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Body – Object – Intersections
Reflective Documentation



**Sensual Instruments &
Performative Processes:**
Relations and Interactions
between Body and Object

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Sensual Instruments & Performative Processes: Relations and Interactions between Body and Object

A reflective documentation, submitted as part
of the thesis “Body – Object - Intersections” by

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Reflective Documentation:

Sensual Instruments and
Performative Processes:
Relations and Interactions
between Body and Object

I hereby declare,

that I have independently written/produced this reflective documentation of my thesis in accordance with the principles of good scientific practice and have not used any sources and aids other than those indicated, and that this reflective documentation has not yet been submitted in any form for evaluation, neither in Austria nor abroad.

Date

Signature

Abstract

EN

As part of my artistic research, Body – Object – Intersections, this reflective documentation deals with the relations and interactions between body and object in a selection of my artworks. All of the works included here combine the body plus an object in a performative moment; however, as the objects are specifically fitted to the artist's body, they can only be fully sensed by the artist herself. The works here are described and categorized according to my *BOIS Method*, the *Body – Object – Intersection Scan*. Here, how the works were performed, how it felt to be in touch with the object, and what was learned in these practice-based projects are described. These discoveries are further transformed into new works, what I call *Sensual Instruments* and *Performative Processes*.

The *Sensual Instruments* are usable, sculptural works that result from the research. For example, *Little Friend*, a hybrid including the gymnastics aid, a vaulting buck, is used for trying out backbends; and *A* – a mix between a movable seesaw and a metronome – can be used to feel how one's interaction with it can impact a more complex system.

The *Performative Processes* are exemplary workshop sessions – the *Phantom Lab* and the *Body-Object-Intersection Labs* – that have developed in line with the question of how it feels to be in touch with the works. These instruments and processes aim to spark curiosity and to invite anyone who is interested to feel these sensory experiences for themselves.

DE

Diese reflexive Dokumentation ist Teil meiner künstlerischen Forschung zu Objekt-Körper-Schnittstellen und untersucht die Beziehungen und Interaktionen zwischen Körper und Objekt an einer Auswahl meiner Kunstwerke. Jede hier behandelte Arbeit verbindet Körper und Objekt in einer performativen Situation. Da die Objekte auf den Körper der Künstlerin zugeschnitten sind, können sie nur von ihr vollständig erfasst und wahrgenommen werden. Die Arbeiten sind entsprechend der *BOIS-Methode*, dem *Body – Object – Intersection Scan*, dem *Körper – Objekt – Schnittstellen Scan* beschrieben und kategorisiert. Anhand dieser Methode werden die Arbeiten beschrieben: wie sie performt werden, wie es sich anfühlt, mit dem Objekt in Verbindung zu sein und was aus den praxisbasierten Projekten gelernt werden kann. Diese Entdeckungen werden darüber hinaus in neue Arbeiten übersetzt, welche ich *sinnliche Instrumente* und *performative Prozesse* nenne.

Die *sinnlichen Instrumente* sind nutzbare skulpturale Arbeiten, die aus der Forschung resultieren: *Little Friend* ist eine hybride Skulptur, die aus einem Springbock und einer Sprossenwand, besteht. Sie kann für Rückbeugen verwendet werden. Das *A* ist eine Mischung aus einer Schaukel und einem Metronom. Das Werk ermöglicht es, sich als gemeinsamen Körper innerhalb eines komplexen Systems zu erleben.

Die *performativen Prozesse* sind beispielhafte Workshops: Das *Phantom Lab* und das *Body-Object-Intersection Lab* arbeiten an der Schnittstelle zwischen Körper und Objekt. Hier werden in unterschiedlichen Settings die Fragestellung untersucht, wie es sich anfühlt in Berührung mit Objekten, die den Körper ergänzen oder erweitern zu sein.

Diese Instrumente und Prozesse zielen darauf ab, Neugierde zu wecken, und es allen Interessierten zu ermöglichen, diese sinnlichen Erfahrungen selbst zu machen.

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Introduction

This document of artistic research is concerned with what I call body-object intersections, and is based on some of the art works I have created over the past ten years (as can be seen in the monograph *Barbis Ruder: Work – Cycle – Body*¹). It is rooted in the relations that are brought about when certain actions (*Performative Processes*) interact with certain objects (*Sensual Instruments*). It is my objective to make the findings of my research accessible to others by looking at the connections and interactions that are brought about by the body and some objects.

We are constantly in touch with objects, especially instruments and tools, many of which are ergonomically designed to complement our bodies. What happens when we regard such objects from an aesthetic perspective, or when this connection realizes itself in concrete artistic processes and manifestations? Enhancing my own body with objects allows me to strengthen my own sense of agency (*Haltung*); my works aim further to empower my audience either when they see them in the situation of a performance or are enabled to touch or to try out the objects themselves. When body and object are one, there are different laws of nature at work, and one needs to readjust one's senses accordingly.

In comparison to third-order systems in scientific research, my artistic research derives from both my own personal development and processes that are then transformed into general aesthetic findings. In order to describe these circumstances, this chapter first sketches out the personal preconditions that have been a driving force behind my work and then looks into the general set-up, scope and focus of “being in touch.”

▷ **Personal Preconditions: Owning the body**

I grew up in the sexist and misogynous environment of the 1990s and 2000s. It was a time when women and girls were objectified and devalued if they did not fulfil the idealized skinny female body image, the “anorexic look.” This was an experience that I share with many women of my generation. We grew up believing that we each had an imperfect body that was negatively judged by all. Personally, this belief was amplified by the fact that my family moved house four times as I was growing up. These abrupt changes of environment – and feeling like a stranger in each new place – lead to many (but not only) unpleasant experiences and resulted in me feeling even more insecure. The rather unhealthy messages of those times were fed into my personal surroundings, in school and in the media, and lead to my belief that I could only be happy and “whole” if I met all of their external demands.

It has been a journey to own my own body and to overcome those preconditions. Even though I now am intellectually aware of my position and possibilities, I did not then have the skills, at all levels, to let go of those old beliefs.

For this reason, I made art that dealt with the specific issues. It was a struggle to become the person that I actually was and am. It was also a fight to become an artist – the only thing about myself I was always sure of. It took a detour of about ten years before I was able to become an artist. After failing entrance exams to study music, I co-ran a self-governing art and culture center and studied arts management. While continuing to deal with self-confidence issues and not being able to find a job (even though I was well-aware of my qualifications), I took the leap of following my heart and was lucky to be accepted in an arts study program. Here, and through art, I could continue my journey to finding my own voice and owning my body.

The roots of this journey lay in my true love, which had always been music, specifically, working

1 Madeleine Frey et al., *Barbis Ruder: Werk - Zyklus - Körper / Work – Cycle – Body*, ed. Madeleine Frey, Edition Angewandte (De Gruyter, 2023).

with an instrument (violin), and my voice. During this time I spent many nights dancing in clubs; I also took part in sports, especially cycling and rowing, where the bike or the boat are instruments extending the body. I also began to practice yoga and other somatic dance practices.

Now, I can say that I own my body and can use it as the instrument of my work: I know how to both be present and to know and own my own power. Thanks to my art practice experience I know that my works have the power to transform and empower myself.

In the past ten-plus years, I have had to negotiate among states of artistic chaos and fiction in relation to the real. “Reality” can become artistic reality, and I accept its boundaries:

- ▷ Most of the performative works use both the human body and the artificial “corporate (capitalist, economic) body,” and combine them with harshness, softness and a degree of humor.
- ▷ The artworks and objects are mostly created in negotiation between the body and the boundaries of the possible

The process of creation and the process of being (in) the work have been the focus of my practice. Thus, the body is the center of my current practice, and I use the study of the body as the core of my research. This direct aesthetic experience of a body is difficult to describe and almost requires its own language. The body speaks as its own medium. It does not need to talk actively to transmit a message. It contains a lived experience that can be described as a practice of heightened consciousness.

When showing my work, I often hear viewers ask, “What does it feel like to be in the work?” I have wondered how insights gained from entering yet unknown artistic bodily situations can be translated and made visible to others. I have realized that there is a need for documentation and translation of the sensory aspects of my work, and to make the

work and my findings accessible to others. In order to do so, it is important to me to make those insights and findings relatable, to make them “come alive.”

▷ **Relation: To be in touch**

To be in touch with objects is something intuitive. Humans are accustomed to being in touch with objects and tools that are ergonomically designed to be used and as such become “extensions” of the body, such as cars and bicycles, sports and kitchen equipment, and so on. We subconsciously learn to use and to “become one” with the objects or tools. It may take a little time, but in this there is a sense of bodily expansion. I look at this from an artistic perspective: when body and object become one, different laws of nature are at work. I look at the relations and interactions and the rules that apply in each situation. From these findings, I want to formulate situations that will offer viewers an opportunity to become more sensual and calibrated in their approach towards the world.

The body and its connection with objects form the scope of this research. It focuses on knowledge of the body in its functions and its boundaries, the body’s functionality in connection with objects (as well as my “sculptures”), and their points of intersection as translators and connectors to the living organism.

▷ **Aesthetics: How does it feel to be in this work?**

Artworks draw the viewer into another world. They appeal to the viewer, they want to be touched. They provoke and attract us on unconscious and sensory levels. An artwork may possess a tension or contain a riddle that may not be immediately understood. The attraction may lead to a relation that the viewer makes with the artwork, but can also lead to the viewer wanting to touch the work. And here the viewer will be disappointed: even if there is not a “Do not touch” sign, cultural codes prevent the impulse.

Even further, when a human body is involved as part of an artwork, the impression of an offer of easy and appealing access increases. This low threshold makes it easier for the viewer to empathize or relate with the artist. It is not only the sensation of wanting to be in touch with something appealing (in a kind of “mirror-neuron” effect) that comes into play, but to come into connection with something unusual – such as an artwork – awakens curiosity and the desire to play.

My artworks are not only for people who are already interested in the arts. Through the activated body and the relatedness this situation creates, I hope to spark curiosity in people who might not be interested in art as such or might not feel “well-educated” enough to approach artworks. I wish to lower the barrier of what it is that makes people curious and to enable viewers to take their own positions or standpoints in regard to what they see. Only when they feel like a subject in control of their own opinions and views can they be empowered to take a stance and speak up. This is what a good work of art means to me: one that ignites a fire and opens up room for interpretation, conversation and constructive argument. I aim for this by creating works that offer an invitation and by creating a moment of play by taking something common and making it somehow “unusual,” not exactly what one knows or thought one knew – but something now different that is being used or can even be experienced.

Ideally, there should be a reaction to the perceived information in which conclusions might be drawn, but then there comes a moment that is beyond strategy, a moment of intuition. “How can I get in touch with this work?” In many cases there is a default protocol for the user, a disappointing moment of “do not touch.” This is the case with the objects and fitted sculptures I use in my research/performances: they do not fit anyone’s body but my own.

This is why the main challenge lies not only in dealing with the complexity of the problem of making these – my, direct – experiences available to the viewer, but also how knowledge from artistic and somatic areas can be represented, combined and categorized in a way that provides insights for others. The answers can only come from the performance of the action and one’s memory of that action. It requires the transference of the personal and artistic position to a visual and descriptive level, one that can offer a comprehensive and artistic outlook and findings (the discoveries that are made during workshops and performances). Moreover, new objects and relatable processes are necessary in order to make the findings accessible to others. They become manifest in the descriptions of the non-replicable situations, the objects in the form of *Sensual Instruments*, and their use in the scope of *Performative Processes*.

1. Framework

This personal reflective documentation is an appendix as well as an artistic take on the objects that complement the body (as, again, seen in the monograph *Work – Cycle – Body*). To narrow down the “body of work” dealt with here, I focus on those pieces that particularly deal with the connection of the body with the outside world – how it can be limited, and how it can be enhanced. I describe the knowledge practiced and realized in time that has been created from a subjective place – within myself – and from my body’s both being the work itself and being with the work (objects).

Further, I will focus on tangible levels and look at the living interface between body and object. They are transformed into drawings and language that tell one truth. The practical knowledge gained is translated into a scheme, a visualized experience that is put into words. The goal is to make the findings empathically sensible and accessible for others – to create a transfer of knowledge for an empowered bodily experience to be felt by others and applied to other bodies.

Even though I look most of the time at my own body in connection to artworks or props, I would like to narrow my terms down to simply body and object. This twist in language is made in order to neutralize the situation and in order to set the focus on the moment of touch and the forces that are put in place when making connections between the two. And besides, the work of art has to be taken down from its pedestal in order to create access and relation. This artistic research is not in the making of works, but in looking at being (with) the work, these co-joined body-object-bodies.

1.1. Posture / Haltung

Within the scope of my sculptural works and body-work, I explore the relationships and functionalities at the intersection between body and object. Many bodily sensations and phenomena that relate directly to the body are to be observed while using my sculptures. The aim is to transfer the experience by creating models and setting up new works based on knowledge gained from the process of creating and performing. One key factor in this process can be denoted by the German term *Haltung*. This noun describes a whole range of attributes: attitude, body posture, mind-set, moral level, and composure. As there is no single English equivalent for the term, I will use the German term here. *Haltung* (as it is used in the teaching of Brigitte Kowanz) also means to take on an artistic stance from a conceptual perspective that then determines the choice of medium. In functional anatomy *Haltung* means tonus. These many aspects represent both the term’s physical and psychological connotations.

It is essential to look at and understand our *Haltung* towards the body, complementing objects, and how we access our surroundings. *Haltung* is also an inner state, a precondition with which one encounters both others and objects, a sensing that is empathic and sensitive towards the world (or not). An attitude that complies with a given design, or that wants to break a code of conduct. *Haltung*, as in posture and attitude, is very personal and it defines the entire experience of being in touch with *Sensual Instruments* or partaking in *Performative Processes*.

1.2. Sensual Instrument

The *Sensual Instrument* is the object that the body comes in connection with.

In this paper I call the artworks that I refer to “objects” (and sometimes they are called “sculptures” or “installations”). The selection of the objects was done according to their epistemic value – what might be learned from them, what knowledge they generate – in connection to the research, and hence are sometimes also referred to as “epistemic artworks”. At a later stage of development, they will become – when appropriate – *Sensual Instruments*. These terms are chosen in order to point to a more neutral and then functional state of being that takes the aesthetic artwork as such down from its pedestal and turns it into something to use and to be in touch with on a sensory level.

The term *instrument* has been invented for the objects in use. When searching for the term online, one will find ranking lists of the most sensual musical instruments and songs that are accompanied by a cheesy saxophone solo. However, I use the term to frame the usable artworks I create. Like *Haltung*, the word “instrument” possesses a variety of meanings: it can be a tool, a medical instrument, a musical instrument, a device to measure and control analogue conditions (a ruler, a calculator), and be a part of market analytics. All of these nuances and meanings apply to my art works.

The term *sensual* is often limited to its erotic or carnal aspects. The sensual in my works embodies this resonance as an invitation to enter into relation with or even become intimate with and close to the object. This creates a sensual situation that incorporates an openness to play and explore. By adding a sensual aspect to the instrument, an ambiguous and soft approach towards the rather harsh technical term “object” creates a counter-aspect that results in a tension between the softness of a body and the materiality of an object.

1.3. Performative Process

The active and living part of the research is called *Performative Processes*. The first term denotes the act of doing something with or without an audience; it also implies the power that may lie within a performance. The term process refers to the undertaking of an act that manifests in its making and in its practice. The two together refer to the use of the body in connection with the objects. Hence, *Performative Processes* mirror the artistic work in practice and offer a tool for guidance when using the *Sensual Instruments*. This guidance is offered as an aid to consider when dealing with the limits and potentials between the body and the object. To negotiate these in the interaction between the two factors involved (body and object) is crucial and requires strong bodily presence so that the body is not exhausted nor does the object break.

14. Artistic References

One's own artistic practice is of course influenced by the work of others and is built upon ideas that have long developed over time. Often, when talking about the work and its connection to the extension of the body, there are many artists and scientists who deal with the optimization and extension of the body. The works of ORLAN and Stelarc are usually the first that come to mind. (ORLAN, who streamed the enhancement operations of her face, and Stelarc, who attached an extra ear to his arm.) However, prosthetics and extensions directly applied to or inserted into the body are not my focus. Also, many of my works include emancipatory, surrealistic and instrumental aspects. However too, the realm of cyber feminism and prosthetics is not the focus of this research.

Among many artists the most influential for me are Rebecca Horn, VALIE EXPORT and Franz West.

- ▷ *Körperkonfigurationen* (1972–1982) Body Configurations by VALIE EXPORT are performative images where the artist places her body in geometric form in relation to architecture.
- ▷ Rebecca Horn measures the outlines of the body from different perspectives in *Measure Box* (1970). Her *Finger Gloves* (1972) extend the fingers for a few meters so that she can touch the walls of a room while walking through its center; and *Weisser Körperfächer* (1972) is a “body fan” extending between the legs and arms and creating graphic lines and postures.
- ▷ *Paßstücke* (1980) by Franz West are adapters made out of plaster that are designed to complement the body. The artist wanted them to be used by his viewers. However, one is now only able to use replicas.

2. Method

My artistic research project is opposed to the idea of creating sterile test settings that will validate data, but possess no external influences. I offer instead human influence as the starting point. In my work, the personal artistic position is translated into practical settings and situations. A subjective artistic approach can be explorative and chaotic; internal insights and influences are the engines of the activity: ingenuity, creativity and play. The aim is to generate a validity that is based on speculative exceptionality that becomes manifest in each single artwork and can also be applied in workshops.

2.1. Practice-Based Research – Artistic Process
Knowledge is gained from practice and the production process, including working methods, collaboration and communication. These emerge by creating works around one topic. Usually they imply different media: drawing, performative research, sound, video, installation, object and sculpture. From this wide range of media and works, those works with a physical manifestation in connection to the body are the subjects of this discourse. As an expression of a lived experience that manifests itself in physical works, they demonstrate aspects of being in relation to an object. The place where the two meet – their intersection and mutual dependence – is the focus of my research. In my work, potential forces, movements and possibilities become visible in the unity between the body and the *Sensual Instruments*. They complete, copy and amplify bodily processes, means and functions. As a new body-union, they become another inseparable body wherein new laws of physics might apply, where a new point of balance might need to be established or limits discovered that push the user to sense in new and different ways.

As it is directly tailored and connected to the body, the awareness of an extended body/object should be on its amplified, limited or added function. This requires the *Performative Process* as a means of rehearsing a *Haltung* (as a code of conduct, a claim to artistry) with which the performer encounters the work and deals with its potential limitations and actual physical functions. Ideally, a neutral performative state is reached where a natural and unbiased meeting of body and instrument is possible. Only by living and working with the objects and materials in question can ideas, conclusions, and transfers occur. They need time, space and freedom to flourish. As in any project, the process is highly unpredictable and subject to many non-measurable factors. Reflection and knowledge are based on the experience of working

in the field for many years. Complex relationships are generated from the organic practical process and discourse. It does not need words to experience the works directly as images or to sense them live through the body. However, to translate and make them accessible a specific vocabulary for their key aspects – doing, action and feeling – is necessary.

