

EKA

Estonian Academy of Arts
Faculty of Design
Department of Textile Design

Zane Shumeiko

**SHU-SHU-SHUM:
free-motion
embroidery
practice creating
multi sensorial
experiences**

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**MA Thesis
Supervisor: Kristi Kuusk, PhD
Consultant: Taavi Hallimäe, MA
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Dedication.

Veltījums vecmāmiņai

“ You always told me I could do it and manage everything. You shared my passion for art and offered me your unlimited support. You stitched with your sewing machine while I listened to the sound of shushushu...in the next room. You were often making and mending clothing for family members. You gave me scraps of your materials. I stitched them first into clothes for my dolls and later into my artworks. You were socially active and communicable with many friends and people who loved you.

Then you could not walk or stand on your feet anymore. You could not leave the flat in your wheelchair because the building did not have a lift. You spent most of your days alone. Time passed, and you could not stitch anymore. Your hands remained weak and trembling. Once, you told me your eyes started to develop glaucoma, and your sight became obscured.

You always asked me to bring you new perfumes because that reminded you about your life profession as a perfume chemistry specialist. Your well-trained nose could still smell any delicate fragrance. We had conversations through and about textiles while you touched and enjoyed them. I sat by your bed waiting for you to recover, and when you became depressed and sad, I asked you to write. Writing became your pastime: anything from memories to stories, letters, fantasy tails, recipes. Your essays are with me today. They nurture and advise me. I will always be thankful for the inspiration, security and path you showed me before you left, grandmother. “

**My work is dedicated and stitched
to you for everything
you brought into my life.**

Summary

Keywords: Free-motion embroidery; multisensorial aspects; practice-led research; autoethnography; experimental free-motion embroidery workshops; collaborative study

My thesis defines an artistic free-motion machine embroidery (or free-motion machine stitching) that is one of the textile art techniques as the potential tool to stimulate the multi-sensorial experience. Furthermore, it explores the benefit of the technique for the artist who seeks a balance, calm and a flow state during turbulent times of unstable global situation due to the Covid-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine.

It seeks to answer how the technique of free-motion machine embroidery triggers and involves several senses (vision, sound, touch, smell) during the creation process and, after that, also for other people who experience the artwork.

Combining artistic practice-led research and autoethnography, I seek to find answers through numerous artistic experimentations and processes (drawing, painting, stitching, sound recordings). The experimentation continues involving other people in testing the stitched samples.

This thesis explains the components of the work, including workshop activities and collaborative study, which further informed and influenced my artistic practice. Doing so gives voice to the participants' experience and engagement in the processes. Moreover, it helps to seek answers to how it is possible to collaborate through creative free-motion embroidery.

The results of the work are two-fold: 1) series of practical works: free-motion embroidery artworks that demonstrate the personal stories, exploration of the technique and multisensory aspects of making and experiencing them as a visitor; tactile textures created by free-motion embroidery offering a multisensory experience; a series of free-motion embroidery collaborative artworks, that are containing a personal story of collaborators and multisensorial characteristics; 2) insights gathered from creating free-motion experimental embroidery (observations regarding multisensorial aspects during the individual creative practice, workshops with participants and collaborative study).

Artistic, visual, tactile and sound outcomes are examples of developing experiential approaches to a multisensorial free-motion machine embroidery practice for practitioners and students.

Kokkuvõte

Märksõnad: vabakäe masintikand; multisensoorsed aspektid; praktikapõhine uurimus; autoetnograafia; eksperimentaalsed vabakäe masintikandi töötoad; koostööpõhine uurimus

Minu magistritöö käsitleb loomingulist vabakäe masintikandit (või vabakäe masinõmblust) – kui ühte tekstiilikunsti tehnikat – potentsiaalse tööriistana multisensoorse kogemuse stimuleerimisel. Lisaks vaatleb töö antud tehnika positiivset mõju kunstnikule, kes püüdleb tasakaalu, rahu ja vooluseisundi poole rahututel aegadel, Covid-19 pandeemiast ja Ukraina sõjast tingitud ebastabiilses globaalses olukorras

Otsin oma magistritöös vastuseid küsimustele, kuidas vabakäe masintikandi tehnika stimuleerib ja puudutab loomeprotsessis mitmeid meeli (nägemine, heli, puudutus, lõhn), mõjudes hiljem sarnaselt valminud teost kogevatele inimestele.

Sidudes loomingulise praktikapõhise uurimustöö autoetnograafiaga, otsin oma töös vastuseid läbi mitmete kunstiliste katsetuste ja protsesside (joonistamine, maalimine, õmblemine, helisalvestused). Eksperimendi jätkuna testin ömmeldud proovitükke ka teiste inimeste peal.

Seletan magistritöös lahti töö erinevad osad, nagu töötubades toimunud tegevused ja koostööpõhised uurimused, mis andsid mulle uusi teadmisi ja mõjutasid ka minu kunstipraktikat. Nii saavad hääle ka tööprotsessi kaasatud inimeste kogemused. Lisaks annan ülevaate sellest, milliseid koostöötamise võimalusi vabakäe masintikand pakub.

Töö tulemused jagunevad kaheks: 1) seeria praktilisi töid: vabakäe masintikandi tehnikas teosed, mis annavad tunnistust isiklikest lugudest, tehnikaga tutvumisest ning multisensorsetest aspektidest nii tehnikaga tegeledes kui seda vaatajana kogedes; vabakäe masintikandi tehnikas loodud taktiilsed tekstuurid, mis pakuvad multisensorset kogemust; seeria vabakäe masintikandi tehnikas koostööna valminud kunstiteoseid, mis ühendavad endas kaasatud inimeste isikliku loo ja multisensoorsed aspektid; 2) eksperimentaalse vabakäe masintikandiga tegelemise käigus tekkinud mõtted (individuaalses loomeprotsessis tekkinud tähelepanekud multisensorsete aspektide kohta, töötoad erinevate osalejatega ja koostööpõhised uurimused).

Kunstilised, visuaalsed, taktiilsed ja helipõhised tulemid on näited kogemuslike lähenemiste arendamisest multisensoorse vabakäe masintikandi vallas nii praktikutele kui ka tudengitele.

1 Introduction

I first turned to textile making and, in particular, free-motion stitching practice as a tool to calm down, feel centred, have control over some part of my life, and immerse myself in the pleasure of the creative process (Collier 2012 p.37).

The global coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) starting in 2019 and continuing today in 2022 influenced my practice greatly. The unstable political situation caused by the Russian invasion in Ukraine, started on the 24th of February 2022 brought for me even more anxiety.

To manage my state of mind, I turned to the Textile artist communities such as the Society for Embroidered Work, TextileArtist.org and Stitchingtogether.net, which promote communication among textile artists, makers, and professionals and acknowledge the importance of creative practice as a safe space for them. I experienced stitch practice's healing and calming power through various workshops, communication, support, and sharing among professionals and everyone interested in textiles.

I decided to continue exploring stitching as an art form and discovered new aspects of the free-motion machine embroidery that I am presenting in this Thesis. These aspects helped me be curious, ask questions, explore, experiment, and be present here and now, getting to know myself and the world better through senses (smell, touch, vision, hearing).

1.1 Becoming a textile artist

In early childhood, I loved playing with paper. My grandmother wrote memories about me:

“On her birthdays, all the gifts she threw out of the baby fence, only the wrapping papers left there she wanted to play with. So she started drawing at about two years old.” (From memory journal No.3, the year 2013-14, translation from the Latvian language by the author).

Later studying at Riga Art and Design Secondary School at the age of 15, I got my first sewing machine and tried the free-motion embroidery technique, learning to stitch on paper and later on fabric, asking for advice from my grandmother.

My grandmother practised machine embroidery and stitching of clothing with her domestic sewing machine (Figure 1-2). That has been a practical need in 1950s Latvia since she started stitching. In her memories journal, my grandmother wrote:

“ I do not know how I did it, but I have completed two years of sewing courses. I sewed everything for myself, even pants for my husband, fur coats, vests, and shirts. The stores are empty, at least in Riga. ” (From memory journal No. 3, the year 2013-14, translation from the Latvian language by the author).

She greatly influenced and supported my early interest in art and craft and my choice to study in the textile art department at the Art Academy of Latvia. Later I moved to work in the textile industries in Italy, from where we continued our communication through writing letters. At some point, I asked her to write a memories journal. Reading them through today, when she has long gone, I remember many everyday things, places and her home that I wrote in my journal in 2021:

“ I listened to my grandmother’s stitching behind the wall when I lived with her. The calming and rhythmic cluttering sound has left indelible marks in my unconscious mind. It gave me a sense of security and a relaxing feeling when I was a young student at university. ”



Figure 1-2. My grandmother’s machine embroidered textile details from the 1980s. Photographs by Zane Shumeiko

In 2005 my free-motion embroidered artwork, a self-portrait, was selected for the exhibition “Portrait Gallery”, Pfaff Art Embroidery Challenge dedicated to machine embroidered works in London, England (Figure 3). That was a starting point for my search for artistic expression through the stitching.

The first free-motion embroidery artist that I learned about was Alice Kettle. She is one of the prominent contemporary artists working in the free-motion embroidery technique to create her large scale works. Kettle uses a personal narrative with details from her family history – e.g. her mother’s dresses in the project “Pause II” (Figure 4) – through the technique of creative stitching with sewing machines (Manchester school of Art, 2021).



Figure 3. Self portrait. Free-motion embroidery and collage, 2005. Photograph by Zane Shumeiko



Figure 4. Alice Kettle, Pause II

1.2 Me and my sewing machine

“ My parents gave me a sewing machine. My father brought it from Lithuania. We do not have them in our market yet – I am proud of this first thing. ” (From memory journal No. 2, the year 2012, translation from the Latvian language by the author).

These are my grandmother’s memories of her first sewing machine. She expressed being proud of having the machine that helped her to create things. I can similarly recall the excitement of getting my first sewing machine from my parents. It gave me a sense of security and became my companion in creating things.

I ask myself how was the experience of working with the simple mechanical sewing machine that my grandmother used compared to the electric machine I use today (Figure 7-8). Grandmother’s machine was a whole heavy furniture type cupboard. She kept all her sewing and handicraft tools inside (Figure 5-6).

Today when opening her wooden machine, I feel the smell of older times, dust and moisture that transforms the space for me, bringing back memories and associations related to my childhood. My machine, in contrast, is made from plastic, light, small, easily portable and does not smell particular.

The sewing machine's free-motion stitching process and its responses to different materials and tensions remain highly influenced by the sewing machine. Technology (sewing machine) helps the maker enter into intimacy and relationship between material and maker. Through collaboration and support, it feels like we are having a conversation between me and my sewing machine.

In the book "Crafting Textiles in the Digital Age" (2016), authors Downes et al. argue that it is essential for textile designers to define the unspoken elements of what they have learned through the experience of working with the material. I believe this could probably also regard work with a sewing machine where new knowledge and notations appear during the creative process and intuitive trust between maker and sewing machine.

Author Tessa Acti turns digital embroidery into a mechanical conversation between artist, machine and material. She uses an investigative approach and explores these relationships that evolve while working with digital embroidery between machinery and material. As an embroidery expert, she says: "What is that sound? The machine does not sound right!" (Downes et al., 2016, p.37). This aspect is intriguing to me how the practitioner's ear knows that something is wrong by hearing the unusual sound of the machine.



Figure 5. My grandmother's sewing machine tools.
Photographs by Zane Shumeiko



Figure 6. My sewing machine tools in 2022.



Figure 7. My grandmother's sewing machine from the 1980s.
Photographs by Zane Shumeiko.



Figure 8. My sewing machine in 2022.

1.3 Free-motion embroidery as a multi sensorial experience

Free-motion embroidery is also called free-hand machine embroidery or free machine stitching. One can use any sewing machine for this technique. In the process, the maker moves the material freely, creating thread lines under the needle. The sewing machine's needle becomes similar to a pencil or any other drawing tool. The upper and lower threads of the sewing machine's bobbins draw the lines and textures.

Maker touches the materials and machine, manipulates them, hears the sounds of stitching and experiences visual interest while working with stitching. Visual, tactile, sound and smell elements contribute to the exploration process. I seek to create an artistic, free-motion stitching experience that, additionally to visual aspects, activates touch, sound, and smell in the body (Lupton, Lipps; 2018). This type of design supports the opportunity to receive information, explore the world, experience, wonder, and social connections, regardless of sensory abilities (p. 9).

The visual and tactile experience

My grandmother talked about one of her first stitched pieces and also referred to the material her mother used to sew her a skirt:

“ The fabric was from officers' pants, which my father exchanged for a brick of bread. Then, from the overcoat found in the ditch, my mother sewed a lovely skirt for me (the skirt was sharp and biting, but it could all be tolerated). ” (From memory journals No. 1 and 2, the years 2011, 2012, translation from the Latvian language by the author).

My grandmother was recycling and gathering clothes and materials of all kinds. When I visited her in my childhood, I spent time among boxes, bags and piles of fabrics, papers, buttons, threads, ribbons and other materials I could touch, admire, explore and play with.

Grandmother often offered materials for me when I had to make something. So today, I select the materials for my free-motion embroidered work based on their visual and tactile properties spontaneously, and I continue using vintage materials my grandmother had gathered.

Touching surfaces evoke emotions and memories and awaken the unexpressed need to continue with a particular material or colour, or an opposite – to abandon it. Copetti et al. cite Pallasmaa (2009), who says that touch is a sensory way that combines our experience of the world with our personality. That means it deepens our understanding and engagement with our materials and tools.

The sound experience

“ I remember sounds from the grandmother’s room, dominated by the rhythmic beating of the foot pedal of the sewing machine that was touching the floor, accompanied by a soft buzzing of the stitch. ”

I wrote these memories in 2021 about a sound I remember thinking about my grandmother. I also asked several of my family members about their memories related to our grandmother and sound. They remembered her stitching and the sewing machine’s pedal beating while she was working in the silence. Some mentioned her laughing and talking with constant radio noise in the room’s background.

Objects and materials make sounds when they fall, break, bend, or crash into other things. In addition, energy is released as sound (Lupton, Lipps; 2018, p. 47). Different sounds of the stitching process captured my attention while preparing the machine and material, spinning the thread, cutting, etc.

A humming sound when the thread gets stacked or sudden sharp noise when the needle gets broken invites me to pay attention and concentrate on my inner thoughts and feelings. I accept them as a part of my artwork creation process. Sound asks me to think that perhaps that happened because I was anxious and started to move the material too fast or push the machine pedal furiously.

The smell experience

My grandmother’s home had a distinct smell. There were cupboards full of aromatic oils, essences and perfumes because she worked as a perfume master in a cosmetic factory. She writes about her early childhood memories and influences from the spring flower smells as well as comments on her nose:

“ I open my soul to scents, and to my surprise – my nose turns out to be gifted with a “memory of smell”. So we are slowly climbing the career ladder with my nose “in hand”. ” (From memory journal No. 2, the year 2012, translation from the Latvian language by the author).

I find smell elements in my free-motion embroidered artwork due to some recycled materials or the presence of natural dyes on paper. My work consists of papers and fabrics, creating “composite pieces”. The Textile artist Anne Kelly uses this term in her online stitching workshop (TextileArtist.org Stitchclub, 2022). She encourages using various materials with a connection and personal meaning to the artist, including found or recycled objects.

I have incorporated covers of vintage perfume bottles and labels, coloured paper, and found objects. Smell is the direct pathway to memory that allows us to remember smells even better than images and for a long time.

2 Background and inspiration

Free-motion embroidery practice can be experienced individually or together with other people. My research seeks to answer the central question of **how machine free-motion embroidery practice triggers multi-sensorial experiences**. To give a more profound overview, I divide this question into three sub-questions:

- 1) How does the maker experience multi-sensory aspects of machine free-motion embroidery?
- 2) How to co-make multisensorial machine free-motion embroidery with other people?
- 3) How to create machine free-motion embroidery that triggers multi-sensorial experiences in other people?

Multi sensorial aspects of free-motion machine embroidery for the maker

Considering that senses are unique to every person (Lupton, Lipps, 2018), I wonder how the maker experiences the machine's free-motion embroidery and what multisensory aspects they discover during the process. For this, I look into the work of other artists who use free-motion embroidery in their practice.

Emily Porter is a textile artist who creates art using a sewing machine in a free-motion embroidery technique and alcohol ink markers (TextileArtist.org, 2022). She has used textile art techniques to help herself overcome mental health disorders such as anxiety. Emily describes that she was sewing like being hypnotised by the sewing machine in her childhood. She describes the free-motion embroidery as “imperfect, quirky, bouncy, impractical” that she chooses to use again and again. The artist's favourite characteristic of free-motion embroidery is the tactile and visual textures. Porter claims that she can have a feeling of freedom with free-motion embroidery.



