

exprir

mere

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Bodor-Pék

My research focuses on the one's relationship to his or her own appearance, more precisely how people use their exterior to express their personality.

The goal of my project, exprimere, is to create a collection of body extensions. These elements reflect on the current state of mind of the participants of my research and design process. During co-creation sessions they reflected on their emotions, how they let or very often don't let them be seen by others. Then they channeled their feelings into creations, body extensions that they crafted with found-at-home materials. Guided by these personal stories and artefacts of the participants, I created a collection modular system using 3D pen, PLA filament and textile. The elements can be freely combined, inviting the participants to find new inspiration in others' stories and work.

Keywords

body alteration, body extension, digital fabrication, digital crafting, 3D pen, self-reflection, self-expression

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My research

focuses on the one's relationship to his or her own appearance, more precisely how people use and alternate their exterior to express their personality.

Both as a makeup artist and as a designer, I am interested in the core motivation of people to change the way they look. I am taking a psychological and anthropological approach to investigate this field. I start with introducing the notion of the self, how the self develops in the context of his or her community/communities. Understanding the relationship between is crucial to find the core motivations of the individual to alternate his or her body. Shifting from psychological to anthropological perspective, I move on looking into the methods that people use to alter their body in order to achieve a desired look.

The desire to look different from what is given to us, to distort, to modify our bodies by various methods is as old as humanity. As the anthropologist Nancy Etcoff summed up, we have come up with a wide variety of in many cases torturing techniques to achieve the coveted features in order to gain the trust and liking of a community or an individual. (Etcoff 2000)

The role of the community is undeniably important in an individual's life in various aspects. The desire to belong somewhere, to someone, is an innate trait, an elemental instinct that determines our behavior from birth. Even in infants, it can be observed that they imitate the people who are constantly present in their environment, primarily their parents and siblings. They use the closest community around them to adapt to their norms. This behavior accompanies the whole learning process and conditions the children. The individual uses his or her environment as an origin, a key pattern to be followed, and to try their own limits against it. (Mérei-V. Binét 2016) The influence of the community then accompanies some individuals in less, while others to a larger

extent throughout their lives. The defining pattern is that the individual seeks his place within the rules and norms of the community and adapts rather than strives for otherness. Communities have not only behavioural patterns but they also define certain standards and qualities for appearance that is unwritten expected to be followed by the members. Though the relationship of the individuals and the community, communities they are part of by coercion or by choice is an aspect that I cannot neglect in my research, but I want to keep my focus on the individual. What intrigues me on the first place is how can an individual break out of the standards put up by the community. My key interest is to play with the thought of snatching the individual from their communities and see how I can help them, empower them to express who they are.

Background and context

As a first step, I am investigating the relationship between self expression and body alteration, how it has evolved throughout history. I am splitting up the two key components, self-expression, focusing on the notion of the self, and body alteration.

The Self

The self is a psychological concept, that is in focus of research and a probative basis for trends in modern psychology. The very first step towards defining and understanding the concept of the self was taken by William James. He defined two aspects of the self. I, the subjective knower, and Me, the object that is known. (James, 1891) In the context of my project I found relevant the work of Alfred Adler, Margaret Mahler and Carl Rogers. (Juhász; Takács, 2006) Adler and Mahler defined the self in a social context and examined the development of the self in relation to the immediate medium surrounding them. They argue that in the newborn the me and not me concept are fused together. And the development of the self, my own personality, is nothing but the disintegration of this fusion. Adler stated that the main driving force of an individual is power and ambition in the process of the development of the personality. While Mahler put more emphasis on the role of self-reflection. The ability of the self to interpret for him or herself the events of life, allows him or her to get a more complex picture of the personality. It also provides an in-depth understanding of the relation of the self to the outer world. The views of Adler and Mahler allowed me to understand more deeply why the individual is so embedded in his environment. Why is it that although the self is evolving, it can still depend on its environment.

Carl Rogers' personality-centered view is impor-

tant in my research because it shows how important self-actualization plays in the individual in addition to following norms and patterns. Rogers describes the individual as a person who feels responsible for him- or herself and is an active actuator in making him- or herself better. He also articulates the current state of the self, that is, the self-image that the individual has at a given moment and the ideal self-image that the individual would like to have. What makes these two states important to me is that most people choose their personalities not only on a spiritual but also on a physical level. In my research I want to both explore the steps people take in order to reach their ideal self and connect the physical and mental aspects of their endeavor.

Body Alteration

The main literature that I went through from the topic of body alteration is the already mentioned book written by anthropologist Nancy Etcoff. Survival of the prettiest provides a comprehensive insight of how an individual relates to his or her appearance, what evolutionary motivation or inner drive he or she has to change his or her appearance, and what advantage an individual with a certain physical appeal gains. She provides a more open definition of body alteration than other literatures determine. Thompson and black approaches from an anatomical perspective: body modification (or body modification) is "the deliberate alteration of the human anatomy or human physical appearance." (Thompson, Black 2010) They do not include the social aspects of body alteration. Etcoff emphasizes the aesthetic, sexual, religious, and community causes, among others. The online article Body Modification & Body Image also covers the inner motivation of the individual. According to it the purpose of the body modifying an individual can be to be accepted or, on the contrary, to shock other members of his or her community. Among other things, body modifiers have the motivation to create body art, to portray their life experiences, embody their religious or political beliefs, and to express their personality. Body modification gives one the feeling of pride and excitement, giving one something to show off to others. (Bradley University) Etcoff goes into more detail when it comes to giving detailed examples of body modification. She lists temporary, less drastic methods as well along with permanent and drastic interventions. Going through the definitions and interpretations of the reviewed literature in my interpretation I will include all forms of body alteration. Including but not limited to:

Introduction

scarring, painting, piercing, padding, stiffing, plucking, buffing of the body through permanent and temporary methods such as regular or semi-permanent makeup, tattoos, piercing, plastic surgery. (Etcoff 2000)

If we look at the historical and anthropological literature, we can see that body modification procedures are not fashionable only today, but are almost as old as the history of mankind. The oldest known body modification techniques are piercings, tattoos, body jewelry, especially neck rings, and scratches and beading. Piercings are incredibly common in almost every culture throughout history, with a huge range of legends, myths, and meanings behind the jewelry worn and its placement. Nostril piercing for instance has been documented in the middle east as far back as 4,000 years. Tattooing, as we know it, is documented as far back as 3300 BCE as seen in the discovery of Ötzi the iceman in 1991 and ancient Egyptian mummies bearing tattoos of animals and various creatures. The practice, however, was believed to have originated over 10,000 years ago. Traditionally, scarification is found most widely amongst dark-skinned people especially in equatorial regions where people tend to have so much melanin in their skin that tattooing is not as effective visually. Neck rings are one or more spiral metal coils of many turns worn as an ornament around the neck of an individual. In a few African and Asian cultures necklaces are worn usually to create the appearance that the neck has been prolonged. (Etcoff 2000)

These ancient techniques still inspire body modifiers and are still in use today. Their meaning and significance, as well as their application to certain body parts, have changed, but the basic motivation of body modifiers to use these techniques remains unchanged: fashion, function or just to make a statement of some kind.

Limits of Self-Expression

The specific procedures mentioned above are only a part of the overall body modification process. In addition, modern devices guarantee that any potential source of danger (bleeding, infection, etc.) that may arise during body modification processes is minimized. So we could easily think that self-expression, the embodiment of our personality, is easier than ever. However, this is not entirely true.

Because body modifying procedures have a rich history, some communities and cultures have given them different meanings, therefore we rather are talking about identifying with certain connotations. Take a specific example, the red lipstick. The red pigment

obtained from red ocher is the pigment that is believed to be the oldest dye raw material used for body painting. South African excavations have found larger amounts of pigment in 100-125,000-year-old graves. Since there was no decoration at all on the walls, it was concluded that it was used for face and body painting. Red is thus the primary color of the ancient makeup palette and is primarily used for coloring lips and cheeks. (Eldridge 2015) Over the centuries it has been associated with a very rich association. Desirability, love, passion is most prevalent in Western culture, and youth and health in Eastern cultures. Nancy Etcoff summarizes the biological essence of red color in evolutionary psychology as "red, the color of blood, of blushes and flushes, of nipples, lips, and genitals awash with sexual excitement, visible from afar and emotionally arousing." (Etcoff 2000) In African tribal cultures, where red was used not for coloring lips and cheeks, but for body coloring, the goal was similar, to make the skin shiny and fresh, to give the wearer a younger look, regardless of gender. (Kirk 1981) With such a rich sense of meaning, the current wearer of the red lipstick would try to express anything else about his or her personality with a red lipstick, and the outsider would project him on a learned or by this time subconscious association.

The perception of tattooing, which is one of the most widely used body modification techniques, is equally strong. It is not only decorative but often functional as it documents important life events. Currently, tattoos are considered accepted and normal in most cultures, yet its wearers are often getting into situations where their tattoos are judged negatively. The most widespread preconception is the "dark past," because people have also been tattooed to identify them permanently as criminals or undesirables in society and that associated stigma of being lowbrow or undesirable still exists in the minds of many. (Etcoff 2000) Thus, it can be said of this mainstream body modifying process that often results in the stigmatization of the body modifier's characteristics, their moral constitution, and their behavior (Thomas, 2012).

The most commonly used body modification techniques like dressing or makeup are nowadays dominated by brands. Branding is a marketing tool that defines the value of a company to its customers and sets it apart from its competitors. (Keller, 2007) This is what brands do in addition to their visual appearance - identity, packaging - in the form of advertisements that mean not only the classic giant poster and TV spot format, but also the lifestyle conveyed in consumers' second living space, social media. The brands con-



sciously strive to display values and attributes in each marketing campaign that make the members of their target group feel like they are part of their own self. (Chernev 2011) So when a customer takes a product off the shelf, it is rarely a matter of making a decision driver by inner motivation, but it is more a matter of deciding upon external influence.



When I write about the limitations of self expression, I summarize how petrified notions, standards and associations stand in the way of people to reveal through their appearance who they are. What do I mean by that? Imagine this lady painting her lips red. What would be the first personal trait you'd describe her with? Shy, insecure, modest? Very unlikely. Would you entrust your fortune to the gentleman in the second picture? I would doubt it. Do you think the ladies in the third picture can talk to you about anything other than the latest Michael Kors collection? Maybe. When the associations that we experience, and learn are getting fixed in us give and rise to so much prejudice, how can we expect a lovely shy girl to even try red lipstick on her in her own room?

(Image 1. resource: maccosmetics.com, Image 2. Steven Burton, resource: stevenburtonphotography.com, Image 3. Mario Testino, resource: vervemagazine.in)

Therefore, my goal is, through my research and design process, to create an environment where self-expression can be realized without learned associations, stigmas and outside influences.

Introduction

Methodology

In the initial phase of the design process, desktop research plays a major role, in which I set out the theoretical background of my project and create the context of the project. Past projects within my research topic are on the verge of theoretical and practical work. Understanding and analyzing these related projects will help me to make design decisions and ensure that my project fits into the existing design discussion.

Although my project is speculative, it is important that I not only intend to channel my visions into my work, but also expect people to play a major role in the design process. Therefore I will do User Interviews to get to know people's thoughts on my research topic. Their relationship with their appearance, their views on the beauty ideals in the media, and their vision of the body image of the future will all be useful insights that form the final artefact. Co-design workshops will also play a key role in the process, as they allow me to observe how the participants create body extensions for themselves. What decisions do they make during creation? Which part of their body are they targeting? What materials they choose and why? All these insights will have and influence on the aesthetics and features of the body extension that I will create as an outcome of my project.

As my own personality is currently undergoing a major change, I am documenting my own experience and creating early prototype(s) through self-experiments. I work with a toolbox and method similar to the Co-design workshops, so my own insights and creations will shape prototypes and the final artefact(s).