To make artistic decisions is part of the process of creating the work. As in any practical approach, this process requires learning from experience and following (or not) the lead of a work, that is, creating the conditions in which it can thrive. There must always be a place where things are allowed to happen. This openness and curiosity are key factors in creating the work. It also takes time and practice to realize the artwork, that is, from the initial concept, idea, or expectation to its actual physical manifestation. Decisions have to be made, and in the process, new conclusions appear. Unknown and incalculable realms are entered.

In my artistic work it is a principal challenge that I am part of the work as both the subject (artist) and the object (body as part of the work). Then too, there is a need to practice a distance from the self and ego perspective in the form of self-restraint, doubt and the vulnerability that vanity reveals. This too needs practice, a process of maturing followed by a safe distance from the work in order to grasp its essence. Moreover, it requires endurance, and many times a big leap of faith to make the works possible.

2.2. BOIS: Body – Object – Intersection Scan

As mentioned earlier, only those artworks that include an object and that refer to or are combined with the body are included in this research. These are the “epistemic works” that form the basis of the creations of the *Sensual Instruments and Performative Processes*.

BODY
OBJECT
INTERSECTION
SCAN

The *Body – Object – Intersection Scan (BOIS)* is the tool I use to categorize and process the works. It is an identification system that describes the works based on the physical aspects of the body and the objects, as well as their interplay when being worn or touched. Scans of the body and the object combined at their intersecting is the method used to describe how it feels to be in the work and forms the basis for the conclusions regarding the works that eventuate in making these processes accessible to others.

2.2.1. Body

The body is the starting point of the research. As mentioned earlier, owning it has been a large part of my artistic practice. My somatic practices follow the idea of Richard Schusterman that the “body has a crucial role in all perception, action, and thought”². I trained my “heightened body consciousness”³ with personal bodywork in the form of regular yoga practice, dance training, and doing endurance sports such as swimming, cycling and rowing. My years of sports and dance practice established the basis

2 Richard Schusterman, *Thinking through the Body* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 4.

3 Schusterman, 9.

of my awareness and control of the physical body. There have been phases where this bodywork lead to self-optimizing and over-conditioning. To own a body and to level out one's impulsiveness, to become sane and healthy, but not to over-do workouts, was important to learn and a precondition in order to feel and to be present. To know one's own limits of power, strength and growth, as well as weaknesses is a study of its own. There are states of tension in which one bends or breaks.

Heightened body consciousness forms the base for getting involved with the *Sensual Instruments* and making the *Performative Processes* visible. In order to look at the body from the anatomic and medical perspectives, studying the human body and its anatomy was the second pillar of my research. As the study of one's own body is much connected to the tonus, this aspect of my research was conducted both in the exhibitions related to the body, and in classes in anatomy and nude drawing.

For its static, aesthetic and balancing aspects, yoga is another part of my research: postures are conducted with a high sensitivity towards the body's core, its muscular strengths, tensions and

tractions. When holding a yoga position, the body is constantly scanned and adjusted in order to widen and open up within a pose. To stay in a pose strengthens and stretches the body. This constant scanning and awareness within helps to extend these effects and to overcome potential pain.

The knowledge of anatomy involved in yoga as well as functional anatomy from the physical and medical points of view serve as an aid in examining body-object relations.

Approaches to visualizing bodily functions are taken from the following:

- fig 1.* **anatomy in yoga** – graphic representation of the forces within the body
fig 2. **functional anatomy of the human** – model image of the spine muscles.

They are combined into an artistic language that depicts the tractions, tensions and forces at play when holding a yoga position:

- fig 3.* **example drawings of yoga positions and their forces, tractions and tensions**

Blandine Calais-Germain, *Anatomie Im Yoga*
(marix Verlag, 2017), 124.

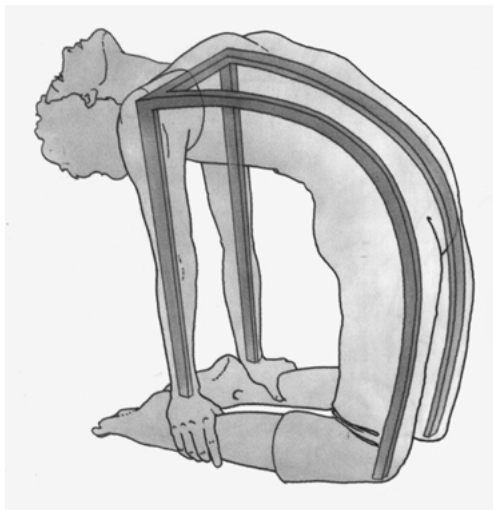


fig 1.

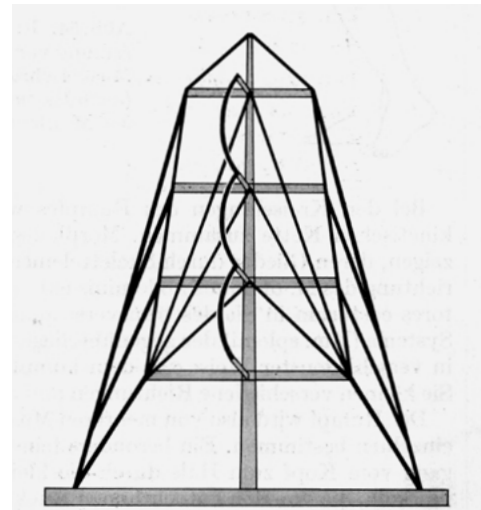
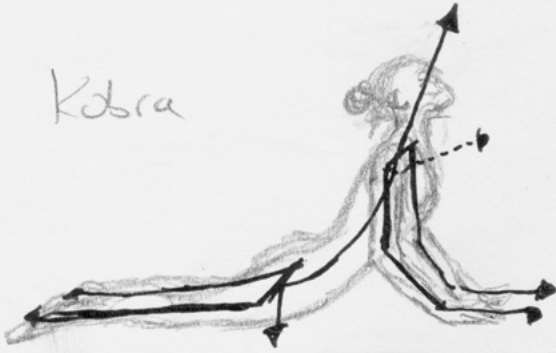


fig 2.

Johannes W. Rohen,
Funktionelle Anatomie Des Menschen, 2nd ed.
(F. K. Schattauer Verlag, 1974), 59.

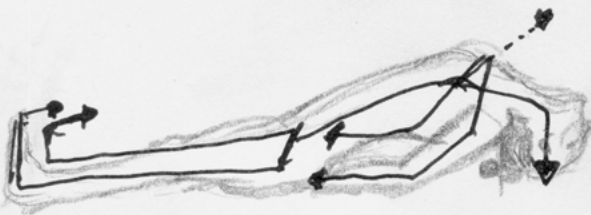
Kobra



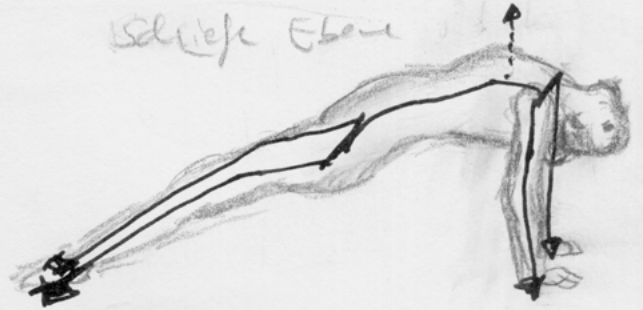
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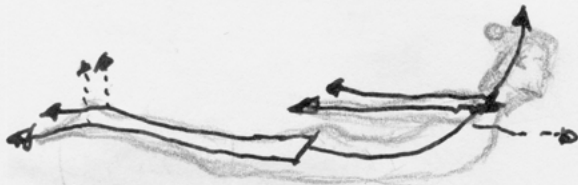
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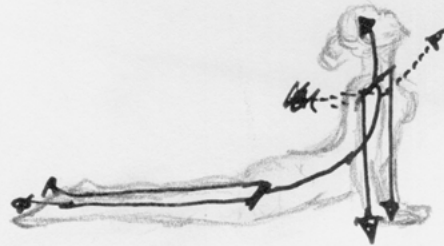
Schiefe Ebene



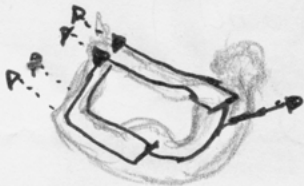
Hensdrecke



heraufschraubender Hund



Boyer



Schulterbrücke



Fortgerichtet: Rad

Skorpion

Halbmond

Brücke

Kamel

fig 3.

2.2.2. Object

The artworks created over the past decade and more are the objects of research here. A selection has been made according to their epistemic value to the research, that is, their applicability and connection to the body. This thread of work starts at the very beginning of my artistic practice in 2012 with the studies *Body Square Index*⁴ and concludes with the discourse work and concept *Touchpoint*⁵ in 2019. There is a fluent transition of themes at play, and the same transition applies to the forming of the terms *Sensual Instrument* and *Performative Processes*. Both aspects are present in the epistemic artworks and are then translated into more concrete works and findings from the year 2020 onwards. The transition from object to *Sensual Instrument* is marked by the point from which the artworks are easily accessible and usable by the audience, and

not just co-performers. This also applies to the *Performative Processes*.

As previously stated, the artworks have an epistemic value due to their uncommon usability. In the scope of this research, they are called objects with the aim of looking at their mechanics and functionality in relation to the body. The knowledge gained from some sculptures is not replicable (or only at a high cost as they are custom-made to fit my body). In some cases, using them is dangerous for people without bodily practice and knowledge, and simply for safety reasons. One can learn from the objects on the physical and mental levels, and so, I translate the experience, the knowledge gained, into drawings. To objectify the artwork is a way to breaking the taboo of the untouchable artwork – to touch the untouchable.



fig 4.



fig 5.

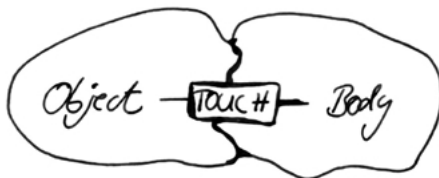
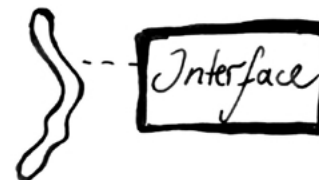


fig 6.



4 Frey et al., *Barbis Ruder: Werk - Zyklus - Körper / Work - Cycle - Body*, 34–41.

5 Barbis Ruder, *TOUCHPOINT*, 2019, <https://base.uni-ak.ac.at/showroom/Xn2SYzb4BJ4BVkcF2ReiTv>.

2.2.3. Intersection: TOUCH MODEL

The interface of the boundaries is the subject of investigation: What is the connection between object and body? There is a clear line and surface: this place where body and object meet, the point where they touch, I call the “Intersection.” To understand the factors involved, I focus on three key elements:

- ▷ the BODY: knowledge of the body in its functions, its boundaries, its *Haltung*
- ▷ INTERSECTIONS: the functionality of the body in connection with the thing
- ▷ the OBJECT: its material and form as interface and connecting point in relation to the body

This is a first attempt at describing the space between the body and the object as a new form: their intersection. The touch is the intersection, and it builds a shape with various specifications. The following touch model attempts to signify and describe different qualities of connection.

fig 4. **Drawings object touch body**

This model can also be expanded and combined into endless combinations of bodies and objects. However, for this demonstration, it is applied only between object and body.

fig 5. **Drawing touch**

This graphic shows the nature of the moment of touch more accurately: It is the significant factor of the moment of intersection.

fig 6. **Drawing Interface**

The first step is to translate the intersection into an interface and to describe its form. It collects different modes of touch. Touch and tactility have many qualities. Everything is possible between conjunction, friction, resistance, slight contact, and beyond. This shows a first attempt at

a value system to help understand and map these different parameters.

fig 7. **Drawing forces included**

When asking the question of what the objects do to the body, many aspects of the situation are not covered or included in the moment of touch. It is to be seen as the position and catalyst of direction, movement, speed, energy, time.

fig 8. **Drawing directions included**

The connections to the body and activation is not only the tactile and sensory.

The tactile sensation itself and its connection and activation with the body will be described later, including the body’s and the object’s form, materiality and texture. These need to be understood on various levels.

As for the question of “What does it feel like to be part of the object?,” different concepts apply to the moment of touch. On the physical level touch feels differently depending on the body part it is applied to. The fingertips have a much higher sensitivity than, for example, the back. This effect is translated into the philosophical and neuroscientific concept of the homunculus, which lays out a virtual image of the personal perception of each body part within the body. How one perceives and feels touch is not only part of the physical realm, but actually implies (according to Sarah Ahmed) an “anticipation of what we already know”⁶. She discusses the role of the body in connection to an anticipation of pain, but this can also be applied to the anticipation of something new. Pain “involves the violation or transgression of the border between inside and outside”⁷. Before a new encounter the perception of one’s own body “disappears from the

6 Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 26.

7 Ahmed, 27.

view and is often forgotten as I concentrate on this or that”⁸.

Again, *Haltung* plays a large role as an inner stance and in the physical connection to the object. One’s fitness and state of mind at the time of performance are part of one’s subjective observations. The object to get in touch with has to be seen as a friend, so that one’s perception can shift from something potentially hostile that heightens the senses, to a state of awareness that is open and full of care and empathy. Though difficult to achieve, this neutral or unbiased state of the body as part of the performance in connection to the (new) object is what is striven for. With years of practice and learning this state of serenity can be modelled and rehearsed in connection with the objects. .

2.2.4. Scan

In anatomy, human bodies are dissected and sliced into layers according to a grid: the anatomical plane. They are divided into three layers: the sagittal plane (longitudinal), the coronal plane (vertical) and the transverse plane (horizontal). This segmentation and imaging of the body is the starting point for visualizing the organic material – the body part in connection to the object.

fig 9. Drawing of the anatomical plane

fig 10. A body dissected in multiple transverse planes⁹

In contrast to the intrusions into the body that we see in medical history, the intersection with the body involved here is not opened up but imagined; it occurs in an aesthetic moment of drawing. The first step is to translate the intersection into an interface and to describe its form. It collects different modes of touch. Touch and tactility have many qualities.

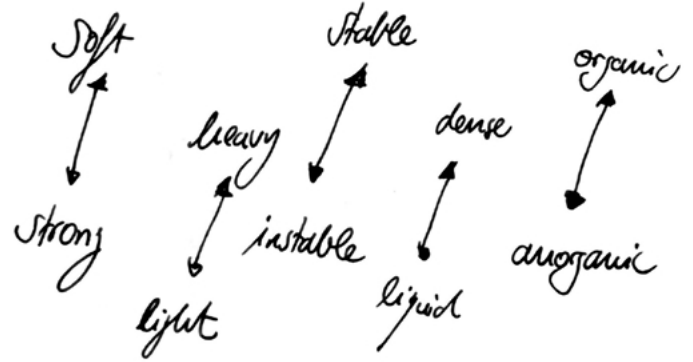


fig 7.

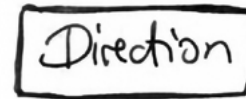


fig 8.

8 Ahmed, 27.

9 As seen in *Gunther von Hagens Körperwelten*, Vienna, 2019

Venus von Melos :

SENSUAL INSTRUMENTS & PERFORMATIVE PROCESSES
RELATIONS AND INTERACTIONS BETWEEN BODY AND OBJECT

rechte & linke Gesichtshälfte

Frontalebene



aufschneider
Anfänger

Median-Sagittalebene
(Genau in der Mitte)



Teilen

Transversalebene
(horizontal)

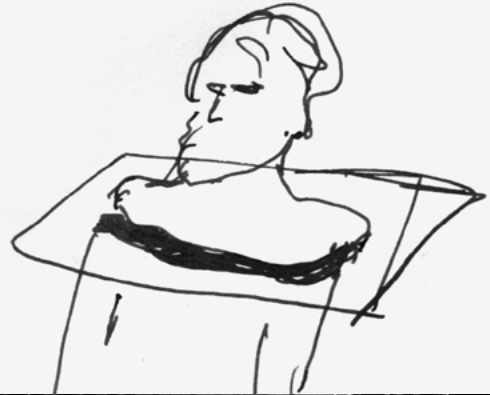


fig 9.



fig 10.



fig 14.

Everything is possible between conjunction, friction, resistance, slight contact, and beyond. The following shows an attempt at a system that will help us understand and map this virtual point.

fig 11. Photograph of Spine

fig 12. Drawing of Spine

fig 13. Drawing of Touchpoints

These organic drawing pieces illustrate the place where body and object meet. Here their relationship and dependence becomes physical. It is created to make the experience visible and to describe the process.

fig 14. Touchpoints on the living body

The touch model is the graphic catalyst that I developed in order to follow my interest in and approach to the place where and the moment when body and object meet.

The object in place cannot describe how it feels. Hence, the sensorial mapping itself follows a scheme that describes a central point of the sensual experience in the most neutral way. As it is an active mode of doing research, aspects of Action Research – such as the Action Research Interaction Spiral¹⁰ and Setting a Scene¹¹ – apply. From object to object new conclusions will be drawn that influence the development of the works to follow. The scene is set anew each time. Still, while the research is very personal, it is equally meant to be open and available to the audience in the forms of the *Sensual Instruments* and *Performative Processes*. The findings that evolve from this point are yet another artistic research project.

Each of the objects undergoes aesthetic translation as part of the *BOIS* following the criteria of showing the act and scene, a mapping of the sensations, and the inner perception that applies. Finally, each scan is described from memory.



fig 11.

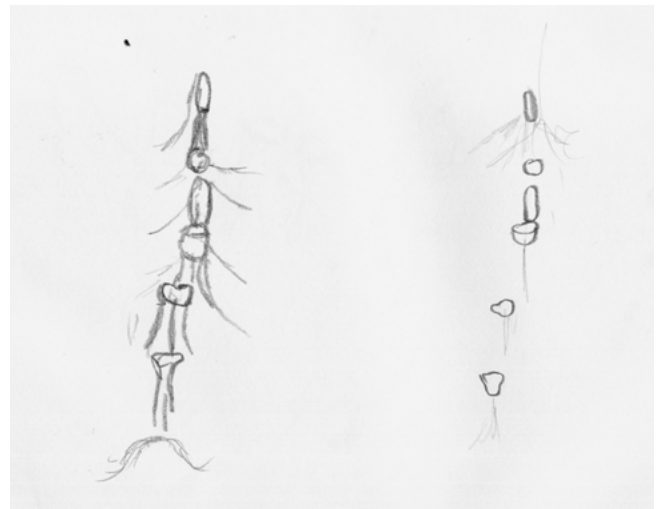


fig 12.

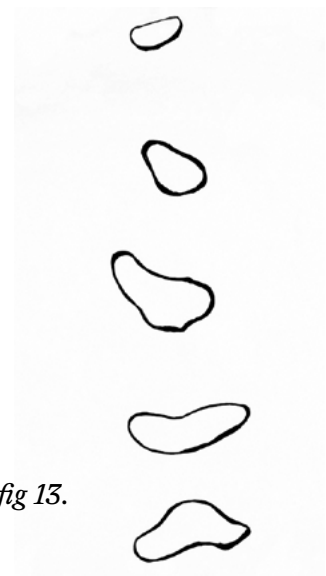


fig 13.

10 Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research*, 3rd ed. (Sage Publications, Inc., 2007), 9.

11 Stringer, 19.

The discussions of the art will proceed in the following order:

A. Action and setting

A short description of the object and performance and the reference to the work catalogue plus drawings of the body/bodies involved, a drawing of the touchpoint and – if applicable – a drawing of the movement and tractions that take place.