Figure 09-10. Emily Porter: Waiting, Sweet Dreams

“Click, click, clap, trrrrrrrrr, a magical sound”, describes a mixed media textile artist Willy Schut her memory for life when her mother was sitting at the sewing machine and bobbing the thread spool (Schut, 2022). She claims her life in the textile making was born through the inspiration of her mother. Schut creates her textile art using a combination of painting, appliqué and freehand machine embroidery (TextileArtist.org, 2022). She is interested in open and broken connections between man and materials, layering different materials and techniques. Artist describes her hands subconsciously leading the work by themselves, knowing what threads and fabrics are needed and how to make the correct stitch. Schut pays attention to the stitching sound and notes that the repetitive sound of continuous stitching is incredibly soothing to her.



Figure 11-12. Willy Schut: Wat zeg je and Portret

For Leisa Rich, her stitching is a way of painting and building texture with sewing thread (Rich, 2022). Rich is facing deafness problems in her personal life and pays attention to the sounds of machines. She says: “When we got the 3D printer last fall, I was surprised that it “makes music” as it is printing and that that sound varies depending on the item printed. It has become a comforting and lively background sound that I have become quite accustomed to!” (TextileArtist.org, 2022). She uses free motion embroidery combined with multiple methods and materials, including a 3D printer and biodegradable plastic, to create conceptual installation art. She explores human interaction through sight, touch, and sound.

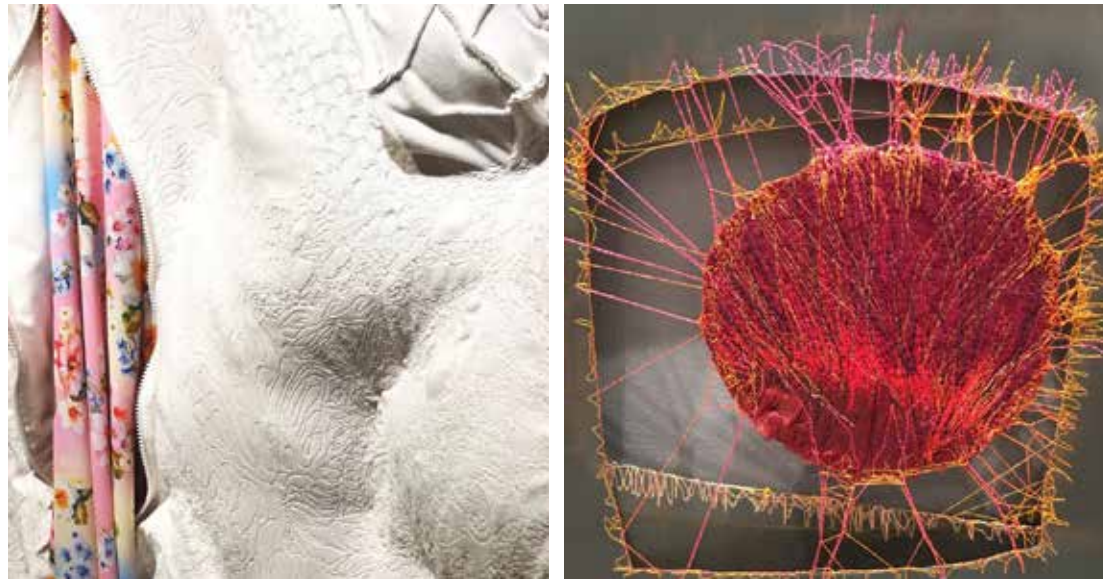


Figure 13-14. Leisa Rich: What Counts Is What's Inside, Tangled/Untangled

During the textile art-making process, the maker can experience multisensorial aspects (sight, sound, touch, smell). As Collier has said, reality comes to us through our senses (2012, p. 77). How do we perceive a textile art piece while creating it? One of the first aspects of developing the art piece is colour. Colour holds its meaning, personally and culturally (Collier 2012, p. 23). Colour is present in the making process, and artists usually make a conscious choice of the colours to work with. The texture and chosen technique informs and changes the visual experience. For example, lace-making techniques similar to the free-motion embroidered surfaces might be strong and delicate, hiding and exposing (Collier 2012, p. 27). Embroidery often imitates the making of lace (Ingold, 2007, p. 52).

Visually one can observe both sides of the embroidered surface. The front of the textile piece usually shows what people want to see and understand, while the back is imperfect and full of threads and knots. The backside holds the artwork's meaning or visual image of the front together (Collier 2012, p. 28). The author suggests that this example of two different sides of embroidered work invites one to accept parts of life that one cannot avoid.

Collier states that touch is the first sensation to develop in unborn babies and the last that disappears in the elderly (2012, p. 22). She mentions the importance of touch and the need for it in humans. Without touch, people might feel less content and connected. We receive tactile stimulation through the skin. Skin communicates touch, pressure, temperature and pain (2012, p. 122). We manipulate the materials and receive information and feelings. Fibres are fantastic to touch, says Collier (p. 97). Ingold talks about touch, saying that it comes close to vision because the blind can achieve with their hands what the sighted achieve with their eyes (2000, p. 258). Hand touch seems to allow them to perceive the information similarly to how it is seen visually.

Collier states that "listening is the groundwork for the creative process" (p. 227). In her reflection, artist Rebecca Cross explained that she had to listen to her work. When she truly listened to it, she knew where to go next. "You do not only look, you listen as well, for the air is full of sounds of one kind and other," says Ingold when talking about sounds created by humans at work (Ingold, 2000, p. 205). He explains that our knowledge of the world can only happen through perception, talking about examples of looking and listening. He compares both, stating that sound reaches directly to the soul and has a more vital ability to convince a person than vision. Ingold cites thinker Paul Stoller, telling that sound is a foundation of experiences and creates a sense of communication and participation (2000, p. 249).

Sensorial experience for co-making free-motion machine embroidery

I question how to create free-motion machine embroidery. Two approaches that I consider to apply to my work are conducting workshops and collaborating with other people. Copetti et al., citing Höök (2018), "in the situation of present uncertainties we are facing in society, there is a need to be experiential, felt, and engage with realities of subjectivity, sensations, feelings, and emotions". According to Ingold (2013), making offers a reflection on what it means to create things and personal knowledge. The knowledge results from the contacts around the embroidery, objects and touches exchanged among participants and researchers.

Copetti et al. cite Holroyd (2016) that there is evidence of people joining the textile groups since the 18th century. Stitching together network (Stitching Together, 2022) is one of them, seeking to promote understanding and critical dialogues around making textiles with others. Embroidery allows us to think about experimentation and touch (Copetti et al., 2022, p. 7) because the hands, touch and materials are involved in the process. Copetti and Meyer proposed an embroidery group to imagine and create something that would express their life experiences about their circumstances during the Covid-19 pandemic (2022, p. 8).

Taylor, Gretel and Deborah Warr (2018) explore the practice of touchy art using participatory methods. The artists or researchers are involved in exploration, experimentation, and creation with residents or participants. They adapted ideas of practice-led creative research. Warr et al. cite Barrett, who describes this type of research in which knowledge derives from doing and sensing (2018, p. 4). Sensory details offer poetic possibilities. Warr et al. (2018, p. 7) describe methods for documenting the participants' insights from the experience of walking by writing a stream of bodily sensations.

Taylor et al. introduce the term open-endedness while giving participants to explore their ideas in their selected direction and free approach and open-endedness (p. 8). With open-endedness, they mean that both participants with expertise or skills and people with little prior knowledge may engage in activities. Following this principle, it would be possible to structure a free-motion embroidery workshop in a suitable way for people without previous knowledge.

An element of co-working practice could be the multilingual approach. I am looking at this personally as I speak and live in different foreign languages (Latvian, English, Russian, Estonian, Italian). I agree that cross-cultural and multilingual navigation become part of the richness of the project (Warr et al. 2018, p. 11).

While conducting creative stitching learning sessions, the important elements could be reflecting on the potential co-making activity to enhance sensory awareness cultivated in workshop activities (p. 12). In addition, the phenomenological methodology to explore artistic projects could be used to rename the participants' experiences and personal meanings (p. 14).

Another possible approach to experimental touch-oriented practice could be the Action Research method. That could be adapted to the free-motion embroidery workshop that would seek the touch-oriented approach where participants could use their world perspectives through craft-making (Copetti et al. 2022, p. 4). Analyzing such experience goes beyond the textual medium: spoken, seen, and touched could be acquired from video and audio recordings (p. 8). Again, this approach seems to be applied to the free-motion embroidery workshops.

Copetti et al. emphasise the importance of exchanging creations through touch embodied care among participants, sending each other's feelings, hugs, and worldviews through the threads and their compositions (p. 11). Although, as in the Covid-19 pandemic situation, it was impossible to meet in life and hug each other, at least it was possible "touch each other's work and touch each other's heart, too" (Ibid., p. 11). That makes me think about the collaborative practice of free-motion embroidery to establish relationships through textile art-making and touch.

Multisensorial aspects of machine free-motion embroidery as experienced by other people

Embroidery provides a dialogical process (Copetti et al. p. 8) for workshop situations between the researcher and participant. It could also be applied to the user/visitor of the finished work if they are allowed to touch the objects or stitched textile samples. Copetti et al. propose a method when running a finger over the pieces. They identify shapes and textures that range from filled-slow to impatient-fast (p. 16). That could also be an exciting aspect of analysing the free-motion stitched pieces or textures through various rhythms.

Copetti et al. are addressing the question of how we can care more? "Care transforms the act of touching into an act of becoming with", they cite Haraway (2008). Authors describe care as partnering with others by an ethical obligation to look after another (p. 16). Taking another person's work in hand brings to repair, hold, and feel another's work. The delicacy of touch overcomes a tactile experience to establish a democratic environment (Ibid., p. 16), allowing participants to share affections and emotions. That could refer to the situation of intimacy and sharing in a family setting or group with students when touching and experiencing the finished samples. Touch invites the idea

of care and intertwining with experimentation and being together (p. 17). Sharing with others common enthusiasm is a vital way to connect with others (Collier 2012, p. 56). Collier cites Moon (2010), who proposes that group making creates a sense of community, is an expression of hope and keeps people present here and now.

3 Methodology

This practice-led research thesis looks into my auto-ethnographic view while developing the free-motion machine embroidery artworks. Workshops conducted to share the learnt skills feed new information and experience into the practice. So does a collaborative project where I communicate solely through the artwork with the co-author. Making textiles with others is an emerging methodological approach used in cross-disciplinary research (Stitching Together, 2020). The three methods influenced and supported one another during the research process. The main thread of this thesis is my artistic practice, which I explain in more detail. The workshops and collaborative project informed my practice immensely. However, they do not form the focus of this thesis, therefore they are explained briefly.

The following visualisation (Figure 15) shows how artistic practice, workshops and collaborative study are connected in my practice-led research.



Figure 15. Visualisation of the methodology used for this thesis.

3.1 Practice-led research

I used practice-led research to investigate my subjective experience of multisensory aspects of the machine free-motion embroidery technique. It includes an autoethnography method which allows to document and notate personal artistic experiences, impressions and understandings.

Elizabeth Mackinlay, author of the book Critical Writing for Embodied Approaches: Autoethnography, Feminism and Decoloniality (2019), proposes thinking about autoethnography in an embodied way. I question how to investigate the relationship between material (e.g. paper), tool (sewing machine) and me (artist). Mackinlay (2019) shows how autoethnography is used and how it steps inside and outside the self to experience. She uses theory as a story and personal stories as a theory to explore her place in the world. Autoethnography is a method of living, Mackinlay claims. I documented and analysed my experience by stitching through various practical, multisensorial experimentations that were a significant part of my daily life from 2019 to 2022.

I filled a diary each time before I started to work, during the process, and after I finished stitching (Figure 16). I reflected on the day and working conditions, named keywords, and noted observations and findings. In addition, I did the video and audio recordings of the work process. Audio thinking and making a transcript of thoughts are proposed by Groth and Mäkelä (2015). The authors describe their study of experimentation with data collection methods in the case of ceramic practice. Still, they can be applied to other fields due to the focus on sensory experiences. The authors also explain the multimethod, which allows the inclusion of sensory experiences in data collection and other methods incorporated into research to reach the best outcome. I found it beneficial to combine both writing a diary and recording audio and video for my autoethnography process.

Date, place:	Tallinn, 17-19 January 2022
Before starting making:	Have a light fever, some worries, stress, confusement about things and tasks to do. Thinking about family history research gives a stimulus that moves forward. Wish to create something new, to have bases for my works. Participating in the free workshop-online stitching camp of Gven Hedley, she invites to mark making on fabric with paints. I chose natural inks on paper instead. This seems to boost the creativity flow. Start making marks and paint with natural inks I had already prepared from Curcuma and coffee. Select the size of papers that makes me feel comfortable and easy to manage with stitching. On the 2nd day of the workshop I got inspired from the concept of deconstructing and reconstructing, cutting and restitching parts of work.
Outside me:	Sunny, cold weather outside.
Process thoughts:	I am observing my grandmother's photographs. What emotional meaning and connection do they bring to me? Thinking about what multisensorial aspects connect with her. Her kitchen! Smells, colours, that is what inspires me at this moment.

Figure 16. Notes from my diary. 2022

I preferred to turn to a multimethod for my research because of the non-linear, “free-motion” (as the name of my chosen textile technique suggests) fragmented and multilayered approach to my work.

3.2 Workshops

I conducted two workshops to investigate how to co-make free-motion machine embroidery, share and communicate the experience of the technique with other people and what would be their reactions and opinions about it. In addition, I was interested to discover what their sensorial experiences were during the process.

I led my study internship at the Estonian Academy of Arts by creative making, offering workshops in Latvian Academy of Arts, Vivistop Telliskivi creativity accelerator for kids and youths in Tallinn and Merimetsa support centre. I found them a fruitful part of my study and research process. Moreover, I have participated in numerous textile-making workshops myself as a student in the last few years.

I described two workshops I conducted in the autumn of 2021 as a part of this thesis research process in Sally studio Art school in Tallinn (Sally studio, 2021) and the Estonian Academy of Arts (Textile design departments project, 2021). After the workshops, I asked participants to answer short questions and give feedback. That helped me to have an overview and analyse their experiences. I include the visual material and complete reports from the workshops (content, planning, and participants) in Appendix 5. In addition, participants have signed consent forms for giving their permission to involve them in research.

3.3 Collaborative practice study

In the autumn of 2021, during the workshop in Sally Studio, I met an art therapist Lilian who works with her client Tiiu. Tiiu has a visual impairment and physical disability condition, both caused by accident. I was looking for ways to collaborate through the practice of free-motion embroidery and decided to propose to an art therapist to create a collaborative art piece together with her client. Participants have signed consent forms for permission to involve themselves in research.

The aim of co-making the artwork of free-motion embroidery is communication between us through stitched multisensorial art. I mention that my work is not taking part in any therapeutic processes between me, the art therapist and her client but is an independent artistic project.

We started a communication through Lilian, who brought Tiiu's drawings to me and my stitched pieces and various materials to Tiiu. Tiiu created an abstract line drawing on paper and, together with a therapist, explored associations with materials and embroidered lines (thoughts, memories, emotions, feelings). My contribution to using artistic free-motion embroidery is to make these lines touchable for Tiiu. Stitched or embroidered with the thread on the surface, they become three dimensional. Tiiu can re-experience her design and our co-created artwork by touching stitched lines. I include the visual material and complete report from this collaborative study in Appendix 6.

4 Process

During the practice-led process of the thesis, I used several approaches that I divided into smaller categories. These were, 1) painting with natural inks on paper to produce the bases for my artworks. 2) experimenting with the free-motion machine embroidery. 3) creating a sketchbook with figurative drawings and stitch 4) posting my stitched samples to an online stitching community to receive feedback and discussion. 5) recording of the stitching sounds and my voice audio thinking. 6) transcribing my audio thinking notes and re-listening the recorded material 7) touching embroidered samples and recording sounds of my stitched pieces with my family members.

4.1 Painting backgrounds

I spent much of 2020 and 2021 in-home isolation due to the global pandemic of Covid-19. The home environment significantly defined my work on material experimentation. I took inspiration from Italian professor and designer Bruno Munari. I learned about him by visiting the Children's museum in Milan in 2018. He encourages children to learn about the world through experiences discovering different material properties by experimenting with them (Associazione Bruno Munari). I extracted inks from vegetables and fruits (beetroot, carrot, red cabbage, blackcurrant and others, which recipes I provide in Appendix 1. I painted and experimented with recycled materials (e.g. paper) that served as painted bases for my artworks in development. The aspects of colour fixing, light resistance and durability were not problematic for this project because the work was artistic and experimental.



Figure 17-18. Beetroot ink boiling, testing and filtering process. Photograph by author

After extracting the colours, I painted different paper surfaces with them without predicting the outcome. It was an intuitive, spontaneous and experimental process. It became a relaxing activity for me, bringing in the surprise of results. I followed the ink flow on the material and was not trying to lead it.