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Intended Contribution

As a makeup artist I modify people's appearance on a regular basis. No matter if I fulfill a creative brief at a photoshoot or I work with private clients, I see the power that lies in this subtle, non-permanent body modification technique. Even just a trick like applying taupe toned powder around the nose, that changes a facial feature in a slightly noticeable way, can have an empowering effect on the personality. In my daily job I am always looking for that twinkle in the eye from my models and clients when they discover new qualities in themselves.

As a designer I am particularly interested in how more drastic, durable and easily applicable body alteration methods influence our relation to the appearance. And what qualities of ours is it able to reveal to ourselves.

I combine interaction design methods and traditional techniques of makeup artistry to push forward the possibilities of body alterations.

With my project, I want to join in the discourse on the role and importance on how we look, how our appearance is perceived by the outer world. In the past few years, there is an ongoing discussion in this topic, rooted in social media and now reaching mass media. The key message is acceptance and openness towards different types of beauty. Since this is a value I stand behind, which I personally admit, I would appreciate it if the result of my design process and the process itself could join this thread.

In addition, I believe that the combination of procedures known in the world of beauty and fashion, the most common forms of body modification, and digital fabrication techniques learned during my studies may result in a new method that may not only be inspiring but also applicable to other designers.

Related Projects	The “Related Projects” chapter lists and analyses existing projects that I gained inspiration for my own work. It also serves the purpose to position my project in the context of working with body extensions by highlighting features that I want to embody in my artefacts.
Concept and Angle	In the “Concept and Angle” I summarize how the theoretical research and the analysis of the reference projects formed my thinking about the artefacts that I am looking forward to creating. I describe how I imagine my artefacts to answer my research questions and what qualities I want them to embody.
Field Research	From this point my thesis turns into an in-depth documentation of my design process. Starting with the “Field Research” where I share how I used the methods of Autoethnography, User Interviews and Workshops. These aim to support my theoretical statements, to get new viewpoints that I have not included in my research part and to get insights on how people reflect on their relation to their appearance.
Findings and Next Steps	“Findings and Next Steps” includes my analysis of the outcome of Field Research. Here I define a more clear direction I want to take in Project Development.
Project Development	In the chapter “Project Development” I describe step by step the milestones of creating exprimere. Instead of a chronological progress description, I chose to write in a reflective style. I group my thoughts around the most important design decisions and aspects of my prototypes and final work. The chapter will include details about how I developed a workshop method that introduced a psychological aspect to my work. Then how the outcomes, the body extensions that participants created during these workshops influenced and guided the creation of the final artefacts. I also detail the technical aspects of producing the body extensions with a hope that the techniques I learned from previous examples and that I came up with along the way will help designers choosing to work with the same fabrication methods.
Conclusion	“Conclusion” is my last chapter where I summarize the achievements of my design process. I also dedicate space here to list my challenges once again briefly and what I learned from making mistakes. I discuss here my wishes how my project could live in the future, how could it be developed further.
Annex	In the “Annex” I enclose the scenario booklet for my workshop method.

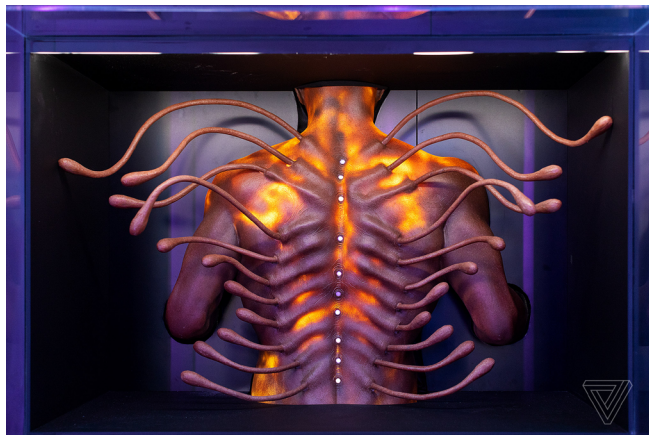
The artistic and design interpretations of body alteration is a very rich field. My approach of listing projects was to find the qualities that I am looking forward to having in my artefacts.

I consider my work as a design proposal therefore it was important for me to find works that have speculative aspects and draw up a possible future picture of the human body. I was looking for pieces that do small interventions on the body, still their presence and effect is significant. As in my argument before stated that petrified definitions and ideas of what “normal”, “standard” or “beautiful” is limit the individual in his or her self-expression, works that tackled and challenged these notions got a place on my list. I did not want to limit my source of references to the usage of certain technology, methodology or material. Though from the beginning I was dedicated to using means of digital fabrication, I wanted myself to be inspired by any form of art or design and the fabrication methods behind them.

Related Projects

A. Human

An immersive theatrical experience that was created by the Society of Spectacle in 2018. The goal of A.Human was to showcase a fashion retail store in the near future, where customers are browsing from stylish body extensions not pieces of clothes. The prostheses presented were made with traditional materials and techniques used in mask making, some implemented technological elements such as LED micro lights. The central question of the installation is what if we could extend out body parts, change them as easily as our clothes? Would appearance lose its meaning or would it exaggerate how meaningful it is? I consider not only the body extensions themselves, but rather the narrative built around them, to be a defining inspiration for my work. I find it interesting that body extensions were presented in an installation disguised as a fashion show, however, I miss the visitor - body extensions interaction. The participants of the exhibition could only see the pieces on models, they could not try them, they could not come into contact with them in any form.



Tudor SS19, Anglerfish, Viper. Imaginative accessories that people could shop for as easily in a future store as they shop for clothes now. (Society of Spectacle, resource: theverge.com)

Related projects



Transfigurations

A series of speculative sculptures is a great example of how the human body could be re-designed or engineered with medical interventions. Haines speculates that through surgical procedures several potential future problems rooted in social, economical and environmental circumstances could be solved. In her work, Agi Haines reflects on the problematic of decision-making processes in healthcare, how complex they are and how the involvement of different parties is evolving. Although the medical, health aspect is far from my thought process, Haines' work is undoubtedly inspiring and instructive when it comes to pushing the boundaries of body modification. I also like the fact about her work that she introduces subtle changes that are not so detached from reality. The future she proposes is a non-distant one that I also aim to target with my work.

Epidermal Myostomy, Extension Ostergensis, Thermal epidermiplasty. Pieces from the series of Transfigurations showing speculative medical interventions that would give answers to future environmental and health problems. (Agi Haines, <https://www.agi-haines.com/transfigurations>)

Related Projects

Biometric Mirror

Like Haines, Lucy McRae's work features mostly speculative pieces, artefacts, installations and films that are redesigning the human body. In this specific immersive installation, McRae challenges the notion of perfection. The visitors are getting a face scan. An algorithm creates a mathematically perfect version of their faces. What is the most interesting aspect of the project to me is the visitors' reaction to their idealized image. The notion of perfection is not subjective in this context anymore, but objectified through an algorithm. Unfortunately the media covered mostly covered the technical aspect of the project and there is little written about the interaction between the visitors and the algorithm.



Lucy McRae explores the notion of perfection through an Artificial Intelligence platform that shows people the mathematically perfect facial design of theirs. The question is, whose perfection is it after all? (Jesse Marlow, resource: lucymcrae.net/biometric-mirror-)

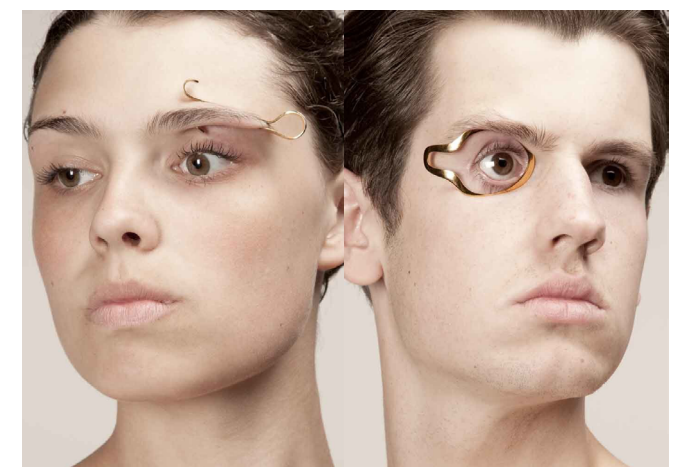
Related projects

Terrifying Beauty and Configurations

I am analysing these two jewelry collections together, because I see a very close connection between them. Both Burcu Büyükcinal (Terrifying Beauty) and Imme van der Haak (Configurations) questioned the notion of "normal" and "beauty" with their pieces. The golden appliques they both created, mimic plastic surgery, procedures getting popular to reshape the body. The medical intervention is done with the motivation of being more beautiful, getting closer to a standard, what is considered "normal". The way these pieces distort the face are achieving looks that are definitely not falling under the category of standard beauty. As van der Haak states: my intention is "to reveal the idea that every form has its own beauty". The proposal of new, not usual forms of beauty, can open discussions and change directions in collective thinking and ideas about petrified definitions. What I like about these two projects is exactly this ambition. Again, what we see is that not so grandiose artefacts make subtle changes on the body itself. The potential they have though to change ideas and concepts in the head of people is very relevant on the other hand.



Head Piece 1: Gold plated brass, diamond, Head Piece 4: Gold plated brass. The head pieces shows an alternative interpretation of beauty standards. (Burcu Büyükcinal, <https://burcubuyukunal.wordpress.com/2008/09/20/terrifying-beauty/>)



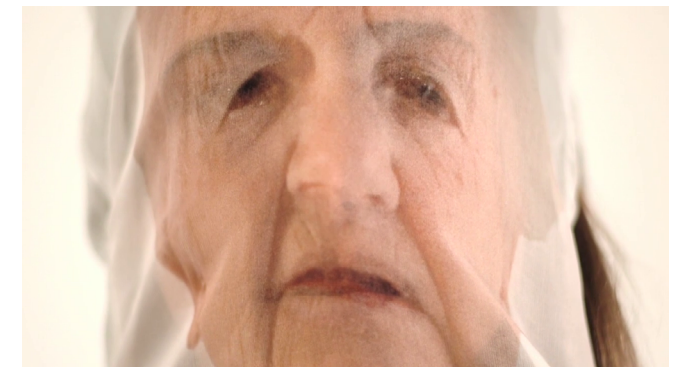
Jewelry pieces from the collection of Imme van der Haak. Simple forms showing unusual body distortions that suggests beauty lies in each and single shape. (Imme van der Haak, <https://www.immevanderhaak.nl/Configurations>)

Wearable Interactive Sculptures

A series of wearable sculptures created by Jennifer Crupi has a very interesting quality. Her pieces limit the body. Crupi created pieces that make it possible to perform only restricted movements to act out a gesture or in more drastic elements, it immediately locks down body parts in a certain position. What each piece shares is that they all look like sterling silver jewelries that highlight a pose. The most interesting subseries within the collection is *Ornamental hands*. What is conspicuous in these specific pieces is that the pose they allow to pick up looks a bit unnatural. They look artificial but playful at the same time. They suspended fingers mimicking marionette dolls. The structure limits the movement of the hands, of the fingers forcing it to perform graceful gestures that might not be natural to its wearer. Crupi compares *Ornamental hands* to corsets and other restrictive beauty aids that bring that part of the body closer to the concept of canonized beauty. My overall goal is the opposite from this collection. It is still interesting to observe the pieces in terms of wearability. Due to their restricting qualities, they have to fit perfectly to fulfill their mission. I want to achieve such a level of integration between the artefact and the body, of course not limiting but liberating it rather.



