PAPERNESS

Expressive Material in Textile Art from an Artist's Viewpoint

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Content

1
Introduction

A textile artist tends to create artworks using a specific physical material or a set of materials together with a specific technique throughout her professional life. A passion for a type of material can lead a textile artist to unceasingly experiment with the material, so that she comes across an idea and finds artistic means for expressing the idea in a tangible form – an artwork. With its potential to help an artist execute an artwork, a material is considered crucial for any creative process. Although textile artists normally realise the importance of the physical materials they choose to work with in their art practice, no explicit account has been made of how a material is important for them, for their creative processes and artworks. From my experience in textile art practice, I have speculated that both the physical qualities of a material and its expressivity beyond its physicality, are vital for an artist carrying out a creative process the outcome of which is an artwork. Surprisingly, the expressivity of physical materials in textile art has not been much touched upon in the discussion among textile artists, and therefore is worth investigating.

This study sets out to scrutinise the expressivity of paper string as a material in textile art. It aims to explore the relationship between paper string and artistic expression. While paper string is physical and touchable, artistic expression can be conceived as subjective, known only by a person. However, the physical and the subjective components might not function separately in a creative process but instead rather intertwiningly. The possible incorporation of these components becomes the problem field of the study. To tackle it, the study calls for a closer look at paper string used in actual textile art practice. Being a textile artist myself, a way to look closely into a creative process is to take the role of a practitioner. As such, I can carry out artistic productions[1] that use paper string and take them into research as case studies. Researching through own art[2] suggests a model to research – the researcher investigates her creative processes, creating artefacts and writing about them. This model of research, which can be called practice-based or practice-led, has developed during the last

[1] "Artistic production" or "art production" in this study comprises acts and activities in a creative process, making artworks, putting them on display in an exhibition, and asking viewers for feedback.

[2] Research through art and design is a model of research in art and design first suggested by the British educationist Christopher Frayling (1993). This model represents research where art or design practice is the tool of performing the research and of communicating the results.

two decades both in Finland and internationally. For its development, see, for example, Frayling et al. (1997), Scrivener (2002a), Biggs (2004), Gray and Malins (2004) and Mäkelä and Routarinne (2006). The term "practice-led" will be adopted to refer to this study, because it better represents the research process which is led by my professional textile art practice.

In order to show and discuss in detail my own artistic productions, making and exhibiting artworks becomes one of the approaches applied to this research. As the artworks made of paper string are put on display, to know how an audience views the material can be interesting and possibly help investigate the relationship between paper string and artistic expression. This aspect supports the choice of questioning visitors to the exhibitions. When the art productions or information collected from the visitors' surveys needs some explanation, literature related to the research problem is used, especially on the following subjects: phenomenology of perception (e.g., Heidegger 1962/1990; Merleau-Ponty 1962/2005), expression theories in aesthetics (e.g., Collingwood 1938/1958; Dewey 1934/2005), exhibition design and history of modern art display (e.g., Lefebvre 1991; O'Doherty 1999), and Finnish design history (e.g., Kruskopf 1975; Wiberg 1996). For the research, I employ various means of documentation, such as diary writing, diagram drawing, photographing, sketching and questionnaires. These form the data, which can be organised, communicated and discussed.

Research through own art practice enables a deep and thorough examination of the research problem. By focusing on paper string, various themes have evolved during the study, demonstrating the *active* quality or expressivity of paper string in textile art, or what I call "paperness". With this quality, paper string can inform me (the artist) through its physical qualities about how to proceed with the creative processes of "Seeing Paper" and "Paper World" physically and conceptually. Conceptually, the experience with paper string can gradually give rise to artistic expression; thoughts and feelings are stimulated, leading to the conceptualisation of the design and context of the art production. Physically, the results of the art production are artworks and an exhibition, which, however, not only appear as material objects but also possess artistic content expressible to an audience. Materialness thus formulates both the physical form and subject matter of each artwork and exhibition into which artistic expression incorporates the material.

This study has changed and improved my way of creating textile art. This detailed account can be useful for textile pedagogy and everyone who is interested in textile art. I believe that some readers will benefit from it and change their way of doing things after reading it, just as I have benefitted and changed during the conduct of this research.

2

Research problem and context: material and artistic expression in textile art

Textile art[3] is a creative field involving making textiles. The term "textile art" implies that any creation in the field places emphasis on the use of textile material as a physical medium.[4] Almost anything from linen fibre to found objects from a flea market can be used as material for contemporary textile art. While some textile artists might experiment all the time with disparate materials, interestingly, most textile artists tend to use only a single kind of material or an assemblage of varied materials for making their works for a prolonged period or even for their whole lifetime. Persistence in using and experimenting with a particular material can progressively develop artistic quality and the skill of the artist, so that she is able to create high-quality artworks, i.e., well-formed objects with artistic contents, from the material. A physical material in the hands of a textile artist thus has the potential to construct not only an outwardly tangible object, but also to give that object meaning. With this potential, a material becomes vital for any creative process. However, the significance of a material beyond the surface of the physical object it constructs has hardly been described. Although textile artists implicitly understand the importance of materials they choose to work with in their art practice, they rarely explain how a material is important for their creative processes, for their artworks and for themselves.

This is a study on a physical material employed in textile art written from the point of view of a textile artist. It will shed light on the value of material in physicalising the idea of an artist into the tangible form of a meaningful artwork. The current chapter addresses the aim of this research from which the research problem field is developed, forming a set of

[3] Textile art in a particular cultural context is uniquely created and organised. The field seems to be culturally bound and interpreted. Therefore, as a textile artist having been educated and working in Finland since 2000, I focus most heavily on the field of textile art in Finland. In Thailand, for example, textile art seems to refer only to ethnic textiles and their creation, it does not include contemporary textiles.

[4] In comparison, "ceramic art" suggests that any creation in the field emphasises the use of ceramic material as a physical medium, and other material-based or craft-based arts, such as glass art, wood art, etc.have the same emphasis. The emphasis on the material used in artworks could be considered a unique characteristic of craft-based art that differentiates textile art and other material arts such as ceramic art, glass art and wood art from fine arts.

research questions and my position in carrying out this research. The chapter provides the definition and overview of research that includes art and design productions by researchers, and also examples of completed research projects of this kind. Research in other disciplines that utilise the inclusion of professional practice by researchers is illustrated, too. Before discussing the issues mentioned above, it is worth examining the textile artworld[5], in Finland in particular, and its relationship to the art and design domain[6] at large in order to clarify the context in which this piece of research stands.

2.1 Textile artworld: textile art and textile artists

Textile art may fall into the category of applied arts, industrial arts, decorative arts, fine arts or crafts. In Finland, textile art has its origins in industrial arts or "taideteollisuus" in Finnish (where "taide" means art and "teollisuus" denotes industry), the field having developed from both home industry or in Finnish "kotiteollisuus"[7], and fine arts or "kuvataide". The Finnish term for industrial arts has a broad meaning comprising the area of design arts and crafts.[8] The present term for industrial arts is design or "muotoilu" in Finnish. This term was adopted in the 1950s due to the growth of design for industrial production.[9]

The Finnish term "tekstiilitaiteilija" (textile artist) is also quite broad. The term has been used since the 1910s to define people who work creatively with textiles or fibre. Other terms such as artist, decorative artist, Miss or Mrs and architect (only in male cases) have also been frequently used during the first decades of the twentieth century to refer to textile professionals in Finland.[10] However, not all of these textile professionals deal exclusively with art textiles. The Finnish textile art historian Leena Svinhufvud writes in the exhibition catalogue of the seventh Finnish textile triennial

[5] Textile artworld here involves anyone who thinks he or she is a member of a specific textile institution, thus acting on behalf of it. I use the term artworld according to the American art philosopher George Dickie's Institutional Theory (1974; 1984, 49-86).

[6] I discuss art and design as one field in my research. In my case especially, it is irrelevant to divide it into two fields because textile art creations can include both art textiles and industrial textiles.

[7] The field includes peasant or traditional craft.

[8] Wiberg 1996, 19.

[9] For an account of the development of industrial design in Finland, see Valtonen 2007, 64-74.

[10] Wiberg 1996, 8.

Hand and All[11] that textile artists tend to unite both art and design in their occupation. They rarely describe themselves exclusively as artists or designers.[12] Svinhufvud emphasises that no single form of contemporary Finnish textiles exists. Textile art in Finland is a multifaceted field standing independently between industrial design and fine arts, and a Finnish textile artist has manifold characteristics as an artist, a craftsman and an industrial designer.[13]

As a textile artist in Finland, I recognise that although the definition of Finnish textile artists and textile art seems somewhat extensive, distinguishing between different kinds of professional practice is possible. As pointed out by the British textile educators Colin Gale and Jasbir Kaur in *The Textile Book*, the professionals in textiles can be split into four groups: the textile designer, the designer-maker, the craftsperson and the textile artist. What separates the designer-maker from the craftsperson is that the designer-maker lays greater emphasis on designing than on processes of creation. In making a one-off product, a designer-maker may use industrial means to achieve the outcome, and may make only part of the piece and ask someone else to make other elements.[14] Accordingly, Finnish textile artists could be divided into three different groups based on the characteristics of their practice. The first group of textile artists can be labelled as designers for or in the textile industry, aiming at creating designs for serial production. The second group can be included in the category of designer-makers (or craftsmen) who produce hand-made products. The last group deals with art textiles or unique pieces of textile. In addition, the second and the last groups may occasionally work in collaboration with other non-artists such as weavers, printers, knitters, etc. to execute products or artworks. Although work by the last group of textile artists is similar to work in the field of fine arts, the difference lies in the importance of materials and techniques. Textile

[11] This was a Finnish textile triennial, which took place in 2006. The event was first launched in 1986. It has been organised by Textile Artists TEXO (Tekstiilitaiteilijat TEXO ry in Finnish). Textile Artists TEXO is an association founded in 1956 to promote Finnish textiles and to enhance the professional status of Finnish textile artists.

[12] Svinhufvud 2006, 145.

[13] Svinhufvud 1998, 202.

[14] Gale and Kaur 2002. Helen Rees (1997, 116), a British curator and researcher in museum studies, simply labels both designer-makers and artist-craftspeople as craftspeople. Rees uses the term craft in a broad sense to signify not only the works of experts, such as carpenters, glass-blowers and leather makers, but also those of fine artists, such as painters and sculptors.

artworks must be composed of textile or fibre, or created with textile techniques. Although appearances and characteristics of products of these three groups of practice differs from one another, the term "textile artist" seems applicable to all textile practitioners involved in all categories of textile practice. In comparison to other creative fields whose character concerns material-based or craft-based arts such as ceramics, glass, wood and some other media, the three groups of professional work – industrial design, craft and art – seem applicable to these disciplines as well. Similar to the field of textiles, a creative practitioner in other material-based or craft-based practices might work in more than one of these three types of professional work. For example, a glass practitioner may call herself a glass artist although she is involved in different kinds of glass practice, such as designing a series of tableware for industrial production, hand blowing drinking goblets, and creating a sculpture from glass, in her professional life. Noticeably, there is the common term "ceramist" to refer to the professionals working in the field of ceramics, regardless of the precise specification of what kinds of work (art, craft or industrial design) they create. Versatility might be the most suitable word to describe the material-based disciplines as well as the work and the ability of material-based artists.

Having been educated in Finland, I found myself having worked on every kind of textile practice mentioned above. In this research, however, I look upon the subject of the study from a viewpoint of the third type of textile professionals – a textile artist working with art textiles – rather than of other types of textile practitioners dealing with utilitarian textiles.

2.2 Aim, problem field and research questions

This study undertakes to examine a material[15] in textile art. As implicitly known among textile artists, a material is an important component in any creative work. The role of a material in textile art has remained unexpressed, and thus should be elucidated. Being a textile artist myself, I wonder whether a material is only important because of its practical qualities, which help an artist shape a visually

[15] By saying "material", I mean only a tangible physical matter, of which a thing is made and which one can see, touch, hear, etc. Other meanings of "material" such as imagination, idea and information are not considered.

pleasing object, or also because of its expressivity, which guides the artist to conceptualise and produce artistic expression. While physical qualities are undoubtedly useful, as a material can bring forth a tangible art object, it is unclear whether a material actually has expressivity. And if a material possesses an expressive quality, its importance for an artist using the material for creating an artwork will still need to be clarified.

To clarify these doubts, the study sets out to investigate the *expressivity* of a material. The material chosen for investigation is *paper string*. If paper string has the quality of being expressive, this quality possibly helps artistic expression to occur. This means that in any creative process, a material cannot only physically form an object, but also at the same time conceptually construct artistic expression. The result of the creative process is an artwork, which is the combination of an object and artistic expression (form and content). However, the above description needs to be investigated.

The study, therefore, aims to scrutinise the relationship between paper string and artistic expression in contemporary textile art creation. The possible incorporation of paper string and artistic expression becomes the problem field of the study (Illustration 2.1). There are two concepts involved: *paper string* and *artistic expression.* Whereas paper string is physically existing and discernible by physical contact, artistic expression seems to take place during a creative process when an artist is working with a material.

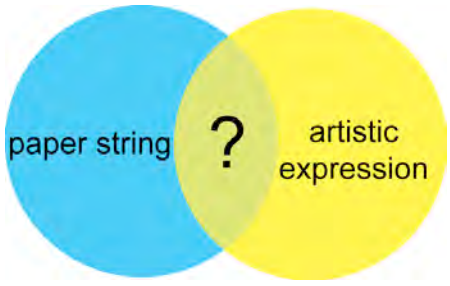


Illustration 2.1: The research problem field: the relationship between paper string and artistic expression.

How can paper string and artistic expression be related to each other in a creative process? How does artistic expression take place in a creative process of textile art? How does paper string relate to the occurrence of artistic expression? Is there any inherent quality of paper string considered expressive? If there is, what is the quality

like? Do the physical qualities of the material affect a textile artist in her creative process? If so, how? How about spectators? Are they influenced by paper string as well when they view an artwork made of the material? How?

From these questions, the focus of the study originates. For paper string to be connected with artistic expression, the material must influence the artist working with it, thus affecting accordingly the creative process and the resulting artworks (i.e., material object with artistic expression). With the aim of analysing the relationship between paper string and artistic expression, the research henceforth focuses on the *material's influence* on a textile artist's artistic processes and artworks. By centring on the influence of paper string, the earlier mentioned disorderly questions are organised, evolving the following three research questions:

- How does paper string, when used to create an artistic work, influence a textile practitioner, her artistic processes and resulting artworks?
- How does expression arise in artistic processes by using paper string as the chosen material?
- What could be considered an expressive quality of paper string?

These research questions signify that the experience of a textile practitioner with paper string in specific artistic processes is important. They also imply the importance of acknowledging and reflecting on particular phenomena that happen when an artist is working with the material and making artworks from it. To deal with these questions in order to examine the relationship between paper string and artistic expression, the study involves looking closely at paper string with which a textile artist is working in actual art practice. Actual textile art practice can portray the artist's experience with the material. Speaking as a textile artist, one possible way to scrutinise actual creative practice is by taking the role of a practitioner and exploring my own artistic processes. By so doing, I can design particular art productions, which use paper string as material. I can carry out and observe the art productions with a focus on how paper string's qualities influence my creative processes and me, and result in meaningful artworks. This study thus approaches the problem field and research questions by looking at my own textile art practice, discussing my direct experience with paper string used in particular art productions. This is to take the artistic productions and the resulting artworks into research as case studies. By

researching through one's own art, the researcher can investigate her creative processes by creating artworks as an artist and by documenting and reflecting on them as well as reading literature as a researcher. By using documentation, creating artworks as part of solving research problems in my study can cause the artworld to overlap with academia (Illustration 2.2). Research through the art and design approach has developed for over two decades both in Finland and internationally. It can be labelled practice-based or practice-led. The issue of practice-based or practice-led research in art and design will be discussed later in this chapter. My own art productions as case studies are expected to illuminate the influence of paper string embodied in both completed and underway artworks, on the formation of the artist's thoughts and experiences.

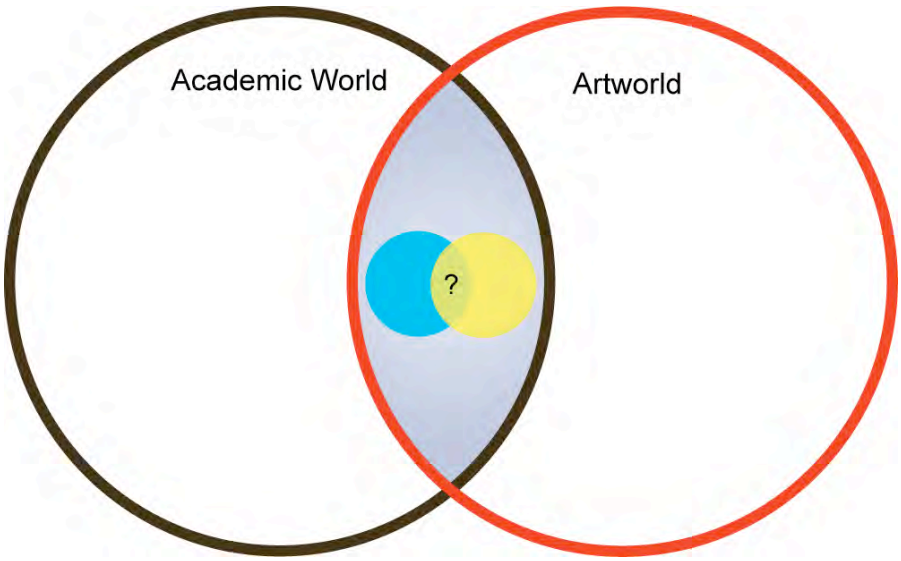


Illustration 2.2: Location of this study in academia and the artworld.

Completed artworks, as the results of art productions carried out as part of this research, are placed on display in galleries. The exhibitions belong to the artworld, yet can be utilised as vehicles of research. As part of the artworld, the artworks are created not only for the artist, but also for the purpose of being shown to other people. The exhibitions, therefore, are also places for people interested in art to visit and actually experience the artworks. It might be useful to see how they view paper string as the material used in the artworks. Moreover, the case of spectators is perhaps similar to the artist, that is, paper string in completed artworks possibly influence spectators viewing them, thus affecting their interpretation of the artworks. If a

physical material can influence a textile artist, her creative process and artworks, does it have influence on spectators, too? The issue of material's influence on spectators is not a major concern in this study. However, in the later stages of the research, this issue plays a significant role. By considering paper string's influence on spectators, the research questions previously mentioned can be modified, hence developing into a new question:

- How does paper string, when seen in completed artworks, influence spectators and their contemplating and interpreting processes?

According to this question combined with the other research questions, paper string as a material is considered to play an important role in my textile art practice: not only in the creative production but also in the exposition of artworks, and not only in the intimate process through touching but also in the distant operation through observing. This research thus seeks to understand how qualities of paper string, in particular visual and tactile qualities[16], influence the sensation, feelings, emotions and cognition of both a textile practitioner and spectators when they experience the material and the overall artworks in which this particular material has been employed. While an artist can experience a particular material before it has been formed into an artwork, the audience is able to experience the same material only in the completed artwork shown in an exhibition. However, the spectators may combine this current experience in the exhibition with other experiences of the same material they might have previously obtained. What one knows and believes affects what and how one sees. The visual and tactile qualities of a material may contribute to the occurrence of artistic expression in the artistic process and invite the artist and the spectators to interpret and reflect on the creative work.

[16] Other sensuous qualities of materials such as auditory and odorous qualities are not as significant as visual and tactile qualities in this research. In my art, of course, silence and non-olfaction as qualities are parts of the gallery environment. Each of these qualities would be a topic for further research.

2.3 Researcher's position: textile artist and writer

As this study requires a close examination of actual textile art practice, researching through one's own art can be a suitable approach. This approach enables me, a textile artist doing research, to create artworks and simultaneously observe them being created in artistic productions. In this sense, I do not distance myself from my textile art practice while doing this piece of research, but rather involve myself in the practice and consider it fundamental to the study. Whereas artworks are gradually materialised, my interpretation and reflection on the artworks and their production are generated. With research through own practice as approach, I become a "reflective practitioner"[17] who writes about her own specific art productions and artworks created as part of the study and used as case studies.

Writing about one's own creative work is one way to reflect upon what has happened during an artistic process (e.g., problem, challenge, success, etc.), to ask how, where and why it has happened, and to learn from it, in order to refine the subsequent art production and eventually the professional practice. Issues, problems and challenges raised in creative practice can be resolved by research, suggest Carole Gray and Julian Malins, British art and design educators. By saying this, Gray and Malins mean that with a rational process, a piece of research can yield results available for critical assessment that can later assist in improving art and design practice.[18] Mick Wilson, an Irish researcher, also highlights that enquiry through practical actions in making artworks, events or systems followed by the production of theoretical manuscripts is the factor which differentiates research in art and design from that in the humanities.[19] Research through own professional practice, therefore, creates a special position for the researcher – she is the artist and the writer.

[17] "Reflective practitioner" is the term used by the American thinker Donald Schön (1983/1995) to signify the professional practitioner who can reflect on what has happened in her practice, by constantly asking herself why, how and where it has happened. It is a way a practitioner can learn from actual practice and improve her subsequent practice with the lesson learnt.

[18] Gray and Malins 2004.

[19] Wilson 2005, 1. According to Wilson, the humanities includes fields such as history, literature, cultural studies, etc.

As a textile artist conducting research

From my experience as a textile artist, I tend to begin a textile art production by conceiving the idea of an artwork (or a series of artworks).[20] Then, I seek a suitable type of material for that artwork by touching and feeling several different materials until I discover the *right* one – the material through which I am able to express my idea (Illustration 2.3). However, why this material is more appropriate than other materials is still a question I cannot fully answer. Selecting a material for a textile artwork seems to be a delicate subjective action. What I can affirm is that the *right* material seems to have special potential to communicate with me. My previous art production of a three-dimensional woven artwork representing an old woman can serve as an example. When developing this artwork, I sought for a type of yarn with sensuous qualities that would present not only the aging process and physical weakness but also wit and high spirit. I sampled different kinds of yarn in order to find the above qualities in one particular material. Finally, I found raw silk yarns. Their roughness, frailty and natural bright yellow colour could arouse the feeling of meeting an old lady within me when seeing, touching and smelling them, as well as when hearing the sound of the yarns touching each other. Once the material elicits the qualities that correspond with my imagination, it becomes *right*, like the raw silk became right for representing an old woman.

Illustration 2.3: The general process of my art productions.

The above passage recounts my general way of creating artistic work. It has become the starting point of my research, which aims to seek answers for and is carried out through my textile art practice. However, the focus on the material's influence makes the artistic part of this research differ from that described above. To focus on the material's influence, the first art production of this study starts with

[20] In this research, the terms "art production" and "artwork" have different meanings. "Art production" means the process, way or act of conceptualising and executing an artistic object and that of presenting for display (i.e., exhibition). "Artwork" signifies the work of art produced in an art production that includes form, content or subject matter, etc.

material selection (Illustration 2.4). I select types of paper string according to one criterion – the obvious distinction between each one's sensuous qualities. The creative process continues with the concept of the artworks that followed the way I feel and perceive the materials. The subsequent art production then followed the results and the analysis of the first production, and at the same time, maintained the aim of the research and the research questions. This shows that a creative production can be modified to suit the aim of research and the research questions.

Illustration 2.4: The process of my art productions focusing on the material's influence.

As a writer reflecting on my own professional practice

> The whole point of doing research is to extract reliable knowledge from either the natural or artificial world, and to make that knowledge available to others in re-usable form. … [T]o qualify as research, there must be reflection by the practitioner on the work, and communication of some re-usable results from the reflection.[21]

As pointed out earlier, the importance of physical materials in textile art has remained unexpressed, meaning that documents regarding this issue have rarely appeared. The lack of written texts about why material is crucial in textile art could be due to the fact that art and design is considered a practical field. Practitioners aim at producing an object meaningful in some way. This means that the effort is placed on the resulting object, not on the process and the documentation of it. As a result, the creative process seems to be known and understood implicitly by the artist or designer creating it.

Explanation in words, either written or spoken, can be a suitable means to explicitly communicate a practitioner's unique creative process to other people, e.g., viewers, users, and other artists and designers. Documentary explanation may help other people understand artistic processes in which a practitioner or a group of practitioners are directly involved. It avails other creative practitioners of new perspectives and insights generated in any unique artistic processes, so that they can

[21] Cross 1999, 9.

develop and create novel art or design objects on their own. Textual explanation thus contributes to the improvement of creative practice. Although there are written documents regarding creative processes in art and design, practitioners who are the actual makers of artistic production rarely write them.[22] Similarly, research publications about art have rarely been written from the point of view of practitioners but from that of historians, philosophers, educators or art theorists.[23] However, the number of research publications by researchers who are also practitioners have recently increased, most of which publications consist of investigation through and contextualisation of the practitioners' own art and design practices.[24]

While some artists and designers seem unwilling to express their work in words,[25] textual description of artworks might be superfluous to some others. However, there have been several visual artists who are also writers. Some artists document their art practices and artworks or write about other artists' works, and publicise them in book form.[26] Some write personal messages, e.g., diaries or letters, which are later collected, edited and published by someone else.[27] Nevertheless, artists who write are not always researchers, and thus their written accounts are not research. For example, Van Gogh was not a researcher although he wrote nearly a thousand letters, which have since been published in several books. The published books of Van Gogh's

[22] Art and design practitioners sometimes do write short texts about their artworks and creative processes for their exhibition catalogues or educational situations.

[23] Nevertheless, there are a few publications written by art theorists and philosophers that discuss the issues of art practice as enquiry, for example, Hannula et al. 2005; Sullivan 2005.

[24] For example, dissertations completed at the University of Art and Design Helsinki, in Finnish: Mäkelä 2003a; Turpeinen 2005a; Lukkarinen 2008, and in English: Albrecht 2001; Summatavet 2005. Only Lukkarinen's dissertation tackles the importance of a physical material in textile art (recycled textile).

[25] The Norwegian artist-researcher Grete Refsum (2002) claims that practitioners confront positivist and romanticist viewpoints that accuse them of being deficient in scholarly ability and that causes unwillingness to describe their work in words.

[26] For example, the American minimalist artist Donald Judd wrote about his and other artists' works and published his writings in several books. See, for example, Judd 1975/2005; 1987. Another example is the well-known Swiss-German painter and teacher at the Bauhaus, Paul Klee. Klee wrote a number of books about not only his works but also visual art theories (generated from his practice as a painter). See, for example, Klee 1950; 1953; 1961/1992a; 1973/1992b.

[27] For example, Vincent Van Gogh wrote more than 800 letters to his brother, mother and sister. These letters have been collected and published in a form of book. His letters could lead a reader to a better understanding of his works. See the collection of his letters, for example, Van Gogh 1997.

letters are not research work, because they are not academic investigation and contain no research questions. Noticing that documents written by art and design practitioners are rather rare motivates me to take the role of a writer. Researching through my own artistic work allows me to look at the research problem from my viewpoint and practice as a textile artist, and to investigate, reflect on and write about my textile art practice as a researcher.

2.4 Research through own creative work: practice-led approach

In comparison to research in some other disciplines, research in art and design has begun only recently. However, there have been steady attempts to develop it during the last two decades. In 1993, Christopher Frayling proposed three models of research: 1) research *into* art and design, 2) research *through* art and design, and 3) research *for* art and design.[28] First, research into art and design represents research that looks into art or design from various well-established approaches, such as historical, cultural social and technical. Second, research through art and design represents research that uses art or design as the means for conducting research and for communicating the results, which are also written up. Third, research for art and design represents a study whose goal and result is not verbally communicable knowledge but an artefact. This implies that art and design activities already involve a high degree of research in themselves through collecting reference resources. This last category, as Frayling points out, is quite contradictory to traditional notions of research, and is not necessarily considered academic. Academic research may include the use of art or design practice as described in the category of research through art and design. However, research that means gathering reference materials for creative practice as such is not academic research.

Frayling's categories of research in art and design have received widespread criticism. For example, the British art researcher Darren Newbury argues against the separation of research *into*, *through* and *for* art and design, because it signifies a romanticist view of artists as lacking intellectual ability, which is no longer valid.[29] According to Newbury, research in art and design should be stimulated by creative

[28] Frayling 1993, 5.

[29] Newbury 1996.

practice and must enhance the knowledge of the field, and also develop art and design work.

Research in ordinary creative practice and academic research

Art and design practitioners often say that *research* is an essential part of their professional practice in general. This idea of research could be synonymous with Frayling's research *for* art and design. Although any creative practice involves both seeking ideas and finding out methods or techniques to realise those ideas, research in this sense cannot be valid as academic research on several grounds. One ground could be that while the former intends to fulfil an individual's aspiration, the latter aims to contribute to shared knowledge in a wider research community and emphasises the transparency of the aim, methods and results. Therefore, research accepted in academia, as Stephen Scrivener points out, must generate original apprehensions that are not just novel to the individual creator or viewers of artefacts.[30] Another ground for the distinction between the two could be explained in terms of context for enquiry. In order to be accepted as academic, research must be performed in academia with the process that the university regulations structure and define or with methods and approaches acceptable within the scholarly context. Linda Candy, a researcher in computer support for creativity, indicates that the key element for research to be recognised as academic research is the transferability of understandings of the research process.[31] Anna Colford, an Irish researcher, also clarifies the distinction between research in academia and research in general art and design practice. Colford suggests various terms synonymous with academic research: "systematic investigation; rigorous inquiry, denoting a devotion to criticality; implied notions of transparency and accountability; …", all typifying the merits necessary for research within the scholarly context.[32] While these merits are the requirements of creative practice carried out as research in academia, general art and design practice require no such competencies, says Colford.

[30] Scrivener 2002b.

[31] Candy 2006, 2.

[32] Colford 2005, 8.

As a textile artist who has explored ideas and gathered information in art creation processes, on the one hand I see this kind of exploration, which is casually understood as research, as a process carried out to execute an artefact or an art project. On the other hand, as a textile artist who performs a piece of academic research through my own art practice, I see research in general art and design practice as part of a case study to be observed, analysed and reflected on in academic research. In this sense, research in art creation processes could be extended to the scholarly context, yet keep its own characteristics, and as such would not be academic research. On the contrary, artistic processes and artefacts created as a vehicle of research could also be considered art proper in the artworld (Illustration 2.5).

Illustration 2.5: The situatedness of research in general creative practice in the academic community. Creative practice and artefacts created in academia still function in the artworld.

Research through practice: Practice-based, practice-led or artistic research

Academic research considering the researcher's creative practice as the vehicle of research or "research through art and design" using Frayling's term is an approach that relates the researcher's professional expertise to the academic world. This

approach emerged in art and design academia during the 1970s and the 1980s[33] in different countries under various labels: practice-based research, or more recently practice-led research or artistic research.[34] Why has this approach been differently termed? Do different terms suggest any slightly different meanings of the approach? Perhaps, it is worth tracing how differing labels have been defined and used to refer to this research through art and design approach.

The terms "practice-based" or "practice-led" have been used rather interchangeably. Although the concurrent use of both terms has been widely debated during the last two decades by art and design research communities and individual scholars, especially in the UK[35], Finland[36] and other European countries[37] as well as in Australia[38], no distinction has been illustrated in detail.

In the UK, "practice-based" was the common term used to refer to this type of research. In 1997, the UK Council for Graduate Education Report defined practice-based research in a doctoral framework as:

> … advanc[ing] knowledge partly by means of practice. An original/creative piece of work is included in the submission for examination. … [S]ignificant aspects of the claim for doctoral characteristics of originality, mastery and contribution to the field are held to be demonstrated through the original creative work. … Practice-based doctoral submissions must include a substantial contextualisation of the creative work. This critical appraisal or analysis not only clarifies the basis of the claim for the originality and location of the original work, it also provides the basis for a judgement as to whether general scholarly requirements are met.[39]

[33] Mäkelä and Routarinne 2006, 17.

[34] Other terms used to define this kind of research in creative fields are process led or studio based (Biggs 2006, 185).

[35] For example, Biggs 2002; Frayling et al. 1997.

[36] For example, Mäkelä and Routarinne 2006.

[37] For example, Coumans 2003 in The Netherlands.

[38] For example, Candy 2006.

[39] Frayling et al. 1997, 14.

More recently, the use of the term "practice-led" has become more extensive than practice-based. As the Arts & Humanities Research Council[40] describes it, practice-led research involves:

> … practice as an integral component (or theorise that practice), in relation to its research questions, issues or problems, its outputs and outcomes, and – crucially – its research methods or approaches, thereby generating new or enhanced knowledge and understanding in the discipline and/or be undertaken with a specific view to generating outputs and outcomes with a defined application beyond the education sector – for example, new or improved systems, designs, artefacts, exhibitions, performances, events, products, processes, materials, ...[41]

In my view, the above statements attempt to demonstrate that practice-based research differs from practice-led research in the meanings of creative practice: both in the purpose of practice and the implementation of it. First, the difference in the purpose of practice is that while practice in practice-based research aims to produce an original creative artefact, practice in practice-led research emerges in connection with research questions and methods as the essential part of the enquiring process which aims to generate or enhance knowledge. Second, regarding the implementation of practice, while creative practice in the practice-based approach is carried out separately from research, practice and research are intertwined in the practice-led approach.

In the Netherlands, Anke Coumans, a design educator, defines the scope of practice-led research as follows:

> Within practice-led research it is the design process moving from problem to solution that is the point of departure for the rhetoric research direction of the thesis. … The research direction of an artist/designer – other than the art and design process – is a transparent process in which conscious steps are taken, in which knowledge is used, or knowledge is searched for and articulated in the process. … The artist/designer, therefore, must also demonstrate that he [sic] possesses sufficient knowledge to justify the choices he [sic] has made.[42]

[40] The Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC), established in 2005 to replace the Arts & Humanities Research Board (AHRB), is a public body that funds research into creative and performing arts in the UK.

[41] Arts and Humanities Research Council 2007, 7-8.

[42] Coumans 2003, 65-66.

The preceding account implies that practice within the practice-led approach includes the conscious exploration of the creative production of artefacts wherein the knowledge is acquired and communicated.[43] Creative practice in this sense, therefore, comprises rational thinking and transparent artistic process.

The emergence of research through art and design appeared in Australia and Finland for the first time around the same period between the 1980s and the 1990s.[44] In Australia, both terms: "practice-based" and "practice-led" have been used and the attempt to define the difference between the two terms can be seen. For example, Linda Candy compares and contrasts practice-based research with practice-led research. Practice-based research, as Candy describes it, is:

> … an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice. In a doctoral thesis, claims of originality and contribution to knowledge may be demonstrated through creative outcomes in the form of designs, music, digital media, performances and exhibitions. Whilst the significance and context of the claims are described in words, a full understanding can only be obtained with direct reference to the outcomes.[45]

And practice-led research is:

> … concerned with the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice. In a doctoral thesis, the results of practice-led research may be fully described in text form without the inclusion of a creative work. The primary focus of the research is to advance knowledge about practice, or to advance knowledge within practice. Such research includes practice as an integral part of its method and often falls within the general area of action research.[46]

[43] Nimkulrat 2007.

[44] In Australia this kind of research began in 1984 and the first doctorate was awarded to Graeme Harper in the field of creative writing at the University of Technology, Sydney in 1993 (Candy 2006, 4). In Finland, the first doctoral dissertation that includes an artistic part completed at the University of Art and Design Helsinki was by Taneli Eskola in the field of photography in 1997. Eskola's study focused on the photographic landscape of the Aulanko park by presenting it through his textual and visual interpretations published in two books: a narrative and a photograph books (Eskola 1997a and b).

[45] Candy 2006, 3.

[46] Ibid.

Candy's definitions of practice-based and practice-led research imply that the division between the two is based on what the research's focus is that contributes to knowledge. A study is practice-based when the integral result demonstrating knowledge is an original creative artefact or event (e.g., artwork, music, model, digital media, performance, exhibition, etc.), and is practice-led when creative practice leads to the advancement of knowledge and the supplement of a creative artefact is not necessary.

In Finland, at the University of Art and Design Helsinki in particular, research conducted in dialogue with the researcher's artistic production with reasonably equal emphasis on practice and theory is called practice-led. This term, which underlines the active role of practice in research processes, was first used in Finland in the book *The Art of Research*[47], with a reference to the online discussion[48] led by British design scholar Chris Rust in June 2006.[49] Nevertheless, not every Finnish institute has followed this way of performing academic research and called it practice-led. For example, at the Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki, research carried out by artists through their art is termed artistic research.[50] To me, this term raises a question: Can academic research be artistic? The inclusion of the researcher's creative productions might make a piece of research artistic for the following reasons: First, the research topic tackles the problem of artworks, their creation or artists. Second, the artistic productions are performed in a way that shows skill and imagination. Last, the resulting artworks look aesthetically rewarding. However, the whole piece of research cannot be solely undertaken in a skilful and imaginative way, and the research process and results might not be aesthetically pleasing. This means that not all aspects of a piece of research can be conducted by artistic means, and considered artistic. The term "artistic research" thus connotes a mismatch between artistic work and academic

[47] Mäkelä and Routarinne 2006.

[48] The practice-led online workshop started on 12 June 2006 and ended on 6 July 2006. The workshop discusses the UK's AHRC proposal for practice-led research to be adopted as the new term. For the discussion in the workshop, see http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A0=AHRC-WORKSHOP-PL (accessed October 26, 2007). Earlier, at the University of Art and Design Helsinki, the term practice-based research had been used to identify research projects that include artistic practice and resulting artefacts.

[49] Mäkelä and Routarinne 2006, 15.

[50] See, for example, Kiljunen and Hannula 2002; Hannula et al. 2005. To some extent, Hannula et al. (2005, 119-50) claim that practice of an experienced professional artist could be considered research.

research; they are not similar activities and cannot be conducted in the same way. On the one hand, artistic activities employ the action of making, skill and imagination, yielding artworks as the results. On the other hand, research activities include data, methods and other scholarly criteria, yielding theses as the results. Data in research activities cannot be made up or gathered by imagination, like ideas in artistic activities. Nonetheless, these two activities can be combined in a research project in which a researcher explores the research problem through her art practice, utilising artistic productions and artworks in a process of enquiry. This is one way an artist-researcher could contribute to the advancement of knowledge and the understanding of creative art practices.

For my research that contains art productions of my own, I call it practice-led research. The use of the term is not for institutional reasons. Rather, the reason is that this term most clearly explains my study in which professional artistic practice leads the process of enquiry to generate new or enhance understanding of the expressive potential of material in textile art.

Previous practice-led research projects

This section features a number of completed doctoral dissertations carried out by means of the researchers' creative practices and accepted at the University of Art and Design Helsinki.[51] The university does not intend to impose only one format for dissertations but requires a scholarly written thesis that demonstrates its dialogical and analytical relation to art productions. Nevertheless, in terms of presentation, two major forms of dissertation using the practice-led approach are noticeable. The first form comprises two publications – one presents the written research part while the other documents the artistic component. The second form is one single text and a

[51] By the time of writing this chapter (November 2008), the number of completed doctoral dissertations is 71, fourteen of which include creative artefacts produced by the researchers and could thus be classified practice-led research. The fourteen dissertations are: Eskola 1997a and b; Nellimarkka-Seeck 2001; Albrecht 1998 and 2001; Pullinen 2003; Mäkelä 2003a; Ikonen 2004; Anttonen 2006; Kantonen 2005; Summatavet 2005; Turpeinen 2005a; Ikonen 2006; Irwin 2007; Lukkarinen 2008; Tikka 2008. In addition, some other dissertations comprise an art or design component or project in the research work, for instance, Isohanni 2006; Leppänen 2006; Galanakis 2008. For an overview of practice-led research conducted in other universities in Finland, see Mäkelä and Routarinne 2006, 17-21.

series of art productions and exhibitions – the publication presents both the research and the documents of the productions and exhibitions.[52]

Research projects presented in the former type comprise the dissertations of the photographers Taneli Eskola in 1997[53] and Kristoffer Albrecht in 2001[54]. On the one hand, Eskola studies the photographic landscape of Aulanko Park in Finland. His study focuses on how photographs have created the Finnish landscape that affects travel, tourism and the mind. Eskola interprets the influence of landscape photography verbally and visually and presents it in two publications: one as the research and the other as a photography book. The interpretations uncover the shared experience of the landscape of Aulanko conveyed from one generation to another. Albrecht's dissertation, on the other hand, investigates the influence of ink-printed photograph production on the aesthetic identity of an image. The intervention in the reproduction process can transform the original into an ink-printed photograph. Albrecht conducts this multidisciplinary research within the framework of John Dewey's pragmatist aesthetics. By using Dewey's thinking, Albrecht demonstrates how the act of intervention affects what the image becomes and how it constructs aesthetic experience for the artist and the viewers. This research originates a new technique for printing photographs in offset lithography. Its presentation in the form of two publications, the research part and the photography book, generates a dialogue between theoretical discussion and artistic work.

The second presentation form of dissertation comprising a publication and series of art productions and exhibitions can be seen in the ceramist Maarit Mäkelä's and the installation artist Outi Turpeinen's dissertations in 2003 and 2005, for example.[55]

[52] Other presentation forms of dissertations can be seen, too: one exhibition (e.g., Kantonen 2005), three scenography productions (e.g., Ikonen 2006) and a site specific theatre project (e.g., Irwin 2007), each of which is accepted together with a publication.

[53] Eskola (1997a) presents the research part; Eskola (1997b) depicts the artistic element.

[54] Albrecht (2001) presents the research part; Albrecht (1998) presents the artistic element.

[55] Mäkelä 2003a; Turpeinen 2005a. Although both Mäkelä and Turpeinen wrote their dissertations in Finnish, they have published articles about their doctoral research in English rather extensively. See, for example, Mäkelä 2003b; 2005; 2006; Turpeinen 2005b; 2006a; 2006b. The following dissertations are also presented in form of a publication and series of exhibitions: Nellimarkka-Seeck 2001; Pullinen 2003; Ikonen 2004; Anttonen 2005; Summatavet 2005; Lukkarinen 2008.