I also depicted landscapes, inspired by the walks, places and nature. However, when I started to make sketches outside in the open air, the fluidity of the line, colour choice and shapes changed to the more abstract, and I used aquarelle painting for this. Later this practice influenced one of the workshops I proposed to young students (about landscape painting and creative stitching). Some examples of these later embroidered landscapes are visible in Appendix 2.



Figure 19-20. Zane Shumeiko, natural ink painting experiments 2020, painting in the open air with her family 2021. Photographs by Zane Shumeiko

4.2 Experimenting with free-motion machine embroidery

In the spring of 2020, I decided to create each day a miniature portrait, meditating about my family and roots to calm and balance the anxiety brought by the pandemic. I used materials available at home for creative exercises, such as different papers, acrylic paints, watercolours, and markers. I combined them with three-dimensional lines of free-motion machine embroidery, using polyester and cotton threads. I tried to draw, paint and stitch creatively regularly.

That seemed to be a beneficial approach that trained concentration, creative flow and new ideas development for me, along with the memories that appeared during the creation process. I wrote in my diary entry in 2020:

It's hard to get started. I want to create a light, sketchy image on a white background with a line. I look at myself in the mirror and quickly sketch a face. Then I tinted it with watercolours and stitched it a little. The embroidered part is more important to me. The process feels a little sad, maybe scary. Pandemic, Covid virus-induced lockdown, sitting at home seems to affect mood.

The tables attached to Appendix 2 show visual details from stitched portraits with keywords appearing during and after the stitching process. I discovered new ideas

about memories, places, and colour associations related to people I was thinking about during the creation process.

I found a visual interest in design on the “wrong” or backside of the stitched pieces because they offered me unexpected solutions and possibilities to discover unintended qualities of the artwork. For example, I used different colour threads in the upper and lower bobbin of the sewing machine. That produces two different outcomes and a surprise moment for the maker when watching the backside of the work (Figure 21-22).

Materials and tools used for these experiments are strong aquarelle paper, black paper, polyester and cotton embroidery threads, silk threads, acrylic paints, ink pens, pastels, watercolours, felt-tip pens, water-soluble film, sewing machine.

The techniques are: drawing or painting the background (inspired by family portrait photographs), free-motion sewing machine embroidery for details (enhancing or tracing the outlines and details of faces or filling parts of the design with a stitched texture), and creating texture with threads and water-soluble film.

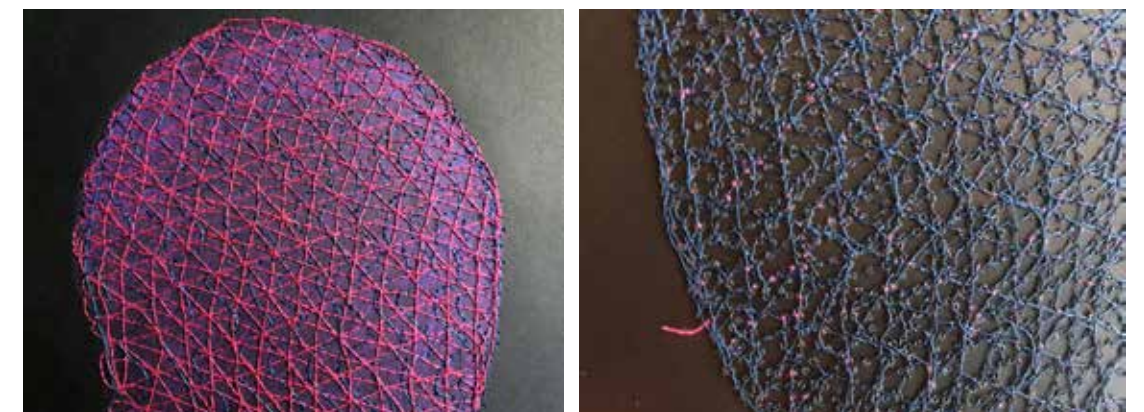


Figure 21-22. Free-motion embroidery experiments on paper. Abstract portrait #12, Front and back side of the sample 2020. Photograph by Zane Shumeiko

I created a series of textural tactile pieces influenced by techniques and approaches learned from various textile artists and their inspiration during my experimentation in 2021-2022.

For the texture (Figure 23), I was inspired by artist Brooks Harris Stevens and her approaches to creating highly-textured, three-dimensional layered hand stitch explorations and repurposing used fabrics and unconventional materials (Textile curator, 2022).

The materials and tools I used for this experiment are found objects, cotton and polyester embroidery threads, vintage pearl cotton, water-soluble film, and a sewing machine.

The techniques are free-motion machine embroidery on water-soluble film, incorporating found objects, adding three-dimensional elements by hand and machine embroidery.



Figure 23. Free-motion embroidery on water soluble film with incorporated found objects. 2021. Photograph by Zane Shumeiko. This work was exhibited in the exhibition Surface and depth, dedicated to contemporary textile art in Rome, Italy (Rome Art week, 2021).

Artist Alice Fox inspired me to create a texture (Figure 24). Fox uses approaches of couching, trapping, stitching found objects and incorporating them into the artwork (Fox, 2022). I created a series of small free-motion machine embroidered pieces with added three-dimensional elements (vintage perfume bottle cups and labels).

Materials and tools used for these pieces are printed paper, vintage perfume bottle cup and label, lace, cotton and polyester embroidery threads, water-soluble film, and a sewing machine.

The techniques are free-motion machine embroidery, incorporating lace and threads, using water-soluble film, and adding three-dimensional elements by hand embroidery.



Figure 24. Free-motion embroidery on paper with incorporated found objects, laces, fabric. 2021. Photograph by Reti Kokk.

For embroideries (Figure 25), I took inspiration from artist Ailish Henderson (TextileArtist.org 2022), her approaches to surface design experiments using batik, paint on paper and usage of mixed media in textile artworks.

Materials and tools used are: paper, candle paraffin wax, brushes, wooden sticks or cotton tips, acrylic ink, watercolours, cotton and polyester embroidery threads, iron, recycled newspapers, and a sewing machine.

The techniques are: creating batik surfaces on paper with melted wax, using various tools; colouring with watercolours, ironing paper to clean from wax through recycled newspaper sheets, and free-motion machine embroidery, stitching from both sides of the paper, experimenting with different thicknesses of the thread in the lower bobbin of the sewing machine.



Figure 25. Free-motion embroidery on paper. 2021. Photograph by Reti Kokk.

Figure 26 was inspired by mixed media embroidery artist Jessica Grady, her approaches to sequin creation, recycling, hand stitching, and fusing materials (Jessica Grady.co.uk). Materials and tools I used are paper, polyester and cotton embroidery threads, vintage labels, wrap film, scissors for cutting, and a sewing machine.

The techniques are: creating a surface from paper and vintage labels wrapping with wrap film, free-motion machine embroidery, cutting shapes in paper, experimenting with different thicknesses of the thread in the lower bobbin of the sewing machine, and stitching over the holes.



Figure 26. Free-motion embroidery on paper wrapped with plastic film. 2022. Photograph by Zane Shumeiko.

4.3 Posting works to online platforms

Online stitching community workshops and artists influenced numerous textile experiments. So I decided to post some of the outcomes and receive feedback. That informed and influenced my working process because mainly it was a positive and motivating exchange of experience, techniques and approaches.

I took part in a four-day Stitch Camp organised by TextileArtist.org at the beginning of 2022. It was led by textile artist Gven Hedley who works with mark making with paint and stitch restoration of surfaces with embroidery (Textile Study Group, 2022).

Materials and tools used are: paper, homemade coffee and Curcuma ink, vintage perfume bottle taps, vintage golden aluminium foil, polyester and cotton embroidery threads, scissors, needles, and a sewing machine.

The techniques are: painting with natural inks on paper, creating marks in wet colour and imprints using bottle taps, cutting papers, creating a collage, stitching pieces with free-motion machine embroidery, and combining it with hand embroidery.



Figure 27. Screenshots from the process photos of the stitch camp, day 1 and 2 2022, Zane Shumeiko

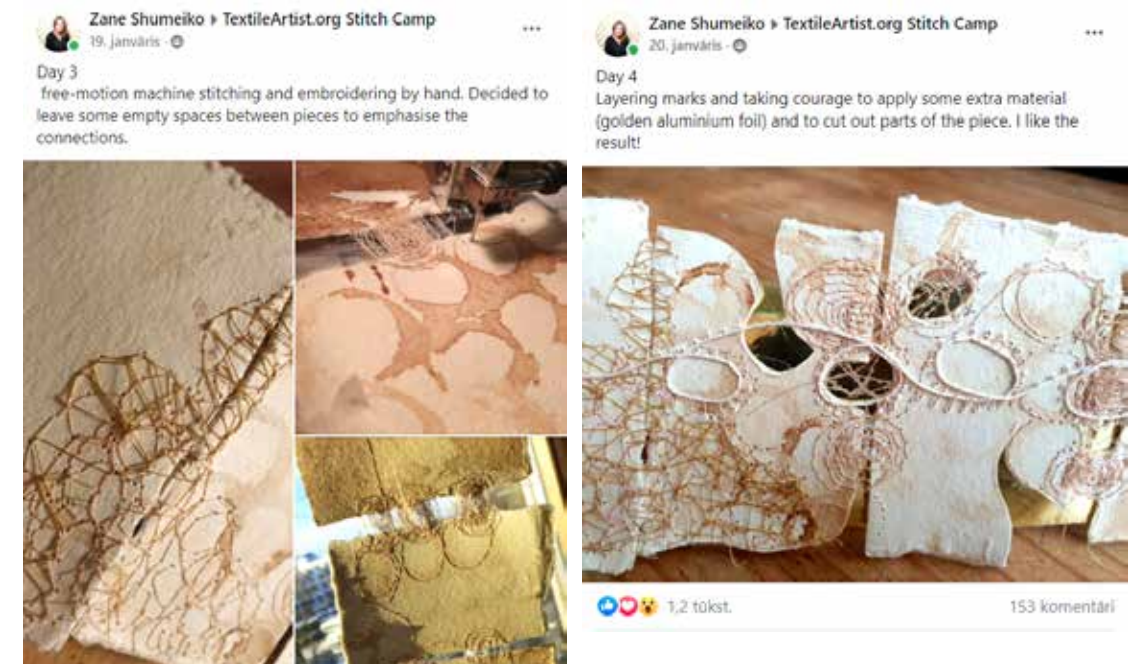


Figure 28. Screenshots from the process photos of the stitch camp, day 3 and 4 2022, Zane Shumeiko

4.4 Drawing figurative sketchbook with stitch

During the drawing stylistics course at the Estonian Academy of Arts, I explored model drawing and experimentation with different media, trying to find my expression (Figure 29). I was encouraged to combine natural ink painting with graphic lines. As a result, I combined line drawing with free-motion machine stitching directly inside my sketchbook, following my expression.



Figure 29. Zane Shumeiko drawing.
From the drawing stylistics session in Estonian Academy of Arts. 2021
Photograph by author

To briefly describe ideas from the sketchbook, I used audio thinking (without preparing my text in advance) and talked about my works, recording the process in the video. I used my native Latvian language to maintain the authenticity of the expression and to accentuate the sound shu-shu-shum of my project. In Appendix 4, I add the photo records of this sketchbook.

4.5 Recording sounds from the stitching process

I recorded sounds from the process while free-motion stitching with a sewing machine on different materials. I found that the most exciting sounds appear while stitching on paper. I summarised my first attempt to record free-motion machine stitching sound in a short video, Birds meditation, that I sent to the Biennial of Contemporary Textile Art in Chile 2020 (Figure 30). The online event reflected artists' work processes during the Covid-19 pandemic and proposed short videos. The video captures the sound and visual of free-motion embroidery experiments on various papers combined with mixed media.

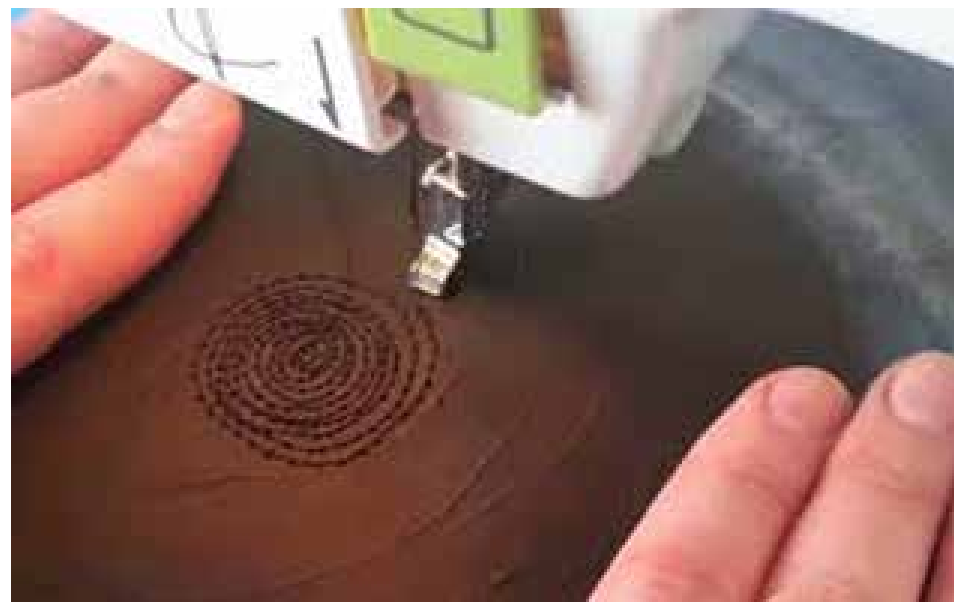


Figure 30. Screenshot from the video. Free-motion embroidery on paper Bird Mediation. Video by Zane Shumeiko

Click the link to see the VIDEO: <https://youtu.be/34NPJhLHSxo>

I gathered sounds while stitching on different surfaces like paper and plastic (Figure 31 and sound recording). I add the collection of them to Appendix 3 of this thesis.



Figure 31. Free-motion embroidery process on etching paper_20211101. Photograph and recording by Zane Shumeiko

Click the link to listen to the SOUND RECORDING: <https://youtu.be/2-feH1BwdkE>

Stitching activity provoked thoughts and memories that I expressed in words during the process. I stitched mixed media textile pieces and recorded audio with the work process and me thinking out loud, talking in parallel to the stitching sound. I recorded sounds during all stages of the work process. However, the focus is not on my voice, the stitching sound dominates it, and the voice blends with other sounds. I also include sounds of materials while manipulating them (for example, dissolving water-soluble film in the water). I recorded longer audios during the free-motion embroidery process.

While recording sound on January 26, 2022, I wrote:

“ I stitch now without leading the material with my hands. What’s going on there? The thread has run out. The holes are forming. ”

I was curious to re-listen to my recordings after some time. They revealed some moments and memories about the process that helped me to analyse how I experienced the free-motion embroidered art piece creating moments. I transcribed and translated my audio thinking records from the Latvian language, which appeared during the process and notes.

4.6 Touching embroidered samples

After finishing some tactile artworks, I asked five family members (aged 6, 61, 65 and 67) to touch some of the embroidered textures and articulate their sensations and thoughts this activity triggers (Figure 30-32). The process was video recorded and transcribed, showing responses about experiences during the touching session.



Figure 32. #1_Screenshot from video_3_20220311_ 00:32 -It seems that there has been water. -But I think there is ice in the windows. -Grandmother could not even imagine that another occupation would come to Semjonovka (meaning during the Ukraine-Russia war in 2022). In year 41 there was one and now another one. -It seems like a frozen ornament.

During experiments, while recording sounds of stitching and my voice, and family members touching and commenting on my stitched works, I noticed the sounds that artworks and stitched samples are creating themselves while being manipulated (e.g. crunching, scratching paper and threads on the surface). We recorded videos reporting the experience.