Ornamental Hands: Figure One, Ornamental Hands: Figure Four. Delicate pieces limiting the hands to execute one single gesture. (Jennifer Crupi, <https://www.jennifercrupi.com/work>)



Beyond the body

Another work of Imme van der Haak shows her approach of simple interventions. In a performance she dressed her artists into translucent silk robes. They are decorated with the prints of the bodies of the actors. What I adore of the project apart from the simplicity is that movement plays a big role. The body is not just a canvas here, but one of its main qualities, the ability to change itself only by movement is in focus. By the movement of the actors, the robes interact with the "real" body itself, mapping the prints onto it and drawing up new bodies constantly. Regarding my project, I am also looking forward to seeing such an interaction between the artefact and the body through movement.

Video snapshots from a dance performance. As the translucent fabrics interact with the dancers body, they reveal new qualities of the body. (Imme van der Haak, <https://www.immevanderhaak.nl/Beyond-the-Body>)

Animal: The Other Side of Evolution

The collection of fashion artefact designer Ana Rajevic marries forms of animals with human features. The pieces can be interpreted as standalone sculptures, but when they are worn by a human, they become body extensions. The forms that Rajevic chose have a majestic look, and empower the human body with strength and power. Though it is not a subtle change I am looking for to develop in my project, I adore the clean look and the perfection of the symbiosis between the surface of the body and the artefacts. Also, the fact that Rajevic worked with forms that can be found in nature could have led to a result that is easy to misinterpret. She managed to create forms that are recognizable, yet they are fabricated and presented in a way that they don't feel literal.



Animal. What if human body would be empowered with majestic features from the animal kingdom? (Ana Rajevic, <http://ana-rajevica.com/work>)

After summarizing the theoretical background and the most important features that I wanted to display from the reference projects in my own work, I set the following goal for my design project.

I want to create an environment for my users where they can express themselves without having to keep up with norms of communities. An environment that makes them possible to free their mind from standards, stigmas and ingrained associations. An environment that lets them focus on their inner self, and bring to the surface their true self, their emotions, feelings in the form of body extensions.

The body extensions will be the central artefacts of my work. They will be designed with a human centered approach and function as pieces that people could wear on a daily basis.

The main goal

of mine is to create body extensions that inspire and empower the wearers for self expression.

What sets the body extension apart from other similar projects is that it is not only showing my artistic proposal, but made with the active involvement of participants as co-creators.

The initial diploma pieces will form a cohesive collection. I use methods of digital fabrication, as I envision at this stage 3D scan and 3D printing will be the key fabrication techniques I use. During the exhibition, visitors will be welcome to try on the pieces and find their own personal story behind the pieces.

Field research

involves two qualitative methods: auto ethnography and user study.

The latter is a combination of an interview session and a small design task. I chose these two methods because they help me to get familiar with the users' opinions and thoughts about the role of self-reflection and self-expression in their lives. At the same time, they provide me the opportunity to observe the users while creating. And their creation, of course, plays a big role in creating the final collection.

Auto Ethnography

Auto ethnography as a method combines the main elements and techniques of autography and ethnography.

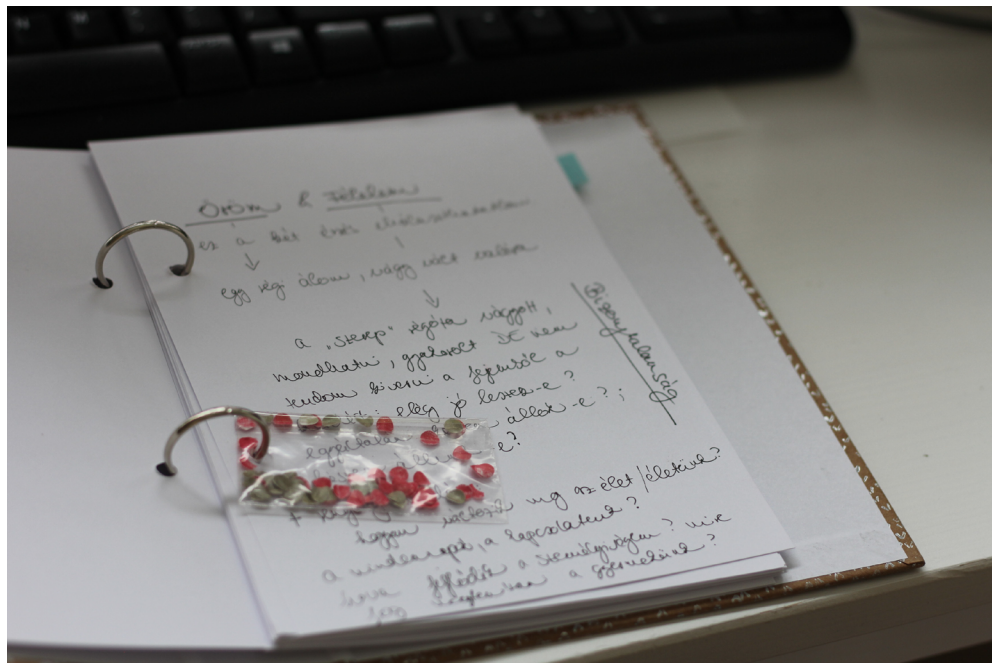
According to Maréchal's (2010) definition of autoethnography, it "is a form or method of research that involves self-observation and reflexive investigation in the context of ethnographic field work and writing". As I wrote earlier, I don't want the final collection to be built around myself, my personality, yet I think it's important to try it out for myself, to test all the methods I'm going to apply with users as well. In addition, it turned out that my diploma thesis and project are being prepared at a time in my life, in which I myself am going through changes that strongly shape my personality. I record these experiences, with their help I set the schedule for conversations and work with my interviewees. Going through every step they take during a session helps them become more empathetic to them.

The said life situation in which I am currently is expecting a child. From the beginning of the diploma project design process, I write in the form of a diary in short entries about how physiological processes affect me, how they affect my days, my thinking, and I also reflect on how my personality develops. In addition to writing the entries, I make sketches, smaller prototype details that express the recorded thoughts in an abstract way. Of course, in addition to the changes related to pregnancy, the condition caused by COVID-19 is not a negligible circumstance, which has a great impact not only on my own person, but also on the whole design process, I will write more about this later.

It's important to me not to write in the tone of the mom-to-be blogs, logging the development of my body and my bonding with the child, but to focus on self-reflection, on how I experience change and how I react to it. I write that diary by hand because there is less distraction than if I kept it digitally. I also feel that it is more personal and I can use drawings and other illustrations to express my thought in addition to words. Updating the diary is irregular because there are days when a lot of things keep my thoughts away, I don't have the energy left at the end of the day to sum it up, or I'm simply so overwhelmed by the thoughts that it is hard to turn them into words or pictures at that point. I have noticed that if I force the process, the log entry will be like a template, it remains general, which I can not use in the prototyping process. The writing technique that works for me is that I try to focus on the most important emotion, feeling in a post. At first, I listed the emotions that affected me since the last entry in a list, with short explanations. As a result, it became an incoherent set of thoughts. When, on the other hand, I started to select an emotion and walk around it, many other emotions and thoughts came up in the same way, but I saw it in a system, in context back on paper.

I summarize the recorded thoughts roughly every second week, and create prototype details that are based on the summary of the entries. These details later put together lead to my main prototype for a collection piece. In any case, the most important criteria is that the body extension becomes a reflection of my emotions and state of mind. The materials I use for the creations are materials found in our apartment (strings, labels, discarded textiles, seashells collected during the holidays, shopping bags, stickers, etc.), which I constantly collect in a separate place and, when it comes to creating an element or a prototype, I select from it. The creations made this way are very crafty in nature and far from the method of execution I am planning for the final collection. I planned that this crafty

phase of prototyping would be much shorter, with one work coming from each of me and the interviewees, and so I would have more time to rework these works with digital fabrication methods. In the current quarantine situation, however, the role of this process has become more valuable to me in several respects. On the one hand, working with crafty materials has become much longer for me. This allows me to get in direct contact with different materials. Based on past experience, I thought I knew them, but they can always show a new quality of theirs. And by going through the process I go through with the interviewees, I experience potential deadlocks, problems that I then pay attention to or eliminate from the instructions.



A sneak peek into my autoethnography process. My written journal contains texts, sketches and very different sort of prototypes. This particular entry summaries my thoughts that I had after a complication in my pregnancy. I handled it calmly on the surface but I blamed myself. The question if I am doing it right haunted me for a couple of days, taking my focus off from most of the other things in life. The confettis embody this ambiguity of the surface and the deep. The second experiment dealt with my changed perception of time. After the first trimester was over, I felt that life simply sped up. As a material experiment I used dried flowers and tried to conserve with gelatin embodying that something I want to preserve is already gone.. (images by the author)

Interviews and Workshops

I started with user interviews that consisted of two main parts: an interview and a creation exercise.

For the interview, I came up with a set of questions that were consistent across all interviewees. During the interview, of course, each interviewee had a different dynamics of the interview, so I added more or fewer personalized questions to the listed ones. The purpose of the user interview for me was to get confirmation or rebuttal to the results of my research by my interviews. In addition, I expected that they bring up new, personal perspectives that can enrich my research material. I was mostly curious about how do my interviewees feel about themselves, how is their relation with their appearance, how important role plays in their daily life and what limitations do they encounter when they try to express themselves.

From the interview I planned to jump into the second part of the session, which is a co-creation session. My goal was to see how people react when I ask them to create a body extension that truly represents them and embodies what they brought up in their responses. My hope was that the introductory discussion about their relation to their appearance will start a thought process and such an exercise will be an interesting addition to the interviews. Originally I started to organise the sessions as face-to-face encounters where I provide all the necessary equipment and material and can guide the interviewees. Due to the lockdown, I had to adapt my idea of creating together to the circumstances.

Preparation

The preparation for the interviews and workshops included two important tasks. One is the personal conditions, i.e. ensuring the presence of the interviewees, the other is the material conditions, i.e. the collection of tools used in the workshop.

Let's start with the participants. In recruiting participants, I aimed to have the most diverse personal background possible. I invited creative colleagues I had met in previous projects to the workshops, with whom I had already talked in some form about the role of physical appearance in their work and everyday life. They are typically models, actors / photographers, film professionals, but there were plenty of them as well who are engaged in non-artistic occupations. Based on previous experience, I knew that they would provide useful insights, and their already known opinions contributed to the selection of my research topic. Alongside them, I also invited people whose work I follow

through social media channels and based on what I saw there, I guessed and hoped that they would say yes to attend the workshop. My third recruitment technique was contacting completely unknown people, for which I posted a call on Facebook.

I aimed for variety and was also the main aspect in terms of the objects and tools used for creation, because I wanted everyone to find materials that inspire them, which they like to work with. To help the participants a bit with this process I sent them a picture with the objects that I collected. I grouped them into three main categories: binders (adhesives, ribbons, staples, etc.), coloring materials (felt-tip pens, paint, nail polish, etc.) and constituent materials (colored paper, textile pieces, plasticine, wires, etc.). I asked them not to buy brand new raw materials, just use what they collected at home.



Materials that I gathered for the Interview and Workshop sessions happening face-to-face. I also sent these to my participants as a reference and helped to make their own collection. (images by the author)

Challenges at this stage

I briefly summarize the challenges I faced at this stage of the process. Shortly after I started field research and organising the interviews, the first signs of a possible lockdown caused by Covid-19 popped up. I originally wanted to hold the interviews in person, which unfortunately happened in only two cases. Even before the lockdown, some interviewees, especially people who were strangers to me cancelled their participation in the interview. The regulations made in connection with Covid-19, made me reorganize the sessions on online platforms. It was very inconvenient at this point. The interviewees who responded to my calls on social media platforms did not stick to my proposed schedule suggestion and in many cases quit responding to my messages. As in many Facebook groups I have already used my shot to share what I am working on, a second round of calls did not attract as many people as a week back. So a number of interviews did not take place at the end.