Mäkelä's research refers to women's studies as its theoretical foundation. The research investigates how the concept of femininity can be transformed and realised by ceramic art and its material. In her research, Mäkelä as a female ceramist asks:

> [H]ow can "feminist" art, in this case ceramic art, change current representations of femininity? How is it possible to observe femininity or, rather, the different kinds of femininities, through ceramic materials? How do memories, autobiographies and narratives produce, change and transmit possible female identities? How does remembrance and autobiography construct narration in the process of making ceramic art?[56]

Mäkelä makes ceramic tiles in combination with the silkscreen technique and video projection to visually represent women whose photographs exist in her collection of cultural pictures and own family photographs. She presents her artistic work in a series of three exhibitions called "Mirrorplay" and retrospectively reviews them by following the concept of the hermeneutic circle. The point of view is explicitly the maker's, the artist's. Each of the three main chapters of Mäkelä's written thesis examines one exhibition, all of which construct a thematic and chronological narrative about the whole creative process that reveals how she conducted her research:

> The first chapter … "The reproduction and mimesis of Other(ness)" portrays the practise [sic] of art as a creative forum for action. Through a close reading of certain works displayed in the exhibition Mirrorplay I, I reflect upon the way in which by repetition and alteration of pre-existing images I end up rearranging and reinterpreting the things I experience and see. … Chapter two, … "The female body engraved in clay", centres on corporeality as well as excreta which maintains [sic] a close symbolic connection with the body… The chapter includes excerpts from my working diary. In chapter three, "constructing female genealogy", I developed a gap-filled story onto an autobiographical space. I have used … family photographs as well as letters and diaries kept by my forbears. I have also collected … family histories through interviewing my relatives.[57]

[56] Mäkelä 2005.

[57] Ibid.

Turpeinen also deals with material objects, glass objects in her case. She explores the relationship between a cultural history museum and the displayed objects, aiming at seeking meanings constructed and represented as visual signs. Her research questions comprise:

> How are meanings constructed for cultural history museums exhibition design? How are meanings represented as visual signs by the exhibition design? How does the relationship between exhibition design and museum objects, especially their visuality, affect interpretation?[58]

Turpeinen researches this subject with a transparent subjective approach, using three methods: literature survey, museum visits and artistic production. She creates three fictive museum installations presented in three exhibitions, each of which has an individual theme. These visual installations function as test spaces, thus contributing to the development of her research themes and the collection of data for analysis. The analysis is based on her interpretation, showing how meanings could be constructed from the viewpoint of the exhibition designer. The research themes are presented in the three main chapters of her dissertation (Chapters 3, 4 and 5):

> Chapter 3 "Museum as the interpreter of the world view" … analyse[s] the visual elements in exhibitions … [V]arious interpretations of the vitrines are discussed from historical and artistic viewpoints. … Chapter 4 "The interaction between art and cultural history museum" … examine[s] the relationship between visual arts and cultural history museums' exhibitions … [E]xamples from the beginning of the 1990s are analysed with the help of comments by artists themselves, theories of art, semiotics and museology. … Chapter 5 "Installations as test spaces" … analyse[s] three artistic installations, which I created as part of the research. Through the research process, certain themes emerged, which I analysed further: stories, the atmosphere, fictive and authentic museum objects, vitrines, spatial working, and showing the process of exhibition design to the audience.[59]

Although both Mäkelä's and Turpeinen's studies concern material objects they have created during their research process, their approaches and ways of doing research differ. All examples in this section infer that there is not just one way but

[58] Turpeinen 2005a, 237-40.

[59] Ibid.

various ways of doing research, in which theoretical enquiry contributes to artistic productions and vice versa.

Knowledge, which professional artists generate in research they perform through their practice, is inseparable from their perception, decision and craft.[60] Personal perception, decision and craft are non-verbalised experiences in creative practice whose results are artefacts. Although the resulting artefacts cannot impart knowledge, a professional creates them systematically and transparently in a research context as a part of a project, and they also comprise explicit data.[61] Research through own creative practice brings insightfulness from practitioners' actual experiences, which only the practitioners themselves can participate in personally, to the art and design field at large. Although there could be several creative practitioners carrying out research about their own practices, their research processes and outcomes would never be exactly the same, because of the uniqueness of human beings that makes them perceive, experience and produce things differently.

Although research through the researcher's creative work seems to be a promising approach, it poses a challenge. Due to the fact the researcher also holds the position of a practitioner, she needs to work on both studio work and writing, i.e., practical and theoretical components of research. More importantly, both parts of the thesis should be constructed as a coherent whole.

2.5 Research through professional practice in other disciplines

Positioning practitioners as researchers is not new and has not emerged exclusively in art and design. In other professional fields, such as education[62], psychology and counselling[63], and clinical medicine, pharmacy and health care[64], the approach through the researcher's professional practice is also utilised and called practice-based research or practitioner research. Practitioners in these occupations undertake

[60] Seago and Dunne 1999, 16.

[61] Ibid.

[62] See, for example, Burton and Bartlett 2004; Kincheloe 2002.

[63] See, for example, McLeod 1999.

[64] See, for example, Fish 1998; Reed and Procter 1995.

research in order to gain new knowledge from and in their practice, which is transitory and encounters prompt change.[65]

The definition of the practice-based research approach in clinical medicine, pharmacy and health care includes "science-based inquiry that occurs in practice settings such as field epidemiology, systematic reflection on the practice experience, and laboratory analysis—to the extent that such inquiry produces generalizable knowledge to improve the outcomes of practice or to inform policy making."[66] In clinical medicine and nursing, current research is conducted in living clinical settings by practicing clinicians. Earlier, clinical research has been conducted in a laboratory by university researchers, who might never touch a patient. Clinicians then expose themselves to the published research, critically validating and utilising the findings as evidence to support their practice. However, the evidence that is the result of laboratory research might not support issues occurring in a particular real-world setting, so that clinicians need to perform a focused study to discover how a practice operates with real patients in their setting, i.e., to fill in the missing knowledge in the literature that in turn produces evidence for subsequent clinical cases.[67] The process of clinical practice-based research seems similar to that of art and design research. Artists and designers doing research start with a focused research question, review literature written by scholars and utilise it in their creative practices in their real-world settings. They collect data from their actual practice, analyse and write about it, so that others can utilise their findings.

In health care, there is the use of a research paradigm called the "artistic/holistic paradigm" [68] whose focus is on deepening the abilities to understand practice and to

[65] Jarvis 1999, 46 and 179.

[66] Potter and Quill 2006, 3.

[67] Houser and Bokovoy 2006, 13-15. One example of clinical research conducted in living clinical settings is a study on non-serious fall risks in old patients conducted by a research team of professionals from various clinical disciplines such as physicians, nurses and nurses' aides (Ibid., 25-32). The team collected data from patients in a hospital according to categories they had made.

[68] The paradigm is suggested by the British educator in health science Della Fish (1998, 123-7) who considers professional practice in health care similar to the processes of the arts. In comparison with the scientific and social science paradigms within which research is obliged to have a detailed research plan about which methods to be employed in the investigation in advance, the artistic/holistic paradigm "recognizes that uncovering the complexity of human situations which themselves cannot be entirely pre-planned … can only be achieved by keeping open as long as possible the processes to be used and questions to be asked."

describe and scrutinise the intricacy of professional practice. With a comparison to the arts, the paradigm suggests the role of the researcher not only as an artist and a critic, but also as an interrogator of both positions.[69] By considering themselves in various positions, healthcare practitioners as the researchers carrying out research into their professional practice can respond immediately and directly to their own creative motivation. The direct and immediate response can lead to gaining understandings and bettering their practice, thus demonstrating the indivisibility between theory and practice.[70]

"Time-consuming" was pointed out to be the common shortcoming of the research through practice approach in the field of education[71] and health care[72]. Another more serious limitation or risk of this approach lies in the qualifications of practitioner-researchers. A practitioner-researcher needs to be knowledgeable both in practice and in professional and personal philosophy.[73] On the one hand, repetitive errors in reflection tend to occur when the practitioner-researcher does not understand the practice standard technique adequately. On the other hand, an obsession with the technique seems to take place when philosophical awareness is not involved in reflection.[74]

[69] Ibid., 130.

[70] Ibid., 114.

[71] See, for example, Imel 1992.

[72] See, for example, Burnard 2002, 84-85.

[73] Imel 1992.

[74] Ibid.

3

Research approaches and process

Literature on methods of conducting research that involve creative practices as a process of enquiry (i.e., practice-led research[75]) has only just appeared. Although the issue of methodology used in this form of research has been a topic for scholarly debates in the United Kingdom and Finland for over two decades, no explicit consensus has been reached, and thus no standard package of methods is available for a novice researcher to follow. However, attempts to introduce methods for performing practice-led research in art and design have been made. As Carole Gray and Julian Malins point out, research in art and design involves multiple methods, primarily visual, originating from practice or adapted for practice-led research from other research paradigms.[76]

Michael Biggs argues that practice-led research in art and design contains a dynamic interplay between different variables: context, question, method and answer, and audience.[77] The change of any of the following variables – context, question or audience – can affect the method primarily chosen, so that the method might no longer be appropriate for conducting the research.[78] Method, according to Biggs, should be the last variable for the researcher to decide. This explains why applying a fixed method to every research problem would not be appropriate. Hence, each researcher has to explore the nature of her research questions in order to develop a method appropriate for the project.

According to Maarit Mäkelä, one outcome of her research was a research method called the "retroactive approach". The approach looks at the interaction between the field of art and that of research in retrospect by means of a hermeneutic framework. The research process starts with the researcher's first art production and exhibition. Then, the completed creative

[75] Practice-led research here denotes studies carried out by researchers who undertake their own professional creative practices as part or means of the studies. I consider this study in hand practice-led, because it arose from my textile art practice, which then led the process of enquiry.

[76] Gray and Malins 2004, 31.

[77] Biggs 2004, 19. Outi Turpeinen (2006, 118-9) agrees with Biggs that during the process of practice-led research, the researcher must review the research questions and may need to reformulate in various phases of the process.

[78] Biggs adds that because changing these variables would occur during the whole research process, the researcher needs to possess a decision-making strategy in order to handle the changes.

process is examined, using literature (women's studies in Mäkelä's case) to clarify and narrate the process as one chapter of the written thesis.[79] The process continues with the second art production and exhibition, followed by the retrospective analysis of the already completed artistic process that forms a theoretical text as the second chapter. The third exhibition and chapter of the written thesis follow consecutively. Method in Mäkelä's sense is therefore a way of performing research in which the researcher can recognise and understand at the end of the research process. In other words, the researcher scrutinises and reflects on her art productions and exhibitions retrospectively when these events have been completed, and develops the subsequent ones.

In comparison with Mäkelä, methods as said by Outi Turpeinen, mean ways or activities of gathering data and performing research obtained during the enquiring process. Three activities – literature survey, museum visits and artistic productions – were conducted in Turpeinen's research about the visuality of cultural museums.[80] Her research process began with a research plan and continued with the interplay between the three approaches. Reading literature and museum visits (experiencing) generated ideas and knowledge for her artistic work (making). She constructed installations as test spaces for scrutinising their meanings that conversely affected the theoretical argumentation in the written thesis.

Having given the above accounts, practitioner-researchers seem encouraged to develop their own approaches according to their specific research questions, as seen in Mäkelä's and Turpeinen's cases. Their art productions and artworks played a central role in their research. This shows that practitioner-researchers can maintain and present their creative qualities in their academic research. By using explicit research approaches and verifying their appropriateness throughout a research process, a research project in art and design comprising creative productions and artefacts can gain acceptance not only within its own discipline but also in the research community at large.

The current chapter explains how I as a practitioner-researcher developed and defined my approaches, and tried them out in my research project. I called the research process "progressive line of enquiry", because the interplay between the approaches applied in a concurrent manner has led to the progression of the research project. This chapter also discusses the means of documentation used in the research process.

[79] Mäkelä 2006, 72-81.

[80] Turpeinen 2005a, 237-40.

3.1 Research approaches and documentation

My textile art practice, which included two particular art productions and their resultant artefacts, formed the key component to the steps taken towards understanding the subject of study. The research, therefore, involved an interpretation of my art productions and experiences. This form of research is sustained by the practitioner's practice and reflections; the practical and the reflective sides stimulate each other. To conduct this study in dialogue with my professional practice, I documented the art productions and the experience of making artworks – both facts and feelings – whether in visual or textual formats. The captured visuals and texts later became the data I used as research material.

Research approaches

The approaches used in my research can be seen as interaction between art practice and theoretical discussions. The methods consisted of three key forms and/or activities: 1) artistic productions – which means *making* artefacts and *reflecting* on my own artistic experiences, 2) *reading* literature, and 3) expert interview and surveys – which means *questioning* others about their experiences and *evaluating* their answers in comparison with my own. I employed these actions simultaneously in the research process, so that they influenced and interacted with one another. Supported by the documentation of my experiences while I went through the process (Illustration 3.1), the interaction between the three approaches eventually formed this practice-led study.

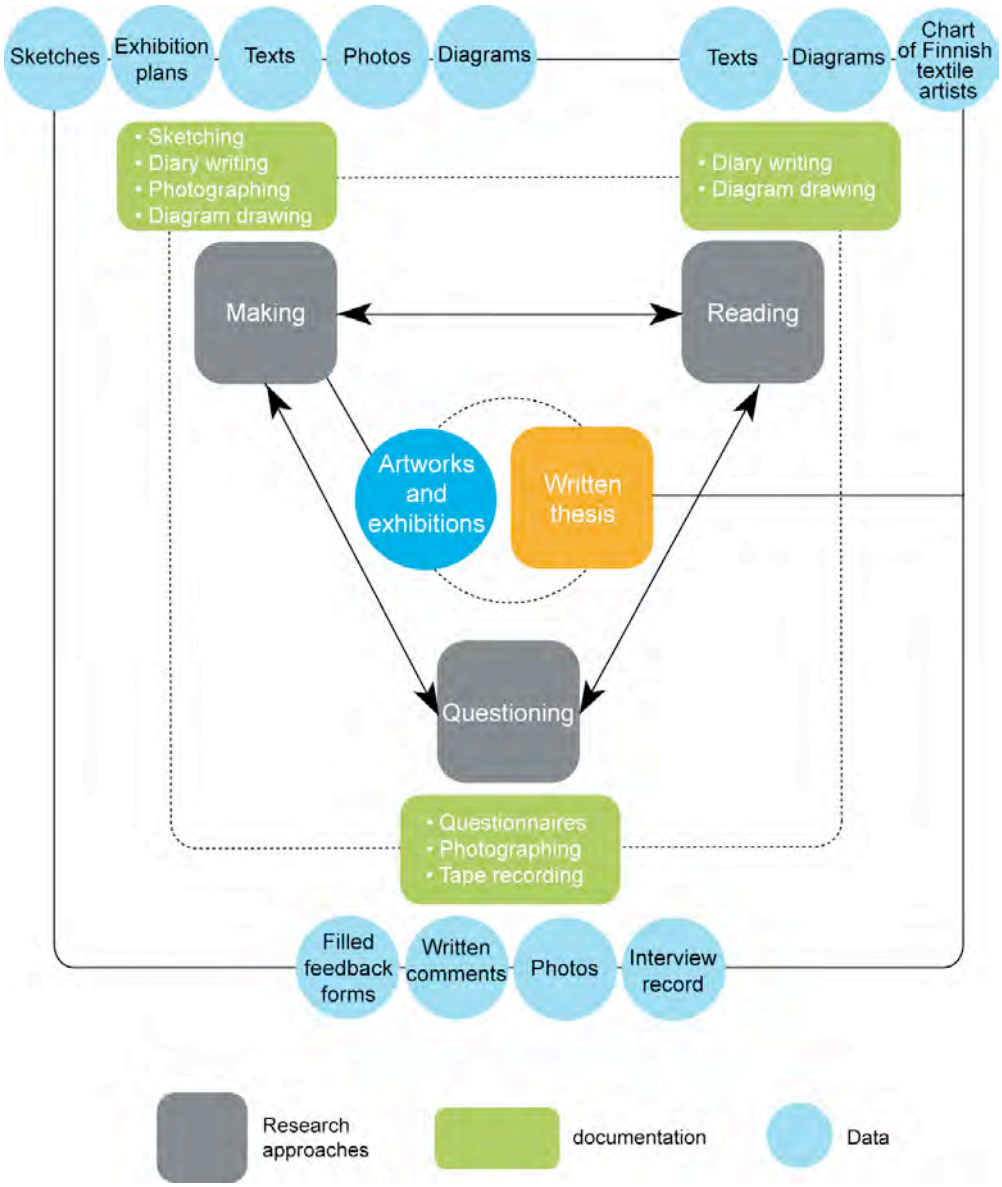


Illustration 3.1: The dialogue between research approaches, documentation and data collection

Artistic productions cannot be considered a research method as such. Nonetheless, a production can be used to test various thoughts in practice. It demonstrates the artist-researcher's way of developing her own professional practice, i.e., what she is doing in a creative process and why, and what happens as the result of her actions,[81] which can be explained by related literature. By *making* particular artworks centred upon a set of research questions, the artist-researcher can determine what the best possible way to direct the research process is. As my research problem concerning the relationship between paper string as a physical material and artistic expression arose from within my textile art practice, I approached the problem and examined it through

[81] Scrivener and Chapman 2004.

making two particular series of artworks: "Seeing Paper" (2005) and "Paper World" (2007). Placing my own textile art practice at the centre of this research, the two particular art productions were planned and produced around the four research questions[82]. Problem-focussed thinking while having actual experience in the creation of artefacts can result not only in tangible artefacts but also an understanding of the process in relation to the research questions. Undertaking research by utilising artistic productions as an approach may, however, have some limitations. For example, the artist-researcher might be too involved in the creative process to notice some important aspects of her own art production which someone else accompanying her might have easily noticed. However, by having some action or using the same material repeatedly during the creative process, the artist-researcher possibly distils what is important in her art production. Also, publishing a study that includes the artist-researcher's artworks and art productions is a way to open a dialogue or a discussion with other people.

A literature survey provided some understanding of the subject studied, i.e., the relationship between a physical material and artistic expression, throughout the whole research process. As the research process was followed through in different phases of research, literature was selected based upon its relevance to the research problem. In other words, while the research problem has developed during each research phase, the literature used to tackle it differed in various phases. *Reading* influenced *making* and vice versa. On the one hand, thoughts and ideas generated from reading have been brought into my artistic productions, for the purposes of being tested in practice and discussing the processes of making artworks. I reflected on what I had read during the creation of particular artworks. On the other hand, the art productions have influenced my decision about what literature seemed to be relevant to the research problem at a particular phase of research in order to offer theoretical discussions of the problem from different perspectives.

Questioning in this study took two different means: public questionnaires and an expert interview. While the first was performed after completing artworks, during the two exhibitions ("Seeing Paper" in 2005 and "Paper World" in 2007), the latter was carried out afterwards. Regarding the first means, I composed feedback forms and distributed them to the visitors at both exhibitions. The feedback forms asked the

[82] For the research questions, see Chapter 2, Section 2.1.

visitors to interpret the artworks as well as the exhibitions. The purpose of the questionnaires was to document the response of the viewers experiencing the exhibitions and artworks and to examine how the material could influence the viewers' interpretations. Regarding the expert interview, I conducted it with a Finnish textile artist who has used paper string as the physical material in almost all her works. The interview sought to gain a personal insight into this material that might still be useful for the research, in order to better understand the meaning and importance of paper string. I questioned the artist about paper string, in particular about the reason why she had chosen it as the material for her textile art and how she had developed her work from it, and registered her articulating personal experiences with this material.

Documentation

Documentation seemed to be vitally important for conducting a practice-led research project. In any art production, an artistic process is a series of interactions between various actors: a physical material, a practitioner and an artwork. When a practitioner performs her art as a vehicle of research, her artistic process needs to be presented as material for argumentation. To transform an interactive process of making art into data, it needs to be represented in textual and visual forms. Documentation is thus the factor that differentiates a creative production performed as a part of research from the general conception of art and design practices whose aim is to produce objects rather than to report on the process. Also, the documentation of the transitional stages of my art productions could create transparency and communicability to the creative process.

As shown in Illustration 3.1, I used multiple methods to document and record the research process. I documented not only the artistic processes (*making* and *reflecting*) but also the overall research process (*reading* and *questioning* included).

Documentation included the following tasks:

Sketching was used to capture and present my ideas visually. It is an activity many artists generally perform before starting working with their actual medium. I used sketching when conceptualising some pieces of art, which I needed to do to discover and plan how they would look and could be formed. Sketches were made in the

research diaries or on separate sheets of paper, which were later attached to the diaries. All sketches are marked with dates.

Diary writing[83] was done daily at the end of the day during the process of producing each artwork of both art productions ("Seeing Paper" and "Paper World"). Each entry was marked with a date. In a diary book[84], I recorded my actions and experiences in the creative process from conceptualising to manipulating the physical material and executing the artwork. Not only the concrete elements such as the choices of material and the reasons for choosing them were noted, the less tangible ones such as my feelings when touching and manipulating a material were noted, too. Some recorded thoughts or actions, which seemed insignificant during the creative process, helped me understand the overall processes after the processes were finished. In fact, they were not trivial as such, but rather I was too involved in the creative processes to be aware of their possible relevance to the research. In addition to the daily writings, when encountering a problem at any stage of each art production, I stopped making the artwork for a while and wrote in the diary the problem and my experience with it. *Writing* was thus a reflecting process evolving in correspondence with the situations I encountered in the creative process. It facilitated my self-awareness of the cumulative thoughts, intentions and decisions. *Diary writing*[85] was also used when reading literature. It included making notes, quoting and paraphrasing the texts read as well as recording my thoughts about them. I carried this out when some part of the literature related to the research problem. It facilitated an interaction between my readings and my creations within the overall research process.

Diagram drawing was employed to explain my creative process visually. It was used instead of *writing*, which narrated my experiences verbally, when I attempted to explain them but found it difficult to do so. Diagrams drawn also assisted me afterwards in formulating the written explanation of what I had not earlier been able to put into words. *Drawing diagrams* was also used when reading literature, together with *writing* mentioned above. It served as a tool helping me understand some texts I was reading. It clarified the sequence of thinking in the text.

[83] Burgess 1981; Holly 1984; Schatzman and Strauss 1973.

[84] Altogether in this study, I used four diary books: one in 15am x 21cm (A5 size), two in 15cm x 15cm, and one in 11cm x 15cm, all consisting of about 200 pages.

[85] It was written in the same books used for recording the artistic productions.

Photographing documented each artwork in progress and after completion, both in the studio and in the exhibition spaces. The system of *photographing* was that each artwork would be shot in the following states: first, when it initially started to be formed; second, when the manipulation technique was changed, creating a different aspect to the artwork; third, when it was completed and installed in my studio; and last, when it was positioned in the exhibition space. An ongoing artwork in the studio was always photographed alone. I tried to capture how it was gradually formed in similar angles and distances to how I saw it while making it. In the exhibitions, each artwork is photographed individually and also with other artworks in relation to the exhibition space. *Photographing* was also used in relation to the questioning approach during the opening reception of both exhibitions. It captured some visitors' movements and positions in the exhibitions in relation to the artworks in order to observe how they viewed the exhibits. *Videotaping* would have been used to film my actions in the creative process. However, I did not choose this means because I was used to creating art in solitude to maintain my focus on the work in front of me. The presence of the video camera could break my concentration on the artwork in progress.

Questionnaires were used to collect comments from visitors to the exhibitions who volunteered to answer my questions. The questionnaire used in both exhibitions was made small in size and has an indicating number in its top-left corner. The small size aimed to give the impression to visitors that filling in the form would not consume much time. The feedback forms were printed on individual sheets of adhesive paper and placed next to the visitors' book, so that many visitors could simultaneously fill them in and attach them to the visitors' book. However, the details of the feedback form and the question used in "Seeing Paper" and "Paper World" differed slightly from one another. The next section will explain the differences.

Documentation gathered various data: texts, sketches, diagrams, exhibition plans, photographs, a chart of Finnish textile artists, filled feedback forms, written comments and an interview record (Illustration 3.1).

3.2 Five phases of research process

This research explored the relationship between two components: paper string as a physical material and artistic expression in contemporary textile art. The relationship between the two components remained the research problem throughout the research process. However, as the research was progressing, the research problem gradually accumulated other components such as artworks and exhibitions (Illustration 3.2), so that the relationship between paper string and artistic expression could be looked at in particular contexts.

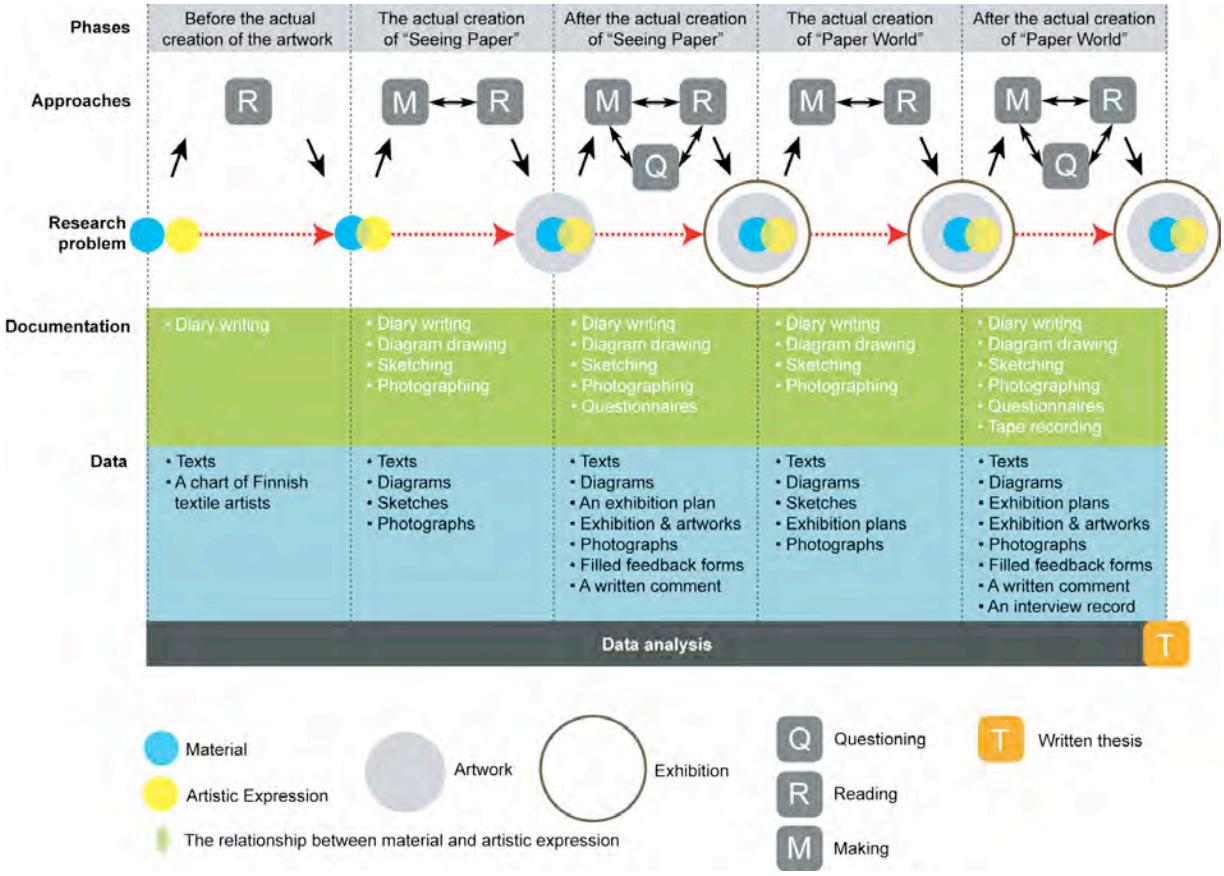


Illustration 3.2: Line of enquiry in various phases of research shows the research as an evolving process. The research problem has developed during the process, requiring the interplay between research approaches and documentation.

As can be seen in Illustration 3.2, I divided the progress based on the period when the creative productions took place into five phases. Each phase started with the research problem and ended with an outcome to be taken on as a new or reframed

problem grounding the next phase of research. Throughout the research process, I used various means to record what happened when I employed different approaches in each phase of this research. The documentation provided data for analysis whose results could generate arguments that eventually formed a written thesis at the end of the research process. This way of doing research is close to "reflective practice" as theorised by Donald Schön[86] and recently developed by Stephen Scrivener[87]. According to Schön, a practitioner attempts to understand a unique situation in which she is involved professionally (e.g., what she is doing or what is in hand). Schön suggests three components of reflective learning: "knowing-in-action", "reflection-in-action" and "reflection-on-action". Knowing-in-action describes a process in which an experienced practitioner can act spontaneously in a regular situation. Knowing-in-action is a kind of know-how a skilled practitioner can use and show in her action, but often cannot describe in detail verbally. Reflection-in-action indicates a process in which the practitioner encounters an unusual situation and has to take a different course of action from that which she usually does or has originally planned. Reflection-on-action includes an analytical process in which the practitioner reflects on her thinking, doing and feelings in connection with a particular event in her professional practice. The reflection would demonstrate what she has learnt from her previous action that can help reform the future action when she encounters a similar situation. Scrivener additionally proposes that the methodical documentation used to capture creative productions and reflection-in-action would provide material for analysis or reflection-on-action. The documentation also yields accessibility to the research project to which the creative productions belong.[88]

As earlier mentioned, I partitioned the research process into five phases (Illustration 3.2). The partitioning was built around two art productions: "Seeing Paper" and "Paper World", thus comprising the following phases: 1) *Before the actual creation of the artwork*, 2) *The actual creation of "Seeing Paper"*, 3) *After the actual creation of "Seeing Paper"*, 4) *The actual creation of "Paper World"* and 5) *After the actual creation of "Paper World"*. As these phases openly show the steps I took through the research process, letting the art productions play the lead in this

[86] Schön 1983/1995.

[87] Scrivener 2002a.

[88] Scrivener 2002a, 38-42.

study, I structured my written thesis based on these partitions into three main phases: 1) *Before the actual creation of the artwork*, 2) *The conceptualisation and the creation of the artwork in the studio*, *and* 3) *After the actual creation of the artwork – viewing artworks in exhibition space*.

The following will detail the five phases of research, demonstrating how the set of three approaches and the means of documentation were employed in each phase, and what the recorded data contained. The details of the research problem reassessed and reformulated at each phase of the research process will be discussed in Section 3.3.

Phase 1: before the actual creation of the artwork

Given the above account, Illustration 3.3 shows that the first phase employed *reading*, a survey of literature about contemporary textile art in Finland.[89] The survey aimed to seek what kinds of material have appeared in Finnish modern textile art since the 1980s. Most textile works in the literature were the creation of textile practitioners who have been awarded the prize "Finnish Textile Artists of the Year"[90], the prize evaluated by Textile Artists TEXO (i.e., the Association of Finnish Textile Artists). This could imply that these awarded artists have created high-quality works in the textile art context, so that the information about them and their works has been collected.

[89] See, for example, Bálint 1991, 202-16; Poutasuo 2001; Svinhufvud 1998, 181-207. Literature here includes catalogues of textile art exhibitions in Finland (e.g., the catalogue of the Seventh Nordic Textile Triennial, Nordic Arts Centre 1995) and textile art archives at the Design Museum in Helsinki and TEXO. The archive at the Design Museum in Helsinki consists of a collection of documents such as slides, photographs, and magazine and newspaper articles sorted by the textile artists' names. The archive at TEXO comprises slides and photographs also sorted by the textile artists' names.

[90] The award exemplifies what kind of textile art is especially appreciated in the textile artworld at a specific period in Finland. Hence, it may show a conception of high quality in textile art of the period. The award is called "Vuoden tekstiilitaiteilija" in Finnish, and is granted annually to a textile artist who has been successful in her career. For the full list of Finnish Textile Artists of the Year, see Appendix 1.

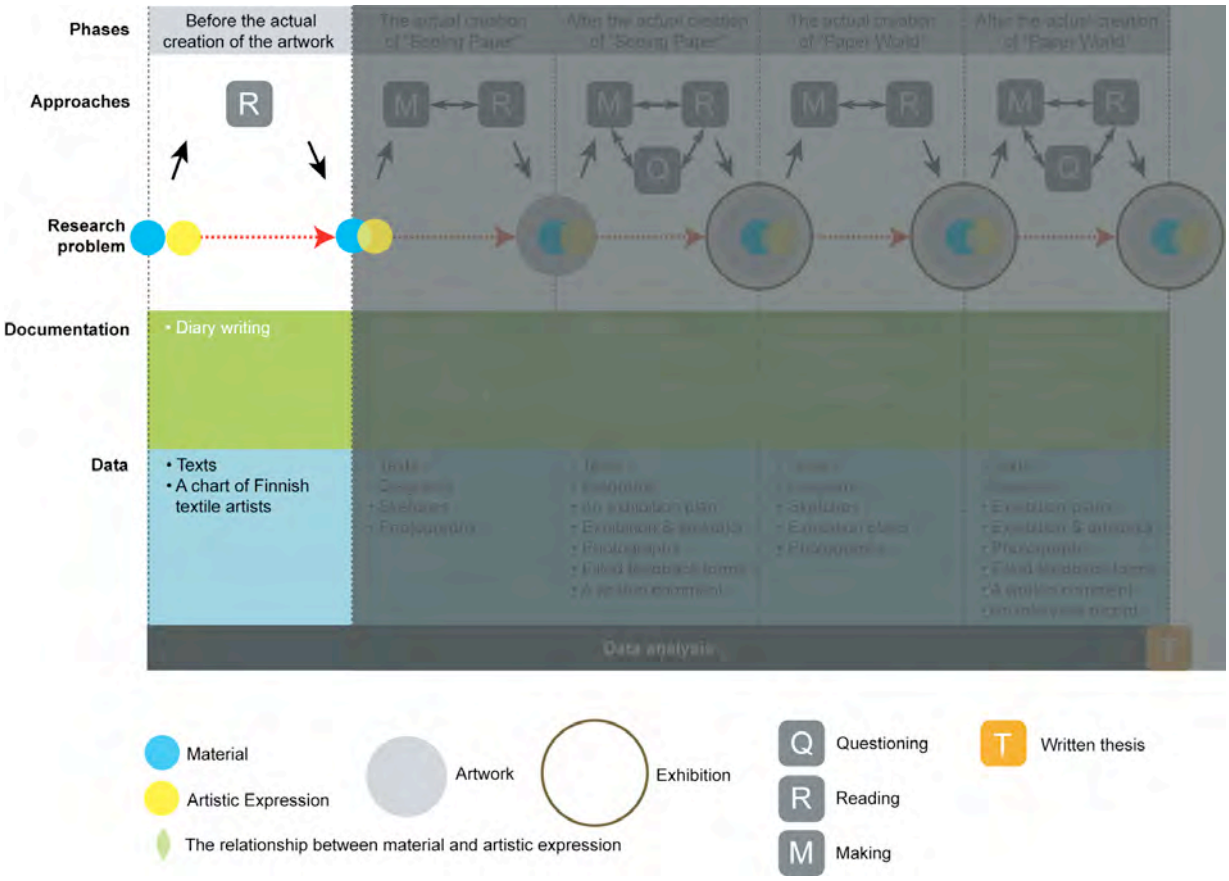


Illustration 3.3: The first phase of doing research: before the actual creation of the artwork.

Within the group of Textile Artists of the Year (1981-2004)[91], not all artists worked or have worked with art textiles.[92] Only the works of the following 12 Textile Artists of the Year: Agneta Hobin (2004), Merja Winqvist (2003), Ritva Puotila (2001), Inka Kivalo (2000), Soili Arha (1998), Maija Lavonen (1996), Maisa Tikkanen (1994), Anna-Maija Aarras (1995), Ulla-Maija Vikman (1992), Airi Snellman-Hänninen (1989), Kirsti Rantanen (1986) and Irma Kukkasjärvi (1984) were those I considered to be in the category of contemporary art textiles. This group of textile artists were just examples of Finnish artists who have produced outstanding artworks. Considering only their works was by no means to exclude them from the whole community of Finnish textile artists. Art textiles of some other Finnish artists

[91] TEXO awarded the prize Finnish Textile Artist of the Year for the first time in 1981 and my research began in 2004.

[92] Some Textile Artists of the Year during 1981-2004, such as Eva Anttila (1983) and Helena Halvari (1981) created tapestry, which I consider traditional textiles, and some others, such as Helena Hyvönen (1997), Sirkka Könönen (1993), Maija Arela (1987) and Anneli Airikka-Lammi (1982) worked with utilitarian textiles.

who have not received this award can also be of high aesthetic quality, for example, the works of Moosa Myllykangas, Silja Puranen, etc.

I documented the works created by the above Textile Artists of the Year, found in books or archives, by photocopying pictures and scanning slides of the artworks as well as writing detailed information about them (e.g., title, material, year of creation and dimensions) in my research diary. I organised the collected visuals counter-chronologically according to the year the textile artist received the award, including accompanying details of the artworks, in the form of a visual chart (Illustrations 3.4 and 3.5). The chart formed a series of works of the artists listed above. It supported me in recognising how contemporary textile art in Finland has changed, especially in terms of materials used. Many artists used common textile materials. For example, Ulla-Maija Wikman used silk yarns, Maisa Tikkanen felting wool, and Inka Kivalo linen yarns. Some employed materials found in nature in their works, for example, Soili Arha works with bast fibres and Agneta Hobin with mica. The types of material used in the works of these textile artists seemed to have shifted from common textile materials such as wool or linen to more distinctive ones that in turn have become symbols of the artists using them. For example, the main material for the work of Merja Winqvist has been brown kraft paper that she rotates and glues into small tubes reminiscent of wood. These small paper tubes enable people to identify her artworks.

Illustrations 3.4 and 3.5: Visual representations of art textiles created by Finnish textile artists who were awarded Textile Artist of the Year between 1984 and 2004. My collage, 2004.

From the survey, the material that attracted my interest most was paper string. It has been the major material used in the artworks of Ritva Puotila, the Finnish Textile Artist of the Year 2001. I became particularly interested in this material because of its conflicting characteristics. On the one hand, paper string seems commonplace, as it is industrially produced in the form of yarns as other textile materials. On the other hand, it is special in its own right, because this man-made material is produced from wood, the raw material widely available in Finnish nature.

The study set out to examine the importance of a physical material as to whether it possibly helps a textile artist construct artistic expression while making an artwork, i.e., the relationship between a material and artistic expression. A particular type of material to be investigated had not yet been decided. To examine every type of material used in contemporary textile art was undoubtedly impossible. Moreover, if several types of material were chosen in order to examine their relationship with artistic expression, the subject of the study would probably be too broad. Narrowing the subject of study down to one or two materials would be preferable. I decided to choose only one type of material which I had never used for creating my own textile art. Having no prior artistic experience with the material chosen, I could experience it as a new material. However, the material should be one that some other textile artists

have used. As such, I would be able to compare my view on the material and my experience with it with another artist, which could enlarge or enhance understanding.

Paper string, with its characters shown above, seemed to suit the choice for being scrutinised in this study. Before deciding on it, deepening my understanding of this material was the next step. I conducted a literature survey, *reading* two different kinds of literature about paper string: Finnish history in general and Finnish design history[93] and also about Ritva Puotila[94]. From this, I found that paper string played a significant role during the post-war period. As a substitute textile material during that time, it not only surrounded Finnish people's everyday life in forms of useful products, but also challenged professional practice of textile artists, such as Dora Jung and Greta Skogster-Lehtinen, to expose their creative power over the limitation of available materials.

Regarding the other component of my research – artistic expression – I examined it by *reading* aesthetics and philosophy of art[95]. Some philosophers' thoughts raised interesting questions. For example, Collingwood's theory defining art as expression, which exists only in the artist's mind, and is not identical with the physical manifestation of a medium, arouses the question of whether what I would create from paper string, which is a physical material, could be an artwork after all. I planned to examine it through my actual art production in the next phase of research.

Phase 2: the actual creation of "Seeing Paper"

In this phase, *making* included selecting a set of different kinds of paper string, forming the idea or concept of a series of artworks, planning the creation of the artworks, experimenting with the chosen materials, and executing the artworks (Illustration 3.6).

[93] See, for example, Kruskopf 1975; Singleton 1986; 1998; Valtonen 1998.

[94] See, for example, Svinhufvud 2003; Leitner 2005.

[95] For expression theories, see, for example, Collingwood 1938/1958; Croce 1992; Dewey 1934/2005; Goodman 1976; Langer 1963.

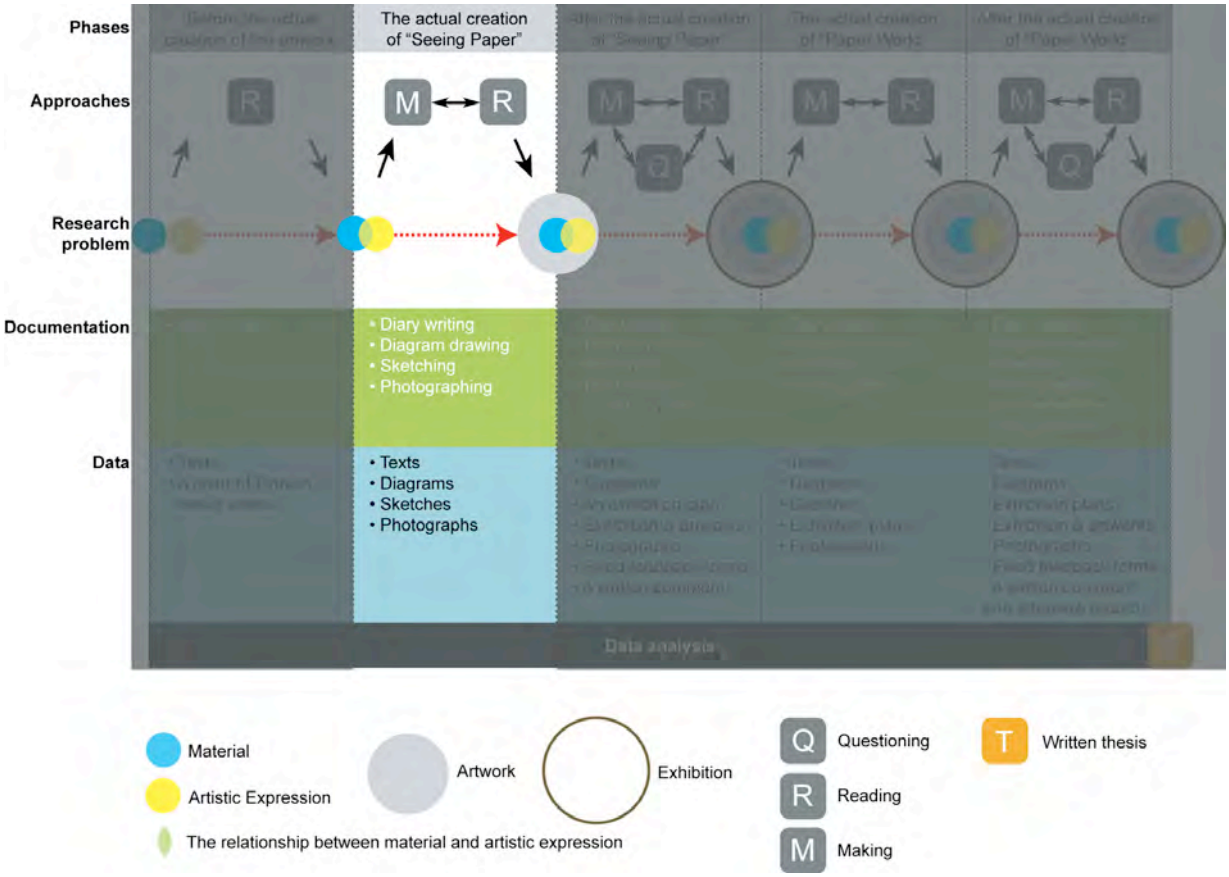


Illustration 3.6: The second phase of doing research: the actual creation of "Seeing Paper".