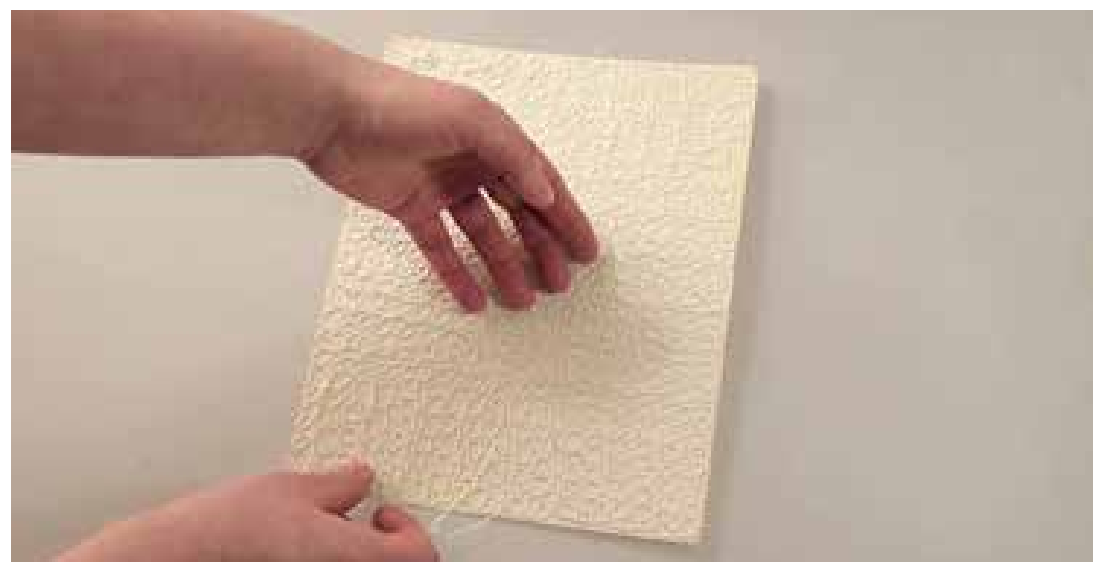


Figure 34. Screenshot from the video. Sound created while touching the embroidered sample. Video by Reti Kokk

Click link to see the VIDEO: <https://youtu.be/ORL9kf3BdhU>



#1_Screenshot from video_1_20220311_ 01:43
This seems like an Estonian map.



#2_Screenshot from video_1_20220311_ 02:04
Seems like some crunch.



#3_Screenshot from video_1_20220311_ 02:28
It feels like a dry leaf, like touching, caressing crispy leaflets.



#4_Screenshot from video_1_20220311_ 03:43
It seems like something poured out, like grain.



#5_Screenshot from video_1_20220311_ 04:43
Is this grandmother's embroidered lace? It is like, you know, that fabric as curtains by the window.



#6_Screenshot from video_2_20220311_ 00:21
I like this. It has exciting parts (showing the texture).



#7_Screenshot from video_2_20220311_ 00:29
I also like this when I touch it by hand. Why? Because there are different decorations attached. Like coins.



#8_Screenshot from video_2_20220311_ 00:48
Wow! I like this. It is like a spider with legs, look!



#9_Screenshot from video_2_20220311_ 01:05
I also like this. It is like a boot, a footstep.



#10_Screenshot from video_2_20220311_ 01:13
Oh, this is very beautiful, it is so good.



#11_Screenshot from video_2_20220311_ 01:18
That is interesting. I like it. It reminds me of some ornament.



#12_Screenshot from video_2_20220311_ 01:30
I do not like it. Such texture I don't like.



Figure 30. Screenshots from the touching session. 2022. Zane Shumeiko

4.7 Creating artworks

Three series of free-motion embroidered artworks on paper, and mixed media are 1) “Dedication to my childhood self”, 2) “Dedication to my grandmother”, and 3) “All is in your hands”. I created them in three stages. First, I made figural drawings (Figure 35-37), inspired by my childhood, my grandmother’s and relatives’ grandmother’s photographs. Next, I painted backgrounds with natural colours on paper. Finally stitched the design using the free-motion embroidery technique with a sewing machine (see close-ups of the stitch and material layering in Figures 38-40).

The choices of background, drawings, and materials were intuitive and spontaneous, adding the textures and layers to the pieces. The idea about visual story elements was influenced by an online textile workshop, “Say something with a stitch”, that I participated in in the summer of 2021, led by the textile artist Sue Stone. Stone is known for her figurative textile compositions, where she connects people, place and time (Stone, 2020). Participating in her workshop took me in a direction to create personal pieces of memory landscapes that tell a story. I described each art piece with my associations and memories that emerged during the creation process.



Figure 35. Figurative drawings inspired by my childhood photographs.2021. Zane Shumeiko



Figure 36. Figurative drawings inspired by my grandmother's photographs. 2022.
Zane Shumeiko



Figure 37. Figurative drawing inspired by Ukrainian grandmother's photograph. 2022.
Zane Shumeiko



Figure 38. Details from the series "Dedication to my childhood self". 2021. Zane Shumeiko
Photographs by Reti Kokk

Materials and tools used for the artwork series "Dedication to my childhood self" (Figure 33) are: aquarelle paper, natural self-made inks, figural drawings printed on copy paper, recycled vintage doll clothing and metal buttons, ribbons, beads, polyester and cotton embroidery threads, scissors, needles, sewing machine;

Techniques and processes are: drawing, painting with natural ink on paper, applying printed figures on paper with free-motion machine embroidery, removing the excess paper, filling areas with free-motion embroidery textures, cutting, creating three dimensions of the figure and transparency, adding vintage elements and hand stitch;

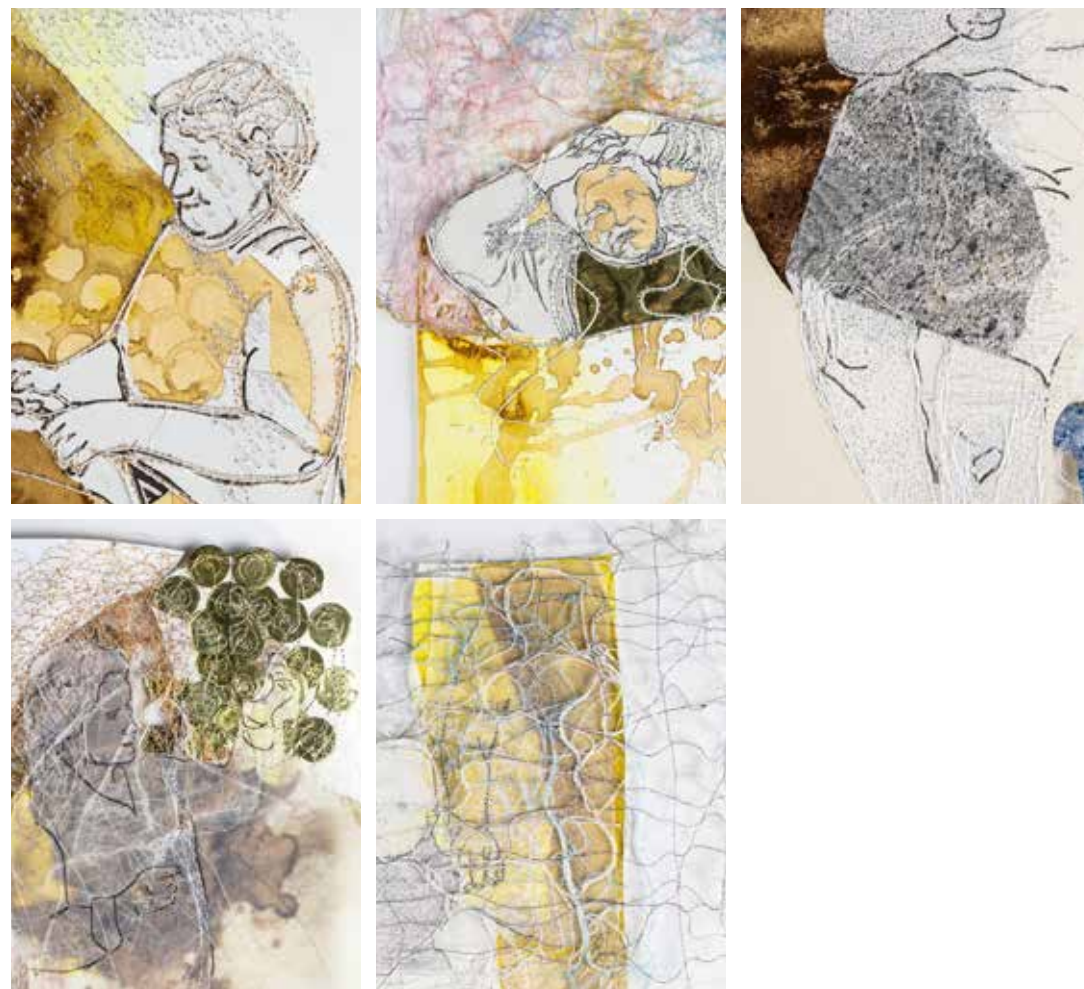


Figure 39. Details from the series “Dedication to my grandmother”. 2022. Zane Shumeiko
Photographs by Reti Kokk

Materials and tools used for the series “Dedication to my grandmother” (Figure 39) and artwork “All is in your hands” (Figure 40) are aquarelle paper, natural self-made inks (Curcuma, coffee), tools to make marks in colour (bottle taps), figural drawing printed on copy paper, industrial felt, water-soluble film, recycled vintage paper, wallpaper, foil, vintage perfume labels, polyester and cotton embroidery threads, recycled cotton threads scissors, needles, sewing machine;

Techniques and processes are: drawing, painting with natural ink on paper (Figure 41), applying printed figures on paper with free-motion machine embroidery (Figure 42 and process video), removing the excess paper, filling areas with free-motion embroidery textures (Figure 47), cutting, creating three dimensions of the figure and transparency, adding vintage elements (Figure 44) and hand stitch, “blind stitching” from the backside of the work (Figure 43) where I tried concentrating on the sound, movement, tactility, not on the visual patterns of the stitch. For some pieces adding mesh created from cotton threads and water-soluble film, filling areas stitching from the backside of the work and using thick thread in the lower bobbin of the sewing machine, hand stitch for the details;

For the hand stitch details of the work, “All is in your hands”, and background texture (Figure 45-46), I was inspired by the artist Sharon Peoples. Peoples uses a random cross-stitch for her portrait art and water-soluble fabric to make lace-like structures (Peoples, 2022). Random cross-stitch means stitches are uneven and spontaneous. In addition, the artist combines free-motion machine stitch with hand stitch in some works. These aspects and approaches seemed interesting, and I added expressive hand-stitched details to my artwork (Figure 48).



Figure 40. Detail from the artwork “All is in your hands”. 2022. Photograph by Reti Kokk

I created a process diary for the series “Dedication to my grandmother” and the artwork “All is in your hands”. Firstly, I noted my feelings and thoughts before starting to make them and my inspirations and expectations. For example, on January 17, 2022, I wrote:

“ I wish to create something new. Participating in the free workshop-online stitching camp of Gven Hedley, she invites mark-making on fabric with paints. I chose natural inks on paper instead. That seems to boost the creativity flow. Start making marks and paint with natural inks I had already prepared from Curcuma and coffee (see Figure 41) and select the size of paper that makes me feel comfortable and easy to manage with stitching. ”

Secondly, I paid attention to the weather or other conditions around me that seemed to influence the creative process's flow and process and energy levels. For instance, on January 22, 2022, I marked:

“ The child is learning to play the trumpet. Those sounds are all around me at home. ”

Thirdly, I wrote about my thoughts during the process. Although sometimes it was difficult to stop and write about it, it felt more natural to use audio thinking or video recording without the need to stop for writing.

“ This work feels like it needs time to settle. I came back to it several times. I am adding more layers and stitching. I do not wish to make numerous notes but rather record all the work processes in the video. ”

Finally, I marked the reflections and keywords after finishing the work. Note from January 26, 2022:

“ Video experience is good because it helps to re-experience the process. It recalls the feelings of touching and manipulating material. ”



Figure 41.Mark making process with natural inks on paper. 2022. Zane Shumeiko

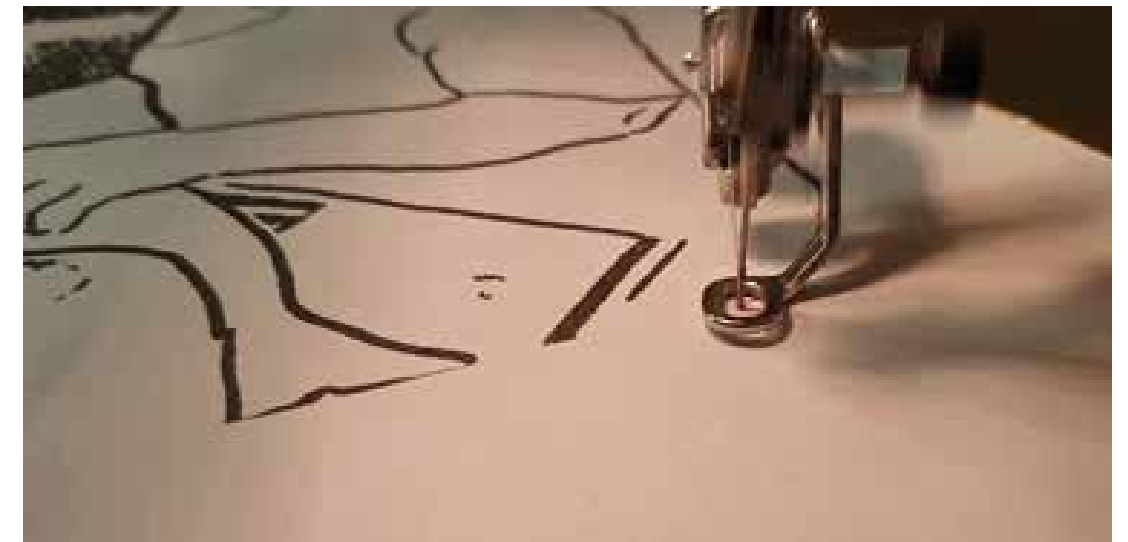


Figure 42. Screenshot from the video. Free-motion machine embroidery process following the drawing lines. 2022. Video by Zane Shumeiko

Process video: <https://youtu.be/kVXqVujZ3O4>



Figure 43. Screenshot from video. The backside of the work. “Blind stitching”, with closed eyes. 2022. Video by Zane Shumeiko

Process video: <https://youtu.be/ail-y7BvHQY>



Figure 44. Inserting vintage paper with free-motion embroidery technique. 2022.
Photograph by Zane Shumeiko

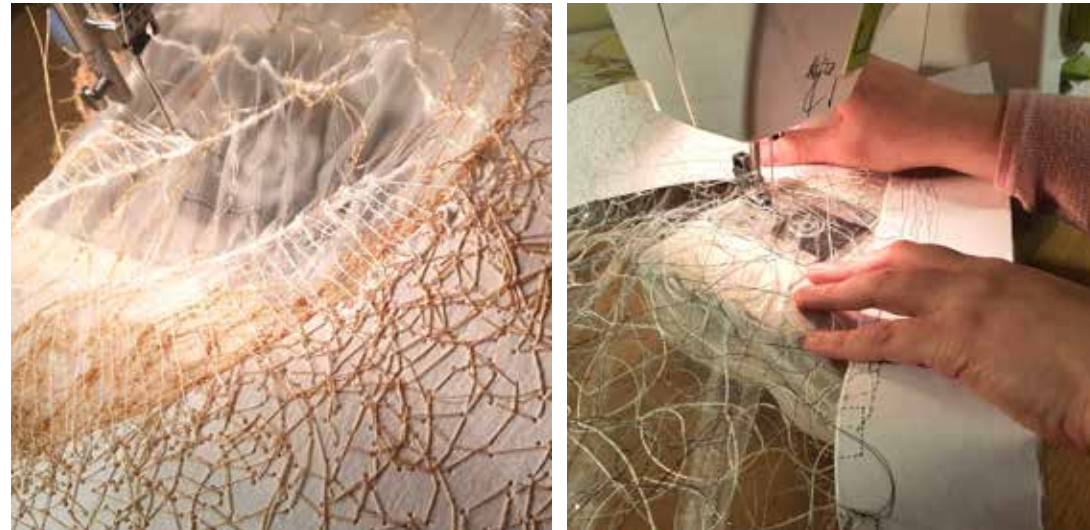


Figure 45-46. Stitching texture for the background, combining paper and water-soluble film. 2022.
Photographs by Zane Shumeiko



Figure 47. Filling design areas with free-motion embroidery textures. 2022.
Photograph by Zane Shumeiko



Figure 48. Adding hand-embroidered details. 2022.
Photograph by Zane Shumeiko

5 Artwork SHU-SHU-SHUM

I stitch, touch materials, and listen. ‘Shu...shu...shum’ sounds appear when the sewing machine’s needle sews the surface and punches the material with different speeds and pressure. I enjoy feeling the material and the sound of the stitching texture of the threads running under my fingers. Pushing the sewing machine’s foot pedal and movements of the needle calms my thoughts. It seems to bring me to the present moment. Sound results from an action, some words to describe sounds in English imitate the sounds of actions: bang, bump, crunch, smash, tap, tinkle, whistle, whomp (Lupton, Lipps; 2018, p. 47).

In the Latvian Northeast dialect close to South Estonia, where my family comes from, the word ‘šumīt’ means to make noise or sound. In Estonian, the term ‘sumisema’ means to make some mellow sound. There are related and meaningfully close words such as Russian ‘šumét’ (to mutter, move, noise) or German ‘summe’ (to buzz, roar). That describes in onomatopoeic terms the sound that accompanies my work process and is always present whenever I create a small sample or elaborated piece of art.