B. Sensory catalogue

The sensory mapping follows this scheme to describe the sensual experience and *Haltung* of the body in connection to the object. It is a delicate situation which cannot be simply measured. The catalogue follows the idea of naming the sensations in regards to the situation, and not the cognitive or emotional affects.

First, they are translated into drawings.

- ▷ Tactile: Defining the space of touch and body parts: Drawing
- ▷ Interdependence of Body and Object: Drawing

Then BIOS in relation to the object is catalogued and the following aspects and qualities of contact are examined:

Touch: Direct/Indirect – Fixed/Free –
Friction – Lubrication

Movement:

- ▷ Direction: pushed, pulled, vertical, straight, organic ...
- ▷ Intention: tender, striking, hitting, caressing, etc.
- ▷ Impact: in waves, pulsating, following a curve
- ▷ Resistance

Time

Performance: Energy + Time

fig 15, 16. Drawing of a Performance in the sphere of Energy and Time

C. Perspective

The third pillar of the *BOIS* is the personal perspective. In this there is space for looking at the aspects of how it feels to be connected to the object, and what challenges are to be overcome. Some works can also imply the viewpoint of other performers. This is a further step to undertake, one that would require a check of their preconditions, training and *Haltung*. Also, their information cannot be anonymized, so it requires their consent for their information to be published.

D. Learnings

From each *BOIS* there will be a short section of findings that state the challenges of the work and what was learned from it in relation to the objects that follow. These are the base of what will be translated into new works in the forms of *Sensual Instruments* and *Performative Processes*.



fig 15.

Performance & Movements
moment = material

Graphic Representation

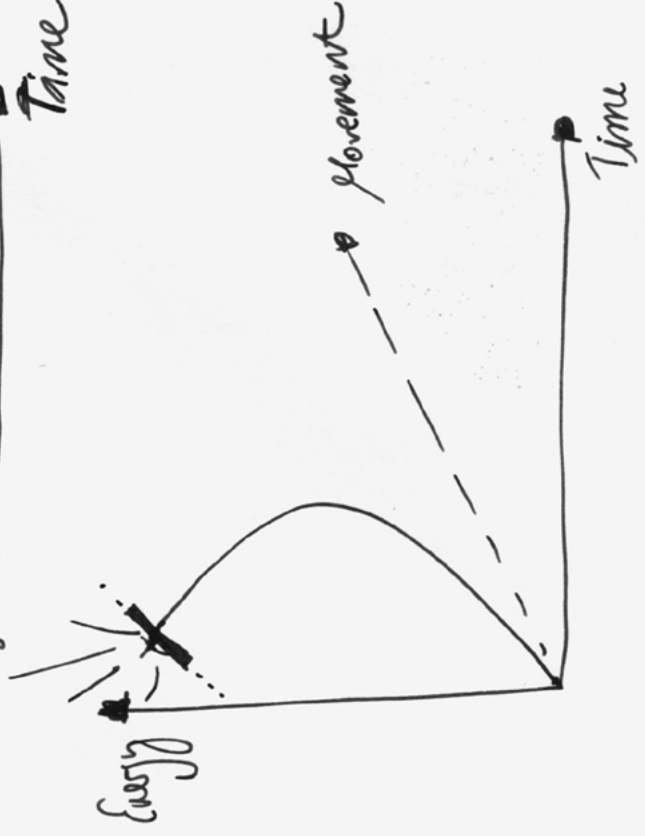
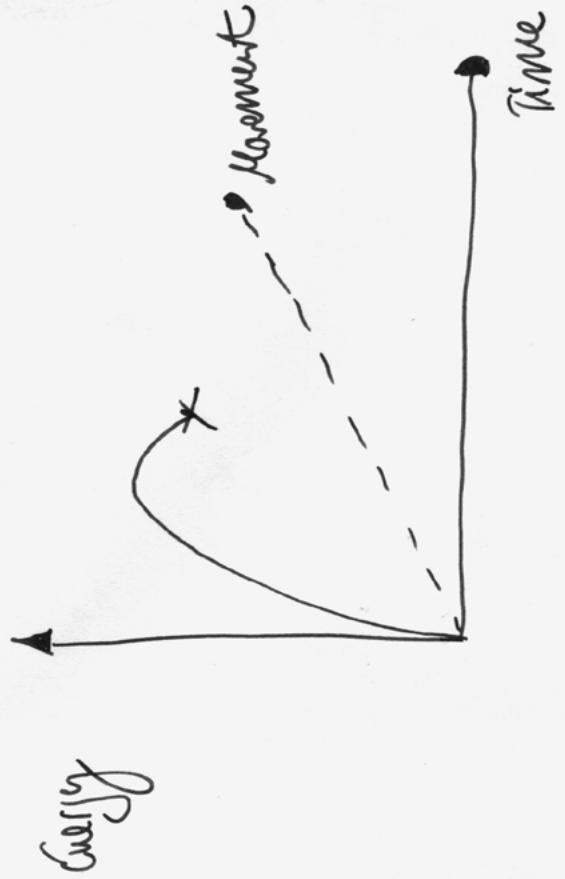
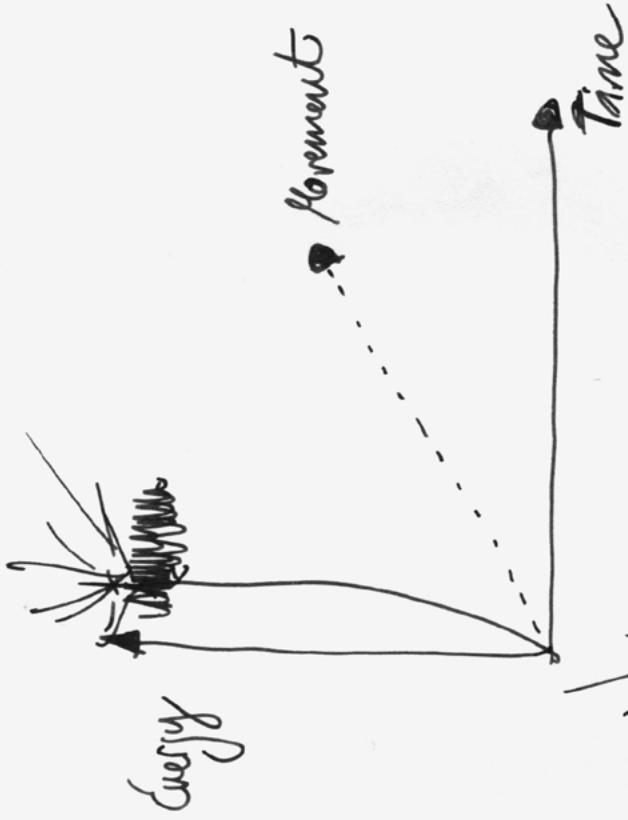
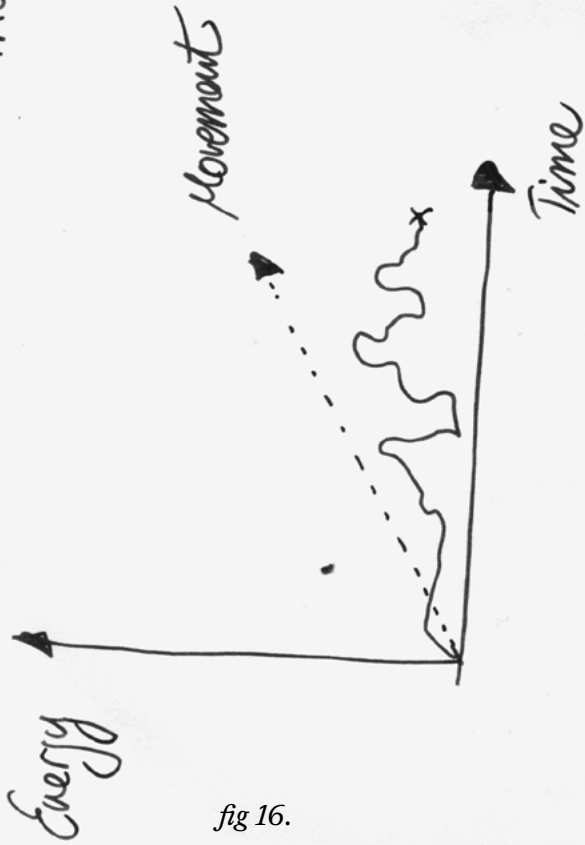


fig 16.

3. BOIS on Epistemic Artworks

The *Body – Object – Intersection Scan (BOIS)* method is here applied to the epistemic artworks created between 2012 and 2019. The works for this research needed to meet the criteria of

- ▷ being in touch with the body,
- ▷ being used by the body (ideally), and
- ▷ organically mirroring or completing it in an artistic and uncommon way.

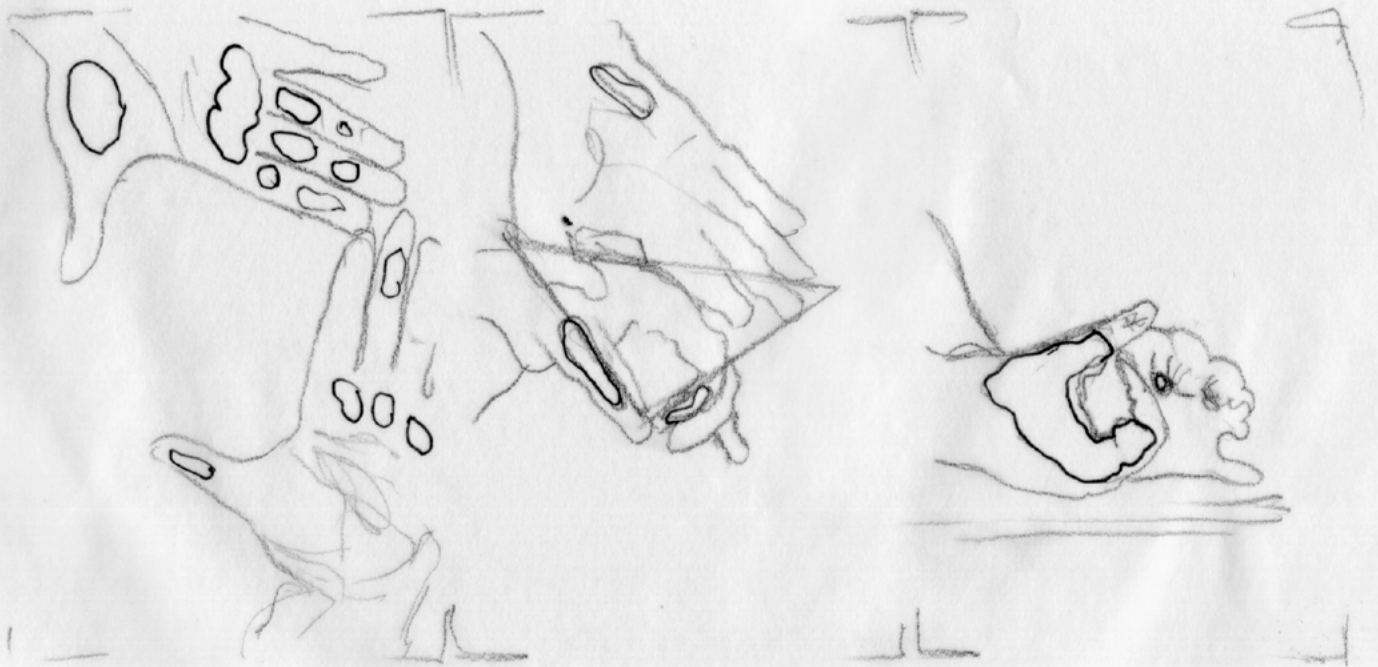
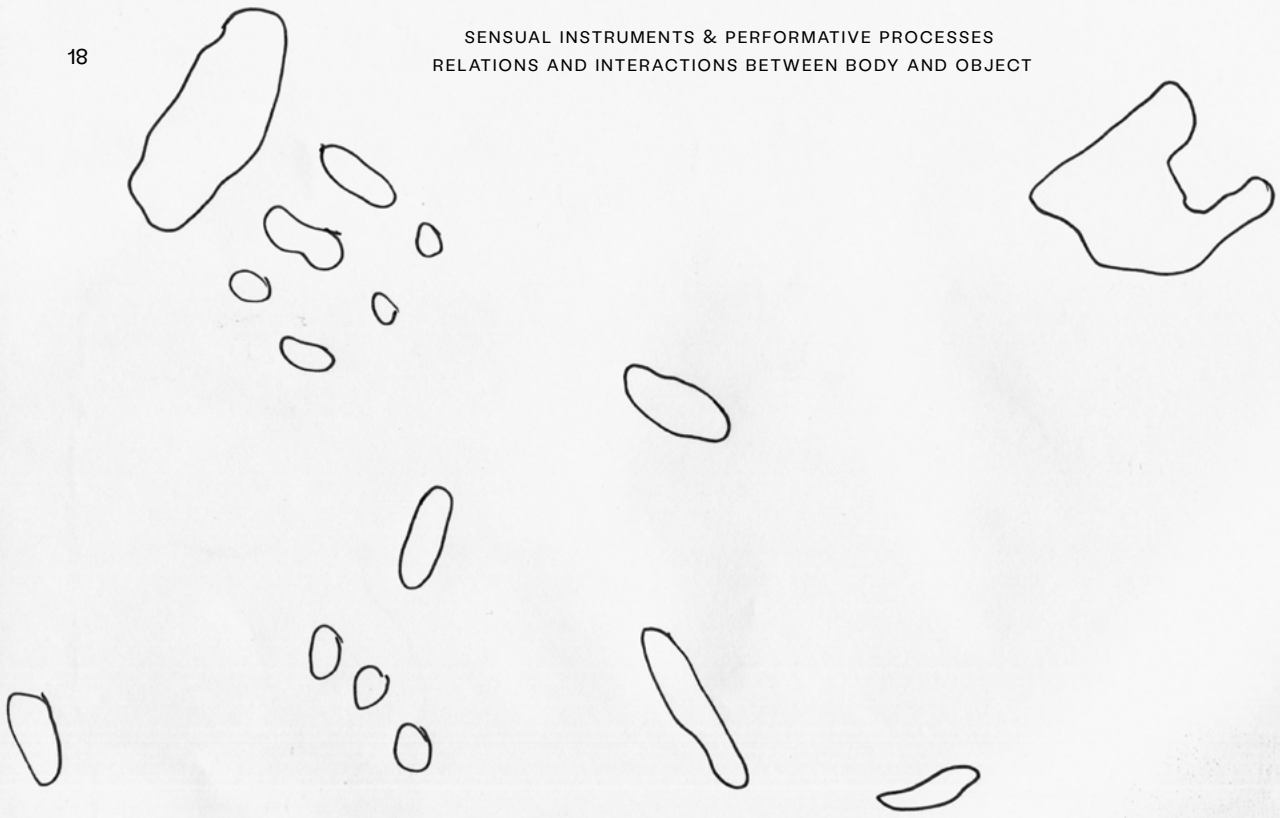
The works are linked to their descriptions in the monograph *Work – Cycle – Body*; their performative use is described; drawings and a sensory catalogue are added; and then a personal perspective is stated, and conclusions are drawn.

The epistemic artworks discussed here are:

- 1) *BODY SQUARE INDEX* (2012)
- 2) *AIR* (2012)
- 3) *HAPPY TOGETHER* (2013)
- 4) *VALUE-ADDED CHAIN* (2014)
1C/2C – Protection
1D/2D – Change
- 4) *ART WORK OUT* (2014)
Tensing
Bending
- 5) *DOWN DOG IN LIMBO* (2015)
- 6) *THIGH GAP STRETCHER* (2016)
- 7) *MOUTHPIECES* (2017)
- 8) *TOUCHPOINT* (2019)

Two of the works, *Body Square Index*, and *Touchpoint* are pre-studies that affected the method described in the previous chapter. Both works deal with the intersection between body and object. They undertake a translation of the process of making the virtual surface of touch visible, by drawing a line. The touchpoint usually has an organic, curved shape. This place is the key point of investigation as it is where the action of this difficult-to-grasp moment occurs. This – mostly virtual – surface will be drawn for each artwork, describing the invisible place of touch and the in-between where body and object meet. This space of touch is anticipated, guessed at and interpreted as a drawn line/form. The key sensations are described and made visible, following the previously explained scheme of the BOIS.

SENSUAL INSTRUMENTS & PERFORMATIVE PROCESSES
RELATIONS AND INTERACTIONS BETWEEN BODY AND OBJECT



3.1. BODY SQUARE INDEX

A. Action and setting

*Body Square Index*¹² is one of the first research works I created. It is an artistic take on the method of the Body Mass Index (BMI), which calculates the so-called “normal body” by dividing the weight of the body by the squared height. *Body Square Index* translates this to making scans of my body, while also trying to find actual squares on the body, and also cutting out and excerpting square shapes from the scans. As the body touches the flat surface of a scanner and is scanned it makes the touchpoint visible, thus the drawings of the works that follow. On the flat screen the organic shape of body and skin is beautifully visible. The object the body gets in touch with is a scanner. A cheap HP scanner is not an actual sculpture in itself. It is connected with a cable and one has to be careful not to pull the plug!

The work is about the feeling of skin on a cold flat surface. The body is much more articulated in the fingers than on the butt. There are different sensations to be felt:

- ▷ Being in touch with the scanner: Holding it but not being able to sit on it (as it is a cheap scanner), there is a sensitivity towards how much of a close-up I want to allow in the picture.
- ▷ Constant checking: not to be too overbearing, but not too exposed either.
- ▷ Sensation of overstretching my fingers trying to form a square
- ▷ Sensation of scans:
 - a.) Cold, anticipating the feeling of glass
 - b.) less of this feeling on the back of the body.

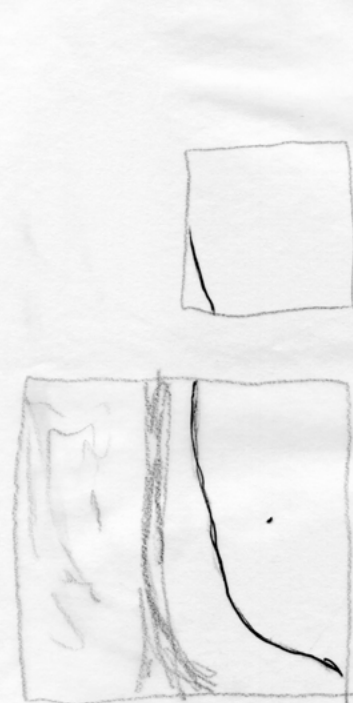
The connection between body and object is loose. The scanner needs to be held and pressed against the body. It is a common tool to be used by the hands. For some body parts I have to overstretch and redo the scan. I also need to hold still, which usually works.

C. Perspective

From an artistic perspective, when doing the scans, the boundaries of intimacy are negotiated, in the textures of skin and hair, but also in what body parts to reveal and which not. This closeness is 1:1, live, touched.

D. Learnings

The work is more of a study in epistemic process. It exists at eye-level and gives us a first glimpse of the virtual body. Different body parts differ in their sensitivity, especially on a cold glass surface. The touch by the scanner light can't be felt, but only seen and heard.