Making this series differs from general art practices in two senses: first, I conducted it as part of research in academia that aims to enhance knowledge and understanding, and second, it involved my reflection-in-action[96]. For example, my intention of creating "Seeing Paper" was to investigate whether paper string of different physical qualities influenced me (the artist), the process and the artworks differently. This investigation led me to select a set of specific types of paper string physically differing from one another enough that I could compare them.

I set a criterion for this material selection to assist me in deciding methodically which types of paper string among those available in Finland would be included in the investigation. The criterion was that each material should possess noticeably distinctive sensory (visual and tactile) qualities.

Reflection-in-action could be one way of looking at one's own creative process with a critical eye, thus contributing to the openness and transparency of research led by art practice. In my case, because of my reflection-in-action, I could try to

[96] Schön 1983/1995.

understand unique situations encountered and decisions made in the ongoing actual creative process. During the creation of an artwork, I wrote or drew diagrams about the work in progress in my research diary daily and photographed it in different states as described in Section 3.1. However, when the creative process was interrupted due to some problems with the material or with the manipulation technique that required me to evaluate the process, I also photographed the artwork at that moment, and wrote in the diary immediately to reflect on the problems and the solutions to them. While writing and diagram drawing were the documentation methods capturing my reflection-in-action evolving in the creative process, photographing documented the artwork in progress that in turn visually presented the results of my actual creative process.

Reading in parallel with *making* artworks certainly influenced the way I thought and worked. When making an artwork, I tried to understand my actions and the work in progress. To learn about my conscious experience of making the work, ranging from thought, memory, imagination and emotion to action and decision, I studied literature on phenomenology[97] in which the structure of the experience could be described. For example, when I touched and manipulated a type of paper string, its tactile and visual qualities reminded me of something else. According to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological philosophy, tactile experience gained through touching the material could establish a connection with my consciousness, thus recalling my memory of some experiences in which I have engaged in the past.

The interaction between *making* and *reading* formed not only the artworks I created but also my direct experience of the art production, both being taken as the basis for the next phase of research.

Phase 3: after the actual creation of "Seeing Paper"

The third phase (Illustration 3.7) was about the event after the actual creation of "Seeing Paper", continuing with the basis established in the former phase.

[97] See, for example, Heidegger 1962/1990; Merleau-Ponty 1962/2005.

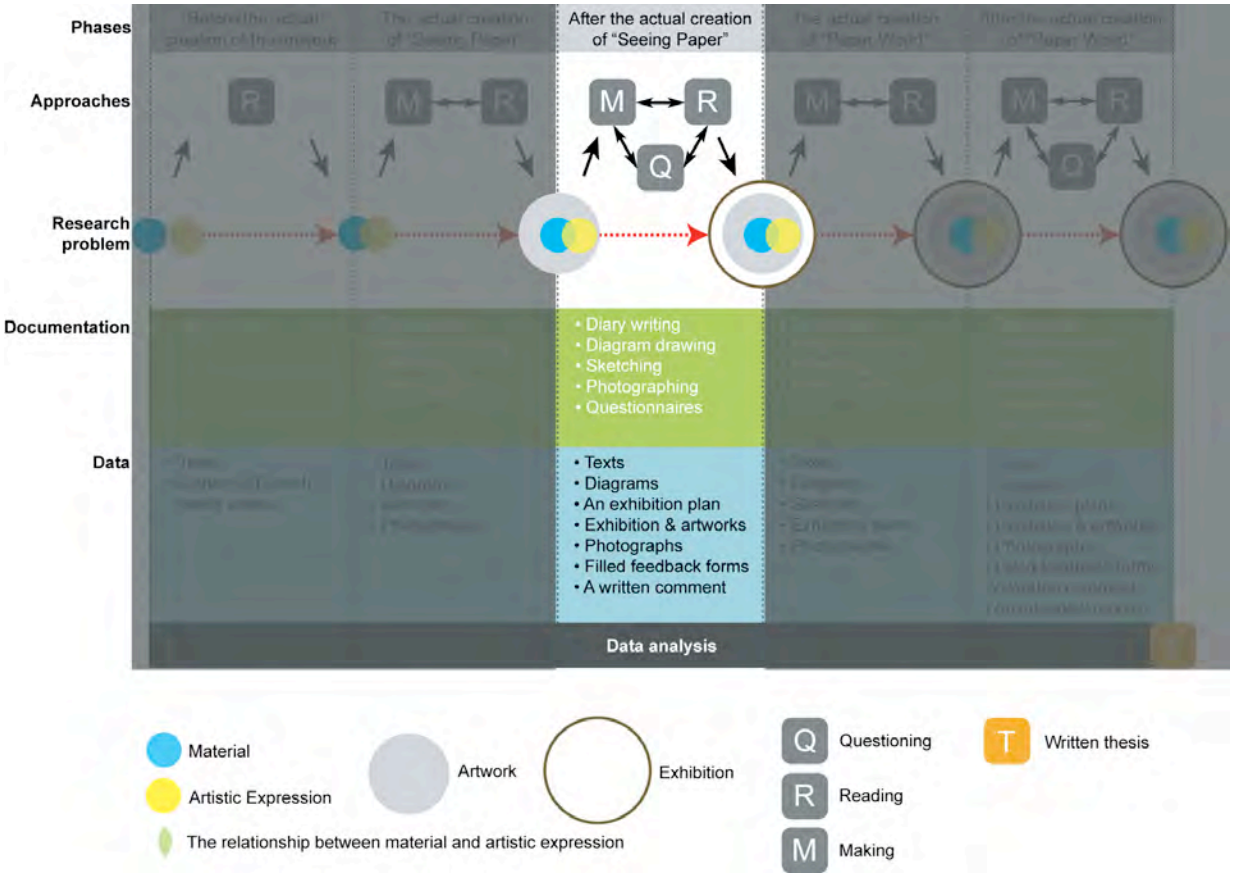
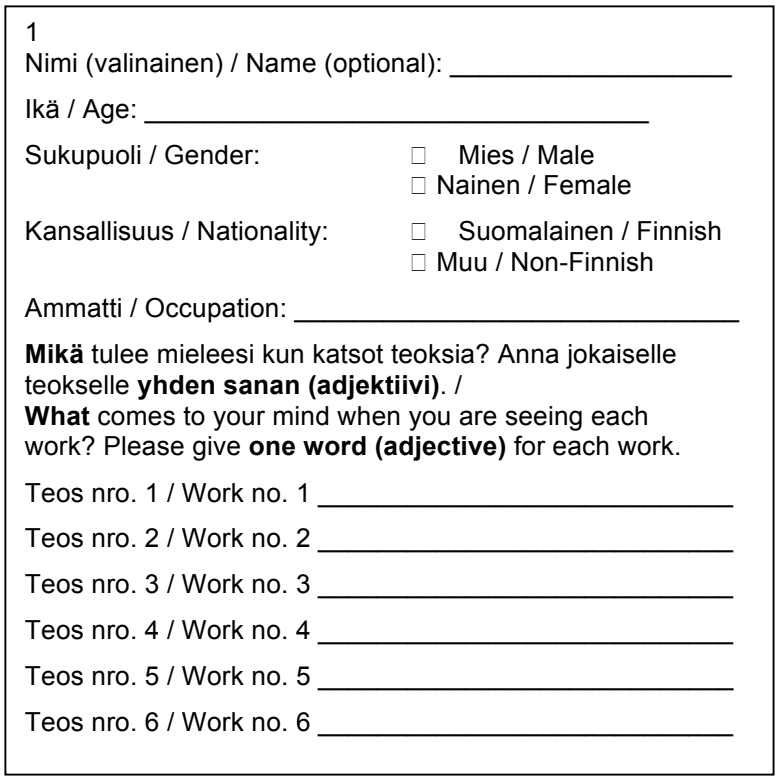


Illustration 3.7: The third phase of doing research: after the actual creation of "Seeing Paper".

Making in this phase of research consisted of activities different from those in the previous phase's making. It comprised planning an exhibition and setting it up according to a plan. Similar to the previous phase, *making* in this phase entailed my reflection-in-action when the situation required a decision to change something from how it was planned. For example, "Seeing Paper" did not appear as I had imagined when installed in the actual display of a modernistic gallery as to the sequence drawn on the layout plan. This suggested the rearrangement of the artworks' sequence. I, therefore, tried repositioning some artworks until I was satisfied with the final composition for the exhibition. When the installation was completed, I placed an indicating number from one to six for each artwork according to its position in the gallery. As the exhibition was temporary, I documented it by photographing each individual artwork as well as the exhibition to capture the overall atmosphere.

Q*uestioning* was carried out when the exhibition "Seeing Paper" was open to the public. It took place in the form of a question on printed questionnaires for visitors to the exhibition. The question was intended to direct the visitors to look at and comment on each individual sculpture. To guide the visitor to focus on each artwork

and attach a particular adjective to it, the questionnaire was designed to have blank spaces with numbers indicating the artworks from one to six (Illustration 3.8). The numbers corresponded to those marked at the positions of the same artworks on display.


1
Nimi (valinainen) / Name (optional): _____

Ikä / Age: _____

Sukupuoli / Gender: □ Mies / Male □ Nainen / Female

Kansallisuus / Nationality: □ Suomalainen / Finnish □ Muu / Non-Finnish

Ammatti / Occupation: _____

Mikä tulee mieleesi kun katsot teoksia? Anna jokaiselle teokselle **yhden sanan (adjektiivi)**. /
What comes to your mind when you are seeing each work? Please give **one word (adjective)** for each work.

Teos nro. 1 / Work no. 1 _____

Teos nro. 2 / Work no. 2 _____

Teos nro. 3 / Work no. 3 _____

Teos nro. 4 / Work no. 4 _____

Teos nro. 5 / Work no. 5 _____

Teos nro. 6 / Work no. 6 _____

Illustration 3.8: Feedback form for "Seeing Paper" (actual size 10cm x 10cm). As the six individual artworks were marked with indicating numbers in the exhibition, Works no. 1 to 6 on this feedback form referred to the artworks marked with the same numbers.

However, I did not bother all the visitors to fill in the feedback forms, for two reasons: Firstly, some visitors might feel compelled to perform an extra activity that they were not willing to do, so that they might give false answers. Secondly and more importantly, I intended to underline their free will, although I was aware that visitors willing to answer the questionnaires could lie anyway, pretend or tease me with their answers. Still, if they could devote time, energy and thought to filling in the forms, their answers would be worth taking into account for comparison with the artist's conception. Also, I did not restrict the number of visitors or specify the eligibility of visitors according to age, occupation, nationality, etc. This was because the exhibition was open to the public, similarly to any art exhibitions in galleries that usually welcome anyone interested in the works displayed.

As the method was deliberately implemented in a random manner, collecting as many visitors' comments as possible was important. To attract people to stop and fill in the forms, a brief question on a small piece of paper was expected to give the impression that the form required only little effort and time to complete. When people visited my exhibition, they would probably prefer to experience, enjoy and appreciate works of art displayed, and would not perhaps expect their visit to include a discussion or explanation of how they felt or thought about the works or the exhibition. The feedback forms were therefore expected to record the responses of some visitors who were willing to share their opinions about my artworks and exhibition. The willingness of the visitors to do this implied their attentive awareness of my work, meaning that their answers might reveal reflections generating in their mind during their contemplative experience with the artworks in the exhibition. As some visitors voluntarily filled in the feedback forms and attached them to the visitors' books, the filled forms with these visitors' comments were used as data for my discussion. To make the data easier to understand, I later organised them into a table showing comments and some personal information about the visitors, such as age, occupation and nationality (Appendix 2).

Another form of *questioning* the audience was also employed. The method arose during the exhibition when I discussed the artworks and exhibition with a textile artist. The discussion covered a number of interesting points, so that I asked this artist to freely write about her thoughts on the artworks and the exhibition in a longer text. I received her narrative comment on "Seeing Paper" (Appendix 3) after the exhibition had ended. The comment was used as a part of the data collection.

In addition, other alternative forms of *questioning* the audience about the exhibition could have been included, for example, inviting a focus group to the gallery to discuss the exhibition and the displayed artworks or to answer questionnaires. I intended the exhibition to be set to the public as normally as an exhibition in general. A visitor could be anyone who was interested in art and visited the exhibition to appreciate the artworks. Having visited the exhibition voluntarily, the visitors would possibly give honest comments on the artworks and the exhibition.

Some visitors' comments caught my attention and directed me to seek what caused them to give their comments as they were. For example, most visitors gave a similar comment demonstrating that they did not interpret the concept of female dress-like artworks as a metaphor. This shortcoming led me to look back on the process of this

art production, which I thought I had carefully planned and undertook. I assumed that the shortcoming might be caused by the exhibition space, the element that I considered little in the creative process, because it was not a part of the problem in the first place. To support or oppose this assumption, I hence familiarised myself with exhibition design and the history of modern art display[98]. For instance, O'Doherty's concept of "the white cube" demonstrates that the neutrality of the white space of a modernistic gallery is illusory and that its whiteness creates the feeling of perpetuity in visitors. This confirmed my supposition and led me to modify the research problem to include contextual elements in the research and to develop my subsequent art production in a different way.

Phase 4: the actual creation of "Paper World"

The fourth phase of research took place during the actual creation of "Paper World". The outcome of the third phase became the research problem of this phase, which dealt with the subsequent art production that still used paper string as material in relation to exhibition context. This phase (Illustration 3.9) was carried out in the same fashion as the second phase.

[98] See, for example, Lefebvre 1991; O'Doherty 1999.

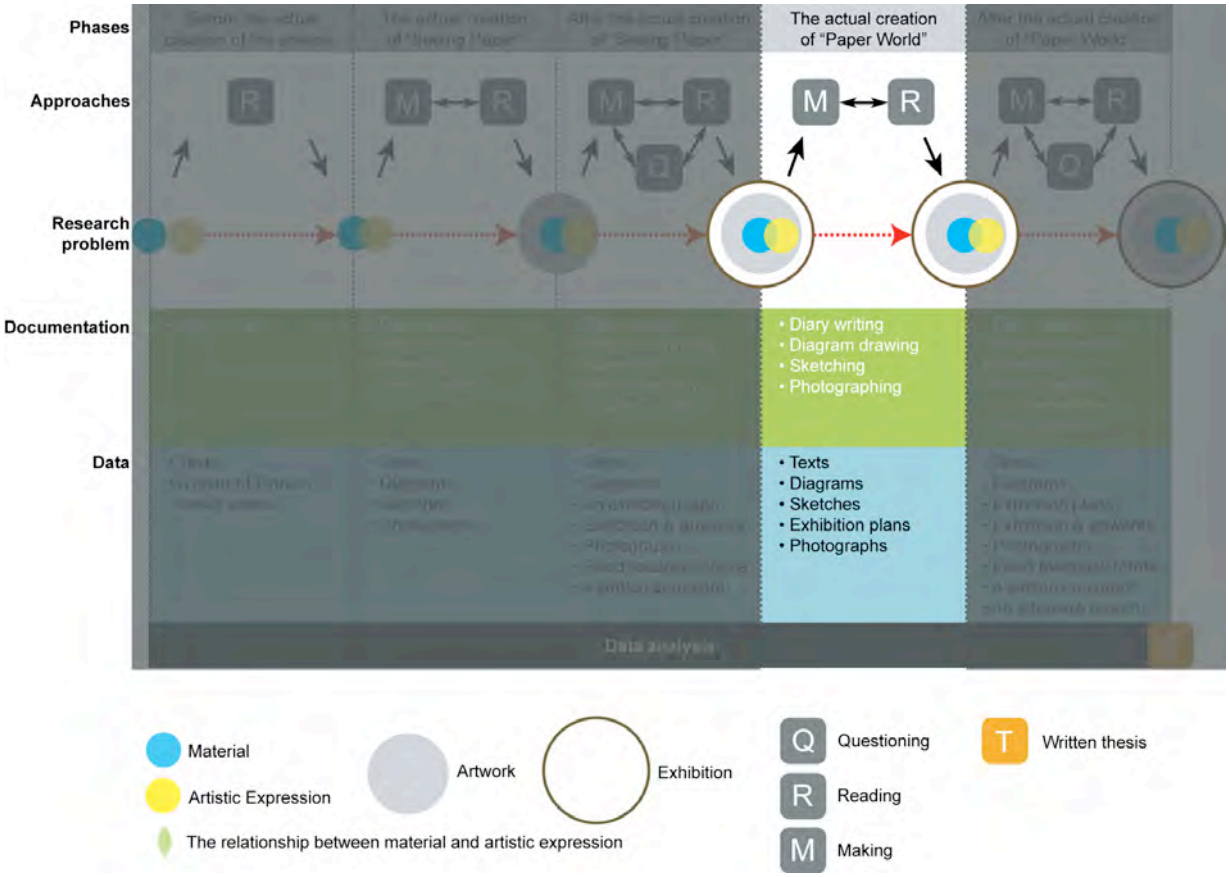


Illustration 3.9: The fourth phase of doing research: the actual creation of "Paper World".

This phase included choosing a kind of paper string, forming the concept of the series of artworks, planning the art production and exhibition, experimenting with the chosen material and creating artworks. *Making* this series of artworks differed from the previous series, because I considered the contextual components differently, in particular the type of exhibition space and elements in the space, looking at them carefully already at the beginning of the art production. Having analysed the comments of some visitors about "Seeing Paper", I found that most of the visitors did not grasp the concept of female dress-like artworks as a metaphor for human beings. The artworks appeared to them as lifeless dresses. I assumed that the problem might be due to the atmosphere in the modernistic gallery, the spatial context in which "Seeing Paper" was displayed. I thus attempted to improve the art production of "Paper World" by considering the contextual issue together with conceptualising the artworks at the beginning of the actual production process.

While conceptualising the art production, I tried to anticipate the experience of visitors to the exhibition in order to decide on the theme of the exhibition and artworks, which could direct most people to experience them as I intended. To

achieve this, I needed to find out how people experience things.[99] In Heidegger's phenomenological thinking about "being-in-the-world", one interprets the meanings of a thing and an activity as they are "in the world", not by looking at them as a general thing or activity but by looking to her own contextual connections to that particular thing and activity.[100] For visitors to experience and interpret my artworks as I intended, all artworks would appear in forms and in space with which they and I were familiar and which had meaning for them and for me, so that we could look to our relations to the artworks in the same way. This contributed to conceiving the theme and concept of "Paper World" and to guiding me throughout the art production.

In this fourth phase, reflection-in-action still played their roles in *making*, i.e., I knew what I was doing and reflected on my doing, and determined how I would continue the creative process. For example, when choosing the exhibition space for "Paper World", I needed to decide which option – an actual house or a gallery converted from an old house – would suit my artworks better. To decide on this matter, I compared and contrasted the two alternatives, examining their advantages and disadvantages. I also documented this decision-making process in my research diary. The comparison assisted me in selecting the suitable exhibition space and in explaining how and why I selected it.

The interaction between *making* and *reading* led me to develop the artworks in "Paper World" and to better understand the process of my artistic production. This interaction also yielded a result of this phase of research that was to be used as the basis for investigation in the next phase.

Phase 5: after the actual creation of "Paper World

The fifth phase of this study took place after the actual creation of "Paper World" (Illustration 3.10).

[99] See, for example, Heidegger 1962/1990; 1988/1999; Merleau-Ponty 1962/2005; 1968.

[100] Heidegger 1988/1999, 65-70.

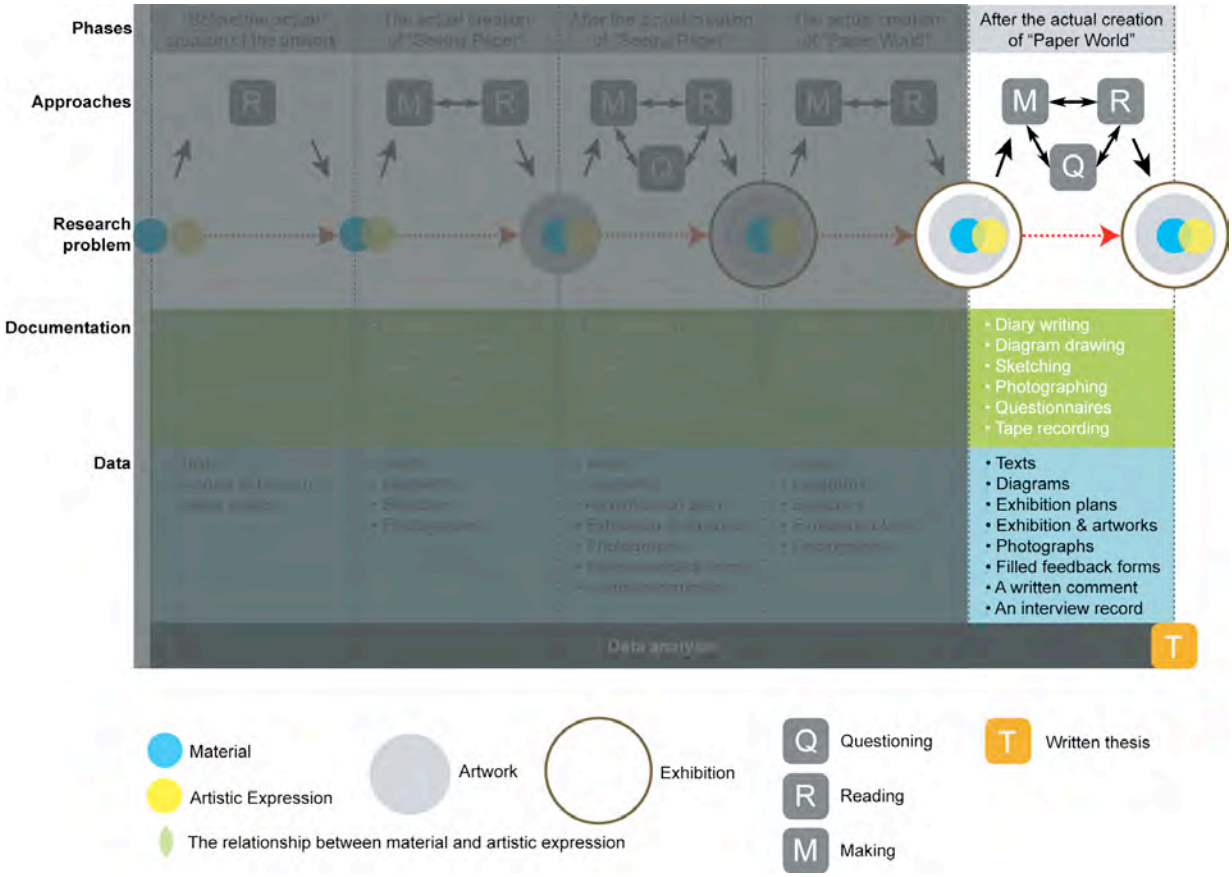
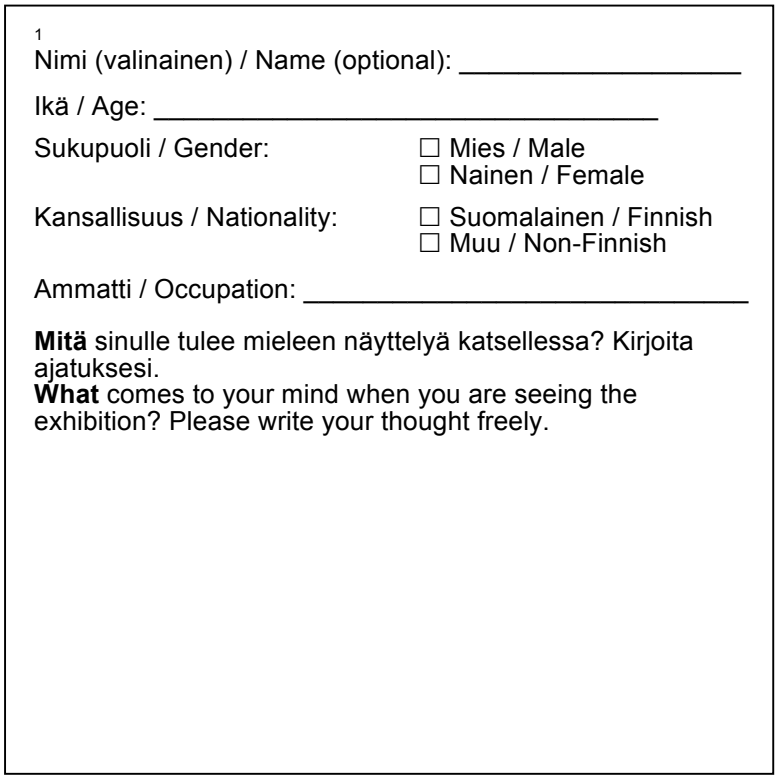


Illustration 3.10: The fifth phase of doing research: after the actual creation of "Paper World".

Making comprised building an exhibition that not only followed the exhibition layout but also solved the unplanned situations in the actual exhibition space. As the exhibition was temporary, it was important to document how all artworks were situated in the exhibition space. I documented this by photographing every artwork in the gallery, especially the angles showing how it was placed in harmony with the gallery space, as well as the exhibition to capture the overall atmosphere.

Printed questionnaires were used to ask for comments from visitors to the exhibition "Paper World". As shown in the third phase, the form that required visitors to give one word for each individual artwork did not quite yield the outcome I had expected; some people wrote a passage or used the same word for several artworks. I thus modified the question and the feedback form, so that the visitors would be freer to write about their thoughts (Illustration 3.11). The feedback form documented the responses of some visitors who would be willing to share their opinions on my artworks and exhibition. Their comments in the filled feedback forms were used as data for my discussion. To make the data easier to examine, I arranged them into a

table that presents the visitors' comments and some personal details, such as age, occupation and nationality (Appendix 4).


1
Nimi (valinainen) / Name (optional): _____

Ikä / Age: _____

Sukupuoli / Gender: ☐ Mies / Male ☐ Nainen / Female

Kansallisuus / Nationality: ☐ Suomalainen / Finnish ☐ Muu / Non-Finnish

Ammatti / Occupation: _____

Mitä sinulle tulee mieleen näyttelyä katsellessa? Kirjoita ajatuksesi.
What comes to your mind when you are seeing the exhibition? Please write your thought freely.

Illustration 3.11: Feedback form for "Paper World".

I also used the other form of *questioning* by asking a textile professional[101] to freely write about her thoughts of the exhibition. A textile designer visited the exhibition and wrote her comment on a feedback form. She realised that she had more to say about the artworks and exhibition than the small form could contain. She thus offered to write a longer text about the exhibition. After receiving her text (Appendix 4), I found it useful for the research and included it in the data collection. I considered this text equivalent to a discussion between this textile designer and my work, independently of my influence. Only one artist offered, however, her comment.

I then examined the visitors' experiences reflected as their written comments. In Heideggerian phenomenology about the structure of experiences, people know how they will interpret things before they actually see them, by relating what they are experiencing to the meaning of similar things they have experienced.[102] This assisted

[101] This person is not the same person who offered her comments on "Seeing Paper" in the third phase.

[102] Heidegger 1962/1990, 191.

me in understanding how some visitors had experienced my work, so that they could express their interpretation close to the concept of the artworks and exhibition.

In this last phase of research, after the exhibition "Paper World" ended, I interviewed Ritva Puotila, the textile artist who has used paper string in her art textiles. The interview[103] was arranged to be face-to-face and an hour long. I prepared an interview schedule[104], i.e., a list of questions whose order was organised from general to specific, and content was centred upon paper string. However, the interviewing did not strictly follow the interview schedule; many additional questions were spontaneously asked in response to the interviewee's answers. As the interviewing was carried on, the rapport between the interviewee and me seemed to develop, so that the interview eventually became close to a discussion of two textile artists about their common interest. During the interview, I used a digital recorder and unceasingly noted down Puotila's answers in my notebook. I later transcribed the digital record together with the noted text, so that the transcription became the interview record to be included in the data collection of this research.

The benefit of this interview was the possible obtainment of some additional perspectives about the material from an experienced textile artist, i.e. how Puotila has experienced and understood the material. The interview was conducted at the end of the research process deliberately, because I intended to create my artworks with the least possible influence from another artist, her thoughts about her work, and her approaches to the material or techniques for dealing with it. The reason I attempted to avoid any ideas from another textile artist originated from the fact that each textile artist, particularly in Finland, tends to work during her professional life with only one type of material. The material in turn can eventually become a symbol of the artist, as paper string is in Puotila's case. Accordingly, when using the same material, I might risk receiving too much influence from a well-known artist. Therefore, I distanced myself from deepening my knowledge about Puotila's work before I completed the two art exhibitions. Although avoiding influence from other artists might not be fully possible, awareness of any possible influence helped me overcome the risk.

[103] Gubrium and Holstein 2001.

[104] Kumar 2005, 126.

3.3 Development of research problem

The research process started with the problem initially set, i.e., an investigation of the relationship between a physical material (paper string in particular) and artistic expression in the creation of art textiles. This remained the focus of this study throughout the whole process. The following passage demonstrates how the research problem was modified and evolved, thus also revealing its direction of investigation.

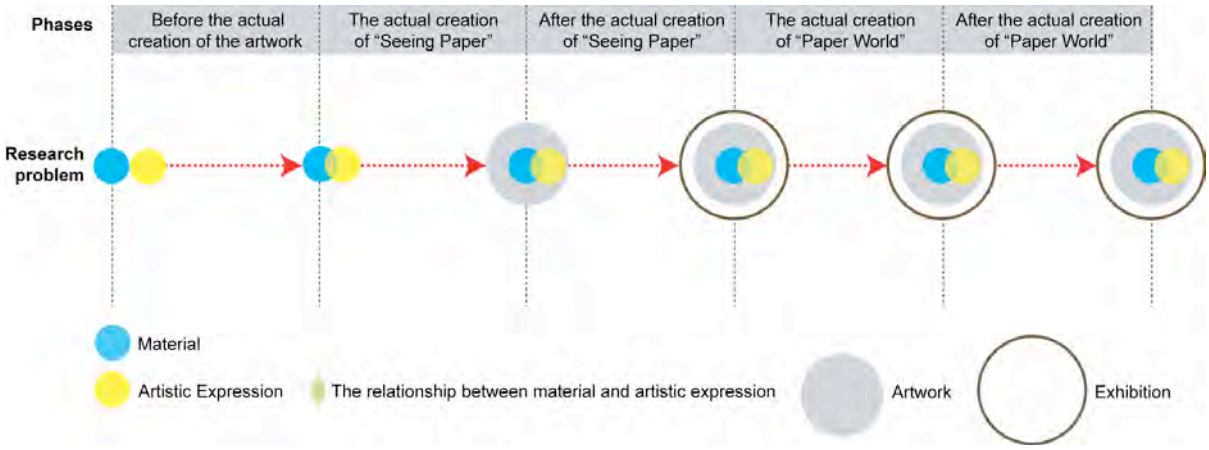


Illustration 3.12: Reformulation of research problem.

Illustration 3.12 shows that the research problem was formulated first as two components: physical material and artistic expression. In seeking their possible relationship, the two components must somehow interact with each other. The interaction could be analysed only when a type of material is specified. With the help of a literature survey, I was able to decide to focus on paper string. Having defined the two components of the research problem, I then studied each component separately in the first phase. Studying the components supported me in exploring the relationship between them. This was because paper string and artistic expression became familiar and intertwined in my thoughts, thus generating ideas of how they could be incorporated in my actual art practice. The conceptual intertwining of the two components prepared me for the next phase of research in which the actual creation of "Seeing Paper" was involved and the intertwining became embodied.

The second phase continued from the two defined components – paper string and artistic expression – as the focus of this investigation (Illustration 3.12). As this phase concerned the actual creation of "Seeing Paper", I interacted with three different

kinds of paper string as the material in hand. The interaction created a dialogue between each type of paper string and my expression. I felt that I was not the only actor in the creative process; paper string seemed to act, too. In other words, when I manipulated paper string to express my idea in a tangible form, the material in return reacted to my manipulative act. This interaction established the research problem field of the relationship between paper string and artistic expression. With the interplay between making and reading in this particular art production, expression seemed to arise when I touched the material and was touched by it. This meant that the physical qualities of each material I touched in the creative process affected my thought and imagination, so that I reacted to the effect in return. For example, when working with the type of paper string that was physically messy, coarse and weak, its messiness, coarseness and weakness seemed to disturb my concentration on forming the artwork. I reacted against the physical disturbance of this material, by pulling the string harder and breaking it. Dissimilar types of paper string applied to this series of artworks acted differently and resulted in artworks with differing characteristics at the end of the second phase of research. I recognised different appearances between the completed artworks as the result of different materials employed in them.

The artworks (paper string and my artistic expression) produced in the previous phase became the research problem in the third phase (Illustration 3.12). In this phase, the outcome of the previous phase (i.e., "Seeing Paper" series of artworks) was presented to the public in an exhibition. A specific context where the artworks were situated affected the ways people saw them. Making, questioning and reading concurrently played their roles in generating my understandings of how some visitors to the exhibition looked at and interpreted the artworks and the exhibition. Viewers seemed unlikely to see and to interpret the artworks in the same way as I as the maker did. To these viewers, dissimilarities between the chosen types of paper string appeared unable to reveal their specific expressive qualities, which I had recognised in the actual creation of "Seeing Paper" in the previous phase. Unrecognised materials in the artworks, as the result of this phase, raised the question of how exhibition space might influence the exhibits and that contributed to reassessing and reformulating the problem field. The new problem thus comprised the exhibition context as part of the exploration to be continued in the fourth phase.

In the fourth phase, the reframed research problem brought in a new dimension to the art production of "Paper World". Regarding the creation of it, I changed the way I

created my artworks by emphasising not only the material as the focus of this research but also the exhibition space wherein the artworks would be situated in order to gain knowledge of the relationship between the material and artistic expression. I recognised the expressive potential of the chosen type of paper string when making the artworks in this series and imaging them being in a particular exhibition space. This increased my awareness of the visitors' perception that linked their contemplation of the artworks not only to the surroundings in which the works were situated but also to some aspects embedded in their personal experience. I attempted to anticipate the future situation, or in this case, the exhibition where my artworks and their material would be publicly shown. I carefully planned the production of both the artworks and the exhibition at the same time. Accordingly, this phase of research ended with a series of artworks in which one kind of paper string was employed, and which was specially designed for a particular exhibition space. From this phase, the research problem became settled and remained unchanged until the end of the process.

The artworks in the "Paper World" series, which were designed for a specific context, became the research problem in the last phase (Illustration 3.12). They were publicly presented in a thematic exhibition space, i.e., a gallery converted from an old house. The specific context influenced some visitors' perception and interpretation of the exhibition and artworks. Making, questioning and reading enhanced my understandings of how some visitors would perceive and interpret the exhibition. The questioning in the form of small questionnaires could capture how some visitors personally interpreted my artworks and exhibition. Interacting approaches also assisted me in reacting to the unplanned situations more effectively.

It was my intention to construct a set of approaches suitable for solving the research questions. I attempted to utilise them openly and consistently, in order to bring transparency and reflection to the process, which combined art practice as part of research enquiry.

Before the actual creation of the artwork

4

Paper string and artistic expression: two components

Each creative process of a craft-based artist can be seen as comprising two components: physical material that serves the artist to form an artwork, and artistic expression[105] that arises when creating that particular artwork. The former can be seen as functioning as an outer component, while the latter operates as an inner one. From my experience as a craft-based artist, although these two components function in different manners, the outer material seems intertwined with the inner artistic expression. When I am manipulating a physical material, my relationship with the material appears mutual, i.e., the material seems to interact with me and expresses its qualities to me, and that contributes to the artistic expression occurring within me. As the problem field of my research lies in seeking the relationship between material, paper string in particular, and artistic expression (Illustration 2.1 in Chapter 2), it seems necessary to look at each component. Understanding the components per se may create awareness of their possible incorporation into my actual artistic productions.

This chapter examines them before the actual creation of the artwork as individual components having no explicit interconnection with one another. The materiality of paper string is based on its physical characteristics and cultural significance in Finnish history[106]. The study of artistic expression rests on expression theories in the philosophy of art and aesthetics. This chapter contains no direct experience of my own, neither with this material nor with artistic expression in my creative practice. I intend to distance myself from the investigation of these components. Exploring them from a distance may lead to a fuller understanding of both components explored and that could be useful later for my experience in the actual artistic productions, which I will discuss in the next chapter. This chapter thus articulates my thoughts as a researcher who investigates these issues.

[105] *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* states about "express" that it originates from Latin: "expressare" or "exprimere" and from old French: "expresser" which means to portray, to represent or to press out.

[106] Finnish history here concerns the period starting from World War II to the post-war time in Finland. I examine only the issues regarding the role of paper string as a textile material during the mentioned period, particularly when it emerged in the 1940s, then disappeared and reappeared in the 1980s.

4.1 Materiality of paper string

On the one hand, a physical material possesses quantifiable qualities, such as strength, size, colour, etc. On the other hand, it is a human construct.[107] People in a particular cultural context seem to be bound to the intrinsic qualities of a material.

In this section, I examine the materiality of industrially produced Finnish paper string on two different issues: physicality and significance in Finnish textile art history. These issues are based on my interview with Ritva Puotila (1935-) who has worked with paper string since the 1980s.[108] Puotila could be considered one of the most noteworthy textile artists who devotes herself to this material, not only because she has created her work with it, but also because she rescued it from near oblivion in the eighties. What I expected to gain from this interview is that Puotila might express both her passion for paper string and her past experience of striving for its availability. Surely, I would not obtain this information from either other textile artists or literature. The aspects obtained from the interviewed are examined together with a number of texts written about Puotila's works and those about paper string used in textiles in Finnish history.

4.1.1 Physical characteristics

One might mistakenly mix industrially produced paper string with other materials such as raffia or sisal. However, when looking at it more closely, unlike sisal, raffia or hemp whose surface is fibrous, the surface of paper string is smooth and slightly

[107] What I aim to present here is that although a particular material has measurable physical qualities, people in different cultures may perceive the same material in various ways and create dissimilar concepts of it. This could explain why I chose to study one material in one culture, i.e., industrially produced paper string in Finnish culture. For more overviews on social constuctionism, see Berger and Luckmann 1967; Hacking 1999; Searle 1995. On objectivism, see Popper 1972, for example.

[108] Finnish textile artists seem to prefer to work with a particular medium (material and technique). The chosen medium could remain in use in every artwork of an artist for decades or even her lifetime. In the case of paper string, another Finnish textile artist who has worked with this material for a few decades is Maisa Turunen-Wiklund. Some other Finnish textile artists also work with paper but of different kinds, for example, Merja Winqvist whose material has been kraft paper and Janna Syvänoja whose material has been text-printed paper from e.g., newspapers.

shiny.[109] These physical features introduce to the artefacts in which this material is employed not only functional qualities such as dustlessness, but also visual qualities such as pureness and clarity of form and structure.

Producing strings from paper may imply temporal use or fragility. However, paper string is in fact stiff and strong, yet exceptionally lightweight. Its strength varies according to its thickness and means of production. Finnish paper manufactures have regularly attempted to improve particular qualities of paper string. For example, the paper producer UPM-Kymmene in cooperation with VM-Carpet, a company producing carpets from paper string, developed a specially durable and even type of paper string with high density and moisture resistance.[110] Regarding the stiffness of paper string, this characteristic might be considered the downside of the material, because it contributes to its lack of flexibility.[111] The inflexibility of paper string seems to prevent the act of bending that is necessary for textile techniques, e.g., weaving, knitting, etc.

The unique qualities of paper string, such as its peaceful sound, clean line, weightlessness and dustlessness, make it a prominent material compared to other fibres. These qualities may explain why Finnish Textile Artist of the Year 2001 Ritva Puotila has chosen to work with this material. She expresses how the aesthetic values of paper string have attracted her as follows:

> Spun paper is untamed, and has its own unique aesthetic. It has its own colour properties, and ways of absorbing and reflecting colour and light. … It transmits the body's warmth…[112]

Puotila also points out that paper string differs from other materials because of its pureness, both when it is unbleached, when it is a shade of natural brown, and when bleached white or dyed bright colours.[113] Puotila's commitment to this material has led her to achieve not only new means of artistic expression in her interior and art textiles but also the improved qualities and easy accessibility of this material today.

[109] Leitner 2005, 60.

[110] Nikkari 2006, 14.

[111] Valtonen 1988, 54.

[112] Quoted in Bickert 2002, 14.

[113] Puotila 2003, 110.

The next section will explain her achievement with paper string in relation to Finnish history.

4.1.2 Significance of paper string in recent Finnish history

In order to familiarise myself with this material, I come to examine it in terms of history. Its importance in Finnish history seems to influence my thinking and assist me in conceptualising an artistic production, which will be demonstrated in the subsequent chapter.