My artworks are multilayered, noisy and busy with the information I represent with the title SHU-SHU-SHUM. The collection of artworks is divided into two parts:

1. “Dedication to my childhood self” (Figure 49–54)

This series consists of six free-motion embroidered artworks on paper. I communicate through stitching with my inner thoughts, feelings and childhood memories, depicting the autoportrait and the inner child. I used stitching with my sewing machine for figurative drawings and textural areas, applying hand embroidery for the details and incorporating recycled vintage doll clothing pieces that I created in my childhood. The making process was a personal multi-sensorial experience. Working with soft, rigid, thin and thick materials gave me a tactile experience. I was pleased visually with the colours, shapes and lines. In addition, I experienced the sensation of smell due to the natural inks. The sound was present while I stitched the work and manipulated the materials.

These artworks were exhibited in an exhibition Rapid test/Kiirtest in summer 2021 at Kullo Gallery, Tallinn. The show was made in collaboration with artists Tomas Tõnissoo and Kadri Kandilaski. Both are professors at the Estonian Academy of Arts (EKA) and greatly encouraged my creative experimentation: using mixed media such as combining free-motion machine embroidery with painting. Each piece is produced intuitively and spontaneously without planning the final result. Natural ink often changed colour while drying, thus acting unpredictably and training me to be open to unexpected changes and surprises. Such created backgrounds were inviting spaces to continue adding figural drawing, free-motion embroidery and recycled objects. The metaphor of hands that I used for the titles of each separate art piece helped to relate, reinterpret and reprocess the visual memories.

2. “Dedication to my grandmother. All is in your hands” (Figure 55–61)

The series consists of five free-motion embroidered artworks on paper dedicated to my grandmother. The sixth work is an individual piece, “All in your hands”, dedicated to universal grandmother, influenced by family connections and personal response to the situation caused by the war in Ukraine in 2022. It is committed to Ukrainian and all other grandmothers around the globe. I reflect on the Mother and Grandmother as the source of nurturance, patience, love and peace. These pieces are accompanied by additional audio documentation about the work creation process and my voice recordings capturing audio thinking expressing associations, memories and feelings while working.

Before starting the artwork series “Dedication to grandmother,” I asked myself: what smells, sounds, visual and tactile aspects do I remember related to my grandmother? Searching for answers, I try to reconnect with her through memories, feelings and senses. My favourite sound was from the kitchen while grandma was cooking, immersed in the smells, perfumes of spices and warm colours.

“ I open my soul to the smells of ivy and maple flowers in spring, small golden lady’s mantles, pink and white clover heads. ” (From memory journal No. 1, the year 2011, translation from the Latvian language by the author).

She wrote about her childhood memories, and later as a perfumer master, she paid particular attention to substances that evoked aromas, colours, and tastes. Memories about our coffee mornings in the sunny kitchen appear through my ink’s intuitive, natural flow on paper. I include several pieces of paper that my grandmother collected and preserved in these artworks. I decided to create a conversation with materials and stitch to connect deeper with these and see what experience and sound these materials are offering me. I moved away from visual storytelling to clarify the tactile and sound experience, embracing the tactile and unconscious line and rhythm. Feeling comfortable letting my hands decide when each work was finished and discovering the final visual aspect through surprise moments. I tried concentrating on the tactile element and the sound of the stitching.

In 2022, 24th of February morning, Russia started a military invasion in Ukraine. We received the first phone calls from my Ukrainian relatives. After those events in Ukraine, desperate feelings of helplessness, fear, unknown feelings, panic attacks at night, and sleep disorders appeared. In the process of Thesis work during that time, I felt lost the ability to concentrate on focusing and felt paralysed in all my creative processes. I needed to struggle and understand how to cope with that confusing psychological state.

I finally found enough force to turn to stitch and textile making with a concrete demand of self-regulation through the making process. I experienced textile art-making as a personal way

to cope with this situation. Additionally, I wished to express my emotions, thoughts and connection of solidarity with the Ukrainian people. I observed photographs of my relative's Ukrainian grandmother and other ancestors. I reflected on some stories I knew about this lady's life with whom I share the same surname. I have never been to Ukraine myself. By observing visual images from my family heritage, I searched for communication and connection points to understand the people better. Her image invited me to think about the mother as the symbol of security, love, and safety needed for all of us. Inspired by the art therapy book by Ann Futterman Collier, where she explores the Mother archetype as a source of nurturance, patience, and love (Collier, 2012). I also thought about grandmothers who, by various misfortunes of life, are not that anymore or never become mothers or grandmothers (not by choice) for multiple reasons. Perhaps a life-giver could also be a person who is not one's biological parent or grandparent but once you find a connection. I immersed myself into the creative process of intuitive portrait, using both a free-motion sewing machine and hand embroidery. I could apply various materials available at home at a moment: soft and stiff, dark and light, delicate and thin, contrasting and giving a tactile experience. The outside weather was sunny with a spring feeling in the air, birds singing and contradicting what was happening in the world. This contrast provoked my wish to use bright colours, yellow, blue, and neutral tones following the Ukrainian national flag colour range.



Figure 49. Zane Shumeiko Holding hands
Size: 24 x 32 cm (with frame). 2021. Photograph by Reti Kokk

The figurative drawing depicts me with my brother under the oak tree holding our hands.
The tree foliage appears as a memory landscape.
That reminds me of our life journey map.
I held in my hands a doll that got lost over the years.
Its dress was miraculously preserved.
The textile artefact triggers memories about my childhood and crafting together with my grandmother.
The soft, pleasurable white material reminds of security and a sense of belonging.



Figure 50. Zane Shumeiko Hiding hands
Size: 24 x 32 cm (with frame).2021. Photograph by Reti Kokk

The figurative drawing shows a girl-me
standing in the high grass.
I hold my hands, hiding them.
The facial expression seems confused and thoughtful.
I remember learning through touching the material.
My grandmother stitched a dark red velvet evening dress.
She made me a skirt from the same velvet and gave me leftovers to play with.
I was scared of this material because cutting it fell apart,
left fine dust and felt uncertain.
The tiny velvet dress I have conserved still carries
smooth, glossy, mysteriously.



Figure 51. Zane Shumeiko Keeping hands
Size: 24 x 32 cm (with frame). 2021. Photograph by Reti Kokk

The figurative drawing depicts me
with my brother leaning to the big stone.
I am keeping my hands on it.
I have a new dress and shoes.
It recalls memories of the festive event
where I needed new shoes.
In those times in the 80s Latvia countryside,
it was not always possible to buy them.
My grandmother took a regular colourful pair of shoes
and sprayed them on white.
An early experience about making and
transforming things.



Figure 52. Zane Shumeiko Letting freehand
Size: 24 x 32 cm (with frame). 2021. Photograph by Reti Kokk

The figurative drawing pictures me
learning to ride a bicycle with letting one hand free.
Two supportive training wheels fell off my bike when
I discovered that I was riding by myself.
Adventure, trying something new.
Grandmother was learning to create leather objects.
New material and new challenges. She let me try using it.
The trousers were stitched. Accomplishment.
Metal buttons from her stash have the smell of dust.
It is here, the memory of playing with boxes of buttons,
beads, metal rings, ribbons, laces, yarns
she gathered and shared.



Figure 53. Zane Shumeiko Busy hands
Size: 24 x 32 cm (with frame). 2021. Photograph by Reti Kokk

The figurative drawing shows me
with my family picking blueberries in the forest.
Our hands are busy at work.
The pink nylon hair ribbon, conserved from my childhood,
recalls the first admiration for the brightness of the colours.
Blueberries, cranberries, cherries, grass...juices.
I remember a whole range of different ribbons I played with.
The touch of my mother's hands while adjusting ribbons braiding my hair.
The smell, the taste and the stains from blueberries on my hands and clothes.
A memory of connection and togetherness.



Figure 54. Zane Shumeiko Playing hands
Size: 24 x 32 cm (with frame). 2021. Photograph by Reti Kokk

The figurative drawing depicts me with my cousin
in our grandmother's cottage garden.
I have a ribbon flower in my hand.
A warm summer day and joy.
Hands are busy in childhood and play.
Interconnectedness, creating first patterns of relationships
and friendships. Interwoven stories like multicoloured fabric.
Remember the perfumes of the garden
and vibrant air.



Figure 55. Working hands Size: 22x30 cm 2022.
Front and back sides of the work. Photograph by Zane Shumeiko

The figurative drawing inspiration comes from the photograph of my grandmother cooking a fish in her kitchen. She told me a story about seeing fish in her dreams as a symbolical appearance that would bring her money or wellbeing. This work connects me to her through senses of smell (spices, food) and the tactility of different materials that remind me of the wallpaper in her kitchen. It connects with her hands, always busy working and creating things.



Figure 56. Crossing hands Size: 22x30 cm 2022.
Front and back side of the work. Photograph by Zane Shumeiko

The figurative drawing depicts a moment of my grandmother sleeping or daydreaming during our trip to Norway. A rare moment of togetherness somewhere outside her home, a place rich with unusual textures and contrasts. I captured her photo while she was asleep, keeping her hands crossed over her head. This piece is my reflection on insomnia and dreams. In childhood, she taught me about the connection between

worries and bad sleeping that I could not comprehend.



Figure 57. Talking hands Size: 22x30 cm 2022.
Front and back side of the work. Photograph by Zane Shumeiko

The figurative drawing shows my grandmother sitting on the bench in her garden. She is telling a story using the expression with her hands. There is an emphasis on her legs and visible a scar under her knee. That remained after a car accident and several serious operations she had when she was young. I perceived this as a mysterious hole in her leg, weird and strange, that I loved to touch.



Figure 58. Skilled hands Size: 22x30 cm 2022.
Front and back side of the work. Photograph by Zane Shumeiko

The figurative drawing took inspiration from the photograph of my grandmother demonstrating the perfume experiments in the Rigas newspaper's publication of 1973 when she worked as a perfumer in a cosmetics factory. She had skilled hands, a nose and a mysterious knowledge about the unknown perfume world to me. A deeply rooted thread of perfume brings me to the connection with her.



Figure 59. Loving hand Size: 22x30 cm
2022. Front and back side of the work. Photograph by Zane Shumeiko

The figurative drawing was created by observing a photograph with my grandmother holding me by hand when I was a child. That was my earliest photograph with us together. I reflect on the reconnection with her loving hand, warm and strong, guiding and protective. This piece evoked thoughts about my grandmother's home space, a secure place and foundation for my childhood memories.

6 Research results



Figure 60. All is in your hand Size: 35x60 cm 2022.
Photograph by Reti Kokk



Figure 61. All is in your hand (backside) Size: 35x60 cm 2022.
Photograph by Reti Kokk

The portrait was inspired by a photograph of my relative's Ukrainian great grandmother, dedicated to all grandmothers, peace and love.

To answer how free-motion embroidery practice triggers multi-sensorial experiences, I identified four topics that refer to the main findings of the analysis: visual, touch, sound, and smell elements that were present during and after the process of my work. Each of these elements has its description, but they must be seen as interwoven. I investigate how I notice visual, tactile, auditive, and smell aspects during the making process from my artist's perspective. My artistic work got inspired by workshops and collaborative study. I am giving here the main ideas resulting from these practices.

The workshops sought to answer the question of how to co-make free-motion embroidery or share it with others. The result summarises how the free-motion embroidery technique was introduced to different age and expertise groups in two workshops. I have included in Appendix 5 the documentation about them, the process and photographic records and participants' observations or answers. I also described the participant responses, suggestions and reflections for possible further workshop developments. As one student mentioned: "surprisingly how design changes when stitched", the surprise was constantly present also for me. The workshops encouraged me to ask questions and search for new techniques and possibilities in my artistic practice.

The collaborative study was another way to answer how to co-make free-motion embroidery. The result of this study is a series of collaborative artwork (in this case, collaboration with an art therapist and her client Tiiu who has a visual impairment). I created free-motion embroidered textile samples inspired by Tiiu drawings. I have included in Appendix 6 the documentation about the process. For me, this study brings awareness about the infinite possibility of textile art-making through free-motion stitching that may be a beneficial, valuable and explorative connection point between people. This practice inspired me to look deeper into the aspect of touch, think about "blind stitching" as an element to introduce in my work and guided me towards multi-sensorial explorations.

I also elaborate on how the finished outcome (free-motion machine embroidered art pieces) can trigger multi-sensorial experiences for other people. Finally, I explore examples of how these sensory objects could be user tested in the future. I do not aim to give a viewer a specific indication of how each part of my work should be seen. It is instead an individual and free journey of multi-sensorial experiences.

6.1 VISUAL

During the process of free-motion embroidery, I observed particular attention to the visual aspect. I used some vintage materials with emotional meaning to me and thus celebrated their beauty. Ellen Lupton and Andrea Lipps say that nothing moves us more than beauty. They invite us to use colour, contrast, proportion, texture, image, and material to engage with beauty and extend its idea beyond the visual to all senses (2018, p. 23). An important aspect of visually experiencing the free-motion embroidery process is light. Light is the first thing you switch on when starting working with a sewing machine. The process of free-motion stitching offers visual surprises. For example, a visual interest from both sides of the work because the embroidered work is double-sided, and the backsides sometimes reveal information and hidden secrets. I found an important visual aspect of the creation process while posting work on social media because the perception of it can happen only visually. It seemed that people familiar with stitching techniques and knowing the properties of materials and techniques could relate beyond the visual aspects.

Free-motion machine embroidered artwork presents a visual interest to be observed and experienced: textures, colours, materials, techniques, shapes and structures (Figures 38 and 62). They have the potential to offer additional emotional aspects if seen through different lightning. Stitched samples change the visual experience according to how they are presented. Due to the fragility and vulnerability of the first series of my artworks, I chose to frame and protect them with glass which means they are offered to be seen. Other pieces are free-hanging in the space visible from both sides and can be touched, smelled, and heard. I do not intend to guide viewers of my work in any specific direction or awareness of predisposed ideas. I prefer them to find their subjective associations and symbological interpretations according to personal experiences and emotions. This approach gave interesting and unexpected reflections while works were offered to be tested (touched) by my family members. They often referred to visuals, for example: “This looks like”...or “It is beautiful”! From this, I learned how to offer my artwork to be experienced beyond the visual aspects.



Figure 62. Observing finished free-motion embroidered sample.
Zane Shumeiko. 2022. Photograph by Reti Kokk

6.2 TOUCH

During the process of free-motion embroidery creating artworks and samples I experienced touch mainly through my hands but also my body and foot because I was working with an electrical sewing machine, pushing the pedal and constantly touching its surface with my hands. Touching material and sewing machines together gave a comfort feeling. “We open up, cooperate more and feel more connected when we are touched”, Lupton and Lipps are suggesting (2018, p. 22). I refer this thought to the situation of free-motion embroidery technique, threads and materials, that together cooperate while offering an extraordinary tactile experience. Touching materials, threads and textures provoked memories and associations that I tried to express during audio recordings and in my notes about the stitching process (Appendix 7).

After the free-motion embroidered artwork is finished it can be experienced through touch. I am offering my stitched art pieces to the public to be touched and experienced. This Thesis includes examples of touching experiences with my family members and notes about their associations and ideas appearing in the process (Figure 30,32 and 63). An important aspect that I did not enforce myself but was revealed by one member of the family who said that she wishes to touch them with closed eyes and that feeling changed completely while doing it. Another participant noted an interesting subjective view, referring to one of the stitched samples: “It warms the hand if you put it closely next to this piece”. This further developed our conversation about the particular piece and material of it that was actually a vintage cardboard used by my grandmother as a supportive layer for writing in her note book. As a result these experiments influenced my process and thinking, answering to the question on how to trigger multisensory experience in user/visitor through free-motion embroidery technique. I have gained more confidence and awareness of the tactility of my work.



Figure 63. Touching finished free-motion embroidered sample. Zane Shumeiko. 2022. Photograph by Reti Kokk

6.3 SOUND

I noticed interest in the sewing machine sound when stitching on paper and plastic surfaces. It reminded me of birds chirping and made me curious to explore this aspect further. I started to notice differences in these sounds. As a result, I have a collection of sound extracts (see Appendix 3), accompanied by a visual illustration of what I was stitching. In addition, I added some verbalisations of thoughts or associations that appeared during the process. I was trying to do “blind stitching” when I was not looking at the embroidery surface but following my hearing if the machine sounded right or wrong in my understanding. If it was wrong, I felt anxious. These signs of “danger” put the organism on alert (Lupton, Lipps; 2018, p. 37). I tried to understand what was happening during my stitching process by just listening to the sewing machine. Stitching sounds that I noticed had all different ranges of typology. They seemed: towing, heavy, complex, squeaky or rhythmic, harmonious, and chirping. When sound is heard with the ears or felt with the body, sound wraps us in the abundant murmur of being (p. 49). The machine’s mechanical stitching and vibration itself contributed to the sound. The material manipulation during the process had a strong influence (cutting, tearing, bending the material or bobbing the thread). Additionally to the sound exploration of free-motion embroidery practice, I recorded my voice audio reflections parallel to the stitching. In these cases, the embroidery process provoked and induced the memories, associations and thoughts to appear. I talked in my native Latvian language while audio thinking. That added an authentic element to my research while my voice blends with the stitching sound. I tried to accentuate the nature that I call the ‘shu-shu-shum’ noise of my work for myself and both who can or can not understand my spoken word’s meaning. I consider it an important testimony of the moment of creation and my emotional state during the stitching process.



