

# **poignancy flavor**

by kolya kotov

**academy of fine arts  
university of the arts helsinki**

the written component is part of an MFA thesis project  
date of submission 2.10.2023

opus phase iii, 2023

installation, 5 kinetic objects

sublimation print on textile mesh, v-slot 2x4, arduino, adafruit motor shields, stepper motors

exhibited during Kuvan Kevät 2023, 6.5-4.6.2023

supervisors Reija Meriläinen, Jasmine Xie

examiners Max Hannus, Tero Nauha

special thanks to

Daniel Peltz

James Prevett

Roberto Pugliese

Tuomo Rainio

Lena Seraphin

Marloes Van Son

## **summary**

This text, submitted in fulfillment of the required written component of the MFA thesis, titled 'poignancy flavor,' serves as a collection of fragmented thoughts and experiences, offering a glimpse into the artist's perspective on life, work, and their own body as inseparable within their existence. By acknowledging personal struggles in writing, Kolya chooses to explore writing itself as an art form and as a part of their art practice. This is a reflection on their life experiences and creative process through the themes of identity, loneliness, and the pursuit of love and connection. It highlights moments of both support and resistance within their family and looks into the challenges of vulnerability in a family marked by generational trauma.

The central focus is on Kolya's art project, 'opus phase iii,' exhibited at KK23 as the practical component of this MFA thesis, which intimately glimpses into their gender affirmation journey. This multidisciplinary work combines experimentation with photography on textiles, automated by programmed motors. In the written component artist acknowledges the role of artificial intelligence as a collaborative tool in the creative process, blurring the lines between human and machine authorship.

The written thesis contains an excerpt of a script from a video project, that was intended to be the practical component of this thesis but later discarded. The narrative of the script transports us into the autofictional director's struggles with social anxiety and missed creative opportunities. It paints a vivid picture of his world, filled with faded dreams.

The artist looks back at their previous works marked by phases to unfold the evolution and significance of 'yellow phase i' and its transformation into 'afflatus phase ii,' which pays homage to a social media influencer by creating elements inspired by the work and body of Michaela Stark.

In conclusion, this text reflects on the importance of phases in Kolya's artistic practice. It highlights their defiance against established norms and their commitment to seamlessly blending life and art. The text also hints at future projects that will continue to push the boundaries of artistic exploration.

**prelude**

v

**interlude**

xi

**part i**

xii

**part ii**

xviii

**part iii**

xxix

**postlude**

xliii

# prelude

21st August 2023

Writing has always been a challenge for me, in part because I never considered it one of my strengths, but also because the words I'm putting down on paper now take me back to events and emotions that are deeply triggering. Nevertheless, in this text, I've made the deliberate choice to view writing as an art form that allows me to revisit and process these challenging experiences.

My initial foray into writing began in January 2020 as part of my residency in Berlin. It was a year after a heart-wrenching separation from someone to whom I had grown deeply attached, even overfixated. It was also the year preceding my second deportation notice, and the year before cancer would afflict my body, leaving it deformed and disabled. Over the course of two weeks, I embarked on a journey of self-reflection, grappling with loneliness and pondering the concept of 'home' through intimate writing. Returning to those diaries now is challenging, as they serve as a reminder of the emotional state I was in during that period.

I primarily use the Notes app on my phone for writing. It's convenient because it syncs seamlessly with my other devices, and the act of writing on my phone feels less intimidating than using a laptop. It's almost like having a conversation with myself through text.

21st January 2020

I try to understand if these feelings come from missing the comfort of the place I'm so used to, the place I consider home, or is it the loneliness, I never really traveled alone.

4th February 2020

...what am i actually doing in here apart from a couple of quick visits per day to the galleries I've been advised to visit because there's an artist that everyone is talking about right now, or trying to figure out where to eat cause i cannot force myself to cook whilst being homesick, being caught up in my own thoughts of how lonely i am, that I can not understand why i keep on doing anything i do, feeling pity for myself and trying to find distraction by fucking with whoever could make it here the quickest...

22nd January 2020

On the third day I meet with a guy from grindr, his profile states "english artist, I enjoy talking and swallowing", I text him

- hello english artist

He invites me over, his place is cold, he has funny hat on, we talk, we both agree on having ADD and facial autism, the latter one is something i recently picked from a netflix series, he says that he is going to psychotherapy for the past 5 years because of depression and anxiety...

The following text was written and revised between April 15th and September 27th 2023

So Welcome to the collection of my fragmented thoughts and experiences, which I've chosen to rename to 'poignancy flavor'. The earlier version was called the 'strawberry flavor phase', inspired by my obsession with strawberry-flavored chewing gum. Before that, it was 'cloud chasers', reflecting my fascination with creating massive vapor clouds from vaping (I found that term rather poetic).

This compilation represents my perspective on how I navigate life and work, two facets that often blur into one for me. To me, work embodies my essence – it's a fusion of my physical being, emotions, and personal experiences.

The realization of being Here all on my own came to me quite recently. I'm very needy, and it feels lonely.

I just texted on ig (instagram) a musician that I found on Spotify because I read in their Wikipedia that they identify as gay genderqueer. I am desperately lonely and dreaming about falling in love with a talented being. We will become an inspiration for each other and all my sadness disappear. I want to be a muse. I wish muse was a profession, but within the capitalistic society obsessed with consumption surviving by inspiring others does not seem like an option. The body is a product. Unless I found a sugar daddy...

a muse for your gaze only

tbh (to be honest) I really don't want to work.

but it will have to be someone very perverted since in the eyes of our society I'm a taboo, queer, trans, freak, disabled body covered with ink and scars.

I am tired of saying I'm ok when you ask because I am not. The next time when I say it I want to truly experience it.

I'm not ok

But how anyone can be ok in these conditions? I'm looking up to your motivation and productivity.

The concept for my project showcased at Kuvan Kevät 2023, began to take shape in early 2022. The actual process of bringing this work to life commenced in February 2023. However, before getting into the details of opus phase iii let me tell you about the time during which it was planned and created. My artistic practice is a part of my life and things happening affect its development and creation.

At the beginning of the year, I found out about a doctor who can prescribe medication for gender affirmation without the long and complicated process of a Gender Identity

Clinic. The contact was shared with me by a friend who said that this doctor prescribed hormones to many trans people she knew. Excitement filled my body, something I rarely experience as an individual with clinical depression.

I was about 13 years old when I found out about the possibility of gender transition, at that exact moment I knew that this was what I needed in order to be myself.

I was a very shy and introverted kid. Throughout my life, I have never felt like a boy or been able to relate to the experience of masculinity.

I have a wonderful mom, who raised me and ~~my brother~~ on her own as a single parent. Who always supported my artistic development and desire to pursue a career in the art and design fields.

I was 8 years old, I remember receiving a remote-controlled car for Christmas. The moment I ripped off the packaging paper my eyes filled with tears, there's no scenario in which I would wish for something like that. I really wanted a Barbie. I remember my cousin getting my desired present that Christmas and I remember your disappointed face spectating me hysterically crying over the unwanted present.

To this day I feel guilty for disappointing you back then.

It's interesting how selective our memory can be.

You told me that when you were pregnant with me you were dreaming of having a girl. When I was 7 I said that I wanted to be a girl and you helped me to dress up by borrowing my cousin's skirt and making me a wig by cutting and braiding your stockings.

You took a photo of me on a cheap film camera, the photo that later disappeared into the unknown.

