

## **Breastfall and Sexual Journey**

Written part of MFA Thesis:

*Breastfall and Sexual Journey*

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Natalie Seifert Eliassen, *Breastfall*, 2022. Installation, mixed media. Photo: Petri Summanen.

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# 1 Summary

During the graduation show Kuvan Kevät 2022, I exhibited a three-screened video Installation *Sexual Journey Interviews* and a sculptural installation *Brestfall*.

*Brestfall* was a result of a one-month casting performance, where I moulded and casted 30 breasts of voluntary people that had signed up. All genders were welcome to donate their breasts in a private casting session. The models were choosing the colours and glitter I would paint their plaster breast sculpture with. When the sculpture was ready, I found a place for it in the artificial waterfall. The volunteers got their sculpture copies of their breasts back after the exhibition. The waterfall ended in a hexagon-shaped pool with a breast fountain in glazed ceramic. The construction, of wood and black plastic, contained a mix of plaster breasts, ceramic breasts, ceramic support pieces, water, and oysters' seashells. *Brestfall* is a celebration of breast diversity and is based on my curiosity about nudity. During Kuvan Kevät was *Brestfall* installed on the last steps of the stairs at the main entrance of the Academy of Fine Arts Helsinki, during the casting performance it was installed in the Kuva/Tila gallery.

*Sexual Journey Interviews* presents a soundtrack with 12 personal histories about sexuality with kaleidoscopic visuals, on three TVs and seven headphones, in the Kuva-hall on the second floor. Under each TV screen was a wood sign with keywords from the interviews. The keywords from the three videos were:

A: *Relationship, Nudity, Squirting, Drag, Body image, Asexual, Identity, Love.*

B: *Lovers, Dominant/Submissive, Dating, Boundaries, Chasing, Communicating, Pain.*

C: *Spiritual, Orgasm, Motherhood, Porn, Gaze, Masturbation Club, Desire.*

I wanted to learn more about my own sexuality by hearing new perspectives from others of my same generation. The interviews were mostly conducted live in a sound studio at the academy, but some were recorded online. They often lasted for an hour, from which I made about 12 min excerpts. In both my works, the individuals who contributed remained anonymous in the exhibition, but since the subject in the interviews were using their own voices, they could be recognized.

The written component is describing the whole process of making my two works about nudity and sexuality. From my first ideas, the actual working process with materials and techniques, a work description of how it was presented, and thoughts and knowledge I gained after the exhibition. Inspiring artists, elaborating on keywords from the videos, science about sexuality and clitoris, and concepts such as the "sexual script" and "the male gaze" are woven throughout the text. In my art, I'm interested in investigating, exploring, and describing human sexuality. I wish to take part in creating a healthier culture around sex by encouraging people to think and talk more openly about their experiences and wishes.

In my practical works, I chose to focus on all different genders, this is contrary to that several parts of this master text are written from my female perspective. I have just started the journey of unlearning to read the word through binary contrast thinking. Most matters are more than two-sided, instead, they are floating in kaleidoscopic angels and shapes.



*Sexual Journey Interviews*, 2022. Video installation. Photo: Natalie Seifert Eliassen

## 2 Introduction

In this master text, I'm writing about my two graduation artworks, the process of planning and making them, my original plans and intentions, the ideas and artist who has inspired me, the technical knowledge I have gained, and sexuality topics and science that also was dealt with in my work. The attempt was to write about my proses in chronological order, from when I started to study in Helsinki to my last semester. I deleted a whole autobiographical chapter from this MFA-text called "My own sexual journey" because I felt it was too exploitative to make it public. Instead, I revile parts of my sexual journey through the whole text.

I exhibited two artworks at the graduation show Kuvan Kevät 7.5 - 5.6.2022, a sculptural performance installation: "*Breastfall*" and a video installation "*Sexual Journey Interviews*". Both artworks are based on individual contributions with people in two anonymous working groups.

*Breastfall casting performance* was one of the main steps in producing my graduation work *Breastfall* and was made during the exhibition *Tracing Work* at Kuva/ Tila gallery 11.3 – 3.4.2022. Jarkko Partanen was my curator in this group show. Both Jarkko and curator Krister Grahn helped me with the technical building the first waterfall construction and the pool.

*Sexual Journey Interviews* is a 3 screened kaleidoscopic video, in total 2,5 hours, containing 12 interviews about sexuality. In the videos, the audience got inside knowledge of topics I was occupied and curious about while making both works.

The Vimeo links to the 3 screens of *Sexual Journey Interviews*, the password for all of them is: nude

<https://vimeo.com/709116095> nude

<https://vimeo.com/712332319> nude

<https://vimeo.com/724251221> nude

2 min trailer: <https://vimeo.com/714993706>

Breastfall performance + installation, 2 min installation view and process video:

<https://vimeo.com/800265099>

## 3 Motivation and Intention

### How it all began

During the summer after the first MFA semester in Helsinki, I was thinking a lot about what my graduation work could be. My BFA work had been video performances about sex-work, witches, mental illness and masks. I had just realized the reason I had been so interested in my friend's sex-work was that I tried to find out about my own sexuality. It was tough to stand up for the sex-workers that had chosen the work themselves. I was constantly confronted with the traditional side of feminism which believes no one chooses this profession of free will, and I also often heard that I had no right to make art about sex-work without having tried it myself. Therefore, I started to be tired of dealing with the sex-work topic and thought my master topic was going to be about my own sexuality.

### Roots in Helsinki

In the middle of my Bachelor's in Fine Art in Bergen, I went on a six-month exchange semester at the Academy of Fine Arts Helsinki. As an exchange student, I was freer in choosing courses, and I chose courses in fields of art I never had worked with before, like performance, programming, and sound art. The main piece I started to develop in Helsinki in 2018, was a lecture performance "*The escort lecture*", which was the start of a 3-year-long series of work called "*My Body is My Business*". The lecture was based on a friend's experience of being an escort – a sex worker. I performed as an escort character giving a dry work presentation with PowerPoint followed by a Q&A. I used a costume, and a mask and pitched my voice live through a computer code. The first performance was held in the Exhibition Laboratory Helsinki, a half year after my exchange and the second in Bergen Art Hall.

In Helsinki, I experienced another culture around nudity and sexuality than I was used to in Norway. I went to a public indoor nude swimming hall and saunas where nudity was welcomed. Both being polyamorous or non-binary seemed much more common and even popular. It was the first time I was witnessing introduction rounds where people were asked to present their names and pronouns. I guess Norway is lying 5-10 years behind Finland in queer development and even longer behind when it comes to nudity acceptance. I was so satisfied with my exchange semester in Helsinki and the new direction of my art, that I was only applying for a Master's in Helsinki.

### Nudity in Norway

I grew up going to Norwegian schools in the early 2000s when social media gradually entered the world. People had mobile phones with bad cameras during middle school. People were bullied for sticking out and not being mainstream. The unspoken social role was to try hard to not look at other people's bodies while showering after the gym. If we managed to shower one-on-one, that was the best. Everybody covered up their naked body as fast as possible. In high school, my class community was warm, and diversity was suddenly appreciated, but this behaviour of not looking at others was sticking with us.

I belong to the last generation who barely managed to shower nude together. Lately, it has been hugely debated in Norway, about the newer generations of teens who don't dare to shower together after the gym, without partitions installed in the shower. They are afraid of being

secretly photographed and hung out on social media. One side of the debate is afraid installing shower partitions will result in a generation that only has porn as a reference for nude bodies. It seems like the winning argument is that young people should be able to decide for themselves if they want to be looked at or not by their classmates. The newest changing room architecture is becoming more and more private.

In Norway, we don't have the sauna culture like in Finland where nudity is welcomed. Saunas mostly belonged to public swimming halls where you had to wear swimming wear. Later in the 2020s, more expensive bookable sauna-floats have been built in Norwegian cities, but nudity is not allowed. Only on a few summer days, I have been nude swimming in the sea with friends in Oslo.

### **NUDE at Fotografiska**

In autumn 2021, I saw the photo exhibition *NUDE-The Naked Body in Contemporary Photography* at Fotografiska, Stockholm. The exhibition was featuring 200 works from 30 female-identifying artists, who explored the female-identifying gaze centered around the naked body of all genders. I was enjoying the diversity and variety of the nude bodies presented in a fresh contemporary style. The photos were collected from fashion, Instagram, films, art, activism, science and more. They all were giving me the impression of all bodies are beautiful, even if they are obese, wrinkly, scared, or not fitting the standard beauty norms. I think this exhibition subconsciously inspired me to make *Breastfall*.

### **Burlesque**

I'm inspired by burlesque and use it in my visual art. In periods I dance burlesque in dance classes, a dance based on femininity, seduction, and your personal style (individuality). Burlesque has taught me to accept, embrace and love my own body, and even get better self-esteem. We learn dance moves that make you look sexy, and you see that they work in the mirror. We work on enjoying ourselves and finding how we individually are looking good on stage, to underline our best sides.

In burlesque, it's positive to have body fat, the more fat, the more you can shake. For me, the dance is very liberating and freeing. When I was 3-17 years old, I danced classical ballet, a very strict dance, where you try to do every move perfectly and try to fit into the ballet system. I was kicked out of the national youth team in the Opera ballet when I was 14 years, for not being a good enough ballet dancer. Burlesque is in that way the opposite of ballet, you are encouraged to do every movement in your own way, in your own style. Like in art, your mistakes are your style.

### **Performance**

During the gap year between my BFA and MFA, most of my work was about the clitoris, and I made two clitoris-costume performances based on burlesque and modern dance. I thought I would be doing more performances in Helsinki. I first started working with performance during my exchange semester in Helsinki in 2018, but I understood that teachers had changed at the academy, there were not that many courses or resources supporting performances anymore. We heard from previous students that the performances happening only a few times during the one-month graduation show, tended to be missed by the majority, it would get more attention to show something permanent, like a video or installation.

### **Use the facilities**

I wanted to use the resources that were provided at the academy, and work with what was accessible instead of searching for support that did not exist there now. First, I was a bit naive to the resources I thought I had access to. Later I understood that the sculpture premises and their courses, materials and technicians prioritized helping Sculpture students first, and I'm a Time and Space student. Covid had reduced English-speaking students to 10% and with the start of practical teaching, I met challenges with the Finnish language, which has been frustrating for me. This Academy does not sell materials at the school, so I had to learn how and where to order and buy them myself. I had to battle a lot of bureaucracy and fight for my right to be able to work in the sculpture premises but succeed after a while.

### **Interviews and privacy**

I have always been fascinated by secrets and topics most people think about as private. In one of my very first installations "*1000 minner og 1 natt / 1000 memories and 1 night*" 2014, I collected "embarrassing breakup reasons" for why people ended a romantic relationship or stopped dating someone. I presented a hanging forest of around 30 worn-out socks stuffed with human hair and different fragrance from spices, food, or perfume. Connected to each smelly sock, hung a small piece of paper with an often humorous reason and an object that was connected to it. On a window nearby, the audience could write their own reasons on post-it notes. I remember I was dealing with trying to stop dating a guy and I thought it was too embarrassing to tell him that I was still in love with my ex, I tried to find some other excuses.

### **Artists working with the private**

Back then I was looking into other artists that worked with privacy as Sophie Calle, who photo-documented people's suitcases when working as a cleaner at a hotel and has been spying and following random people as a performance. Sophie Calle also reviled a breakup letter sent to her and let a big group of other people answer it and then she exhibited all the letters.

Especially in Tracey Emin's earliest work, she shared a lot about her own private life, depression, and sex life. For example, in *My Bed* or in *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963–1995* (1995) she applicade a textile list with the people she had shared a bed with. It made an impact on me when she said in an interview something about how she regrets exploiting other people by oversharing so much of her own life and community. She blamed that she was young and naïve. After hearing this I started to hide my own stories in group interviews and collect other people's perspectives about the same topic I was dealing with myself.

The Dutch artist and sexological bodyworker Melanie Bonajo (they/them) make video installations based on performances and interviews about sexuality. I was lucky to be introduced to their work already early in 2016 when I was a part of the gallery team that helped them install the solo exhibition *Does it matter who orbits? blackLED sex ii forest*, at Rogaland Art Center, Norway. The gallery rooms were transformed into sensory zones and I remember gluing textiles onto cubic sponge pillows that the audience could lie at while watching the two main video works: *Fake Paradise* (2014) and *Economy of Love* (2015). According to the press release: "*Fake Paradise* tells the story of several people's experiences using ayahuasca, a hallucinogen from the Amazonas, which has a similar status as LSD did in the 60s. *Economy of Love* follows a community of activist sex workers in Brooklyn."



*Origin of Orgasm*, textile collage. Natalie Seifert Eliassen, exhibited in Free Art Space Helsinki, February 2023.

The form shows the inner clitoris organ and how it's balls are surrounding the vaginal canal and urethral opening.

Installation view and detail photos: Natalie Eliassen.