The second important change it brought is that an online session was not a choice but it was the only way to go. Before the lockdown I knew that with some interviewees I cannot meet up face-to-face because of the distance. So I was prepared to hold sessions online and in most cases it worked out pretty well. Especially with friends and acquaintances. While in other cases, mainly with strangers I could sense that the online medium made the interviewee less comfortable.

The way I adapted to the circumstances is that I tried to let go negative feelings about the fact that people are not showing up, that this is a possible sign that I am doing something uninteresting. Instead I focused on how I can make sure that the online session goes smoothly. Once I have scheduled the date and time of the interviews, I sent a short description of what the interviewees should expect. With people I didn't know, and with people I haven't talked for a while I made sure to open the conversation with some casual talk to break the ice. In all cases, I described my project briefly, what I am up to and what are the roles of the interviewees in my design process. I wanted to make sure that they feel comfortable with sharing personal information and opinion. I did not record the interviews but took notes with the hand. I made the interviewees aware about that as well.

A mistake I made here though is that I separated the creation part from the interview itself. I decided to do so for two reasons. First, I was a bit worried about taking too much time from people. Not only in the context of my project but shifting to online meet-

ings in general I experienced that people have a more tight schedule when organising meetings online. The second reason was that I thought if it is like homework, something extra they can make in their free time whenever it is the most convenient for them, they would be more willing to sit down and start creating. For this exercise, I made a small handout that contained my inputs for the creation. Starting with what materials they should collect at home, the idea that it shouldn't be something that they buy for the sake of creation but something that is laying around already at home. Then very simple instructions that I want them to build a body accessory, an extension that represents their personality. I explained it also at the end of the interview and let them know that I am there for them to help if they have any questions. After the first few sessions I did not get any questions or feedback regarding the exercise, so I decided to introduce a limitation of completing the exercise in 4 days.

This decision of mine to separate the interview from the creation proved to be wrong. Out of the 9 interviewees only 2 of them got back to me with a finalised body extension. I got an additional piece from one of them that responds not to his own emotions but to the COVID-19 situation. If I haven't heard back from someone after 4 days, I texted and asked them how far they were with their body extension. I managed to do 4 follow up with interviewees who did not complete the exercise discussions about the exercise. I got the feedback that they found it hard to start. It is not the construction itself, but the expression of emotions with colors and shapes. Especially that the interview did not tackle emotions, more sharing life experience, opinions and thoughts about my research topic. From the conversations, it became clear to me that I needed to turn back to my original idea and facilitate the process of creation. Most of the time, the excuse of "I'm not creative enough for this" was voiced alongside the idea of "very hard to start". I know from past experience that if a facilitator leads a person, you can quickly overcome these obstacles.

Of the completed creations I will write as part of the participants' creation analysis.

Findings and Next Steps

Learnings from the Interviews

In the end, I have conducted 9 interviews in about one and a half weeks time. The interviews were very instructive for me. As I had hoped, the interviewees came up with a lot of ideas that justified the main conclusions of my theoretical research. What was most interesting, however, was that they enriched me with new perspectives that were extremely inspiring and allowed me to see my research from a new perspective.

The greatest confirmation from all the interviewees was the dominant role and influence of the community, to be more precise the geographical community, so where they live. Most of the interviewees had the chance to live in different cities, countries, cultures and their most basic motivation was integration, to become a part of that certain community. When they talked about the process of integration, they brought up examples that nuanced my almost negative image that the community plays in limiting an individual's self-expression. I didn't think that accepting or rejecting a community model is not a black - and - white decision. It is a much more nuanced process, where the individual is given a big role in exactly which of the sample set to follow and which to ignore.

As the interviewees described, the process of integration began with the observation of their tight environment. What do they look like? Which is the dominant hairstyle? What do they wear, how do they dress? How much do they show of themselves? These observations then underwent a kind of selection among the interviewees, selecting the observed samples and incorporating only those that they felt self-identical. However, this was not a copying process but a learning process in almost all cases. One of the most important thoughts I have recorded for myself is that self-expression is not a one-way process, so it means not only that internal emotional states affect what an individual displays on his or her body, but what he or she wears, how modifying the body can also affect the personality. A new body modification procedure can reveal a new quality of personality. The inner and the outer are thus in constant dialogue with each other, thereby developing the personality. For instance an interviewee who moved from a small, conservative Eastern-European community in her early 20's to Milan, experienced a very different attitude not only in terms of dressing, but how people relate to their body. By making more and more local friends, going shopping with them made her aware of new qualities to her body

that she likes emphasizing ever since. She told me she started to wear more colorful pieces mixing them with basic clothes she already had this time. Also she got her ears pierced to be able to wear earrings. This transformative process had a big influence on her personality as well. She became more outspoken and tended to speak up more for herself. This behaviour was hard for her to imagine to embrace in her hometown.

Another aspect that caught my attention was not only dressing but the mention of a very elementary body alteration method: gestures and movements. It is not necessary to put anything on ourselves in order to discover new qualities of our body. Though I have listed them among the methods in my research, I did not expect that they will come up this significantly in the interviews. It was highlighted primarily by those interviewees for whom body awareness plays an important role in their work: models, musicians, and photographers. One of the interviewees brought it up in context of living and working in India for six months. During the observation phase in the first few weeks, he learned that as the language is very far from his mother tongue, the way they form the words with their mouth, the way body language underlines what they are saying is very interesting to him. He found gestures that he felt he was missing from his "repertoire". Another argument and example from another session is particularly interesting. Nowadays, more and more people are modifying their bodies for the sake of a "social media performance", which can be a photo or a video, but definitely a carefully prepared recording. The goal is to

make the person seem as attractive as possible from the certain angle from which the recording is made. But it often does not look good in person, especially when the people start to move and gesticulate in their natural way.

I also wanted to tackle the participants' relation to certain body alteration methods. Starting from subtle and simple techniques like makeup, hairstyle, moving onto more divisive interventions such as tattoos, piercings or plastic surgery. Almost all of them divided their comments on how they perceive it and if they could imagine using the methods to alternate their appearance. As I am an insider in cosmetics and makeup, I dived a bit deeper into this topic both with female and male interviewees. What was interesting to see is that both genders believe that this non-permanent form of body modification has a significant effect not only on the appearance of someone but also on their personality. A male interviewee stated that as he experienced, even a very subtle makeup look can be a mask on certain faces. He is a musician and during some performances or photo shooting he gets his makeup done. Makeup on male faces are mostly for the purpose of creating a unified complexion. According to him, whenever he sees this perfected skin, makes him feel more confident somehow. When I brought up the topic of tattoos and piercings, most interviewees told me that they can look great on people who can actually wear them, when they are really becoming part of the body. But most of them could not imagine having their own. They argued it was a permanent intervention and they needed to think twice which pattern they would pick as they should have a certain meaning. One girl said she is even afraid of getting addicted. She gets her nails extensions and designs done, and if she misses an appointment she already feels frustrated. She senses that she would be one of those people who would get one tattoo done after the other. Only 2 of the interviewed people had tattoos. One of the girls has an infinity symbol on her wrist. She got it done almost a decade ago when she was a senior in high school. Her mom promised her that she can get a tattoo when she is 18. Back then she thought it a philosophical symbol but now it does not tell her anything. She likes the aesthetics of it, she does not hide it, still this is not something significant to her anymore. She didn't get other symbols because she was afraid the same thing will happen. She did not articulate that she regretted it at all, but I had a feeling if she could turn back time, the minimum she would change is to pick another motive. The other girl has a small star on her neck, she thought choosing a body part that she does not see all the time

makes it easier not to regret her choice. She also got another one done on her belly, a small constellation of stars. It does not show an actual constellation, just something she liked. She got it done when her beloved grandmother died and it is still a symbol for her that her grandma is watching over her.

I was also curious how different brands form their thoughts about self-expression. I think this was the only topic in which I had high hopes for loud opinions of how brands evoke consumership, how they want to sell a certain lifestyle, not just particular products etc. Interestingly, this was the topic that brought up very few thoughts. The interviewees did not confess to be loyal to brands, most of them couldn't even list the brand they buy most of their clothes from. Two of them told me that what matters more than brands is sustainability, they tend to buy clothes second hand mostly. Another girl had the same reason to pick clothes from a higher price range hoping for a better quality and longer product lifetime. From the male interviewees more practical aspects came up. Two of them were really ironic about themselves and told me that they are very typical in the sense that they buy multiple pieces they like. One of them after joking about it told me that he enjoys being associated with the basic guy. He said that picking the same type of clothes is not only practical but it develops an image about him in others. He believes to be seen as more reliable and trustworthy. He works as a teacher with teenagers and especially in their eyes any incoherence can open doors to being a target of jokes.

As for the conduct of the interviews, in most cases there was a smooth conversation with the interviewees. I learned the most about those and those who spend time reflecting on themselves. Some have done this in meetings with a psychologist, during coaching, or for personal motivation using various tools, most often mobile applications. In these cases, the interviewees opened up easily, sharing many personal stories during the conversation in addition to answering my set of questions. How close was the relationship between us did not affect the course of the interview and who shared personal stories in what depth.

Next Steps

This research phase, which was based on my own experience and observations. I found the outcome of the interviews sufficient to support my theoretical base, also to open new perspectives to the upcoming tasks. What I lacked though at this point and wished to have more is the creations. As I wanted to use the interviewee's creation to develop my final body extensions, I needed to work on to get more. The first two completed body extensions I got already revealed interesting aesthetics that matched their thoughts. Therefore I defined the next task to develop a session that is less like a user interview, more like a personal conversation that inspires creation on a deeper level. How can I lead people as mediators in reflecting on themselves and expressing their emotions and living their emotions through their creation? I want to focus on finding the answer to this question.



Project Development

Structurizing and Iterating on the Co-Creation Sessions

Learning from the mistake of separating the interviews from the creation, I dedicated time to develop a detailed guide for the upcoming sessions. I found crucial to come up with a framework, a method that I can still adjust with each participant. The most important angle was to guide the participants from self-reflection to self-expression. Though in the interview sessions the interviewees shared their opinion and personal experience with me, I wanted to dive a bit deeper. From the feedback they gave me, the creation was hard for them to even start because what we discussed required more form their opinion rather than work with certain emotions. I thought that starting off with bringing up emotions and feelings, reflecting on how the people feel about themselves, how they see themselves would be a more solid rock to build something on top. In order to be able to express themselves, they need to know who they are really. I decided to go with a more psychological approach from this point. Also, this was the first time when I started to think about my project as a service, not as a product anymore. Though my goal was still to create a series of body extensions, I thought that a method that leads there could be something more than just getting inspired by artefacts that people create.

The First Test Round

I decided to do an introductory part of the session that is dedicated to helping the participants bring up feelings and emotions, and also let them be seen by themselves from an outer perspective. Apart from the collected materials to work with, I have listed a mirror as an important ingredient to the session. This is a tool that we all use on a daily basis to check out how we look. I thought it is a nice addition, as it is something that shows a very straightforward and live image of its user. I also took a look into mindfulness, relaxation and meditation apps as I was curious how they make their users get into another state of mind. What I liked about them, especially about the mindfulness apps is that they operate with brief open questions, then leaving time to find the answers in oneself. I decided to go with this technique.

Once I put together the questions, I started to test it. I run a first round with three people to see if the guide is clear enough. Before starting the sessions, just like at the interviews and the homework, I sent out a document that contained the instructions to get prepared. From the feedback of the three participants it was all clear. Though the creations were completed and all of them were really personal, I felt that the session itself went a bit incoherent. I did not feel hundred percent confident and comfortable with the role of a mediator. And the participants somehow sensed it. I jumped into the creation quite fast, and guided more

that part, in one case I even felt I micromanaged the participant by going through all the materials and suggesting which should go after the other.