When I was a teenager you made several attempts to question my sexuality, presenting homosexuality as a disease. So I kept on denying everything.

You were 36 when I was born, I'm turning 36 this year.

My mom is 72 now, we haven't seen in about 5 years, only rarely exchanging a few text messages:

you received a message from Mama

- Hi! How are you?
- Hi! I'm good, what about you?
- I'm doing well, cooking a stew and having some wine.



this photo was taken by mom in 2023

- mm looks good (:
- ok not going to disturb you anymore, love you, miss you, sending hugs and kisses.
- love you, miss you, hugs and kisses.

While my love for her is undeniable, I've often felt that we never truly connected. Perhaps it's because I never took the step to come out to her, or any of my relatives, as queer or trans. Consequently, from the age of 14 onward, I ceased sharing any aspects of my life beyond the confines of our home.

Within my birth family, vulnerability has never been a common practice. There's a lingering veil of untold history, woven from shame and an inability to confront past traumas.

We made up stories to hide the painful truths, which manifested in generational trauma.

When I told you about my cancer, you asked me not to share it with my grandmother, as you believed it would distress her. To be honest, I hadn't initially planned to reveal my diagnosis to you either, but in the fog of sedatives and painkillers at the hospital, I wasn't thinking clearly, and I called you right after waking up from anesthesia.

Three years later when I tried opening up to you about my depression, anxiety, general disappointment with life and inability to cope, the only thing you said was:

- В жизни все таки больше позитива, поэтому не грусти. Все будет не просто хорошо, а будет замечательно. Люблю, целую и обнимаю.

"In life, there is more positivity after all, so don't be sad. Everything will not just be good, it will be wonderful. Love you, sending kisses and hugs"

as translated by GPT chat

I wonder if that saying is what has fueled your determination all these years. I admire you and look up to your strength, your hope, and your will.

The text you're about to read mainly centers on 'opus phase iii', a series of kinetic objects displayed at the Kuvan Kevät MFA exhibition at the Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki. Within these pages, I blend elements from popular culture, weaving in elements of autofiction and poetry. My artistic journey intertwines with my personal experiences, capturing the essence of life events and drawing inspiration from social media and the melancholic feelings of Lana Del Rey's poetry.

The creation of 'opus' closely coincided with what is often referred to as the medical gender affirmation's puberty phase - a process involving the introduction of estrogen into the body while suppressing testosterone levels with blockers. During this period, the artwork underwent a significant transformation, transitioning from an abstract representation to a more figurative and corporeal form. Elements that had previously melded together in the work were now divided, each finding its own place within the space and its relation to other components.

In this narrative, one of the figures carried along the rail came to embody a self-portrait, while another was dedicated to my dear friend, Elana. Together, they symbolize the complex journey of transitioning, the challenges of connecting with society's conventional definitions of humanity, the physical pain and the fear of not being accepted.

The question I ponder is not whether I am making the right decision, but rather, am I prepared for the journey and the subsequent experiences it entails?

Some parts of this text are written with the assistance of an AI (artificial intelligence aka GPT chat and Siri who is not identifying as an AI and asked to be called a virtual assistant), and some are actual conversations between the author and the AI. The decision to use the assistance of artificial intelligence comes from the production phase of opus in which some of the kinetic objects were programmed with the help of GPT chat. In this written component Artificial Intelligence is not a final author but rather a phase in a process, an editor, a cowriter.

refer to the last page of this text for disclosure

# INTERLUDE

# part i

an unfamiliar feeling ingresses my body, fills it up and spreads to every cell of me. it's new unknown and i love it

i love changes

if you would ask me to describe it i don't think there is a suitable word in my vocabulary, but i can tell you it feels new

- hey siri what is a synonym of new?
- i found this on the web for what is a synonym of new?

brand new

up to date

state of the art

contemporary

it is the most recent stage in the development of this body, incorporating latest techniques and features, i would say it is corporeal, but it feels too embedded in human.

I am not a human and based on the history of sexism, racism and transphobia you cannot deny me that

i am posthuman

i am transhuman

an entity that exists in a state beyond being human, human that is defined by those seeking power and dominance over others

i dim the brightness of a screen and put on blue light in the space where my body is present.

This is an excerpt from a script that was written for a video project originally intended for the Master's final project:

INTERIOR, SUN ENERGY CENTER - DAY

A modest space nestled in the half-basement of a block of flats. The heavy metal door, devoid of any signs, grants access to the place of self-healing through the sun's energy. The CHARACTER arrives at the address, guided by curiosity. They push open the door, revealing a room bathed in an unpleasant, bright yellow hue. Simple chairs line the walls, accompanied by a table cluttered with magazines, a water boiler, and a collection of mismatched cups.

The chairs are occupied by individuals, engrossed in sipping a greyish liquid from their cups. Some engage in hushed conversations, while others gaze into their cups, lips moving silently.

The GUIDE, who greeted the CHARACTER, steps forward to explain.

GUIDE

(softly)

- Welcome. This drink purifies the body, allowing it to embrace the healing power of the sun.

The GUIDE offers the CHARACTER a cup filled with a blend of black tea, cow milk, and salt.

CHARACTER

(receptive)

- Thank you.

The CHARACTER takes a seat as instructed, sipping the peculiar concoction. The blend of ingredients creates an inexplicably unpleasant flavor.

The GUIDE signals for silence, announcing the arrival of the MOTHER.

An unremarkable OLDER WOMAN enters silently through a door at the back of the room. She takes her place at the center and gestures to a chosen individual.

MOTHER

(softly yet commanding)

- You, come forth.

The chosen person rises, leaving their cup behind, and approaches the center of the room. They stand before the MOTHER, awaiting her instructions.

With a gentle touch, the MOTHER places her hand on the person's head and directs them to look into her eyes.

MOTHER

(authoritative)

- Repeat after me.

The room falls into a profound stillness as the chosen individual meets the MOTHER's gaze. Their face reflects a blend of anticipation and uncertainty, ready to embark on the words that will follow...

The host interrupts the reading of the script, "Please stop right there, The last thing I need is the formula getting stuck in my head again."...

Guest puts away the script and looks around.

In the dimly lit apartment of a reclusive indie film director, the air was thick with the pungent scent of weed. The heavy suede pink curtains were drawn shut, casting a rosy glow on the cluttered space. The walls were adorned with faded movie posters, bearing witness to a forgotten past. A solitary, overgrown plant reached for the ceiling as if desperate for the touch of sunlight.

In the midst of this shadowy sanctuary, the director found himself engaged in an unexpected encounter. Seated on a worn-out sofa, he shared his tale of woe with a guest who had stumbled upon his world. With each inhale of smoke, the director's thoughts floated into the hazy atmosphere, weaving a tapestry of missed opportunities and shattered dreams.

"It's not that I lack talent," the director confessed, his voice laced with resignation. "But my introverted nature has always been my downfall. The mere thought of collaboration sends shivers down my spine. I'm haunted by social anxiety, you see, and it has crippled my ability to work with others."

As he exhaled a cloud of smoke, memories flooded his mind. His unreleased film, an autofiction based on his own experiences within a sun worshipping cult, taunted him from the depths of his creative abyss. The story was a labyrinthine exploration of devotion and disillusionment, a deeply personal journey that he had once believed held the key to his artistic salvation.