Figure 64. Listening to the sound that free-motion embroidered sample on paper provide. 2022. Photograph by Reti Kokk

After the free-motion embroidered artworks are finished, they can be experienced by listening to them while touched (Figures 34 and 64). Next, I recorded the sounds of the noise my stitched pieces produced while touched. For this last stage, I needed help with recording and participants to touch and create the noise. As a result, we created a series of videos recording free-motion embroidered piece sounds while being touched, scratched or differently manipulated by hands. That became a form of communication and interaction among me, participants and my stitched art pieces.

6.4 SMELL

The smell element was present while manipulating different materials and preparing them before the stitching. During the free-motion embroidery process, the smell was the most elusive, airy, subjective experience for me. “Designing scents is an art form and science and can be deeply powerful in its emotional influence” (Lupton, Lipps; 2018, p.23). I first paid attention to the scent due to my grandmother, as she was a perfumer. I was influenced by her collected vintage elements and included them in my art samples (perfume bottle labels and caps). The smell presence was very evident during the initial phase of my work. I prepared and used natural inks from vegetables, coffee, Curcuma and other ingredients that have specific aromas. They brought and evoked memories, connections and associations.

After the free-motion embroidered artworks are finished, they can be experienced by smelling them (Figure 65). In the latest stage of my practical work, presenting stitched samples to the family, some noticed the smell element presence. In some cases, they reported individual associations. For example, one participant noticed smelling the coffee painted and embroidered paper: “It reminds me of the distant smell of the leather”.



Figure 65. Smelling the free-motion embroidered samples.
Zane Shumeiko. 2022 Photograph by Reti Kokk

Conclusion

This master thesis results from the practice-led research I conducted from 2019 to 2022. It aims to explore how free-motion machine embroidery practice creates multi-sensorial experiences. First, I look into the work of other artists using the free-motion medium as their expression tool. Secondly, I reflect upon my subjective experience and understanding of technique by making tactile surfaces and artworks. Next, I conduct workshops for participants and finally set up a collaborative art activity. During these processes, my understanding of various aspects of chosen technique matured, allowing me to reflect upon the multisensorial processes involved.

I find that the multi-sensorial experience came mainly from sewing machine sounds, seeing, touching, listening and smelling the materials (papers, fabrics, threads) during and after the work process. The results of the thesis are the created artworks, and the insights gathered while making them. I answer the questions set out at the beginning of the thesis process through the practical working process. In addition, I understand the potential of free-motion embroidery to trigger the multi-sensorial experiences (visual, auditive, tactile, smell) that link connections to emotions, memories and associations. It works for me as a calming and emotionally balancing activity during anxiety caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

For me, the multi-sensorial experiences and findings during and after the creative making mean expanding the understanding of free-motion embroidery potential that is commonly considered a decorative or mainly visually oriented practice. In addition, the multisensory working approach gives my work a wider perspective and deeper meaning. During the practical part of this thesis, I learn to collaborate with other people and express my approach to intuitive, non-linear, multilayered textile art-making methods.

The artistic exploration of free-motion machine embroidery still needs to be tested by a broader audience. I made the first steps towards understanding how other people perceive the free-motion machine embroidery technique by doing workshops and learning about participants' responses to the process, materials, feelings and emotions before, during and after the experimental stitching practices. So thought, it needs deeper analysis and longer-term testing to get insights into specific participant sensory experiences.

This thesis gives a short overview of how four elements, visual, touch, sound, and smell, can be seen and experienced through creative stitching. Further research can focus on exploring one of the senses at a time through making and user-testing. Also, interventions and co-creation projects about the free-motion embroidery as a creative expression multisensorial tool with more participants and different target groups (for example, art therapists or people with visual impairment) could be the next steps of this research.

Most of my artistic practices happened during the Covid-19 restriction time, working alone in my studio. The work could have developed in other directions without such restrictions, such as co-creation. For example, creating in-depth workshops to explore people's sensorial responses, insights and testing the process and finished free-motion embroidered work. However isolation time conditions were fruitful for me to explore my personal stories and family inspirations that otherwise would have remained untold. As a result, the work has given testimony and contribution to the artistic practice of free-motion embroidery as a multi sensorial experience.

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Translations from the Latvian language by the author

Gatere, Liesma (2013–14). Memory journal No. 3

1. “Es pati nezinu, kā paspēju, taču esmu beigusi divu gadu šūšanas kursus. Visu sev šuju pati, pat bikses, kažoku, vestes, kreklus. Veikali tukši, vismaz Rīgā.”

“I don’t know how I did it, but I have completed two years of sewing courses. I sew everything for myself, even pants, fur coats, vests, and shirts. Stores are empty, at least in Riga.”

2. “Jubilejās izmet no sētiņas visas dāvanas, paliek tikai ietinamie papīri, apmēram no diviem gadiem sāk zīmēt.”

“On her birthdays, all the gifts she threw out of the baby fence, only the wrapping papers remained she wanted to play with. She started drawing at about two years old.”

Gatere, Liesma (2012). Memory journal No. 2

3. “Es zinu, ka šūšu un es to izdaru. B mugurā aizsargu jeb Haki krāsas jacīte. (no virsnieku, biksēm, ko paps ir iemainījis pret ķieģelīti). Mani vecāki uzdāvina šujmašīnu. Tēvs to atvedis no leišiem, mūsu bodēs vēl nav-es ar šo pirmo mantu lepojos. Iestājos šūšanasursos.”

“I know I will sew and did it. B. has safeguards or Khaki colour jacket ready. (Fabric was from officers’ pants, which my father exchanged for a brick of bread). My parents gave me a sewing machine. My father brought it from Lithuania. We do not have them in our market yet - I am proud of this first thing. I took sewing courses.”

4. “Man pašai par brīnumu-mans deguns izrādās apveltīts ar “smaržu atmiņu”. Tā nu mēs” ar degunu sauja” palēnām kāpjam pa karjeras kāpnēm.”

“To my surprise - my nose turns out to be gifted with a “memory of smell”. So we are slowly climbing the career ladder with my nose “in hand”.”

Gatere, Liesma (2011). Memory journal No. 1

5. “No grāvmalā atrasta šineļa man mamma sašuvusi sevišķi jaukus brunčus (asi gan, kož ciskās, bet to visu var pieciest).”

“From the overcoat found in the ditch, my mother sewed very nice brunches for me (they were sharp, biting, but it can all be tolerated).”

6. “Es atveru dvēseli smaržām.”

“I open my soul to scents.”

Appendix 1

Natural ink recipes I used for painting on canvas and paper

Carrot ink making:

- 1. Boil 270 gr of carrots cut into pieces with 270 ml water at a low temperature for approximately 30 minutes.
- 2. Leave the mixture to cool down overnight.
- 3. Filter through a sieve to remove vegetable remains.
- 4. One cup of ink, add one teaspoon of vinegar and one teaspoon of salt.
- 5. Simmer the ink for 1 hour at low heat.
- 6. Add one teaspoon of Arabic gum.
- 7. Filter the liquid through the coffee filter.
- 8. Pour into a clean jar and add one clove for conserving.
- 9. Keep ready ink in the fridge.

Curcuma can be added for a brighter result.

Red cabbage ink making:

- 1. Boil 500gr of red cabbage cut into pieces with 500 ml water at a low temperature for approximately 30 minutes.
- 2. Leave to cool down overnight.
- 3. Filter through a sieve to remove vegetable remains.
- 4. One cup of ink, add one teaspoon of vinegar and one teaspoon of salt.
- 5. Simmer for 1 hour at low heat.
- 6. Add one teaspoon of Arabic gum.
- 7. Filter through the coffee filter.
- 8. Pour into a clean jar and add one clove for conserving.
- 9. Keep ready ink in the fridge.

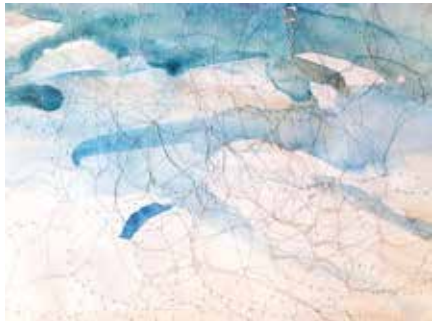
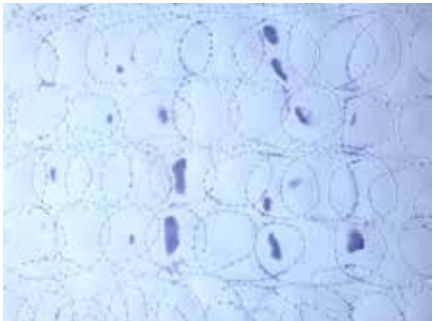


Red beet ink making:

- 1. Boil 377 gr of red beet cut in pieces with 377 ml water at a low temperature for approximately 30 minutes.
- 2. Leave the mixture to cool down overnight.
- 3. Filter through a sieve to remove vegetable remains.
- 4. One cup of ink, add one teaspoon of vinegar and one teaspoon of salt.
- 5. Simmer for 1 hour at low heat.
- 6. Add one teaspoon of Arabic gum.
- 7. Filter through the coffee filter.
- 8. Pour into a clean jar and add one clove for conserving.
- 9. Keep ready ink in the fridge.



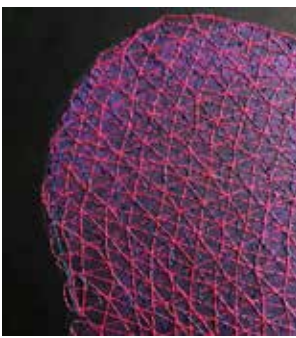





Appendix 2

Free-motion machine embroidery experiments

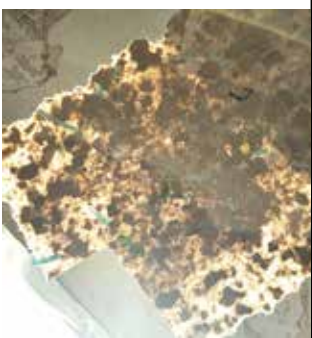


Landscapes:




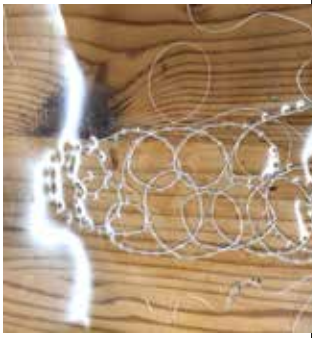
 <p>#82 (detail) 2020-06-27 front Landscape - Clouds</p>	 <p>#82 (detail) 2020-06-27 back</p>
 <p>#83 (detail) 2020-06-28 front Landscape - Aegna island boulders</p>	 <p>#83 (detail) 2020-06-28 back</p>



Portraits:

	#12 (detail) 2020-04-18 front Texture portrait - family bonds- colour green		#12 (detail) 2020-04-18 back
	#15 (detail) 2020-04-21 front Texture portrait - sufferance - colour violet		#15 (detail) 2020-04-21 back
	#13 (detail) 2020-04-19 front Texture portrait - meditation- lake- colour yellow		#13 (detail) 2020-04-19 back
	#14 (detail) 2020-04-20 front Texture portrait - city connection with countryside - colour deep blue		#14 (detail) 2020-04-20 back

Appendix 3
Sound recordings from the free-motion machine embroidery process

Click the link to listen to the recording		notes	visuals
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qEo0AbK6CluOn8uwGRDKHxArL0vYEJEe/view?usp=sharing	#2 Free-motion embroidery on handmade paper_20211101	Stitches feels longer, paper need to be moved or turned around more often	
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cCY2ONzveKksTXOrGdNxiwtJR69lX0Nb/view?usp=sharing	#3 Free-motion embroidery on etching paper_20211101	Smooth, nice, easy stitching, Interesting texture appearing in front from background thread	
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uKceB5wn83TOFKoQOpWgrEvYgVBwt4me/view?usp=sharing	#4 Free-motion embroidery on copy paper_20211102	Easy to stitch, stitching from backside with thick thread, appears wish to stitch a big surface with the same texture	

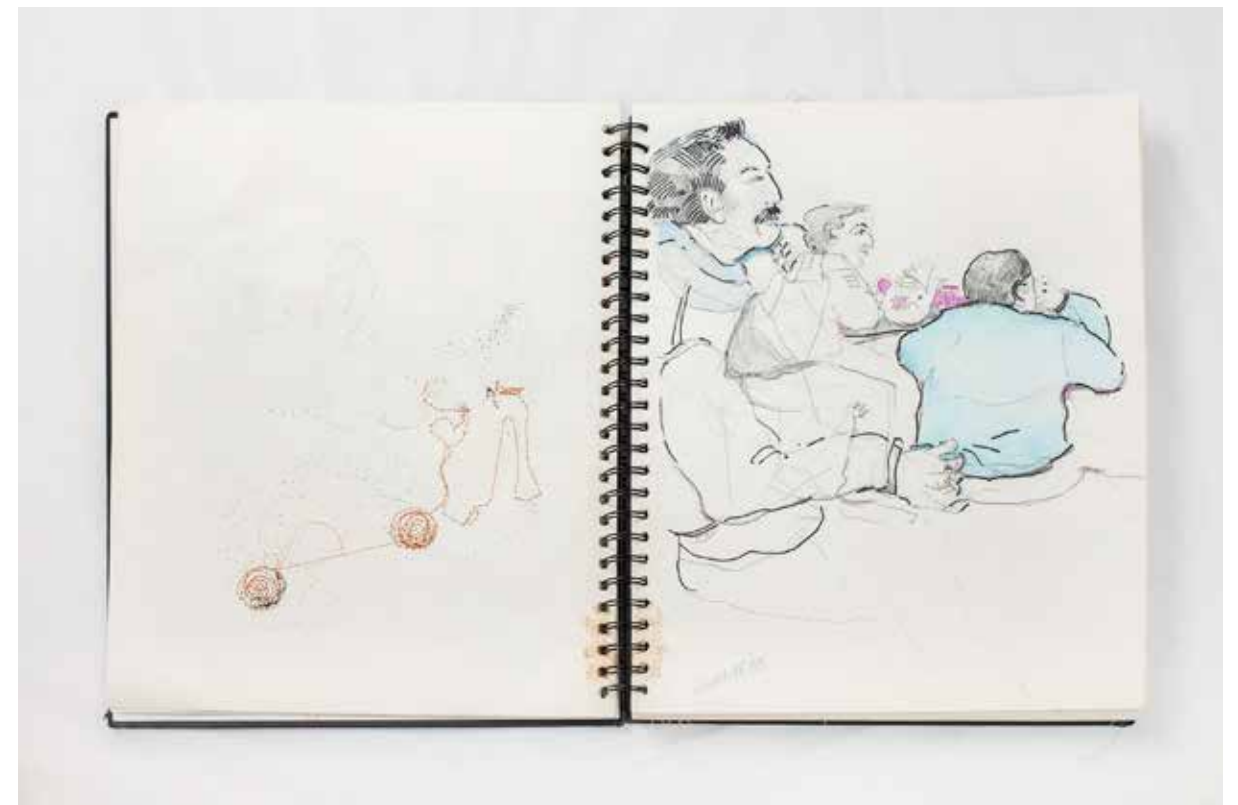
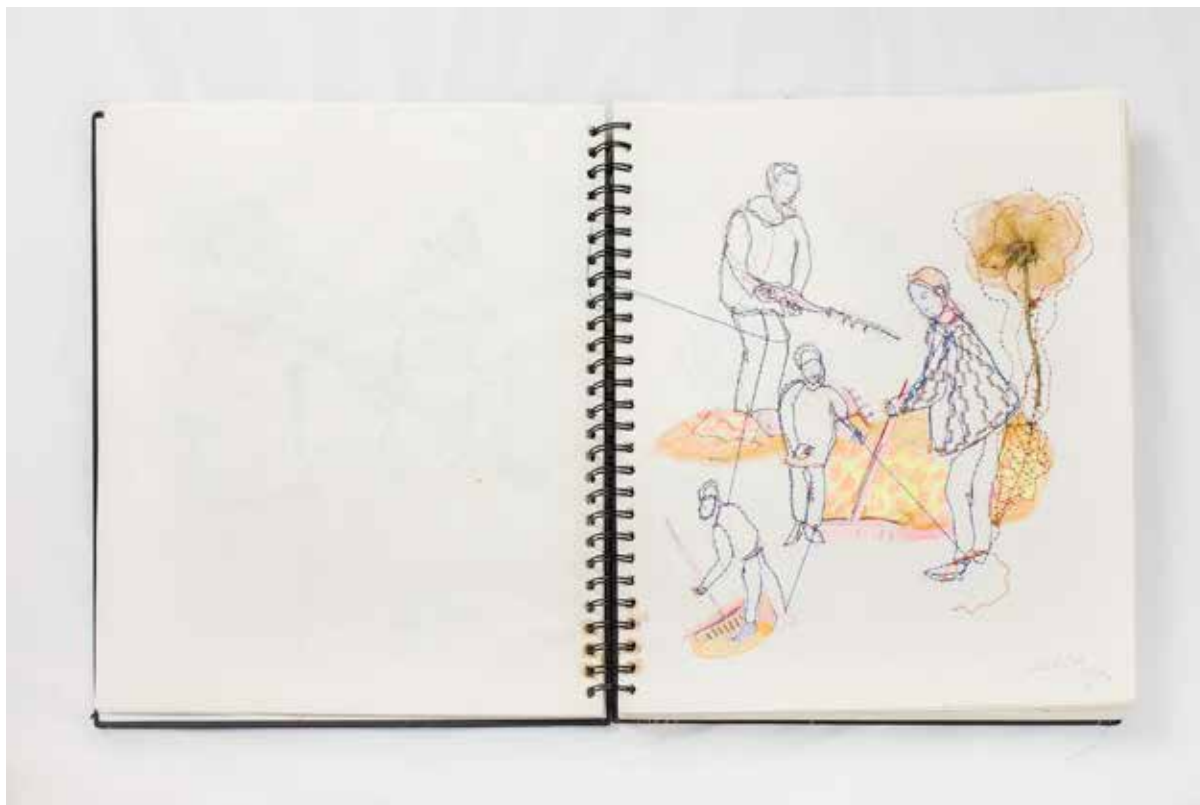
https://drive.google.com/file/d/11JBfdo5Z_6oPh324lXaZGZMfI8mYlH-/view?usp=sharing	#11 Free-motion embroidery and defects_20220107	Difficult to stitch, perhaps because used golden thread, that is brokening or stacking into mechanism.	
https://drive.google.com/file/d/12iLU5Opr96jIkN3Esfh2dxb2_z1EfZx9/view?usp=sharing	#6 Perforating (stitching without thread)_20211025	Very easy rhythmic process.	
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fLrnOC0kiaLHf0vW8wCbhhM3S4SPGg_/view?usp=sharing	#7 Free-motion embroidery on plastic and paper_20211025		
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zkdnstHeOXRIZOXhUJ5RPcPwCewonOCW/view?usp=sharing	#8 Free-motion embroidery on soft plastic_20211025		