Since the session I envisioned went beyond a user interview learned from classic design methodologies, I turned to outside help. I consulted with a grief counselor and asked her about possible ways of creating an environment that people feel comfortable in. As I wanted to tackle personal topics, make the participants bring emotions to the surface it was important to me to learn about techniques to do so. We started with discussing how to lead a session online. She said that many therapists and counselors don't even meet clients online as it is a very different scenario than a face-to-face setup. For more serious problems, this may be justified, but she reassured that in my case, online contact works. She emphasized small things that do matter. She recommended a brief introduction about my working setup, especially that I took notes in a notepad. Looking into the camera, signing that my full attention is on them, is a must. By showing my table in short, and making the participants aware of my note-taking approach makes them feel good if they see the writing motion. She also told me examples of how people signal when they don't want to cross a certain border, like starting to look off camera for a longer time or reaching out something and start fidgeting with it. Then we moved onto my role in this setup that was the most challenging part for me. Her biggest advice was to be open with people and don't focus on who I am not, but who I am. Meaning that I don't need to be disqualified as a therapist or coach because I am not one. I should introduce myself as a curious design student who is in the middle of developing something. When signing up for a therapy or a coaching session, it is not the qualification that patients are interested in, but the environment that the therapist can create for them. She also was a big help in polishing the new session scenario. To help me understand where the flaws are, she did the session with me. As a last step, she shared some techniques and tools she uses to make people talk about their feelings.

She explained to me the role of emotion projection during therapy that helped me to be more aware of the role and importance of the creation from another perspective. My list of related projects has expanded with tools and methods used by therapists, coaches, and psychologists to bring out the emotions of their clients. Various decks of cards, such as Kompatia or Contemplation, are available to professionals. Each card shows illustrations of life situations or even specific emotions and clients select from them with the

help of the therapist and then talk about it. This is a very straightforward tool that even insecure people enjoy to use. After a while, patients start combining the cards and reveal even more complex problems with their therapist. Elements of Dixit and other illustrative board or card games have a similar function, but they mostly depict abstract things, and not all clients can unleash their thoughts and identify with them. Many people use more ordinary tools such as playfigures, lego or playmobil figures in the first place. These allow completely free association for the client. Figures with different looks are suitable in a therapeutic context for clients to identify with them, to see a detail with which they can identify. She suggested emphasizing more the emotional projection on the collected objects by the participants. I shouldn't jump right into the creation but leave time for the participants to build emotional connection with the materials so that the creation is a representation of feelings.

The last problem we tackled was to or not to make people say out loud their emotions. In the first test conversations I left it to the people if they want to articulate their thought process loudly so that I can hear. Though I knew I could get the most out of the process, I also wanted to highly respect the borders if people build it around themselves. She commented that from a professional point of view, she would also leave options but of course I have to be aware that I am losing valuable information.

I have built in all her suggestions into the process. As a next step I rehearsed a bit and went on with casting participants. As for the interviews, it was hard to find participants. I still had the same criteria: include a diverse group of people, reaching beyond friends. By this time we were into the lockdown for a couple of weeks. Coaches and artists both flooded certain groups with offers to their sessions. It was very hard to stand out of these posts, especially that my method was still very fresh and fragile. My technique was to respond directly to posts of people who reached out for help and recommendations. I was open and direct about where I am standing with my project, that it is more on the art side, but definitely helpful in a way that it makes feelings exposed - not only to myself but for themselves as well. The direct contact worked in most of the cases, and I could reach out to eleven participants.

Project Development

Project Development

Iterating on the Session Scenario

I used every single session to iterate on the session scenario. The basic structure of the session crystallized after the first few sessions.

- Pre-session preparation in written format. The participant receives instructions on what he or she will need for the smooth creation.

- Self-reflective exercise, which I can best compare to a kind of meditation. In doing so, with the help of a mirror and my questions, the participant explores his or her emotions about himself or herself, his or her mental state, his or her relationship with his or her appearance, and how he or she sees his or her emotions projected on his or her own body.

- We move onto the work, where with the collected raw materials the participant expresses all the feelings that he or she has brought to the surface before.

- Once the creation is finished, comes the last round of reflection. With the created body extension the participant shares how he or she feels about the altered body (part).

- At least 3 days after the session, within the framework of a follow up conversation, moving away from the experience in time, I collect feedback from the participant.

But the devil lies in the details. In the first sessions, I focused on creation, but then I embraced more the role of a coach/mediator. It took me time to feel comfortable and confident in this position. Once I got there, I not only enjoyed the process more, but I got better and better from the participants themselves.

To iterate successfully on the scenario, getting back and talking to participants was crucial to me. When I contacted them I made it clear that our “working relationship” will last longer than just the session itself. Most participants reacted very positively to it and I could contact them whenever I needed them. It did not matter how well we know each other, most of the participants gave very direct feedback. I evaluated and channeled their thoughts back into the session scenario for the next participant. The final version I was happy with and felt it worked the best established after five-six sessions. Of course it always provided me the opportunity to tailor-make some parts of the session to the needs of the participants. I also could pace it easily

the way the dynamic of the conversation required.

Though these eleven sessions were very fruitful, I wanted to scale up the number of participants. Apart from being active on social media platforms, especially in targeted Facebook groups and my professional and personal Instagram accounts, I collected contacts from friends. This channel was semi-successful, leading to five participants only. As I always updated the session scenario, it reached a format that started to look like a complete workbook. I had the idea to edit it, so that people could go through them themselves. I was aware from previous experience with the homework, that I am likely to receive fewer results, still I can reach out to more people. I received many likes and positive reactions to my calls for participants, but way fewer actual applicants. My thought was that these people might feel intimidated to talk to a stranger about their feelings so why not provide them the workshop in a form they can do it by themselves. Once I made a PDF format, first, I asked people I knew to test it. I sent them the booklet, asked them to follow the instructions and guides. Then, in a follow up round I did the session with them so that they could comment on the differences between a written text and a guided session. Regarding the booklet, I got feedback mostly on the look of it, so it has more structure and is easier for the eye to follow. The experience was confirmed to be different of course, but according to the three people I made the test round, the written format worked on its own. There is a right amount of instructions that they could follow. Two of the people I did this test round with suggested thinking about an audio version as well, where I record my voice reading the instructions of the main part. The introduction and the preparation could still be sent as a text, but the exercise itself, as it contains instructions like “Close your eyes...”, could be more relaxing to follow if they don’t have to focus on what to read afterwards. Following their suggestion, I did so.

Once I introduced the suggested changes, I published the booklet and the audio exercise on social media, and sent it to a mailing list. I got back five creations in total, however there were around 30 people who downloaded any of them. From people who did not send me back their creations, I got emails with their thoughts on the exercise, that also helped me to make my process better. I also used the booklet from this point on to share it with participants after the online session. Some of them commented it is a good idea from me, as they can get back to the exercise even without me. They thought it would be nice for them to use it when they have time and they want to reflect on themselves.

Reflection on the Co-Creation

Sessions

In total I conducted 2 sessions face-to-face, 15 sessions online and I got back 5 creations that were made upon using the booklet or the audio guide. I do not count the test rounds. Though I made sure that people do the creation part as well, my focus there was more to fine tune the session scenario and I felt that the creations were a secondary outcome.

Let me start with how I felt during the sessions. No doubt that at the beginning I was very insecure in the position of a moderator. Having help from the grief counselor meant a big push to improve, also during the mentoring sessions my professors assured me that it is a natural attitude and I have to and can work on improving. Once I defeated this doubt in myself, I could concentrate better on the process.

The followup sessions that I had after the creation was a good idea to organise a few days after the sessions took place. The participants were thus able to view their experience from a perspective, both in time and in emotion. Since they were no longer under direct influence of the experience, they were able to give more objective feedback. I kept the feedback rounds quite open. I started with the question “How did you feel during the session?” and the question “What thought did the creation process bring up for you?” was also fix with almost everybody, I tried to go into details reflecting on the thoughts they shared with me.

Most participants reflected on the emotional side of the session in the first place. About half of the people brought up additional additions to what they told, either emotions or additional stories that support them. Although I wasn’t curious about it on their part in the first place, I listened intently and took notes. About five

participants commented that they kept the body extension and wore it at least once after it was completed outside of the session. At such times, of course, I asked about their motivation. Most gave the answer that it is interesting to play with the idea of changing something on their body so easily. Participants used to think mostly about what would happen if they had bigger noses, thinner arms, more muscular legs. However, the session and the built-in add-on woke them up to the fact that in addition to superficial appearances, there are other dimensions along which they can change their bodies. Several participants admitted that it is difficult to express their emotions, afraid that others will find them vulnerable if they admit that they have a bad day sometimes. I would be reluctant to communicate these clearly, but they played with the idea of how one such body supplement could be displayed in a less explicit form. It is not necessary for everyone to understand what a blindfold or scales symbolize on their hands, it is enough to constantly remind them of an emotion or a story. ficial appearances, there are other dimensions along which they can change their bodies.

About my doubt in making or not making people talk their emotions out loud I also received confirmation. About ten people preferred to share very little or no feelings at all with me during the sessions. With two of them I had a detailed conversation about why they choose to do so. They were insecure about opening up to someone they don’t know and also as I mentioned that I am doing a project for university they were afraid of saying something wrong, even though I communicated that there is no such thing in this session. They both told me that they regretted not to talk out loud, not only because of me, but also when you keep thoughts to yourself, there is still the possibility of hiding them from even yourself.

I also got positive feedback on handing out the exercise. Though almost no one did it all the way once again in this short timeframe, they took time to read it at least.

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Analysis of User Creations

At the beginning, in the first eight sessions I left very open with which materials should the people work with, also to which body part they should design their extensions for. These first creations ended up looking really crafty, and had issues with wearability. Of course, a polished, easy to attach extension that fits like a glove was very hard to expect from people. Following the advice of my mentors, I narrowed down the material list to paper, coloring tools and adhesives. I wanted to achieve that the user creations have a more clear aesthetics so that it is easy to compare them. But what did they use before the iteration? I was happy to see materials coming from nature, such as banana skin, feathers, shells and floating root plants. Though I knew it is super hard to mimic the lightness of these materials with digital fabrication, I really liked how people use them as symbols. Threads, wires and scotch tape were mostly used to connect pieces. I suggested using textile and stickers, small bits of decorative elements such as buttons, but they did not occur that much. At this point people did use coloring methods very little as well. I liked that they kept the natural elements mostly raw, but was also curious what certain colors would represent to them.



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The result of the first few sessions. The participants had no limitations in which materials to use, and which body parts they should design their pieces to. This resulted in pieces that were rich in personal feelings, ideas and references but gave a very different outcome in terms of aesthetics. (Images provided by the Participants.)

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Then I tried a few sessions limiting the participants in two ways: use of paper, cardboard, coloring tools and adhesives and I also listed only three body parts to focus on. From the first creations I saw the pattern on focusing on the face or on the hand. From the feedback I learned people find these body parts the easiest to build on. I also listed the back. Firstly, because the creation with the transparent ball on the back really touched me with the story and idea behind it. Many people brought up similar emotions about letting others see their vulnerable side. But they built on their face or hands as well. By listing the back as the third body part, I wanted also to inspire people to think out of the box a bit and challenge them. Of course, if I felt that they have difficulties, I allowed them to change their mind and switch to another body part.

It was also interesting to see that creations started to bring up similar ideas and feelings. The central thought was insecurity, ambiguity that were in connection with Covid-19 in most of the cases.



After limiting the materials to be used and the body parts the creations are somewhat simplified. Though the personal stories behind them showed a rich context, the representation got to a more unified aesthetics. (Images provided by the Participants.)



Defining the three body parts helped me as well getting closer to the final collection. I knew that at a point I have to synthesize the inputs from the participants and start working on my own prototypes.