"But unfortunately," he went on, his words marked by the flicker of his joint, "my fear of connecting with people has made my greatest work just a distant dream. The weight of my introversion is suffocating, rendering me unable to take that final step towards realizing my vision."

The guest listened intently, captivated by the director's raw vulnerability. They marveled at the way he sought solace in the clouds of smoke, believing that his best ideas emerged when he was stoned. In those moments, the director's mind was liberated from the shackles of self-doubt, and the allure of his abandoned masterpiece beckoned to him like a siren's call.

In that small apartment, cocooned by pink curtains and the entangled tendrils of a wayward plant, the director bared his soul to a stranger. The weight of his unfulfilled

potential hung heavy in the air, a poignant reminder of the dreams that slipped through his fingers.

And as the evening stretched on, the director and the stranger found solace in their shared understanding of the pain and beauty that lay dormant within the human spirit. Two lost souls, adrift in a sea of unfulfilled desires, sought temporary respite in each other's company, knowing that their paths would soon diverge, leaving behind only the lingering scent of smoke and the echo of words unspoken...

#### EXTERIOR SUNLIT MEADOW - DAY

A radiant day dawns upon an expansive green field, teeming with the sounds of nature. Birds chirp, water gurgles, and a gentle breeze rustles through the surroundings.

The camera pans across the scene, revealing a scattered group of people throughout the field. They stand with their faces upturned toward the sun, basking in its warm embrace.

The sounds of nature crescendo, filling the air with a harmonious melody.

The camera focuses on one individual from behind, slowly zooming in. It circles around them, framing their face with delicate precision. The person's eyes become the center of attention.

All sounds suddenly disappear replaced by a high-pitched monotonous noise.

Their gaze fixates upon the sun, their eyes resembling polished metal, reflecting an ethereal light. The eyes gleam with a luminescent radiance as if resonating with the very essence of the sun itself.



catalog image for 'yellow phase i', 2021

# part iii

## yellow phase i

yellow phase i (1) was presented as a part of Kandinäyttely 2021 - bachelor exhibition at Academy of Fine Arts Helsinki and in the building of the GLO Art hotel as a part of a group exhibition "Sweet Dreams".

The work, named after its color, was not initially intended to be yellow.

So why the yellow got so important that it became not only the color of the entire composition of works but also the name of the entire work? In the exhibition catalog, I delve into this question:

yellow phase i

i came open

stripping away what i know in order to use this body to absorb and to wrap what i have with what i get

there are just as many y nots to all the ys you about to ask

- google, was yellow a color of the holy trinity?

- the trial of faith will be tried with yellow flames

this work is an appreciation of color yellow

it's about gender and sexuality where yellow is the color for those who identify outside of gender binary

yellow as sun, the life support to our planet

as such it has come to represent life, energy, hope and wisdom

one of the most common colours in nature

yellow is the color that made me do it

without asking i threw it on my shoulder and carry it as a color of awareness

now this weakness feels like my power

yellow as the color that urges caution, warning about dangers

yellow as piss or egg yolk

is there anything else that comes on your mind? just write it here

yellow as \_\_\_\_\_

This text, while it may appear somewhat abstract and poetic, holds the key to understanding the evolution of the work, as well as the factors that influenced the artist during its development and creation.



'yellow phase i', Kandinäyttely, KuvaTila, 2021

Yellow phase i underwent a significant transformation due to a series of events and circumstances that coincided with its creation. Originally conceived in pink, it was shaped by the concept of inclusivity and diversity as yellow represents those existing outside of the gender binary. An aspiration to craft a textile piece that would be site-specific, and adaptable to various spaces.

Additionally, the intention was to create a textile work that transcended the boundaries of traditional clothing, one that could be worn by any human or non-human body. As yellow symbolizes bone cancer awareness, it reflects the diagnosis I received during the development of my Bachelor project. This diagnosis, which altered my body's form, forced me to adjust my working methods and prompted deep contemplation of human vulnerability, physical disability, and the importance of acceptance.

It was fascinating how many assumed my affection for color yellow based on the choice for this particular work.

“look your favorite color”, the comment I kept on hearing continuously during the time following its first presentation.



'yellow phase i', 2021

Another thing that both amused and annoyed me was comments comparing the visual part of yellow phase i to commodified objects.

Below are the comments that were written down by the artist during the feedback session involving most of the participants of Kandinäytely 2021 exhibition and a few people from the academy's staff.

I see yellow somehow

And each time I see its like it was the first time

What do you see in the video or what takes your attention?

I see kolya

Dressing up in the garment, going down

Im intrigued with how you keep your right leg

Yeah hm. What I see?

Its like a sculpture and some kind of garment

Unfunctional

All small details and stitches that you have made by hand that is amazing

And the video piece

Super sensitive. Trying to wear. Sitting. Piece

Mental hospital

With constrained shirt. Corset

Those both have the connection of restriction in the body

Try to figure out how to use it

And also the color

Feels like there's some nostalgia

It feels like its old and the colours are fading away

pissed old blanket

or a used maxi pad

For me its mostly about the colour

Should I leave my coat here, If I wear yellow am I a part of the work?

baby

Something baby

Small sizes

Dolls or babies

Adult person

Tattoos

Exceptional high heels

Face covered

Baby. Baby sleeping bag for the head

I just collect this information

baby blankets

small hand-stitched pissed baby blankets

a lot of them

Will different color change the meaning?

It goes queer

transsexuality

Do you forget all the time that the face is covered?

I see it as a creature

And I sexualise that creature

Its a creature its a human

Its a creature its a human

I want that dress

I want to look sexy

a lot of things going on

Im paying attention to the process and not to how the person is feeling

And when they stop moving I suddenly remember that there's a person behind it

Doll

Model doll

Mannequin

Without face

Taking care

Maintenance

Cleaning

Cleaning mop

It is meditative and I want to watch it over and over again

somehow my attention is on the mop, the mop feels important like it breaks the form of this work

Is that a mop that this object represents?

It opens it up to more meanings there are different sizes of babies and dolls

Each of them is a different life event

All of them are connected in a different way

It creates a life story

A little bit violating

Within the following year, 'yellow phase i' will undergo a transformation, evolving into a complex body of work that reimagines the human body, intersected by the ordinary objects from our everyday lives.

# afflatus phase ii

In recent years, I've become enthralled by the concept of a fragmented narrative, recognizing the increasingly diverse and chaotic ways we consume information in our modern world. The following notes are a practice in which I continuously write in one paragraph phrases from pop music that resonates the most with my personal experiences: In the notes that follow, I've collected phrases from popular music that deeply connect with my personal experiences, crafting them into a single paragraph:

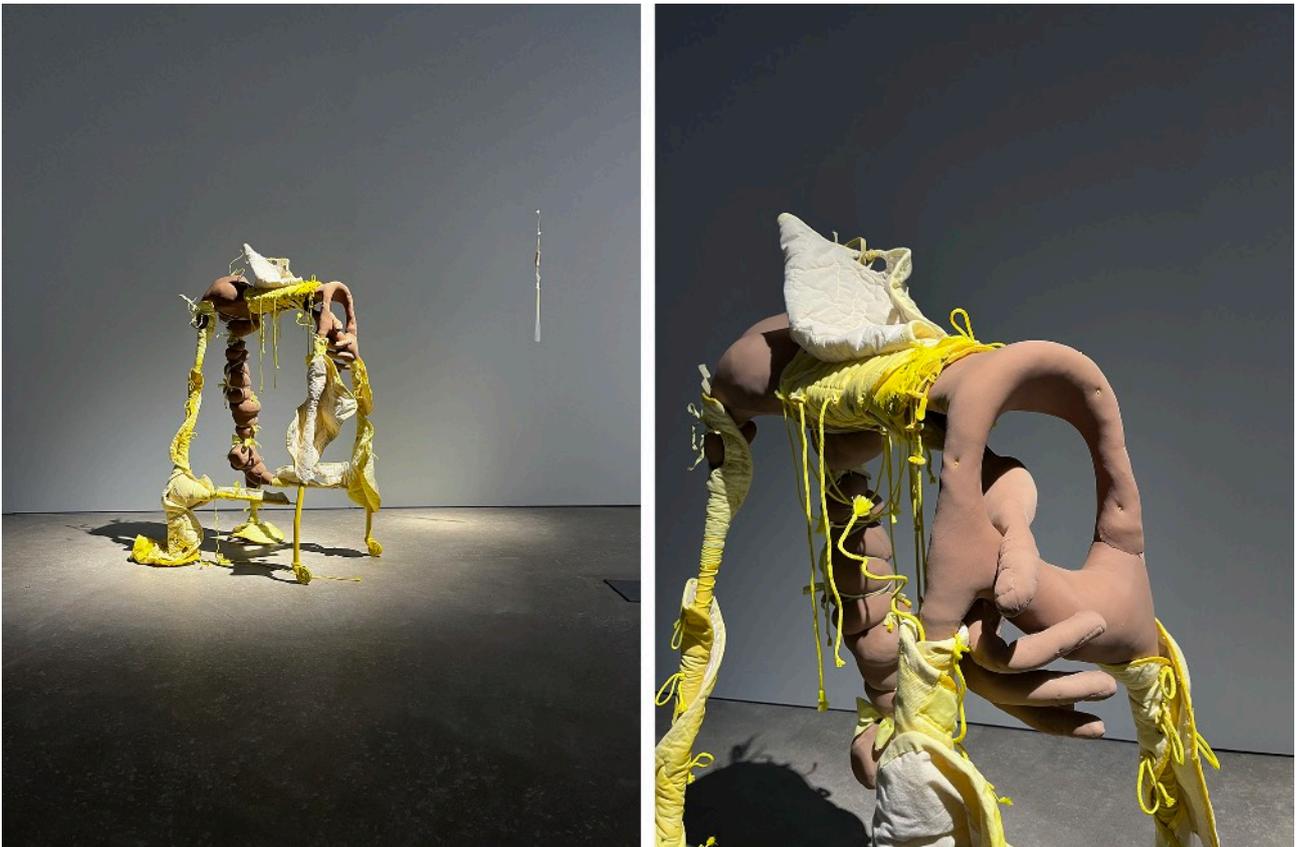
...time takes too much time, shhh it's all so quiet, (hysterical scream) this is it!, come and love me now, i will never know cause you will never show, you deserve a girl like me, jump in let's go, enjoy the show, everybody gets high, erase and rewind, i won't sympathize anymore, i'm the ugly, i started dancing just to be around you, i wanted nothing but for this to be the end, i am the only one now, all i want is a simple kind of life, who am i to question the nature of things, is life just an illusion, didn't work out and we are covered in shit, still got to wake up and be someone, there's pain inside you, it's ok to cry, so i cried and i prayed and i begged, is the reality just a reenactment of the dreams, im here but im really gone, beautiful garbage...

This practice has become a component of my artistic research, often directly appropriating from the source and influencing the work.

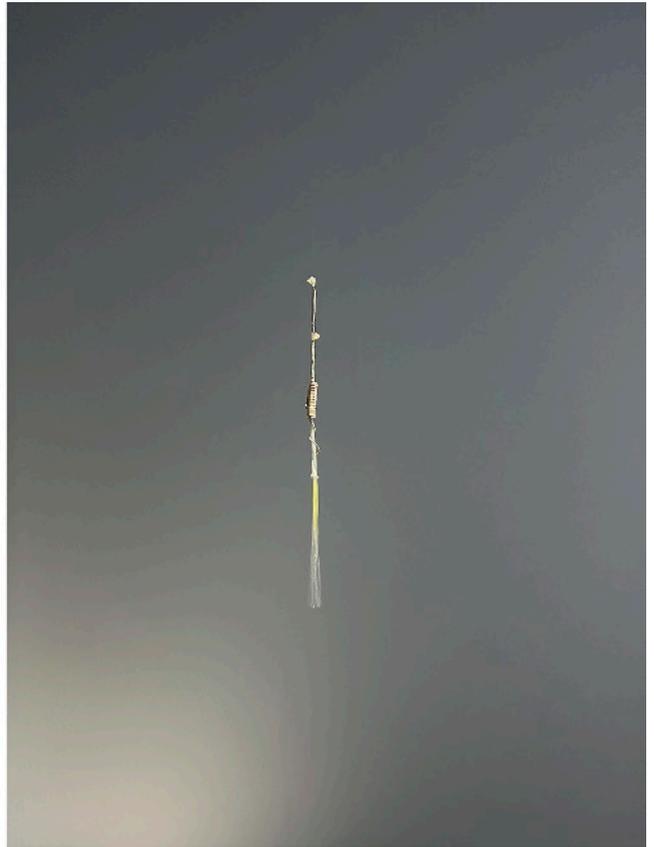
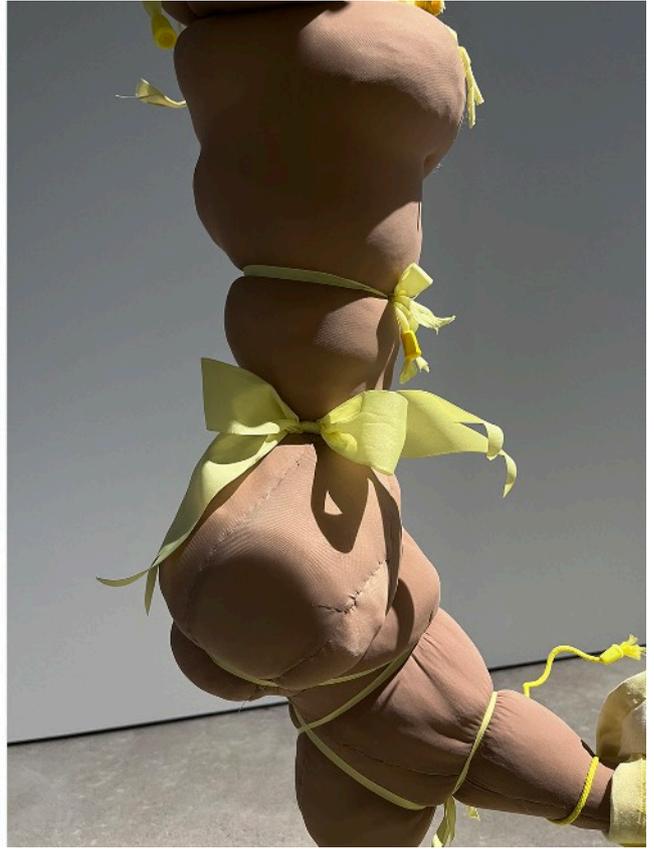
- What if someone would like to purchase your yellow work? - Someone asked me after finding out that I deconstructed it in order to create a new work - 'afflatus' using the elements of 'yellow'.