3.2. AIR

A. Action and setting

*Air*¹⁵ pursues the idea of being connected to different media. In this case, air that is transferred from the breath of other people. For this work I attached eight plastic tubes on my body. Then eight co-performers blew air into the tubes. In the performance the aim was to concentrate on the impulses given by the energy of the breath and to translate this into soft movements. From a slow movement of coming alive I moved through the audience and out into the cold of the night.

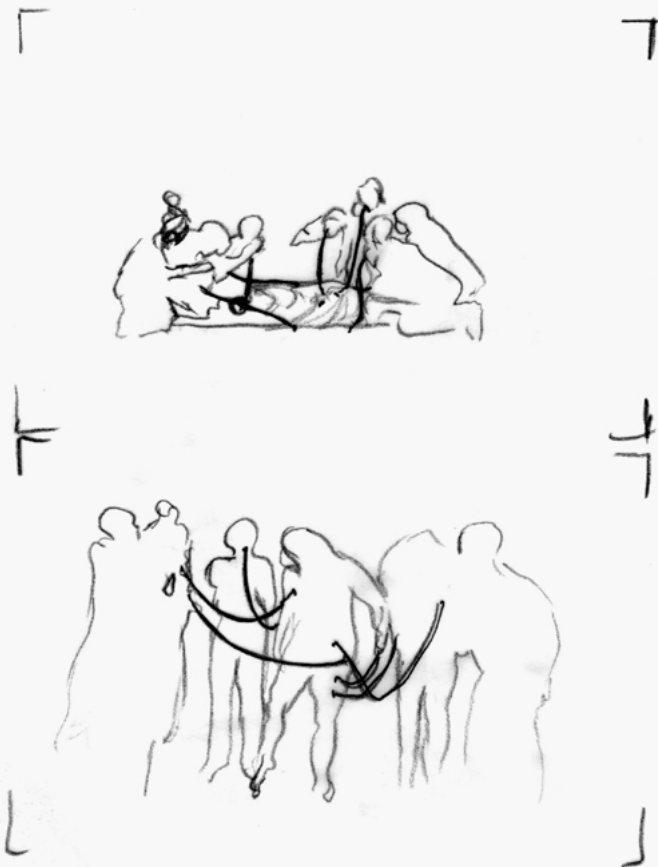
B. Body: Sensory catalogue

The body is connected through many tubes that again are connected to bodies, mouths and people. There is an array of bodies and body-object connections in place. The touchpoints are all over the torso in the form of the tubes. Through the tubes comes

breath – warm, humid air. Ideally, awareness of the breath triggers movement and provides the impulse and energy to move into space. In reality, there were too many diverse and unexpected impulses at once, and these were further overcome by intense feelings of stage fright and anxiety.

C. Perspectives

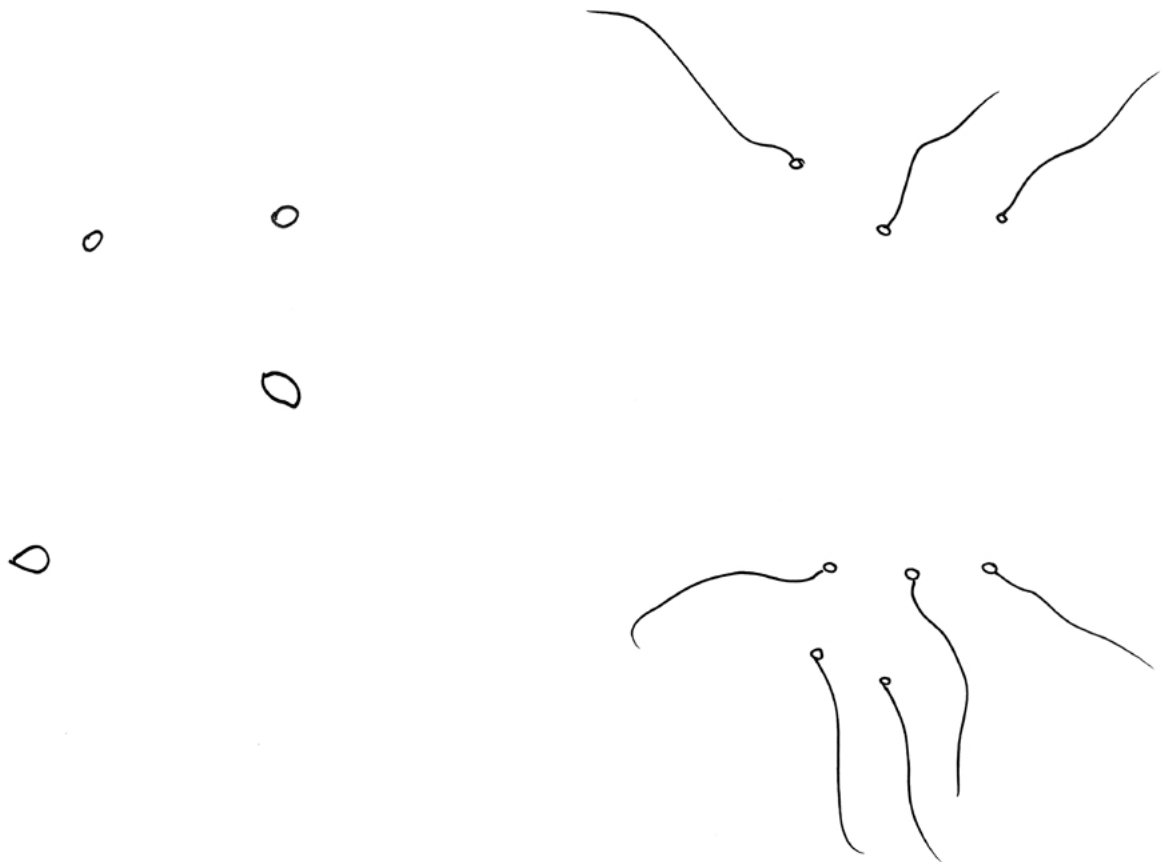
Air was my first solo performance and I had to deal with a lot of insecurity and stage fright at this time. I was even scared of rehearsing as I felt really insecure about doing a work centered around myself. It is a fragile thing to put yourself on stage and to act in your own performance piece. I had hoped to convey my concentration on the impulses I was experiencing when in the performing state. I had had little experience in creating a rehearsal

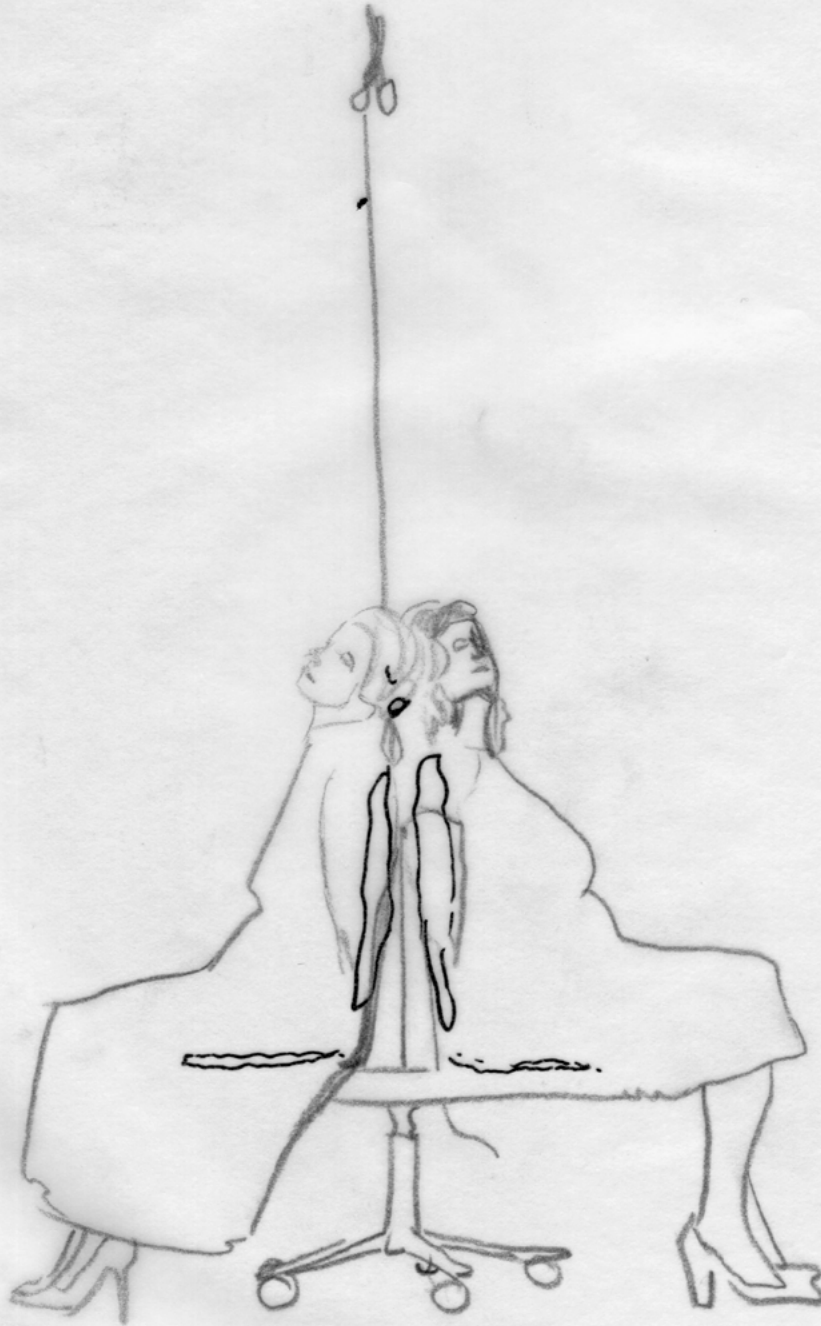


environment appropriate to my needs and those of the co-performers. Due to the multitude of people present and involved, a personal perspective was somewhat overruled as I cared too much to not be overbearing or selfish. Even though the focus was on me, the central performer, this overwhelming situation was hard to navigate. Overcoming oneself, self-criticism and criticism from the outside are key in being able to perform the idea one has created and set for oneself. It was hard to overcome my anxiety so as to actually perform the key idea of the piece: letting the warm breath of air guide my movements. Having little body awareness and feeling insecure, I also lacked knowledge of touchpoints connected to joints or body parts that might have triggered my movements.

D. Learnings

Bodily practices and awareness did not relate together well enough in this work; there were too many touchpoints involved. Also working with other performers was not feasible at such an early stage in my work. The live situation and adrenaline rush disrupt the possibility of any accurate assessment of the connection between body and object(s). I had to learn to be present in moments of high adrenaline and to be more precise and clear about the aspects of a work that matter. It takes practice to learn to be self-aware, sure and cool. It takes practice to become a neutral performing body, to become the image that you yourself as an artist imagine yourself to be.





3.3. HAPPY TOGETHER

A. Action and setting

*Happy Together*¹⁴ was created together with Anna Vasof. The two of us made a double swivel-chair with rollers in which we could sit back-to-back. Between the two backrests a two-meter long rod is attached to the base, with a pair of scissors attached to the top of the rod. When slowly rocking the chair the rod begins to move like a metronome. Different rocking speeds and rhythms create different intensities of scissor snapping.

The bodies involved are two female artists in fancy evening dress and high heels. They sit on their sides of the chair, hands folded behind their backs. In the live version of the work they – and the chair – move to the center-stage by jointly making very small steps. All of this can look rather comic but is accompanied by a serious performative attitude. When placed in position the women stop and lean their heads back, their backs almost touching, but not. Instead, their inner focus is on staring blankly into space. When in position one of the artists starts to move her back very slightly. The small movement translates to the rod and on the upper end of the rod the scissors start snapping. First slowly, shyly, but then, as the rocking becomes stronger, the snapping becomes larger, both in the amplitude of the swinging rod and the snapping of the scissors. At some point the women stop the movement and the swinging fades out (blacking out in the video, petering out of the space in the live version).

B. Sensory catalogue: Posture and movement

The object is used by two people sitting on it. The point of connection is in the seated position. Their posture is a voluntary restriction. By limiting the bodies to this position, they become a unity with the object. Two pairs of feet – opposite to each other and in between the rollable base of the chair – touch the ground and affect the movements that are

possible: One performer has to move backwards in order to follow the direction of the other. The steps cannot be large as they take place from a seated position. By placing the arms behind their backs the focus becomes even more on wondering what movements can still be made. Apart from pattering along with the chair, the remaining movements consist of rocking their backs and moving their heads. But then they lock their heads into a blank position and only stare ahead. The only movement left is to rock their backs. In order to be more “efficient” in this movement the performers decided that one of them would impulsively begin and thus control the movement. (Otherwise it would get out of synch and actually counteract the action.) With one person in control and one person following, the use of the joint object in *Happy Together* can become quite powerful.

C. Inner Perspective

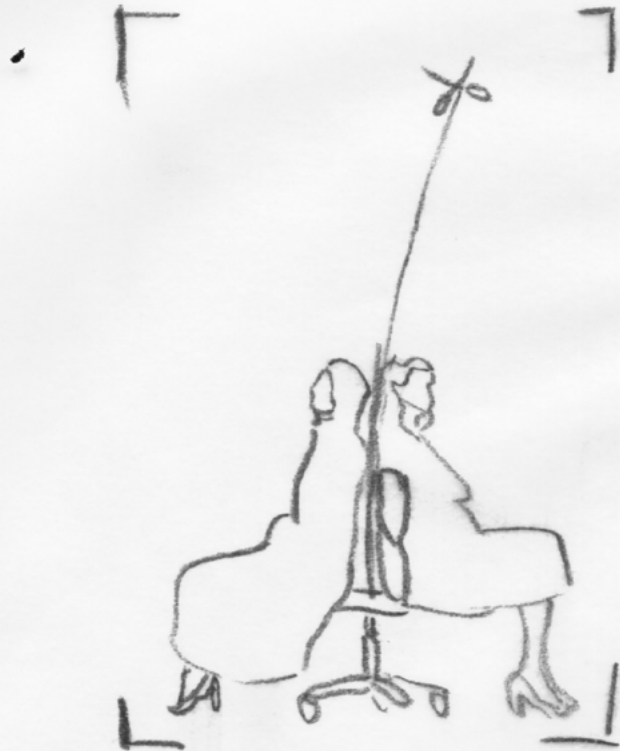
Happy Together is a work in which two bodies are joined together by an object that not only connects them but also limits them in their capacity to move. It needs clear communication and rehearsals to figure out its potentials and limits. By letting one person have a clear lead, the object can be used according to the scope of its purpose. There is a sense of moving something greater – the scissors are swinging as an extension of the spine a few meters above the sitters’ heads. They are facing away, and thus there is a sense of empowerment, the potential of weaponizing the object, while at the same time being bound and limited to one’s position in the body-object system. As for connecting spaces the joined object (chair and sitters) shares power with the partially controllable scissors at the top. The oscillating movement leads towards the ceiling or the sky. When it becomes stronger it conveys the

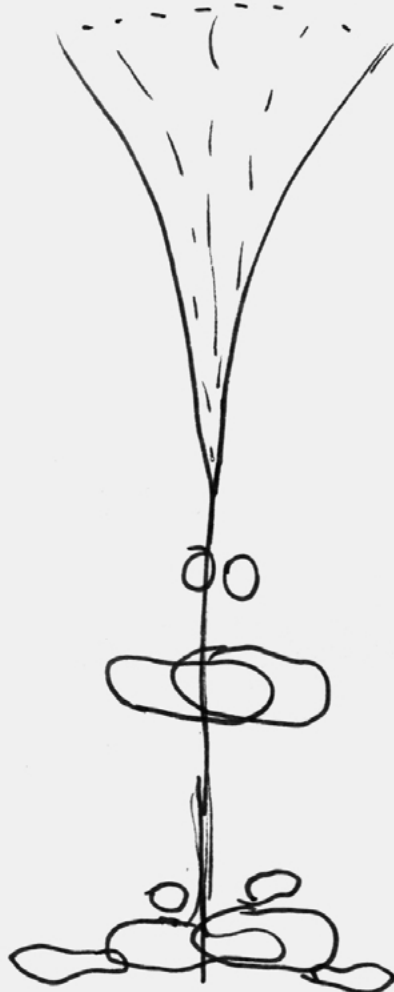
potential to have a threatening effect on people in the vicinity or standing in the line of the oscillating scope.

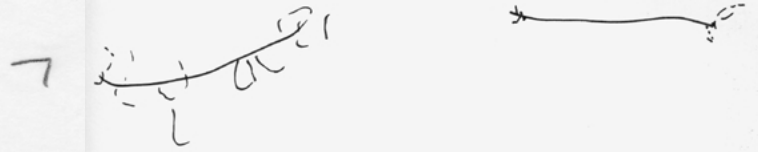
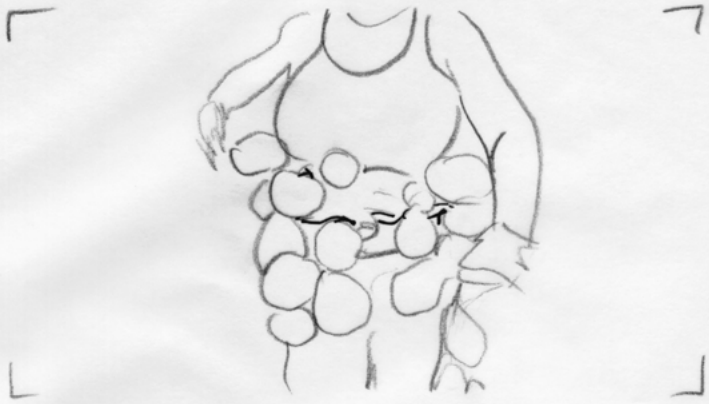
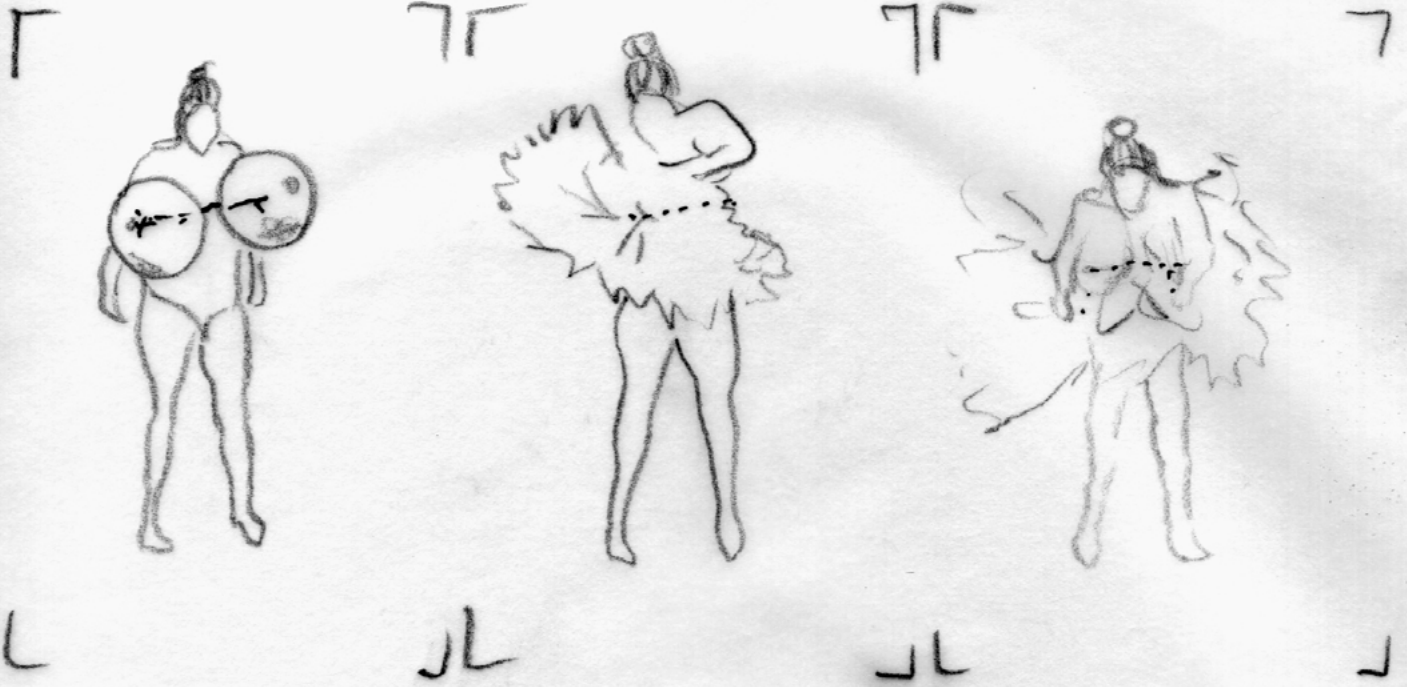
D. Learnings

To look at the connection between body and object it helps to limit the amount of performers to two. However, here the experience of the exact same object differs highly as it requires active and passive parts. Also, the different bodily constitutions are factors that interfere with the pure dynamic of the translation of movement.