Project Development

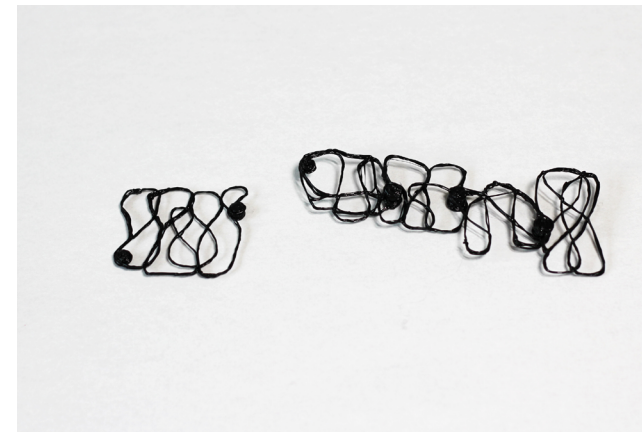
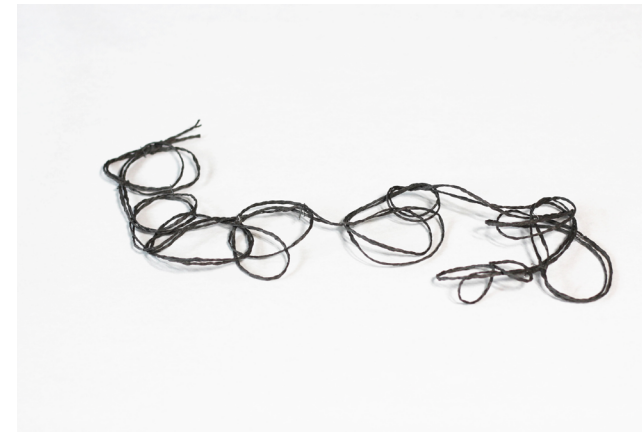
Conceptualizing the Final Elements

When I started the production of the final collection, I struggled quite a bit to get to a final concept. Initially, as I have already explained in the earlier chapter of "Concept and Angle", I wanted to use the creations as a base, more like an inspiration to my artefacts. My original plan was to create three complex body extensions that are building strongly on the creations of the participants. My mentors suggested finding a more relevant connection between their and my creations. I also had the feeling that after spending a lot of time listening to emotions, personal stories, watching people create I have to give back something to the community. Though people were already thankful for the session itself, I wanted to include them in the final pieces.

I knew that I want to stay true to their aesthetics and definitely not make better versions of their creations suggesting that theirs was in a way not good enough. Also copying them one to one was out of my scope. What I aimed for is to create a version 1.0 that is wearable, embraces the shapes they brought to the creation.

My other main criteria was that I should enrich their piece with inspiration and empowerment. So when they look at the final piece of mine they feel related to it, they see the potential of wearing it.

These two aspects lead to breaking down the creations of the participants into the smallest elements. Let's take the example of the very first creation. It is a choker-like body extension on the neck that reminds the wearer of all the mistakes that one is about to make again. It is made out of thread and staples in a very decorative curvy form. The participant aimed for an elegant look so that it is something that matches her general personal style. I thought that the curvy lines are worth embracing, but instead of creating a full length neckpiece, I made multiple small elements that can connect to each other so that the participant is able to recreate that as it was. I went through the same process with every creation. Tried to find the smallest piece I can produce and added a small magnet. This allowed the participants not only to remake their own body extensions but also to be inspired by the form and stories behind the creation of the others.

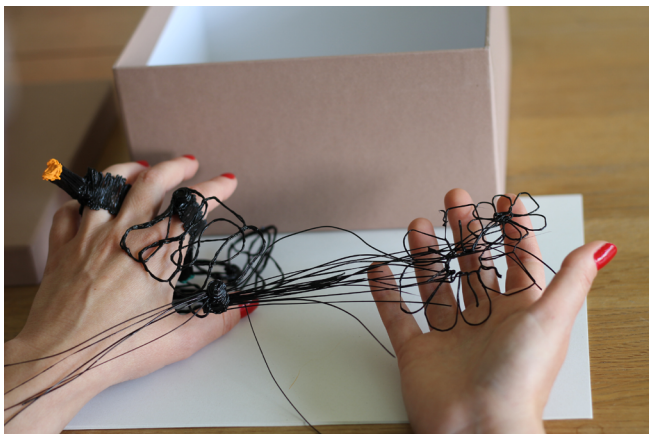


Defining elements from the original creations of the participants allows the co-creator community not only to recreate their own body extensions but be inspired by the forms and stories behind the creations of others. (Images by the Author)



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To validate the idea for the final pieces I produced three elements and brought it back to one of the participants. I put it all in a simple box. Of course, it included modules of her own creation and two extra parts coming from different creators. I didn't explain to her much about what she should do. I was curious if she recognises her pieces, also what questions she will have about the pieces. She was pleased with the pieces and liked the aesthetics of the 3D pen a lot, she said it is very interesting to look at her creation in such a translation. After she completed her piece she took a look into others. I included parts of the neck-piece as well as some long lashes and flowers. To her it was quite clear what she sees in terms of shape but of course became curious about the back story almost immediately. Apart from that she asked which body part they were designed to be worn. I told her briefly the story behind the pieces and asked if she could imagine making them part of her body extension. She hesitated a bit, and told me that after knowing the story, which is very interesting, not necessarily. She would add them with the motivation of liking the form of them and finding a personal connection. In the case of the flowers she said that they look fragile and beautiful. Though she wished they were shorter she added them to her piece.



An example of evolution from the creation of a participant to creating her body extension including the pieces of the final collection. Picture 1: she used oil pastels that she got from her father to extend her fingers and being able to leave marks behind. As she is a fashion designer she decided to build on her hands, that she uses for her embroidery work. Her emotion was to long back to childhood. She feels that she lost her track a bit with finding inspiration for her design work. With meditation techniques she likes to bring up moments when she visited her father's atelier and played with bits and bobs she found there. Her body extensions serve as a reminder. Picture 2: by attaching spikes ending in colorful tips to ring like extensions, she can wear them easily. The feature she liked the most of her original creation was that she can leave a colorful mark behind remaining existing in the body extension element. Picture 3: she added flowers at first place. Though the story behind it was not relevant to her, she felt a strong connection to her idea of playfulness, childhood memories and finding new inspiration for her work. (Image 1. provided by the Participant, Image 2. and 3. by the author)



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Unfortunately I did not have the chance to complete such a feedback round with all the participants, before I finished with the production of the final fifteen elements, I could get back to two people in total. With them, the outcome was similar. People were focusing more on how they can find meaning in the elements for themselves. I sent an email or text to all the participants though to confirm that they feel comfortable that I share anonymously and briefly their stories behind the creations. I got positive reinforcement so I decided to do a virtual share round once I finish the production. Meaning that I take pictures of the final elements and share with the community.



The final elements that I presented to the final meeting with the participants. On purpose, did not highlight their own creations so that they go through the final elements. In the final feedback round, the three participants I could visit to see their reactions on the final collection, all were curious to see what others created and what they did with their designs. (image by the author)

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Working with the 3D pen

When I originally envisioned my final artefact, I planned to 3D-scan the body parts of my models. I wanted to design the artefacts in a 3D software and 3D-print them. My idea was to marry the makeup craftsmanship and mask application with digital fabrication. To alter a body with traditional techniques, the first step is creating moulds and filling them with traditional materials like silicone or latex to achieve the final piece that will be mounted on the skin with different kinds of adhesives. I wanted to replace the mould with the scanned body part of the models. It could provide the canvas for creating body extensions in a 3D virtual environment. I hoped to come up with solutions without or very little need for adhesives.

Social distancing and the closure of the university made me look for other available options. Therefore my design process took a different direction along the way. Both the Covid-19 circumstances and the developed method for working together with the participants led me to a different solution. The co-creation sessions involved working with classical crafty materials that everyone is familiar with. Therefore it made more sense to embrace a low-tech method for the artefact production while preserving the essence of the participants' prototypes.

With the limited access to the university facilities,

I did a material experiment with laser cutting. I used a training doll head as a model and created prototypes in Illustrator. Despite my careful attempts to map the shape of the doll, the 2D translation ended up a misfitted and fragile prototype. I decided to give up the full digitally fabricated approach for the body extension production.

Following the defined principle for the participants, I worked with what I had and used a tool at hand: a 3D pen. While tapping into 3D technologies a few years back, I was fascinated by the 3Doodler, one of the first 3D pens on the market. I worked with it for years before I ordered my own Maker Factory 3D pen, to do experiments for a university project. I considered it as a found-at-home material, underlining my "work with what you've got" principle. First, I experimented on my own sketches from my diary to see whether the 3D pen fits my project. Although I had some difficulties and constraints with the pen, I liked the aesthetics of the prototype. The creation process put me in the state of flow. The result somehow embodied both the crafty and tech approach that I was looking for.

What also gave me confidence in using the 3D pen is research focusing on artists and designers using it as a main tool to create their artwork. Most 3D pen manufacturers also build communities, educating and inspiring their users. I came across an interesting report of Sophia Björkman's delicate jewelry pieces made entirely using 3D pen and PLA filament. I was

impressed by her collection named Garden, which featured detailed flower and plant elements. Grace du Perez apart from doing jewelry creates statement design objects such as lamps and glasses using 3Doodler. Her portfolio includes also teaching the techniques and joy of creating with a 3D pen. Rachel Goldsmith integrated working with 3D pen into her art by combining it with canvas. She uses the colorful filaments to create three dimensional artwork that can be interpreted both as paintings and sculptures. The aesthetics of the artefacts by these few artists caught my attention and inspired me to commit to the 3D pen.

As I left for myself relatively short time for producing the body extensions, I did not look for other methods for execution, I fully focused on bringing out the best from the 3D pen. In the following paragraphs, I would like to share my experience working with it.

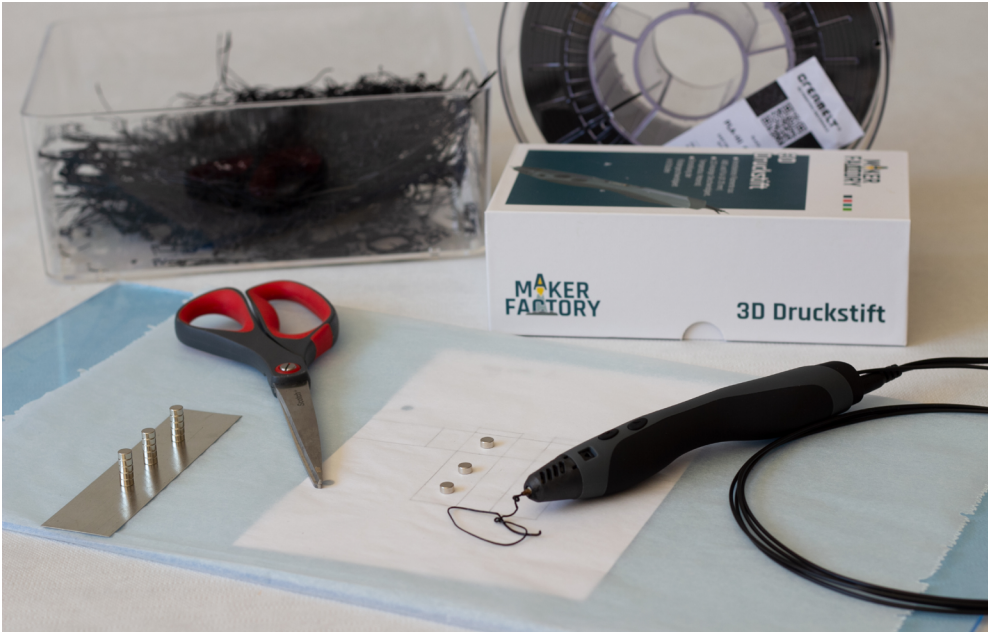
So, what is a 3D pen exactly? It is a handheld gadget that allows people to make three dimensional creations out of plastic. The device melts the plastic filaments to their melting point. The molten plastic then is suitable to draw shapes either on a flat surface, or with some skills even in the air. The first 3D pens appeared shortly after the launch of consumer targeted desktop 3D printers. They are often associated with children's toys, and at first most people mention a hot glue gun as the closest gadget they can think of. It is true, that the first 3D pens were create with a child user in mind, they included, and still include lots of safety features as the melting point of the used plastic filaments are typically 180 to 220 degrees Celsius warm and though they

are well insulated in the body of the 3D pen, there are some parts that are exposed to the user. The reason why there is still a legacy for 3D pens on the market, is that they make a perfect bridge between "low" tech, manual creation and "high" tech digital fabrication. The core technology that the 3D pen uses and shares with the 3D desktop printers, is the FDM, fused deposition modelling technology that makes the 3D pens a good enough alternative in some applications. What differentiates the 3D pen from the 3D printer though is that it does not require from the user the skills of using 3D modelling softwares and there is a result, a creation in way less time. But working with a 3D pen do require patience and endurance, also the ability to plan the execution of the desired piece.