The phase ii (2) afflatus is a work upcycled using elements of yellow phase i. It stands as an altar, a homage to the ephemeral world of social media influencers. Drawing inspiration from a multitude of events and references in social media and mainstream

culture, this work takes shape upon an enigmatic metal structure, reminiscent of a clothing rack on wheels, yet stripped of its functionality due to the absence of hanging elements. Encased within this structure are parts resembling a skin and deformed human body, a nod to the work of Michaela Stark, a designer and artist whose creations captivated me through the lens of Instagram.



'afflatus phase ii', Time and Space exhibition vol. 1, KuvaTila, 2023



'afflatus phase ii'

Stark's artistic journey commences with her own body, manipulating curves, including her own, through custom-made corsets and couture pieces. It all began with an unexpected medium: the selfie, as she explored her own form, bending and shaping her flesh.



self-portrait of Michaela Stark, year unknown  
retrieved from <https://i-d.vice.com/en/article/g5pkk4/michaela-stark-designs-lingerie-that-celebrates-the-body-in-all-its-forms>

# part iii

opus phase iii

have i ever been human  
or is this body eternally rejected  
deprived of recognition by the authority of the construct?  
would this body respond to yours  
or are their tongues foreign to each other?

mind is dazed  
limbs are numb  
relying on automation

- . cloud chaser
- . trash just like us
- . curious/furious
- . no space no time
- . chewing strawberry ice cream flavoured gum

...cloud chaser  
..... trash just like us  
..... curious/furious  
..... no space no time  
... chewing strawberry ice cream flavoured gum



'opus phase iii' catalog image for Kuvan Kevät 2023

'opus phase iii' is an immersive installation consisting of a series of kinetic objects. Originally presented during the MFA graduation show at the Academy of Fine Arts Helsinki, this artwork delves into the realm of auto-fiction, drawing inspiration from the personal experiences of the artist as a transgender individual.

Throughout the creation of opus phase iii, I was driven by the idea of creating something unseen. The artwork combines various mediums, weaving together elements of photography, performance, moving image, installation, and sculpture.

Within opus phase iii, transformed bodies and body parts are dragged by belts along aluminum rails and propelled by motors. The work explores the consequences of objectification and dehumanization experienced by queer and trans bodies, raising a profound question: has queer ever truly been considered human?

I'm waking up dazed and confused, unable to recognise the essence possessing me today. This essence of a slowly decomposing aching body, unable to cope with the reality of whispered promises and pulsating violence.

The world outside is a sea of strangers, each glance a potential judgment, each step a potential landmine. The cruel symphony of prejudice and rejection played in the background, a dissonant melody that clashed against the tender strings of authenticity.

Putting on the summertime sadness

Will you still love me when I'm no longer young and beautiful? How am I going to pay for Spotify when my student discount expires? The melancholic imagery of Lana's poetry intertwined with the reality of my phlegmatic existence. Transporting to hazy landscapes where emotions are painted with darkness and beauty.

- Say yes to heaven



'opus phase iii', majakka, Kuvan Kevät 2023



'opus phase iii', majakka, Kuvan Kevät 2023



'opus phase iii', majakka, Kuvan Kevät 2023



'opus phase iii', majakka, Kuvan Kevät 2023



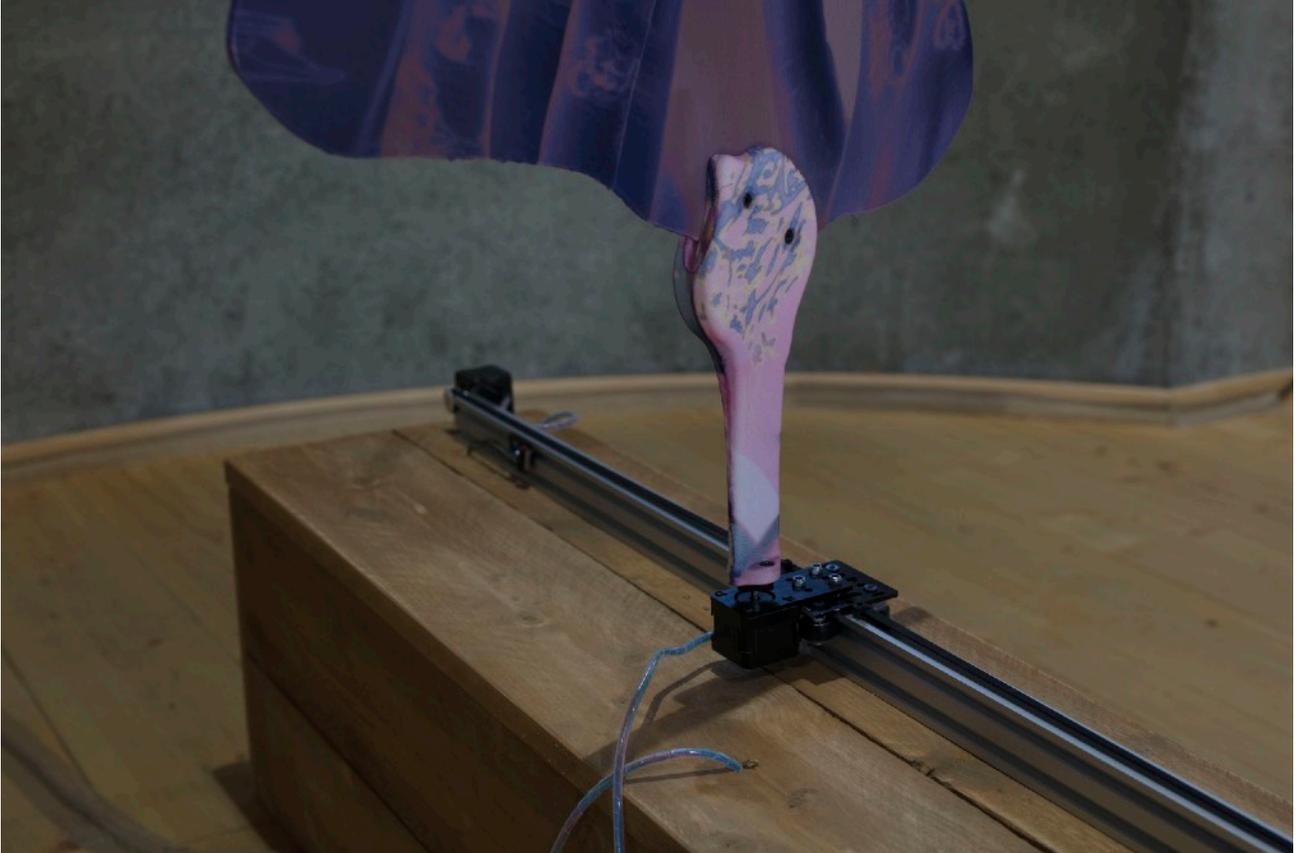
'opus phase iii', majakka, Kuvan Kevät 2023