The object would be a great *Sensual Instrument*, as with its two chairs, it is accessible to most everyone. Unfortunately, the object has been dismantled and cannot be used anymore. Otherwise it would have been interesting to put it back into activity/research in order to figure out more bodily sensations connected to the artwork and to ask others to try it out.







3.4. VALUE-ADDED CHAIN

1C/2C – PROTECTION

A. Action and setting

The works *1C*¹⁵/*2C*¹⁶ protection are part of the series *VALUE-ADDED CHAIN*, which places rather intimate situations into public spaces. Protection is an image of extending my personal space of insecurity over “being too much.” In my case, the feeling of being too female by having a big tummy and big breasts is exaggerated with sets of balloons that are filled with different materials (powder, glitter). The balloons are attached to the body in corresponding positions. Needles are attached to the hands and when formed into a fist they stick out. The balloons are punched and explode. The material splatters into the space. The action ends with a victory pose.

B. Sensory catalogue

The balloons are light and little weight is added by the added materials. They are strapped lightly onto the body and carry more symbolic than actual weight. By popping them they explode, splatter their materials and then change into sloppy pouches. In this work a fundamental self-doubt is translated into a burst image. It’s more about owning a narrative that proclaims power. It depends on the anticipated effect of the bang and the clouds of powder or glitter that splash about.

The intersection between body and object remains shallow. The balloons are a foreign and symbolic material that is attached to the self and yet also internalized. Dealing with this delicate and interior sense of bodily imperfection, the balloons act as colorful and lofty counterweights that are also easily destroyed.

C. Inner perspective

In order to perform the works, it is essential to get into a performative state of self-hate and project that onto the corresponding body part. Channeling one’s own anger into action – translating the inner fight onto the outside – has the power to transform and to proclaim another state of being. The bodily feeling is rather lead by the emotion than the objects. This symbolizes a fight that is uneven and beyond reason on many levels. By creating an image that includes comic relief, the work shows the ambiguous state of materializing inner struggles into object and action.

D. Learnings

The work is too complex to look at a simple connection between body and object. There is the light materiality of balloons in connection with the harsh act of popping them. The pop then creates the reaction of flying pieces of material. All of this has too much of an effect in order to see it clearly in terms of the objective of this research. With the fright coming from the sound of the explosion followed by the splattering materials, the body is too much in anticipation and tension to feel the object and its specifics. Even though the work is easily adaptable for other people to try, it requires some effort to get into an emotional state of self-hate. This is very individual and still misses the point of translating the act into a *Sensual Instrument* or *Performative Process*.

15 Frey et al., 76.

16 Frey et al., 84–85.

1D/2D – CHANGE

A. Action and setting

As part of the work series *VALUE-ADDED CHAIN*, *1D¹⁷/2D¹⁸* Change shows a changing room scenario in public space: I put on clothes that only half-fit while wearing a transparent plastic funnel around my head.

B. Sensory catalogue

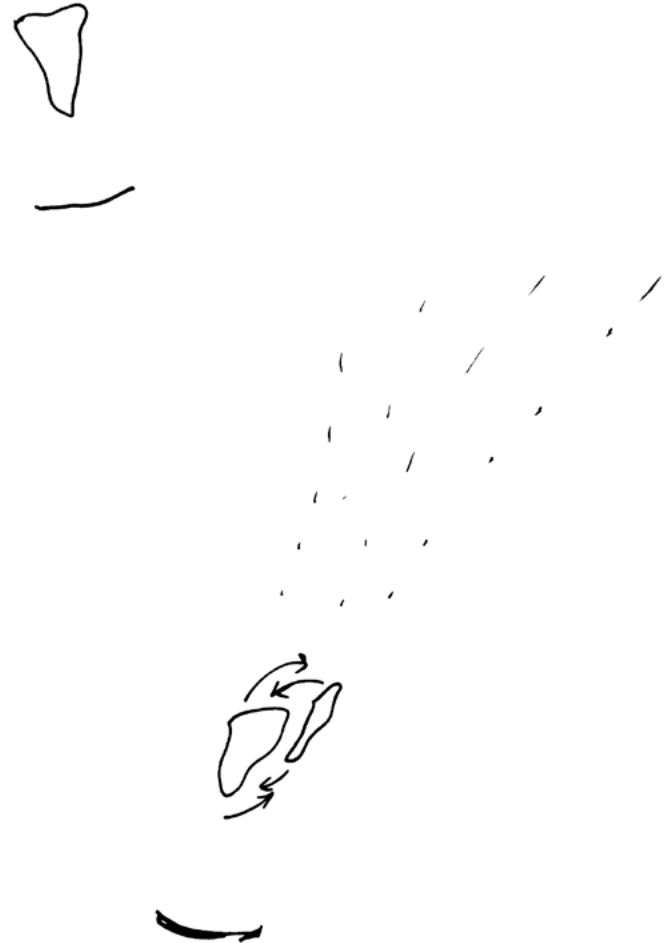
Wearing a funnel around one's neck has a restricting, protecting and enhancing effect. It is restrictive once it is put on and when pulling pieces of clothing over it. It is protective against wind and conveys the sense of a see-through shell. It is enhancing by opening up the senses towards the sky, and enabling long stretches when putting on clothes. The skin is squished when folding the funnel to make way for the pieces of clothing. Breath fogs the funnel; it becomes sticky and creates a humid and sweaty climate for the head. The edges are sharp, and it lightly cuts the throat. And, when putting the clothes on, they feel harsh and strong on the skin and press against it.

C. Perspective

The protective layer of the object is felt more on the emotional than the sensory level. But too it distracts from the vulnerability of being half naked in public. This unpleasant and potentially shameful act somehow becomes more bearable thanks to this body extension. The conic opening to the sky opens up the senses in this direction. In the moment of wearing the funnel, there is a heightened awareness of the sky.

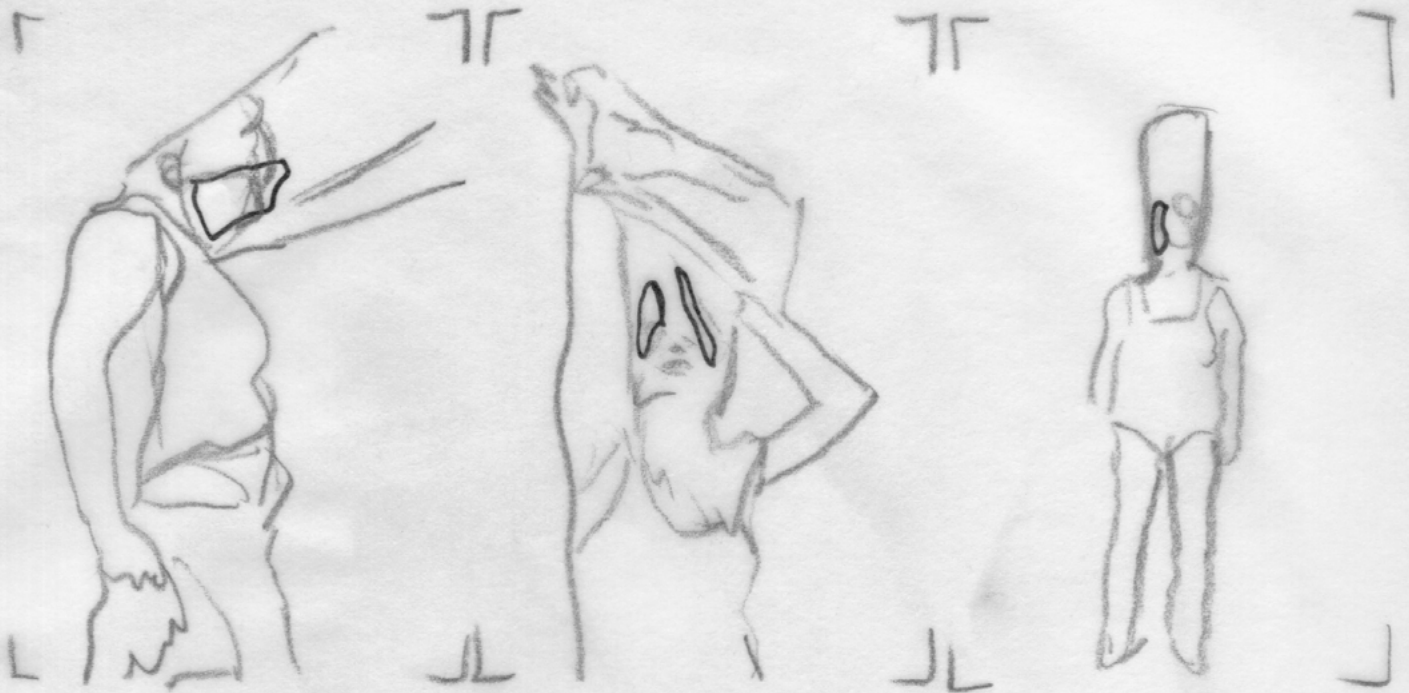
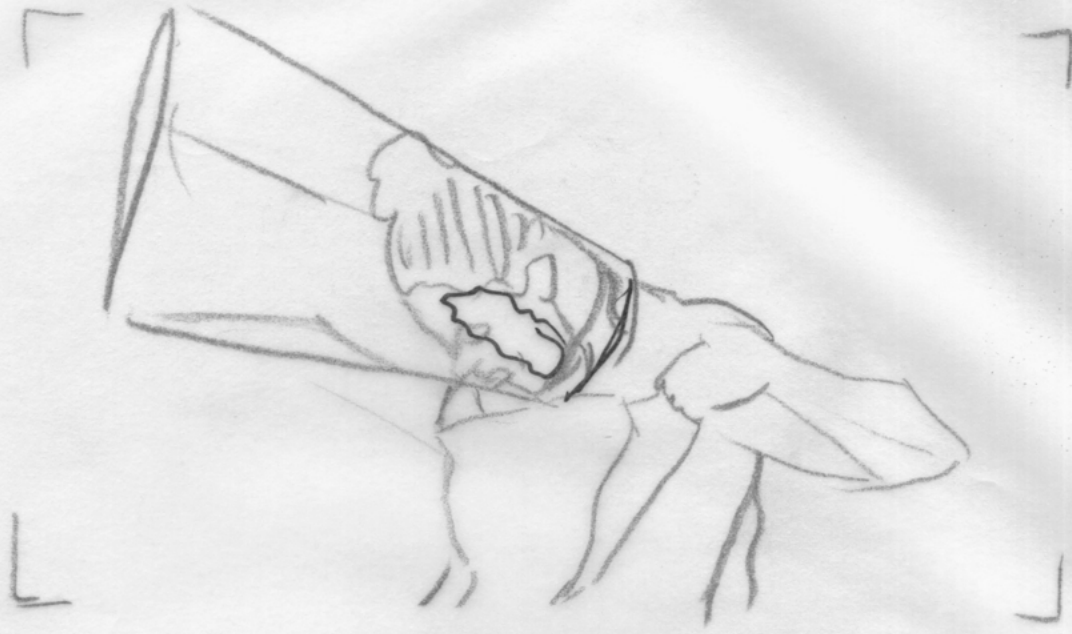
D. Learnings

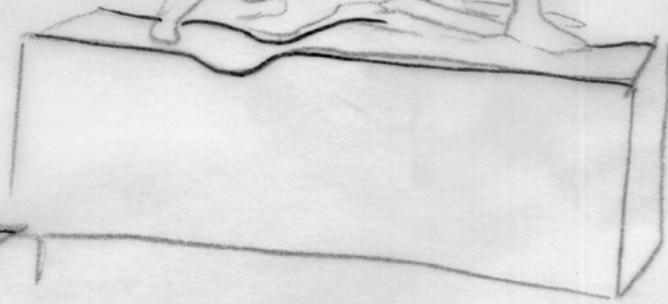
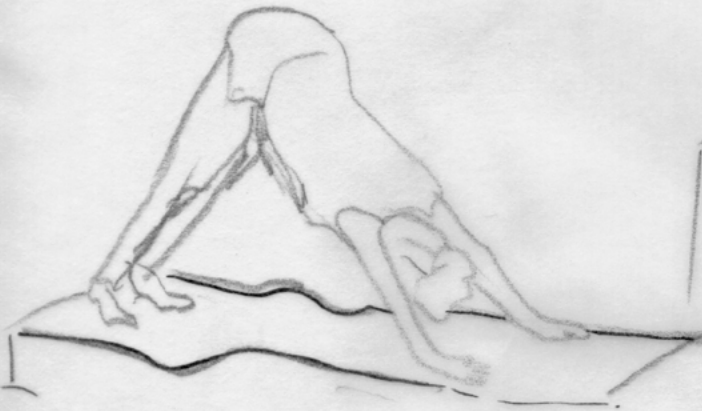
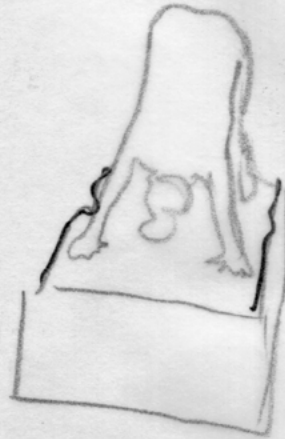
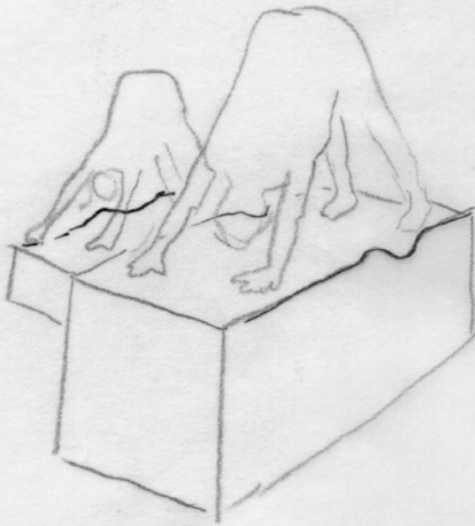
To perform the work in the public sphere and/or in front of an audience adds a layer of distortion in sensing the connection between object and body. Too, the funnel is an easy tool to be made accessible in further workshop settings, a “tool” to experience a bodily alteration which is not as usual as a handy tool, instrument or vehicle.



17 Frey et al., 77.

18 Frey et al., 86–87.





3.5. ART WORK OUT

The work series *ART WORK OUT*¹⁹ looks at different aspects of the body's performance in connection with trendy sports. The object-related performances in this series are a yoga performance (*tensing*) and a pole dance performance (*bending*). For each part, I created objects that complement the S-curve of the spine:

TENSING

A. Action and setting

A typical yoga mat is transformed into three yoga pedestals that resemble the different heights of a winner's podium. Instead of remaining a flat surface a vertical curve is incorporated into the artwork that simulates the form of a spine. The surface is fixed on to a slatted frame. On top is a foam mattress and a silver dance carpet. The performance itself is a sequence of yoga movements taking ten minutes and performed by three women, each of them using one of the pedestals. When performing the sequence, they keep their mouths in a strained and stretched gesture. The sequence of poses were adjusted according to the qualities (form, material) of the objects. So too, some of the postures were destabilizing and some even impossible to perfectly perform, but they were carried out anyway.

B. Bodily sensations when performing in connection to the object(s)

In regards to the body-object connection, three poses were rather challenging in regards to the given objects:

- ▷ The tree yoga pose: standing on one foot and keeping the other foot on the inner thigh. This was challenging to balance on the mattress-like surface

- ▷ The arm-pressing pose: one lifts the seated body with one's arms. This was made impossible by the object; it was performed with the butt in the hollow part of the object making the lifting physically impossible to achieve.
- ▷ The stretched abdominal position was performed sideways in the pit of the yoga pedestal. Support from lying with the upper body in the pit made this position more stable.

C. Inner perspective

As the yoga practice was part of my daily routine, the challenge was to perform the piece on the given objects in a more artistic sequence and with the mouth in a tensed gesture. As the base of the yoga pedestal was rather shaky, one had to know one's own weaknesses in order to balance out the positions or to play with the restriction or enhancement of the object.

D. Learnings

This is the first of my object series that tried to embody the organic form of the body. It was hard to fabricate the form as actually fitting individual spinal curves in the rather industrial setting of a wood workshop. In comparison to earlier works, a rehearsal to make the *Performative Process* applicable was established. (This was also done for the co-performers.)

BENDING

A. Action and setting

The pole dance piece is performed on a pole structure that can be set up by one person alone. The pole itself is made out of three pieces of brass tubing. One of them is bent in the form of the S-curve of the spine. The pole is based on a spherical socket joint, so it can spin. In the show, a typical pole choreography – including spins, headstands and climbing poses – are performed on the object.

B. Bodily sensations when performing in connection to the object(s)

The performance was physically challenging. On the level of touch the choice of material and diameter was crucial. With relatively small hands the grip was better on a pole with a smaller diameter. Also, the brass material provides a surface that has a better touch. Ideally, the arms and legs (and other parts of the body) remain uncovered. Bare skin sticks better to the pole and the resulting grip provides stability for the poses performed on it.