<sup>1</sup> Melanie's immersive video installation "When the body says Yes" where my favourite pavilion to experience at the Venice Biennale 2022. I think their video work has inspired me more than I first thought of, in the way they use performativity, costumes and interviews in their videos. I was quite surprised when I looked back at their old video work from 2014 and 2015 and was thinking "Oh this is exactly such types of stories I hope to be able to present in my *Sexual Journey* film."

### **My motivation for making art about sexuality**

It's a paradox that sex is everywhere in our culture, we are bombarded by sex in the media, but at the same time, sex is also a topic full of shame and taboos. The world is porno-fied, but not sexualized, I think. We should focus more on sex education and sex that is outside the porn system. It is problematic that the biggest sex education we have today is from porn.<sup>2</sup> The next biggest is from movies and TV series, but none of these media has wanted themselves to be used for sex education. It's so few hours of sex education and even in Norway and Sweden, it has a narrow focus on how to avoid pregnancy and STDs. It takes time to get new science about sex into schools. Still today most sex-education chapters in schoolbooks include some pages on the anatomy of the penis, but only show one cartoon drawing of the outside of a vulva, not the whole clitoris which is 90% an inside organ.

### **Sophia Wallace and Cliteracy**

I discovered the whole shape of the clitoris through a podcast called *The sexually liberated woman* by Evian Witney, where the American clitoris artist Sophia Wallace was interviewed. Wallace is famous for introducing the term *Cliteracy*, and advocates for more knowledge about the clit, and that the clit is a queer symbol. I was shocked that I was 24 years old and did not know that it's only the top of the iceberg of the clitoris that I have heard about, but it's an 11-14 cm big organ with legs and balls, that also gets erect when we are horny or just very relaxed in the morning or stimulated.<sup>3</sup>

### **The pleasure festival**

For several years already, I have been interested in investigating, exploring, and describing human sexuality. I wish to take part in creating a healthier culture around sex by encouraging people to think and talk more openly about their experiences and wishes. From 2019-2021 have I been part of organizing *Nytfestivalen / The pleasure festival* in Oslo. A yearly four-days seminar/festival, with lectures, workshops and performances, presented by: sex educators, sexologists, tantra teachers, BDSM-practitioners, sex-workers, artists and organizations working with sexual health.

<sup>1</sup> Rogaland Art Center, 2016  
<sup>2</sup> Sandve, Eliabeth 2016  
<sup>3</sup> Nagoski, Emily 2015

## Boundaries

After discovering what you self like (with masturbation), you are able to explain your limits and desires to your sexual partners. I learned this in a consent workshop at *Nytfestivalen*. If you are about to have sex with a new partner and they ask what your limits are “What do you don’t like me to do?”. If the person answers: “I’m open to anything”, that’s probably not true, it just means that the person doesn’t know their limits. When a person doesn’t know their limits it’s like bingo, a guessing game for the other partner to not accidentally step over their boundaries. In the same workshop, we learned to say: “Thanks” for a “No” or a “refusal/turn-down”, since that is a gift given to you, so you are able to not overstep a boundary and hurt the other.

## Lack of sex education

I think it’s sad that a lack of sex education leads to people who misusing many years of their sexual life on having “bad quality sex” or sex based on the premise of “the average pornified script” instead of being freer and more playful in it. Children learn by copying adults and then it is no wonder that they are looking for something to copy when it comes to sexuality. It’s difficult to come up with your own things that you have never heard of. We should learn to write our own sexual scripts and constantly rewrite them as we change our sexuality, even if it is difficult to break away from the norms of society, we can perhaps try to loosen our grip a little instead of holding on to it. Sex should be personal, not a public recipe.

It’s one story I have heard too many times, from several of my friends, when we talk about when we started to have sex. It is one of my main motivations to make art that informs about sexuality, and I think better sex education can prevent this story to repeat. The story goes like this from the girl’s side:

*Back then I thought the boy was responsible for making me orgasm, and I shouldn’t help with my own hands or guide him in any way. I thought my boyfriend at the time would be offended and feel like a bad lover if I guided him verbally or would take his hand and place it where I wanted it. The foreplay was usually too short, my boyfriend was strongly influenced by porn and thought fingering was supposed to happen for a maximum of two minutes in the hole, not at top of the clit-hood.*

From the men’s side, I have heard it was pressure about the boy should know how to have sex and be experienced even the first times. That’s why they did not dare to keep asking for consent during the act, like: *Can I do this? Can I kiss you here? How much pressure do you prefer with this?*

## Gender as a spectrum

Gender, sexuality, relationship-forms, and attraction is not a black and white thing, but a spectrum. All people can change where there find themselves on the spectrum throughout their life, I believe. I identify as a woman and use she/her pronouns, and I define what is a woman as a big spectrum. I think we all have feminine, masculine, and non-binary sides or energy in our personalities. What we think about as feminine, masculine, and non-binary sides/ energies is also very much up to each person and the times and societies we are living in.

Even though I identify as she, I also accept, try to understand, and welcome all who identify as trans, nonbinary, he, or other pronouns. I also believe feminism is fighting against the patriarchal structure of society, toward equality between all genders. You do not need to be

identifying as a woman or feminine to be a feminist. Working for female rights, also include working for queer rights.

Under follows an excerpt from a text about the starting process of my thesis.

“My first Master’s semester was in the old Art Academy building and mostly over zoom because of covid. In autumn 2021 we moved into the newly built Academy of Fine Arts in Hakkaniemi. When the sculpture premises opened in the new building, I got into some casting and ceramic courses that I needed for my *Boob-fountain* in the graduation exhibition. I experimented with different materials and casting methods. After this, my week was very full of courses, and at the same time, I was asked by Kino Club to be the curator for the next screening event at the end of November.

The event was titled, according to my thesis topic, *Sexuality* screening. Organizing an event like this was fun, but also super time-consuming, especially with lending all the right equipment for a whole small art festival. There were 19 artworks or films, soup, sponsored Kombucha drinks, and 60 persons in the audience. I also showed my own 20 min test-out-video with kaleidoscope visuals and interviews with four people about their sexuality. With “kaleidoscopic visuals” I mean that all the images were transformed with kaleidoscopic effects in my edit, so it looked like the audience was watching the film through a kaleidoscopic gaze or binoculars that I as the filmmaker was controlling and steering. Right after the event on Saturday the 27<sup>th</sup> of November 2021, I edited the video recording of the event and published it on a Vimeo link, which was only available on Sunday and Monday - 170 people streamed it.

I wrote this after my very first semester: *“Next semester I want to do more research on female sexuality. I hope to focus more on how to make textile sculptures (clitoris) move with electronics. Making more video art and learning how to do animations in video. Right now, I think I will do an immersive video installation with moving sculptures for the Kuvan Kevät exhibition.”*

I have been doubting a lot about if my graduation topic is “female sexuality” or just “sexuality” without a gender adjective. I have started the process of interviewing males, females, and non-binary people. When it comes to working with moulds and plaster casting, I have only cast my own woman’s boobs and my male partner’s breasts. I still haven’t found an easy way to cast breasts so I can provide body casting for people I don’t know so well. Hope I start next semester by casting other people.”

### The original plan of the Master thesis, 2021:

My plan for my MFA thesis project is to make an immersive multimedia art installation about sexuality.

#### **Stories**

A key element in the art piece will be to collect “sexual journey” stories through interviews and surveys/essays/open calls, all genders and sexual orientations are welcome to share their stories. The written stories will be read out loud by different actors, and function as the voice-over for my kaleidoscope videos. I want to explore different people’s sexual experiences, and by listening to others’ sexual histories I will discover more about my own sexuality. I’m interested in collecting sexual microhistory, going deep, and asking big questions to a few people. “Microhistory” is a study method where you look at individuals’ own experiences.

#### **Kaleidoscope videos**

I want 5 big screens with slow-motion dance videos of different people dancing and playing with sexuality. My audience can listen to stories while watching kaleidoscope videos of lush body parts morphing into the abstract. In the editing program I use a kaleidoscope effect/filter to anonymize the participants and find beautiful symmetry and new body parts will emerge. It can be different or the same person contributing with a dance or a text. The participant can dress as erotic as they want and bring a personal object to dance with.

#### **Tent with clitoris door**

The kaleidoscope videos will be shown inside a circular textile tent, with a 3 m tall clitoris sculpture filled with air as the entrance door. Inside the tent, the audience can rest on wavy comfortable beds/sofas. The inside fabric of the tent should be pink/red like the inside of a body. The outside textiles should be a colourful patchwork of different glittery textiles and text stating important key sentences from the collected data about sexuality. For example: “Ask for what You Want in bed and ask your Partner(s) what they Enjoy” The textile patchwork will also consist of anatomical illustrations explaining the clitoris anatomy and the similarities between a clitoris and a penis.

#### **Boob fountain in ceramic**

Outside and in front of the textile tent/cave, I want to show a glazed ceramic boob fountain of casted or 3D scanned boobs (of all genders), so the audience can study what different and unique boobs look like. They have permission to stare. I want to cast/scan the boobs in different gravity, some with people standing, sitting, hanging, bending forward, or laying on their back.

#### **Costumes and dance**

Additionally, I want to make costumes that portray different abstract aspects of sexuality: boundaries, intimacy and playfulness. Around five contemporary dancers will use the costumes in a dance inspired by: burlesque, voguing, pole dance, disco, trembling therapy and contemporary dance. The dance will be performed in the installation and the sculptures and videos should be used as stage props and scenography. After the dance performance, the costumes will also be on display nearby the installation.

#### **Interactive live kaleidoscope screening**

My friend Katie Ballinger (from Alto University) has programmed a live kaleidoscope code, so the dancers and audience can interact with it. I want to collaborate with Ballinger by making events (parties) for people where they can dance and see their movements screened with the kaleidoscope effect live, while we are recording it. We will also cooperate with making the interviews and collecting the texts.

#### **Aesthetic**

The reason I want the aesthetic to be like glitter, sequins, pastel-coloured, silk, velvet, shiny and soft, is that that’s my personal fetish sexual dressing preference. I want to seduce people with the materials. Lure them into learning/hearing about more perspectives on sexuality, even if they basically are not interested in the big topic of sexuality. I’m a cis female and an emerging burlesque dancer and I love this pink, soft, textile, materiality that has been deemed as feminine and therefore lower quality in the patriarchal art field. I want to use these materials and hopefully raise their status. I also want to use them on a big scale and immersive way.

#### **From my own female perspective**

I want to explore my own sexuality, and therefore the starting point of this project comes from my own female sexuality. Nevertheless, I don’t want to exclude anybody, and I’m interested to collaborate with all different genders in this project. I know this is an ambitious project to fulfil before May 2022. However, I want to try to get as close to my vision as possible.”

Now reading this one year later and after the Kuvan Kevät exhibition, I am surprised at how wild and big my ambitions originally were. Out of this, I managed to complete the *Boob Fountain*, the sexuality interviews, and the kaleidoscopic video visuals. For my graduation show, I did not have time to make a clitoris tent or collaborate with Katie or with dancers, and I changed the topic from female sexuality to all genders’ sexuality. I hope I will fulfil more of my plans in the future.

According to the Queer GLOSSARY written by CN Lester that I found in paper in the exhibition *Queerness in photography* at CO Berlin “*Cis -short for cis-gender, a term for people who occupy the gender category they were assigned as birth (cis) and those who move away from the gender category they were assigned at birth (trans).*”



### **The Kuvan Kevät catalogue text:**

Natalie Seifert Eliassen 1993/ Oslo, Norway

A score for a dance about sexuality:

Soft to erect

Submissive switch with dominant

Gift a boundary

Asking, taking, serving, allowing, accepting

Passive or active

Fake performativity desires real intimate behaviour

Insecurity meets openness builds trust

Single, couple, plural lovers

Expand into kaleidoscopic movements

@nataliese natalieart.myportfolio.com

The Kuvan Kevät catalogue text was written as a dance score. I learned to write scores in a dance course in January 2022. I originally thought I would focus more on movement and performativity in my Master thesis, and I'm a bit sad that the performative part of my graduation work is quite small. Writing the catalogue text in a performative way is an attempt to show that I also work with performance.

### **Some of my References for Artists working with sculptures and performance**

I was looking into artists that had combined sculpture with performance. A lot of today's ceramic artists works with "ceramics in the expanded field", which means they often mix ceramic with other art forms or use ceramics as something else than only a sculpture. For example, ceramic artist Jessica Jackson Hutchins used big ceramic sculptures as costumes that dancers and musicians were wearing during her performance called: *Restless Animal Kingdom*, 2020.<sup>4</sup>

Mimosa Pale's Mobile Female Monument 2007, was a giant vulva and vagina sculpture made in silicone and placed on wheels. As a performance, the artist was dragging the sculpture around Helsinki city center and invited people to climb in the vulva. If they did, Mimosa was shaking the vagina walls from the outside.

Young Boy Dancing Group is a dance company that is known for its highly sexual esthetics in costumes and props in their intimate dance performances, often happening in the middle of a crowded audience. Their trademark is to use green lasers or lit wax candles as but-plugs as their roll, grind, and shake over each other in minimal and worn-out clothing.