There are two main approaches that one can create: drawing parts on a flat surface and then bringing together the parts so that they form a three dimensional model. The other approach that requires experience with the 3D pen is to draw in the air. Some models, like mine, have a latency between pressing the "stop extruding the filament" button and when the cogwheels stop working and the nozzle of the 3D pen cools down a few Celsius degrees. Luckily, there are many tutorials available provided by manufacturers, enthusiasts and artists that help to make the first steps. In my final artefacts, I wanted to combine both approaches.

My working setup ended up relatively simple. The key components are the Maker Factory 3D pen itself and the 1.75 diameter PLA filament manufactured by Creameelt. A pair of scissors is also a must have item to cut off unnecessary parts from the creations

or remove excess melted filament from the top of the nozzle of the 3D pen. As a base, I used a plexiglass and covered it with standard baking paper. I have seen this trick in a tutorial I found online and proved to be a good choice to go with it. Though PLA does not stick to normal copy paper, it can easily erase pencil sketches that I had of each element. Baking paper has the same quality, it is even safer due to its heat resistant quality. Plus it is see through so I could easily place my sketches underneath the thin layer and could follow my lines without any problem. I also used a box to collect waste, as it can be recycled into new rolls of filament. (image by the author)



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Let me share with you my experience briefly about working with the Maker Factory 3D pen. When I bought it, I checked the price-quality ratio of a web shop that offered a wider range of 3D pens and promised fast shipping as I needed the gadget relatively fast. What made me decide for it is the possibility of using regular 1.75 diameter filament, meaning that I could buy a whole roll of filament and didn't need to go for a custom sized and manufactured PLA filament. Also, taking a look at the tutorials seemed easy to use, and the user feedback confirmed this promise. What I personally like about it is that it is ergonomic, the buttons are easy to reach if it is held as a normal pen. The amount of plastic that it lets through the nozzle can also be adjusted, so thin layers can be laid for delicate pieces and thicker ones allow it to work a bit faster. What is a bit disturbing is that it cannot be changed after pushing the extruding button. What I struggled the most with throughout the production process, is the safety features of the pen that cannot be adjusted or turned off. These include that after 5 minutes of active use, so not pushing the stop extruding button for 5 minutes, the pen automatically reduces the heat that stops the cogwheels and for 2 minutes the pen cannot be used. It is quite an issue during the production of larger pieces as the connection of the already cooled down plastic and the newly laid down part can end up being fragile. The other safety feature that forces the user for a pause is that after 2 minutes of not using the pen, so not pushing the extruding button for 2 minutes automatically puts the pen into sleep mode, meaning that the nozzle and the tube starts to cool down drastically. In just about 2-3 minutes it falls to almost zero, and to reach again the melting point of the PLA takes another 2-3 minutes. What does it mean for the workflow? Let's say I want to switch between my sketches, or taking a measurement that would take a few seconds more than the safety time, I have to wait again to be able to use the pen quite a bit. Overall it is a great pen for beginners, to try out how it works but it would have been wiser from me to go with a new one for the production.

After evaluating the creations of the participants, I wanted to have a bit of variety and break somehow the rigidness of the plastic and combine with different structures. I wanted to embody the ambiguity of the feelings that the participants shared with me, also how they combined hard and soft materials, ingredients that formed the base of their creations and decorative elements that added extra layers of meaning to their body extensions. Therefore I started to look for materials that could be combined. I took some plexiglass parts that I cut previously and different types of textile. Plexiglass, though gave a nice surface, it did not attach perfectly with the PLA filament, in addition it gave the feeling that the precisely cut parts demoted the drawn parts to be seen as some sort of adhesives.

What was a definitively better solution is the combination with textile. I was looking for fabrics that are thin enough to soak in the melted plastic. I started my experiments by cutting up tights as the method of 3D printing on this type of fabric was shown in a class during our BA studies. How I approached is stretching out the fabric on my plexiglass surface in fibre direction and vice versa as well to see how the applied thin layer of plastic will manipulate the fabric. I bought more types of tights that are containing different proportions of natural yarn (eg. cotton) and plastic threads (eg. lycra), also thinner and thicker models. What worked best out of the possible combinations is tights with a DEN number around 20 and 30, more from the thin side of the scale, that contain more natural compo-

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nents. As the nozzle has to be very close, less than approximately 3 mm from the fabric in order to get soaked in, fabrics which have more plastic in them easily burn, resulting in small holes. If the nozzle is kept a bit higher, the plastic cools down and does not get soaked into the material properly resulting in partial detachment. Though some experiments had a positive result, the final touches of removing the access fabric made the overall outcome not as polished as I wanted to be. Cutting off the fabric ended up being the hardest task, especially with smaller, delicate pieces. As described beforehand, I laid down 3 layers maximum, just enough to let the plastic soaked in the fabric. If I cut too close to the plastic, I sometimes hit the layers themselves and broke the border a bit or the plastic separated from the fabric. If I kept a safe distance, the edges ended up being rough.

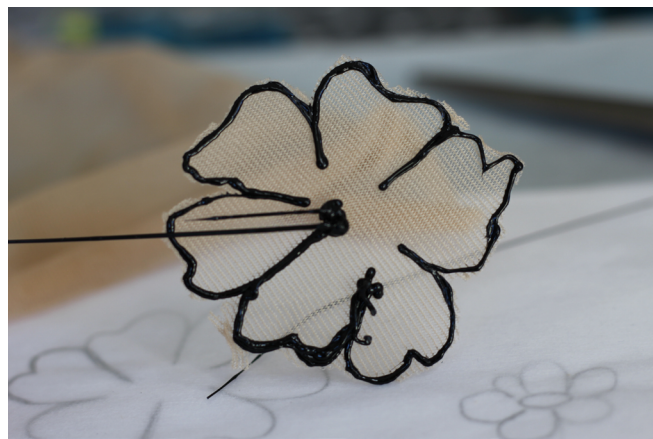
To save this, I tried to carefully lay down a thin coat on the edges so the extra textile part would be covered and integrated into the plastic. This often resulted in remelting the shape causing distortion in the shape. I decided not to go with the lycra-cotton blend after a few tries.

My second fabric choice was mesh and fine tulle fabrics. I started with left-over pieces of mosquito net that we applied earlier on the windows. Though I hav-

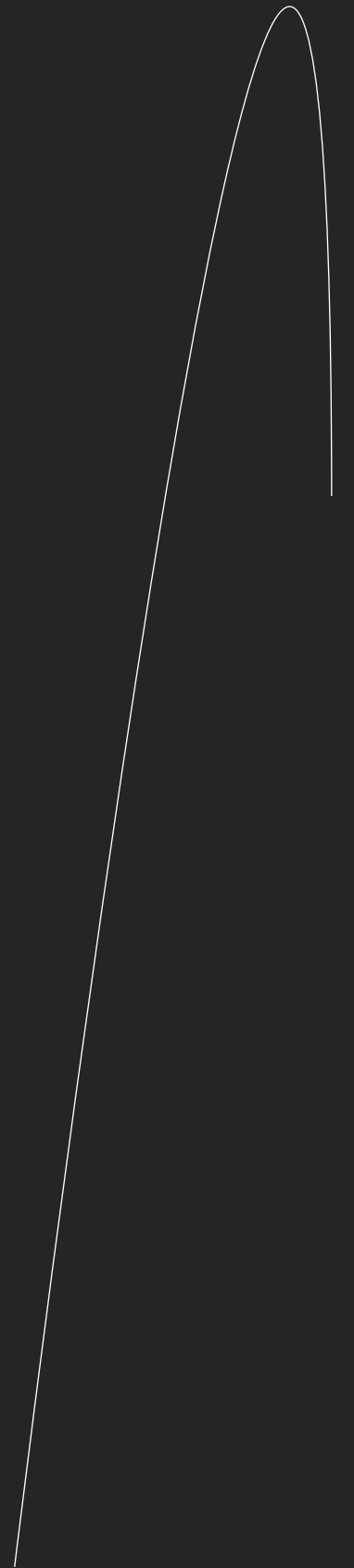
en't found the exact composition of the material, just by touch I felt it is a rigid fabric that contains mostly plastic. It felt more like plastic, then textile to be precise. I also opted it out after a few tries, as the filament could be easily separated from the mesh itself. Also, the rigid mesh guided the flow of the plastic quite a bit, filling the gaps between two threads making curvy shapes look as they were rectangular, somewhat like pixelated.

Tulle ended up the best option. The ones I had had very little elasticity so opposed to the tight fabric, it could not be stretched out that much, just enough to slightly get deformed by the layers of plastic. The structure of the tulle from close up is a mesh of hexagons that allowed me to carefully form curvy structures. I still had to pay attention to work at a slower speed closer to the surface of the fabric. By sticking to this principle, the plastic melted beautifully into the fabric, even when I applied only 2 thin layers. So I ended up using tulle, mostly in colour black to keep a monochrome look and pink in a very few elements.





In order to break the monotony of the 3D pen, I did experiments to see how different materials could be incorporated. The plexi glass gave a very rigid look and made the filament look like some sort of adhesive, not as the main component of the creation. Plastic blend insect mash did not soak in the melted PLA filament, the form got easily detached from its surface. The different lycra tight fabric blends soaked in the PLA but was difficult to cut off the edges, also some blends burnt easily, leaving small holes on the fabric. The best way to go was with the tulle. This fine mesh fabric incorporated well with the melted PLA and gave a somewhat softer look. I used it with elements that had reference from nature, also for practical reasons for larger pieces. (images by the author)



Lessons Learned during the Process

The design process of my Bachelor project taught me and reminded me of plenty of lessons. Though I am happy with the result, I am aware that the road that took me here could have been different.

At the beginning I kept my research field open, that made for me to find a clear path and commit to a certain, better defined direction. It resulted in diving into the design process later than I should have. I also defined parameters for myself that I hoped to be helpful. These included creating body extensions for the face solely, using 3D scanning and 3D printing as fabrication methods. Sticking to these gave me less flexibility and freedom of thinking outside of these restrictions. Luckily giving them up at the relevant point of the design process was not a hard decision and didn't hold me back.

Time management and lack of having a step by step breakdown also made my progress uneven, sometimes circulating around the same problematic.

Looking back at the moments of making decisions, I also struggled with making definite, instant choices. I often left ends open and let myself float in-between options. This resulted in not saving up enough time for the production of the final artefacts, leaving less options to experiment with materials.