Paper string used in textiles appeared for the first time in Finland during the Second World War (1939-1944)[114] when the economic situation became poor and other textile fibres were scarce. The short of supply of materials such as wool, linen and cotton lasted until the post-war period. Although the foremost cotton and linen manufacturers of the Nordic countries before the outbreak of the war were in Finland, these textile producers predominantly relied on imported raw materials and machines.[115] During the war, after 1941 in particular, the Finnish textile industry ran out of its supply of imported raw materials, such as cotton, and stopped importing them.[116] In addition, the shortage stemmed from the fact that the Ministry of Supply operated between 1939 and 1949 and it controlled the supply of textile materials and prohibited textile production for ordinary citizens.[117] After withdrawing from the war in 1944, Finland agreed to pay high reparations[118] in the form of industrial goods to

[114] The period during the Second World War included two wars: the Winter War (1939-1940) and the Continuation War (1941-1944) with a brief interval between the two during the summer of 1940. Jutikkala and Pirinen 1984, 248-59; Singleton 1998, 122-46. For a particular issue about the economy, see Singleton 1986, 61-63.

[115] Singleton 1986, 58-59. The British geographer Fred Singleton (ibid., 120) mentions that before the Second World War, Finland imported all raw cotton and nearly three-quarter of wool and flax for yarn productions. Marjo Wiberg (1996, 105) also states that the majority of textile products manufactured in Finland before World War II served the domestic market.

[116] Singleton (1998, 147) points out that the trade between Finland and its main partners, i.e., Germany and Great Britain, gradually decreased and entirely stopped in 1941 when the United States joined the war. This incident caused the short supply of imported raw materials.

[117] Textile mills during the war thus produced items basically for the military (Wiberg 1996, 107-8).

[118] Reparations are compensation or remuneration in money, material and/or labour that a defeated country is required to pay to the victor in a war for loss, damage or injury during or as a result of the war.

the Soviet Union. More than half of the delivered goods comprised ships, machinery and industrial equipment, cables and electrical articles; the rest included forest industry products, such as paper, timber and wood pulp.[119] The reparations continued until 1952.

Because of this extended period of impoverishment, Finland had to produce textile products from substitute materials. Paper string became the major substitute, because Finland did not have to supply it to the Soviet Union and it was one of the few other materials available[120]. However, the situation of material scarcity was not negative in every respect. Erik Kruskopf, a Finnish art critic, considers this period of material shortage in a positive light as well. Kruskopf sees that the scarcity of materials forced practitioners to try a variety of substitutes in their works and that afterwards contributed to the advancement of the field of industrial arts.[121] Päikki Priha, a Finnish textile artist and professor of textile art, also points out that the shortage of textile material during the war led to the innovation of practical yet aesthetic woven and printed textiles made of paper and paper string.[122] Likewise, Marjo Wiberg states that handicrafts with skilful techniques that had been valued before the world war flourished again when textile practitioners attempted to use limited materials to create their works.[123]

As paper string was a substitute, most everyday textile items in people's lives during the war and post-war period were made of this material. Shoes, clothes as well as upholstery, wallpaper, carpets and other soft furnishings were made of paper spun into string[124] (See an example in Illustration 4.1). This application demonstrates the ingenuity of the makers of these products in improvising a substitute. Examples of these everyday items still remain today, because of the large number produced during the long-time shortage of supply of materials. Due to the long war period, the country took time to recover from poverty, and that contributed to the scarcity of raw materials that forced yarn producers to technically develop this substitute material.

[119] Singleton 1986, 66.

[120] Other available materials were also forest products such as birch bark, wood and paper.

[121] Kruskopf 1975, 73.

[122] Priha 1999, 124-5.

[123] Wiberg 1996, 107.

[124] Singleton 1986, 62; Priha 1999, 124.

One development was the success in making it appear similar to cotton.[125] During the period of the substitute material, textile practitioners such as Dora Jung (1906-1980) and Greta Skogster-Lehtinen (1900-1994) expressed their creativity with paper string. Jung used paper string instead of linen as the material in her damask textiles.[126] Skogster-Lehtinen wove her curtains with paper string in combination with birch bark.[127] The situation of lacking raw materials continued until the end of the 1950s, and at the time, paper string started to gradually disappear.[128] In general, the importance of the textile industry, which was one of the main sectors of Finnish industry before World War II, diminished during the post-war reconstruction, particularly after the 1960s.[129]

Illustration 4.1: Shoes in the 1940s: the uppers are made of paper string and the soles are made of wood.

Although Finland had had a prominent forest industry and was known as one of the major timber and paper producers, paper string in the 1980s seemed rare. Its scarcity occurred when yarn producers stopped spinning the material because of a lack of interest in it.[130] The disinterest may have arisen from the fact that paper string was the only available textile material during the Second World War and the post-war

[125] Interview with Ritva Puotila.

[126] Damask textiles included reversible fabrics with patterns woven on it.

[127] Kruskopf 1975, 73; Enbom 1999, 102-3.

[128] Leitner 2005, 36.

[129] Wiberg 1996, 108; Singleton 1986, 120-1.

[130] Interview with Ritva Puotila.

period. Finnish people who lived during that time may have associated it with bleakness and inferiority.[131]

Ritva Puotila also remembers the post-war period when no other material was available. Despite the fact that people during the post-war period may have perceived paper string as an inferior material, Puotila perceives the material with different eyes and realises it has qualities that no other material can substitute. She states:

> … During time of shortage, paper string was a substitute for textiles fibres. It's been my aim to use paper in its own terms, and not as a substitute for anything else.[132]

The above statement showed Ritva Puotila's enthusiasm for and impression of paper string, the material she came across when designing linen collections for Tampella[133], a linen manufacturer in Tampere, between 1966 and 1986.[134] During the war and post-wartime, Tampella produced paper string for the textile industry. After the company ended its linen production in 1986, Puotila sought a new form of expression through her experimentation with leftover white and brown paper string from Tampella. It was the technically robust kind intended for covering telephone cables. This type of paper string was the only available kind in the early 1980s. With the promising result of her experiment, Puotila together with her son Mikko Puotila founded Woodnotes Oy[135] in 1987 aiming at producing novel interior textiles from paper string. Although Woodnotes successfully gained recognition when showing its products at Artek in Helsinki in August 1987, it did not instantly gain commercial success, and still needed to resolve technical difficulties in industrial production. Especially problematic was the fact that there was no paper string producer in Finland.[136] In general, the Finnish textile industry almost completely ceased to exist in the1990s, because of the increasing number of low-priced imported textiles that

[131] Carla Enbom (1999, 113) remarks that people from the war generation considered paper string as the material that was used because of the "want of better materials."

[132] Puotila 2003, 110.

[133] Tampella was Finland's largest textile manufacturer. It was established in 1856 and went bankrupt in 1991.

[134] Svinhufvud 2003, 162-3.

[135] Other Finnish companies producing interior textiles from paper string are, for example, Hanna Korvela Design and VM-Carpet.

[136] Enbom 2003, 28-29; Leitner 2005, 168-9; Interview with Ritva Puotila.

had come into Finland since the 1970s as well as the effect of the economic recession in the 1990s.[137] Ritva Puotila, therefore, collaborated with Tampella in order to develop good-quality paper string. When Tampella closed down in 1992, Woodnotes bought Tampella's spinning machinery, and founded Suomen Paperilanka Oy[138], a company for paper string production in 1993.[139] After this, paper string became easily accessible to textile practitioners. Accordingly, Ritva Puotila not only brought paper string back to existence again in the 1980s after its boom in the post-war period but also gave a new meaning to the material.

4.2 Subjectivity of artistic expression

As this research aims at exploring the relationship between a physical material and artistic expression in textile art, it is crucial to understand what artistic expression in fact denotes. Understanding the meaning of artistic expression seems to unavoidably require the study of aesthetics or philosophy of art. Philosophers throughout history have attempted to define and theorise what art is about. Some theories define art as expression. If art is expression, what would expression then be like? For this matter of defining expression, the American contemporary aesthetician Jenefer Robinson complicates this matter further:

> "Some works seem to *express* their author's emotions; other which are not expression of anyone's emotions … have *expressive qualities*; some works are simply expressive without expressing anything in particular; or perhaps they are played or performed *expressively* whether or not they are themselves expressions of anything. … [S]ome works are known as *expressionist*."[140]

The above statement indicates that the term *expression* has diverse meanings in different theories and is used for various purposes. This passage intends to clarify a

[137] Aav 2003, 7.

[138] The other Finnish producer of paper string is UPM; however, it is not the main product of the company. There are a number of dye houses, for instance, Pirkanmaan Kotityö Oy and Lappajärven Värjäämö Oy.

[139] Enbom 2003, 29; Svinhufvud 2003, 172; Leitner 2005, 169.

[140] Robinson 2005, 231-2.

number of concepts of expression or expressiveness, by addressing diverse expression theories of art discussed by philosophers and aestheticians.

4.2.1 Meanings of expression in ordinary language

Before examining the meanings of expression in terms of aesthetics, it might be worthwhile seeking meanings of expression in terms of ordinary language. One uses language to describe an artwork, for example, a person might say that a piece of music is melancholic, meaning that the music expresses melancholy to her. *Melancholic* is thus a notion of expression this person uses to characterise the music. In everyday conversation, people tend to use the word *expression* in various ways, so that *expression* has the same meanings as *representation*[141] and *communication*, each of which and *expression* appear interchangeable.[142] However, Noël Carroll points out that the words *expression* and *express* in ordinary speech seem to have broader meanings than those used in philosophy of art. According to Carroll, the concept of expression in philosophy of art regards only human qualities[143] that include both emotive attributes (e.g., anger, happiness, joy, etc.) and personal characteristics (e.g., truthfulness, generosity, etc.). Thus, expression could mean communication in the case of communicating human qualities. Ambiguity regarding the use of *expression* in aesthetics nevertheless remains, because an utterance could have several meanings. For example, when one says "the music expresses melancholy." This utterance could mean the following: 1) the composer experienced a melancholic occurrence that motivated her to compose the music in such a way, 2) the composer felt melancholic when composing the music, and 3) the music causes melancholy in audiences. Despite the fact that an expression could have different explanations, each meaning could be objected to because it might not be true in every case. For instance, the composer may not be in a melancholic state when composing the music but she had

[141] Philosophers dealing with expression such as Croce and Collingwood principally disagree with representational theories of art that define art as representation. They claim that art is not necessarily a representation or mimesis of a thing or person as Plato maintains. For detailed elements of representational theories of art, see Carroll 1999/2005, 18-57.

[142] Ibid., 79-80.

[143] Art philosophers call human qualities "anthropomorphic properties" which mean "properties that standardly apply only to human persons" (Ibid., 80).

learnt how to compose a melancholic piece of music.[144] Regardless of this problematic matter, when an artist intends to create an expressive artwork, she manifests a human quality in her artwork.

4.2.2 Various concepts of expression

The concept of art as expression has emerged since the eighteen century in the Romantic Movement when works of art in this period became more connected to the inner world of the artist.[145] Theories of expression have defined art as expression in a similar manner to human expression, by holding that art communicates emotions or feelings and conveys ideas of feelings.[146] Many philosophers throughout history have put forward various views on expression theories. For example, in the late nineteenth century, the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy conceived expression as a form of artistic communication, thus being concerned with only expression or communication of emotion, not as that of typical communication such as talking.[147] In the current view on aesthetics, Noël Carroll explains the distinction of artistic expression of emotion from the mere conversation of an emotion. He says that in the process of making art (i.e., process of clarification of an idea), an artist reflects on her emotional condition and experiments with different approaches to find the right way to express and externalise her emotion through her work. Other philosophers, such as Monroe Curtis Beardsley, Oets Kolk Bouwsma, Robin George Collingwood, Benedetto Croce, John Dewey, Nelson Goodman, John Hospers, Susanne Langer, Guy Sircello, Alan Tormey and many others, have offered different concepts of expression.

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[144] This example shows the thinking of Oets Kolk Bouwsma (1954), a twentieth century philosopher. Bouwsma explains expression in relation to properties of artworks. According to him, an artist is able to express emotions not because she actually feels them but has learnt the traits of people who feel the analogous emotions. John Hospers (1971), an American philosopher and politician, later follows Bouwsma's thinking.

[145] Carroll 1999/2005, 59-60.

[146] Freeland 2001, 149-56. In her book *But is it art? An introduction to art theory*, the American philosopher Cynthia A. Freeland maintains the role of interpretation as a means to explain how a work of art communicates. Freeland exemplifies it through works of well-known artists such as the works of Francis Bacon, an Irish expressionist. According to her, interpretation is "grounded in reasons and evidence, and should provide a[n] … illuminating way to comprehend a work of art" (Ibid., 150).

[147] Carroll 1999/2005, 61-63.

Expression as mental phenomenon

The Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce brought in a fundamentally new concept of aesthetics. In his view, mind has two forms of activities: doing and knowing. While doing is concerned with what is useful or good, knowing is directed to logical knowledge or intuitive knowledge, whose science, as Croce claimed, is aesthetic.[148] He asserted his proposition that expression is intuition: "[e]verything that is truly intuition … is also expression" and "expression cannot lack intuition" says Croce.[149] The American philosopher of art Monroe Curtis Beardsley clarified Croce's thought by identifying that "art is just the most highly developed form of intuition-expression, as science is the most highly developed form of logical knowledge."[150] The clear distinction between the theoretical and the practical can be seen in Croce's thinking. Croce excluded the practical thoughts from the aesthetic ones. The act of an artist including her technical knowledge and the artefact as the result of the act are practical matters, both holding no relationship with aesthetics.[151] The expression of an artist thus starts and finishes internally, i.e., an artist forms an idea of aesthetic work[152] within herself. Expression, therefore, exists in the mind of the artist as the act of intuition according to Croce. The artefact as the externalisation of the work of art is not the work of art as such, but serves to communicate the subject matter to an audience. The audience thus utilise the artefact to reconstruct their unique artistic experience, although they cannot experience the mind of the artist.[153]

The British philosopher and historian Robin George Collingwood seemed to follow Croce's thoughts.[154] Collingwood analysed imaginative expression as a process in which undeveloped emotion becomes coherent and self-aware. Similar to

[148] Croce 1992, 1. Croce wrote *The Aesthetic as the Science of Expression and of the Linguistic in General* in Italian in 1902.

[149] Ibid., 8-9.

[150] Beardsley 1982, 321.

[151] Croce 1992, 56-57.

[152] According to Croce (Ibid., 57), only "aesthetic work" in the artist's mind is the work of art whereas the externalised work is not. The entire course of action of aesthetic production consists of four phases: "a, impression; b, expression or aesthetic spiritual synthesis; c, … pleasure in the beautiful; d, the translation of the aesthetic object into physical phenomena (sounds, tones, … combinations of colours and lines …" (Ibid., 107).

[153] Ibid., 132-3.

[154] Although Collingwood seemed to follow Croce's philosophy, he rarely cites Croce's works in his books.

Croce's thinking, Collingwood's expression theory stresses that expression exists in the mind of the creator, not in the object and that an artist does not know her emotion until she has expressed it.[155] Expression is therefore part of understanding the emotion expressed. According to both Croce and Collingwood, artistic expression is a mental process and quite separate from the craftwork involved in the manipulation of an external means, such as material and technique, into a preconceived object.[156] What Collinwood and Croce claimed seems to question the importance of tangible art objects and the craftsmanship of artists. The execution of an art object by transforming an external medium is secondary and serves only as the externalisation of expression to other people for appreciation and contemplation.[157] A physical phenomenon such as an object created by an artist is not a work of art and thus not the artist's expression, and the execution of it is an act that comes later than the act of expression.

Expression as reflective experience

Contrary to the view of Croce and Collingwood, the American philosopher John Dewey considered expression in relation to experience that encompasses not only the action but also its result, i.e., process and product or act and object.[158] The act and the object of expression are thus inseparable from each other in an artist's experience. An act of expression comes into being when an artist becomes conscious of the meaning of her action. The action that means something to the artist contributes to the result of an object of expression. If an object is expressive, it thus conveys some meaning to people experiencing it. For the process of expression when an artist creates an artwork, as indicated by Dewey, she never does it instantaneously with an unfilled mind. Instead, the process of expression takes time as the artist's emotion-loaded life experience subtly arranges visual elements, e.g., forms, materials and colours, in one

[155] Collingwood 1938/1958.

[156] Collingwood (Ibid., 15-29) asserted that although some works of art may involve planning and execution that are essential features of making craft, art is not identical with craft. Craft involves means and ends but art does not. See also Warburton 2003, 37-51; Eaton 1988, 29.

[157] Davies 2005, 182.

[158] Dewey 1934/2005, 60-109. See also Zeltner 1975, 31-49.

composition rather than another within a specific context.[159] The meaning of an artwork resides in the artwork itself, beyond the artist's and the viewer's experience. Dewey also emphasised that an artist does not conceive an artwork only in her mind, but rather develops her creative ideas by working with an actual medium that is sensuously perceptible.[160] Being also an appreciator while working, an artist can evaluate and modify the artwork in progress, and can carefully control her action accordingly.

In addition, as stressed by Dewey, expression calls for the artist's craftsmanship and materials employed as media, so that the artwork can become expressive to an audience.[161] Expression in Dewey's account thus involves both an audience and a medium. A medium is essentially connected with the act of expression, i.e., when a physical material is transformed into an artwork, the expression of this particular artwork involves the interaction between the material and the artist.[162] Therefore, the transformation of a material into an artwork takes place through an operation as the expressive act, on both the outer and the inner sides, i.e., the material and the mental matter. A material art object is thus a work of art, not just an externalisation of it as Croce and Collinwood stated.

Expression as metaphorical exemplification

The American philosopher Nelson Goodman analysed expression in terms of expressive characteristics. His analysis seems to be more closely linked to semiotic aesthetics than recognised as a theory of expression. Goodman claimed that what art expresses is a property transferred to the artwork by a metaphorical association between that property and some other things.[163] For instance, if one says that a marble sculpture expresses softness, softness refers to some other things that are literally soft (e.g., wool and cotton). The artist then exemplifies the property or properties of a certain form of softness to the sculpture metaphorically, so that the sculpture brings forth softness in a certain way. "What is expressed is metaphorically

[159] Dewey 1934/2005, 89-91.

[160] Ibid., 78.

[161] Ibid., 49-50.

[162] Ibid., 77-79.

[163] Goodman 1976, 85-95.

exemplified," said Goodman.[164] In the case mentioned above, the marble sculpture that expresses softness is not literally but metaphorically soft. However, an expressive artwork, according to Goodman, does not necessarily stimulate a particular feeling (e.g., feeling of softness) in an audience.

Another view on expression to be presented in this section includes the thoughts of the American philosopher Susanne Katherina Langer. Similar to Goodman, Langer saw art in relation to language, or in particular symbols. For Goodman, a work of art is a symbol of a certain kind (e.g., verbal, pictorial or musical symbol) that expresses "only properties that it metaphorically exemplifies as a symbol of that kind."[165] For example, a poem expresses only verbal properties. Langer regarded a work of art as a symbol or a symbolic form[166] of feelings[167] that expresses the artist's imaginative experience.[168] Imaginative experience signifies the fact that the artist may express an emotion she has never experienced in her real life through her work; however, she has an idea of that particular emotion.[169] Using a symbol to express an experience, as Langer stated, is a means for understanding one thing through another that is a principle of metaphor.[170] Langer also mentioned that an artist involves herself in making an emotive symbol by means of some medium and craftsmanship. "Every choice the artist makes … is controlled by the total organisation of the image he wants to call forth,"[171] said Langer. Her view on craft and technique seems to contrast with Croce's and Collingwood's, which assert that art is not craft and includes no technique. Langer called stages when an artist creates an artwork or an emotive symbol "indivisible acts" that includes inventing and mastering techniques,

[164] Ibid., 85.

[165] Ibid., 87.

[166] While "form", according to Langer (1957, 16-20), means "structure, articulation, a whole resulting from the relation of mutually dependent factors, … the way the whole is put together", "expressive form" signifies "any perceptible … whole that exhibits relationship of parts … within the whole, so that it may be taken to represent some other whole whose elements have analogous relations."

[167] According to Langer (1957, 15), "feeling" means "everything that can be felt, from physical sensation, pain and comfort, excitement and repose, to the most complex emotions, intellectual tensions, or the steady feeling tones of a conscious human life."

[168] Langer 1963, 386-7.

[169] Ibid., 369-374.

[170] Langer 1957, 20-23.

[171] Langer 1963, 370.

elaborating imagination as well as making and seeing pieces of the artwork in progress.[172]

Conclusion of the approaches above

The above discussion aims to demonstrate various concepts of expression that some philosophers of art offer, most of which attempt to define art as expression. Although expression does not belong to all art, it belongs to most art. This passage aims to clarify the import of expression. Accordingly, with most artworks what is expressed includes either feelings or ideas of feelings, which the artist who creates the artwork has not actually experienced in life but has ideas about. Most of the theories mentioned above show that the creator and the audience do not necessarily experience the same feeling as that which an artwork expresses, but have an idea of that feeling by referring it to some other things they have experienced or imagined. The act of expression of an artist, from my viewpoint as an artist-researcher, emerges not only in the mental state but also in the physical body of the artist. When an artist has an impression in her mind, she tries to make clear what it is, so that she is in the state of being aware of what her act of expression could be. Simultaneously, the same artist seeks clarification by using a medium and techniques and that results in an art object. The intertwined connection between mind and body can be subtly seen in my creative processes and will be articulated in the subsequent chapter. The chapter will uncover my experimentation with paper string resulting in two series of creative productions. It will reveal the possible incorporation of the materiality of paper string and the subjectivity of my artistic expression.

[172] Ibid., 387.

The conceptualisation and the creation of the artwork in the studio

5

Incorporation of paper string and artistic expression in creative production

My study involves the interplay between a researcher-practitioner and her artistic work in process. This kind of interplay is an integral part of practice-led research, as discussed in Chapter 2. The present chapter illustrates how paper string as the chosen material and artistic expression are possibly incorporated in textile art. I investigated this possible incorporation through both my artistic process and the resulting textile artworks. The incorporation of material and expression could show the relationship between the two elements and the influence of paper string on the making and understanding of artworks. The art productions explored in this chapter as case studies have been shown in two exhibitions: "Seeing Paper" (2005) and "Paper World" (2007). The material employed in every artwork is industrially made paper string and the technique is hand knotting.

Paper string is not a novel material, and nor is knotting. Nevertheless, when the two are combined, a new perspective toward the material and the technique emerges. Knotting is a basic technique I learnt in my childhood in Thailand, in handicraft classes and in scout camps. Nevertheless, the materials I had used with this technique had never included paper string. While knotting is the technique learnt early in my life and seems to be embedded in my memory, paper string is the material with which I have become familiar only recently, after relocating to Finland. When the early life experience (i.e., knotting) and the recent one (i.e., paper sting) converge, the combination of the material and the technique becomes original. Moreover, the creation of artworks with this combined medium has eventually become a new experience. The origin of this new experience, therefore, seems to derive from my memory at the point where my embedded experiences of paper string and the knotting technique merge into one another.

In this chapter, I uncover my working processes as a textile artist in the creative productions of "Seeing Paper" and "Paper World". The artistic processes are experiential, derived from my intention and involvement in making my artworks. The chapter clarifies not only how I worked as a craft-based artist who gradually transformed paper string into artworks, but also how I interpreted and reflected on the artworks both when they were being made and when they were completed. My interpretation and reflection on my artworks at

different stages mostly arose in a studio where the works have been gradually transformed from paper string. In this chapter, I consider myself the first spectator of my own artworks.[173] I consume the artworks by interpreting, reflecting on and contextualising them with my critical eyes and thoughts throughout both art productions. The creative production of "Seeing Paper" explores materials as the origin of specific expressions in individual artworks. The production of "Paper World" focuses on ways in which a material could make my expression become explicit in the overall exhibition.

5.1 "Seeing Paper" – material as focal point

My intention when creating "Seeing Paper" was to explore the expressive potential of different kinds of paper string. When physically experiencing a material, an artist senses the qualities of the material, especially visual and tactile[174]. The material thus influences the artist's senses, feelings, emotions and cognition. In order to investigate the expressive potential of different kinds of paper string, I began the process of making "Seeing Paper" with material selections. The criterion for selecting types of paper string rested on the sensory qualities, such as visual and tactile qualities, of each type that should be noticeably distinct. In addition, all types should be in the same colour in order to avoid any colour variation that may occur as a result of using different types of paper string. As can be seen in Illustration 5.1, a set of three different kinds of paper string was chosen for two series of artworks, each consisting of three sculptures.

[173] John Dewey (1934/2005, 50) suggests that an artist is also an appreciator of her own artwork during its creative process that evaluates and modifies the artwork until it is completed.

[174] I also consider other sensuous aspects of a material, e.g., aural and odorous, in my research. However, they seem to be of minor importance in this study.

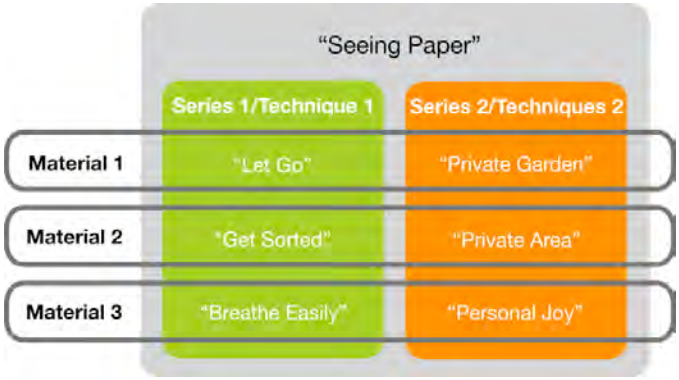


Illustration 5.1: The diagram shows how I planned to employ the three types of paper string in my artworks in the beginning of my creative process.

The three kinds of paper string differ visually from one another. Nevertheless, they appear in the similar colour – white. I chose the colour white for three reasons: First, white seems to be a neutral colour.[175] In the modernistic context, the neutrality of the white space of a gallery suggests timelessness to artworks situated in it.[176] Hence, if my artworks were in white, they would possibly achieve this quality too. Second, as paper string is a thin material and knotting is a meticulous technique, an artwork composed of this material and this technique would be filled with considerable details. The details of the artwork would stand out better when the work appears in pale colours such as pale grey and white. Third, white is the only colour in which all these three kinds of paper string are available.

In "Seeing Paper", I constructed every sculpture in each series with a specific technique and sculpted it on the same mould. The three factors – colour, technique and mould – were fixed, whereas the material factor was variable. This allowed me to study the effect of dissimilar types of paper string on artworks based on the same technique and composition. The artworks were thus created not only for the sake of art, but also to support the idea of the potential expressive power possessed by a material.

[175] The American expert on the effects of colour on humans, Faber Birren (1961, 260-261), suggests that white, black and grey "are found to be emotionally neutral and fail to have much psychotherapeutic application…" Birren also introduces the signification of these three neutral colours writing that "[w]hite is the perfectly balanced color, clear and natural in its influence" while "[b]lack is negative" and "gray is passive."

[176] As the Irish-born art critic Brian O'Doherty (1999, 79) claims, the neutrality of the whiteness of modernistic galleries is illusory. The white walls are not truly neutral, because they affect an audience in the space. Their ideal and eternal appearance also has a commercial function, that is, to assure people that buying a displayed artwork is a good investment.

5.1.1 Metaphorical meaning of material

Artists and designers tend to have no limit in expressing a set of concepts and signs they choose in various ways. As a textile artist, I also felt free to select a concept[177] and express it through my artworks in my own way. The concept of "Seeing Paper" showed that a material metaphorically *lives* in this world. This notion originated from the argument that a material possesses specific expressive potential. I developed the idea of creating my artworks in a form of female dress-like sculptures, as a metaphor for human beings (women). Imagination, as acknowledged by Maurice Merleau-Ponty as a basic expression of human beings, is the mental focus on a deep dimension of the world that exists in a hidden and unexpressed form and is waiting to happen.[178] In "Seeing Paper", I imagined the three-dimensional artworks existing in the same world as we live in and waiting to be seen as living in the same world as we are.

Although the concept of artworks as metaphorical living beings was presented in a form of un-wearable female dresses in both series, the pieces in the two series were created with different prior intentions. The prior intention, according to John Searle, is developed before the real action.[179] In the first series, I intended to let the material free to *speak*[180] for itself. Conversely, in the second series, I manipulated the material to see how it could *speak* under my control. In other words, each artwork in the first series was regarded as an emotional individual. Material was expected to speak and express itself free from the full control of the creator and the outside world, i.e., material took the lead in the creation of the artwork. In the second series, each artwork was integrated with the outside world, as a social individual. This meant that

[177] Concept here means an abstract idea that an artist forms and uses to create a series of artworks that in return could shape the way audiences perceive the artworks.

[178] Merleau-Ponty, 1968, 267. Merleau-Ponty maintains his interest in the theme of imagination and latently discussed it throughout his early writings, e.g., *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962/2005) and *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays* (1964).

[179] Searle (1983, 107) classifies two kinds of intentions that initiate actions. The other kind of intention is the intention in action that coexists with the action.

[180] I use the metaphor "material speaks" in order to emphasise the communicative ability or the expressive quality of materials, although when a material expresses or communicates, its expressiveness is in a visual form.

I let the material show its ability to adapt itself to the outside world, or to be associated with the outside world under the influence of the creator.

As can be seen, my prior intention of creating "Seeing Paper" seemed rather conceptual and abstract. Hence, to begin with the actual material manipulation of each series, I needed to transform the relatively abstract thought into a more concrete picture of how I could implement the selected materials into each series' artworks. For the first series, I intended to investigate the expressive potential of the three dissimilar materials when I had minimum control over them. I decided to prepare no sketch of artworks. Instead of following a sketch, I started the first artwork in this series by cutting paper string into pieces of a certain length, and knotting these pieces together around the neck of the female figure mould[181] (Illustration 5.2). The knotting continued by following the contour of the mould until the paper string became too short to be knotted. Conversely, in the second series in which I intended to fully manipulate the materials, I sketched the outline of the sculptures (Illustration 5.3) and planned how the sketched structure could be constructed on the mould. The actual production of each series of artworks will be fully illustrated in Section 5.1.3.

Illustration 5.2: Papier-mâché mould of the female body form.

[181] The mould I used to form both series of "Seeing Paper" was made with the papier-mâché technique around a standard-size-female dressmaker's dummy. I divided the completed papier-mâché mould vertically into two pieces in order to remove it from the mannequin. One piece of the divided mould was smaller than another. The unequal-size pieces were intended to provide the possibility of sequentially removing them from a finished artwork. I originally made this mould in 2002 for shaping an artwork I previously created for my Master's thesis. According to the concept of "Seeing Paper", each artwork required a mould to form an un-wearable female dress. This existing papier-mâché mould of the female body form suitably served the purpose.

Illustration 5.3: The sketch of the artwork in Series 2 (8 March 2005).

5.1.2 Initial experience with three dissimilar types of material

After selecting three types of paper string and planning how they were to be employed in six artworks of two series (Illustration 5.1), I began the creative process by preparing the selected materials for artworks in Series 1 (i.e., cutting them into pieces of an equal length). This material preparation was my first opportunity to familiarise myself with each type of paper string. When cutting or untwining each material, my hands touched the texture, my eyes saw the shape and colour, and my ears heard the sound of strings moving and touching each other.

The first series aimed to investigate how each material could present its specific materialness, i.e., its conditions and qualities, when it took the lead in the creative process. The details of the creative production of this series of "Seeing Paper" will be further accounted for in the subsequent section. This section focuses only on my first experience with the selected types of paper string.

Each type of paper string possesses quite distinct visual and tactile qualities, which I can describe from my experience as follows:

Illustration 5.4: Material 1.

Material 1 (Illustration 5.4) was the first kind of paper string I experienced. It is a rather stiff single paper string. Nonetheless, the stiffness seems to be concealed by its visually sleek waviness. It was employed in an artwork in the first series that was later named "Let Go" and in another artwork subsequently entitled "Private Garden" in Series 2.

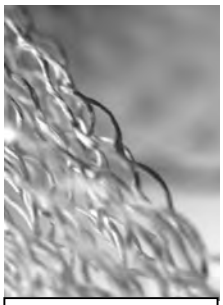


Illustration 5.5: Material 2.

Material 2 (Illustration 5.5) is the paper string that requires considerable preparation before using it. The material has a sturdy characteristic, as it is made by twisting five paper stings. I untwined the twisted string, separating it into five smaller strings. The strength of this untwined string is much weaker than the original string; however, this weak quality is hardly perceptible. The string appears curly, and is tactually coarse. I employed this material in an artwork subsequently titled "Get Sorted" in Series 1 and in another artwork later called "Private Area" in Series 2.

Illustration 5.6: Material 3.

Material 3 (Illustration 5.6) is a very fine single paper thread. Its silky appearance creates the feeling of fragility although it is physically strong. This type of paper string was used in an artwork in the first series that was later named "Breathe Easily" and another artwork in the second subsequently called "Personal Joy".

As all of these selected types of paper string are industrially produced, they were ready to be used in the artistic production, only by being cut into pieces. However, Material 2 (Illustration 5.5) was an exceptional case, because I needed to prepare the string before employing it in an artwork in order to differentiate this material from the other two materials. Interestingly, this material preparation influenced my thoughts and feelings and that made my subsequent experience in making artworks from this material become more intense, compared to my experience in making artworks from the other two materials. As can be seen in my research diary, I wrote about my bodily

(visual and tactile) experience and emotions when undertaking the material preparation process of Material 2:

> My life is a mess now! I am untwining the machine-made twisted yarn: from one yarn to five, from straight form to mess. It is very hard to manage. The length of a single string is reduced, because of the curly effect after I have untwined the twisted string. The strength of the twisted yarn disappears. One single string is very easy to break….[182]

When touching each material for the first time, I could visually and tactually sense the qualities of each type of paper string. It seemed that in the creative process, I was simultaneously touching and being touched by the material. According to Hubert L. Dreyfus' commentary on Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*, the paper string thus touched me in a metaphorical sense when having physical contact with me.[183] This sensual experience generated emotions and thoughts within me. My emotions and thoughts successively became the input of the creative process. Conversely, my creative process gradually developed into the metaphorical interaction between the two actors: the material and myself. A pressure or tension I had toward and/or against this material was, in return, the reaction toward and/or against me. As the American poet and philosopher Susan Stewart says, the pressure involved in touching is a pressure on our own bodies and upon objects touched. Touch goes across the boundary between interiority and exteriority, and mutually returns to the agent of touching.[184]

My interaction with a particular material was the point where a subject could become an object. The artist's feeling of touch could also shift from subject to object. This interaction illuminated my visual and tactile experience with this specific material. It became even more intense when the material was slowly changing into its new form – an artwork. I will explain the visual and tactile experience arising from

[182] From my research diary on 11 March 2005.

[183] According to Dreyfus (1992, 44) in his book *Being-in-the-world: A commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division 1*, "[o]bjects can touch in the sense of physical contact (a metaphorical sense), but they cannot touch each other in the sense of mattering to each other (a literal sense)." According to Heidegger (1962/1990, 82), Dasein [being-human] can be touched by objects and other Daseins.

[184] Stewart 1999, 31-35.

the interaction between the three dissimilar kinds of paper string and myself in the following section.

5.1.3 Bodily and visual experience with material in artistic production

If expression had been a mental phenomenon, as Collingwood and Croce said, my expression would have started and finished internally and I would not necessarily have to actually make any artworks.[185] However, my experience with making "Seeing Paper" informed me that although expression existed in my mind when forming the idea of the artworks, its existence did not cease there but remained also during the forming of the artwork when my hands interacted with the paper string and shaped the objects of art. The actual formation of the artwork was thus a dialogue between the material and myself as the maker that intended to express an idea in tangible forms.

The interaction between the three types of paper string and myself was the crucial part throughout the artistic production of "Seeing Paper". It generated my bodily and visual experience in relation to the differing materials transforming into artworks. As previously mentioned, each series of "Seeing Paper" was produced with two different intentions even though the concept of metaphorical living beings was applied to both series. While I intended to let the material be free to *speak* for itself in the first series, I planned to force the same material to *speak* under my control in the second. The different intentions affected the way in which I manipulated the material in the creative process of each series. In order that the effect of the different intentions regarding the material manipulation could become explicit, this section splits into two parts, each explaining my experience in making artworks in each series.

Materials' own voice in the first series ("Let Go", "Get Sorted" and "Breathe Easily")

In Series 1, the level of my manipulation was low, as I did no twisting, strong pulling or the like. Hand knotting on and around the mould of the female body form was the only manipulation technique applied to the strings in the production of all the

[185] Collingwood 1938/1958; Croce 1992.

artworks in this series. Strings of a specific length were tied together with simple knots, row after row, constructing a lacy structure around the mould. The lacing followed the contour of the mould (Illustrations 5.7 and 5.8). Paper strings being transformed into a female form and into a lacy structure inevitably represented femaleness. In other words, the resulting sculpture became a representation of women because of its form (i.e., female figure) and its structure (i.e., lace-like structure).

Illustrations 5.7 and 5.8: While Material 1 was gradually hand-knotted around the female-form mould, the artwork later named "Let Go" was slowly coming into being.

As a result of each material being transformed into a three-dimensionally human-sized sculpture, I experienced each material and each artwork in progress not only with my hands and eyes but also with my whole body, e.g., the eye focused on the hand knotting paper string and the body moved in accordance with the position of the hand. My visual and bodily experience was somewhat full of motion. When making an artwork in this series, I alternately stood and sat on chairs of various heights in order to maintain my sight on the same level as the row of the knots being made. I occasionally stopped to look at the work in progress or came closer to check its details. Sometimes, the distance between the particular artwork and I became longer if I needed to see the overall artwork. I stepped backward from the artwork and walked around it in order to experience the whole art piece.

Accordingly, when making an arm of the first dress with Material 1, which was later named "Let Go", I paused to look at the unfinished dress, walked around it, and considered whether its arm was long enough or should still be continued. I chose to

stop knotting the arm. Subsequently, instead of closing the end of the arm with knotting in the same way as I had planned to do with the neck and hem of the dress, I left the strings unfastened and allowed them to hang freely. The artwork was finished with strings left un-knotted on both arms of the dress (Illustrations 5.9 and 5.10). According to Searle, this can be called the intention in action[186], as it simply concurred with my action in the artistic process. In the process, what I was trying to do or my intention in action in Searle's sense was to finish the arms of "Let Go" nicely in such a way that the expression of type of paper string employed can be recognised. In so doing, my action not to close the ends of the arms with knotting was done intentionally.

Illustration 5.9: The arm of "Let Go" was left unknotted.

Illustration 5.10: The unfastened strings were left to hang freely on the arm of "Let Go".

[186] Searle 1983, 107.

Illustration 5.11: Knotting around the neck of the dress later called "Breathe Easily" neatens the fussy ends of paper string. I did the same with the hem of the dress.

This was my way to allow the material the freedom to *speak*. I did the same with the other arm of this artwork and with those of the other two artworks in this series. The unfastened strings displayed the dissimilarity of types of paper string employed in each artwork. They presented the pure existence and characteristic of each material.

In the creative process of each artwork, there were a number of experiences worth explaining. For material 2 with which I had earlier encountered difficulty in the material preparation stage, the experience of making "Get Sorted" from it became more intense. I could feel a tension between the material and my hands. What I wrote in the research diary revealed my experience with Material 2 and the artwork in progress as follows:

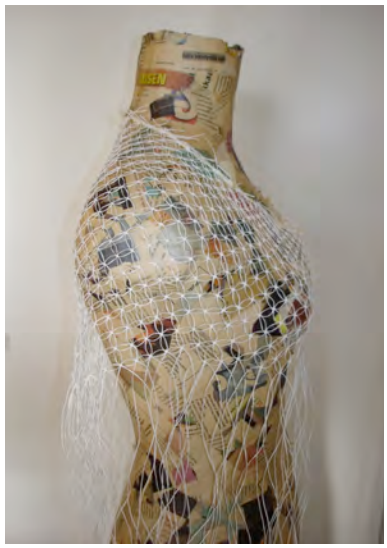
> …. Life is in a mess because one makes it messy, like I did with the neat twisted paper yarn. I am the one who created a terrible mess with the strings, and I must be the one who sorts the mess out in order to form the piece on the mould…. I have to control not only the messiness of the strings but also my pulling strength. If I pull the strings too hard, I may break some strings. On the other hand, if I pull them too gently, the knots are too loose. This material doesn't want to be controlled. I have to add new strings at several places where the old strings are broken. I hide the broken strings very neatly….[187]

[187] From my research diary on 28 March 2005.

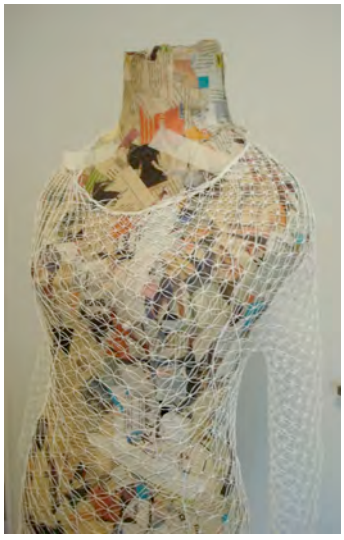
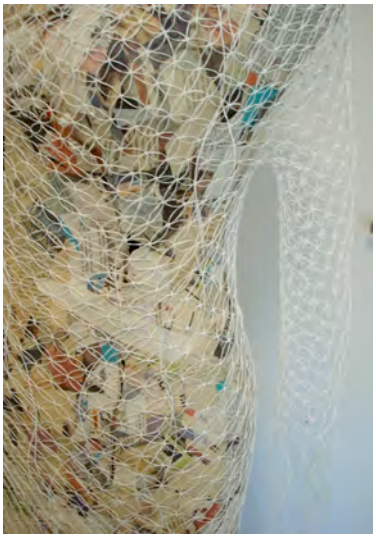
The above record of my creative process shows that I subjectively associated myself with and put an interpretation on the material. In the diary, I notice that I tended to write entries more often when facing difficulties in making the artworks. As the artworks in this series were lacily constructed, the similar knots were repeatedly tied on and around the mould. I carried out my repetitive action in a meditative mode. When a single string broke, my meditation was interrupted. The broken string thus evoked the mood of noting down what had happened in the creative process.

The meditative mode of action can be clearly seen in the creative process of "Breathe Easily" in which I used Material 3. This process lasted for almost four weeks. The extreme fineness of this material required far more pieces of string (Illustration 5.12) to be knotted around the female figure mould. However, Material 3 was easy to handle. It appeared very strong, and it was thus possible to pull it with great power without causing anything to break. The daily quiet action of repeatedly knotting this material created a sense of meditation and constant breathing.