## **4 Working process of *Sexual Journey Interviews***

### **The footage in the video visuals**

The footages in the kaleidoscopic interviews are of very different age, the earliest is filmed one week in a project room with a friend and me in Bergen in 2017. We dressed ourselves up in clothing that we felt was too sexy to use in public and did sexy dancing and kind of theatre exercises. We experimented with crossing the line of being too sexy, nearly like what conservative people will think of as whore-style. Living out this fantasize that we felt could not show in our everyday life.

There is also new some footage filmed with me and my boyfriend in Helsinki, dancing in underwear, and documentary footage of my *Breastfall*. All of this is filmed by me with a professional Black Magic camera in 60 frames per second and RAW 4K format, so it's convenient to make a slow motion and zoom, in the edit. A few scenes are filmed on my iPhone 12 pro, which I bought especially for filming purposes.

### **To be seen and listened to**

I think people were booking breast casting sessions and accepting my interview invitations because most of us want to be seen. We want our stories to be heard, we want to be understood. Since breasts and sexual history are a private and sometimes secret matter, those topics may have been overlooked. I hope the participants in both my artworks, experienced a place to ventilate and felt that they were seen and listened to. I myself was looking for confirmation, that I'm not the only one that has had a bumpy road toward figuring out my sexuality or how to enjoy sex. I hope the audience also found acceptance/support or started to reflect on their own sexuality or body, of the diversity I presented. In my interviews, I tried to lift forward hidden perspectives from different personal sexual journeys. I wanted to expand the norms of what is deemed normal and talk about topics we normally hide.

### **Pre-film**

I tested the concept with a short pre-film or a pilot, with three written and one read-out-loud with another voice type of interview and one live interview in November 2021. This 20 min test film was shown in the Kino Club Sexuality screening on 27.11.21 and shown to my seminar class for feedback. People liked the live interview with the real voice the most, the ones that were read out loud from a text were a bit stiff and you could not listen to the real feelings from the voices. Therefore, I was moving away from the idea of making an online survey. A fellow student asked if I could just find a lot of private stories on Reddit or other online places where people already have shared this anonymously. Although I wanted to explore personal meetings and be able to ask follow-up questions.

Another feedback was that I had found four people which were not struggling with their sexuality at the moment. There were too many positive things presented, and people wanted to hear that sex not always is easy. One person even said he was a-sexual and he thought I should interview and include an a-sexual person for my final work. "The world is already so much sexualized, why focus more on sex?" he asked. I feel sexuality often is looked at as something complicated and mysterious and I first wanted to celebrate and have fun with the topic instead of focusing on the dark sides of it.

<sup>4</sup> Jackson Hutchins, 2020

## **Interview Questions**

First, I made a list with around 20 open questions I was interested in. The questions were inspired by several sources: The book “Women on Top of the World” by Lucy-Anne Holmes. Where one interviewer travelled around the world and interviewed women and femmes from 18 to 73 years old about their sexual journey and then edited each interview down to a two page essay. The questions the interviewer used are not displayed in the text, but all the texts follow a chronological structure. The person is first telling about their upbringing and the community they were raised in, childhood, teenager, first sex experience, discoveries in sexuality, adulthood and more. I tried to find the questions the interviewer might have asked.

Some of my questions are inspired by “*The Sexually Liberated Woman*” podcast based on interviews. The host Evyan Whitney usually starts the podcast about how everyone is on a journey to liberate themselves sexually, and then Whitney interviews different people about their sexuality. I know this podcast also inspired me to find the title *Sexual Journey Interviews*.

My own sexual journey is also a big inspiration for the questions I found. I wanted to find similarities and other perspectives on topics I had dwelt with myself. Before some of the interviews I sent out the list of questions as a mental preparation for the person being interviewed and on top of the list, I had written this introduction:

*Hi. I hope these questions are interesting for you to reflect on. My intention is to learn about sexuality from different perspectives, become more conscious/ aware, and minimize shame with openness and putting words on taboos. I wonder what our contemporary young adult generations’ attitudes and philosophy around sexuality are. I’m really curious about stuff that for some are secrets and I hope these questions don’t feel like an invasive questionnaire, but rather something that can contribute to your self-development.*

At Baltic Circle Festival Helsinki 2021, I saw a theatre show “*Ejaculation falls*”, where a working group was interviewed about their sexuality on stage. Unfortunately, only 2 out of 9 people were telling their stories in English, but we got a paper list of the interview questions in English. I was surprised that the questions I had made before watching the show were nearly similar to the ones they used, all the same topics were covered.

## **Search for people’s specialities**

At the beginning of interviewing process, I used the same questions on everyone. After talking to my video artist supervisor Jaana Kokko who also has made films about feminism by interviewing people, she recommended me to search for people’s specialities, instead of using the same questions all the time. This I found like a piece of clever advice. When I started to interview people again in April, I was from the beginning of an interview searching for their speciality. During the interviews, I used the question-list mostly as background research. Often people answered with long answers to a single question, so they automatically covered more of the questions I had in mind.

## **Subjects**

### **Finding subjects for the interview**

12 out of 16 interviews are presented in *Sexual Journey Interviews*. Most of the interviews were recorded with a Zoom recorder in the school’s sound studio, but others were recorded

online over zoom.us. Half of the group was people from my network of colleagues from the creative field and the rest was people I barely had met. Two of the interview subjects had I never talked with before but was recommended to talk to by friends. Sometimes I asked people to be interviewed about a special topic I already knew they were passionate about, like polyamory or a-sexuality. Other times I had to find out what was their specialty during and after the interview.

I was striving to compose or find a group of interview subjects that showed a wide range of diversity. Diversity in topics they would talk about: gender, who and what they were sexually attracted by, and the way they dated or structured their romantic relationships. Before the interviews, I thought I had found a group where half of them were straight and half of them were queer. After the interviews, I found that nearly all were identifying as queer or had queer experiences.

Only age diversity was not super important for me with the interviews, I was interested in the ideas and feelings of my own generation. I’m now 29 years old and the people I interviewed were from 20 years to around 37. The breast casting session was open for booking by anyone over 18 years, and the oldest person I casted was 70-years-old.

### **Happily single**

For a long time, I was looking for a “happily single” character to interview, about solo sex and being happy alone. I was either finding heartbroken or desperate singles or singles that were not willing to talk about their private sexual life. I wanted to break the norm about life being best when you are in a relationship.

### **Rainbow Family**

I asked to interview a gay man living in a “rainbow family”, sharing a baby between 5 parents: two gay couples and one lesbian mother. The family had met each other at a website where queer people are looking for others to be parents with. It didn’t go through because of privacy consent in the family. How I understand it, the term sounds a bit similar to “bonus families”, where kids have more than two parents, stepmoms, stepdads, etc. Extended family constructions are more and more common.

### **Anonymising**

It was a big thing that one of my premisses was that the person was willing to use their own voice, and was risking being recognized. Only with this premise, many potential subjects were sifted away. The reason for it was that I have worked with anonymizing sound recordings of interviews several times before, especially while interviewing sex-workers. Anonymising the voices, either by pitching the voice to a higher or darker pitch or by dubbing. With the pitching, the problem is that everyone sounds like criminals being interviewed in the news, and the subject can still be recognized by the way they structure their sentences and the words they use in their sociolect or accent/dialect. The difficulty with dubbing is that I need to pay actors for making good dubbing, and you lose hearing the real feelings in the voice or in between the lines, how they pronounce or put pressure on specific words. In the *Escort film 2019*, I asked friends to dub the escorts, because I did not have enough budget to pay actors. Sadly, the

dubbed version sounded stiff and fake. Both these ways of anonymising in the after-work/edit process are time-consuming, and I lacked time to finish my two quite large-scale graduation works.

### **Process of interviewing**

I ended up not using these four people's stories from the test-film in my graduation film. Next semester after I finished the *Breastfall casting performance* in March I interviewed 12 new persons over 4-6 weeks. I only interviewed people that let me use their real voices and let me interview them freely. The recorded interviews lasted from 40min to 3 hours. Most of them took around 1 hour, and then I edited them down to 8-13 min of what I found most interesting. This stripping down the text was the most difficult process. Some people spoke a lot about interesting things, but I only had time to choose a few topics.

### **Sharing myself**

I took an active choice to share my own experiences during the interviews, like a conversation between two people where both take turns reacting and telling their opinion. This "sharing myself" -style was also a method to get the other person to open up and reveal more. A few times I also needed to work on holding back my own stories, to not disturb or interrupt the other story. I tactically used silence, silence often gives space for the other person to reflect and elaborate more on their stories. I tried to only talk when I thought the whole story from the other person had come out, but this listening sensitivity skill was sometimes hard to get right.

### **Avoiding trauma**

I have been careful not to ask about traumatic experiences when I made the interview questions because I'm not a healer or a therapist. I feel it's rude to ask people to think back on something they try hard to forget. A few times while doing the breast-casting and small talk, I felt some people were interpreting my role or maybe the setting, nearly as a therapy session. While exposing their breast they also started to reveal traumatic childhood experiences of being bullied for their early grown big boobs and unwanted sexual attention. When people started to talk about dark topics, I avoided asking them to elaborate on them, to avoid getting into a wannabe-therapist role. Instead, I just confirmed with something like "oh that must have been terrible".

### **Consent**

At the end of the interview session, I asked if they already regretted some parts of what they had told, being presented in a public exhibition. Several times I was told a few places in the timeline to avoid putting forward in the final edit. I started to edit the day after the interview. After I had made a short edit of the interview, I asked the interviewee to listen through it and tell me if it was something more I should edit out, and if they were consenting to that I used the excerpt in the MFA exhibition. In that way, there were only a few things that were changed after asking for consent to publish.

### **It's delicious not to be perfect**

There were several technical issues with noise from the mic or volume level and distortion in the recordings, even though I used a soundproof sound studio room to record in. Some of the mistakes were too big and therefore impossible to correct properly. I ended up not excluding

any of the final interviews only because the sound quality was not perfect. My motto for getting through my art productions in time without giving up was: *It's delicious/pleasurable not to be perfect*. The imperfection of the sound quality is also fitting the roughness of the breast-casted sculptures. I think it's better to reach closer to my goal of making immersive installations than to settle for less: only one perfect sculpture. Making an installation immersive often involves making a lot of something, a lot of breast sculptures. All bodies have flaws, and all humans make mistakes. I also saw the Academy and the graduation show as a place for learning by mistakes, taking risks and daring to test out new stuff, I had very little experience with mould-making before my Master's. I'm uninterested in perfection, which I think you can look for in mass-produced products and big podcast companies instead of art. I try to remind myself that quite a lot is possible. Just do it. Don't care if it's good or bad, just do it. It is liberating when I manage to think like this.

### **Roughness and immersive art**

There are several feminist artists who have inspired me with large-scale installations, where playfulness or fastness in the work process is more important than a perfect result. Tracey Emin works a lot with text without bothering to clean out her spelling mistakes. The non-binary artist Kris Lemsalu represented Estonia at the Venice Biennale 2019, with a sculptural installation and performance called *Birth V - Hi and Bye*. The main installation was a big ceramic vulva-squirting fountain mixed with jeans, metal bathtubs and eggs lying in the water. The way the glaze was splattered on the ceramic and the whole aesthetic of mixing everyday objects with ceramic appears fast and nearly trashy. Even though I understand it's not true, fountain building and big ceramics certainly is a long-time process.

The French artist Laure Prouvost has made breast fountains in glass, she seems to have a lot of fun experimenting with water and breasts. She works transdisciplinary with many mediums at the same time, in immersive installations where her sculptures become set-design or in video installations. The only Prouvost work I have seen live was her video installation *For Four Beauties 2022*, at Kiasma's ARS22 exhibition.