'opus phase iii', majakka, Kuvan Kevät 2023



'opus phase iii', majakka, Kuvan Kevät 2023



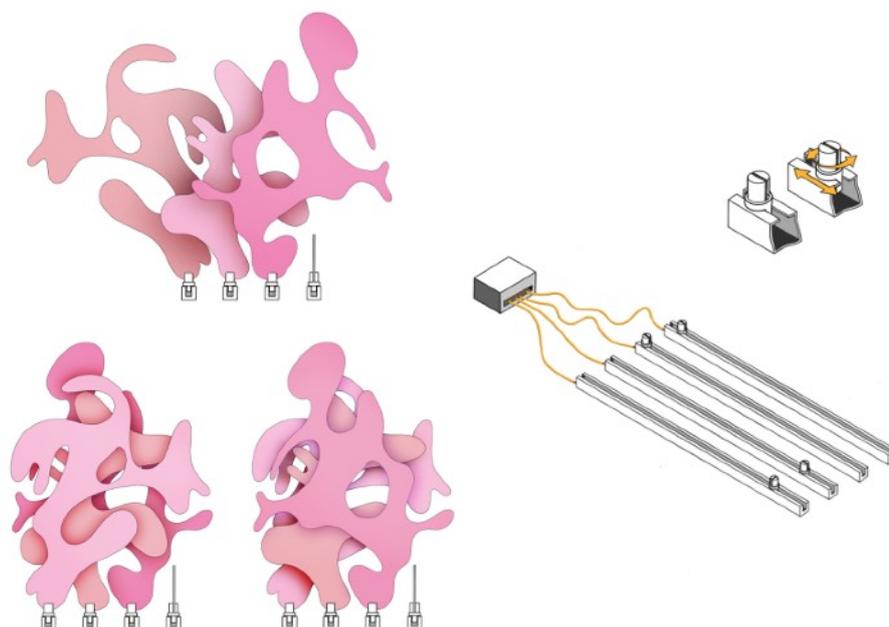
'opus phase iii', majakka, Kuvan Kevät 2023

'opus phase iii' is an outcome of continuous experimentation with photography as a medium, involving digital manipulations and the exploration of silhouettes beyond the typical rectangular shape.

In the initial stages, before deciding to use image automation, I attempted to create a fixed collage using various elements of different shapes, each with images on them. These elements were layered with spaces in between, creating a kind of floating sandwich effect. However, I grew concerned about the predetermined nature of this approach, as it seemed to impose a hierarchy, with me dictating the priority of the images. As a response, I chose to create a collage of images that would continuously change their arrangement, eliminating the unwanted hierarchy and freeing me from making specific decisions about the final look of the work.

For a person with minimal knowledge of programming the original concept of 'opus phase iii' was quite ambitious. Regardless of several people including my thesis supervisors and technicians at the academy warning me about the difficulties and possible issues of the above, I was insistent on going forward with my plan.

Let's look into some blueprints in order to understand what the original concept was.



In this concept, 'opus phase i' is presented as a kinetic installation that is programmed to create compositions out of four flat objects with photographs mounted on both sides. The main task that the computer has is not to repeat the same composition and come up with new ways of combining the objects. There is of course a certain limitation to the number of compositions that can be created based on 8 images.

The space I envisioned for my exhibition immediately captured my attention upon my first visit. It felt like the most secluded area in the entire Fine Art Academy building. Unlike the rest of the industrial-like structure characterized by concrete, metal, and glass, this space stood out for its tranquil comfort, nestled at the building's top floor. Known as Majakka, which translates to "lighthouse" in Finnish, this space felt like an ideal choice for my exhibition, and I didn't hesitate to select it, knowing it was a possibility.

As doubts about my ability to complete the work within the allotted time began to emerge, I also discovered that the original plan of suspending 'opus' from the ceiling in Majakka was unattainable. This realization prompted the need to dismantle the elements and reimagine the final installation to better align with the available space.

Two works 'self portrait' and 'portrait of Elana' that were moving along the rails were placed on the floor on top of wooden podiums which was made to resemble the wooden floor in Majakka. Two works 'watching me watching you' and 'back pain' were placed on one of the concrete walls. The fifth piece, 'Indentation,' was a spontaneous creation, inspired by a concrete column featuring an indentation. This piece was executed in the weeks leading up to the exhibition opening.

The photographs used to create the final imagery were taken in the exhibition space itself, chosen mainly for its ready accessibility. As a result, the prints incorporated elements from the space, such as the distinctive, distorted radiator featured in the work "Portrait of Elena."

Many spectators commented on the sound of the work, questioning how it was made and whether it was intentional. Interestingly, the sound coming from the motors and the occasional rattling of the pulling belts were discovered only during the first testing phase. This was caused by the use of specific equipment, particularly the Adafruit motor shields. As suggested by the supervisor, this issue could be avoided by changing it to a printer driver (which is also a type of computer board used for activating motors, primarily in 3D printers)

It was decided to incorporate these sounds into the work after discovering the possibility of controlling the sound frequency by adjusting the speed and mode of the motors. By programming each work's movement speed and timing with a randomized code, 'opus' was able to create sound compositions and movement patterns that never repeated themselves. The rattling of the belts, however, failed to be eliminated and remained fully uncontrollable.

I open chat GPT

- hi (:
- Hello! How can I assist you today?
- here are two codes that you helped me write for my thesis project. I was wondering if you could explain their function in a language that will be clear to people not familiar with programming.
- Of course! I'd be happy to help you with that. Please provide me with the codes, and I'll do my best to explain what each of them does.
- sweet, let's start with the shorter one that was a base for three kinetic objects including "back pain", "watching me watching you" and "indentation unplanned":

```
#include <Wire.h>
#include <Adafruit_MotorShield.h>

Adafruit_MotorShield AFMS = Adafruit_MotorShield();
Adafruit_StepperMotor *motor1 = AFMS.getStepper(200, 1);
Adafruit_StepperMotor *motor2 = AFMS.getStepper(200, 2);

int minStillnesTime = 5000;
int maxStillnesTime = 15000;

void setup() {
  Serial.begin(9600);
  AFMS.begin();
  motor1->setSpeed(10);
  motor2->setSpeed(3);
}

void loop() {
  int stillnesTime = random(minStillnesTime,
maxStillnesTime);
  delay(stillnesTime);

  int steps1 = random(35, 74);
  int steps2 = random(35, 74);

  int direction1 = 1;
  int direction2 = 1;

  motor1->step(steps1, direction1, MICROSTEP);
  int pauseTime = random(5000, 30000);
  delay(pauseTime);

  motor2->step(steps2, direction2, MICROSTEP);
}
```