Illustration 5.12: Material 3 after being cut into pieces of a certain length seems messy in the image. In fact, this kind of paper string is easy to handle in the production of the artwork later called "Breathe Easily".

Illustrations 5.13 and 5.14: Before an arm of "Breathe Easily" was formed.

Illustrations 5.15 and 5.16: After the arms of "Breathe Easily" were formed.

Experience in relation to the three different kinds of materials gained in the creative production of Series 1, assisted me in employing these particular materials in artworks in Series 2, as I will explain in the following part of this section.

My voice through materials in the second series ("Private Area", "Private Garden" and "Personal Joy")

The second series of "Seeing Paper" explored how each material possibly shows its materialness under my forceful manipulation. Twisting, untwisting, bending, strong pulling and the like, were ways I manipulated the materials. I associated the visual

and tactile qualities of each material with elements of some objects or events I could recollect. The association of prior experiences (objects and events) and present experiences (material at hand and creative process) brought in new ideas to my creation.

I first sketched the outline of artworks in this series (Illustration 5.2). The metal wire structure of each piece was then made on the same female body mould as that which was used in the first series. Before I applied each material to the structure, I had made myself familiar with each type of paper string (e.g., by twisting, untwisting, grouping, etc.). The creation of the first series artworks also contributed to my skill and experience in manipulating each material. The touch of a specific type of paper string reminded me of some experiences in which I have engaged, i.e., I began to associate the current experience (material at hand) with the past experience. The tactile phenomenon can be associated with human perception or consciousness, as Merleau-Ponty articulates:

> I am able to touch effectively only if the phenomenon finds an echo within me, if it accords with a certain nature of my consciousness, and if the organ which goes out to meet it is synchronised with it. The unity and identity of the tactile phenomenon do not come about through any synthesis of recognition in the concept, they are founded upon the unity and identity of the body as synergic totality.[188]

The tactile phenomenon referred to in the statement above appeared in my artistic process. When touching a specific kind of paper string, tactile experience gained through my hands sought connection with my consciousness and that brought in my memory of some prior experiences.

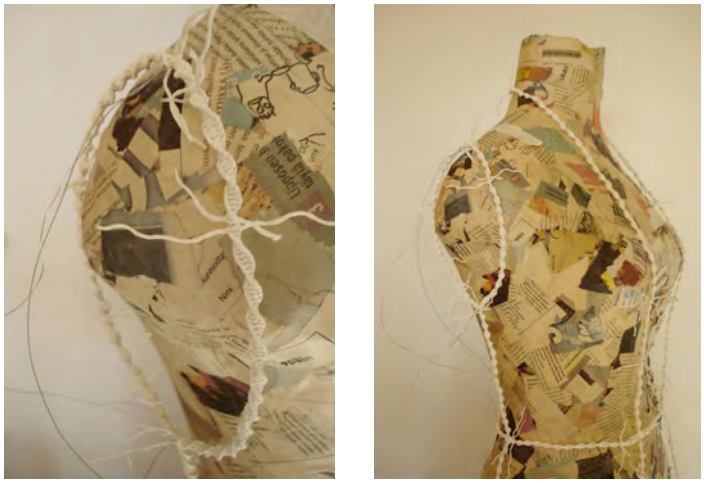
My experience of making the first series eased the creation of the second series. I knew the materials. I had experienced their qualities through my senses of touch and sight in the previous production of artworks. Therefore, when touching the same material again, I knew how hard I should pull it, and how the material should be presented.

[188] Merleau-Ponty 1962/2005, 369. Touch, according to Merleau-Ponty (Ibid., 365-78), means physical sensuous contact between body and object. An example of tactile perceptions is also given – "The contact of our back or chest with linen or wool remains in the memory in the form of a manual contact."

Subsequently, I applied each type of paper string to the wire structure on the female figure mould.

I began the second series with Material 2, because I knew this material better than Materials 1 and 3. Material 2 had apparently informed me of its qualities during my intense experience with it in the first series, so that I had a clear idea what to do with it and how to manipulate it for an artwork in the second series. In other words, I had learnt from my previous experience that the greater the manipulation or the harder the material was pulled, the weaker the material would become. My memory of the broken string that often took place in making "Get Sorted" and the coarseness of the string that hurt my hands, reminded me of a feature of something – barbed wire fence – I have experienced in my life. I associated the two experiences and expressed this new association in my artwork.

I started making an artwork from this material by cutting two pieces of it without measuring their length. I knotted them around the metal wire in the direction against their twisting. My manipulation created a continuous spiral line around the metal wire (Illustrations 5.17 and 5.18). When I thought that the effect of broken string was needed in a particular part of the artwork, I pulled the strings so hard that I broke them. I continued knotting the removed parts of the broken strings around the metal structure, following the other parts that remained on the work. I did the same until the metal wire was fully covered with paper string. I later named this artwork "Private Area".



Illustrations 5.17 and 5.18: Material 2 was knotted around the metal wire structure on the female figure mould in the production of "Private Area".

To create the second artwork in Series 2, I applied the same technique as I used with Material 2 in "Private Area". I knotted two pieces of Material 1 around the prepared metal wire structure on the same female figure mould (Illustrations 5.19 and 5.20). This artwork was subsequently entitled "Private Garden".

When using this material in the first series, I learnt that the string tended to be open, revealing the long stripe of the original material. This quality required my rather strong manipulation, such as twisting the string, in order to make nice knots to create a neat structure. Therefore, in the second series, I experimented by untwisting the string to make it more open. This manipulation transformed the material. The transformed appearance reminded me of the shape of leaves in nature. After untwisting the string at certain places, this association created the idea of a garden.


Illustrations 5.19 and 5.20: Material 1 was knotted around the metal wire structure on the same mould in the production of "Private Garden".

The last artwork in this series, which was later named "Personal Joy", has Material 3 employed. This material was also used in Series 1.

The previous creation of "Breathe Easily" in the first series gave me the feeling of delight and serenity. Although the time spent to complete this piece was much longer than that used to finish the other pieces in Series 1, the time passed pleasantly as I did not need to manipulate the material at all. Before continuing to the second series, I made myself familiar with this type of paper string, by grouping and twisting the string (Illustrations 5.21 and 5.22). The joy of making the previous artwork was combined with the experience of familiarising myself with the material, resulting in "Personal Joy".


Illustrations 5.21 and 5.22: Material 3 was knotted around the metal wire structure on the same mould in the production of "Personal Joy".

After each artwork in "Seeing Paper" was completed and removed from the mould, I experienced some unique visual qualities in each particular work. The next section will cover this issue.

5.1.4 Visual experience with material in completed artefacts

As can be seen in the previous section, my experience during the creative process of "Seeing Paper" embodies controlled actions and activities. Being the artist involved in the process, I undertook the role of a viewer throughout the process, evaluating and modifying each artwork until it was completed. This corresponds to what John Dewey said "[t]he artist embodies in himself the attitude of the perceiver while he works."[189] When I had finished each artwork in both series, I removed the artwork from the mould and suspended it in my studio where I had created the artwork. I also became the first viewer or consumer of the completed artwork. I consumed every completed artwork, by critically looking at, interpreting, reflecting on and contextualising the work suspended in my studio. In this sense, I, as a creator and the first spectator of my own artworks, became the critical thinker and the interpreter of these particular artworks.

[189] Dewey 1934/2005, 50.

This section explores the way I perceived materialness of dissimilar types of paper string employed in the artworks in "Seeing Paper". I look at each series separately in the details of every artwork.

The first series: "Let Go", "Get Sorted" and "Breathe Easily"

In the first series, after removing each completed artwork from the mould, I could not adjust or manipulate the final artwork. Its form appeared as it was supposed to be according to the physical qualities of the material employed.

Illustration 5.23: "Get Sorted" and a part of "Let Go" were hung in my studio together with other artworks I had previously created.

The completed artworks with three different types of paper string looked somewhat different from one another (Illustrations 5.24, 5.25 and 5.26), even though each material was knotted using the same technique on the same mould.

Illustration 5.24: "Let Go" with its perfect form.

Illustration 5.25: "Get Sorted" with its dented back.

Illustration 5.26: "Breathe Easily" with its slightly distorted form.

When looking at "Let Go" in its entirety, the form of the dress appeared perfect (Illustration 5.24). The artwork stayed in the same shape as it was on the mould. The exact form showed the strength of the material used for making the work. The waviness of the unfastened strings elicited the feeling of liberty, in contrast to the repetitive knotted structure (Illustrations 5.27 and 5.28). I established a link between what I saw in the completed artwork and what I touched in the creative process. The wavy un-knotted strings hung from the arms combined with my experience of making this artwork contributed to my interpretation of it. I expressed the signification through the name of the sculpture "Let Go".

Illustration 5.27: An unfastened arm of "Let Go".

Illustration 5.28: Repetitive lacy structure of "Let Go".

When looking at "Get Sorted", to which I applied the curly untwisted paper string, the messiness of the strings was controlled, or in a way concealed by even and repetitive knots all over the work (Illustrations 5.29 and 5.30). The form of this un-wearable dress slightly differed from how it looked on the mould, as its back was dented (Illustration 5.25). This dent in the back appeared unintentionally after the dress had been removed from the mould. The imperfect form of the piece elicited a feeling of weakness and burden. In addition, looking at the work more closely, one might see the nearly broken paper strings and the new strings that replaced the broken ones. However, this aspect seems too subtle for a casual observer to notice. Again, I connected what I saw in this completed sculpture with what I had touched in the creative process. Then, I interpreted the weakness the artwork attempted to conceal with its repetitive lacy structure, in combination with my experience of the process of creating it. I articulated my interpretation by naming it "Get Sorted".

Illustration 5.29: An unfastened arm of "Get Sorted".

Illustration 5.30: Repetitive lacy structure of "Get Sorted".

For "Breathe Easily", the very fine un-knotted paper threads of the arms and the repetitive knotted lace created the feeling of release, lightness and cheerfulness (Illustrations 5.31 and 5.32). The artwork appeared to be slightly deformed compared to the form when it was on the mould (Illustration 5.26). Regarding my interpretation of this artwork, I did it the same way as I had earlier done with the other two artworks, by linking what I saw in the completed artwork and what I had touched in the creative process. The lightweight appearance and the neat lace-like structure,

combined with my meditative experience of the creative process, contributed to my interpretation. Accordingly, I named the sculpture "Breathe Easily".

Illustration 5.31: An unfastened arm of "Breathe Easily".

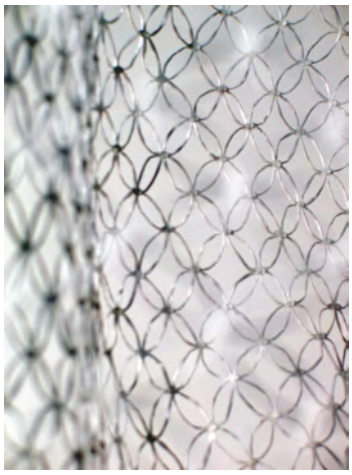
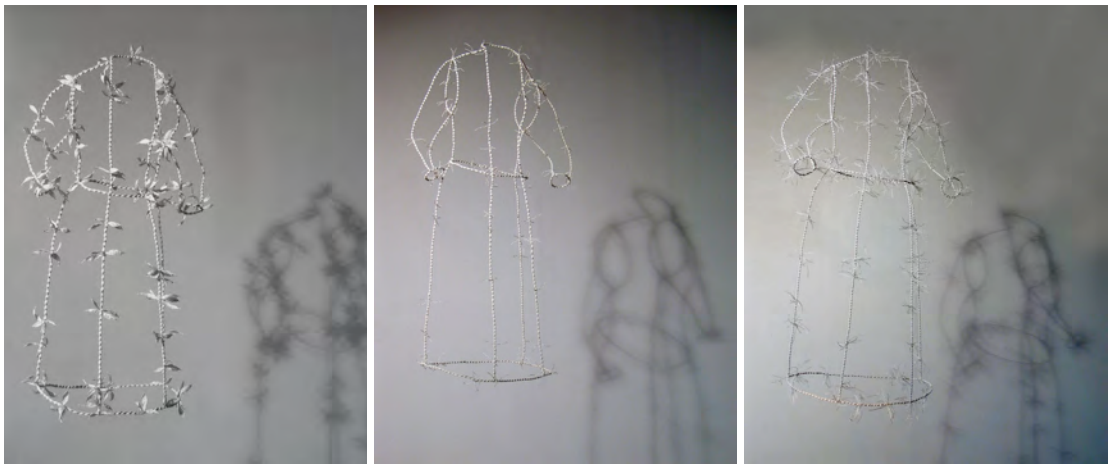


Illustration 5.32: Repetitive lacy structure of "Breathe Easily".

The second series: "Private Area", "Private Garden" and "Personal Joy"

In the second series, after removing each completed artwork from the mould, adjusting or manipulating the final artwork was still possible. I could slightly bend the skeleton of each artwork until I was satisfied with the overall form of the sculpture.

The difference between the completed artworks appeared trivial, although they were made of three different types of paper string (Illustrations 5.33, 5.34 and 5.35). As the three artworks were knotted with the same technique on the same female figure mould, their overall form or the outline became dominant whereas the appearance of their materials faded away. As a result, all completed works, when compared with each other, looked quite similar. However, the difference could be seen more clearly when the distance between the perceiver and the perceived diminished (Illustrations 5.33, 5.34 and 5.35 compared with Illustrations 5.36, 5.37 and 5.38).



Illustrations 5.33, 5.34 and 5.35: (from left) The completed "Private Garden", "Private Area" and "Personal Joy".

Illustrations 5.36, 5.37 and 5.38: (from left) The details of "Private Garden", "Private Area" and "Personal Joy".

The forms of these three un-wearable dresses appeared similar to how they looked on the female figure mould, because each artwork had a metal wire structure. In addition, because of the wire structure, I was able to adjust each dress so that it took the perfect form. My reflection on these completed artworks did not much differ from how I had interpreted them during the production processes, which I mentioned in the previous section.

"Private Garden" (Illustrations 5.33 and 5.36) employed the same material as "Let Go" in the first series. As the shape of untwisted strings seemed analogous to that of leaves in nature, several untwisted strings established the metaphor for vegetation, forming the concept of garden. However, this artificial garden appeared in the frame of a female dress. The combination of the simple yet pleasant nature image and the

human representation elicited the feeling of a woman's possession of a garden. To reflect on this thought, I named the artwork "Private Garden".

In the case of "Private Area" (Illustrations 5.34 and 5.37), the material used was the same type as that used in "Get Sorted". The broken strings became the major feature of the work, which showed the qualities of the material employed. The resemblance of the broken strings with the barbed wire and the form of un-wearable dresses contributed to the atmosphere of privacy and territory. For this reason, I gave the name "Private Area" to the artwork.

For "Personal Joy" (Illustrations 5.35 and 5.38), the material employed is the same type of paper string as in "Breathe Easily". The groups of several strings reminded me of the shape of brilliant fireworks used in celebrations. I associated this thought with my joyful moments while involved in the creative process and named the artwork "Personal Joy".

The interpretations of or reflections on "Seeing Paper" seemed to change when the artworks were moved to the exhibition space. The following chapter will tackle this issue.

5.2 "Paper World" – making expression explicit

As my research focussed on a particular type of material (paper string) and its expressive potential, the exploration of "Seeing Paper" began with the selection of materials. I gave comparatively little attention to the exhibition space. The neutral environment of the modernist gallery, as I assumed, should only marginally influence my artworks situated in the space. This meant that the dissimilar kinds of paper string in those artworks would appear and have remained somewhat distinguishable to the audience. However, the audience seemed to see only little differences between the three types of paper string employed. They tended to perceive the overall exhibition and the artworks exhibited from their completeness, not their detailed components. Paper string, as a material, thus became an almost insignificant and hardly noticeable component. The disappearance of material from the audience's point of view should be considered, because without material recognition no expressive qualities of material would be worth studying. I supposed that this problem might arise due to two factors: exhibition space and choices of material. Concerning the first factor, the

presumably neutral exhibition space might significantly influence the audience contemplating the artworks, so that they barely recognised the visual differences between the three types of paper string. Concerning the latter factor, the differences between the types of paper string might be too subtle to notice. Another possibility could arise from the *hidden* expression of paper string. Some materials may have subtle characteristics, while some other materials may be active or intense in nature. The former type of material, when employed in artworks, could then become easily integrated into the artworks, while the latter remains independently identifiable. Perhaps paper string belongs to the former group. The following chapter will clarify in detail this disappearance of paper string in "Seeing Paper" in the plain exhibition space.

Subsequent to the previous art production and exhibition "Seeing Paper", my intention to explore the relationship between material and artistic expression still remained in "Paper World". The concept that a material metaphorically *lives* in this world originating from the argument that a material possesses specific expressive potential also continued. However, the way of exploring the expressive potential of material altered, in order to solve the problem of hiddenness of material in artworks. Instead of starting with material selections and giving little consideration to exhibition space, I began the process of making "Paper World" by considering the context for situating my artworks created within the concept of metaphorical things. Context became the starting point of the creative process. Although I did not begin the process with a material selection, paper string and knotting would remain as the material and technique, but with no specific choice of either in the beginning.

I compared the way I had explored the expressive potential of material in "Seeing Paper" to the way I did in "Paper World" and found two differences between the two ways: firstly, the direction of thoughts, and secondly, the components involved in the creative process. While I directed my thought from the smallest component – material – to the creation of an artwork in "Seeing Paper" (Illustration 5.39), I thought in the opposite direction from the contextual components – exhibition space and environment – to the smallest component in "Paper World" (Illustration 5.40). The overall exhibition might lead spectators to recognise the material used in the artworks exposed in it. "Paper World" thus attempted to experiment with a different way of exploring the problem and to fulfil the contextual elements hardly considered in the creative process of "Seeing Paper".

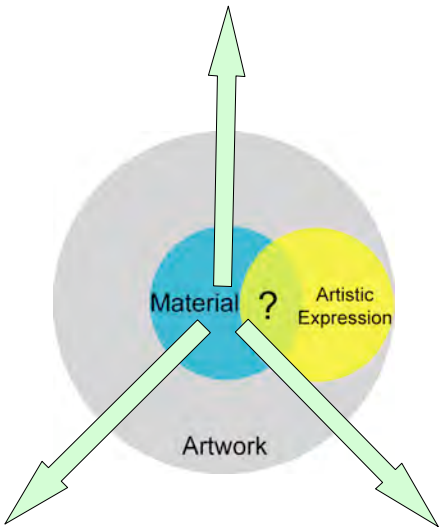


Illustration 5.39: Thinking from the smallest component to the artwork in "Seeing Paper".

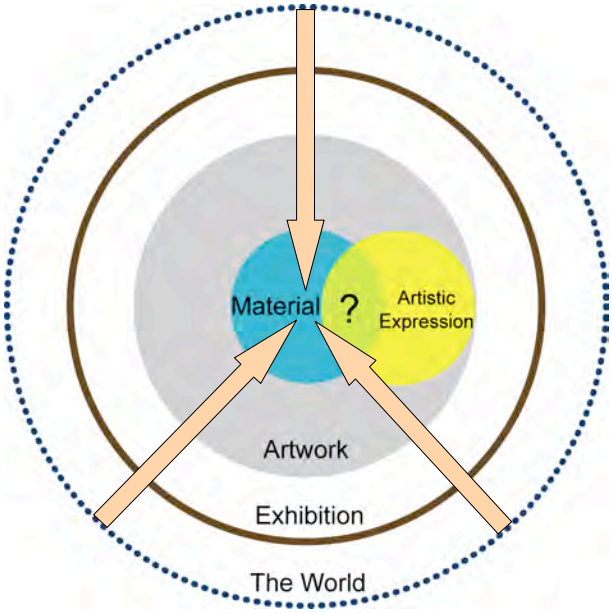


Illustration 5.40: Thinking from the overall context to the smallest component in "Paper World".

The way I directed my thinking in the exploration of the expressive potential of paper string, from the overall context to the smallest component, organised the creative process of "Paper World". This process of creation could clarify how paper string as material can become part of artworks as well as of the exhibition, and that may make this particular material and its expressive quality explicit instead of invisible.

5.2.1 Metaphorical meaning of material in exhibition context

In the actual creation of "Paper World", I considered paper string the central interest, not only in each artwork constructed with the material but also in the overall exhibition where all artworks were to be shown. I planned to first seek an exhibition space and later generate a specific concept of the series of artworks suitable for that particular kind of space.

I thought about the theme or kind of space that should form the context for the exhibition. In my opinion, to persuade the audience to look at particular artworks the same way I as the artist does, the space should be common to both the audience and me[190], so that we might experience things in that same space rather similarly. According to Merleau-Ponty, one experiences an object or an event within a spatial temporal context, and knows it from an embodied perspective, i.e., with her body, one sees an object, hears it and touches it at one time in one place.[191] To experience an object is to be in its world where it shows itself. By being in the same world as the object experienced, one also perceives other co-existing objects in an act of seeing, so that every object reflects all others.[192] Heidegger also gives quite a similar account. What one sees is not just a thing, but *the* thing, the thing for doing something in *the* space.[193] Different entities in the space can refer to one another, and thus create a significant whole. The process of perceiving an object is therefore a meeting or a transaction a person has with the object as well as with other objects and people existing in a specific place and time. In experiencing a spatial world[194], one discovers herself in the world through her body and sense organs in a state of interrelation and

[190] Both the audience and I when being present in the same exhibition space are "Dasein" in Heidegger's sense, because we are existents in a world or "being there" and "there" is the world, the exhibition.

[191] Merleau-Ponty 1962/2005, 77-83. Merleau-Ponty gives an example of seeing a house. He says that one sees a particular house from a certain perspective within a period. The person's perspectives on the house may vary through time. Also, when different people see the same house at one point of time, their perspectives on it are hardly the same.

[192] Ibid., 79.

[193] Heidegger 1988/1999, 69-70.

[194] "Spatial world" here means things or persons that are external to the person experiencing them. See Merleau-Ponty (1968, 3-7) for his account of things and the world.

co-presence between the self and the world.[195] For example, when a person is touching someone else's hand, the person's tactile impression not only subjectively shapes her own self but also objectively senses the other person's touch. Likewise, when a viewer is looking at an artwork, her visual imaging subjectively relates herself to the artwork and objectively maintains her eyes on it. Human beings hence experience things in relation to their bodies[196]. People choose to acknowledge and remember a thing or an event and to ignore and forget some others. How we as persons interpret and understand what we experience today results from the way we bodily and mentally experienced them on the preceding days. We tend to establish a link between what we have known and what we are learning. The experiences regarding things we have come across are stored in our memories. No artwork in "Paper World" is seen in isolation from its setting and other artworks in the setting. In addition, when contemplating the context for this exhibition, I came to think about a larger context where I was working – Finland. This led me to consider what I had studied about the significance of paper string in the history of Finland during the post-war period (the 1940s-1950s) when the material was used for making everyday utilitarian objects. Paper string could create almost everything people in that period needed for their living.

Following from the above, I conceived the idea of everyday experiences of people residing in a familiar space surrounded by ordinary things at a specific period. Experiences that seem ordinary could be stored in people's memories. I developed this idea further, so that I could determine the context for the exhibition – a house in snowy wintertime. I came up with this context for two reasons: Firstly, a house is a familiar space. Most people know how a house in general could be and what they can expect to see in it. Moreover, people tend to record in their memories their own home, either the home where they currently live or a home in the past. A place and things whose essences and functions are known can establish inter-referential significance shared among people. Secondly, snowy winter is the season when people feel cosy and warm when at home, meaning that it could be a supportive contextual element. I

[195] Ibid., 8-9

[196] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999, 16-44; 551-568) offer their concept of embodied mind. They state that the mind is inseparable from the body and that one differentiates aspects of her experience to form concepts through her body.

then connected the context of a house in snowy wintertime with the concept of material as metaphorical beings previously presented in "Seeing Paper".

Accordingly, the combination of the idea of contextual elements and the concept of a material metaphorically living in the world originated a particular concept of the second art production and exhibition "Paper World". This specific concept showed that a material *lives* in this world as ordinary entities surround us in our everyday lives at home. Artworks to be created in "Paper World" thus comprised artworks representing ordinary household objects, neither of which was seen in separation from its context and other artworks situated in the context.

"Paper World" intended to both explore the expressive potential of paper string as a physical material and demonstrate its existence in the artworks and exhibition as the expression of the artist. I decided to choose just one type of paper string, because of the small differences between the three different types of paper string chosen for "Seeing Paper". A single type of paper string when employed in every artwork of "Paper World" might make a strong statement, thus showing its existence in the exhibition (i.e., being recognised more easily). The type of paper string chosen possesses visual and tactile qualities similar to the qualities of Material 1 used in "Seeing Paper" but it is thinner (Illustration 5.41). As I was experiencing it, this industrially produced single ply paper string was tactually rather stiff and visually sleek. Although this material is slightly thinner than Material 1 in "Seeing Paper", its strength and stiffness are comparable to Material 1. My interaction with the material became my visual and tactile experience of not only the emerging artworks representing the actual entities surrounding me but also those entities represented.

Illustration 5.41: Material chosen for all artworks in "Paper World".

5.2.2 Material's connection with exhibition context and artefacts in artistic production

Since I aimed to direct the artistic production of "Paper World" to begin with the context, the exhibition space emerged not only as the starting point of the creation, but also as its lead. In this case, a house became the thematic space in which my artworks could temporarily reside. I started the actual process of creation by imagining what artefacts generally exist in households. I looked around my apartment, which also functioned as my studio, to see what entities were surrounding me in my everyday life. On the one hand, this thematic exhibition space was somewhat restrictive, because it limited the types of imaginary artefacts that could be included in the exhibition. On the other hand, it seemed almost limitless, because of numerous ordinary entities at home. I had no concrete plan of either the number or forms of artworks that were going to be produced for this series. I started with one imaginary artefact and continued to the next, with the picture of a house as the exhibition space in mind.

Imaginary household artefacts

Although I had had no direct experience with the selected kind of paper string, my earlier experience of making "Seeing Paper" eased the creation of "Paper World". I somehow knew the material, because its qualities are similar to Material 1 used earlier for creating "Seeing Paper", but thinner. Hence, when touching this material, I could immediately learn how hard I should pull it, and how the material should be manipulated. Hand knotting still remained the manipulation technique of the material. I also applied the two degrees of manipulation used in "Seeing Paper" to "Paper World". As stated in Section 5.1.1, the two ways of manipulation originated from my different intentions: firstly, the intention of letting the material be free to *speak* for itself, and secondly, that of forcing the material to *speak* under my control. However, I had no intention of designing how the material was to be manipulated in each artwork before its actual creation. In other words, I rather combined the two manipulative techniques in every artwork, with no exact plan of which technique I would apply to a specific part of each artwork.

Things surrounding me in my studio environment acted not only as sources of what I could portray in order to create artworks, but also as moulds I could use to form all artworks into shapes of particular household entities I attempted to represent. As sources of inspiration, surrounding things helped me imagine what artefacts this imaginary house should contain in order to become a home perceptible by people. As moulds, ordinary things in various forms and sizes, such as boxes, tubular bars, dishes and so forth I found around myself, were used for this purpose. When I could not find things in particular forms to serve as moulds, I carved sponge into those forms. Sponge was used for making moulds because the material could be easily squeezed and removed from parts of the artworks whose open part would be smaller than the whole, e.g., hollow spherical form. When a mould suitable for shaping an artwork or a part of it was prepared, I then knotted the chosen paper string over or around it. I eventually made artworks analogous to the following household artefacts: curtain, chair, table, coffee cup and lamp.

The first work I created to be included in the series was a curtain that I later named "The Growing Curtain". This work and its title showed how I related my artistic production and my artwork in progress to a certain period. Morning light arrives early

when spring has come. When the creative process of "Paper World" began in early spring 2006, I thought about creating the first artwork to represent a curtain: an artefact primarily needed for this particular season. In this period, trees do not yet have any leaves. Instead of illustrating what actually happens in the season, I made the curtain full of leaves (Illustration 5.42), meaning that spring appeared to have arrived in my imaginary world before it actually had. I applied the two manipulation techniques to different parts of "The Growing Curtain": low manipulating degree with no twisting or strong pulling in the curtain rail part (Illustration 5.43), and forceful manipulation in the body of the curtain (Illustration 5.42). In the rail part, I simply knotted paper strings cut in a specific length around a tube found in my studio, row after row, constructing a lacy structure similar to the structure of Series 1 of "Seeing Paper". In the body part of the curtain, I cut two pieces of paper string without measuring their lengths and knotted them around several long pieces of the same material, creating a continuous spiral line. When one of the two pieces of paper string appeared five centimetres to the left, a new string was added. As the chosen type of paper string possessed features similar to Material 1 employed in "Seeing Paper" and "Private Garden" in particular, I learnt from my previous experience that Material 1 tended to be open, revealing the long strip of the original material, which looked similar to leaves in nature. I thus untwisted the current material, at the body part where the five-centimetre-long strings were left unknotted, in order to create the shape of leaves.

Illustration 5.42: The body part of "The Growing Curtain".

Illustration 5.43: The curtain rail part of "The Growing Curtain".

Subsequently, when I finished "The Growing Curtain", leaves started budding. The picture of immature leaves and flowers on trees that still looked empty raised the question of whether those trees were growing or dying. I expressed this thought and presented it in an artwork similar to "The Growing Curtain". However, I made one side of it appear full of leaves and the other side appear without a single leaf. This artwork was later entitled "The Growing or Dying" (Illustration 5.44).

Illustration 5.44: "The Growing or Dying" with the body part full of leaves on one side and with no leaves on the other.

Natural light in spring also reminded me of another source of light: artificial luminosity. I expressed this thought through the creation of an artwork portraying a chandelier that I later named "The Lamp" (Illustration 5.45). When making this artwork, I still related my artistic process to spring by using the effect of blooming leaves as a major aspect of the work. Flourishing leaves elicited the feeling of brightness to me in the same way as light (both natural and artificial) did. I knotted pieces of paper string around six separated electrical cables, each of which ended with sockets for halogen light bulbs. I bound these six cables together and knotted this bundle to create a chandelier shape. "The Lamp" became the only *functional* artwork in the "Paper World" series, as it could produce light, illuminating the space in which it was positioned.

Illustration 5.45: "The Lamp" with the element representing leaves in nature.

Then, I thought of one of my everyday activities in the morning – drinking coffee. This activity, to me, required not only a coffee cup but also a table and a chair. I followed this line of thought and created artworks representing a cup, a table and a chair, by knotting the same type of paper string around various objects found in my studio that could give similar forms to parts of the artefacts I intended to create. I later named these artworks "The Coffee Cup", "The Table" and "The Chair" consecutively (Illustration 5.46).

Illustration 5.46: "The Coffee Cup" and "The Table".

Imaginary dwelling

Although I had decided to exhibit my artworks produced in forms of everyday entities in a residential house, no actual place was chosen at the beginning of the creative process. Subsequently, the question about the house to be used as the exhibition space arose: whether it should be a real home whose function still remained for living or a former residential house whose function was no longer for living. The choice between the two would determine the way I would seek a specific space for the second exhibition. While the first choice could be looked for in the rental housing market, checking which gallery had been converted from a house might require searching the latter. I compared these two choices and documented the comparison in my research diary:

Exhibition in an actual home possibly found in rental housing market:

- Free to choose the atmosphere and location of the house
- Many choices to consider
- No time limit for setting up the exhibition
- Have to arrange everything on my own
- May be difficult to access in some residential areas
- Can an exhibition in a residential house be included in the art world?
- Will it be recognised easily enough as an art exhibition?
- Perhaps impossible to rent a house for a short period, especially for an exhibition
- High rent for a nice house

Exhibition in a gallery converted from a former residential house

- A gallery usually arranges a reception, distributes information and has someone to take care of the exhibition for the whole period
- Easy to set up the exhibition as equipped with proper lighting
- Do these kinds of galleries exist? If so, limited choices and locations[197]

As an actual home seemed to have several limited conditions, I became more interested in the choice of a gallery converted from a residential house. Regardless of my concern that this kind of gallery may not exist, I searched for it in Helsinki and

[197] From my research diary on 4 September 2006.

the metropolitan area and finally found Gallery Gjutars in Vantaa. It was converted into a gallery in 1996 from a deserted wooden house built in the 1960s. I visited the gallery to feel the actual atmosphere of the space. The space appeared comfortable and inviting as if it was the house of a friend (Illustrations 5.47 to 5.54). After the visit, I wrote the following in my research diary:

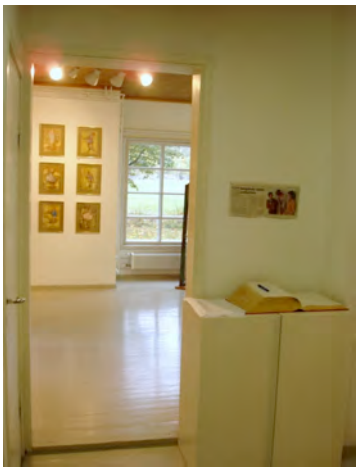
> … The exhibition space retains the original structures and elements of a house. It can create a living place where works of art could be enjoyed (and enjoy being there) and seem inherent to the domestic setting.[198]

Illustration 5.47: Gallery Gjutars from a distance.[199]

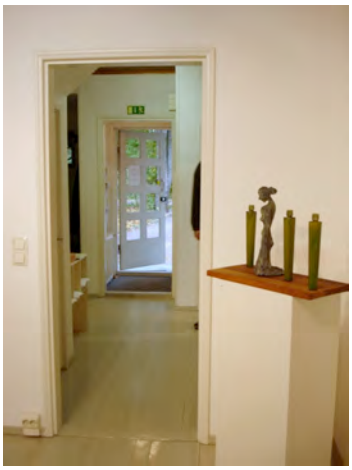
Illustration 5.48: The entrance of Gallery Gjutars.

[198] From my research diary on 9 September 2006.

[199] Illustrations 5.47 to 5.54 were photographed by the author on 30 September 2006.







Illustrations 5.49 to 5.53: The interior of the first floor of Gallery Gjutars.

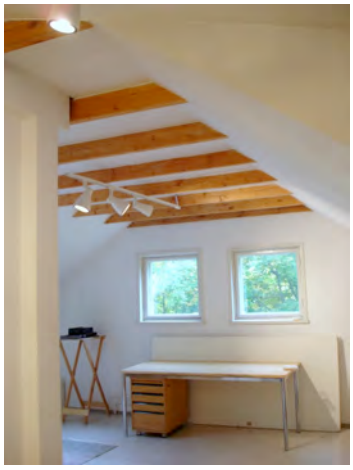


Illustration 5.54: The second-floor space of Gallery Gjutars.

On the subsequent day of the visit, I applied for this gallery for winter 2007 around January/February: the period I estimated that snow would cover the neighbouring landscape of the gallery. When my exhibition proposal was accepted, I returned to the gallery to photograph the space.

The gallery, converted from an old house in which nobody currently lives, emerged as the thematic space representing an imaginary home in which artworks could temporarily reside. Although the form of the gallery is not different from an ordinary house, visitors knew before their actual visits that it was not a house but a gallery. What they knew grounded their "fore-understanding"[200] that what they would see in this place were artworks.

Imaginary dwellers

Household artefacts should not exist without a user. A house would have no meaning without a resident. I considered that the imaginary house I intended to create would appear meaningless if no imaginary occupant resided there. I thus decided to create the owners of the house. I first made a sculpture representing a female human, by using the same technique, structure and female body mould as I applied to Series 2 of "Seeing Paper". However, its details slightly differed from the three artworks in Series 2. Similar to making Series 2, I cut two equal pieces of paper string without measuring their length. I then knotted them around the metal wire skeleton formed on the mould in the direction against its twisting. The knots created a continuous spiral line around the skeleton (Illustrations 5.55 and 5.56). As can be seen in "The Growing Curtain", "The Growing or Dying" and "The Lamp", this chosen type of paper string when untwisted would have appeared similar to the shape of leaves in nature. However, instead of untwisting the unknotted strings completely, I opened only the tip of the strings and cut the untwisted strings straight (Illustration 5.57). I later entitled this artwork in a female figure "The Woman".

[200] "Fore-understanding", according to the American art historian Howard Risatti (2007, 277), signifies "the complex of ideas, concepts, images, works, values, and presumptions that make up the individual's realm of understanding … [that is] brought to the process of making by the maker and to the process of viewing by the viewer."

Illustrations 5.55 and 5.56: Paper string was knotted around the metal wire structure on the female figure mould in the production of "The Woman".

Illustration 5.57: I was untwisting the tip of a string.

Having finished "The Woman", I thought that "The Woman" should not reside in this imaginary dwelling alone. Therefore, I came up with the idea of creating a representation of a male human as another owner of this house. I sketched how this sculpture should appear (Illustration 5.58). It was subsequently named "The Man".

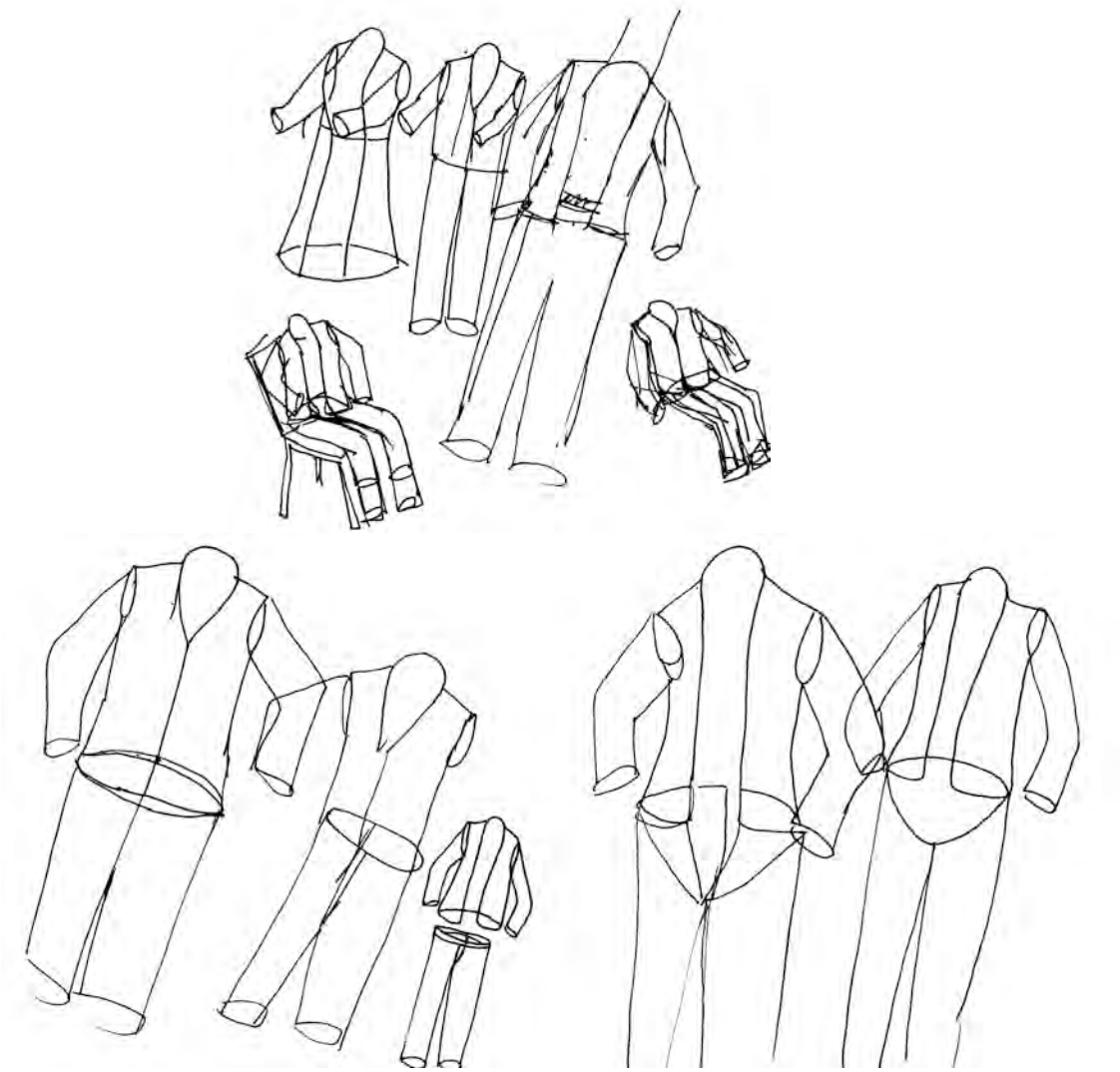


Illustration 5.58: The sketches of "The Man" (28 September 2006).

I applied the same knotting technique around the metal wire skeleton as used in "The Woman". However, I did not make a male figure mould for shaping the metal wire structure. Instead, I shaped the wire according to one of the sketches I had earlier made, with no mould inside. The skeleton of the male figure was still actual human size; I measured a male suit and applied its dimensions to the process of shaping the wire structure. When the wire skeleton was completed, I knotted two pieces of paper string around it and then opened the tips of the unknotted strings in exactly the same ways as I had done with "The Woman". The work, later named "The Man", became complete when paper string covered the whole skeleton, and all the ends of the material were opened and neatly cut. It appeared in the shape of a male suit with no wearer, representing a male human being, one of the dwellers of this particular imaginary dwelling.

Site-specific imaginary household artefacts

The particular exhibition space led me to the idea of creating site-specific artworks. However, before beginning to work on these artworks, I placed the artworks I had already created in the gallery, by drawing them on the plan of the first floor of the gallery and imagining how they would look in the actual space I had seen (Illustration 5.59). In addition, I still left the second floor of the gallery empty with no intention of placing any existing artworks in the space.