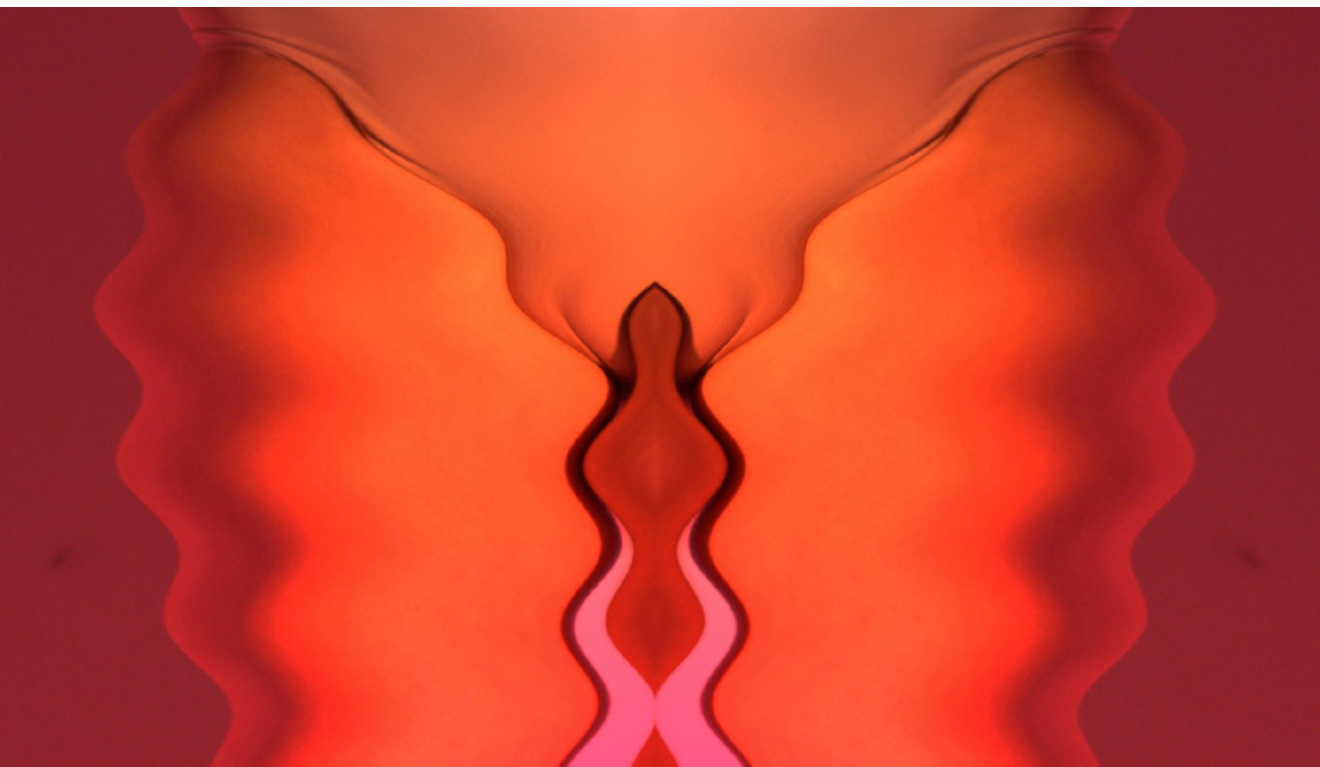
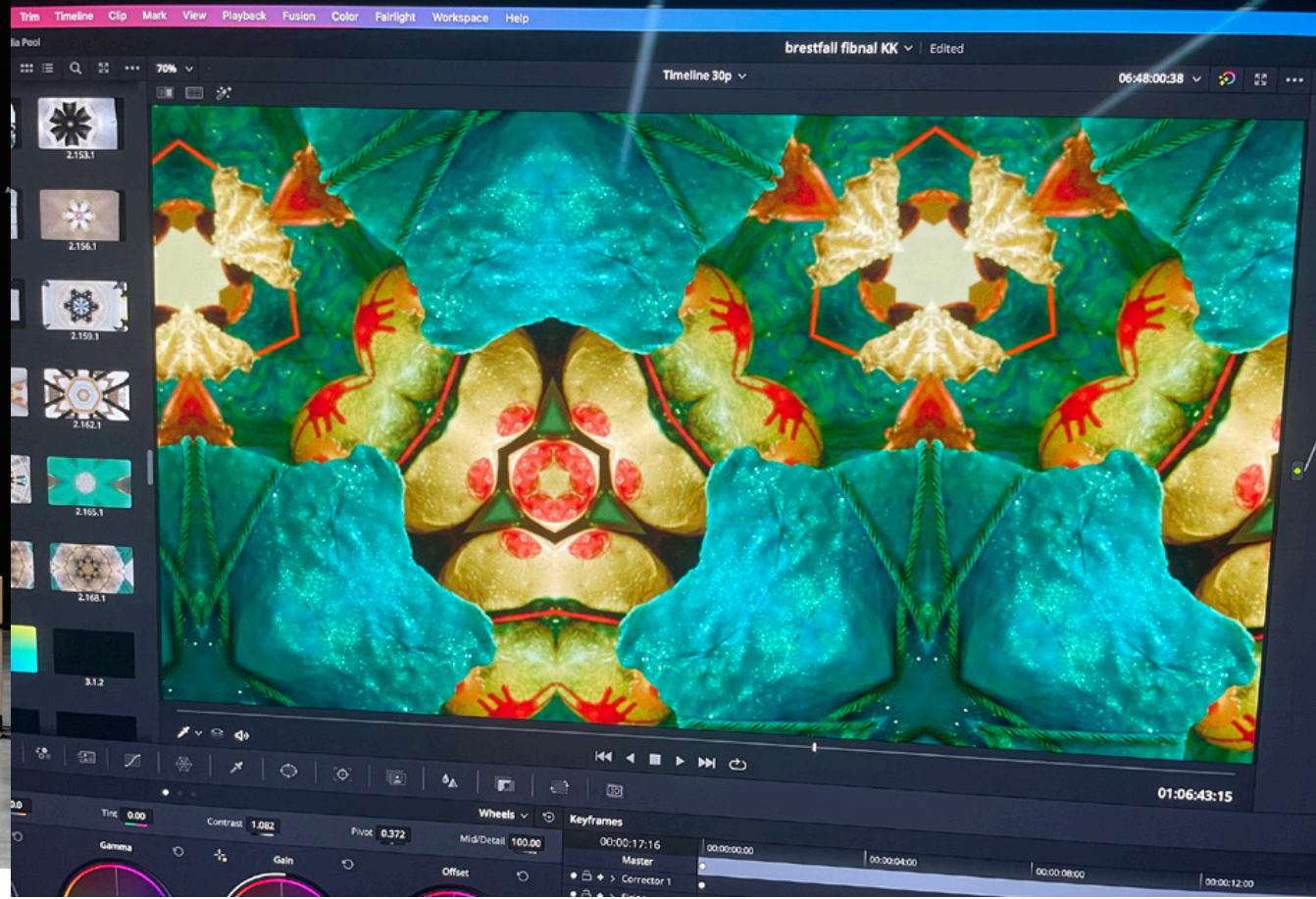
I loved it, the work was nearly hypnotic with a lot of close-ups, many layers of footage and soft sound. The video was about femininity, motherhood, and sauna culture. It was screened on a huge bent screen like it was part of a circle. The room temperature was 38 Celsius, and the walls, carpet, and large pillows were all in pink or red colors, it was imitating a womb.



Kris Lemsalu. *Birth V*. The Estonian Pavilion at the 58th Venice biennale, 2019. Photo: Kent Märjamaa.



Installation view *Sexual Journey Interviews 2022*. Photo: Karoliina Korvuo



Video still from *Sexual Journey Interviews 2022*.



Gallery view, second floor hall. Photo: Petri Summanen.

## Editing

### **Sound Editing**

The sound-editing program I used is a free software called Reaper, which I learned at a SA-MA-sound course at the Sibelius Academy. I cut away a lot of thinking pauses. I cut away or equalized loud noise from touching the microphone for example, this is called sound cleaning. Sometimes the distance between the talking mouth and the mic was changing and causing a change in volume, this was especially a problem with the online interviews. I aimed to create equal volume inside each interview and compared them to the other interviews' volume levels, to avoid volume problems for the listeners that were listening through headphones.

In one interview, there was also a loud background noise throughout the whole interview from a computer fan. I got help from two sound teachers to clean this, but we did not succeed entirely. Throughout all the interviews I was trying my best to edit out high peaks, and sound mistakes. Like with laughter or if the person suddenly spoke higher than their normal volume range because of excitement, I had to quickly adjust the sensitivity in the analog zoom-microphone/recorder, to avoid distortion. Often, I was surprised by the distortion and did not manage to adjust the volume sensitivity in time.

### **Video Editing**

Already in spring 2021, I learned how to produce kaleidoscopic moving images through a video editing course in the software Davinci. First, I animated still images of my own sculptures, but I learned that the effect also could be used with moving video material. In autumn 2021 I started to experiment with adjusting the kaleidoscope effect, colour-grading, overlapping footage, mirroring and speed in videos that ended up in the final edit. I really enjoyed searching for the most interesting setting and position for the kaleidoscope effect. It was a lot of parameters I could adjust and combine; I was gradually building up a collection of kaleidoscope videos.

The kaleidoscopic visuals are fitting to the kaleidoscopic theme of "sexuality", which is complex, and full of angles, shapes, and forms. Sexuality is hard to grasp as something whole, often you can only concentrate on parts of it. Sexuality is constantly floating and changing forms, sometimes in a fast way, other times slowly and gradually.

### **Colour-grading**

I also love colour-grading, to make the visuals look vibrant and saturated. It reminds me of searching for colour harmonies while painting. I'm inspired by the video-artist Pipilotti Rist when it comes to colour-grading. In interviews, Rist talks about how raw film always is greyer than what the eyes see, and that it's both trendy and cheaper to not colour-grade the video back to the colours you actually see. I prefer the vibrance of the colours to be a bit exaugurated, nearly sparkling, and shiny, blended with a strong white or yellow light, like a blossoming flower field. I found grey as the most boring colour, I almost don't accept it as a colour, I disguise colours that are blended with a grey tone in them.

### **Matching**

Toward the end of *Breastfall performance*, in March 2022, I filmed the waterfall and sculptures, in the white box Kuva/Tila gallery. I even sound-recorded the waterfall with a hydro-

phone. In the end, I had a big collection of potential material to pick from. After the sound editing in Reaper, I tried to select the right visuals for the right stories. I was adjusting the clipping rhythm and the objects to the stories. For example, when someone mentioned an explosive orgasm, I added what I see as an explosive water fountain. When someone talked about body image, I abstracted a male torso. With talking about porn, I added glossy lipstick lips licking a lollipop. Talking about gaze I tried to add some eyes. In the end, I could only do this image syncing to a certain level. A very subjective level based on my own interpretations. Some abstract topics I found hard to directly translate into fitting visuals.

### **Hanging of the TVs**

The three TV screens were placed in a line so close to each other, that when listening to one screen's audio you also looked at the two other screens. This was my intention, that if one screen was too fast or too slow, the audience could select some of the others to look at. When presenting the screens so close together I could also relax more about the places where I felt I had not succeeded enough with finding a fitting/mirroring visual to the audio.

## What I discovered through the interviews:

### **Labelling**

Some people find a community in labelling and putting words on their sexuality. Reading everything about the label "polyamory" or "non-binary" helped them on their sexual journey and finding out more about themselves. At the same time, I also met many people that were afraid of using labels, because they could contain so many different shades, and they wouldn't be misread belonging to a strict box. It seemed like some were really specific about what words they identified with and other nearly similar words they were avoiding. Like "non-mogamous" instead of "polyamorous" or "pan-sexual" instead of the older word "bi-sexual".

### **Private vs work**

I had an internship at Tori Wrånes Studio. Tori is one of Norway's most famous performance artists, she is a master at separating her private life from her professional life. Her Instagram and web-page don't give a single picture clue about her family, romantic partner, or if she has children. Even though she mentioned in an Artist Talk that her full-cowered furry creatures are free from gender, and she uses queer titles such as "Mothers and child" she doesn't brand her art for queer-art. I learned that also these labels that many are proud of using, can at the same time narrow audiences' reading of the art. Instead, she uses wider terms for describing the topics of her art, like being a "troll" an outsider of society, that strives for more openness, love and acceptance.

### **Relationship(s) is often not equal to the identity**

I was doing an interview with a romantic couple, that I first thought was a lesbian couple because they both used she-pronouns. One year later one of them came out as a nonbinary person which only uses the pronoun "they". I asked them: *"How would you define your relationship? – SILENCE ... What do you mean? – Do you for example define yourself as a lesbian couple? – No. We don't say we are a lesbian couple; we just say that we are a couple. - And none of us are lesbians, haha... I define myself as pansexual or bi-sexual, which means I can fall in love with ALL genders. ... I think a lot of people just assume that when you are in a re-*

lationship with two girls, that is a lesbian relationship, but it's just a relationship....- It's so frustrating when people are saying: You are in a straight relationship now, so you're straight now. Then you have to explain like – No, I'm still bi-sexual or pan-sexual, just together with the opposite sex right now.”

The relationship(s) you are in now does not need to mirror your identity or inner feeling as something else.

### Queer enough?

This was so beautiful to hear, I often feel I'm not queer enough for others, I think most people are reading me as straight because I now live in a straight monogamous relationship for the last 3 years. I identify as a pan-sexual and polyamorous woman. I'm a cis woman but my sexuality is queer, I could have been in a relationship with another gender than a man. I have the capacity of living in a polyamorous way, but that doesn't mean that I want to live in a polyamorous way now. I got tired of all the changes and instability polyamory demanded. I understand there are different levels of being queer, some are born queer, and others become queer. I'm afraid of taking up the space for someone needing it more than me by going to queer events. Someone that is living out their queer identity right now and can tick off more points of what makes them queer than I can. These feelings about not being queer enough were common for several of the bi- and pan- sexual people I interviewed.