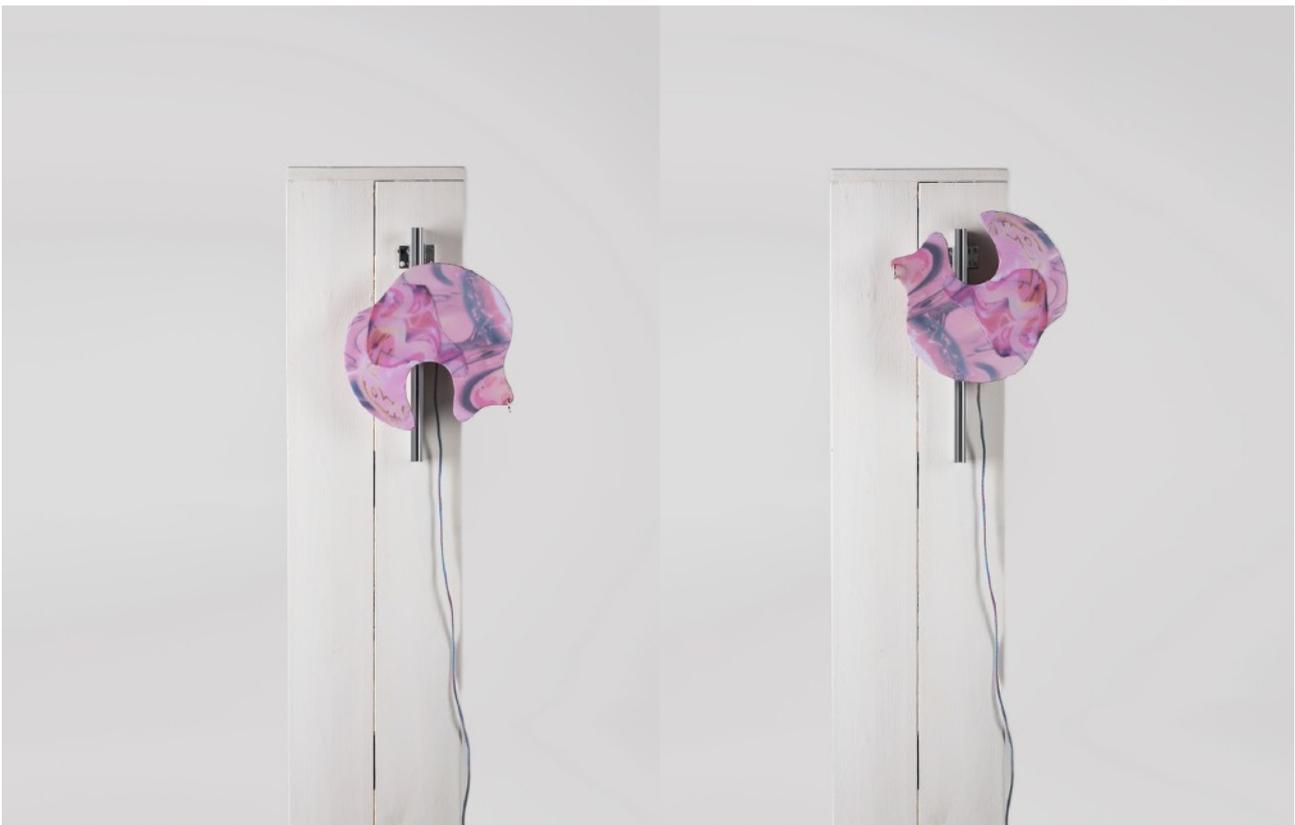


'watching me watching you', part of 'opus phase iii', 2023

- Picture a record player with an enigmatic, almost sentient spinning turntable. This cryptic code assumes control over the turntable's actions, not just orchestrating its setup and spinning speed, but also imbuing it with an eerie sense of playfulness. It compels the turntable to spin unpredictably in both directions, introducing disconcerting pauses between its enigmatic movements. At times, the code commands the turntable to execute full, eerie circles before abruptly commanding it to a halt, reminiscent of shutting down a record player. It's akin to possessing a self-spinning record player that occasionally pauses, as if under some otherworldly influence.



'backpain', part of 'opus phase iii', 2023



'indentation unplanned', part of 'opus phase iii', 2023

- How would you describe this code that is used for both 'self portrait' and 'portrait of Elana'?

```
#include <Wire.h>
#include <AccelStepper.h>
#include <Adafruit_MotorShield.h>

Adafruit_MotorShield AFMStop(0x60);
Adafruit_StepperMotor *myStepper1 = AFMStop.getStepper(200, 1);
Adafruit_StepperMotor *myStepper2 = AFMStop.getStepper(200, 2);

const int switch1_pin = 2;
const int switch2_pin = 3;

bool forward = true;
int switchCounter = 0;
int stepCounter = 0;
unsigned long lastDelayTime = 0;
unsigned long delayInterval = 0;

void rotateSteps(int steps) {
  myStepper1->step(steps, FORWARD, MICROSTEP);
}

if (switch1State == 0) {
  myStepper2->step(150, FORWARD, DOUBLE);
  rotateSteps(190);
  switchCounter++;
}

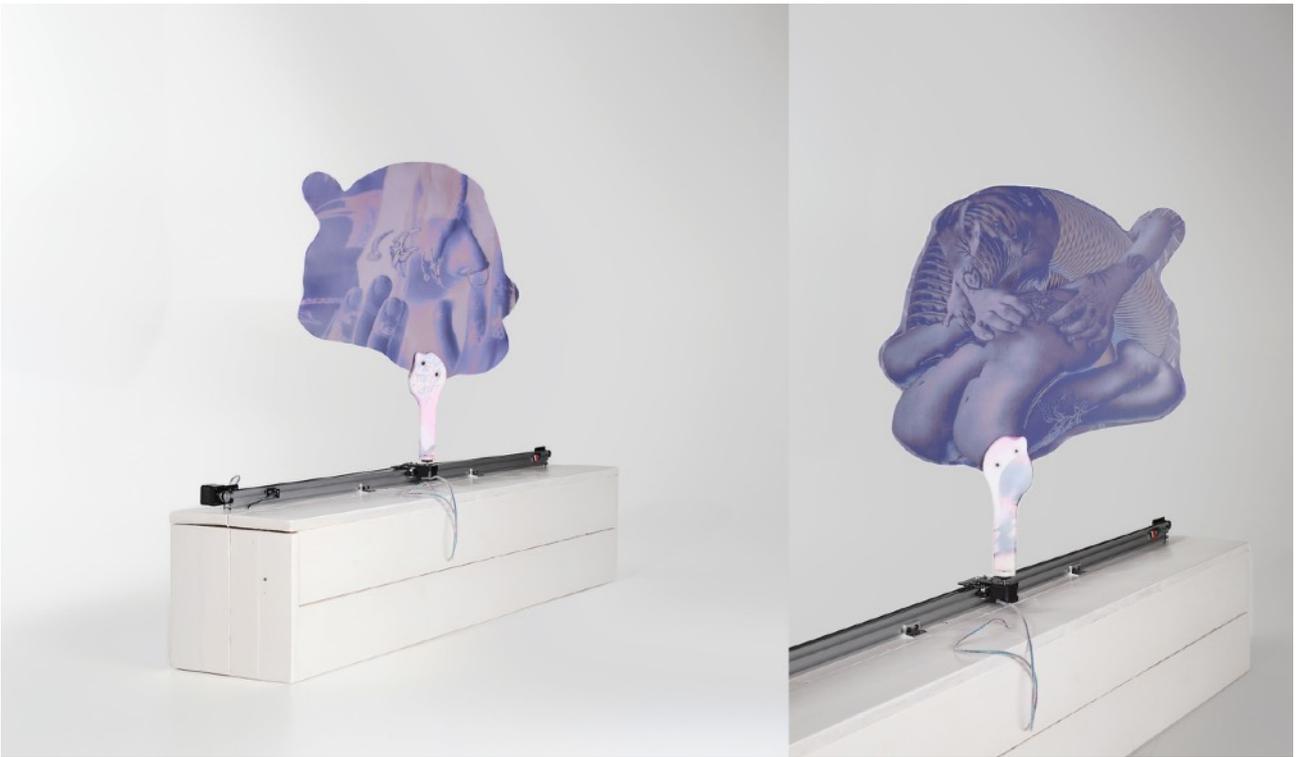
if (switchCounter == 2) {

  int stepAmount = random(800, 1201);
  myStepper2->setSpeed(27);
  myStepper2->step(stepAmount, forward ? FORWARD : DOUBLE);

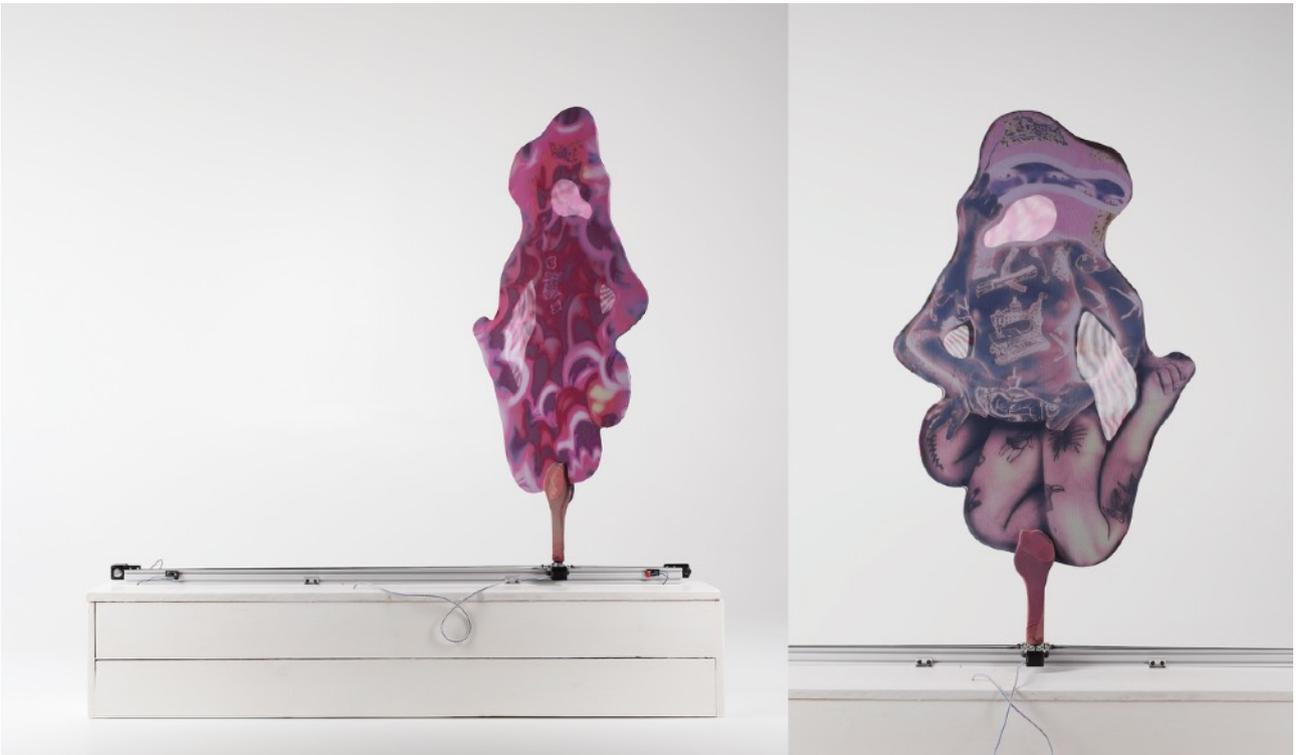
  long delayTime = random(40000, 70001);
  delay(delayTime);

  switchCounter = 0;
}
```