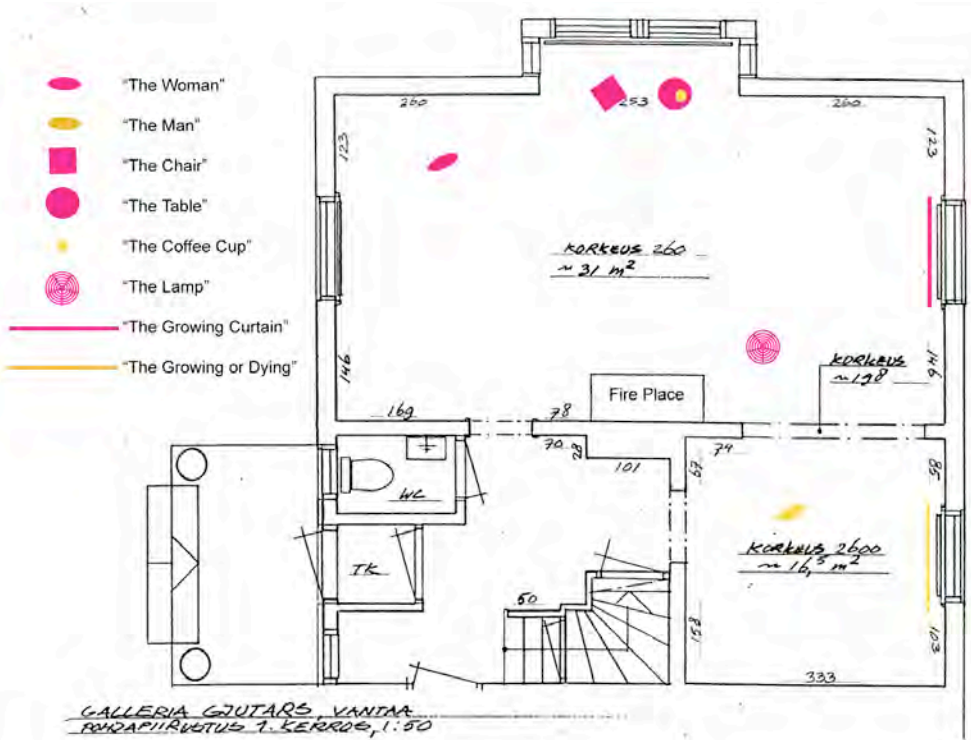


Illustration 5.59: The layout of the ready artworks in Gallery Gjutar (1st floor).

From Illustration 5.59 in combination with the actual ambience of the gallery space on the first floor (Illustrations 5.49 to 5.53), I realised that more artworks could still be situated in the space. In relation to the empty space, I began to think of what everyday entities should be suitable for the space, by following French sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre's *Production of Space*. Space, as Lefebvre puts it, "serves as a tool of thought and of action", and an artist creates it and other objects in it by considering the interrelationship between the objects in relation to the whole, so that a viewer can walk around an object and scrutinise it not

as a single aspect but as concerning the whole space.[201] Regarding this, my thought split into two directions: first, creating artworks portraying objects related to both the existing elements of the gallery and the movement of people in it; and second, creating artworks representing objects associated with the everyday activities of the two imaginary dwellers of this house: "The Man" and "The Woman".

First, I imagined that this house still called for a coat rack for guests to hang their coats and winter accessories. I thus conceived the idea of creating artworks illustrating a coat rack and hangers for this purpose to be placed next to the entrance of the exhibition space (Illustration 5.60). I later named the two works "The Coat Rack" and "The Hangers". Another object necessary for this house could be a coal-rake set for the existing fireplace in the space. I then planned to create an artwork depicting a coal-rake set for this purpose. I later entitled this artwork "The Coal Rake" (Illustration 5.60).

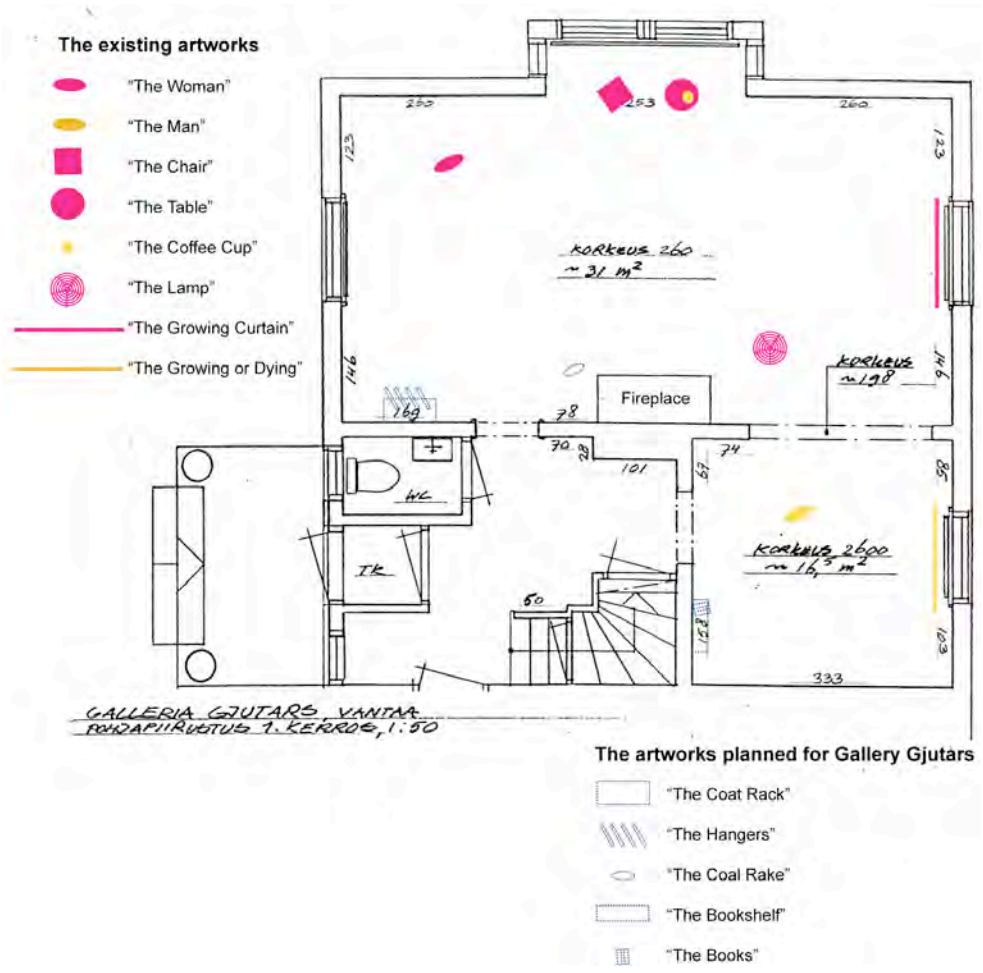


Illustration 5.60: The layout of the existing artworks and artworks to be created in Gallery Gjutars (1st floor).

[201] Lefebvre 1974/1991, 124-125.

Second, "The Woman" seemed to be involved in both the activity created by the existing artworks, such as "The Table", "The Chair" and "The Coffee Cup", and the activity of greeting guests visiting the house. While "The Woman" had been connected to the other artworks, "The Man" was related to none of the existing or planned artworks. Therefore, I thought about creating an activity for "The Man": reading books. Hence, I planned to make a bookshelf and books to be placed near "The Man" (Illustration 5.60). I subsequently named the two artworks "The Bookshelf" and "The Books".

While the first floor of the gallery seemed to contain an adequate number of the artworks, the exhibition space on the upper floor was still unused. This floor is an attic occupying the space under a pitched roof (Illustration 5.54). I found this space quiet, safe and warm, hence imagining that this space would be a suitable place to place a cradle for a baby. I then followed this idea and planned to create an artwork similar to a baby cradle for the upper-floor space (Illustration 5.61). I subsequently named this artwork "The Cradle".

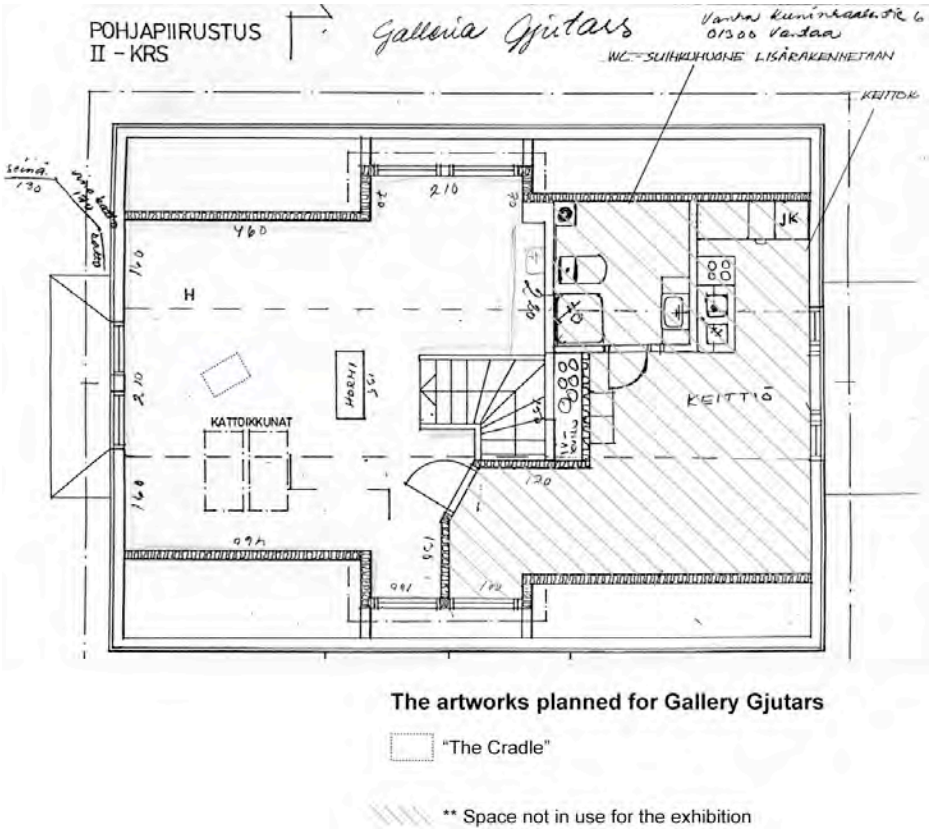


Illustration 5.61: The layout of the artwork to be created in Gallery Gjutars (2nd floor).

Having designed the forms of artworks and the spots in Gallery Gjutars to place them, I continued the creative process with the actual creation of each site-specific artwork. The first artwork I made was "The Bookshelf". I knotted several pieces of paper string around a rather flat box I found in my studio whose shape was similar to the shape of a shelf or a piece of wood. I used the same technique as applied to the previously made artworks, such as "The Table", The Chair", "The Cup" and the rail part of "The Growing Curtain" and "The Growing or Dying"; however, the mould and its dimension differed. Subsequently, I made "The Books", an artwork consisting of two pieces representing books of different thickness, followed by "The Coat Rack", "The Hangers", "The Coal Rake" and "The Cradle". All these artworks used the combination of the manipulative techniques I had earlier used: one that was applied to "The Table", The Chair", "The Cup" and the rail part of "The Growing Curtain" and "The Growing or Dying" and another that was employed in "The Woman" and "The Man".

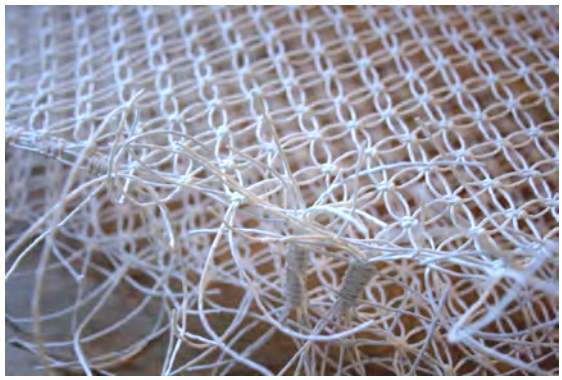
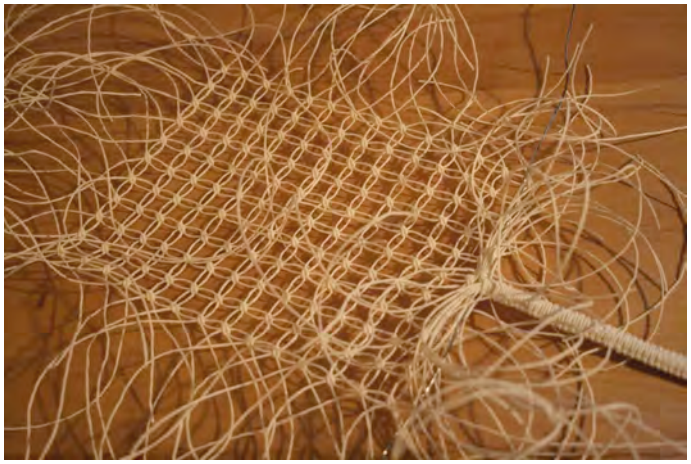
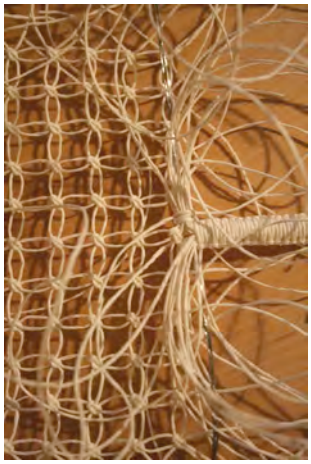
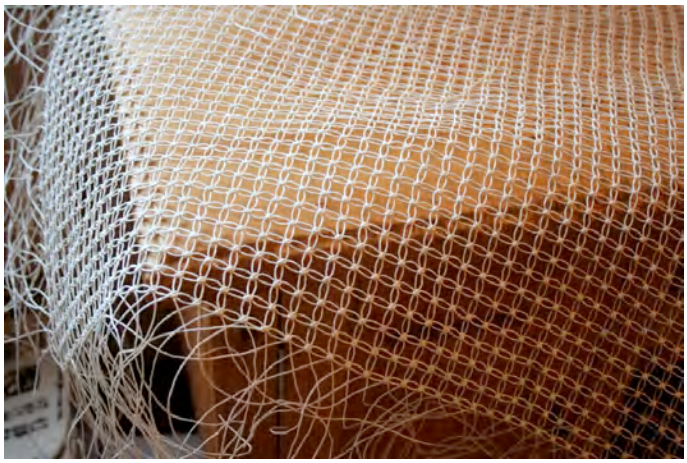


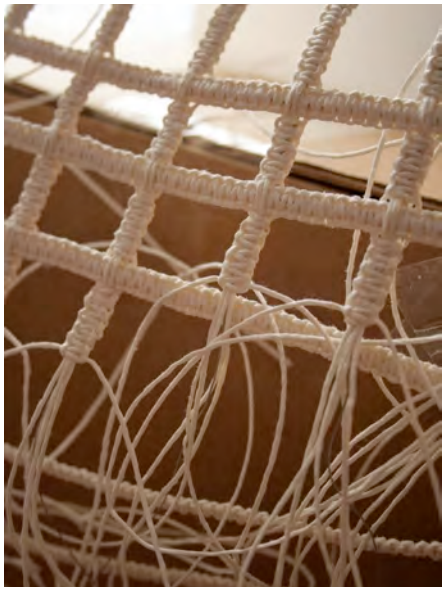
Illustration 5.62: Knotting around the edge of "The Bookshelf" that would be attached to the wall.

Illustration 5.63: The metal wire skeleton of the holder part of "The Coal Rake".

Illustrations 5.64 and 5.65: Knotting around the edge of the spoon part of "The Coal Rake".



Illustrations 5.66 to 5.69: The process of "The Cradle" from knotting paper strings into a large lacy piece and connecting all the lines of paper string on a cardboard box.

5.2.3 Experience with material in completed artefacts

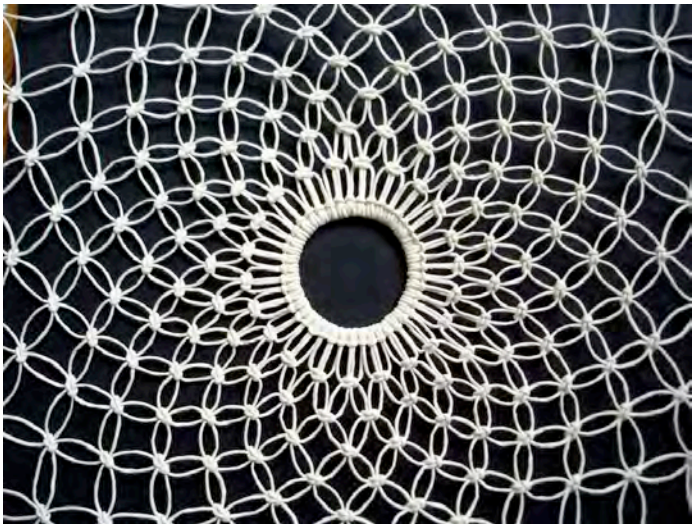


Illustration 5.70: The top of "The Table".

As human beings, we have ordinary life experiences. We sit on a chair. The chair is made of wood, plastic or metal. We drink from a coffee cup. The cup is made of porcelain or glass. This is what we know. When the appearance of these things is analogous but some aspects, such as material, differ from our normal experience, our bodily engagements also differ. The chair may not be something to actually sit on. The cup may not be something from which we drink coffee.

Illustration 5.71: "The Table" and "The Chair" in my studio.

Illustration 5.72: Testing "The Lamp" when illuminated.

All the artefacts in the "Paper World" series were clearly not intended for serial or industrial production. Also, they were not meant to fulfil any practical functions. Instead, they were created to provide enjoyment and to stimulate contemplation and reflection. Although their forms looked realistic, their media and structure signalled that they were intentionally to be used in imagination or conceptualisation. Having a realistic appearance with abstract details might establish a personal connection between the artefacts and viewers. My attempt was to blur the boundaries between the real and the imaginative, so that the imaginative seemed real. The imaginative artefacts that looked realistic offered pleasure but were limited in physical functions. With the above reason of rendering the blurred peripheries between the real and the imaginary, all artworks were named using "The" together with ordinary terms (e.g., "The Chair", "The Man", etc.) to emphasise that these artworks were particular and unique objects representing commonplace artefacts. Naming all artworks in "Paper World" in this way also highlights Heidegger's account, which influenced the creation of this series, that what one sees is not just *a* thing, but *the* thing in *this* space.[202] "The Chair" and "The Man", as examples, are *the* chair and *the* man in Gallery Gjutars.

[202] Heidegger 1988/1999, 69.

After the actual creation of the artwork – viewing artworks in exhibition space

6
Paper string and artistic expression in context

Each material I selected has some visually and tactually perceptible features. However, a considerable number of tactile features such as strength and stiffness could be noticed only by me, the artist in the actual creation of the artwork, through the sense of touch together with the close visual contact. In an exhibition, due to an audience's inability to touch the exhibits, they rarely recognise the tactile features in the way that I discovered them during the process of creation and pointed out in the previous chapter.

This chapter deals with how an audience or visitors to an exhibition possibly perceive the incorporation of material and artistic expression embodied in artworks exhibited in a specific context. People seem unlikely to perceive artworks without correlating the works with other things or experiences that they have already acknowledged and stored in their memories. In fact, they perceive the artworks consciously and unconsciously, interpreting them with references to their personal experiences.

In this chapter, I examine the audiences' perception and interpretations of the completed artworks created in two art productions and publicly shown in two exhibitions: "Seeing Paper" (2005) and "Paper World" (2007). The examination of the audiences' interpretations in comparison with my own critical reflections can reveal how other people experienced my artworks in the chosen exhibition spaces. This examination may also help answer the research question of how paper string, when seen in completed artworks, could influence an audience and their contemplating and interpreting processes. It focuses on the ways paper string, as the chosen material, could be seen as expressive material or expressing artworks' qualities through the forms of the completed artworks and the overall exhibitions. This chapter also includes me as one of the visitors to both exhibitions, as I experienced and critically looked at the artworks in the exhibition spaces.

6.1 "Seeing Paper" – material and artistic expression in neutral space

In the creation of "Seeing Paper", each artwork was a product of my imagination and skill, including my choices of media, i.e., material, technique, space, etc. I was the

only person who could be close to the artwork in progress from the raw material to the finished artefact. Conversely, the audience might come across the complete artwork temporarily exhibited in the gallery, with no possibility to experience the production process.[203] This section contains what thoughts, feelings and interpretations my artworks in "Seeing Paper" may have evoked in the visitors to the exhibition, and how these might influence artistic expression and generate new understandings to them.

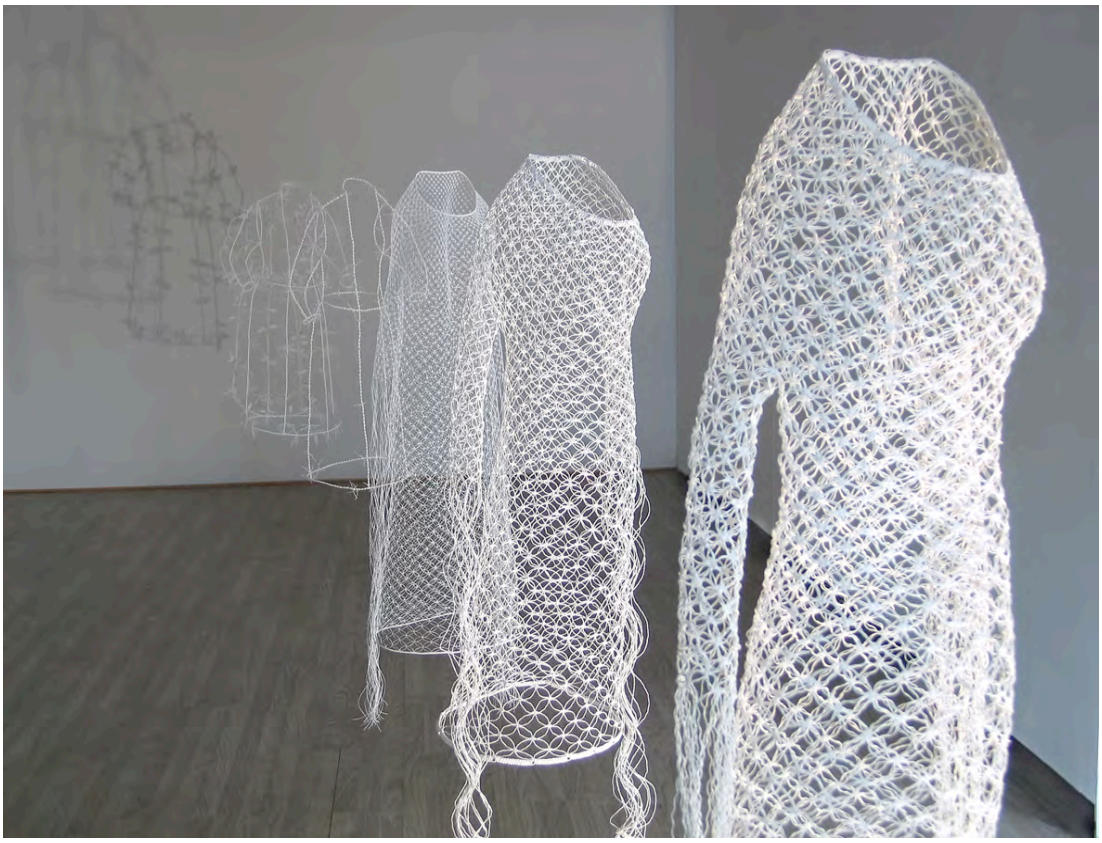


Illustration 6.1: "Seeing Paper" exhibited at Gallery Johan S. in Helsinki from 11 May to 5 June 2005.

In addition, I named this series of paper sculptures and the exhibition "Seeing Paper" to hint at both the expression of paper as the material and its role in the artworks and exhibition. I intended this title to encompass twofold meanings: first, *Seeing Paper* as the action of the audience, i.e., the audience as *seeing paper*, and

[203] According to the art philosopher Marcia Muelder Eaton (1988, 6), aesthetic situation consists of four elements: "(1) the maker …, (2) the viewer or audience, (3) the object or event, and (4) the circumstances or context in which the object, event, or performance is experienced." Aesthetic theory usually focuses on either one of these elements or ways in which these elements interrelate.

second, *Seeing Paper* as the actor, i.e., *paper* as the material of the artworks was *seeing* the audience in the exhibition. While the first meaning seemed realistic, the latter should be considered imaginary or metaphorical. According to my intention, both meanings aimed to signify the alternate active and passive roles of the audience and the artworks in which the selected kinds of paper string were employed.

6.1.1 Artworks and their materials in neutral space

The creation of artworks in both series of "Seeing Paper" mainly emphasised the three choices of paper string that visually and tactually differ from one another. The other factors such as technique and form were fixed in each series, i.e., I constructed Series 1 using a lacy structure, while I used a skeleton structure in Series 2 (Illustrations 6.2 and 6.3, and also Illustration 5.1 in Chapter 5).

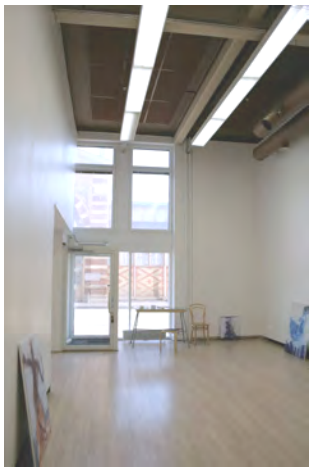
Illustration 6.2: "Let Go", a sculpture in Series 1, constructed with Material 1 into a lacy structure.

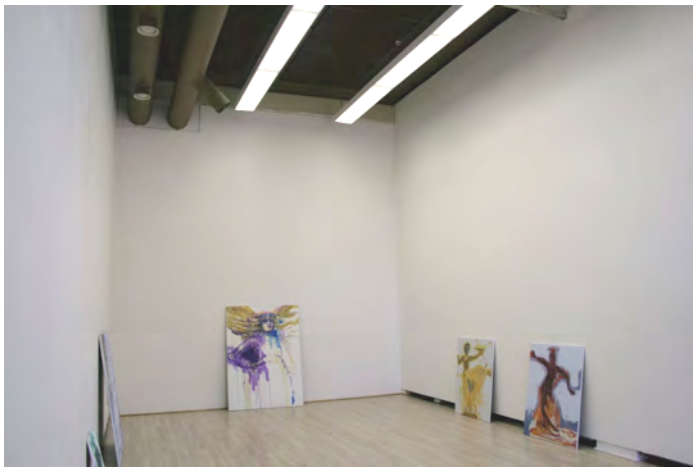
Illustration 6.3: "Private Garden", a sculpture in Series 2, structured with the same material as "Let Go" into skeleton form.

Centring upon the issue of material in my study, I not only focused on this element, but also attempted to control the other factors as mentioned above. Conversely, my thinking did not touch upon the issue of exhibition context during the creative process. I imagined that the space possessed no particular quality or revealed no particular attitude or feeling, thus giving no or little influence to the presence of

the artworks and the materials employed. I expected that with the space having either a trivial effect or none at all, the audience would fully concentrate on the artworks exhibited, especially on the materials. Concentrating on the artworks that were in similar forms and structures might bring the audience's attention to the artworks' materials, which was the only variable in each series. When they were able to notice the differences of materials, they would possibly understand the concept of "Seeing Paper" as different metaphorical female human beings. This understanding would confirm the argument that each material possesses specific expressive potential. However, I was aware that an exhibition space could not be totally neutral. Small elements, e.g., a crack on the wall or a scratch on the floor, might give a particular feeling to some people, and that would affect the way they look at artworks.

Having decided to exhibit my artworks in a quite neutral space, I accordingly chose Gallery Johan S., a modernistic gallery in Helsinki (Illustrations 6.4 and 6.5). I supposed that an empty rectangular-shaped room with plain white walls and pale-coloured wooden floor would appear as neutral as I had expected once my artworks were to be shown there. Moreover, the large windows of the gallery allowed natural light during spring to shine into the gallery space. The dynamic quality of natural light could bring in the *living* atmosphere to the space and that might support the concept of "Seeing Paper" as metaphorical human beings. However, this supposedly neutral environment altered when "Seeing Paper" was present in the space. I will explain this issue of the illusion of the modernistic gallery space in the next sub-section.





Illustrations 6.4 and 6.5: The interior of Gallery Johan S.[204]

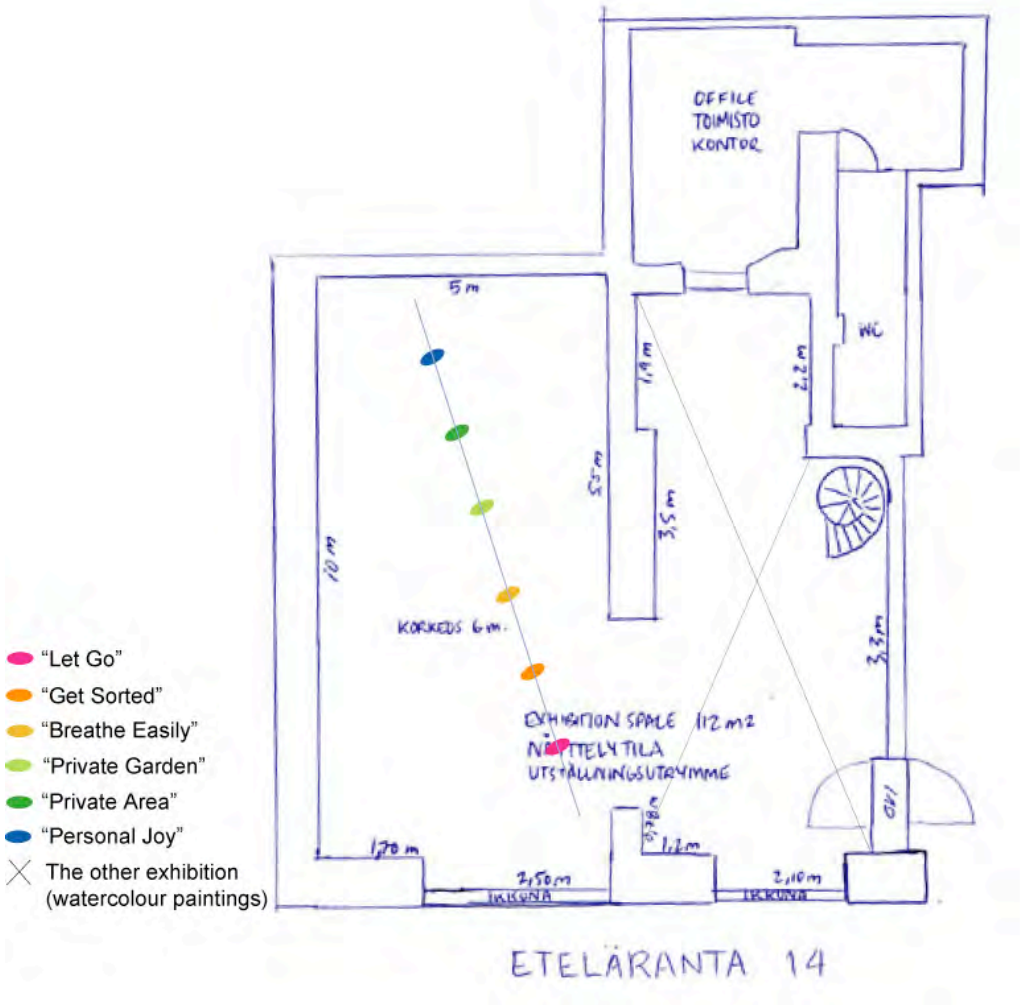


Illustration 6.6: The layout plan I designed to present "Seeing Paper" in Gallery Johan S.

[204] These photographs of Gallery Johan S. were taken on 28 January 2008, nearly three years after the exhibition "Seeing Paper". Illustration 6.4 in comparison to Illustration 6.6 shows that the gallery entrance has been moved from the side to the front of the gallery. A part of the former large window was transformed into glass doors.

When my paper sculptures were completed and ready for the exhibition, I set them up in the gallery's "white cube"[205] according to the layout I had previously designed (Illustration 6.6). On the layout plan, I aligned the six artworks in a sequence that three sculptures of the first series appeared together, followed by the other three works of the second series. The sequence of the alignment of the artworks finally appeared as follows: Series 1 – "Let Go" (Illustration 6.7), "Get Sorted" (Illustration 6.8) and "Breathe Easily" (Illustration 6.9), and followed by Series 2 – "Private Garden" (Illustration 6.10), Private Area" (Illustration 6.11) and "Personal Joy" (Illustration 6.12). The types of materials employed in the artworks were therefore shown in a repetitive sequence of Material 1, 2 and 3 consecutively. I designed the plan in accordance with my intention to compare and contrast the effects of three different types of paper string constructed with the same technique into the same form in each series. In addition, I angled the alignment of the six sculptures, in order to create a clear picture of every work in every direction that the audience might view it. The space between

Illustration 6.7: "Let Go" with Material 1.

Illustration 6.8: "Get Sorted" with Material 2.

Illustration 6.9: "Breathe Easily" with Material 3.

Illustration 6.10: "Private Garden" with Material 1.

Illustration 6.11: "Private Area" with Material 2.

Illustration 6.12: "Personal Joy" with Material 3.

[205] Brian O'Doherty (1999) terms the modernist display, which encloses an unornamented space with white walls, wooden floor and light source from the ceiling, "the white cube".

the sculptures was large enough for the spectators to walk around and look at each individual work.

I started installing my artworks based on the designed layout. However, I slightly changed the order of the works in each series at the site for some visual reasons. In the first series, I switched "Let Go" with "Get Sorted" to set the height order from short to tall. In the second series, I first exchanged the place of "Private Garden" with that of "Private Area" in order to maintain the order of types of material of the first series (i.e., Material 2 followed by Material 1). However, I had to switch the position of "Private Garden" again with that of "Personal Joy", because the outline and the material of the latter work were too thin to be visible on the white background. The final installation of "Seeing Paper" was in the following order: "Get Sorted", "Let Go", "Breathe Easily", "Private Area", "Personal Joy" and "Private Garden" (Illustrations 6.13 and 6.14). In this sequence, the three types of materials employed in the artworks thus appeared in the following order: Material 2, 1 and 3 in Series 1 and Material 2, 3 and 1 in Series 2 (Illustration 6.15).

Illustration 6.13: The final installation of "Seeing Paper" in the gallery space. From left: "Get Sorted", "Let Go", "Breathe Easily", "Private Area", "Personal Joy" and "Private Garden".

Illustration 6.14: The other view of "Seeing Paper" in the gallery space. From right: "Let Go", "Breathe Easily", "Private Area", "Personal Joy" and "Private Garden".

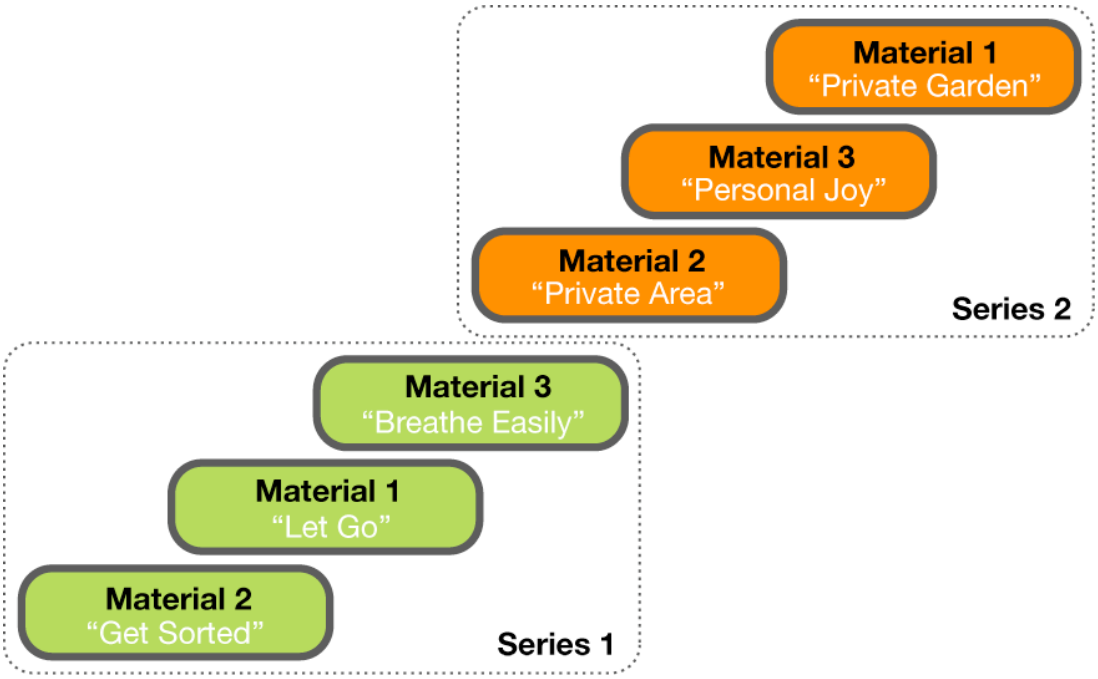


Illustration 6.15: The sequence of the three types of paper string in the final installation.

I used fishing line to suspend all the artworks; its transparency would not create extra lines that might possibly disturb the appearance of the artworks. The invisibility of the fishing line made the artworks look as though they were standing or floating in the air by themselves. I positioned the floating artworks slightly higher than the

height of a moderate-size woman. This somewhat higher level of artworks aimed to signify the difference between the living women and the metaphors for female human beings in the forms of dress-like sculptures. In addition, the ventilator in the exhibition space gently blew the six sculptures from above, slightly moving the artworks. Cracks and small holes on the walls and scratches on the floor were fixed and the windows were cleaned.

6.1.2 Audience and artworks in white space

After the exhibition was set up, it was open to the public for a three-and-a-half-week period. As generally understood, touching is prohibited in most exhibitions. The visitors to my exhibition seemed to follow this prohibition, by contemplating the artworks from a distance. The distance could have varied greatly depending on the audience, and how they walked around and contemplated the whole artwork or its details.

Before the exhibition, I had prepared invitation cards that were designed to resemble the shape and size of a standard business card, with the information about the exhibition printed on both sides (Illustration 6.16). As a business card is an international means to introduce oneself on a public occasion, the invitation card in the size and shape of a business card also aimed at this original function, in order to signify that "Seeing Paper" was not just an exhibition, but instead, someone introducing herself. In addition, every card had a punched circle with the name of the exhibition "Seeing Paper" printed along the curve at the lower part of the circle. I put each card into three different sizes of envelopes, one after another (Illustration 6.17). The punched circle was intended to place the focus on the name of the exhibition, directing the audience's attention towards paper as the material used in every artwork in the exhibition. The arrangement of the layered envelopes covering the small invitation card attempted to hint that the hidden element (i.e., the card) is the essence of the whole arrangement, beyond the obvious surface. This thus also aimed to lead the audience to contemplate the smallest element (i.e., paper string) as the core of the overall exhibition.

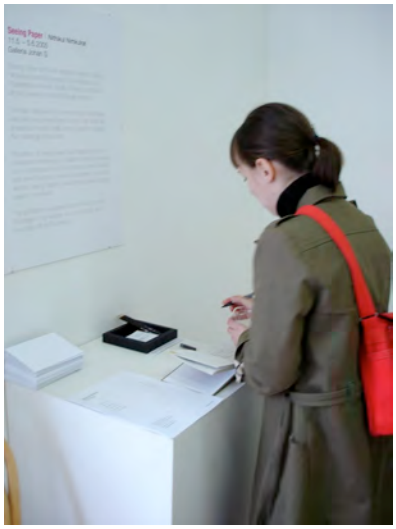
Illustration 6.16: Invitation card design for "Seeing Paper".

Illustration 6.17: Invitation card in three layers of envelopes.

Illustration 6.18: A spectator was contemplating an artwork from a distance.

Illustration 6.19: The audience and the artworks in the exhibition space.

As previously presented in Chapter 3, I prepared a question for the visitors to voluntarily answer in the mode of small feedback forms, each possessing an indicating number (Illustration 3.8 in Chapter 3). Many spectators could fill in the feedback forms simultaneously, by obtaining the forms from a box placed next to the visitors' book (Illustration 6.20 and 6.21).

Illustrations 6.20 and 6.21: The small feedback forms in the black box for the visitors to write their thoughts, feelings and comments.

From my experience as an artist I know that an audience is unlikely to give written feedback on any exhibition. Art galleries in general provide a visitors' book with blank pages for visitors to write and sign their names; however, visitors tend to write only their names and sometimes the names of the towns where they live. Nevertheless, at the "Seeing Paper" exhibition, fifty-three visitors aged between eighteen and seventy-two (Appendix 2), from the total number of seventy-seven[206], filled in the feedback forms. This amount of feedback received was worthy of consideration. It showed that most people who signed their names in the visitors' book were also keen on writing their opinions, thus indicating their interest in being involved in an artistic activity additional to viewing the exhibition silently. Having read their comments on the filled forms later, I found that almost of all of them seemed to take the question seriously and understood the purpose of the questionnaire. The feedback forms I provided in the exhibition somewhat underlined that the audience's written opinions or interpretations of those artworks were desirable and important for me, the artist creating the artworks. I assumed that if the number of visitors had been higher, the opinions filled in the feedback forms would have been more clearly aligned. In addition, those visitors who filled in the feedback

[206] The number was counted from the names signed in the visitors' book. However, as not every visitor wrote his or her name in it, I was aware that this number could not be the actual number of visitors. From the estimation of the gallerist of Gallery Johan S., the number of visitors to my exhibition could possibly have been about 800.

forms had quite a diverse background; however, most of them had professions related to creative fields such as art, design and craft and were female Finns.

From their answers on the forms, none of the visitors seemed to perceive the dress-like sculptures as metaphors for female human beings. A considerable number of visitors gave the same word for more than one artwork in each series. A few visitors seemed to look at the overall exhibition rather than contemplate each individual work, as they gave a narrative answer for all artworks. I divided these various answers on the small feedback forms into three categories: feedbacks given for Series 1, Series 2 and the overall exhibition. The complete list of comments made on the fifty-three feedback forms can be seen in Appendix 2.

Regarding the three dress-like artworks in Series 1 ("Get Sorted", "Let Go" and "Breathe Easily"), the three types of paper string employed in them did not influence the audience's interpretations as strongly as their form and lacelike pattern did. A number of visitors gave quite the same comments on all three pieces, although they were made from different strings. For instance, feedback form number 2 filled by a 30-year-old Finnish female designer contained the word "lacelike" [pitsinen][207] for both "Get Sorted" (Work no. 1) and "Let Go" (Work no. 2). Another instance was form number 29 filled by a 60-year-old Finnish female artisan who wrote the word "sleepy" [uninen] for all three artworks in Series 1 (see other narrative interpretations in Appendix 2).