*Breastfall* installation view from the beginning of the exhibition *Tracing Work* at KuvaTila gallery, March 2022.  
Photo: Natalie Eliassen

## 5 Working process of *Breastfall*

### *Breastfall* Casting Performance

#### Diversity

By showing a diversity of breasts in *Breastfall* I want to demystify breasts, a part of the nude body. I wanted to show diversity, both in the interviews and in the breast casted. Therefore, I was a bit disappointed that the people who booked the breast casting sessions were mostly assumed women from their names, later I learned that around five of them were non-binary. I casted two men in the end. I was in a dialogue with a trans woman that had grown breasts after taking hormones, but she got covid two times during the spring I did the castings. She said she would love to cast her breasts before she probably will fill them up with silicone. The Finnish state will pay for her silicon if they don't grow over a certain size just by the hormone treatment.

In my Helsinki friends' group or more acquaintances, I have four-five trans-men. They did not sign up, and I would not push them to do so. One of them showed me the scars of a breast-away operation gone wrong. His male nipples were not circular, they had grown to be another angled shape, because of infections in the nipple scars. He said he probably would do one more operation later.

*Squeaky Toys* (2017) by Illusia Juvani, is a fascinating video work, I saw at the exhibition *Spektrum* 8.10.21 -9.1.22 at Turku City Art Museum. In the video, I see an assumed trans-woman playing with their hairy breasts. The body is fat and plump, with soft skin, and curvy breasts on a dark-haired chest. The person touches their own saggy breasts with long neon pink nails, they make the breast bounce and their nipples are erect. I saw the breast in the video as gender-free, or balancing exactly in the middle of a scale between feminine and masculine. In *Breastfall* I hoped to show that sometimes it can be hard to see one's sex through breasts.

A body should be allowed to be a body without automatically being associated with sex. I was thinking that by only casting the breast without any face picture, age or name connected to them, people could dare to let people look at the breast without looking at their personality and identity.

#### Title

The title *Breastfall* is a mix of the unisex word breast and (water) fall. I was also fascinated by the title of a Swedish clown show for adults by the group M.P.A.C called "*Breast in Peace*". From their promo-trailer video, it looks like the show deals with all the thinkable aspects of breasts in a very funny way.<sup>5</sup>

5 M.P.A.C, *Breast in Peace*, 2022

## Building/planning

### **Casting Sessions**

The doodle booking system for the *Breastfall casting session* was fully booked the day after the opening of the exhibition *Tracing work*, in March 2022. There I had a private casting room behind the wall with my waterfall in the main room in Kuva/Tila gallery. When people were casted, we could listen to the waterfall sounds or talk, small talk. We often talked about their relationship to their breasts, sexuality, love, dating, sex toys, and more.

### **Time scheduling**

Since the casting schedule was filled up so fast it was not possible for people who were unsure to book a session later, even though I managed to find some time for friends when I had an un-booking. A lot of times people did not show up for their casting sessions. I think this happened because the session was free, the model didn't pay anything, only I (and partly the Academy) paid for the materials. The second reason was a mistake on my side: to design the Doodle booking system in a way that so many people signed up with only their first name, not leaving their last name, telephone number or e-mail address. This often left me with no chance to remind people about their casting sessions. After experiencing that people were not showing up a few times, I started to send out a reminder/notification message to those who had left their e-mail or last name, one or two days before.

One casting session with a model lasted one and a half hours. After the session, I cleaned, filled the mould with hard-plaster, took the dry sculpture out after 30 min and painted the breast torso in the colours, glitter and style that the person had wished for. All together I used around 3,5 hours on making one breast sculpture.

I had 1-3 castings every day. First, I was not planning to do castings on the weekend but ended up doing it on friends that hadn't managed to book a place. Two castings from 10:00 -18:00 was a perfect amount of work for a day. When I had three castings, I had to work until late painting them, as the model requested. When the breast was painted, I found a place for them in or nearby the waterfall. Sometimes I secured them with textile ribbons and tied them to the wood structure. I was thinking that the waterfall was gradually blooming, growing more breasts during the casting month, like flowers popping up in a field during spring.

### **Lydia Reeves**

Through the Instagram hashtag #breastcast I discovered artist and sculptor Lydia Reeves who works in Brighton, England. Reeves works with body casting of breasts, vulvas, and bums. Her models are booking a time and pay for all the material, in the end they receive a sculpture copy of their body part some days after a session. I researched her art practice for inspiration and techniques for making the *Breastfall performance*. Reeves works with more expensive and long-lasting materials than me, more with silicone than with alginate and the buyers can choose if their sculpture will be in plaster, glassfiber or metal. Most of them are made in glass-fiber, which allows her to sand the edges and cut away roughness. Her end results are more precise copies and neater than my sculptures. I saw that Reeves had an exhibition dedicated to breast-cancer survivors, therefor I was expecting more than one breast cancer story to arrive during my castings, but it only happened once.

Reeves's starting point for body casting was her own insecurity about the labias in her vulva. She wanted to operate them shorter but changed her mind when she discovered how diverse vulvas can look. "*The vulva and I*" is her artist book that depicts vulva castings and a story about the model's relationship to their vulva. I bought the limited printed book from the artist, but the book was lost during shipment. It never made the way to Helsinki or back to the artist in the UK.

*«Having worked on myself a lot over the last few years with embracing who I am and the body that I have, I want to give other people the platform to celebrate themselves and their bodies too. I want my work to have a positive impact on how people see not only their bodies, but how they see themselves as a whole.»* From Lydia Reeves's webpage.<sup>6</sup>

### **My role**

During the casting sessions, I took on a performing role and had a small script or introduction speak to everyone at the beginning of the casting. I introduced myself and asked for their name and pronouns, and what they were calling their breasts. I was explaining how the casting procedure would go, asked them how they were feeling about it, and if there were some parts that they were afraid of before we started. Asking them what position they wanted to cast their breast in. The most important thing was to make sure that the models would tell me if they felt uncomfortable or in pain so I could try to do something about it. I tried to also check in about how they were feeling, the temperature, and if they could breathe normally, several times during the casting.



Alginate mould, recently released from breasts. Natalie pouring hard plaster into a mould, wearing the casting session outfit.

**The casting process recipe or score:**

Prepare two water buckets of lukewarm water from the corridor.

Close the windows with the rolling curtain remote control, close the door-curtains to the casting corner, and put out the A-sign with “*Please do not enter! Breastfall casting session in progress.*”

Picked up the model outside or in the big exhibition room and guide them into the smaller casting-room.

Talk and introduced the casting steps. Agree on the casting position.

The model can take off their upper clothes. Wrapped a big plastic cheat around their pants to protect them from alginate and plaster spill.

The model or you should smear the model’s body hair with Vaseline to avoid getting it stuck in plaster.

Take on plastic gloves.

Blended 50% alginate powder and water with a drill with a blender blade.

Now you have less than three minutes to cover the breast with the liquid alginate before it stiffens to hard jelly. Drip alginate on the breasts and smear it out with your hands until the breast is totally covered in alginate.

Use a scissor to cut the plaster bandage and dip it in water before placing it on top of the alginate surface, to keep the round form of the body.

Take on a face mask to avoid breathing in plaster powder while you mix plaster with water. Remember that plaster-making should happen whit some meters of distance from where the model sits. Start with a bucket of water, and gradually feed the water with more and more portions of plaster. When the plaster stops sinking into the water and instead forms an island of plaster on the water’s surface, then you know that you have used enough plaster for the blend to stiffen, and first then you can stir around with a wood stick.

When the plaster mix is ready, pour and press it with your hands against the layer of plaster bandage.

Wait about ten minutes until the plaster layer is completely stiff. A chemical process that produces warmth happens when the plaster stiffens. The model also feels the warmth through the alginate layer when it’s soon time to take off the mould. Sometimes the alginate naturally starts to glide and slip off, other times you need to loosen and peel off the alginate edges before the layered form leaves the body.

When the mould is taken away from the breast. Give the model wet wipes and a towel to clean traces of alginate and Vaseline from the body and offer to help with the cleaning. Now the model can exit the plastic cover/protection and take on their clothes again.

Ask the model what colours and glitter they want you to decorate the breast with. To help you remember, take a phone picture of the high-pigmented acryl colours and glitter that they have picked out.

Sometimes the model leaves right after this, other times they want to watch you blend hard plaster and pour it in too the fresh mould.

Wait for about 30 more minutes before the hard-plaster is stiff and you can empty the sculpture from the mould. Be careful when revealing /un-wrapping the sculpture from the alginate





mould. Started from the edges working towards the nipples and the space between the breasts. The goal is to not make cracks in the fragile alginate mould in case you have to re-use it. In that case, try to use the alginate mould one more time. Unfortunately, cracks or shrinking in the alginate form would be visible on the surface of the next sculpture.

### Alginate shrinking

Alginate shrinks and dries every minute unless you have the form completely covered from oxygen, for example in a water box. Therefore, it is quite risky to not empty the form/mould the same day it was cast. If the first sculpture failed, I had to blend new plaster immediately to avoid oxygen making the mould shrink. In the beginning, I experimented with re-casting in shrunk alginate forms. The result was a miniature of the model, it creepingly reminded me of children's bodies, therefore I stopped with it. Sometimes I also tested pressing ceramic clay into the newly used alginate moulds.

### Types of plaster

Some casts were also a bit problematic. It happened several times that the breast broke in the middle, then it became two separate breasts, especially with big heavy breasts. Sometimes there was a big air-bubble in the nipple, so the nipple got a strange shape or did not exist. The most difficulty I had was with casting nipple piercings when I also had run out of hard plaster. When I used the standard soft plaster, the piercings fell away as a result. I tried with medium hard plaster, and then it finally worked with the new order of hard plaster.

Normal soft plaster (white colour) is the cheapest option, and you can break it with your hands after it's stiff, so it's perfect to use for temporary mould-making. The next level after hard plaster is concrete, you must use a hammer and chisel to crack it. Therefore, hard plaster (beige colour) is perfect to use for the actual sculpture.

### Water and plaster

The tricky part with plaster is that it sands off and evaporates slowly in contact with water. Hard plaster sands off slower than soft plaster would do in water. I put some plaster breast sculptures in a bucket with still water over a month and in the end, they sanded off a trace of plaster powder. With moving running water from a waterfall or fountain, the sanding process was many times quicker. Towards the end of the first *Breastfall installation*, the water was brown and not so easy to see through because of the sanding of the brown-coloured hard-plaster.

### Comfort

While mixing water with the alginate powder, I tried to use body-temperature water to comfort the model. If I had used cold water, I would have got more stiff nipples and goosebumps in the cast, as I did with one of the first mould tests with my boyfriend. The very first test cast was done with a model standing and holding the wet alginate liquid in place in a cardboard box. It was too hard to stand still in the same position without movement and therefore this first plaster breast got three nipples instead of two.

### The casting room and positions

The casting room was a working studio created by installing a wall in front of a corner of the Kuva/Tila gallery. When the curtain-door to the workspace was open (because I was not having a casting session), the audience could walk into the room and often find me working. The



The studio for *Breastfall Casting Performance*, behind a wall in Kuva/Tila gallery. Clay in shrunken alginate, hard plaster in green silicone. Unpainted soft plaster sculptures and glazed ceramic sketch of the *Boob fountain*. Photos: Ida Enegren 33

floor was covered with plastic, and I had a mattress, a gym mat and some pillows covered in plastic, to make the stand still-minutes as comfortable as possible for the volunteers. Some people wanted to lie on their backs, and one person was lying on their stomach. When lying it was harder to avoid plaster not running into the armpit hair area, therefore I started to recommend people to sit, because then it was easier, the plaster only run one direction, down to the lap covered with plastic.

### **Giving back**

The plaster breast sculptures were given back to the models right after the graduation show. I did not feel right for me to try to sell other people's copies of breasts. With the ceramic, I had a different feeling, because the shapes had moved away from being a copy. It's very hard to recognize who the breasts originally belonged to in the ceramics. Therefore, I felt okay with selling ceramic breasts.

Blue and turquoise shades were the most popular colour the models wanted the breasts to be painted in. (Maybe because blue is the opposite of most skin colours?) It was interesting that some people were not 100% sure of which breast sculptures belonged to them. For some, it was more the colours than the shape/form of the breasts that they could recognize their own breast sculpture form. I had to compare it with my mobile pictures and booking schedule to be sure sometimes.

### **My own feeling about the casting process**

#### **Allowed to look**

As I explained in the first chapter under *Nudity in Norway*, I come from a culture where nudity is rare, nearly unwelcomed, and you are supposed to not peek or stare if you happen to see a nude person, except if the nude person is performing or are about to have sex with you. So my curiosity and desire come from that I had studied/explored few naked bodies in my real life. I had this desire to have a closer look at breasts. While I started with the breast casting, I had this inner fight with myself, out of habit I tried to glance as little as possible at the nude breast, the few seconds they were exposed, before covering them with alginate. Even though I wanted to examine and remember the different colour shades and the forms on the nipples and areolas. I had created the performance to be allowed to watch and get a better visual memory of breast diversity, but I was still struggling to unlearn to not see, from being polite. Gradually I succeeded to look and remember more. Nipples have different colours from brown, red, pink, and purple, to orange.