Two poses directly involving a body-object connection were performed:

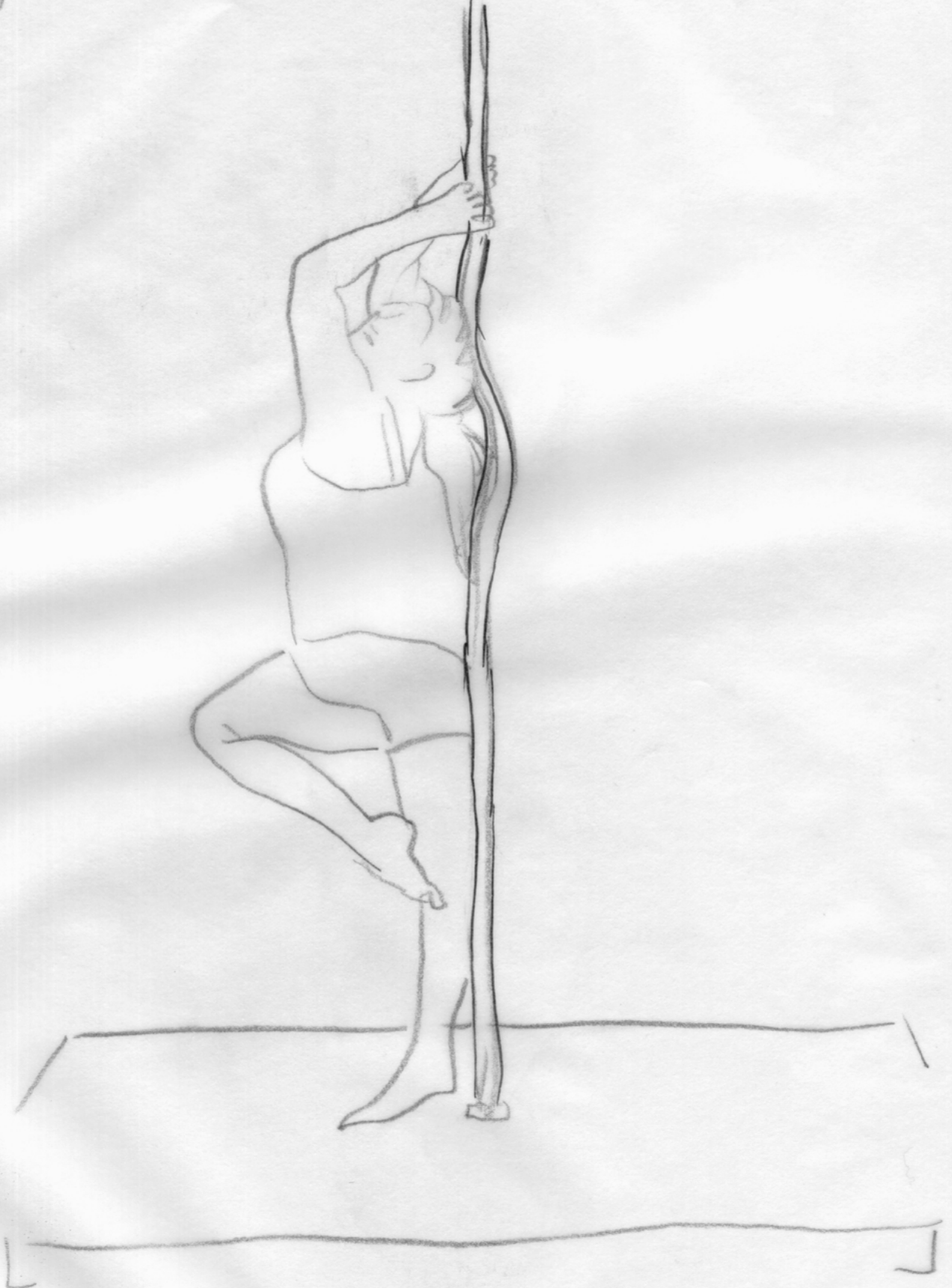
- ▷ A headstand on the base of the pole with two hands holding the base while the pole itself helps as an endpoint for stability when entering the pose.
- ▷ Climbing the pole while using the legs around to the pole as a base. One shin is on the pole, the other is folded over. Then, pushing the weight up, holding the pole with the hands on a higher point then pulling the legs up to lock them back onto the pole in a higher position.

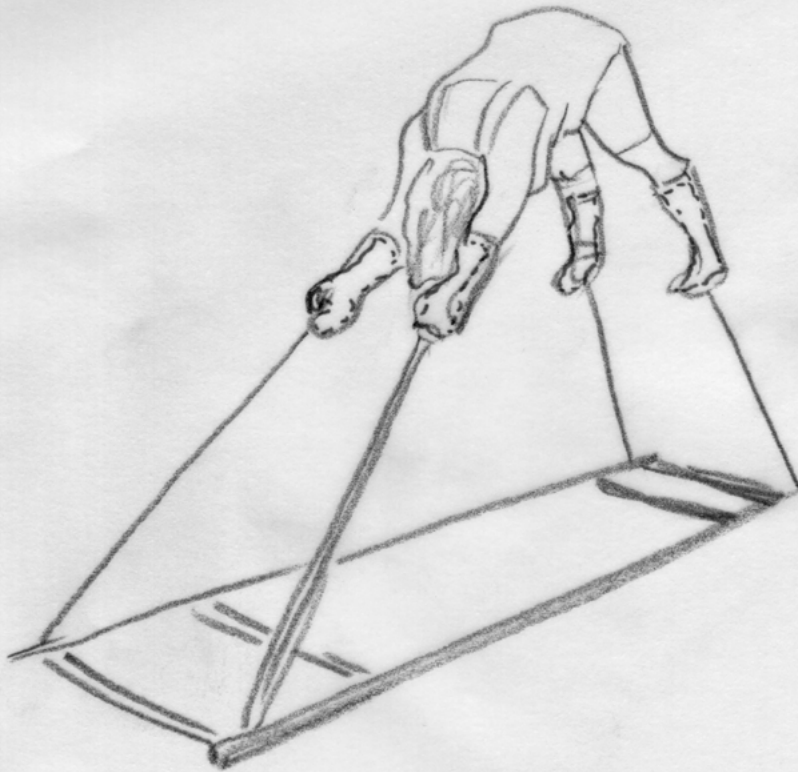
C. Perspective

The pole dance performance required a three-month period of workouts and rehearsals prior to the live shows. This was both physically and psychologically draining. It was a negotiation on the objectification of the female body while doing sexualized and body-building workouts. Having more weight than an average person, this work required discipline and strength on both the physical and mental levels. It became an act of double-standard self-empowerment.

D. Learnings

Like the yoga pedestals, the pole followed the design idea of resembling the s-curve of the spine and its organic form. Here the creative process was challenging as the bending machines in the metal workshop could only calculate one but not two curves. Basing one angle on the other was not possible, and the bend had to be replicated by hand. The height and bend did not exactly complement the body, but only offered the idea of a fitted object that was not yet a *Sensual Instrument*. The project was a step towards figuring out one's own performative boundaries.





3.6. DOWN DOG IN LIMBO

A. Action and setting

*DOWN DOG IN LIMBO*²⁰ is a sculpture and performative installation that combines body and object in a fixed position. The body pose is based on the yoga pose “downward facing dog,” in which the body forms an upside-down “V” figure: the butt is the peak of this triangular position, with the hands and feet on the floor, the legs and upper body straight and long. The hands extend past the head, and the legs are stretched back. Here however, there is a slight modification of the actual yoga pose. The pose is performed, but in the air, as the arms and legs are extended thanks to a metal frame to which they are attached and that rests on the floor. The frame includes four one-meter-long metal tubes that form an incomplete semi-pyramidal shape. On their ends are negative cast orthoses²¹ for the hands and feet. The tubes with the hand and feet casts are positioned in the air so that the body slips into the casts, thus completing the triangular or pyramidal-looking shape. The hands form fists and have handles with which to grip.

Five people are needed to create the piece, four of them assisting the performer who will complete the sculpture (that is, by entering or attaching oneself to it). The “performer” puts their hands into the hand-orthoses and the attached straps are closed. Two others then position themselves so as to lift the performer into position, followed by two more performers who help to place the feet in the sculpture. They put the feet into the feet orthosis and fasten the straps. Then all performers except the one within the sculpture leave the scene. This person now concentrates on a deep breath – called the Ujjayi Breath – a breathing technique that calms the mind, brings deep rest and concentration. The long breaths make a deep long sound coming from the throat. After a couple of minutes of deep breathing

(or whenever the appropriate time is felt by the performer) the performer in the sculpture says the word “down”. This is the cue for the other four performers to come back into position and slowly take the person out of the sculpture by more or less making the same earlier movements but now in reverse.

B. Bodily sensations when performing

As I am the artist and performer in the work, the hand and feet orthoses were custom-made to fit my body. On the physical level they are like casts that fix the extremities into certain positions. It takes a little bit of twisting to enter them, but once inside they fit perfectly. In the first part, when only the hands are inside the sculpture the angle is not yet straight and it feels slightly uncomfortable. As soon as my body is lifted up, this tension dissolves. When both the hands and feet are in position there is a sense of alignment that makes the posing a quite restful experience.

On a physical level, the breathing stabilizes the posture. When doing the downward facing dog, one concentrates on alignment, especially in the shoulders, sacrum and stretched ankles. This bodily concentration ensures a stable posture. The body’s direction continues with the sculpture, as the extension of arms and legs pull down into the frame. The only limit is physical. An amount of energy is required to stay concentrated and strong enough to be lifted out of the construction. As a performer, I set myself the rule that when the sensation of tickling hands starts to arise, the moment to stop has come. From this moment and the spoken cue “down” it will still take about a minute to get out of the construction. One has to own one’s body, its possibilities as well as its limitations and boundaries. It is important to be in tune with one’s

20 Frey et al., 153–63.

21 Orthoses are attachable splints that can move parts of the body into a position or strengthen them.

physical and psychological conditions on the day of the performance. Regular yoga practice – and especially this position – is necessary for this endeavor. The performative part of getting in and out of the sculpture needs physical strength as well. The physical aspects, including my own limits, as well as safety aspects also need to be figured out during the rehearsal practices.

C. Inner Perspective

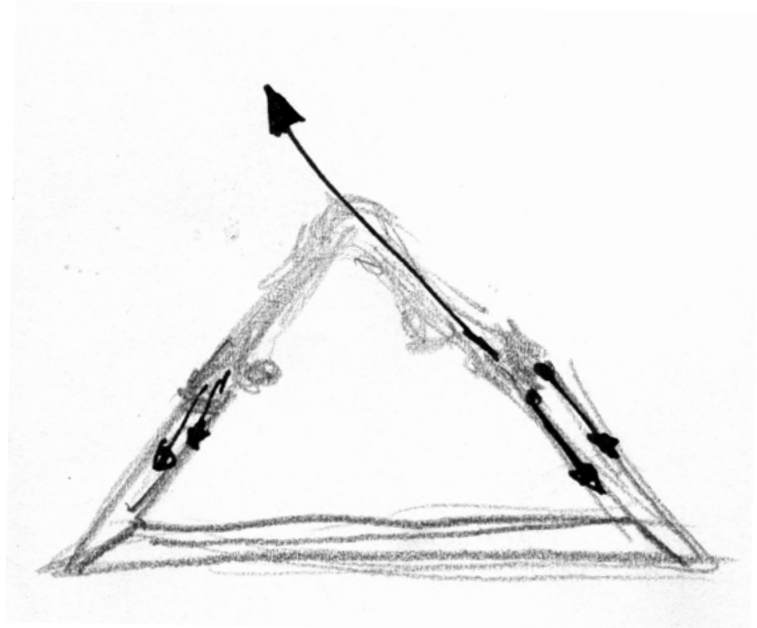
It takes courage to be the person that gets lifted and fixed into the sculpture. One has to trust the object, and must concentrate to not let fear take over. But it actually feels comfortable and safe inside the frame – as long as one is able to detach from the fact that one is in fact trapped in the device. The other performers have to be trusted to be both physically capable and loyal. When being lifted into and out of the sculpture there is a movement of floating free. One's bottom is up in the air, and the feet ready to be attached (at the beginning) and then detached (at the end) and set back to the ground. It is a funny feeling when two arms are attached and one is lifted up into half of a handstand, the groin and bottom up in the air at around 1.7 meters, not seeing what is happening, and while nothing is attached or held until the other performers catch the feet and fix them into the frame.

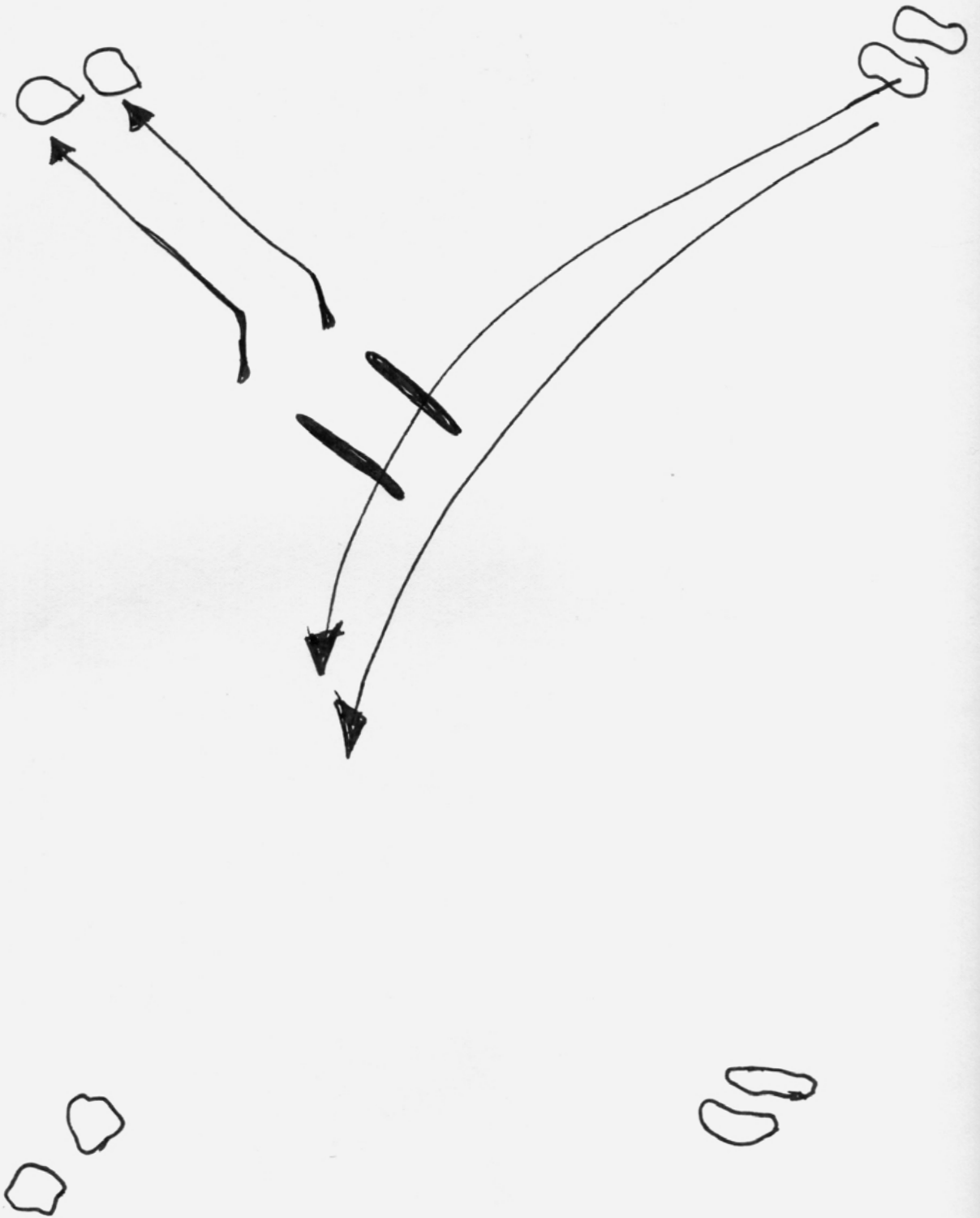
D) Learnings

On a performative perspective, the biggest learning in this work was to trust in my own abilities and in my colleagues, as well as to learn to communicate with them.

It was easy to maintain a neutral performative state, thanks to having a clear sequence to follow and a challenging object to concentrate on. It was simple to show and perform the work in a natural way with a focus on installing, holding and uninstalling the body into the structure. This was the first object that has components that fit exactly

to my body. However, the position is fixed, so no further interaction with anyone is possible. The only possibility is to stay focused while inside the structure. Nevertheless, this work was the first comprehensive step towards the idea of a *Sensual Instrument*. Body and object are truly intertwined and together they build a new object-body.







3.7. THIGH GAP STRETCHER

A. Action and setting

The *Thigh Gap*²² *Stretcher*²³ is a small platform with an inflatable piece of plastic with Velcro straps that is attached between the legs. One stands with one's legs spread apart. The plastic element forms a triangle between the legs and the platform, with the apex of the triangle forming a sort of "saddle" on which one can "sit while standing." When inflated the plastic pushes against the body. The upper part especially pushes the thighs apart. One stands on the platform and attaches a fan to the valve. The stretching occurs as the plastic piece is filled.

B. Sensory catalogue

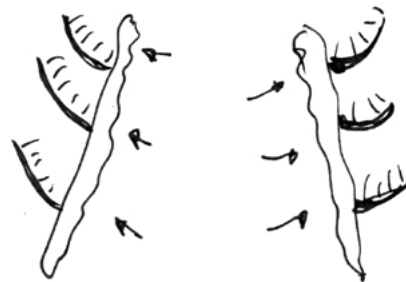
Standing on the podium predetermines the effect of the legs being stretched a little too far apart. The plastic object fills this gap, forcing the body even more so into this position. The more air blown into the object the more the legs are fixed into their position. At some point it feels stable, but as soon as more air enters, it becomes hard to maintain control and not fall over. One has to concentrate, stay focused and upright. As the plastic is a non-breathing material, the legs begin to transpire, creating a sweaty and sticky environment.

C. Perspective

The object is rather uncomfortable to use and serves the purpose of creating feelings of oppression. The effect of the straitjacket-like character is heightened, as one could fall over anytime if not fully concentrated.

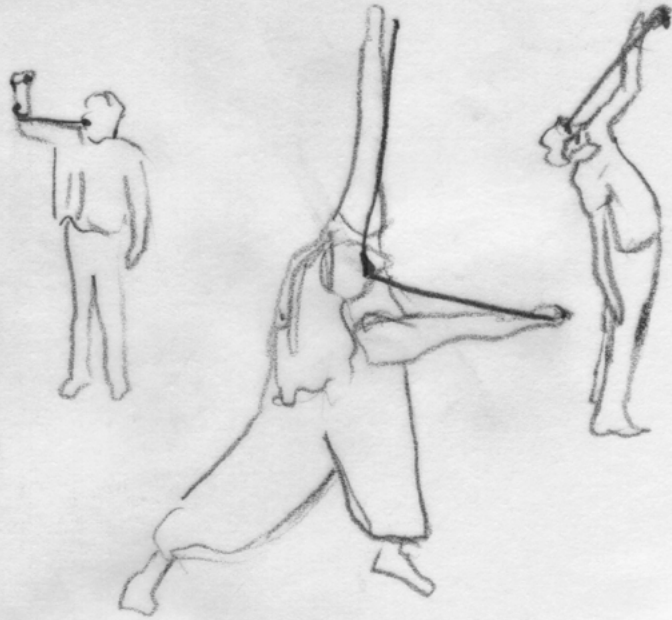
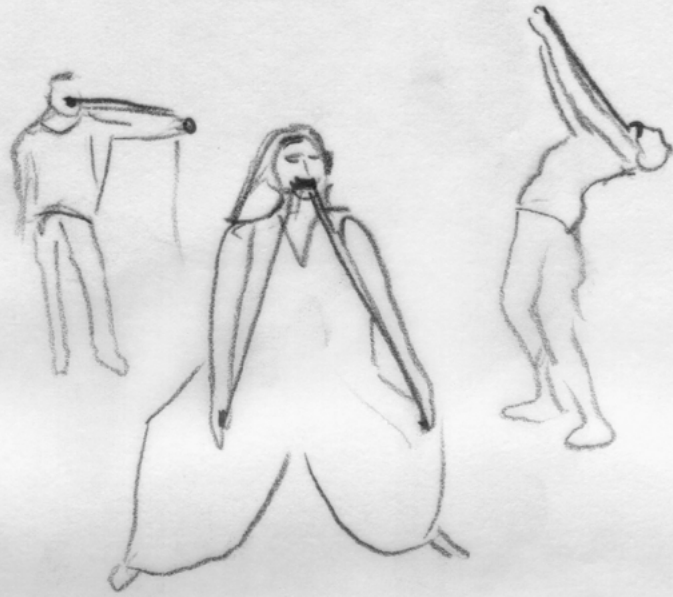
D. Learnings

The *Thigh Gap Stretcher* fixes the legs into a triangular position in which only the legs are fixed. It does not fulfil its artistic aspiration of stretching the thigh gap; instead, it fixes the thighs into a shape that might be reached by simple training. Nor does it have an instrumental use per se. However, by using the technique of the inflatable object it can complete the organic form of the body.