Form and knotting technique seemed to become the dominant aspects in these three artworks in Series 1. This phenomenon may imply that the variation of the three types of paper string was not explicit enough for the audience to notice and that the audience perceived the pieces from a distance by seeing and walking around them. Although I as the creator of these artworks did the same in the production process, I had the additional insight of touch.

Differing from Series 1, the same set of three dissimilar materials seemed to influence the perception of the audience looking at the sculptures in Series 2. For example, as the audience perceived "Get Sorted" with Material 2 employed containing no obvious difference from "Let Go", the same material when used in "Private Area" seemed to manipulate the audience's interpretations. From the filled feedback forms, many of the audience's interpretations were quite similar to mine.

[207] The translation from Finnish to English was by Minna Soininen and Hanna Sirén.

The appearance of the broken paper strings in "Private Area" stimulated the audience and me to create the same association (i.e., broken strings associated with barbed wires). Several viewers used words such as "dangerous", "sharp" [terävä], "hurting" [satuttava] and "spiky" [piikikäs] (see other words in Appendix 2). These words showed the way these viewers interpreted the artwork by associating what they were looking at with what they had experienced. The viewers' previous experiences evoked in their mind what they were seeing and created the new thoughts, and that led to the words they filled in the form as their answers.

A considerable number of viewers did not write one word for a specific artwork. Instead, they wrote narrative interpretations in the feedback forms. This implied that this group of viewers seemed to contemplate the overall exhibition rather than examine the displayed artworks separately.

In feedback form number 31 (Appendix 2), a male Finnish artist wrote a passage in the vein of somebody saying goodbye:

> These give me a farewell feeling. The inhabitant has left a farewell in his abode. I like the mood… I guess also longing is needed. [Tulee jäähyväisten tiilis. Asuja on jättänyt jäähyväiset asujaimeensa. Tykkään tunnelmasta kai kaipaustakin tarvitaan.]

The above passage showed that this visitor saw the overall exhibition as a farewell of the dwellers of the exhibition, i.e., the dress-like sculptures exhibited in the space. "Seeing Paper" to this person then appeared melancholic as if it was the moment of leave-taking, which I interpreted as dying. In a similar way, a Scottish male art model saw the artworks as dead people, as he expressed in feedback form number 22 "They are the ghosts of the gallery" (Appendix 2).

Another visitor who was a 58-year-old Finnish female doctor wrote on feedback form number 53 (Appendix 2) a sentence that described all the artworks in the exhibition: "All are resurrection characters beyond time! ..." [kaikki ovat ylösnousemushahmoja ajan tuolta puolen! …] These words demonstrated the association this particular visitor created between my artworks and Christianity. She saw the artworks in "Seeing Paper" as somebody in the state of having risen from the dead.

The above written expressions revealed some similarity in the three visitors' understandings of the exhibition. I found two analogous qualities that the perception of these visitors possessed: not only that they observed the overall exhibition instead of the individual artwork, but also that they related the artworks with death. While the first two visitors saw the artworks as someone dead or dying or at least leaving or going away, the latter spectator considered them as the process of somebody restored to life.

In addition, a 31-year-old Serbian Helsinki-based textile artist freely wrote me what she thought and how she perceived the exhibition and the exhibits (see Appendix 3).[208] Her one-page text showed that she contemplated the overall exhibition and created her interpretation, as quoted below:

> … I imagined there is a story [the] artist is telling about metamorphose [sic] through the white dress sculptures. Placed in a line these dresses seem to me as a part of a life cycle, certain period of time, as if every dress represented a moment in [a] woman's or maybe [the] author's life up to the present time. …[209]

This textile artist rather thoroughly explained the various perspectives she took on the artworks and the exhibition. She looked at them through the window and in combination with other elements, such as the title of the exhibition, the exhibition space and the way the works are installed. These elements and their combination influenced her perception of the artworks and the exhibition, as she wrote:

> First impression of the work was from the outside, while I was approaching the gallery the big glass window revealed fragile sculptures floating in the air. It [sic] looked like almost transparent and invisible body shapes are [sic] floating in the space. … Position and the color of the dresses were creating an ambience, and words such as innocence, wedding, traditional and metamorphosis were echoing through my head. …[210]

[208] After the exhibition "Seeing Paper" ended, I discussed this exhibition with her. The discussion contained a number of interesting points, so that I asked her to write an extended comment about the exhibition.

[209] Maja Gecic, e-mail message to author, 31 October 2005.

[210] Maja Gecic, e-mail message to author, 31 October 2005.

From the above statement combined with the comments mentioned earlier, contextual elements (e.g., the white walls, the high ceiling and the breezy ventilator) seemed to greatly influence the perception and interpretation of not only this artist but also the audience at large. My intention of clarifying the expressive qualities of differing materials through the creation of the six dress-like sculptures did not prove to be successful because of these elements in the exhibition space. The issue of the contextual elements is worthy of further study and experiment.

As I earlier categorised comments on "Seeing Paper" given by the visitors, the three categories of comments comprise: firstly, the same interpretations for several artworks in Series 1; secondly, the interpretations similar to my interpretations for Series 2; and lastly, narrative interpretations for the overall exhibition. Referring to the first category, the occurrence implied that the variation of the three types of paper string was hardly noticed in Series 1 when I applied a low degree of manipulation to them. Unlike the first category, the second category demonstrated that when this set of paper strings was forcefully manipulated in the creation of the artworks in Series 2, the audience saw each individual material in a similar way to how I perceived it in the creative process.

The last group of the audience's comments affected me greatly. Because the audience perceived the overall exhibition instead of each individual artwork, the variation of materials I had carefully selected became of little importance. More importantly, the interpretations of some viewers appeared rather divergent from my interpretation, such as those relating the exhibition with death that were in contradiction with the concept of "Seeing Paper", i.e., the dress-like sculptures as metaphors for living human beings. Having embodied in myself the attitude of a viewer while making artworks, as John Dewey suggests, the viewers in return would have tried to learn my standpoint to understand what the artworks I created were trying to say.[211] Although there is never a single interpretation, the divergence of the viewers' interpretations from my own raised the following questions: Why did most of the audience understand the artworks quite contradictorily from the concept I had developed? Why did my idea not come across? Did the audience actually notice paper

[211] According to Dewey (1934/2005, 48-56), while the artist, throughout the creative process, adopts the role of a beholder, "a beholder must create his own experience" and "his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent."

string as the material used in the artworks? If not, did it mean that paper string had almost no influence on the audience and their interpretations? These questions directed me to look upon the effect of exhibition context on the audience's perception of artworks. The focus on exhibition contexts of artworks plays a significant role in the creation of the subsequent series of artworks named "Paper World".

6.2 "Paper World" – material and artistic expression in contextualised space

Illustration 6.22: "Paper World" exhibited at Gallery Gjutars in Vantaa from 25 January to 11 February 2007.

In the previous creation, I intended to explore the expressive potential of material, by forming the concept of "Seeing Paper" that a material metaphorically *lives* in this world. The dresses aimed to symbolise women with no actual female body wearing them. However, as described in the previous section, the artworks in "Seeing Paper" did not seem to bring out the above concept in the audience. Perhaps their variations constructed of different materials seemed too subtle for most viewers to notice. Accordingly, I questioned why this happened. Having examined the comments collected from my exhibition visitors, I hypothesised that the artworks appeared in the

gallery space in an unusual way compared to how living female human beings would appear in the real world. In reality, hardly anyone would live in such an empty space with white walls as in a modernistic gallery. Therefore, the spectators rarely found any association between the artworks in the gallery and actual female human beings in the real world. In other words, the metaphorical meaning of "Seeing Paper" could not function in an exhibition space whose ambience almost completely differed from the environment that human beings usually inhabit. Hence, my intention to keep the space unbiased in order to make the differing types of paper string employed in the artworks evident did not happen as expected. The modernist display or "the white cube" did not actually give the minimal effect to the displayed artworks, as Brian O'Doherty states,

> Art [in the white cube] exists in a kind of eternity of display, and though there is lots of "period" (late modern), there is no time. This eternity gives the gallery a limbolike status; one has to have died already to be there. … The space offers the thought that while eyes and minds are welcome, space occupying bodies are not … [T]he spectator … is eliminated. You are there without being there …[212]

Moreover, people visiting my exhibition seemed to view not only the artworks installed in the space but also the overall ambience of the exhibition. As Outi Turpeinen states, the feeling of atmospheres can turn the audience attention away from the actual exhibits to the way they are displayed.[213] In addition, exhibition is always a spatial occurrence, necessitating visitors' embodied experience and being affected by visitors' background, culture and education.[214]

Perhaps, my intention to make an audience see the differing materials forming female figures in "Seeing Paper" was not articulated clearly enough. My expectation seemed to require too thorough scrutiny from viewers. Furthermore, I provided insufficiently supportive manifestations that could have helped people associate their new experience of seeing my artworks with their previous experiences. The association could have contributed to perceiving the differences in materials, too. The

[212] O'Doherty 1999, 15.

[213] Turpeinen 2005b.

[214] Turpeinen (2005a) points out that an exhibition space is a visual experience that is related to the atmosphere and the physical movement of visitors who obtain the information in the exhibition not only through their eyes but also their whole bodies.

audience entered the gallery free to gain a new experience with the artworks. They were not prepared for a specific contemplation concerning the material. The demands on the audience to both see the slight differences in the three types of paper string and to interpret the appearance of each material in combination with the artwork's composition (e.g., form and technique) seemed to require too focused attention to detail.

Therefore, the subsequent exhibition "Paper World" aimed at an audience having two experiences: one of recognising the material employed in artworks, and another of understanding the artworks. As stated in Chapter 5, "Paper World" still explored the relationship between material and artistic expression and continued the concept that a material metaphorically *lives* in this world. However, I developed this into a particular concept that a material metaphorically *lives* in this world in forms of ordinary things surrounding us in our daily life. As the feedback to "Seeing Paper" revealed that the dissimilar materials could not show their differences to most spectators through the artworks of analogous compositions, I intended to create "Paper World" to overcome this shortcoming. I considered that the context of the exhibition might cause the audience to contemplate and understand the artworks in a similar manner to what I intended them and their material to express. "Paper World" then emphasised both material and exhibition space. Regarding the former element, I used one kind of paper string in order to point out the distinctive characteristics of paper string. One chosen material may invite an audience to recognise that paper string served as the material of all the artworks, yet not demand the audience to compare and distinguish the differences between the various kinds of paper string. In the latter, I carefully selected the exhibition space with a unique characteristic that would support the concept of "Paper World", building on the ordinary experiences apparently shared by many people.

6.2.1 Contextualising artworks and their material

For "Paper World", I chose an exhibition space and milieu according to the conception that material metaphorically *lives* in this world in forms of household artefacts. As a result, the chosen contextual elements would serve as a supportive part of the conception. In the case of "Paper World", I selected a wooden house converted

into a gallery and the white winter to support the above concept. These contextual elements had been considered since the creative process of artworks in "Paper World".

The paper string was knotted using two manipulative techniques: one creating the lacy structure and another constructing the skeleton contour. Both were the same techniques as those applied to "Seeing Paper". In placing material expression as the central issue of my investigation, I concentrated on not only the material but also the contextual elements, rather than on the material alone as I had done in "Seeing Paper".

At the beginning of January 2007, Helsinki metropolitan area (which includes Vantaa) still did not have any snow covering the ground. Dark and chill winter was not the environment I expected for my exhibition. However, the temperature dropped and fortunately the snowfall started a few days before the exhibition was opened, leaving snow and ice covering the surface of the land around Gallery Gjutars (Illustrations 6.23 to 6.25). The white atmospheric scenery lasted for the whole period of the exhibition "Paper World".

Illustration 6.23: The icy road to Gallery Gjutars.[215]

[215] Illustrations 6.23 to 6.25 were photographed by the author on 3 February 2007.

Illustration 6.24: The exterior of Gallery Gjutars.

Illustration 6.25: The entrance of Gallery Gjutars.

When the exhibition period approached, fourteen paper sculptures in forms of everyday artefacts and dresses with no wearer were ready (Illustrations 6.26 to 6.37).

Illustration 6.26: "The Growing Curtain".

Illustration 6.27: "The Growing or Dying".

Illustration 6.28: "The Chair".

Illustration 6.29: "The Table".

Illustration 6.30: "The Coffee Cup".

Illustration 6.31: "The Lamp".

Illustration 6.32: "The Woman".

Illustration 6.33: "The Man".

Illustration 6.34: "The Bookshelf" and "The Books".

Illustration 6.35: "The Coat Rack" and "The Hangers".

Illustration 6.36: "The Coal Rake".

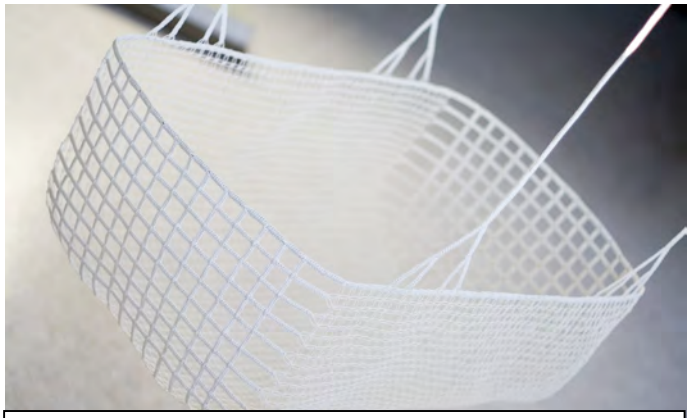


Illustration 6.37: "The Cradle".

Illustration 6.38: The beginning of the exhibition installation process.[216]

[216] Photographed by the author on 22 January 2007.

The gallery became a temporary imaginary home for the completed artworks when I installed them in its spaces based on the layout plans previously designed during the creative process (Illustrations 5.60 and 5.61 in Chapter 5). The layouts attempted to establish both the relationship between the artworks and that between the artworks and the exhibition space. First, the relationship between the artworks regarded the composition of the artworks representing dwellers and those representing household artefacts of this imaginary home. The proximity between these artworks was expected to create dialogues between them. For example, I designed the coffee corner for the female dweller and the reading corner for the male dweller. The coffee corner consisted of "The Woman", a dress-like sculpture, and the artefact-like sculptures "The Table", "The Coffee Cup" and "The Chair" (Illustration 6.39 compared with Illustration 5.60). The reading corner included "The Man", The Bookshelf" and "The Books" (Illustration 6.40 compared with Illustration 5.60). Other examples were groups of two artworks representing household artefacts such as "The Bookshelf" and "The Books" (Illustration 6.41) and "The Coat Rack" and "The Hangers" (Illustration 6.42). The artworks in each group were placed next to each other in a similar way to the real artefacts located in a real residence.

Illustration 6.39: From left: "The Woman", "The Chair", "The Table" and "The Coffee Cup".

Illustration 6.40: From left: "The Man", "The Bookshelf" and "The Books".

Illustration 6.41: "The Bookshelf" and "The Books".

Illustration 6.42: "The Coat Rack" and "The Hangers".

Second, the relationship between the artworks and the exhibition space indicated the positions of the artworks which were specially designed to fit the existing elements or space circulation of the gallery. For instance, "The Coal Rake" was made to harmonise with the fireplace in the gallery space (Illustrations 6.43 and 6.60). "The Coat Rack" and "The Hangers", representing household entities usually found near the entrance of a house for guests to hang their coats, were placed close to the gallery entrance (Illustrations 6.43 and 6.60). I expected them to be the first objects most visitors saw when entering the gallery. "The Cradle" was created to correspond to the warm and cosy atmosphere of the second floor whose space was under a pitched ceiling with windows (Illustration 6.44).

Illustration 6.43: "The Coal Rake" placed next to the existing fireplace in the gallery space. "The Coat Rack" and "The Hangers" placed together on the wall next to the gallery's entrance.

Illustration 6.44: "The Cradle" positioned in the second floor space with an inclined ceiling.

Although I had designed the layout plan quite thoroughly, I had to reposition two artworks: "The Growing Curtain" and "The Growing or Dying". As shown on the layout (Illustration 6.60), I had planned to place these artworks in front of two of the gallery windows. Having installed them as planned, I realised that they appeared different from how I had imagined. When I tried installing "The Growing Curtain", empty branches of trees outside visible through the window visually disturbed the artwork. Both "The Growing Curtain" and the tree branches contained small details. When dark elements of the branches appeared behind the delicate white artwork, they became a part of it, giving extra dark details to its whiteness. The appearance of "The Growing Curtain" was thus distorted. For this reason, windows as background seemed unsuitable for these artworks. Having tried to place one of these artworks in front of a wall close to the window, as on the original plan afterwards, I found it appeared undisturbed against this background. I then adjusted the layout plan, rearranging the positions of both artworks (Illustration 6.45). I installed each artwork at the position drawn on the new plan.

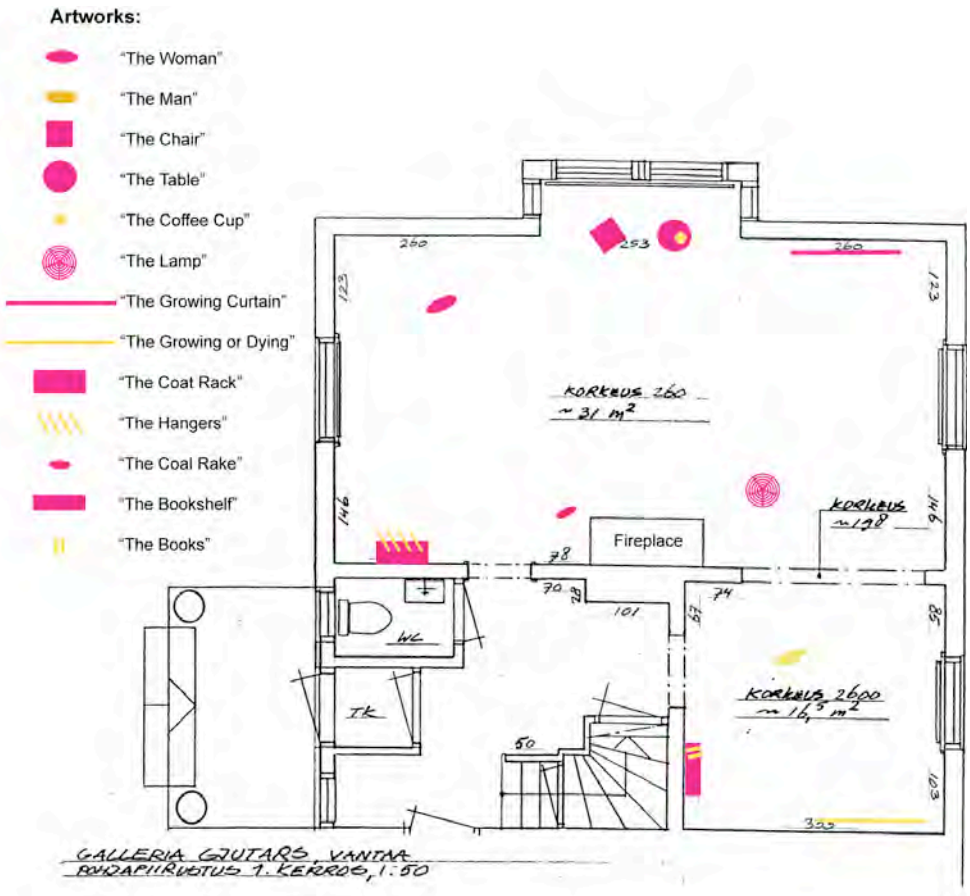


Illustration 6.45: The new layout plan of the first floor of the gallery that repositioned "The Growing Curtain" and "The Growing or Dying".

Illustration 6.46: "The Growing Curtain" was repositioned from in front of the window to the wall close to it.

Illustration 6.47: "The Coffee Cup" hung freely at a slight distance from "The Table".

The installed artworks appeared in the gallery space in a similar way to how people and everyday artefacts would reside in a dwelling in reality. However, "The Coffee Cup" was an exceptional case. Instead of placing it on "The Table", I suspended it from the ceiling and left a slight distance between the cup and the table (Illustration 6.47). My intention in doing this was to underline the distinction between reality and imagination. My artworks appeared in forms similar to functional artefacts, yet were made from an unusual material and offered only visual contemplation. In addition, the house-form of the gallery is real, but it currently serves as a gallery where no one actually lives, except for artworks occupying it for a certain period. In this sense, Gallery Gjutars became an imaginary dwelling which these paper sculptures temporarily inhabited and that could create the imaginary dialogues between the artworks, and between the audience and the artworks.

Illustration 6.48: A view from outside shows "The Chair", a non-functional chair in a real house.[217]

6.2.2 Audience and artworks in imaginary dwelling

The exhibition "Paper World – Imaginary world where paper lives" lasted for nearly three weeks. Before the exhibition, I had prepared invitation cards whose design portrayed the shape of an envelope that could be fully opened with no letter or card in it, but instead had information about the exhibition printed on the surface inside the envelope (Illustration 6.49).

The posters were composed of actual artworks, each of which had a piece of "The Hangers" hanging a printed sheet of the information about the exhibition. I intended this poster to attract people to touch the artwork to feel the material. I thought that when a piece of "The Hangers" was situated in a context other than an exhibition, people might assume that it was not an artwork, but instead in this case, part of a poster. This version of the poster remained in public for two weeks before the exhibition. When the exhibition was approaching, a poster hung on an advertisement board was photographed (Illustration 6.50). I printed several copies of this image and used them as the new version of the poster to replace those with the actual artworks, so that "The Hangers" would be featured in the exhibition. On the one hand, the print was a representation of the poster with a piece of art. On the other hand, it was a

[217] Photographed by the author on 7 February 2007.

poster per se. The invitation and poster had two aims: first, to prepare the audience with a prior understanding of the concept of the material in the artworks, and second, to question the dissimilarity between the real and the imaginary.

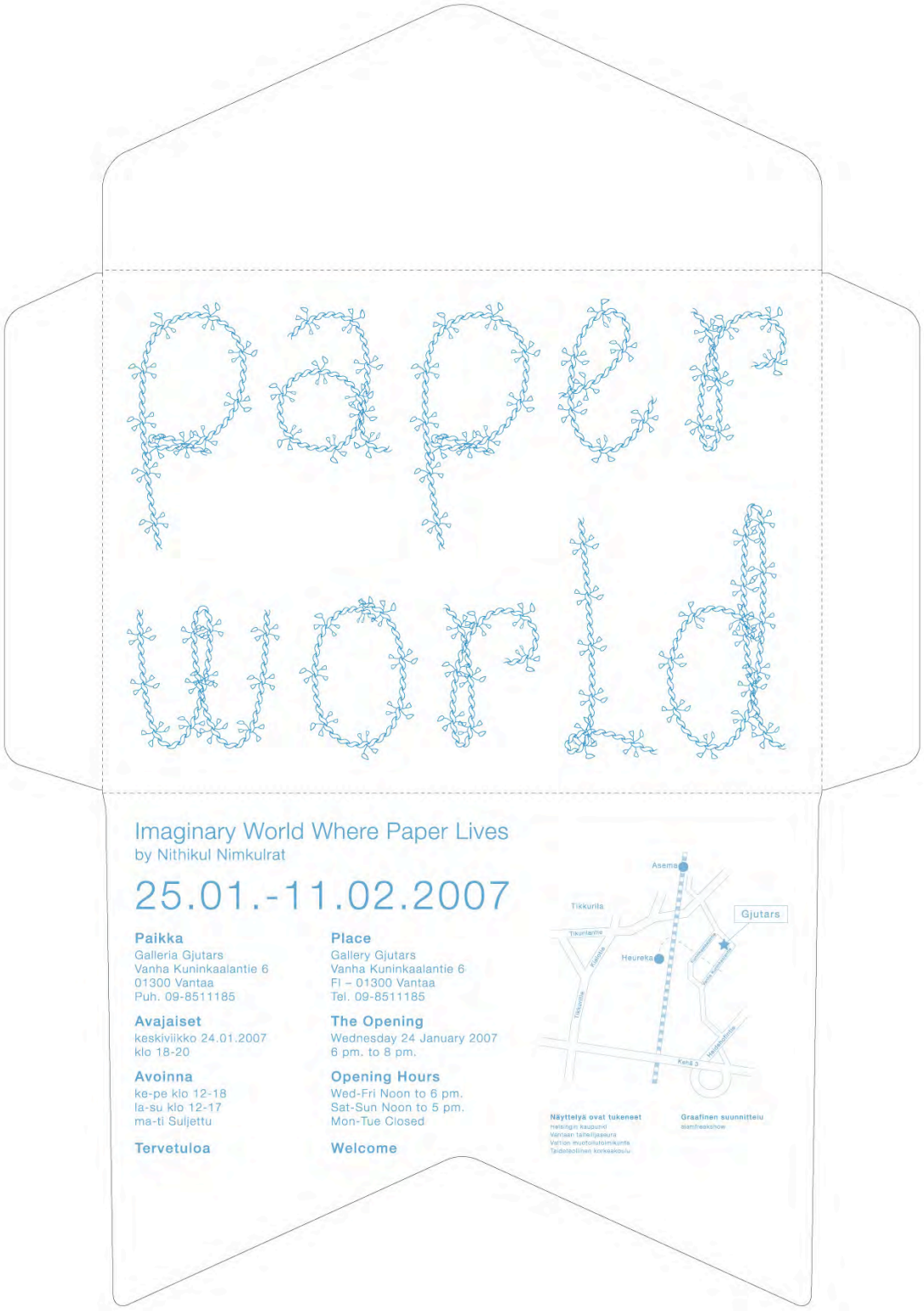


Illustration 6.49: Invitation card design for "Paper World".

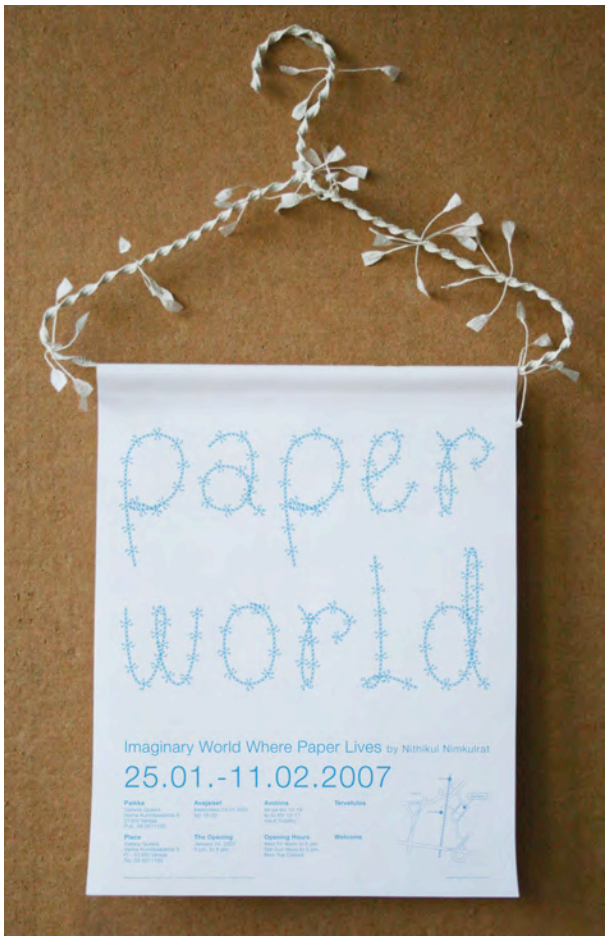


Illustration 6.50: Poster of "Paper World".

Illustrations 6.51 and 6.52: The opening of "Paper World".

Illustration 6.53: A visitor was about to touch "The Table".

During the exhibition, I provided small feedback forms for visitors to voluntarily fill out. Each form possessed an indicating number and contained the question: "What comes to your mind when you are seeing the exhibition? Please write your thought freely" (Illustration 3.11 in Chapter 3). The question was similar to the question asked in "Seeing Paper"; however, there were a few slight modifications. First, instead of asking people to look at each artwork separately as was done in "Seeing Paper", these feedback forms posed a question about the overall exhibition. Second, following from the first modification, the forms had no list of artworks with blank spaces for visitors to fill in a word for each work. Third, the question gave visitors freedom to write, unlike the query posed in "Seeing Paper", which restricted people to giving only one word for each artwork. I expected that by giving visitors freedom to write anything they wished, their written answers might reveal some thoughts or reflections arising in their minds close to the ways they normally experience and understand an exhibition. I placed these small feedback forms by the visitors' book (Illustration 6.54). Many visitors could fill them out simultaneously and stick them on the book. These feedback forms hopefully showed the visitors that their contribution was useful and desirable.

Illustration 6.54: The feedback forms in the black box were placed on the table at the entrance of the gallery for the visitors to fill in their comments. The gallery's visitors' book was on the table on the right.

Forty-nine visitors from the total number of one hundred and thirty-eight[218] filled in the feedback forms. This amount of feedback was comparable to that collected from visitors to "Seeing Paper".[219] Similar to "Seeing Paper", the visitors who answered the question in "Paper World" had quite diverse backgrounds, but most of them had current or former professions in art, design and craft and were female (Illustration 5.55 for the comparison of genders of the visitors to both exhibitions). Unlike "Seeing Paper", the age range of visitors to "Paper World" appeared broad (Illustration 5.56): the youngest was five and the oldest was 84 (Appendix 4). In addition, "Paper World" had considerably fewer non-Finnish visitors compared to "Seeing Paper" (Illustration 5.57).

[218] The number was counted from the names signed in the visitors' book of the gallery. However, the gallerist estimated that the actual number of visitors could have been up to 200. The number counted also included two student groups.

[219] In the exhibition "Seeing Paper", fifty-three visitors filled in the feedback forms.

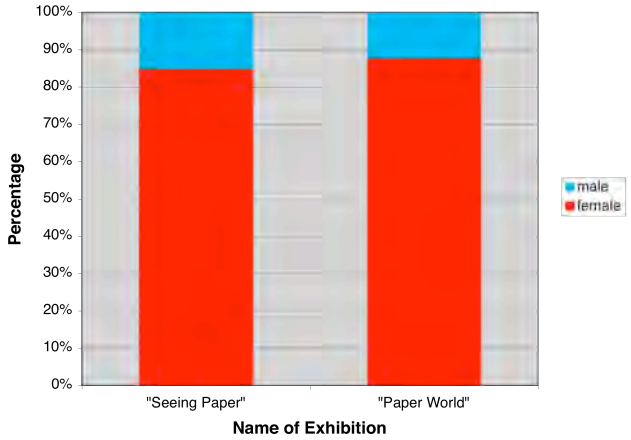


Illustration 6.55: Chart comparing female and male visitors to "Seeing Paper" with those to "Paper World". The Chart shows that while 85% of visitors to "Seeing Paper" were female and 15% were male, 88% of those to "Paper World" were female and 12% were male.

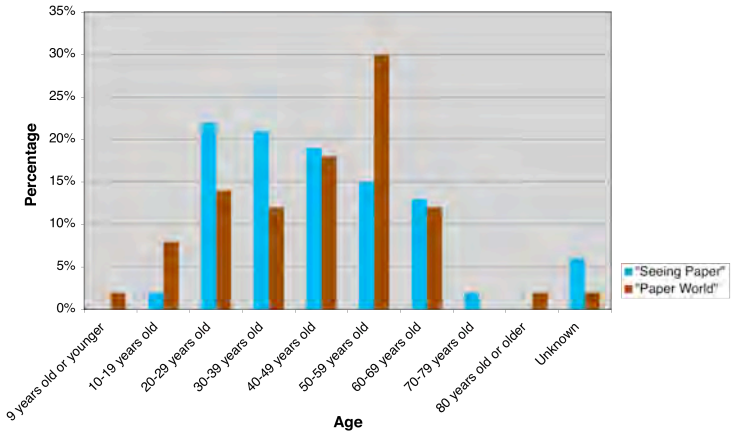


Illustration 6.56: Chart showing the age range of visitors to "Seeing Paper" and "Paper World". As can be seen on the chart, the age range of visitors to "Paper World" was wider than that of visitors to "Seeing Paper". While the largest age group of visitors to "Seeing Paper" was young adults (20-29 years old), the largest age group to "Paper World" was rather older (50-59 years old).

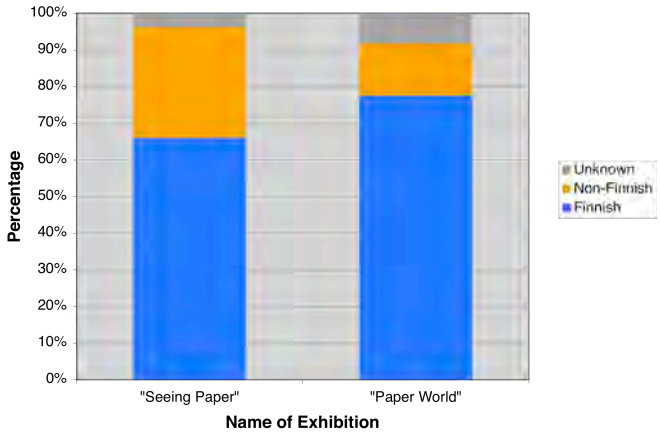


Illustration 6.57: Chart comparing the nationalities of visitors to "Seeing Paper" with those of visitors to "Paper World". The chart shows that "Seeing Paper" had a double percentage of foreign visitors compared to "Paper World".

The answers from those visitors who filled out the forms revealed various ways they associated themselves with the exhibition and reflected on their associations in short texts. Offering them the opportunity to write freely seemed to positively encourage their involvement, so that they became willing to open up about their thoughts, especially about personal feelings and experiences, and to reflect on them in words.

On each feedback form filled, a visitor commented by writing either a narrative paragraph or a list of words. The most frequently written words were: "beautiful" [kaunis] or "beauty" [kauneus] and "sensitive" [herkkä] or "sensitivity" [herkkyys]. Other words repeatedly written were: "light" [keveä, kevyt] or "lightness" [keveys]; "snow" [lumi]; "air" [ilma], "airy" [ilmava] or "airiness" [ilmavuus]; "silence" or "quietness" [hiljaisuus, hiljentää]; "fragile" [hento, hauras] or "fragility" [hauraus]; "peaceful" [rauhallinen] or "peace" [rauha]; "skilful" [taitava, taidokas]; "white" [valkoinen].[220] These words demonstrated that the audience seemed to look at the wholeness of the exhibition (e.g., peaceful and silent) and also to various aspects of it, such as craftsmanship (e.g., beautiful, sensitive and skilful), artwork (e.g., fragile, light and white) and context (e.g., air and snow).

The lists of words and narrative passages showed the audience's contemplation and their multi-faceted interpretations of "Paper World". I considered these interpretations as research material and analysed them and their diverse aspects accordingly. Some interpretations presented the immediate feelings of the audience; some appeared poetic and emotional, requiring further interpretation. For further analyses, I categorised them into three different groups: immediate, reactive and associative interpretations. The first included comments conveying the immediate feelings or experiences of visitors with the artworks and/or the overall exhibition. The second consisted of comments expressing the effect of the artworks and/or the exhibition on visitors. The third comprised visitors' associations of what they were contemplating and what they were thinking (i.e., the seen and the thought). There were numerous interesting comments. Appendix 4 shows the complete list of

[220] Beautiful or beauty 14 times; sensitive or sensitivity 12 times; light or lightness 8 times; snow 7 times; air or airiness, fragile or fragility and silence or quietness 5 times; peaceful or peace, skilful and white 4 times. All the translations from Finnish to English were by Hanna Sirén.

comments filled in the forty-nine feedback forms. The following presents comments from nine feedback forms, each of which exemplifies one group of comments I categorised above and brings insight to the research.

A number of visitors seemed to interpret "Paper World" by describing what they saw in the exhibition. Noticeably, the description of what they experienced appeared as a lists of words. For example, a 36-year-old Finnish female graphic designer wrote the following list in feedback form number 41: "lightness [keveys], airiness [ilmavuus], freedom [vapaus], poem [runo], timelessness [ajattomuus], from time to another [ajasta-aikaan]." On form number 48, a 59-year-old Finnish female painter wrote: "air [ilma], a light touch [herkkä kosketus], breath [henkäys], perishability [haihtuvuus]"

These comments consisted of a few words similar to each other: "lightness" [keveys] and "light" [herkkä], and "airiness" [ilmavuus] and "air" [ilma], which showed that they might have immediate feelings or might experience the exhibition in a similar manner. They seemed to interpret the exhibition and its exhibits according to how they felt and their first impressions of the work. Most words implied that these visitors sensed not only the overall exhibition (e.g., "freedom" [vapaus], "timelessness" [ajattomuus]), but also the atmosphere of the exhibition (e.g., "airiness" [ilmavuus] and "air" [ilma]) and the appearance of artworks (e.g., "lightness" [keveys] and "light" [herkkä]). In addition, the word "poem" [runo] given by one of the visitors mentioned above suggested an association between what she was experiencing and what she already knew.

A number of visitors seemed to react to the influence of the exhibition and to reveal this reaction in words, as shown in several feedback forms filled. For example, on form number 50, a 51-year-old Finnish female designer wrote:

> Lightness meets heaviness wonderfully, and a normal everyday object becomes art when the material changes. The works communicate with each other. [Hienosti keveys kohtaa raskaan ja tavallisesta arkisesta esineestä tulee taidetta kun materiaali muuttuu. Teokset keskustelevat keskenään.]

The above passage showed that when this visitor was emotionally touched by the exhibition, she recognised the change of material for an ordinary object that affected her perception and interpretation of the object. She interpreted the unusual material as

the factor that transformed the commonly known objects into art, i.e., light material could create a new meaning for the heavy forms of everyday functional objects.

Another visitor, who was a 50-year-old Finnish female, also expressed how the changed material influenced her perception of artworks in forms of ordinary objects. She wrote in feedback form number 17 as follows:

> Wonderful mood on a winter day. Clear mind; spaciousness that continues. A floating mood. Everyday objects (coal fork) become diamonds, sacred. … [Ihana olotila talvipäivänä. Puhdas mieli; avaruus, joka jatkuu. [Leijuva olotila. Arkipäiväiset esineet (hiilihanko) muuttavat timantteiksi, pyhäksi. …]

The above comment presented her state of mind (e.g., cheerful mood, clear mind) affected by the exhibition. Furthermore, it showed that a contextual element such as the winter season complementarily influenced her interpretation.

The audience of "Paper World" seemed to perceive and interpret the exhibition metaphorically. According to the comments given, several visitors saw the exhibition or the artworks as referring to another phenomenon or object. For instance, a 43-year-old Finnish Female textile artist seemed to create a story of an illusory person living in the space. On feedback form number 35, she wrote:

> Transparency, like some nonexistent see-through person lived in a room with "immaterial" objects. [Läpinäkyvyys aivan kuin joku olematon läpinäkyvä henkilö asuisi huoneessa, jossa oli "aineettomia" esineitä.]

The above comment demonstrated that this visitor associated the imaginative with the unreal. She interpreted a physically real dress-like sculpture as an imagined person and tangible artworks representing everyday objects as something incorporeal.

Another example would be the comment by a Finnish visitor who was a female artisan entrepreneur, aged 45. She associated the appearance of the exhibition and the artworks with various phenomena in different seasons. She wrote on feedback form number 38:

- Light snowfall on a frosty day [Hento lumisade pakkaspäivänä]
- Slow movement of a white cloud in the sky on a bright summer day [Pouta pilven hiljainen lipuminen taivaalla heleänä kesäpäivänä] …

The note implied that this visitor associated the white artworks in "Paper World" with white natural phenomena she had previously experienced.

Moreover, a few visitors wittily commented on a particular artwork whose form portrayed that of a functional household entity. One example was the comment on form number 11 written by a female artist, age 28: "I would like a cup of tea" [Tekisi mieli teekupposta]. This visitor seemed to associate a real cup, from which she could drink tea, with "The Coffee Cup" whose form was analogous to a functional cup. Her comment might also signify that she felt the welcoming atmosphere of the exhibition, so that she asked for a cup of tea.

Two comments written as narrative passages illuminated an unusual coincidence. Finnish female visitors, age 50 and 68 (the latter was a teacher), wrote on feedback forms number 20 and 51 exactly the same phrase: "unbearable lightness of living…" [Elämisen sietämätön keveys…].[221] This phrase showed that both visitors seemed to interpret the artworks made of paper string in forms of everyday entities as the representations of expressive value of those entities. In other words, these visitors understood the unusually light material used in familiar forms as representing the fragility of everyday life. In this sense, the material thus manipulated the value of the ordinary forms.

A Finnish visitor to "Paper World", a 32-year-old textile designer, freely wrote to me about what she thought and how she perceived the exhibition and the exhibits (see Appendix 5). In her message, she wrote:

> … [The works] represent the different ways you can choose to live and be a woman, about roles and molds. … [U]sually I am a bit allergic of textile art always relate [sic] to being a woman, but your works do it in a good way – on a more general level, not in a "flesh-blood-body-suffering" way, …
>
> … Nice to see in this exhibition that a man moved in with the woman, and that they started building the nest... The place for the exhibition worked very well, even the weather was perfect![222]

[221] I assume that these visitors allude to the well-known novel The Unbearable Lightness of Being by Milan Kundera.

[222] Anna Huhta, e-mail message to author, January 27, 2007.

This textile designer saw the exhibition as the representation of being a woman. "The Woman" and "The Man" became the metaphors for human beings. She also presented the influence of contextual elements such as the exhibition space and the weather.

All comments on "Paper World" given, demonstrated various ways of contemplating and interpreting an art exhibition. According to Martin Heidegger, one sees a thing and interprets it according to his or her understanding of the world.

> In every case . . . interpretation is grounded in *something we have in advance*—in a *fore-having*. As the appropriation of understating, the interpretation operates in . . . an involvement whole which is already understood.[223]

In the case of "Paper World", visitors had not only been familiar with appearances of artefacts and dwellings in their daily life, but also known that a gallery is a place for artworks to be displayed. They thus understood that those forms of household artefacts were not objects for daily use as such, but representational artworks. Two factors that influenced visitors' understanding included: first, the objects were situated in an exhibition in a gallery, and second, they were made of an unusual material. Regarding the first factor, although the artworks portraying everyday artefacts were positioned in a gallery, the space of Gallery Gjutars was unusual as it was converted from an old house, a home. The gallery thus became a part of the exhibition as the representation of a home. Regarding the second reason, the unusual material became influential in leading the visitors to interpret and experience the forms of ordinary artefacts differently and according to their fore-having.