#### **What I learned from breast casting**

The process of casting is not sexual, rather technical, but it is highly intimate. The intimacy made me quite afraid in the beginning, I had to make the other person feel safe, and I tried to check in many times, too not step over anyone's borders. Gradually I trusted that the people who had signed up had thought through it and given me consent to touch and look at their breasts a little bit. At the same time, I was prepared that someone would regret their consent or change their mind in the middle of the casting or when they saw the casting room. This fear of withdrawing of consent, is probably rooted in my own experiences of suddenly resigning from intimate situations, like foreplay or sex. Therefore, I wanted it to be allowed in the casting session also, to say that you do not want to or feel like it after all, but no one did it.

I learned that many women have hair on their breasts, especially around the nipple. Even if you don't have been pregnant you can have long pointy nipples, which I thought at first was a result of breastfeeding. A few mothers told me they did not like their new breast form after breastfeeding and would not sign up, while their kids loved the installation. The most healing learning for me was that I learned that you would get hanging boobs early in your twenties if they are heavy. I had for a long time been sorrowing that I got hanging boobs so early. I also casted mothers in their 50s with small breasts that nearly did not hang because of their light weight. An earlier gymnast that was casted told me that their pre-teenage gymnastics teacher had told them "to remember to use a sports bra, so you don't get hanging boobs". If your genetics are giving you big boobs, they will hang no matter the use of a sports bra.

### **Porn**

Comparing yourself to others is considered unhealthy, but for me, it was healthy to learn about the breast diversity that exists. In one of the interviews, a male character talks about how watching amateur porn and people sharing nude photos gave him a perspective of body diversity and was helping him with accepting his own body. I don't want to stop porn, I believe nude-selfies and ethical porn can be good for people. Although it's sad that this type of porn is often not the most accessible for the youth to consume. You often must pay for this type of porn or learn where to look for it. A Norwegian study on porn, done by Opinion 2022, says that on average Norwegian kids first time watching porn when they are 11 years, and 50% of porn users, say they have learned something new about sexual preferences by watching porn.

### **Small talk**

Originally, I was hoping to also record and interview people while I was casting them, but I quickly realized that it was too much to think about for me at the same time. I had to concentrate on blending the right amount of water with alginate and plaster, and not spill plaster in the model's armpit hair and so on. I saw the small talk about sexuality topics more as inspiration and training for the video interviews that I was starting with right after the one-month casting performance was over.

### **Reasons for wanting a breast cast**

One of the small-talk questions I usually asked during the casting sessions was why the person was interested in casting their breasts. They had various reasons for that, sometimes it was for challenging themselves by relaxing with being nude in front of someone/me. Some were already very comfortable with nudity and wanted to support an art piece about sexuality, and some of my friends only wanted to support my participatory performance. One person told me about their mother had died of breast cancer a few years ago, and that they had a complicated relationship with their own breast because of being afraid to inherit the same breast cancer. To come to a casting session was like an attempt to heal and get a better relationship with their breasts.



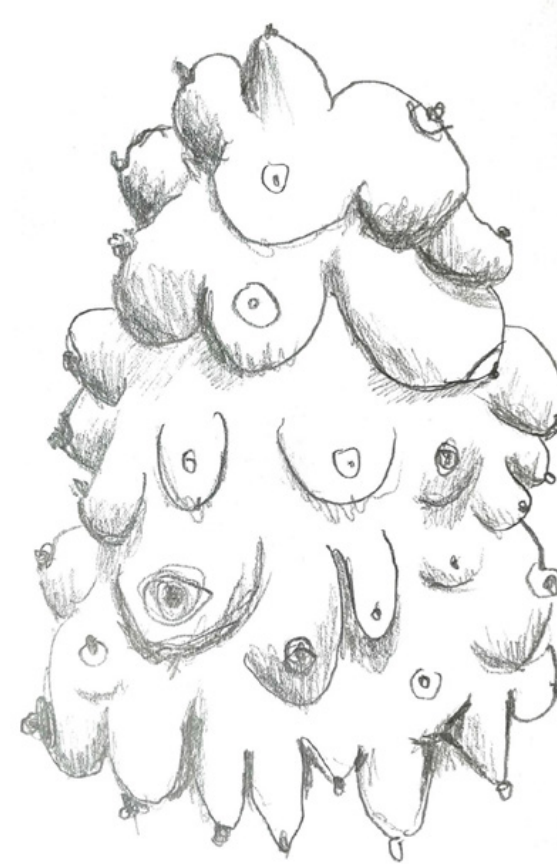
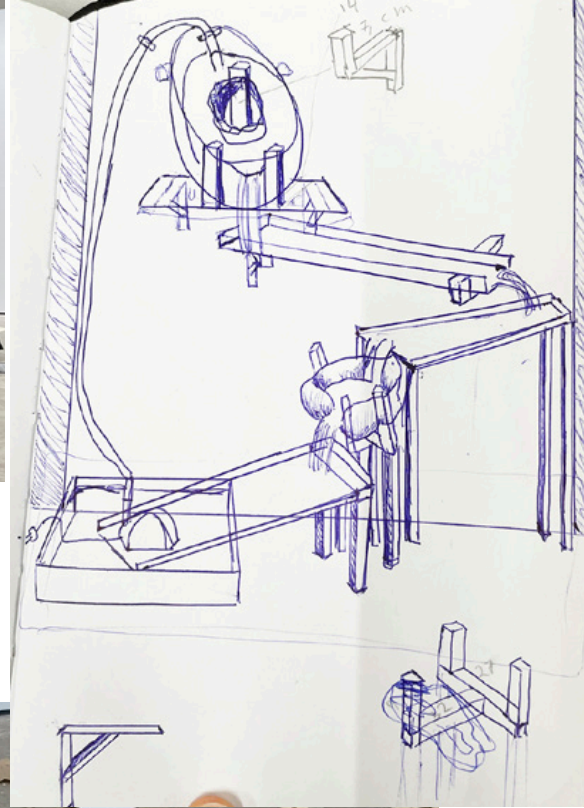
From the work table, higgpainted acryl painting on plaster breasts. Photos: Natalie Eliassen





The casting studio was behind the *Breastfall in Tracing Work*.

Construction work of *Breastfall*, wood and Lundia shelves were covered with plastic and tapes.



*Boob fountain*, drawn sketch and in clay. Some of the clay breast are pressed into plaster moulds others are built by freehand.



My first breast castings, beewax with pigments hanging in a bra. A breast in soft plaster with pigments in still water gradually sanded a trace. Installed in *We are international students trying to survive* at Tasku gallery, Helsinki, December 2021.

## ***Breastfall Installation***

### **My relation to the audience**

I care a lot about the audience when I present my art. What I enjoy most as an art audience going to exhibitions myself, is immersive installations, that activate as many scenes as possible in me. Therefore, I try to give my audience what I would have enjoyed a lot as an audience. I don't want my art to be too indirect and challenging to interpret or tough to find, instead, I use a direct "in your face" aesthetic. I was happy that *Breastfall* could be placed in the main entrance area, so it could not be overlooked.

### **Placing**

We were suggesting the placement ourselves, but the decision was made after a group discussion with all the other students that wanted to exhibit in the same room/area. I knew my installation would need a lot of space and even make some sound, so I was nervous, but luckily no one else wanted to exhibit on the first part of the stairs. I had already seen how *Breastfall* would look in a white cube so I was interested in seeing how it could be installed in a more public space.

I liked that my video work was nearby, on top of the stairs, but not so close that you saw both at the same time and would compete about the same attention. It was challenging to get the audience up from the first floor, despite that we had signs and maps. The higher up in the building, the less audience, and even the second floor had noticeably less audience.

## **4.7 Materials**

### **Finding the material for the fountain**

I wanted to make the topic of sexuality less abstract, and work with the most concrete part of sexuality – the body. The body parts I connect most to sexuality, are the breasts, butts and genitals. The genital was for me a bit too intimate and private to work with. I personally also have a better relationship with my breasts than my vulva. My breast is one of my favourite body parts on myself. Vulvas can also have more obstacles (fluids and menstruation) and sickness/infections than the breast.

Before I entered the master's program, I worked a lot with the inner clitoris organ. I made clitoris earrings, the clitoris dance performance with the clitoris costume, and clitoris sculptures. I found breasts more concrete than the hidden inner clitoris.

### **3D copy**

I wanted to use the academies facilities like the ceramic workshop or the 3D printing workshop. Therefore, one of my earliest ideas was to make a *boob fountain*, with a lot of different breasts. I was taking a 3D course and first thought about 3D-scanning breasts with photo geometry technique and printing the *boob fountain*. The main challenge with 3D was that I would lose a lot of details on the surface, so I could forget about goosebumps and stretch marks. Today the most precise three-dimensional copying technique is still the analogue alginate or silicon casting and then filling the mould with plaster.

I also experimented with a 3D-program where you can build characters and adjust the breast shape in all possible forms. It was the details from real humans that interested me the most, therefore I chose plaster.

### **Fountain output**

In the end, the 3D-course came to use, I had to 3D-print a fountain output to the fountain

pump I had bought. I got technical help in the FabLab at the Academy. After some struggle to make the void inside the output, we managed to design and print an output with 5 holes, that I connected to thin water tubes. I had to cut the tubes thinner in the end and press them into the nipple holes in the ceramics. Later, I super-glued the plastic tubes to the nipples because they were falling out of their positions sometimes.

### **Ceramic**

Because of this, I wanted the *boob fountain* to be made from burned and glazed ceramics which is a waterproof material, that doesn't sand off. Clay is not liquid, so you have to press it into plaster forms, moulded from a plaster sculpture that again was cast with alginate. Wet-clay and porcelain exist, so you can cast with them, but the Academy did not have a permanent ceramic technician, they just hire ceramic technicians for running a course over a short period and none of the courses was about wet casting. I tried to ask the course holders about how to cast with wet clay, but none of them had enough experience or time to show me how to do it.

### **Ceramic shrinking**

Ceramic shrinks 10% when drying and firing, and after it's "leather-dry" it's too hard to add more clay to the sculpture. Therefore, the best way is to continue to work with a big sculpture over several days in a row and make the edges wet with water and paper/textile while you are having a break. Because working so intensely with the sculptures was impossible when I also did interviews I had to divide my fountain sculpture into different circles instead of one part. I first tried to build it in one part, I was building it around a big bucket for support, but the sculpture broke into different pieces while drying and shrinking.

### **Glaze**

In my Bachelor's in Bergen, I had worked a whole year with ceramics and promised myself to not work with it anymore, because it was so time-consuming that I lost the motivation. Four years later I was missing working with the ceramic, but I tried to work as fast as possible without the form collapsing and not doing many tests with the glaze (only a few). I would try to have fun with the surprises that occurred without testing.

### **Experimenting**

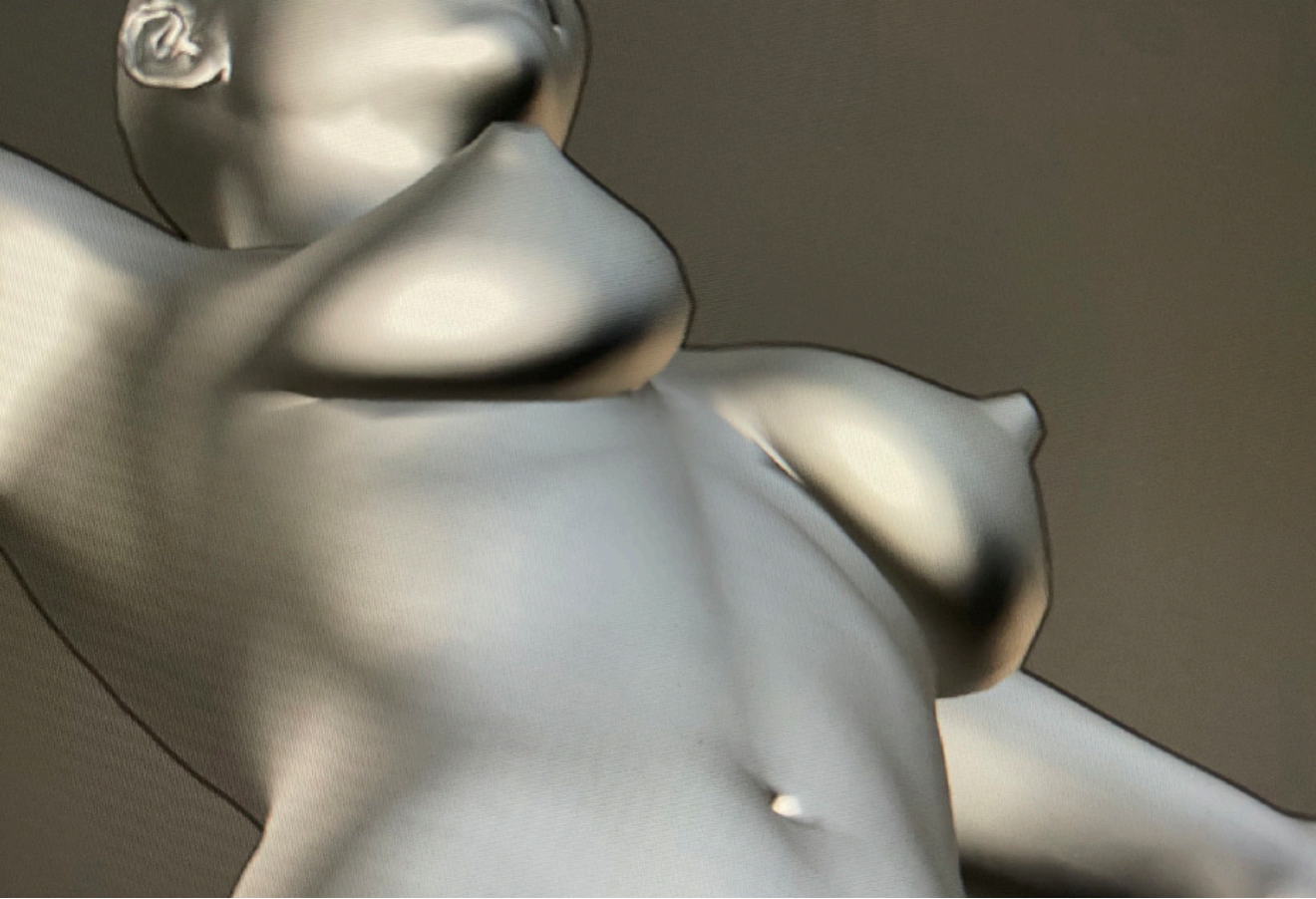
Glazing is for me the final step of making a ceramic sculpture, the part I enjoy the most. I love to produce shiny glittery, marbling textures of glaze. I enjoy mixing different glazing and seeing how they blend or do not blend into each other. I ordered and bought ready-blended glaze powders from different ceramic stores.