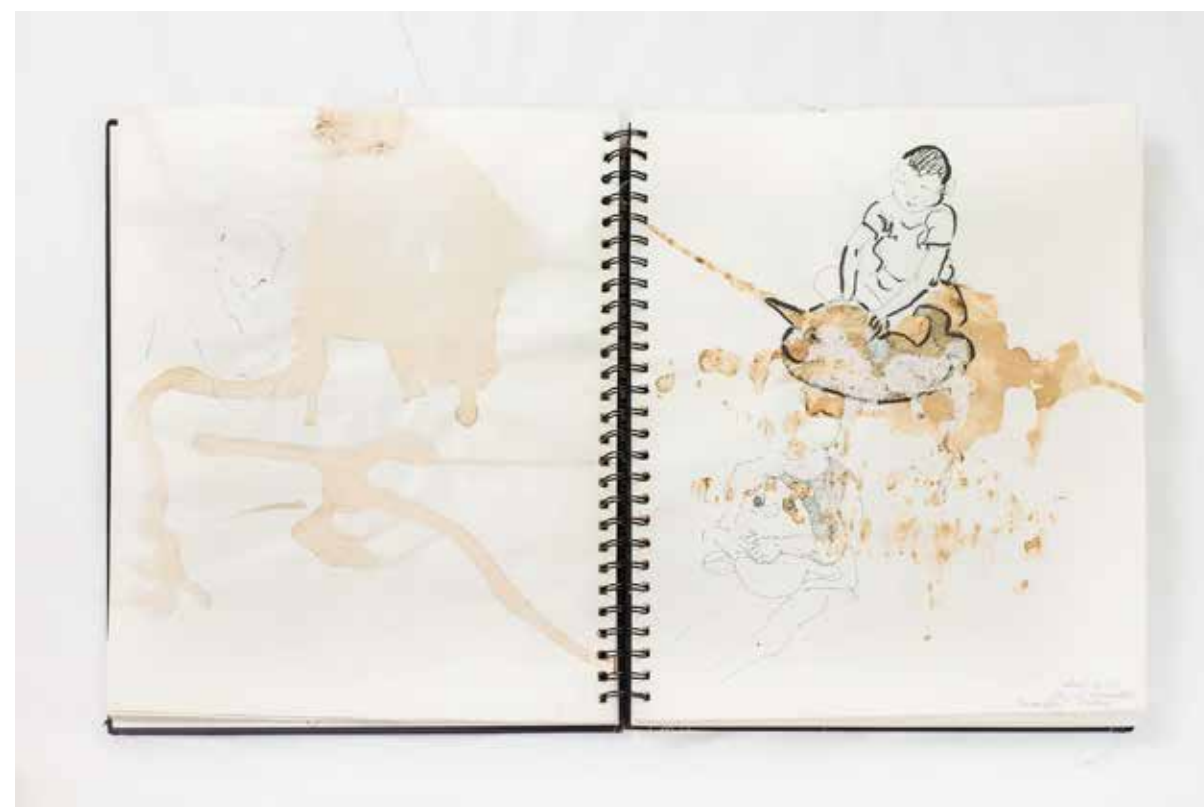
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vjq0madLoMKpufCQ0OTBj56tnQBe4Hau/view?usp=sharing	#9 Free-motion embroidery on paper plate_20211025	Tried to stitch on shaped paper.	
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yp5un92wUwEnojZAUPFO6OId2yOzgObQ/view?usp=sharing	#10 Free-motion embroidery on square shape paper plate_20211025	Tried to stitch on shaped paper.	

Appendix 4 Sketchbook

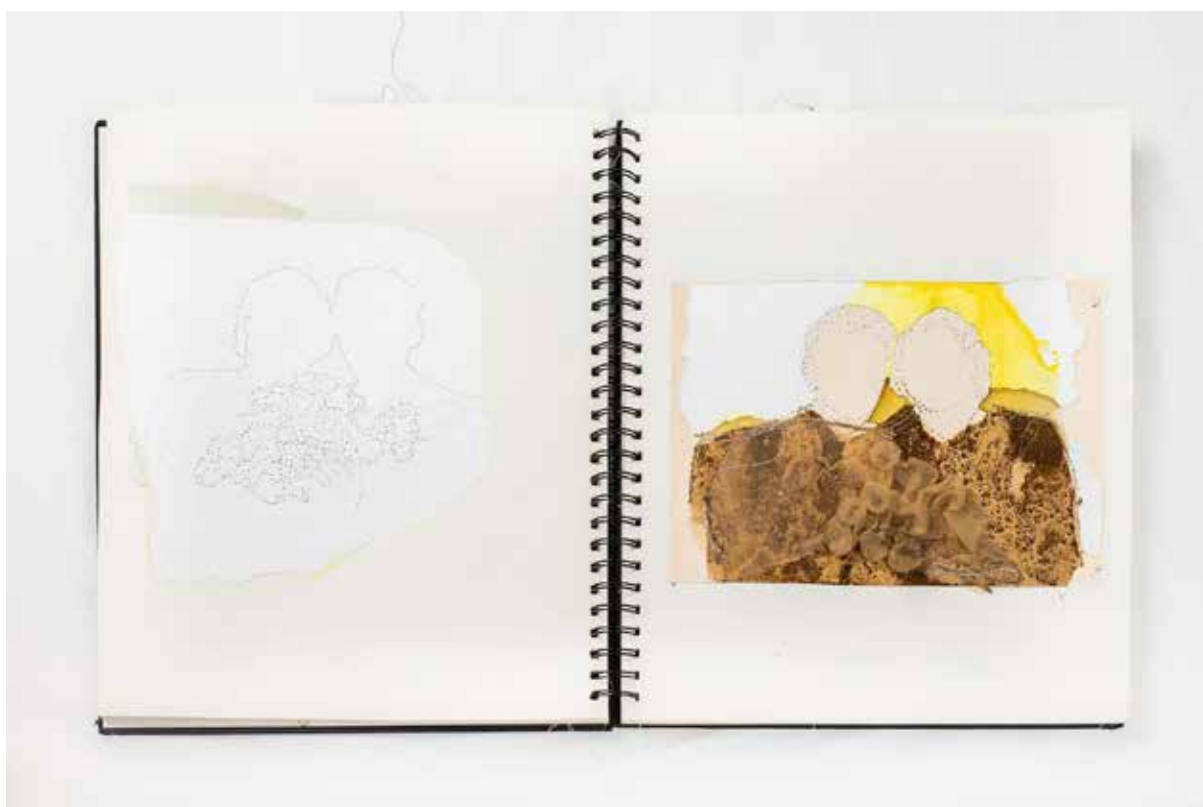
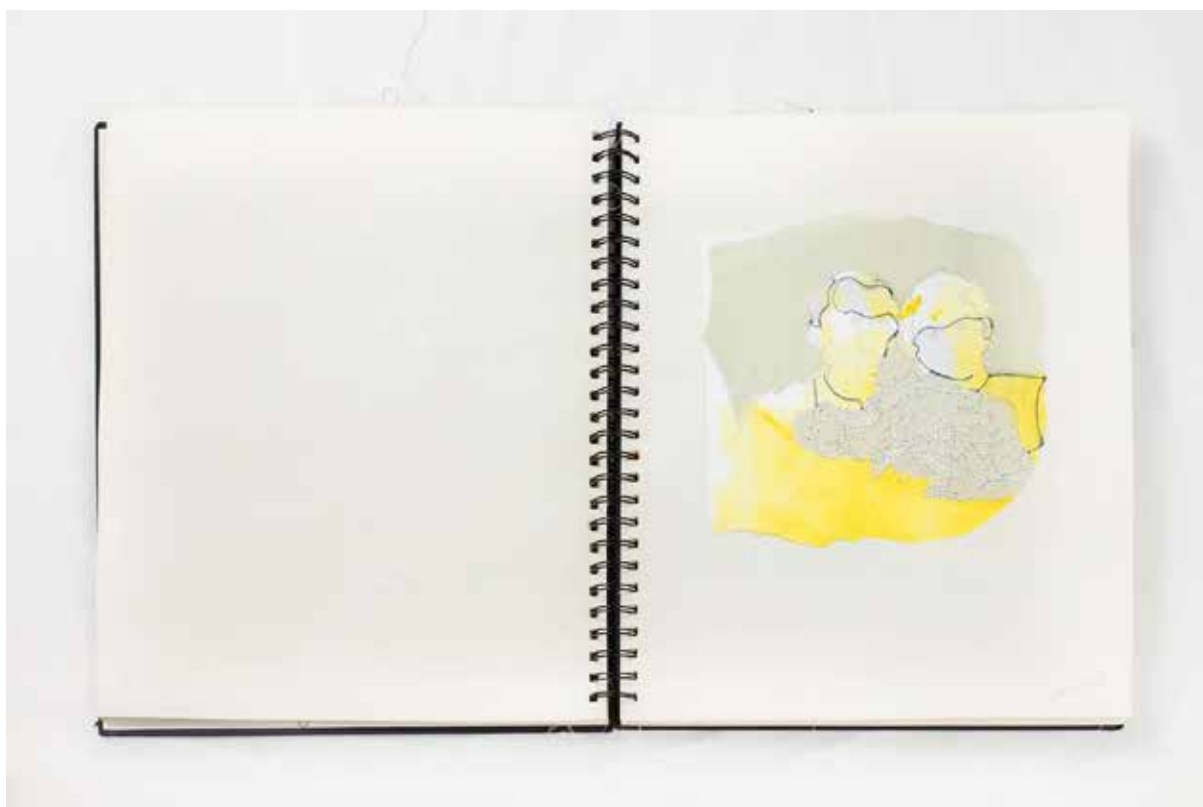
Photographs by Reti Kokk













Appendix 5

Workshops

Workshop in Sally Stuard Art School 2021

I designed a landscape painting and experimental stitching course in the Sally studio in autumn 2021. I was particularly pleased to work with young people in the studio as it was the time of the Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions, and we all had a lack of personal connections. It was a significant opportunity for me to meet students doing hands-on activities and build communication and relationships through creative experimentations.

The workshop consisted of seven meetings once a week. There were thirteen 14-17-year-old students in the group and one adult. The main goal of the course was to teach landscape painting and creative stitching. The workshop emphasized the experimenting process of combining colour paint and graphic stitched lines. We reflected on the landscape association and how it changes during and after the experimental mixed media and stitching experience. I proposed a walking and drawing session outside to explore the theme of their landscape and gather students' first ideas and materials (places, textures, photos, sounds, people). To stimulate the flow of creativity, we did painting exercises, using inspirational images of students' choice that would represent the theme of landscape to them.

I introduced references from some textile artists, textile materials, threads, needles and the basics of hand stitches and free-motion embroidery with the sewing machine. I explained how the students could combine stitching with paper bases and tried to encourage students not to worry about the visual aspects of the work but concentrate on the process and their feelings. Next, students worked on their chosen subject and materials and techniques. Some of them learned and tried hand and machine stitching as an art form for the first time.

Several aspects gained from this workshop leading experience informed my future artwork and practice:

1. I found valuable the situation of stitching in the group and communications that helped to develop my later workshop proposal for adults.
2. I learned the readiness to confront the unknown and think outside the box from the students. That was highly inspiring and encouraging for me.



3. One student proposed starting to add found objects and recycled elements that brought specific emotional importance and personal meanings to her. This approach I used later in my artworks (by adding my grandmother's collected materials).
4. Students' excitement about experiments with water-soluble film combined with free-motion embroidery pushed me to apply this technique to my latest artworks.

I noticed the differences between students' final goals and needs from the course. While some students chose to work on a final artwork, for others, it was overwhelming, and they were producing a series of mini experimental samples. One student did not complete the course requirements, but it seemed that the process of crafting together was the primary value for him as he was present and participated in all the lessons. During our discussion, one student particularly emphasized that "she likes machine stitching better because it is quick and relaxing for her", and this aligns with my personal experience. There was another student who seemed confident with a hand stitch. She embroidered small scale paintings with various stitches. Trying the machine stitching, it seemed she lost confidence as the technique was new and probably too unpredictable for her. That seemed to bring her out of her comfort zone and be even stressful. This last example taught me that free-motion machine embroidery could be frustrating and difficult for some who are keen on perfection and can not accept uneven or unexpected results. One (adult) student said that she would not use her domestic sewing machine for stitching experiments on paintings or paper because this could be harmful to her sewing machine. This aspect made me think about the sustainability of the sewing machine, its maintenance and its durability. Although my sewing machine has been working perfectly for years, regardless of the numerous unconventional materials I am stitching with it, I asked myself if I should be more gentle with how I experiment with my machine.

The workshop series seemed to reach its goal of focusing rather on the participants' processes, feelings, and experimentations. This approach allowed the students to explore materials, technique potentials and their personal experiences without expectations to create a predisposed realistic drawing, painting or product. My grandmother always mentioned that "it is important to have connections". I was privileged to get to know talented students and one of them in particular because, after our meeting during this workshop in the Sally studio, we developed further the idea of how we could work together with the stitched artwork, which I explain in the section about the collaborative study.