Accordingly, paper string as a material seemed to successfully play its role in "Paper World". The paper transformed the ways in which people perceived and interpreted things. As can be seen from several comments, people experienced the artworks in forms of functional things differently from the actual ordinary things when their material was atypical. This occurrence implied that a material has expressive potential for creating a new meaning to ordinary forms. Chapter 7 will analyse and discuss the issue of the expressive potential of paper string, by considering the artistic process and the resulting artworks and exhibitions of both

[223] Heidegger 1962/1990, 191.

"Seeing Paper" and "Paper World" as well as the meanings of paper string and artistic expression as individual components.

7

Discussion – paperness as conception intertwining material and artistic expression

This study set out to clarify the expressive potential of material, paper string in particular, beyond its mere physicality, by exploring its relationship with artistic expression in textile art practice. Two textile art productions and exhibitions, "Seeing Paper" (2005) and "Paper World" (2007), led the process of enquiry and provided material for discussion. The study has demonstrated that paper string incorporated artistic expression in the artworks I created at various stages, such as those in progress and the completed ones, through the interpretation made by me and by the audiences. The study has shown how this specific material could shape interpretation when someone experienced an artwork and its material. Although I intended the artwork to have a meaning relevant to the material used, this was not evident, but tended to be open to interpretation, i.e., people seemed to have different opinions about the artwork. As interpretation brings out the meaning of something understood by an individual, meaning cannot occur as one single truth. This implies that a tangible thing can carry multiple meanings depending on who produces the interpretation and what previous experience the person possesses as well as where and when the interpretation takes place, and so on.

The study has shown that individuals do not seem to experience artworks, in which a material and artistic expression are embedded, detached from either the context or their personal values embodied in themselves. Therefore, if I as an artist wish an audience to interpret my artworks in a similar way to the concept of the artworks I initially conceive, I should also consider other elements in the creation of the artworks than just the material at hand. For an artist exhibiting works, although it is not always important that the audience understands the exhibits in the same way as the artist does, the exhibition offers the artist an opportunity to test whether her expression would be able to come across clearly enough. An exhibition is thus a practical means to improve the art practice of an individual artist and to better understand her audience.

Research can support the improvement of art practices of artists, because its outcome in a textual and documented format can be disseminated to the art world. The researcher's own art practice can function as an alternative means to deeper understand one's own professional

practice. Furthermore, interaction between the inner and the outer (i.e., mind and body) intertwines tangible and subjective components (i.e., material and artistic expression). This kind of intertwining in a creative process contributes, according to my study, to success in forming an artwork.

Materialness and paperness

This study emphasises the concept of materialness, which means the ability of a specific material to express or to convey meaning through its physical qualities to the artist and audience. Materialness intertwines a tangible physical material with artistic expression. This conception shapes the total artistic process of craft-based art wherein material and its interaction with the artist play the central role. The physical qualities of a material affect the ways in which people apprehend and comprehend artworks. Materialness leads the skilful hand and the sensitive mind of the artist to reflect and execute the resulting artworks in a particular fashion, and to display them in a relevant exhibition context.

Three elements: the artworks, the context and the people (i.e., artist and audience) were involved in the research process and contributed to the concept of materialness, or more precisely, expressive quality of paper string, i.e., paperness. In this chapter, I also reflect on my research process.

7.1 Main findings

7.1.1 Artwork as formed material incorporating materiality and subjectivity

Craft-based art discourse has been identified and categorised by materials such as ceramics, glass, metal, wood and textile. It tends to focus on practical topics rather than concepts or theoretical issues. The discussion surrounding material seems to concern techniques of manipulating a material in order to bring forth a physical object. For example, in textile art, when discussing a specific material, whether on a professional or educational level, the issue is about textile techniques such as weaving, knitting and printing. It is more about skill and the end result, i.e., how to

utilise techniques in relation to materials to make a beautiful thing, rather than discussing the meanings of the creative process, i.e., how the material interacts with techniques controlled by the artist to convey meanings through the object created. Material tends to function as a physical entity excluding conceptual problems.

In fact, a material can be conceived as having expressive qualities or materialness presented through its visual and tactile aspects that can assist an artist in shaping her creative production throughout. Influenced by a material, the interaction between an artist and a material in an art production includes both her doing and thinking. In other words, the artist controls her hands to physically form a material while trying to express her ideas, giving rise to artistic expression embedded in an artwork in progress. This is how artistic expression arises. Expression thus functions as a mental process that is inseparable from any craftwork, which include the manipulation of a material and technique into a material artwork. The creation of an artwork in an artistic process takes place when the maker or artist intends the object to mean something and then creates it. Her act of making the artwork embeds meanings in the physical material gradually transformed into an object, an artwork, which in turn defines and articulates a meaning through its physicality visible to some attentive viewers. The formed material in which a meaning is embedded in the creation process brings forth not only the physicality of the artwork (i.e., physical form) but also a conception of it (i.e., meaning, content). The artwork thus becomes the artist's material expression and the physical thing in which its maker's expressive and creative thought is embodied.

As John Dewey pointed out, the expressiveness of an artwork is manifested by the artist's experience and action in resolving creative pressures in the medium.[224] The materialisation of an artwork, according to Dewey, is not just externalisation of an artist's artistic intuition or expression, but "subject-matter and sustainer of conscious activities."[225] Expression is thus considered to involve a skilful control of a medium in order to make the artwork expressive or embody a meaning. Dewey's account on expression differs from Benedetto Croce's and Robin George Collingwood's notions of expression that distinguish expression from art objects, i.e. subjectivity from materiality. Accordingly, a material object is not considered expression or a work of

[224] Dewey 1934/2005, 60-109.

[225] Dewey 1925/2003, 393.

art, but the externalisation of it.[226] Croce and Collingwood put emphasis on the intuition of the artist, not on physical entities or events (i.e., material objects and the craftwork of artists), which are secondary in their views. As my study looks at the expressivity of a physical material and concerns my own artistic productions, their concepts do not seem helpful.

Illustration 7.1: "Seeing Paper".

"Seeing Paper" (Illustration 7.1) as a case study illuminates that materiality and subjectivity are intertwined in artworks and that material is the factor which contributes to the intertwinement. The artistic production of "Seeing Paper" intended to uncover the expressive qualities of three dissimilar kinds of paper string, using the concept that a material metaphorically *lives* in the world. The concept was presented as dress-like sculptures shaped in similar forms and structures using a knotting technique, each of which employed a distinct type of paper string to represent a metaphorically living woman who could express her feelings in a distinct way. I used the metaphor for female humans to convey the idea that although the forms and structures are analogous, each individual had their own particular character expressed by the material. To represent different female persons, differing kinds of paper string

[226] Croce 1992; Collingwood 1938/1958.

were expected to embody the meaning of different human personalities and temperaments. In this sense, the material employed in all the artworks not only functioned as a physical substance, which I manipulated to form an art object, but also had specific expressive features that allowed me to make subjective interpretations of the object.

The special characters of the dress-like sculptures arose solely because of the qualities of the dissimilar kinds of paper string. The unique expressive capabilities of these materials influenced my feelings and conceptions, which consequently shaped my creative process and the interpretations of the artworks, especially in the artistic production. Material is thereby the factor varying the appearance of these artworks and also, more importantly, the artist's interpretations of these artworks in progress during the creative process.

7.1.2 Making is expressing

> [T]ouch delivers invasive "unbounded" data, whereas the eye supplies images that are contained in a frame. … [A] neural network of eye-brain-hand allows touching, gripping, and seeing to work in concert.[227]

The above statement by American sociologist Richard Sennett corresponds to what Dewey says: "[a]s we manipulate, we touch and feel; as we look we see; as we listen, we hear."[228] For Dewey too, the connection between hands and eyes as one entire being controls both the doing and the perceiving. As stated in the previous section, Dewey points out that the process of expression is developed not only in the artist's mind but also through her actions when she arranges visual elements or controls an actual medium.[229] When the artist intends to express her emotions through her work, she thus conceives an idea and imagines it. Then, the eye of the artist attends the skilful hand that moves and manipulates the material according to the image of expression arising in the mind (Illustration 7.2). In this sense, the mind also investigates and informs the hand how to implement the technique in order to actualise the image in the mind. In responding to the image and what the artist intends

[227] Sennett 2008, 152-3.

[228] Dewey 1934/2005, 51.

[229] Ibid., 89-91.

to express, the hand does not only work with the physical material, but also feels how the material touches the fingers and the palm, sending the information about what is touched to the mind.[230] The mind analyses the data and contemplates what and how to continue the creative process. Expression, therefore, does not seem to exist only in the mind of the artist as said by Collingwood[231] and Croce[232], but in the creative process through the interaction between the hand (together with the eye and the mind) and the material. The mind, the eye and the hand seem to work in concert and their movement influences how one thinks.[233]

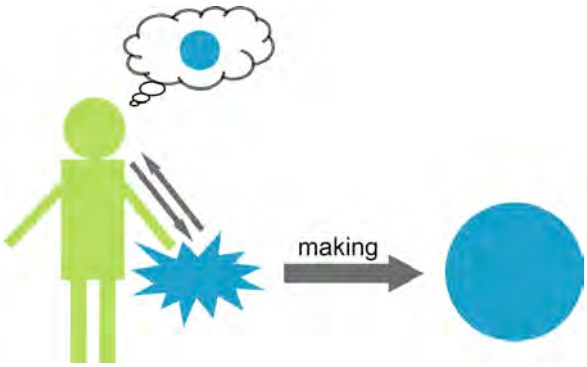


Illustration 7.2: The physical interaction between me, as an artist, and a material stimulates an artistic expression in my mind and gradually forms an artwork.

The act of expressing, as Dewey puts it, begins when there is both a meaning of the outcomes and a medium to release the emotion.[234] Expression then takes place when the mind of the artist conceives the idea of the resulting artwork and the hand of the artist uses the material and method. In Dewey's view on aesthetic expressiveness, meanings and values can be obtained from one's preceding experience and mix with the qualities explicitly presented in the work of art and received by the person's direct sensory apparatus.[235]

[230] As Susan Stewart (1999, 31-35) puts it, touching involves a mutual pressure on the person's body and the object touched, thus moving between interiority and exteriority, i.e., the mind and the hand. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962/2005, 365-78) states about touch as physical contact that when one touches an object, the touch seeks a connection between the object touched and the consciousness of the person who touches it.

[231] Collingwood 1938/1958.

[232] Croce 1992.

[233] Sennett 2008, 149.

[234] Dewey 1934/2005, 66.

[235] Ibid., 103-9.

The creative production of "Seeing Paper" has shown that differing types of paper string have controversial characteristics depending on how a person experiences it. When I saw and touched a type of paper string in the material selection stage, its visual and tactile qualities together with my background knowledge about this material could mislead me. For instance, the thin satin type of paper string made me feel that this material would be weak, and the background information that this string was paper influenced this perception. However, this type of paper string was physically strong. The idea changed in the actual art production, when I controlled and manipulated the material to form an artwork; I realised how strong it was. My hands worked jointly with what I saw, i.e., I did not only touch the material but also saw it. Touching, knotting and pulling were activities in my creative processes and were the ways I felt the actual tactile qualities of paper string that might be incongruent with those perceivable only by seeing, which was the main activity viewers generally performed in the exhibitions.

During the artistic process of "Seeing Paper", I learnt to connect pieces of paper string using a knotting technique. With this means of material manipulation, both my hands worked in an equal manner directly with paper string, requiring no other facilitating tools (Illustration 7.3). Knotting by hand created intimate connection between paper string and me. I manipulated paper string with ordinary knotting techniques repeatedly around a mould, creating a lace-like or spiral skeleton structure following the contour of the mould. Doing something repeatedly increased my skill in doing it, so that I eventually become capable of improvising the techniques for the various shapes and forms of the artworks in "Paper World". The complexity of manipulative technique seemed to diminish due to the enhanced skill.

Illustration 7.3: Both my hands interact with paper string.

The repetitive manoeuvre of the skilled hand generated the rhythm[236] of my hand working with paper string in concert with my eye and mind. The eye and the mind concentrated on the rhythm of the hand twisting, looping and pulling paper string, deciding what rhythm the hand should perform in relation to the knotting structure, i.e., how hard to pull the strings and how fast the cycle of twisting, looping and pulling could be. Once the rhythm I had in a creative process had become steady, my concentration would remain on a precise force and speed of manipulating the material. The constant rhythm and concentration, as I experienced and Richard Sennett points out, make the motion of the making hand firmly established in the artist's mind, so that the artist can see beforehand what the hand is going to do. The consciousness of the artist is thus no longer on what her hands are doing, but on what she sees and expects to see in the future, says Sennett. [237]

However, in the creative processes of both "Seeing Paper" and "Paper World", the rhythm of my hands may not have remained constant for the whole production of each artwork due to its form and the type of paper string employed. An artwork or a part of it tended to have a form that required the adjustment of structure. This means that the eye and the mind had to re-examine the changed curve and adjust the hand and its rhythm to create the structure corresponding to the curve. The latter matter concerning material tended to occur during the steady rhythm. For example, when knotting a physically delicate type of paper string around the mould with a constant speed and force, the slightly exceeding force that was hardly noticeable sometimes broke the string, interrupting the consistent rhythm. In this case, the mind together with the eye needed to reconsider the strength of the string and adjusted the rhythm of the hand, its manipulating force in particular.

The interruption of the rhythm caused me to document the incidents that hindered the production. At some stage in the creative process when the interruption took place, instead of continuing the process immediately with the rhythm adjustment of the hand, I paused to write my research diary. In this sense, my hand switched from making to writing while the thought was still concentrating and thinking in retrospect

[236] Rhythm as the experience of craftsmanship, as discussed by Richard Sennett (2008, 175), consists of two parts: "stress on a beat and tempo, the speed of an action". For a musician, beat means a stroke of the hand marking the time division while tempo is a rate of movement of the hand for a stroke.

[237] Sennett 2008, 176.

about what had happened in the creative process that made me stop. The mind thus controls the hand to make or to write.

7.1.3 Material manipulating meanings of functional objects

Material possesses expressive potential for varying the way in which attentive viewers look at, recognise and understanding an object in which the material is employed. When the attentive viewers recognise some unexpected aspects in a familiar object, they would reshape their understanding of the object, so that it seems no longer the same object with which they are familiar and its meaning is not the same as that of the familiar object.

Originating from the argument that a material possessed particular expressive potential, both "Seeing Paper" and "Paper World" showed that material (paper string) metaphorically *lives* in the world. While "Seeing Paper" comprised dress-like sculptures as representations of women, "Paper World" consisted of sculptures in the forms of household artefacts, including a couple of dress-like sculptures as representations of human beings. All artworks in both series appeared in the forms of functional objects familiar to people. However, slight differences between the concepts of "imitation"[238] employed in these two series can be pointed out. "Seeing Paper" involved double interpretation: the forms of artworks imitated female dresses and the dress-like artworks then represented women. The double-layer interpretation can also be seen in the two dress-like sculptures in "Paper World". The other artworks in "Paper World" imitated and represented everyday artefacts surrounding people in daily life.

As Dewey says, "[t]he material out of which a work of art is composed belongs to the common world rather than to a self, and yet there is self-expression in art because the self assimilates that material in a distinctive way to reissue it into the public world

[238] "Imitation" is translated from the Greek term "mimesis" used by Plato and Aristotle to mean the fundamental condition of art, which includes any practice requiring skill, e.g., medicine (Carroll 2005/1999, 19-21). Monroe Curtis Beardsley (1982, 34-36) points out that imitation is a misleading translation of mimesis, because there is no English word, which precisely means mimesis. Beardsley suggests the term "representation" to replace imitation. However, he asserts that as the term imitation holds a "stronger notion of copying", it should still be used in the sense of making deceptive semblances of "imitative art".

in a form that builds a new object."[239] Combining the realistic appearance of familiar artefacts with abstract detailed elements, as seen in "Seeing Paper" and "Paper World", was a way to establish a personal connection between the viewers and the artworks. My attempt was to blur the boundaries between the real and the imaginative. Blurring the borders between the real and the imaginative also uncovers a process of integrating functional objects with conceptual ones[240] in craft-based art. Artefacts that look realistic offer aesthetic pleasure but are limited in physical functionality; they are artworks with slightly abstract appearance.

Although my artworks share a similarity of form with functional objects, such as a dress, a chair, a table, a book and so forth, what makes them conspicuously differ from the actual useful objects is the material. Paper string signifies that functions generally accompanying those utilitarian objects no longer exist. The material functions as a symbol of non-practicality, indicating that my artworks in forms of utilitarian objects do not have any practical uses. Martin Heidegger explains the difference between a work of art, and an "equipment" or "tool" in terms of how material is used in them.[241] A household entity, which can be considered equipment in Heidegger's sense, is decided by its usefulness and its fabrication "uses up" a material, meaning that the material disappears into the utility. On the contrary, a works of art in the form of a household entity does not cause its material to cease to exist or to be "used up". Instead, the artwork induces the material to show forth into its world, i.e., the exhibition, and also sets itself back into the condition of the material, i.e., whiteness, fragility and other qualities of paper string.

As shown in my artefacts, "Paper World" in particular, paper string when transformed into the form of such an everyday object as a chair, aroused a question in the viewers: *Is it a chair or a sculpture in the form of a chair?* Instead of considering this question negatively as a problem of an object made of an unusual material, I saw it as informing the aesthetic potential the object possessed, which was given to it by the choice of material. This information about the object's aesthetic potential challenged the viewers to reflect on their habitual recognition and understanding of a

[239] Dewey 1934/2005, 112.

[240] Conceptual objects here include artefacts that are characterised by concepts instead of functions, i.e., artworks.

[241] Heidegger 1971/2001, 44-45.

thing. Paper string was thereby the factor that made each of my artefacts an artwork instead of a useful thing.

Paper string expresses its power over the form. When the form affords but the material does not, the artefact appearing in the functional form of a utilitarian thing thus becomes imaginative. The artwork made of paper string hence gives new expression to the thing represented, and also reveals the actual essence (i.e., function) of the thing through the reproduction of its general form. Paper string expresses and brings out what is untransformed, which is the essence of a particular utilitarian thing, such as the elements of "The Chair" (Illustration 7.4) that remain the same as those of a functional chair (e.g., four legs, seat and backrest). These untransformed elements together with the transformed – paper string – informed the audience interpreting "The Chair" that its appearance is similar to a chair but that it does not in practice function as a chair, i.e., it *appears* to be a chair on which no one can sit. In this sense, I gave another meaning to a form perceived, recognised and understood by the viewers.

However, for the audience to grasp this meaning, they cannot just casually look at the artwork. Instead, they have to *see* it, i.e., to both recognise and comprehend it. Recently, for example, Howard Risatti has contributed to this discussion. He states:

> [k]nowing and understanding/comprehending (as opposed to simply looking and hearing) are not only intimately related formally and conceptually, they are co-dependent and are essential to any system of communication, including art".[242]

According to Risatti, it is necessary to understand both the "identity and meaning" (i.e., form and concept) of craft as well of those of fine art.[243] Although the distinction between craft and fine art is not my issue here, what Risatti points out regarding cognitive meaning or system of communication shows the process of seeing craft as utilitarian or non-utilitarian. While Risatti calls the latter "fine craft", I call it here "craft-based art" to signify the exclusion of functional craft.[244] Accordingly, recognising and comprehending are therefore crucial to "identity and meaning", which are parts of the process of interpretation. Interpretation, as discussed in

[242] Risatti 2007, 9.

[243] Ibid., 4-5.

[244] Ibid., 239-50.

Heidegger's phenomenological thinking, is the knowledge of praxis through a recollection of one's past experiences fused with her aesthetic experience of what is depicted in the artwork.[245] The material of the artwork not only determines the artwork's practicality or functionality, but also raises the issue of appearance as related to function. "The Chair" is an example of an object becoming a metaphor for supporting the body (i.e., the affordance of a chair). The functional form of "The Chair" serves as a visual sign representing the meaning or metaphorical truth of a chair. In other words, "The Chair" made of an unusual material with craftsmanship functions as a symbol that I as artist called forth to express or to serve as means for understanding the affordance of an ordinary chair.[246]

Illustration 7.4: "The Chair"

[245] Heidegger 1971/2001, 32-36.

[246] This is the principle of metaphor or the way to understand one thing through another thing which artists can apply to their creation of works of art, as stated by Susanne Langer (1957).

7.1.4 Context in which artworks and their material are experienced

> The situation always prevails. In what the senses of sight, hearing, and touch convey, in the sensations of color, sound, roughness, hardness, things move us bodily … The thing is … perceptible by sensations in the senses belonging to sensibility.[247]

In the creative process, the artist cannot touch, see and interpret the material at hand transforming into an artwork, outside the influence of the context in which the creation takes place. Likewise, in the contemplating moment, no viewers can be influence-free from the place and situation in which the contemplation and interpretation occurs. Touching, seeing and contemplating, and interpreting are experiential acts. These acts of both the artist and the viewers never happen by concentrating on a single thing alone. As Merleau-Ponty points out, when one looks at an object, she also sees other things present in the same place as a "system" or "world" and "every object is the mirror of all others."[248] Similarly, Heidegger's phenomenology maintains that a human being is always in an environing world (or "being-there" in Heidegger's term) and is surrounded by things with which she has a relationship.[249] This means that one thing always connects to other things as well as time, place and its surroundings, and a person cannot experience it independently from the context in which both the person and the thing are. The experience of an artwork is thus inseparable from all kinds of entities surrounding it. The totality of surrounding conditions and circumstances, i.e., all the things that are present in a place affect and form the experience of being there.

Considering my artworks manifesting female dresses in "Seeing Paper", I have conceptualised and created this series in my studio context. It was in the midst of the situation that I attempted to clarify my research problem concerning the expressive potential of paper string, i.e., three visually dissimilar kinds of paper string possess individual expressive qualities. According to the concept of "Seeing Paper" that material metaphorically *lives* in the world, the quality of a type of paper string was supposed to represent the specific individuality of a woman. While creating each artwork in a series of "Seeing Paper", the situation informed me to focus on each

[247] Heidegger 1971/2001, 25.

[248] Merleau-Ponty 1962/2005, 79.

[249] Heidegger 1988/1999, 65-70.

particular material interacting with my hands. The hand, the eye and the mind worked in concert in a narrow perspective, attempting to concentrate on a small spot where my fingers touched, knotted and pulled the string. I did not seem to think much about what happens outside this restricted perspective; I seemed to be temporarily detached from the surroundings. However, my memory seemed to function as mental settings when my physical and visual interaction with a type of paper string reminded me of some previous experiences. My personal experience in combination with my touch and sight of the material informed me what kind of a woman the piece was becoming.

Nevertheless, my visual perspective expanded when the context changed from the studio to the gallery. When an audience entered the gallery, their visual perspective seemed wider than mine in the studio. As a result, the audience experienced the exhibition as a whole. As can be seen in the exhibition "Seeing Paper" (Illustration 7.5), the audience did not interpret the dress-like artworks as the representations of female human beings in the first place according to the filled out feedback forms. Rather, the artworks seemed to become unwearable dresses suspended in the empty space of a modernistic gallery. Initially, I intended that the modernistic gallery with white walls would yield neutral or minimal guidance on the artworks and the viewers experiencing them, so that the focus would be on the three slightly different types of paper string. As mentioned in the previous section, I expected to prove that the variation between the types of paper string was the factor indicating the differentiation between the dress-like sculptures in each series that were composed in the same form, and thus interested the viewers to compare the different shapes. Each artwork with particularised details created by a specific material was expected to represent a woman with a distinctive character. I intended to illustrate that material could create the distinctive details that made each dress-like sculpture the way it was supposed to be, i.e., exhibited their individual expressive qualities. However, the audience did not seem to interpret what I tried to convey by the similar forms using different materials. Moreover, the emptiness of the white exhibition space considerably affected the audience seeing and interpreting the exhibition. The audience considered the dresses in a nonrepresentational sense rather than imagining them in a reality where they would have represented living women.

Illustration 7.5: "Seeing Paper" in Gallery Johan S., a modernistic gallery in Helsinki.

Accordingly, the white space of the gallery does not function as a passive concrete site yielding no effect on what and who is present there. The white space of a modernistic gallery or what Brian O'Doherty calls "the white cube" is a space of aesthetic neutralisation that transforms a thing it encloses into art or aesthetic object with commercial values.[250] The whiteness of the modernistic, as O'Doherty asserts, is in fact deceptive, thus creating an illusory space. In addition, *Space*, as Henri Lefebvre points out, is social reality. Lefebvre's concept of social space is that one creates a thing dependent on other things located in the same context, not only moveable items such as pieces of furniture, but also structures, by considering both their interconnections and their relationship to the totality.[251]

Accordingly, I do not actually *show* my artworks in the exhibition space but rather *create* the space and context in which my artworks and visitors to the exhibition exist and interact with each other at a particular time. Likewise, each visitor may also create her own space, by recognising and comprehending her interrelationships with artworks, and more importantly, her relationship with the wholeness of the exhibition. The exhibition thus comprises not only the artworks the artist intends to publicise but also the audience and every other contextual element of the gallery, the walls,

[250] O'Doherty 1999.

[251] Lefebvre 1974/1991, 124-125.

windows, floor, colours, lighting, technical equipment, or even the gentle breeze from the ventilator, including locality, time of the day and season.

The totality of "Seeing Paper", i.e., the dress-like artworks in the high-ceilinged white space with natural light and so forth, revealed the limits of the interrelations between the people, the artworks and the contextual elements of the gallery. The exhibition could not expose my intention to create representations of women with the concept that material metaphorically *lives* in the world clearly enough. Because of the illusion of the white cube and its contextual elements, the visitors seemed unable to create a space where they interrelated themselves with the artworks and found connections between themselves and the different expressions of the materials.

In "Paper World", I was in the situation of seeking an answer to the research problem about the expressive potential of paper string while maintaining the same concept used in "Seeing Paper": material metaphorically *lives* in the world. Contemplating this concept in relation to the context in which it was brought, I raised the issue of the meaning of this material (paper string) in Finland, the country where I was residing and working. This situatedness established a link between the material and the local culture, revealing the important role of paper string in the history of Finnish craft, in the post-war time (the 1940s-1950s) in particular. The historical everydayness of this material enlightened me to another way of interpreting the concept of a material living metaphorically in the world in the forms of artefacts. I thus presented this new interpretation in the series of artworks portraying household artefacts surrounding people in their daily life.

Learning from the experience of "Seeing Paper", I approached the creation of "Paper World" in a different way. Influenced by Heideggerean phenomenological thinking[252], the creation of "Paper World" started from not only the totality of the series of artworks but also, even more decisively, the overall exhibition. Looking back at my creative process and discussing it according to Heidegger, my artworks in "Paper World" were created in relation to the world they were in and would be in, i.e., both the studio and exhibition space. In my studio, I created artworks according to the forms of household artefacts surrounding me in the working space. I formed

[252] Heidegger (1988/1999, 68) states "[a] material thing in space which offers itself to possible sensation from different directions always shows itself as being-there only from a certain side and indeed in such a way that the aspect seen from one side flows over a continuous manner into other aspects sketched out in advance in the spatial gestalt of the thing, …"

parts of each artwork by manipulating paper string around objects found in the studio. This means that while concentrating on paper string as the material under investigation, I also kept my eye on things surrounding me in the creative production.

In the exhibition "Paper World", the artworks were made in relation to each other and to the exhibition as a whole (Illustration 7.6). The converted gallery still possesses the ambience of a home because of its fixed structures, elements and floor plan. By considering the existing gallery setting, I created artworks representing household artefacts and positioned them in particular spots in the space, for example, "The Coal Rake" beside the fireplace (Illustration 7.7). This was to establish the relationship between the artworks and the existing homely setting in order to draw a distinction and a connection between the real and the imaginary. In addition, one artwork had relationships to other artworks in the space. For example, "The Chair", "The Table" and "The Coffee Cup" were placed together, creating a coffee corner (Illustration 7.6). Their relationship was visually perceptible because of their proximity in the gallery space. In accordance with the concept of this series, the relation between the parts and the whole brought in a new metaphorical meaning of material in an exhibition context. On the one hand, when one type of material, which was the smallest part of the exhibition, was employed in all artworks, its ubiquity grounded a relationship between the artworks, thus contributing to creating the whole of the exhibition. On the other hand, the context informed me (the artist) how the parts (material and artworks) should be composed in order to emphasise the relationship between them. Understanding the expressive potential of the part (material) hence concerns the understanding of the whole, which includes the following factors: the creative process and its situatedness, the forms of the artworks into which the material is transformed, and the context in which the transformed material is displayed, seen and interpreted.

Illustration 7.6: Three artworks in the series "Paper World" – "The Chair", "The Table" and "The Coffee Cup" in Gallery Gjutars.

Illustration 7.7: "The Coal Rake" is placed next to the fireplace.

7.2 Evaluations

7.2.1 Own artwork as case study

> There is a moment in the process where something is new to the designer – a new insight, an understanding of how to achieve a desired end, a satisfying arrangement of elements. If remembered or recorded, this moment of knowing starts on the path to becoming collective knowledge.[253]

The above statement by Peter Downton, an Australian professor of design research and an architect, shows a way of generalising about design practice derived from the personal account. According to Downton, several individual accounts, if documented, can establish shared knowledge. Creative practice in a research context, therefore, can generate new knowledge, which is embedded in the practice and embodied in and by the practitioner. This knowledge can be found not only in the practitioner making the artefact, but also in the artefact created, the process used to make it, and the culture in which it is made and viewed or used. Understanding any of these elements of a practice in an actual artistic experience can begin as personal awareness, which may be detailed, proven and generalised, so that a new way of understanding in the field emerges and can be disseminated.

A practice of craft-based art concerns a practitioner, her creative process and a resulting artefact, i.e., the artist practises her profession through artistic process whose result is an artwork. Any practice of an individual artist is also based on experience, and is therefore partly subjective. A researcher who is also a practitioner investigating a subjective topic can choose between the three following approaches: studying her own work or another practitioner's work, or both. As a professional textile artist, I chose to conduct my research according to the first approach. I undertook two art productions ("Seeing Paper" and Paper World") to examine whether a physical material had particular expressive qualities. Through this research, I also found new approaches to creating artworks, i.e., alternative artistic processes. One approach was to start the creative process with the material (e.g., "Seeing Paper") and another with the overall exhibition (e.g., "Paper World").

[253] Downton 2003, 95.

Having used my own artistic work, I was able to plan the particular art productions and focus on the research problem, establishing a dialogue between art practice and academic research. The specially planned art productions not only directed the research process but also led me to be aware of my own creative processes and temporary experiences in them. One of the strengths of my position as a practitioner-researcher was that the theoretical assumptions were tested in the actual art practice. As the actual experiences in the art productions were documented, the *in situ* information about them could be traceable and analysed later in the research process after the art productions were complete. A piece of research taking the researcher's artistic work as the case study shed light on creative practice as an activity possibly generating new knowledge, e.g., the conception of materialness.

What would be other ways of doing this research than utilising my own art productions as a vehicle of research? A few options and the reasons why they might not be helpful could be presented here. First, taking my own earlier art productions as case studies could be one. This might have yielded an inaccurate source of data when active documentation of those particular art productions had not been carried out. The second option could be in-dept interviews with other textile artists. However, the information about particular art productions or artworks told by these artists might not have been accurate, because it would have relied on their memory and their willingness to articulate it. The third option could include the observation of other artists while making artworks. With this option, the artists might have been aware of my presence, so that they would not have worked as normally. This would have meant that what I had observed in the actual creative productions of these artists might not occur in their habitual studio practices, when they work alone in their studio.

From my experience as a practitioner-researcher who took her art productions and artworks to research as case studies, a few limitations, however, can be pointed out. First, the experiment with material was based on my experience which seemed to be subjective. For example, I realised the strength and characteristics of various types of paper string by manipulating them with my hands, with no tool to control or to measure my pulling force. If my research had been carried out in collaboration with scientists such as physicists and chemists who could have technically tested the physicality of the material (e.g., strength and resistance), I would have been able to gather quantifiable data about the actual physical qualities of the material. Second, the

obvious demands on a practitioner-researcher are that the study takes time and requires a balance between the practical and theoretical parts of the study. In other words, a practitioner-researcher has to strive to maintain not only the virtue of a practitioner-researcher's individual practice but also a vigorous and credible theoretical context.

In spite of the above limitations, the benefits of creating my own artworks as case studies in the research can be underlined as the following. This approach enabled me to maintain my artistic intelligence while undertaking academic research, which is a time-consuming and demanding commitment. When a practitioner stops making artworks for a long period of time, the development of her craftsmanship skills and conceptual creativity can easily be held back. A long pause in professional practice may signify the alienation of the practitioner from her professional artworld. Above all, this approach contributes to illuminating what I was looking for – *paperness* or the expressivity of a material in the creation of textile art.

7.2.2 Applying materialness in textile pedagogy

As earlier mentioned, materials such as ceramics, glass, metal, wood and textile have indicated craft-based art discourse. Although the importance of materials has been emphasised in the education of craft-based arts, techniques seem to be more dominant. In textile art, pedagogy is built around mastering technical skills, i.e., learning various textile techniques. Skills thus lead a creative process, which continues with choosing a material suitable for the mastered technique. In this sense, materials function in any artistic processes as supporting the capability of techniques. Emphasising skills might restrict ways of thinking of a practitioner, especially a novice. For example, a student mastering in weaving tends to think about using only materials in forms of yarn on a weaving loom, or a student skilful in printing might think about printing a pattern on only the flat surface of fabric. This easily limits the variety of materials that can be used for each technique. Changing types of material while their form is still in yarn or fabric does not seem to suggest an innovative aspect to artistic work.

The conception of materialness as an alternative approach could be introduced to textile pedagogy; the methods, including means of documentation I used in this

research, likewise. This is in no way to overlook training students to become highly skilled in textile techniques. Instead, students should still learn and master textile techniques in order to obtain basic skills in making textiles. However, they could also learn about the materialness concept, which in turn might be supportive of advancing the mastered skills. Understanding that materialness is an ability of a material to express a meaning through its physical qualities, students can learn about another way of creating textile art that begins with a material of their special interest. This way of selecting a material can shed light on unusual or new materials for creating textiles, giving students confidence to create textile art from materials of atypical forms and wide-ranging qualities. Interacting bodily with a material, students can be inspired by the physical qualities of it and try it with different manipulative techniques. Being open to techniques they have been previously trained in can illuminate thoughts of developing their technical skills in relation to the material in a new way. In this sense, a material can lead the creative process (i.e., the skilled hand and the receptive mind of the practitioner) in various possible directions without the limitation of techniques. Techniques can play a role as mixed experimental media that help students to play with materials. Placing the focus on a material creates multiple alternatives for a creation. Some ideas can be used in subsequent creations, especially in the case of a student who tends to keep a diary about her creative process.

During my research, I held an intensive workshop based on my research. Students participating in the course were Bachelor and Master students, both Finnish and international. They were asked to choose a material alien to textiles with which they had never worked but would like to work in the workshop, without thinking about the resulting object and its function or the technique. However, they should have personal interest in the material, and be able to explain in words the personal interest, i.e., why they chose that particular material. In addition, I encouraged them to have a diary in which they could write about their material and creative process, and to photograph their creative process. This not only made them become aware of and understand their practice, but also improved their skill in discussing the meaning of their works. The students came up with various types of unusual material, for example, pasta, yogurt lids, plastic straws, marshmallows, bubble-plastic sheet, etc. I then asked them to examine the physical qualities or characteristics of the chosen materials, e.g., colours, textures, sounds, smells and original functions. From the qualities the students recognised in the materials, I guided them to find connections between the materials

and some other things or stories they had experienced in life, i.e., the association between the physical reality and an imaginative idea. This was a way to think about the material as a metaphor. Metaphorical thinking could lead students to find ways or techniques of making art or design works from the newly chosen materials.

The resulting objects by the students appeared original and interesting. A work to be exemplified here is a piece of clothing representing autumn made from yogurt lids. Aluminium foil lids interested the student who created this work because of their function, sound, colours and shape. The sound of the lids touching each other reminded this student of the sound of dry leaves blown by wind. The original function of the lids to cover yogurt cups evoked her the function of clothing to cover human bodies. The colours of the lids, the silver colour of the inner side and the various colours of pictures of fruits printed on the outer, made her think of the autumn colours. She categorised the lids according to their colours. She then found out that the round shape of the lid when folded was similar to the shape of a leaf. This student, therefore, folded the aluminium foil lids and composed the folded lids from green to yellow, orange, red and finally white (silver) to represent colour-changing leaves in autumn. She sewed the lids together to form a wearable piece of clothing. The sound of the folded lids touching one another also portrayed the sound of wind blowing leaves.

Having demonstrated how materialness could be applied in textile pedagogy, the conception has proven to not only help students to express the meanings of their works but also guide them throughout their artistic processes. In addition, this conception can be useful for artists to develop their working process.

7.3 Reflections on research

Knowledge is there, embedded in an artistic process. However, the problem is that practical knowledge in artistic processes is personal and embodied in the artist and her creative work. After the artistic processes, the knowledge is not as clearly recollected by the artist anymore. This causes the knowledge to generate and end in the creative process. When knowledge comes and goes, it cannot even be called knowledge, because it is neither evaluated and validated by others, nor disseminated to them. This reveals the problem that practical knowledge in a creative process is not

captured in textual format. The lack of literature about artworks written by artists has made research that includes the researcher's art practice or *practice-led research* seem unconventional. Actually, practice-led research is about artistic processes and courses of action which lead the research process, being disseminated to others not only in the form of artefacts but also in the form of text. Both text and artefacts are means to communicate what one profoundly gets to know about a topic.

Studying one's own art practice might not be extraneous to academia, as it seemed to me when I decided to explore my research problem. In fact, this form of research appears comparable to *in situ* ethnographic research in social sciences. David Sudnow, an American ethnographer, described how he taught himself to improvise jazz on the piano.[254] Similarly, Erin O'Connor, an American social researcher, learnt about the practice of glass blowing by situating herself in the position of a glass blower.[255] Both studies illuminate the relationship between academic research and art practices: they are entwined and can support each other. To draw a comparison between the above studies and mine, I found that a researcher is also a practitioner, learning and writing about his or her professional practice. Ethnography, as shown by both Sudnow's and O'Connor's studies, appears to be personal interpretation and documentation of human experience, i.e., autoethnography[256]. It is a method and a text that an ethnographer experiences and translates.

Having mentioned this, my study could also be considered ethnographic research, as I interpreted and wrote about the materialness of paper string and recorded my experience of actual artistic processes. Nevertheless, the difference might be on the issue of situatedness. Sudnow and O'Connor were originally located in the academic world but repositioned themselves in the practical fields. In the field of music in Sudnow's case and that of glass in O'Connor's case, both practised and learnt the professional skills as novices (or even as a hobbyist in O'Conner's case). This also signifies that their creation may not be situated in the artworld. In other words, Sudnow's ability to play jazz on the piano might not be as skilful as professional jazz pianists, and O'Connor's glass pieces might not be exhibited together with the works of professional glass artists. In contrast, I was a textile practitioner aiming at

[254] Sudnow, 2001.

[255] O'Connor 2007.

[256] For overviews on autoethnography, see, for example, Bochner and Ellis 2001; Ellis 2004.

positioning my art practice and myself in academia. By doing so, I could give an account of my textile art practice while maintaining my expertise and being active professionally in the textile artworld.

Although both Sudnow and O'Connor offer ways of learning particular skills they experienced in their actual practices in published texts, their written accounts are from the point of view of sociologists and skill learners that might differ from an account written by a professional practitioner. As a skilled practitioner tends to know an apt way to react to and solve problems occurring in creative processes, her written account would also reflect the professional way of dealing with the problems with which a novice might have dealt differently.

Research has shaped my ways of thinking and creating art textiles in many respects, such as taking the audience and the exhibition better into account. Before delving into research, my artistic work tended to end when the exhibition was installed and the artworks were in the space. I supposed that there was nothing I could do with the visitors; the exhibition was about the visitors' personal interest and my artworks. If anyone were interested in expressing some opinion or criticism, the person would write in the visitors' book. I have learnt to expand my view on creative work, so that my creation is not limited only to artworks but extended to the total experience of the artworks, which includes the exhibition space and its surroundings.

With the help of the different research approaches and means of documentation, I could study and understand the relationship between paper string and artistic expression in my art practice. During each art production, I not only expressed my idea and manipulated a physical material, but was also aware of the reaction of the material that in turn shaped my manipulation and expression in the creative process. At the end of the process, the manipulated material and the expressed thoughts became intertwined in various forms of artworks. The artworks and the transformed material, when existing in a particular context, possessed unique qualities that could affect the interpretation of the audience.

Additionally, a diary has become my written memory to which I can return, look at my artistic processes and other thoughts during the processes. As a researcher, I would not have realised how I could implement and analyse my creative processes as data relevant to research without the help of documentation. As a practitioner, without the various means of documentation, I would not have been very critical of my own artistic processes. Finally, as a practitioner-researcher, I would not have been able to

utilise various approaches (i.e., literature, art productions and interview) and discuss data gathered by these approaches without documentation.

Researching my own creative practice may yield results that are different from those of another textile practitioner, even if she had conducted a research project with the same research questions as I did. However, this does not mean that the knowledge I have gained through researching my art practice cannot be applicable to other practitioners. Rather the opposite: other practitioners can learn about my process when attempting to develop their own artistic practices. Research not only transforms ways of designing or creating art, but also progresses toward aesthetic senses, if the practitioner-researcher is able to seek a suitable way to combine practice with research.

This study has focused on the relationship between subjective elements in the practice of textile art, i.e., artistic expression and material, the component understood among textile practitioners as being one of the most important components in any creation. As this study was experimental, it also seems to produce questions not only answers. The research problem has evolved and new questions have emerged during the progressive line of enquiry, revealing the various findings depicted in this chapter. In researching the topic further, I as the artist-researcher might choose a new material for investigation or focus on a newly chosen material in comparison with paper string. It would also be illuminating to conduct a further study by applying a set of approaches similar to the present study and develop the methodology for researching one's own creative practice further. Carrying out jointly a research project with another artist-researcher might also generate a more mutual understanding of how creative practice could be intertwined with research.

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