### **Temperature**

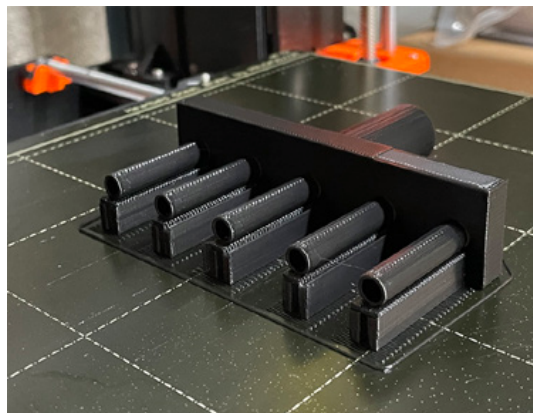
Different glazing requires different burning temperatures, and therefore you have to glaze fire several times if you want to use glazes that require different temperatures. The rule of glazing is that you start with firing the glaze with the highest temperature, and then you apply new layers of glaze and always go down in temperature in the kiln. Glaze and temperature: high-fire is 2000C or higher, medium is around 1000, and lowfire is under 1000.

### **Lustre glaze**

In most of my ceramics I finished with a "top-glaze" called "Lustre", mostly used with porce-



Editing breasts in 3D program.  
The fountain pump with homemade output and tubs to the nipples.  
3D-printing a fountain output.



lain. You buy it in expensive small 10ml glass jars and apply a thin layer of it on your already shiny glazed sculptures. After firing on 780C you see an iridescent pearl/rainbow shine on top of your other glaze. (I experienced that the rainbow shine did not appear on “raku-glaze” probably because raku glaze did not have enough shininess in the surface.)

### **Water**

The reason I wanted to add a waterfall to my sculptural installation, is that I wanted a moving element. I see the still and motionless sculptures as something dead, like sparkling stones or pearls in a river. The running water could make the scenery more like living nature. Water reminds me of all the liquid fluids our bodies produce, that some can squirt during sex and how important water is for all living beings. It was also a positive thing that the running water made a relaxing sound. I tested out different water pressure and speed with different angles on the slopes in a bathroom at the academy, and if it was making a relaxing or stressful sound. I had to switch to a bigger pool pump than I first tried, to make the water be pumped up high enough from the ground.

### **The cycle of water**

The water was running in a cycle, like a life cycle or menstruation cycle. I especially felt that my *Breastfall installation* was a living system when the sun on hot spring days made the water evaporate. On the hottest days I could refill up to 30 litres of water with my 10-liter bucket and on shadowy colder days it drank maximum 5 litres of water. I usually refilled every 3rd day.

The water pressure was living its own life with the sun, it was hard to regulate it to be constant with having the same amount of water in the system. After refilling the water or when it lacked water, the water splashed and dropped at different spots, and I used both seashells and ceramic sculptures to block the water from running out of the slopes or the pool. All the ceramics was therefore very tactically placed. In the future, I want to install the *Breastfall* outside, because it was a hassle to constantly look after and fix it so that it was not leaking. The electric water pump was on during the exhibition hours and was turned off during the night.

During the online clitoris seminar called “The clitoris summit 2022”, I heard nature activist Clare Dubois, speaking about how no new water comes to our planet earth.<sup>7</sup> Water turns into gas and ice and back to water while moving around on planet Earth in a closed system. The water I drink today can some days later be on a leaf in a tree in Amazon and then travel to a cloud and rain or snow back in the ocean. This thought was also something I was thinking a lot about when adding the water element. Water is also my favourite of the natural elements; I lived three years on a sailboat during my Bachelor’s. I still sail the boat each summer, and love to swim in the ocean.

### **Hydrofeminism**

“Hydrofeminism” is a term from 2013, that combines ecological thinking with feminism, introduced by Astrida Neimani, the philosopher and academic writer of the book “Bodies of Water”. If I understand it right the main idea is that water surrounds us and is in all living organisms and in nature. Most of both our bodies and the whole planet consist of water. Both humans, animals, plants and organisms are dependent on water, water brings us together. We

<sup>7</sup> Dubois, 2022





must live ecological lives to save the environment. Like water is fluid, gender and the border between humans, nature and organisms are also fluid. Everything affects each other. If we care about the cycles of water, we care about ecology, feminism and all living beings in the rest of the world. These are ideas that also resonate with me.

### Seashells as aphrodisiac

On one of the swimming trips, I had taken while sailing in Norway, I found a lot of big oyster shells. I collected some of them and brought them with me to Helsinki.

During my research on aphrodisiacs, I found out that an oyster seashell is a typical aphrodisiac symbolizing the vulva. Through Instagram, I have seen videos of fingering a freshly opened oyster and other artists who fill the shells with glittering vulva figures. I added seashells to the *Breastfall installation* for making even more references to sexuality. In a few places, in the ceramic or the wood, I also painted the clitoris symbol.

### Wood

The scaffolding-like wood construction of the waterfall is inspired by artist Olafur Eliasson's different artificial waterfall installations. I was doubting if I should paint the raw wood material in *Breastfall* with colourful wall paint but concluded that if I let the light yellow/white wood be as it was, together with the black plastic slopes, it would make a bigger contrast to the colourful breast sculptures, that was all other colours than black and white. The colourful sculptures were sticking more out and were getting more attention. If the structure around the breasts had been colourful too, they would have been camouflaged.



48 *Boob fountain* in glazed ceramics, as part of *Breastfall*, in Kuvan Kevat 2022. Photo: Natalie Eliassen

## 6 Remembering / Description of both works

During "Kuvan Kevat", I wrote a description of my artworks while sitting beside them:

The first artwork I both see and hear when entering the main door at the Helsinki Academy of Fine Arts is my artificial waterfall *Breastfall*. It consists of a lot of colourful breast sculptures lying in a downhill river (a waterfall) on the big concrete stairs. I hear the water flow running and dripping, and then suddenly I also hear some distanced Finnish language from Pedro Riva's video work a bit higher up on the grey stairs. The waterfall is constructed of unpainted light-yellow pine, softwood. The slopes where the water is running are made of Lunda shelves covered with black waterproof plastics with a small tongue guiding the water to the next level.

The water is ending in a six-shaped pool, also built with the same materials; wood, and black plastic. Breasts are resting on the top six-edged shelf of the pool. In the middle of the pool, there is a ceramic breast fountain with five outputs in the nipples. When I go closer, I see that some of the breasts are shiny, because of their ceramic glaze, and other sculptures are made of plaster, painted with acrylic and therefore not so shiny, but some of them have glitter on top of the painted surface. The bright colour of the breasts is in contrast to the black and white/yellow structure they are placed in.

On the second floor, a bit hidden towards a corner there are three flat-screen TVs around 40 inches, standing next to each other in a line, towards a sanded glass wall. The TVs are placed in the level in the middle of standing and sitting positions, maybe 1,30 meters above the grey concrete floor, on black legs, marked with different decorative ribbons. Pink lace, light-blue and gold-yellow ribbons, the same ribbons are attached to two headphones each. Altogether it's seven headphones lying on two light wooden benches in front of the three screens. When I sit down on the bench, I can hear different voices leaking out from the headphones no one is wearing now.

When I start listening to the surroundings, I also hear my waterfall, the voices from Pedro's video work, and sometimes the screams from Ville's video work on the other side of the second floor, even though Ville's sound piece is in a separate room with a locked door. My video installation is placed in the second-floor hall around the open stairwell. Sometimes I also hear people talking and walking around on other of the five floors, doors that open, beep and slam, and people walking with key chains. Walking down the metal staircase. Someone using the sink.

Next to my work is Henie's 3-meter-tall hanging fabric cave, with see-through blue silk paper, and Seija's video work with a bit smaller tv, a surfboard, and one bench like mine, she is also using headphones. Her video is texted and translated into Finnish. I don't have subtitles/text on my video works, I don't want to scream out people's secrets. If they want to hear them, they need to put on a pair of headphones.

There are three wooden signs with handwritten keywords, in different colours, of topics you can expect from each TV. The wood sign is leftover plywood from building the water pool for my fountain. The signs are placed on the black TV-feet.

In one of the signs, there is written: *Relationship, Nudity, Squinting, Dag, Body image,*

*Asexual, Identity, Love.*

The middle sign says: *Lovers, Dominant/Submissive, Dating, Boundaries, Chasing, Communicating, Pain.*

The last sign, the one to the right: *Spiritual, Orgasm, Motherhood, Porn, Gaze, Masturbation Club, Desire.*

The day after I wrote the signs, I was regretting that I had written motherhood, it should have been parenthood, as one of the parents I interviewed is non-binary.

The videos are vibrant and have strong colours. They are mostly showing kaleidoscopic pictures that constantly are moving. A lot of geometry; triangle, hexagon, pentagon, rectangle, rhombus, four- five-six-seven-pointed stars, and mixed shapes of all of those. Some scenes are vibrating, moving back and forward, others are like a rosette spinning around or like a tire rolling over the screen. In the middle screen, I suddenly see some water and some familiar shapes, traces of my *Breastfall* installation. On one screen it's a mouth with glossy lipstick trying to eat some candy strings, glitter eye makeup, licking a lollipop. I think it is a woman but it's hard to see since only a small part of the face is showing, nearly never the whole face, a way to anonymize.

Now I see traces of a man's face with a moustache, he is playing with some flowers. On the left screen, there is a star of long hair, 20 bellybuttons, and some pink fluffy fur, moving in slow motion. Suddenly some images are without a kaleidoscopic effect, or the picture is only mirrored one time, then it's easier to see where the kaleidoscopic material is coming from. I recognize plaster boobs and ceramic from *Breastfall*, nipples with pearl piercings, and now some closeups from the waterfall without a kaleidoscope. The kaleidoscopic TVs are mixing close-ups and multiplies of the same shapes. My eyes wander to all the 3 TVs at the same

time, it's impossible for me to only watch one of them. Kaleidoscopes of eating sushi, the waterfall, a nose, some breasts, body parts from people in underwear dancing, or body parts from sculptures are constantly mixing on the TVs, sometimes the scene is in slow motion and sometimes it's super quick movements. A scene with real breasts with pink sequin fabric shadows.

I take on one of the headphones, it's a mix of a monologue about coming out as bi-sexual to a Christian mom, sometimes you can hear the interviewer, me, asking questions or reacting emotionally. Like: "Ohhh no, yes, aha" or laughing at what the person interviewing is telling. I take another headphone; the sound quality is a bit weaker than the last one. I know it's because it's recorded through an online zoom meeting on the computer instead of in the sound studio at school.

I look at the small white exhibition sign; Sexual Journey Interviews, 3 channel video installation, total duration 2h and 15 min. I know that I also meant to write 4 interviews on each TV, each interview is around 12 min each. I thought the long, more than 2-hour total duration would scare people away. Unfortunately, the school staff took the extra sentence away to save money on printing the signs, without telling me about this change. This was an even bigger problem with *Breastfall*. They took away the whole sentence that explains that *Breastfall* installation is a performance result of a one-month casting performance and the plaster breasts will be given back to the volunteers that have been casted. Now it's hard for people to know that I want to sell the concept of doing a casting performance again, much more than selling some of the ceramic boobs. I was so frustrated about the text cut, that I added the word "performance result" with a grey pencil on the printed sign some days after the opening. The school staff printed a new sign with the new and forced title: "*Breastfall Performance Result*".