As the participants have become the most decisive element of the project, it is important for me to reflect on the communication with them. The participants of the first round interviews and joint works were mostly close friends and acquaintances, also a very few people who were completely unknown to me. For myself, I justified this decision in such a way that those close to me will be more tolerant if the session does not go smoothly, I am uncertain and will give honest feedback so that I can further develop the method. Although both of my arguments hold up, reflecting on the process, I see that the real reason was that I didn't dare to take on the role of coach / therapist with confidence. Conducting the process of co-creation has not

been a problem, I can lure the creator out of people who profess to be non-creative. However, co-creation is preceded by the exploration of emotions and mental states, which is not part of the "job description" of a designer, especially not a design student. It was a big challenge for me to feel comfortable in this role so that I could listen to people, listen to them, and reflect on what they were saying, even if I didn't necessarily have an official document about it. Although during user tests it is essential that a designer understands and feels the thoughts and feelings of the interviewee, if the interest is focused on a specific problem area or product. In the exercise I came up with, emotions are key and bringing these to the surface requires other types of skills.

Apart from the mistakes that I now see retrospectively, I am more proud of how I handled challenges and difficulties that came along the way. I treated them as opportunities to the benefit of my project. Instead of thinking of them as problems to be solved, I tried to incorporate them into my design process.

The most important aspect was the circumstances brought by Corona Pandemic. The rapid spread of the corona virus and related governmental decisions have changed the foundations of the diploma process. I had to contact and keep in touch with the external actors of the project, my interviewees and co-creators online. I originally calculated with having a few interviews and co-creation sessions online, I optimized my exercise so that it is adaptable for video chats but it was my secondary option.

As my project targets the human body and working with feelings and emotions I wanted to organise face-to-face sessions. Sitting at the same table with the participants, being able to read their body language to get a full picture of how they feel during the discussion would have made a difference. I did the exercise with my husband in a face-to-face setup and putting aside the closeness of the relationship we have, I felt more confident guiding him as being able to observe all his reactions not only a part of his body seen normally in a video chat helped me to see how deep questions I can ask, how much I can push him to take the next steps in creations. Though the online sessions did not leave this room of observation to me, I was looking for techniques to improve myself in creating an ambience in the virtual space to make people feel safe and

I have detailed my difficulties with the 3D pen, my fabrication method in the relevant chapter, so I do not want to repeat myself here. Only a few additions now that I have closed my creation process. Looking through the final design and having the ability to share it with some participants, I am happy that I went for this technique. The aesthetics are though not as polished as I had envisioned at the beginning, still visually appealing. Also, they embody the crafty character of

comfortable sharing their emotions and stories with me. Reaching to outer help in the person of a grief counselor also gave me valuable learning experience that I not only could use in this specific project, but I am sure will affect my future work, especially my approach in making user interviews.

the co-creation sessions. The only thing that came up when participants tried on the pieces there were fitting issues that affect the wearability aspect. As I used my own measurements as a base for the creation, there are some sizes, for instance the finger ring that is too big for some people. This is an aspect I would definitely work on.

Conclusion

Possible Future Developments

When I started to think about my bachelor project, I had the idea of creating something that I do not only for the sake of fulfilling the study program, but something that I could develop further on a longer run. The general topic of body modification, the possibilities of re-designing the human body upon certain parameters and “what if” questions interests me both as a makeup artist and interaction designer. Combining this interest with self expression was still a broad research field and had many possible opportunities to choose from at the beginning.

Going for a very user centred, almost psychological approach allowed me

to gain experience with working with feelings, emotions and personal stories. This is something I did not consider at the beginning of the design process. The most exciting part of the whole semester for me was reaching out and talking to people, listening to them and understanding their state of mind and how they translate their feelings into crafted objects. What gave another interesting aspect to the project was the sudden change of everyday life caused by Covid-19. I started to conduct the interviews and organise co-creation sessions after lockdown and in many discussions feelings brought up by this special situation came up. Therefore, the elements that I created, are not only representing the participants, their feelings but they are also imprints of this special time.

One possible way to keep the project live would be to do rounds of co-creation sessions on a regular basis, most likely yearly. It would give the opportunity to see how different feelings would be brought up by the participants in different circumstances. The comparison would be even more interesting if apart from new participants, ones who already did the co-creation sessions with me took part. During the follow up discussions several participants mentioned they would be interested in re-doing the session, either guided by me or using the written material. This is how the individuals could get a picture of how they change, how they reflect on themselves and how they are able to express their feelings in different ways.

From the technical perspective, I would also continue experimenting with materials. To choose a different fabrication method to the pieces would bring

another interesting approach to the project. As many webshops had low supplies lacking resupply due to the lockdown of borders, my ordered elastic PLA filament blend has just arrived. In the wrong color. I had time only to do a very few and quick experiments but they already showed that the elasticity already solves some wearability and size fitting issues.

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3Doodler Learning Platform:
<https://learn.the3doodler.com/getting-started/hottips/> (accessed: 15 May 2020)

Ana Rajevic. Artist Website:
<http://anarajcevic.com/> (accessed: 11 March 2020)

Burcu Büyükünäl. Project Blog Entry:
<https://burcubuyukunal.wordpress.com/2008/09/20/terrifying-beauty/> (accessed: 11 March 2020)

Grace du Perez. Artist Website:
<http://www.graceduprez.co.uk/> (accessed: 15 May 2020)

Imme van der Haak. Artist Website:
<https://www.immevanderhaak.nl/> (accessed: 11 March 2020)

Jennifer Crupi. Artist Website:
<https://www.jennifercrupi.com/> (accessed: 11 March 2020)

Pen and Plastic. Blog:
<https://penandplastic.com/3d-art-blog/> (accessed: 15 May 2020)

Rachel Goldsmith. Artist Website:
<https://rachelgoldsmith.com/> (accessed: 15 May 2020)

Sofia Björkman. Artist Website:
<https://www.sofiabjorkman.se/> (accessed: 15 May 2020)

Books

Hofstadter, Albert; Kuhns, Richard ed. (1976). *Philosophies of Art and Beauty: Selected Readings in Aesthetics from Plato to Heidegger*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Wegenstein, Bernadette (2012) *The Cosmetic Gaze : Body Modification and the Construction of Beauty*. Cambridge, Mass. :MIT Press Ltd.

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Lynch, Megan Suzanne (2007) An exploration of the relationship between personal ideal(s) of female beauty, self perception(s) of female beauty, and self esteem in women. Masters Thesis, Smith College, Northampton, MA. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f859/1e7ed5fd8709e2debc7a65bb32cef3e6692d.pdf?_ga=2.53430952.1242431012.1576148989-834382647.1576148989 (accessed: 29 November 2019)

Sweetman, Paul (1999). Anchoring the (Postmodern) Self Body Modification, Fashion and Identity. In. *Body & Society*, 5(2-3), 51–76. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1357034X99005002004?casa_token=-waYXbGAcDcgAAAAA:ZyDKIWKPwcdsHsAn96rHnquyvTH5QtHrV-XB5pKVHP1Y-c3H8LLd9DKXohuv2PKVHjxe03QvVI-8 (accessed: 14 February 2020)

Booklet for the workshop

I gave the title “Express yourself - A me time activity” to make it attractive to people. At first, I went with simply “Create your body extension. A diploma project.” but that brought only a very few clicks and downloads.

Hello and welcome.

If you are reading these lines now, you have decided to spend half an hour today and in the near future to engage with yourself. This session was designed to wrap your thoughts around self-expression. What **self-expression** means to you, how you **embody and display your emotions on your body**. This small guide meant to help you to think through various aspects of how you feel about yourself at the moment.

To manifest your thoughts and feelings, you'll **create a small body extension, an accessory that represents your current state of mind.**

To keep the ”me time session” running smoothly, here’s a little help on how to prepare and what tools to gather around you.

First, **choose a place** where you can sit **comfortably**, a place which you find cozy and relaxing and no one is disturbing you for the time. If it helps, put in some soft music, light a candle or turn on some ambient light.

What you will need:

- A mirror

It is most convenient to place a small hand mirror close to you, but you can either be in front of the wardrobe mirror or look in front of the hallway mirror.

-Raw materials for creation

Gather your own supplies, go around the apartment and collect things that are out of use. Important is that you don't buy anything new for the sake of the session. Try to find **materials that are out of use at the moment**, they are lying around, this is a perfect opportunity to give them a second life.

- **Binders:** anything that can hold parts together, scotch tape, school glue, cords, twines, clips etc.

- **Coloring tools:** as colors mean a lot to us usually, please grab color pencils, markers, paints or even out of use nailpolish. If you don't have any of those, grab some magazines, flyers or leaflets, we can use colorful sites to illustrate your wished color.

- **“Building blocks”:** I mean materials that will give the body of the creation. The easiest material to find is paper. It can be an old shopping bag, newsletter that you went through, pages of magazines you've already read or even the cardboard box of your last order. You can also pick up a few other items that inspire you in a way. It can be a natural element like a rock or a seashell, or a piece of textile that you won't use anymore. It is important not to buy anything new for the sake of creation.

Make sure to have everything on you when you start the session.

If you are now sitting comfortably with a mirror and your collected items, you are ready to start.

Now that you're in a comfortable position, close your eyes for a few minutes, **take a deep breath and let go of your thoughts, problems, tasks**. Pay more attention to your body, try to engage all your body parts from head to toe.

Look in the mirror, try to articulate **who you see**. How is the person you see now? Move around a bit, look at your reflection from different angles. List a few qualities, details you notice, let it be a tiny freckle, a wrinkle that you only see as you move, articulate how you feel seeing yourself looking back from the mirror.

Close your eyes again. Look inside yourself and ask again, "who do I see, how is who I see?". Try to characterize her/him as well. What is she/he like? How does she/he feel? What motivates her/him? What is she/he going through at the moment?

Now you're looking at your reflection again. Examine the difference between what you see and what you just saw. How is your inner self related to how you look? How do you feel about the way you see yourself?

Articulate who you are from the inside, how do you feel about yourself and now let it out, say it out whispering or even loud for yourself.

Imagine your body as a foundation, a solid foundation that you are building on.

Look in the mirror again and find the point on your face which represents the most of how you feel. Take some time to find it. Is it on your eyes? Is it on your ears? Your nose maybe?

Take some time to observe it, and think about why you chose this particular body part, what makes it special and inspiring to you.

Now reach out to your collected materials.

It is time to create your body extension.

Try to channel your current feelings and emotions that you just brought up in the past minutes into the materials. Browse among the items until you find one that reveals something from your inner self. Be it joy, contentment, sorrow or uncertainty. Search until there is an object that can express this. Keep going. What else did you see? Hope or concern? Have you seen a memory of yourself in a past situation? What color represents the best of these feelings for you? Keep going, look back in the mirror again and again, close your eyes and let your feelings lead you.

Once you are connected with the materials, find the body part that is the most suitable as a base. It can be a significant body part to you, or one that represents the best the feelings you just brought up.

When you decide on your body part, start building. Look carefully at your body part. Articulate how it relates to your feelings. Try to imagine how it could be formed with the materials that it truly expressing your emotions..

Build on, find the shape or color that expresses YOU. You, your feelings and emotions.

Keep going until you see yourself in the mirror with your creation as you saw yourself with your eyes closed.

When you have finished the construction, move away all the unnecessary material.

Now that you're done, look in the mirror again. Move around a little. Tell now who do you see?

How has your image changed? How does creation change the way you see yourself? How will others see you wearing your creation? How do you want them to see you?

Take some time wearing your creation, embrace how you see yourself with it. Embrace all the emotions and feelings that it represents as they are YOU. These emotions truly form you. Let these emotions be seen from time to time.

With the help of this written guide, you can repeat this session anytime you wish or you feel a need for it :)

If you are finished with the session, please take a photo of your creation and another image you are wearing and send it to me. You can compose a frame where you are not totally seen in the picture, it can be a close up of your body part and the creation. What is important, is that the relation of you body and the creation is clearly seen.

Feel free to repeat the exercise whenever you feel a need for it.

I wish you all the best,

Adrienn