- Imagine you have two spinning machines, like spinning wheels. This code guides them. It sets up the machines' speed and has two buttons. One button makes both machines spin in the same direction, and the other makes them spin in opposite directions. But, after pressing a button, one machine takes a break and spins randomly, like a spinning top. The code also handles if we press the buttons too much. So, in essence, it controls two spinning machines with buttons, making them spin and do playful tricks!



'portrait of Elana', part of 'opus phase iii', 2023



'self-portrait', part of 'opus phase iii', 2023

# POSTLUDE

My relationship with Helvetica Neue is forever ruined by a toxic relationship. Consequently, I've chosen to write in Avenir Next Regular as my preferred font, drawn to its clean and airy simplicity. My friend who was visiting last week from Ireland said that she only approves the use of Times New Roman. Later it came out that her grand grand (grand?) uncle had designed that font. I had to Google for confirmation.

still dunno if i believe her

once she told me that the name of the brand JBL, which is known for their wireless speakers stands for Juicy Big Lips

I do have trust issues

At this moment in time, phases have become integral to my practice, representing events and experiences intersecting with the creation of my work. They serve as bookmarks, preserving personal reminders of those chapters in my existence. Consequently, I tend not to separate my artistic practice from my life.

Despite these phases being influenced by many personal events that some might perceive as concepts, I deliberately choose to focus on the aesthetic aspect of the work. The avoidance of theorization, capitalization, and conceptualization has influenced my artistic practice. Throughout this text (written component?) thesis?), you've come across parts in which I avoid using capital letters and punctuation. It started as a fu...

- hey Siri what is a synonym of Fuck You?
- I found this on the web for what is a synonym of Fuck You...

It started as an act of defiance against grammar rules and my association of capitalization with capitalism. I understand that those parts may have been challenging

to read, but their understanding is not crucial as it is not with the works that I present for the spectator. I leave the interpretation of my work to you and to them by leaving clues and traits.

Avoiding these "-izations" is driven by some rebellious forces that invade my mind of an artist who refuses to conform to existing norms, structures, and rules. The intruder of the masses, unwanted, intimidating, queer, trans, crip... Perhaps these difficulties are just my way of processing theory and, as a result, my refusal of it.

Originally, the phases were intended for the yellow work only, to experiment with its diversity and its ability to adapt to spaces and bodies, both human and non-human. It was exhibited on two different occasions, including the *Kandinäyttely 2021* and *Sweet Dreams*, which took place at the GLO Hotel Art in 2022.



'yellow phase i', *Sweet Dreams*, GLO hotel art, 2022

The yellow piece has also been used for other projects that were not presented publicly and therefore have not been assigned their own phase number. Below are a couple of examples in which 'yellow phase i' was incorporated before being deconstructed into 'afflatus'.



untitled yellow, 2021



untitled yellow, 2022

While working on 'afflatus,' the phases evolved to signify more than just distinct states of 'yellow'; they acquired deeper meanings beyond the mere presentation of work. This approach naturally aligns with my recent practice and work process, which culminated in the creation of 'opus phase iii,' presented at Kuvan Kevät 2023. 'opus' transcended my personal artistic comfort zone and familiar techniques, becoming a venture into the confusing language of programming and the exploration of new ways of working with photography and textiles.

This approach of blending life and art will be the guiding principle for my forthcoming projects. The equipment and components incorporated into 'opus' have been thoughtfully chosen to ensure their relevance and usability post-graduation. These materials, including elements for automation and movement such as rails, motors, and computers, open up possibilities for further experimentation and artistic exploration.

# disclosure and references

Pages xiv - xvi

Starting from the words “The host interrupts...” until “... of words unspoken...”.

The original text of the writer was edited by chat GPT with the request of re-writing it in the style of novelist Ryū Murakami.

Page xxxi

“Will you still love me when I’m no longer young and beautiful?”

Lana Del Ray, Young and Beautiful (May 10, 2013)

Pages xxxviii - xli

Is an actual conversation between the writer and chat GPT

Most of the text in this written component besides the artist’s personal diary notes (page vi), poetic writings (pages xii, xxxi, xliii) exhibition catalog texts (pages xviii, xix, xxix), commentary notes (pages xxii - xxiv) were checked for grammar and spelling by chat GPT.