Natalie Seifert Eliassen, *Sexual Journey Interview*, 2022. Ribbons on the TV-legs and headphones marks connection.



Exhibition sign *Breastfall*

## 7 Reflections and contextualisation

In this chapter, I will put my art in contact with topics and opinions I have thought about after making Kuvan Kevät, but I still find relevant for my project. The artists I mention here, who also works with sexuality, are artists I have become more familiar with after I had made my works. While the artists mentioned earlier has been inspiring for me before and while making the works.

The angle of this chapter shifts from sexuality to sexuality from a female perspective. It would be nice if I could write from a more non-gendered perspective here to match my decision of not having any gender connected to my topics: sexuality and nudity, but it's hard when I identify as a female. At least I recognise that I'm still having a female perspective that affects what I'm interested in, and I don't want to speak for someone else than myself.

### Ane Barstad Solvang and the female role

Ane Barstad Solvang is a Norwegian artist and cartoon creator of "Fear and pity" and "Sporty Ponni", through whom I recognize my own artistry and drive. Barstad Solvang: *"Sporty Ponni is a place where I can vent aggression and vent frustration about expectations for me as a woman in society today. How we are all too often represented as small, pretty, agreeable, and shy of conflict...My project is to explore the intersection between traditional and modern women's roles. Expectations of women and exploring detachment from those expectations. I try to give even more perspectives and write roles that have herpes or postpartum depression. Things that are completely normal, but are rarely talked about because they are about women."*<sup>8</sup>

We still lack the saucy female characters in popular culture. It's so easy to feel that we have to live up to patriarchal expectations. It is liberating with female roles who are tacky, rude, ugly, fat and show their bad sides like their inner monster, it provides more spacious gender roles. Like Barstad Solvang, I want to expand on what is acceptable in the female role. I want the same things we accept for men, to be accepted for women and other genders. In particular, I want to expand and change our generation's sexual script, which unfortunately I still find super patriarchal and harmful for all parties.

### The sexual script

The sexual script is where our norms come from, it's formed by media, art, porn, books, TV-series and movies, and popular culture in general. The concept of "the sexual script", was introduced by sociologists John H. Gagnon and William Simon in their 1973 book *Sexual Conduct*.<sup>9</sup> They described the seduction and the sexual act as an invisible movie script, with roles and rules, which we all learn through culture and social relations, then imitate in our own sexuality. Like actors in a Hollywood film, right down to what sounds you say and your facial expressions. For example, it is part of our sexual script that the woman loudly expresses her pleasure, while the man is the silent but physically active party. In return, one rarely sees a couple talking about how to have sex, or a man being penetrated by a woman.

<sup>8</sup> Barstad Solvang, NRK-TV, 2022

<sup>9</sup> Gagnon & Simon, 1973

### Shame

Our western culture affects our sexuality from we are kids. Most kids discover a form of masturbation when they are pretty young by themselves. Then a parent or an adult is teaching them that masturbation is something you do when you are alone in privacy, or if you're unlucky you are told that masturbation is shameful.<sup>10</sup> As a consequence, they start hiding or avoiding orgasmic sensations when they are out in public or if they share the bedroom with siblings. A lot of girls even stop masturbating, and then they are missing out on orgasmic training and discovering what they personally want and enjoy. Amy Jo Goddard, a sexual empowerment coach, has a brilliant TED-talk, explaining how shame sneaks in to our sexuality from childhood. Goddard points out how even our language produces shame, when we are saying "losing virginity" instead of thinking that you will gain experience/pleasure or start your sexual life.

### Generational Scripts

I have met women grooving up in the 70s who think that they managed to figure out everything themselves when it comes to sexuality and don't understand why I want to create even more information and philosophy about sex. I believe that the sexual script in western society is forced on all young people, even if we try to avoid it. My generation's sexual script differs a lot from my parent's generation, the old focus was on anatomy, being nude in public and sexual freedom from religion. Today I instead see a strong porn influence, with no body hair or pubic hair, botox, anus-bleaching and even cosmetic surgery to shorten long labia. Finding out what you like and freeing yourself from the sexual script has taken a long time for me and most people I have met.

### The myth about a hierarchy of orgasms

Freud wrote in 1905, that clit orgasms were for children and penetration orgasms for adults and was the real orgasm.<sup>11</sup> He said that adult women who enjoyed touching their clit was insane and that if you could not get an orgasm by only penetration, you should seek psychological help. His words and wrong science are until today affecting the sexual script. Men were blessed to only focus on themselves coming during sex, and if the woman did not come it was her own fault. After Freud's publication, the clitoris was written out of science books, anatomical lexicon and forgotten about.

This is the first painting I have seen that depicts clitoris stimulation during sex. It's called "Erotic scene" and was painted inside a big cigarette-box in wood by C.W. Eckersberg around 1805, Denmark. More than 100 years before Freud silenced the clit.

<sup>10</sup> Goddard, 2014

<sup>11</sup> Freud, 1905



It was first in 1960s America, gynecological scientists started to prove Freud was wrong.<sup>12</sup> During years of experiments in Washington, William Masters and Virginia E. Johnson found out that the clitoris is central and involved in all female orgasms. They studied heterosexual couples having sex in labs. The more hands and tongs involved (the more the clitoris was stimulated during sex), the more often the female also orgasmed. Today's science even says that less than 30 % of women are capable of getting an orgasm only from penetration. The bigger clit head and the closer it is to the vagina makes the woman come easier, because it affects how much it indirectly gets stimulated during penetration.

According to the two gynecological doctors Nina Brochmann and Ellen Støkken Dahl, who wrote the book *Gleden med skjeden/The Wonder Down Under* 2017, Princess Marie Bonaparte, was the first who operated the clitoris to be closer to the vagina hole. The goal was to more easily achieve orgasms, but the operation was unsuccessful. Maria Bonaparte was a psychoanalyst college of Freud. She did a science research where she measured the distance from the clit to the vaginal hole in 200 women and found out that those with short distances had it easier to orgasm just from penetration. Often people with a long clit-head are able to get it rubbed against some skin without using fingers.

Excerpt from a story I often shared from my own journey, in the process of recording *Sexual Journey Interviews*: “I thought reaching orgasm from touching the clitoris was nearly cheating or not as good as a proper penetration orgasm. When I learned that the clitoris also is an inner organ surrounding the vaginal canal, I finally understood that all vulva-orgasms are coming from the clit, only stimulating the clit from different angles. Learning this was a liberating eureka experience for me, I stopped my hang up with searching for a vaginal orgasm. Instead I focused a lot more on getting the clitoris erected and sensitized, without being shameful for using long time on it.”

### Maja Malou Lyse

Lyse is dreaming of the same as me: a sexual utopia, freed from ideals, double morals and shame, where humans are not captivated in boxes or by categories. A world where it is inevitable that sexuality is changing as naturally as the seasons are changing in nature or our mode or temper. A utopia where we have a language both for our borders/limits and for our desires. Recently I discovered that I have some similarities to this Danish artist working with sexuality. Lyse is famous for her short TV show, *Sex with Maja*, broadcasted in 2019<sup>13</sup> and for using her naked body in videos and performances, combining sex education and art. In one performance she teaches a group sitting around her how to do a self-gynecological check and selfie with a mirror, a flashlight and a speculum. Lyse has also made an enormous dildo sculpture in glass fiber and pink shiny car lacquer, called *Sex is Not a Natural Act*, 2019. Both Lyse and my own works are inspired by feminist activists and artists. (Like Judith Bernstein, Lynda Benglis and Annie Sprinkle.) We both also love to express ourselves and our art through a hyper-feminine (and sexy) aesthetics. This is a way of expression that does not have much authority in art and culture, it's often judged as a cheap trick to get attention. I wish people who dress ultra-feminine were also heard and respected to the same extent.

### Annie Sprinkle

When artist and sex worker Annie Sprinkle arose in the American art seen in early 1990s, she provoked a lot by taking ownership of the sexualized woman image/female role, for example in the photo works *Anatomy of a Pin-Up* (1991) and *The Bosom Ballet* (1991). She became a front figure for the pro-sex feministic movement that continued into pop culture's girl power. Today Annie Sprinkle and her girlfriend, have developed a movement called eco-sex, where people are marrying different parts of nature. In girl-power in the 2000s, strong women insisted on the right to be sexual individuals without being shamed or judged for it. For example, Samantha from *Sex and The City* fights for the right to wear whatever she wants and fuck whomever she wants, without being judged by her friends. It was also Samantha that broadcasted that the massage apparatus “Magic wand” most of the time is used as a sex-toy vibrator. More and more pop stars and tv-series are gradually and slowly combining a sexual aesthetic with feministic messages. (Like Beyoncé with the music video *Run The World*, 2011.)



Annie Sprinkle, *The Bosom Ballet*, 1991. Photo series.

### The Erotic as Power

In 1978, Audre Lorde wrote an essay called *The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power*. Lorde described herself as a black lesbian feminist author. The essay was a response to the feminist debate about whether pornography maintains sexual oppression. Some of the main points I got from her essay: If we women start to recognize our erotic feelings of what we truly desire and really want, then we will be able to stop living the oppressed way the patriarchal society wants us women to live. Lorde defines the erotic as a feminine and personal life-spark, an inner and individual spiritual force that guides us to the feeling of joy, if we listen to it instead of ignoring it. The erotic is connected to individuality and love. She states that porn is like sex without the erotic, sex without feelings, individuality, or love. I think Lorde wanted women to investigate what they really wanted, instead of just settling for what is convenient for them to want, in this male-dominated world. She saw that women are so used to pleasing men and thinking of what they want instead of their own needs and deepest desires. This pattern is used both in life and in sex.

<sup>12</sup> Brochmann & Støkken Dahl, 2017

<sup>13</sup> Sex med Maja, DRTV 2019

## Sexual objectification

In several interviews we talked about sexual objectification and if there are situations where you want to be desired and seen as a sexual object. If you dress up sexy and are wanting sexual attention, wanting to see in the gaze or hear comments from other people about their lust for you. A person told me they had really made an effort to look fabulous and highlighted they're but with tight trousers for going out partying and were disappointed by not getting any sexual attention after the night was over. Sometimes we are all longing for being desired. You should not be ashamed of being a sex object if you choose to be one. When it is an active choice, it makes you a sexual subject. It is difficult to be sexually liberated in a society that constantly tries to push us to balance in the middle, not be too fat or thin, not too slutty not too boring etc.



Costumes and set design from  
*Honey I'm Home*, 2022



## 7 Conclusion

Western society slowly moves towards more openness and acceptance, more knowledge when it comes to sexuality, queerness, and equality between all genders. To help with speeding up this process I find it still necessary to make activist art that makes people reflect on sexuality. To have a good sexual life/health is crucial for our mental health and well-being. The patriarchal structures in society are still very strong in our "sexual script". I believe the fight for equality between genders starts within our sex life.

This Master's project was the beginning of my art about nudity and sexuality. As I hoped I have found more out more about my sexuality by learning about others' sexuality, but I'm still hungry for more stories. Throughout my life, I will continue my sexual journey, and work on my sexual liberation. I aim to continue expanding my perspective on what exists within sexuality. I think the world needs more openness around sexuality, people are usually scared of the unknown until they become familiar with it.

### Future plans

I hope to continue with *Breastfall casting performances* in art institutions in other cities, but it depends on if I get funding or payment for both the materials I use and the time I use. I'm looking for film festivals and galleries where I can present the 3 screened *Sexual Journey Interviews*, again. I will continue to discuss the same topics from my video in private conversations with new people.

### *Honey I'm home*, stage art

After Kuvan Kevät in the late Autumn of 2022 my dream of using my art as scenography and costumes got real, by working with a Swedish Master actor-student Sara-Maria Phironen, that also is a dancer. I reused ceramics from *Breastfall*, and the *Boob fountain* as a drinking fountain, as set-design for an actor graduation show: *Honey I'm Home*. We had six full-packed shows between 9.-14.12.22. This was the first time I experienced the privilege of being a costume designer who also had a team of seamstresses, tailors and prop makers from Theatre Academy in Helsinki helping me, they saw the design after my drawings and sketches. The only sewing I did were attaching more details like wigs and hair extensions on top of the base costumes and props. In the props department I learned to cast rubber masks and sculptures. In the future, I hope to continue to combine fine art with stage art. The theatre stage is a perfect place to mix all the art forms I'm interested in.

### **Clitoris**

When writing this master text, I found out that I'm still very interested in the new science around the clitoris and I think I will go back to making more clitoris art and performances. I met a choreographer based in Stockholm, Nasreen Aljanabi Larsson, that also bases her art around the clitoris. I was lucky to do an internship for Aljanabi Larsson. We are now working on a sex-education dance show, where I have made the costumes and Aljanabi Larsson makes a dance with a clown actor.

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