22 The thigh gap is the space between the thighs. Current beauty trends for teenagers emphasize the beauty ideals of having a gap between the thighs.

23 Frey et al., *Barbis Ruder: Werk – Zyklus – Körper / Work – Cycle – Body*, 171–75.



3.8. MOUTHPIECES

A. Actions and settings

*Mouthpieces*²⁴ consists of different versions of performative objects that are connected to the teeth. *Mouthpieces v1* is a series of works with different tooth guards that are attached to either one-meter long rods or to a chain. In this series all of the mouth guards are attached to the upper jaw.

Mouthpiece v1 A has two rods attached onto the guard at the position of the upper canine teeth. The other end of the rods can be held with the hands. Positions can be guided by the lengthened pieces. As the rods are stiff, they guide the positions of the mouth so that the body can follow. One masters the movement with one's hands. By pushing the rods (and thus the jaw) in different directions, the position and *Haltung* varies: from straight stretches to crooked positions; depending on the movement, the spine can be supported or placed under extra stress. *Mouthpiece v1 B* follows the same rules, but with one rod seeming to "lengthen" the incisor teeth. Here again different positions are enabled by pushing the rod into different directions. *Mouthpiece v1 C* has a chain connected to the incisor part of the mouth guard. As a flexible material, the chain does not imply the same kinds of movements as in the previous cases. Here the object follows the positions of the body and tension is created by pulling the chain or wrapping it around other body parts.

In the follow-up version, *Mouthpieces v2*, the teeth are connected to braces.

Mouthpiece v2 A is for the lower jaw. At the incisors it is connected to a small metal plate, which is further attached to a bass string that is connected to a 10kg weight. The mouthpiece is played by stretching the chin away from the weight so as to tense the string – allowing one to use a bass bow to play the string. *Mouthpiece v2 B* consists of braces that are connected to the upper jaw. The canine teeth are

lengthened with small Allen keys. To each of them one can attach a two-meter long brass rod; these are attached to two 5k weights standing on the floor.

B. Sensory Catalogue

The mouth guards/braces create an altered body awareness. When the rods are pushed too hard the highly sensitive teeth feel it. However, when gentle the transition between body and object is smooth; this enhancement enables the body to become more flexible. The counter-pressure of the rod and pushing the hands up against the upper jaw makes one's spine feel lighter. Especially in the neck, but also down along the spine there is an openness created when the push is done gently and at a right angle. This spine lengthening enables a deeper backbend.

▷ Backbends

Within the *v1 A* and *v2 A* version this stretch is comparable. While in the *v1* version the hands control and hold the backbend, in version *v2* the two rods are connected to counterweights on the floor. Here the body balances with and against the longer bent rods. This creates more stability, but also less potential to move out of the piece. The balance has to be softly maintained.

In the *v1* versions *A* and *B* there is also the potential to move sideways and into a squat-like position.

▷ To the sides

1. Facing the front: the head bends to one side, and the neck and shoulder stretch, following the movement. So does the spine as it follows this rounded motion. The stretch on the corresponding side extends the body down to the floor.

2. Face to the side at a 90° angle: the body follows, also the feet. then a push through the rods to the jaw, a sideways and long backwards bend that can open diagonally.

Stretching to the sides however and not being aware of one's own bodily restrictions can be tough, as the crooked positions can harm the body and cause muscle strains.

▷ Squats

When moving downwards in a squat position where the legs are spread to the sides and the upper body is lowered, holding the teeth/head with the rods creates extra stability that enables the body to move even lower. Through the mouthguard, the torso has to stay in an upright position and cannot tip over. This counterweights the tendency of less stability in this position and creates a powerful pose.

The mouthpieces with the looser attached materials – the chain and the string – follow different physical rules. In *Mouthpiece 1 C* version (using the chain), the tension has to be built up from within. As a matter of fact, the mouthpiece does not hold a supportive role, but has more of an artificial purpose: The tension is created by holding the chain or wrapping it around other body parts. In this, pushing and pulling the body part or the hand against the jaw creates a kind of play. However, positions have to be created somewhat artificially, and thus this piece is less intuitive than other versions.

As the *Mouthpiece v2 B* does contain a connection to a counterpart – the 10kg weight on the floor – it holds the potential of building a more natural connection and tension to the body that plays with it. The weight is heavy enough that one can push against it with a healthy amount of bodily force without the weight tipping over. The body can pull from the string that is attached to the braces on the jaw. As the lower jaw is the connecting point one has to retain the powers at play with the jaw muscles. As they are the strongest muscles in the human body, and a rather unnatural force is at play, one has to be careful not to become strained in the interaction. The pulling force on the string is translated through

the jaw, and the body has to counter this with an upright position wherein the shoulders push back and the spine lengthens. The ideal standing position would be to stand with the legs in front of each other and about a half-meter apart. This position gives stability and helps to balance the body in connection to the object without straining the back in a posture that might not hold enough power to retain the pull for the string.

C. Perspectives/Feedback involved

Body awareness, both physical and knowing one's own strength and boundaries are important when using the mouthpieces. Strong physical training is not necessary as the pieces require rather a sensitivity for when a stretch feels good or goes too far, and thus, how long it can be retained. Especially for the backbends it helps to warm up the body

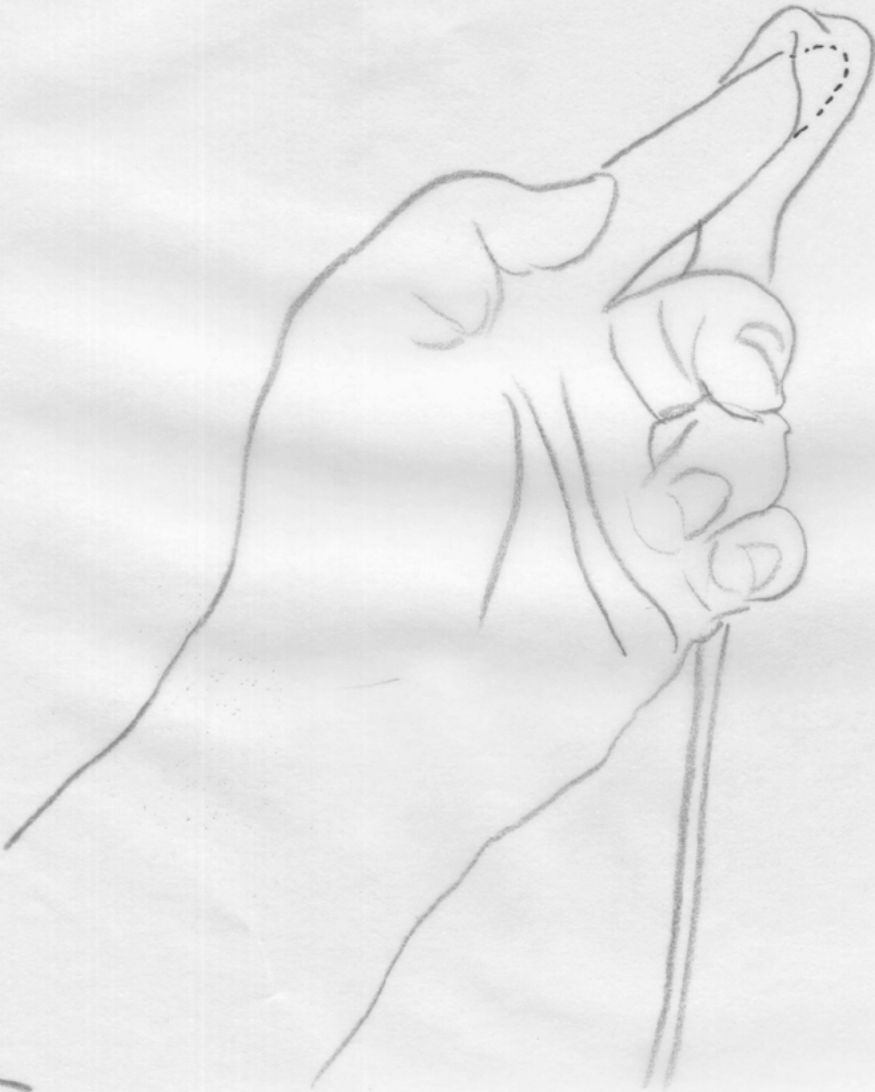


before performing, and to regularly do a few neck strengthening exercises. The jaw especially can become strained, and there have been moments in the course of performing when they were overused. Hence it requires experience and practice to perform the *Mouthpieces* in a gentle way. By doing so one can profit from the newly gained sense of space within the body; the spine is gently stretched when one follows the forces in alignment with the body. To create an inner feeling of stability it helps to imagine lines along the body. This creates another level of awareness of the physique, and of the space when one imagines the lines growing beyond and in alignment with the surrounding.

D. Learnings

Mouthpieces were the first actual *Sensual Instruments*: They are objects to be played with by the body. The object affects how the body can be utilized in connection with them. They are on an equal level with the performer and give an opportunity to play performatively with form in terms of movement of traction, and pulling and pushing in a gentle way. To make the experience relatable, they need to be available for others to use. However, new mouthguards or braces need to be cast for each new performer in order to make the performative instrument accessible to others.





3.9. TOUCHPOINT

A. Action and setting

*Touchpoint*²⁵ is a study of how ideas or conceptual propositions transform into reality and manifest in the physical world. It examines the touchpoint as the place of transition: an invisible surface where the body touches the object. The space within reach and the fingertips are the focus of this work. In order to get a physical grip on the matter, small objects that suit the fingertips were created in clay and then in silicone. Typical hand poses from politicians were the template for the gestures. They were categorized by the three dimensions within reach of an able-bodied person via bent arms and stretched arms in both their actual and physically possible realms of reach. The first level two-hand gestures or poses made while delivering speeches such as the typical *Merkel-Raute*²⁶ or former Austrian chancellor Sebastian Kurz's angled arms waving up and down, the gestures of the second and third levels mostly consist of pointed index fingers. The objects created fill an imaginable space in the air that describes the touch, its motion and direction. The little objects symbolizing this touchpoint are mounted on metal rods that are attached to a platform. The objects are placed at the height of where the imagined motion of the gesture would end. This creates a platform with a few touchpoints representing the places where words and gestures might manifest in matter.

B. Sensory catalogue

Pointing one's fingers into the object has no physical effect other than that of touching a cast negative that is fitted to one's own body. On a physical level the long rods bend away when pressed and there is not much effort or inner alignment necessary to be in touch. It is not so easy to reimagine the exact positioning of the hand and fingers and thus the

work becomes a riddle where the fingers' counterparts have to be found.

C. Perspectives/feedback involved

When standing in front of the *Touchpoint* platform and touching the small pieces one has to imagine the pose that originates from it in order to actually use it.

Somehow this returns one back to the idea of the work, that some words and gestures of powerful people imply consequences in the real world. However, as easy as the actual action of saying and articulating something with the hand is, it does need an entire apparatus – the system, one's connections and the career that they are built on – to have such a powerful impact. The touchpoint is a mere connecting spot where power comes into play and many intertwined dependencies and rules come together. It may be the catalyst of transformed power for those who hold it – but it remains a mystery for those who don't.

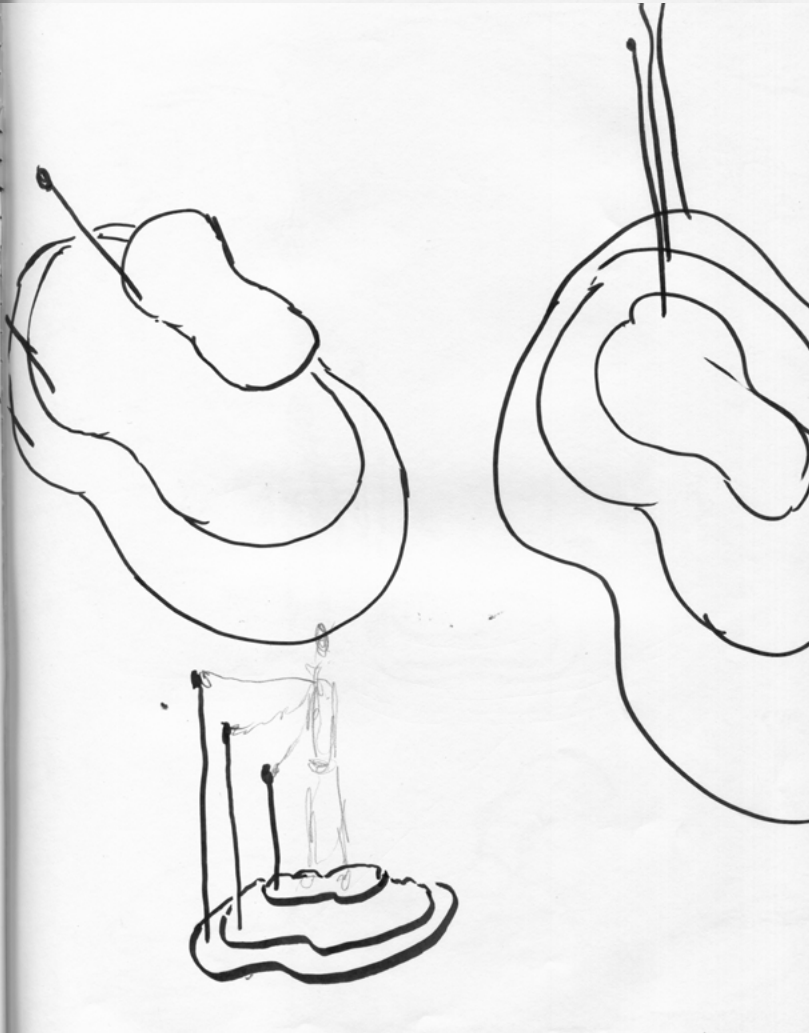
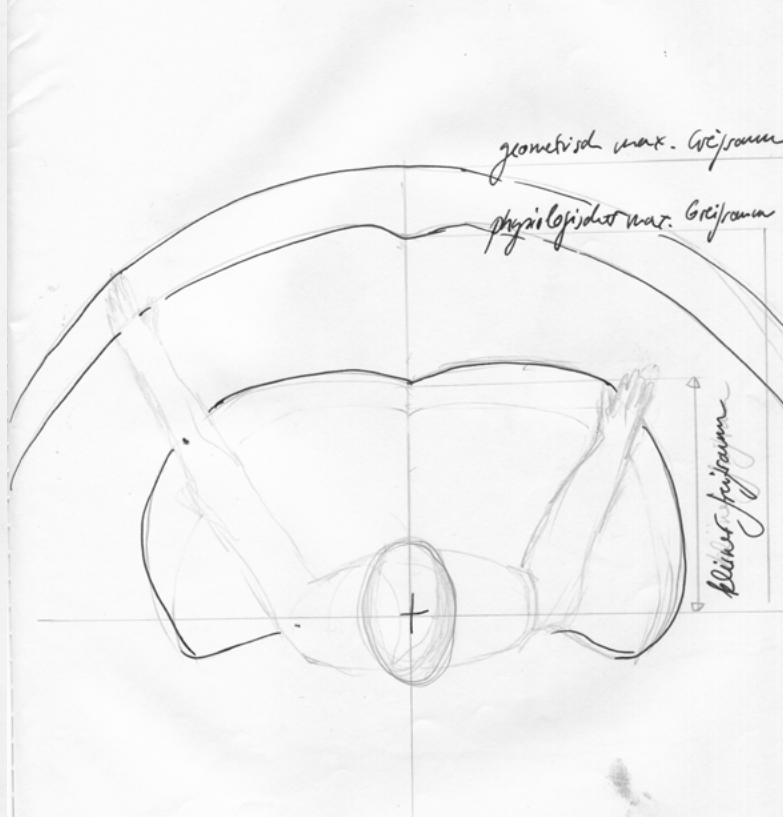
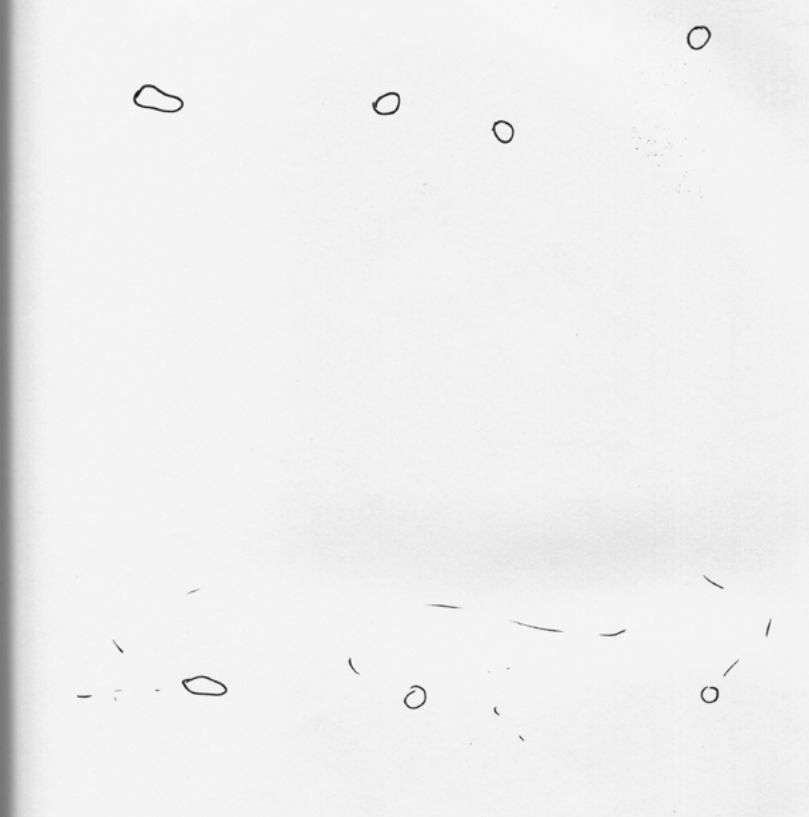
D. Learnings

Touchpoint is a rather conceptual work along the lines of the idea of creating a language of translation for the moment when words become action and then matter. The work helps for the process of describing a method for this research, but fails in being a *Sensual Instrument* or *Performative Process* itself. Even though it was the plan to create an artwork that is accessible to others, I could not succeed with this claim in this work, and so it became more of a riddle or blueprint for works to come. This is why the work is still in the category of epistemic artworks: it conveys the idea of being in touch and in the realm of action and offers a language to translate this idea into form.