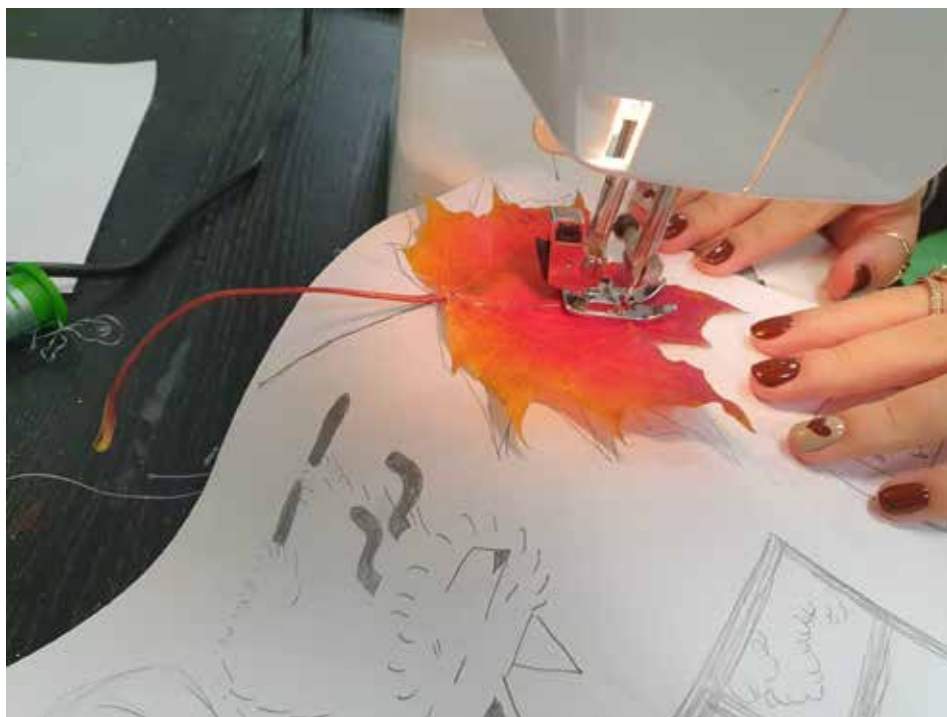
After the course, I asked participants to answer short questions and give feedback. That helped me to have an overview and analyze their experiences.

The first question learned about their feelings during the course, and the answers showed an overall positive experience. Keywords that respondents marked were creative and relaxed feelings, calm and joyful, surprise moments, happiness and excitement. One student demonstrated a full range of mixed emotions, and along with many positive ones, she was also angry and afraid. It confirms that mixed media art processes like the experimental free-motion embroidery techniques may be challenging and inviting to think outside the comfort zone. The second question was about the preferred techniques offered in the course. Some students picked hand stitching and some machine stitching. Overall, most respondents claimed a mix of both methods of hand embroidery and machine stitching as their choice. Probably that gave a feeling of freedom and did not restrict the students. The third question asked about the stitching on the paper as a base material chosen. Did students enjoy stitching on that? Students responded positively. Only one student said that she did not know. Answers show that paper can be proposed for free-motion and hand embroidery workshops as an alternative material to create a mixed media artwork.

Finally, I asked students if they had any comments or suggestions that could help to improve this course. Overall, students enjoyed the course. They learned new approaches and techniques and spent quality time in a group together creating." I think it was perfect. I enjoyed how free it was and how creative you can get. I love when in art you have no rules," one student mentioned. Another student regrets she missed some classes and notes confidence gained in machine stitching techniques: "Sadly, I missed two lessons, and everything I took part in was amazing. Got more confident with stitching with the machine."

An adult student who is a working professional mentioned in her comment: "I get many good ideas to connect to my creative work, and this technique can bring out your personal style." This aspect inspired me to ask her for a further, more detailed interview about her insights and experience. From this, we generated our later collaborative textile art making study among me, her (art therapist), and her client Tiiu. I explained in detail in the section about collaborative practice study.

Student work process. Photographs by Zane Shumeiko



“Stitch your story!” Workshop in Estonian Academy of Arts 2021

In 2021 I conducted an Experimental free-motion embroidery workshop: “Stitch your story!” in the Estonian Academy of Arts, textile design department. The opportunity for communication and engagement with people felt particularly relevant after the long self-isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic. My expectation for the workshop was to facilitate feelings of connectedness and provide themes to share and talk about textiles and stitching.

It was a one-day short workshop. Participants were four students from both MA and BA levels. In this workshop, the main objectives were experimental stitching on various surfaces (e.g. recycled paper, plastic, felt, water-soluble film) using free-motion embroidery with the sewing machine or hand stitching techniques. Similarly to the workshop in Sally’s studio, I offered learners the content of the textile-creating with a focus on the making process rather than the final result or product. An important aspect for me was that people could participate with or without previous stitching expertise. Planned outcomes were small scale samples with stitched memory-emotion-physical textile art landscapes.

I created a mini diary for participants to fill in during their working process for this workshop instead. The diary helped the participants be aware of their process and thoughts during and after the stitching session. The diary consisted of three questions: 1) Before I started stitching. How do I feel now? 2) My process. Keywords, drawings. 3) After stitching. How do I feel now? This format of questionnaire helped examine participant experiences.

Learning from this, a similar example of process diary I applied to my practice-led artistic research later. One student mentioned that she usually follows a precise pattern when embroidering. This workshop was “beneficial to try some freestyle” stitching for her. Also, the free-motion embroidery from the backside of the material when the correct side result is visible only at the end of the process, providing a surprise moment was captivating to the students. One student called it “blind stitching”, which inspired her. These details and moments that students pointed out invited me to pay more attention to highlighting them in my artistic practice (for example, the “blind stitching” that I experimented with in my artwork).

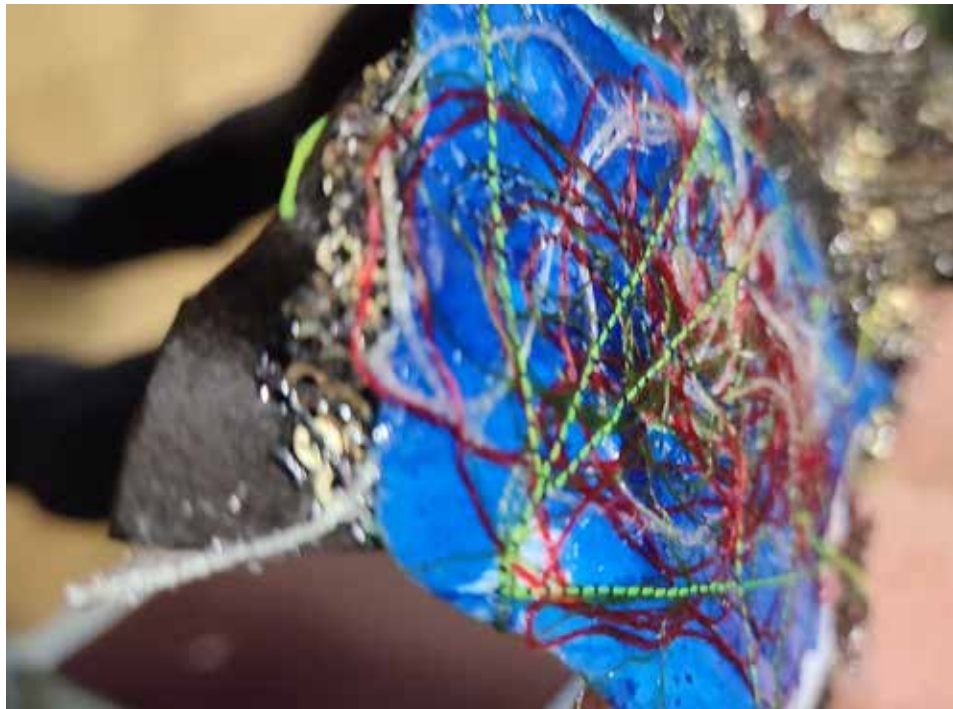
The situation of stitching together simultaneously with various sewing machines made me think about an almost performative element potential of the practice. That demonstrated that it is possible to use different sewing machines for this experimental process. We used two domestic sewing machines, one industrial machine and even a small children’s sewing machine.

According to the questionnaire report that students filled in, the workshop inspired them and generated new ideas and experiences. One of the answers about feeling before starting the workshop was: “I feel excited to see what we are going to do”. Another student said: “No ideas, no expectations, just flow. Feel”. The answers showed openness and willingness to free creative experimentation. One student marked her work process: “It was quite eye-opening that using different threads will give such an interesting look”. Some of them were interested in discovering new aspects by experimenting with the thread of different thicknesses and colours. “Stitching on paper feels easy and nice. Cool flow. I tried stitching on drawing and mixing threads with different colours. It was interesting. Using water melting plastic film around fabrics and paper”, another student wrote, commenting on paper usage in the stitching and feeling about the process.

Asked how they felt after the workshop, students said they were inspired and acquired new ideas.

Student work process. Photographs by Juulia Aleksandra Mikson





Appendix 6

Collaborative practice study

Collaborative project with the art therapist Lilian and her client Tiiu 2021

In the autumn of 2021, during the workshop in Sally Studio, I met an art therapist Lilian who works with her client Tiiu. Tiiu has a visual impairment and physical disability condition, both caused by accident. I was looking for ways to collaborate through the practice of free-motion embroidery and decided to propose to an art therapist to create a collaborative art piece together with her client.

The aim of co-making the artwork of free-motion embroidery is communication between us through stitched multisensorial art. I mention that my work is not taking part in any therapeutic processes between me, the art therapist and her client but is an independent artistic project.

I created a voice message by saying hello to Tiiu. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, we could not organize meetings in life. We started a communication through Lilian, who brought Tiiu's drawings to me and my stitched pieces and various materials to Tiiu. Tiiu created abstract line drawings on paper and, together with a therapist, explored associations with materials and embroidered lines (thoughts, memories, emotions, feelings). She also selected colours to work with. My contribution to using artistic free-motion embroidery is to make these lines touchable for Tiiu. Stitched or embroidered with the thread on the surface, they become three dimensional. Tiiu can re-experience her design and our co-created artwork by touching stitched lines that become textures surfaces. Creating textile artwork to help another person perceive her design and brighten up her social interaction were motivating reasons for me to choose this project.

I embroidered abstract patterns inspired by Tiiu's designs. I used different thicknesses of threads on paper surfaces. Free-motion embroidery has a flexible nature and spontaneously gives space for interpretation. At the same time, it maintains guidelines and the essence of Tiiu's designed shapes and movements. After creating the first samples, I received feedback from Tiiu through her therapist. She revealed that Tiiu was excited and considered this a collaboration. Therefore, I decided to make some free-motion embroidered artworks based on Tiiu designs. These are included in the experimental practical part of this thesis. The work contains a series of pieces on paper and mixed media.

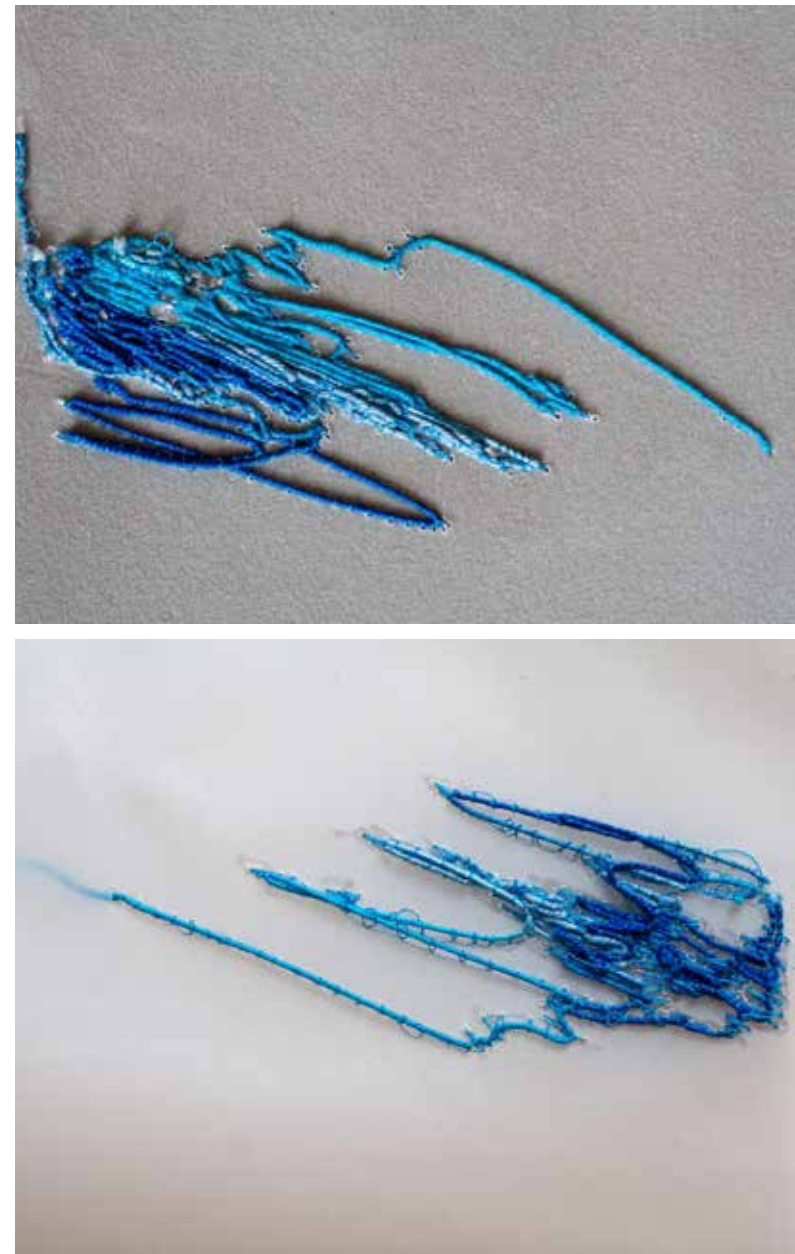
Working on this project influenced the further development of my artistic practice process. I started to feel more courageous about trying blind stitching. I learned not to concentrate too much on my design's visual line or outcome and trust my intuition. I listened to my hands while moving the material stitching with the machine. I may say that working with Tiiu and her therapist taught me to look outside the box or to another dimension of my art processes by trusting embodied knowledge and senses.

Work process and finished samples. Photographs by Zane Shumeiko and Lilian Liiväär

Tiiu drawings



Zane free-motion embroidered pieces



Exploration process, Tiiu and Lilian



Exploration process, Zane and Lilian



Appendix 7

Audio thinking notes

Touching and working with materials, threads and textures provoked memories and associations that I tried to express during audio recordings through audio thinking and in my notes about the free-motion embroidery process. Notes are translations from the Latvian language by the author:

Dedication to my grandmother: Working hands (audio recording 19 January 2022)

- *Stitched uneven, feels like struggling.*

Dedication to my grandmother: Crossing hands (audio recording 20 January 2022)

- *Something is happening. It does not sew as it should, such a funny noise. I feel scared, hands slightly sweating, agitated.*
- *I can not not watch at all, it feels I am stitching over the work edge.*
- *Strange to trust the sewing machine, I can not understand, Wow! something happens again, it is not stitching well...*

Dedication to my grandmother: Talking hands (audio recording 22 January 2022)

- *When I was a child she allowed me to touch that hole in her leg. There was a funny feeling that there was a hole in her leg. She said it was acquired in an accident. It seemed to be something mystical and funny how a person can have a hole in her leg, looking weird.*
- *I want to dedicate time and specific attention now to embroidering exactly those legs with many, many layers. I wish to cover those with a gentle, uniform texture that almost resembles the skin.*
- *I had never thought about her skin before.
There was a book next to her bed called "Skin", a heavy novel she said.*
- *In that summer cottage, we did experiments together during the summer. She showed me how to colour the paper with the marbling technique. She had special oil paints, and we poured water in such tin baths. Maybe we also used rainwater, I don't remember. Then we floated the colours, that was the discovery. Here is a piece, I'll sew a piece of it. It's a small preserved piece.*
- *Now it reminds me of a wooden cavity. In general, the trunk of the tree on which she relied and her family was based. Like a tree has cavities, hollows, adhesions, so did her leg.*

Dedication to my grandmother: Skilled hands (audio recording 26 January 2022)

- *This peculiar sound made me stop and say maybe that's enough. I will sew on the other side.*
- *I stitch now without leading the material with my hands. What's going on there? The thread has run out, the holes are forming.*
- *Very interesting effect on the other side.*

Dedication to my grandmother: Loving hand (audio recording 27 January 2022)

- *I remember myself in childhood playing with a soft, fluffy blanket in my grandmother's home, a white, velvety blanket. And I still remember the dust in the sun.*
- *A very interesting process took place here. All the threads clung around the darning feet, around each other and that is it, I can't get anywhere anymore, just turn around and sew in the same place.*
- *It doesn't truly smell like anything, but it has a sound.*

All is in your hands (audio recording 3-7 March 2022)

- *The paper tears.*
- *I was hoping to be able to calm down when I started doing this, but there seems to be even more agitation.*
- *Sewn with white thread, means ignorance. I don't know what will happen, no one knows.*
- *All others are worried. Everyone is scared.*
- *Blue colour calms down somehow. It stitches easily.*
- *The surface is sharp and unpleasant in some places, and at the bottom, there is a fluffy, soft, warm contrast. That is hiding somewhere. It wants to be let out.*
- *The warm background gives a kind of comfort and consolation. I just would like to stick to it and not let go.*