25 Frey et al., 311–19.

26 triangular gesture typical for German ex-chancellor Angela Merkel: the fingers of the opposite hands touch each other and create a diamond shape.





4. Findings

Based on the question, “What does it feel like to be in this work?,” it has been the main objective of this artistic research to make the experience of performing and being in touch with an object accessible to others. The works of the past decade have been described and categorized with the *Body – Object – Intersection Scan* to draw conclusions towards their potential in order to make them accessible to others. My goal was to create *Sensual Instruments* and *Performative Processes* that would make the unusual artistic experience of being in touch accessible not only to colleagues in the art world, but a wider public that could be approached by the activated bodily aspects of the work and by empowering them in their awareness of their own *Haltung*. This chapter will first look at the artistic manifestations in the form of *Sensual Instruments* and then at the applicable formats of *Performative Processes*.

4.1. Sensual Instruments

Building on the process of creating artistic works that offer a connection to the body and a point of touch, two artworks that can count as *Sensual Instruments* were developed: *Little Friend*²⁷ and *A*²⁸. Both are wooden constructions that can be used by others. The development research is based on my study of the body and its *Haltung*, as well as its relation to space, and how that relation can get in touch through the object.

4.1.1. LEAN IN

Little Friend is a sculpture based on research on backbends and arches that can be performed by the body. The study began with drawing and body exercises of posture that were then made manifest in the artworks. First the arches were translated into drawings. The bodily position served as the base from which to create an instrument or tool that would give the user a space from which they

27 Frey et al., Barbis Ruder: *Werk – Zyklus – Körper / Work – Cycle – Body*, 325–33.

28 Frey et al., 335–53.

could follow the movement of a backbend arch. When translating the work into form, there was first a tryout performance, using a gymnastics box at different heights to create a backbend study. (A video was also made.) Differently angled arches were tried out. Based on this research the hybrid object *Little Friend* was developed. It consists of a gymnastics apparatus – a vaulting buck – as well as wall bars and offers the user the possibility of trying out backbands at varying heights. It is solid and stable and can be used by other people. In the exhibition it is stated that the work can be used and the audience did so at the exhibition opening in 2020. Unfortunately, lockdowns and hygiene regulations have made it impossible to offer the work once more until now.

4.1.2. A

A is a work complex that was created for the Dominican church in Krems in Spring 2021. The aim of the artistic research was to figure out the body's relation to the overwhelming space of the church. Inscribing it in a physical and musical way were the video works that resulted. These two personal aspects were translated in A – instrument and a performative sculpture that could be used by various people. A became a rather complex *Sensual Instrument*: It is a kinetic sculpture consisting of a triangle that employed architectural and carpenter techniques used in making a roof truss. The bottom is rounded to form a seesaw, while a long pendulum holds the triangle at its top and rises far into the sky. It is an instrument for body, mind and soul and is played by at least three friends at the same time. One sits at the base of the pendulum, while the other two stand at the edges: two different roles for three people. Together they set the pace. They make the composition swing with and against each other, like a trembling metronome. It remains exciting and unclear whether there will be a tipping point or if the construction will remain in its equilibrium.

This *Sensual Instrument* was designed for people to use and it invites the audience to get in touch with it. There are many very different qualities of touch and movement at play here. The more sensitive one is to the movements that it provides, the more one can influence it on a subtle level. It has a watery quality too. The oscillation becomes superb when the instrument moves softly and synchronously. This is a *Sensual Instrument* that supports sharing a space and being together – offering an unusual playful situation to engage with. Every action, no matter how small, is followed by a reaction. The smallest movements can have a great effect on the entire sculpture.

A became a *Sensual Instrument* that brings people together in a situation of movement, in relation to one another, and in space. To see how the experience translates to others, feedback from users was collected (paraphrased here):

- ▷ One could see how the subtle movements appealed to the guest, as they were appreciating the minor rhythmic movements and how these affected the body. Some guests who took this approach closed their eyes, laid down on the sculpture, or even fell asleep.
- ▷ In the reception I asked myself, who is the object and who is the performer? How are these boundaries renegotiated through this imposing object? In my opinion, the concept of the instrument is exciting in that the artist assigns a new musical-poetic dimension to this material confrontation, drawing attention to the complexification of nature-culture relationships as a continuum and balance as well as mutual trust and their dependence in a new-material sense.
- ▷ I loved this artwork, because it is so physically interactive. I often miss this in the cold white cubes. I sometimes ask myself: when did art become so dead? But this artwork was alive.

When offering this *Sensual Instrument* to others one has to be aware of the precondition that many people may not be aware of how it works, but may want to try it out of fear or excitement. It required continuous support from my side to be present in and with the object. Unless an institution takes it over and cares enough to supervise its use, it will be difficult to achieve accessibility to a broader audience and to keep the work alive.

4.2. Performative Processes

In addition, to the *Sensual Instruments*, *Performative Processes* were developed rooted in the practice of being in contact with an object. Both the findings from the previous works and the *Sensual Instruments* have been applied in various workshop formats. The Findings are *Performative Processes* that can again lead into applications or new instruments/artworks.

4.2.1. Phantom Lab

*Phantom Lab*²⁹ is an artistic research group that includes the philosopher Lona Gaikis and the industrial designer and tailor Walter Lunzer. We have been researching the aesthetics of prosthetics and its industrialized surroundings by setting up a performative doctor's office as a workshop for colleagues from the fields of art and prosthesis development. The research implied re-enacting scientific experiments, the experimental wearing of prosthetic limbs and using them for artistic purposes. Bringing together people from different disciplines into a performative and playful setting was a direct application of the learnings in the field of *Performative Processes*. From the artistic perspective – and in its current research state – the project has had the following outcomes:

- ▷ changing the way how developers empathize with users by offering *Performative Processes* and setting up a research surrounding;

- ▷ suggesting the development of a better fitted self-awareness prosthetic hand, and performative exercises in order to offer researchers and developers the possibility to empathize more/better with the user;
- ▷ an application and knowledge transfer from the different creative disciplines in dialogue with the industry.

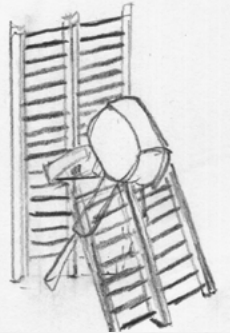
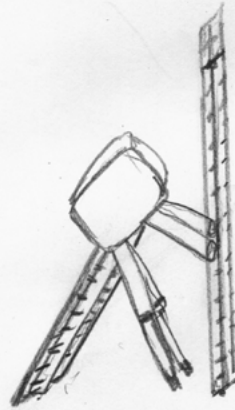
The project team is currently in the process of drawing conclusions and setting up new environments. From the artistic perspective, both experimenting with the setting of the lab as a stage design, and playing with the sensual experience of the self-awareness prosthetic hands, were the main focus.

4.2.2. Body – Object – Intersection Lab

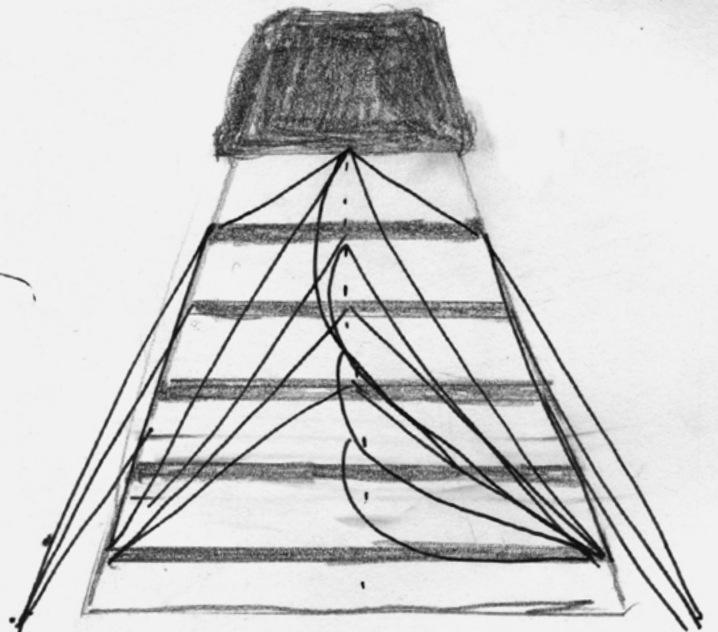
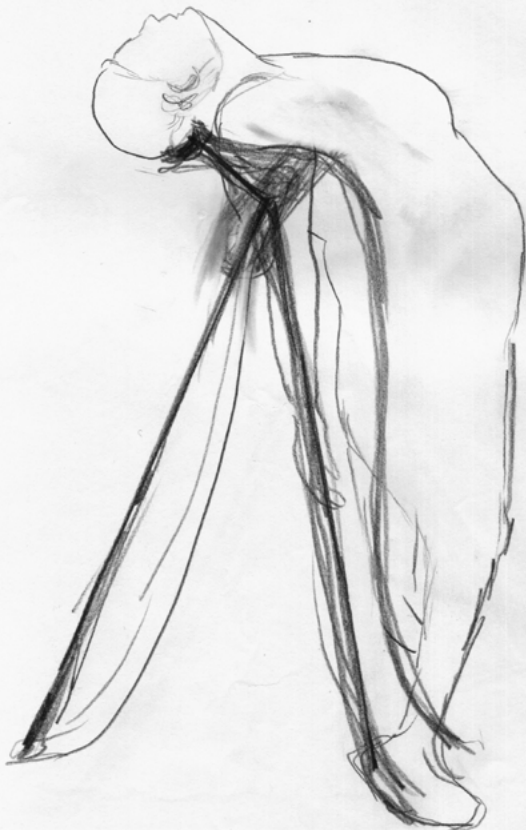
Deriving from the findings of the *BOIS*, this lab offers tools and a workshop format to play around and get in touch with the feel, enhancements and restraints that a performative object can offer. The performative workshop starts with exercises to center the body, and then heightens its awareness towards the space and the possibilities and limitations one's body or body parts possess, as, for example, when falling towards a wall. The second part of the workshop focusses on the creation of an object: a brass rod with soft edges that complement the body at whichever body part the user wishes. With the newly gained awareness of the body, participants can see which body parts can be enhanced through the realm of movement or newly gained stability. The *Body – Object – Intersection Lab* is a direct translation of the findings towards how to have a practical *Performative Process*. Here findings are active and alive in practice.

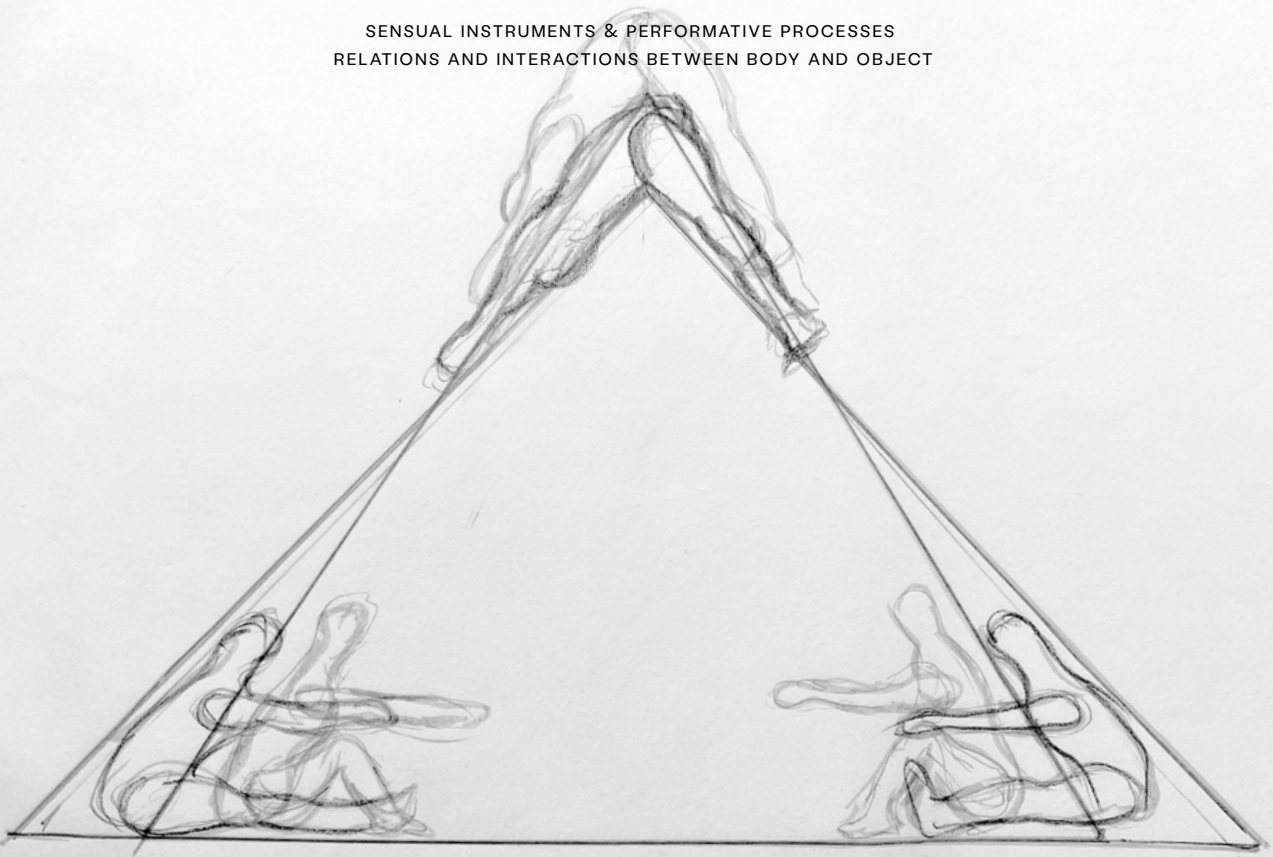
Open your heart Trainingprogramm

→ pseudo 3D in greenbox
→ four facets Objekt auch grün
2-3 Objektet Posen?
Kostüm

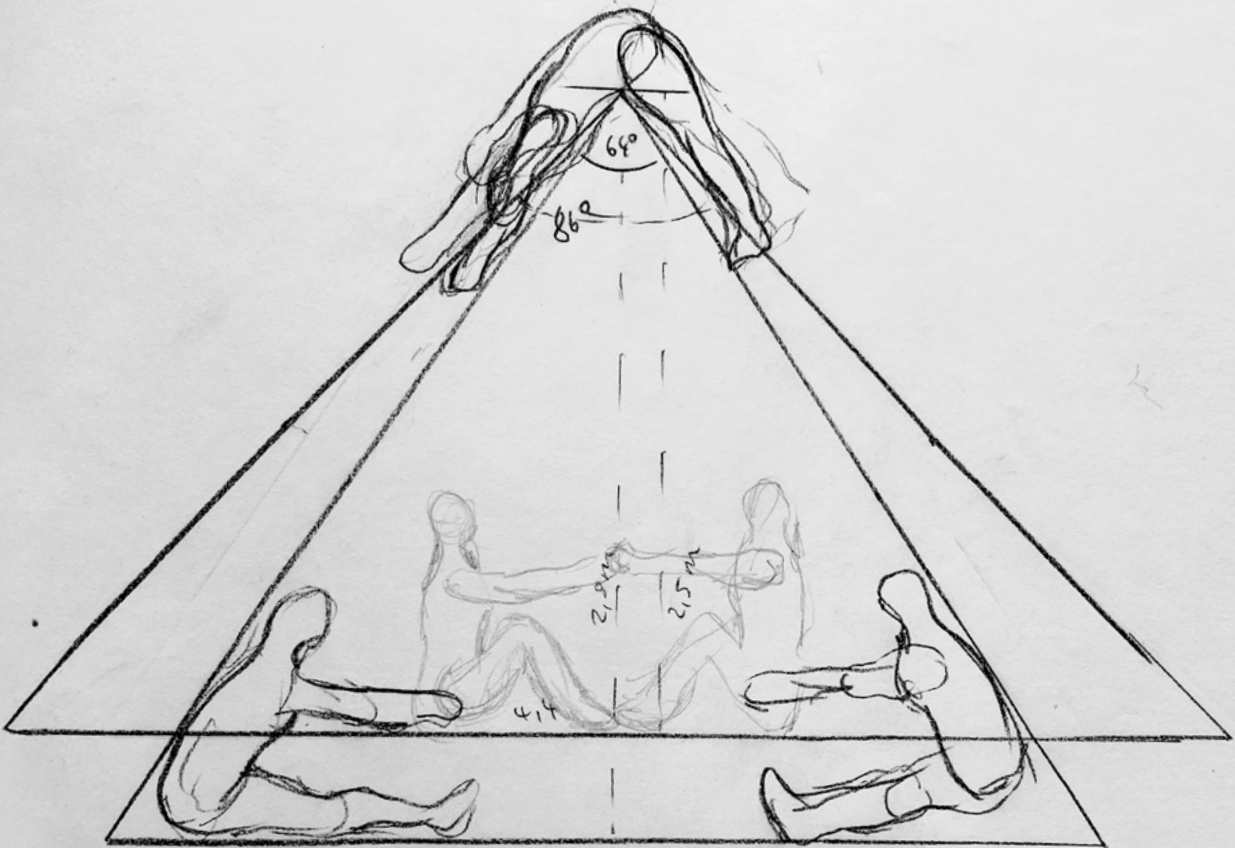


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Body – Object – Intersection Lab





Phantom Lab



5. Conclusions

Both with the *Sensual Instruments* and the *Performative Processes* agency of self-empowerment is offered and ideally transferred to the perceivers, audiences or users in touch with the artworks. They all contain momentum (actual or metaphoric) that offers a moment of stability through instability, a moment to build strength from within, to take a stance and show one's own true colors, one's *Haltung*. The *Sensual Instruments* take the artworks down from a pedestal and offer a moment to be in relation with an object, to be in touch and to experience in a playful way. They are a way of making an artwork live. The *Performative Processes* are the offer of workshop tools and settings that allow people to explore their own situatedness and their relationship to objects. Both practical approaches offer people a chance to come into relation by tearing down the third wall or other barriers, by actively offering an intersection that can serve as a catalyst to make artistic work more accessible, and by offering the audience an opportunity to develop their own *Haltung*.

CREDITS

Many thanks to the team of the Zentrum Fokus Forschung, especially for their support of artistic research projects and for providing space, visibility, and a breeding ground for fruitful and collegial exchange.

Moreover, I would like to thank the many colleagues that entered these unexpected endeavors with me. None of these works would have been possible without you.

From the personal perspective, I would like to add that it takes courage to create works that undermine the market mechanics of the art industry so as to make artworks accessible and even touchable to viewers. In a performative process it helps to have an “as if” perspective. In practice it requires the ability to work in collaboration, to negotiate, to set boundaries (or to let them go), and to be able to manage my own and others’ expectations.

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