

# ELASTICA SYMBIOTICA

## In Search For the Garden of Fiber Delights<sup>[1]</sup>

Keywords

**Elasticity — Healing — Machine Knitting — Resonance  
Stress Reduction — Symbiosis — Connectivity**

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<sup>1</sup> The title of this paper works as a flirtation with the artist Hieronymus Bosch and his most famous work *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, painted in ca. 1503.

# **Abstract**

**This paper explores how craft in general, and the tradition of machine knitting in particular, can act as support and an alternative method within healing processes connected to stress and burn-out. The paper uses creative writing and an intimate approach to reach for and highlight metaphors and epiphanies within the making of craft, discussed from micro and macro perspectives. The search for the garden of fiber delights includes discussions and reflections about the artistic practice in relation to thinkers as sociologists Bruno Latour and the actor-network theory, and Hartmut Rosa, and his theory about an accelerating society and the need for resonance. Some of the artists referenced in the paper are Hilma af Klint, Yayoi Kusama and Niki de Saint Phalle. The main wonder of this project and paper is: what will happen when I as an artist start to respond to the seed of resonance within, and not follow the norms and expectations emerged by capitalism causing stress? How can this knowledge be applied in the meeting with other people in need of healing and rest?**





I found a shape  
A shape to follow  
Into the Garden  
Of Fiber Delights  
Adventure  
Awaits

Just follow

The fibers  
The threads  
Whatever comes,  
may be  
Whatever does not,  
may fade

Roadmaps  
Rabbit holes  
Stretch back  
To the core  
To the soul  
Of value  
and light  
Across the border  
Into the Garden

of  
Fiber Delights

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A threshold appeared and I was not vigilant enough to recognize it until I stumbled upon it. My whole existence crashed through a portal that threw me into the waiting room.

The room in between spaces.

My sight was dizzy, and my feet had wandered in heavy soil for a long time, yet unknown. My mind was covered in a veil of fog. I could not see. I could not hear. I could not feel. I could not taste. All sensations were deactivated. Somewhere on the journey before this threshold I had lost my compass. Maybe the day was when I first observed how the edges of the compass slowly started to blur in mischievous ways. But I mistook that phenomenon for a one-time accident. It was not. It was more like the vibrant area of air meeting heat above a fire. But at that time, I could not see the fire since I was positioned right in it.

In the midst of it I had two choices: to let myself burn or to find a way out. To search for something else, something alive. To catch the myth of Phoenix and rise from the ashes. The state of metamorphosis was not intended to be fought against, but to unfold into. To rest within and let happen in its own natural pace.

With sensitive movements I started to massage the feeling of being stuck in the fire. I started to stretch my perception and recognize the fire for what it was: a sign of transformation, away from a parasitic state of being.

Only then did I get my senses back, and I experienced a deep sensation of pain. I used that experience as my fuel to take the first steps out of the fire.

When I reached outside the fire, there was cold. I experienced the sensation of sorrow. Suddenly a tiny source of glowing light appeared in the ashes, a glowing seed of what to come.

The sensation of desire embraced me.  
Resonance was present.

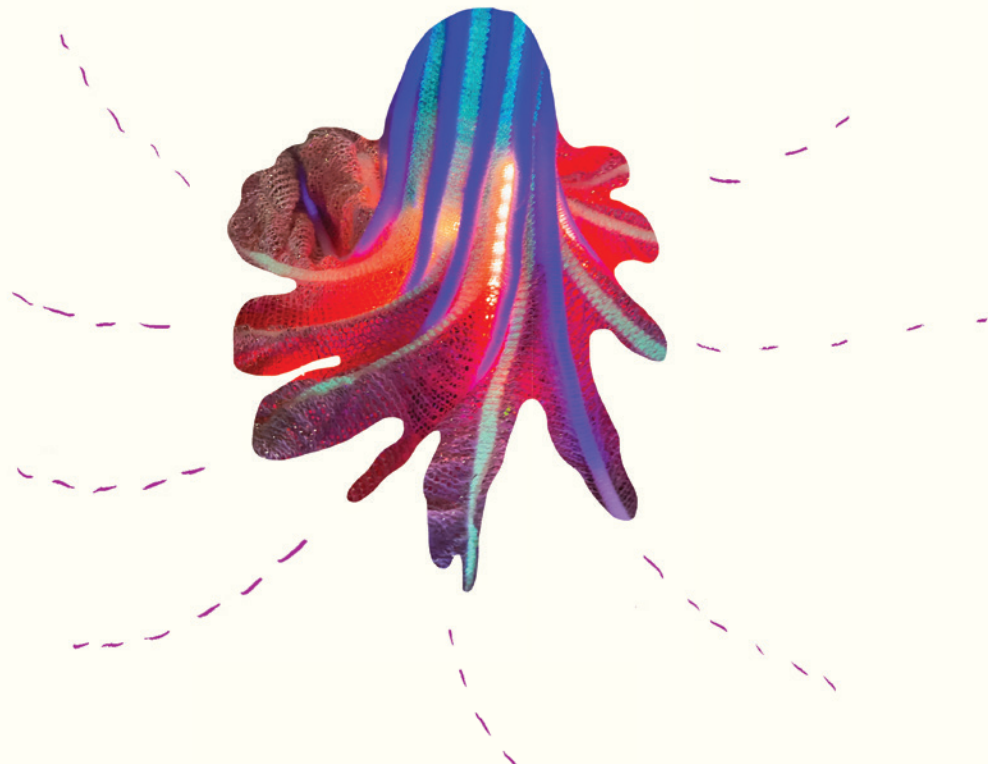






Image 2. Amandah Andersson, knitwork in progress, 2022.



**"Art, to most people  
is something terribly serious  
and people refuse to realize  
that joy is something terribly  
serious too."<sup>[2]</sup>**

**— Niki de Saint Phalle**

<sup>2</sup> Art Basel, *Niki de Saint Phalle: Rebel with a cause*, [video], YouTube, published 13 July 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxkJ2TFsial>, accessed 10 December 2021.

## 1.1

# Roadmaps and Rabbit Holes

The creative process is a playful and yet necessary adventure, which can take us anywhere — except nowhere. The process contains the possibility to stretch our minds, unfold what needs to be unfolded, and deepen our understanding of ourselves and the world we live in. Adventures can happen whenever, but they often happen naturally, when something urgently needs to be stimulated and cultivated within us or in our society.

This paper suggests a roadmap, a *network-knitwork-theory*<sup>3</sup> and an adventure of explorative methods and mindsets through the lens of machine knitting in general, and

the inherent property of elasticity in particular. Through a craft-based process, you are hereby invited to be a part of, and an actor within the knitwork adventure.

To visualize the journey of this adventure there is a map to follow, or to not follow. The symbol in the center of the map on the next page visualizes an illustrated knitwork with an epicentrum, numbered 1.0. As the author of the paper, I intend to use that point to stretch back to when the edges of the compass start to blur, both regarding my craft practice as well as in the practice of writing. As the reader of this paper that is an option for you as well. This is a source of nurturing energies, to let your mind rest in when needed.

The point of departure is surrounded by nine parts, numbered 2.0 to 3.2. These nine parts are built up inspired by the knitting tech-

3 Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social - An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2005. In this paper I work with Latour's theory as a way to understand the knitwork.



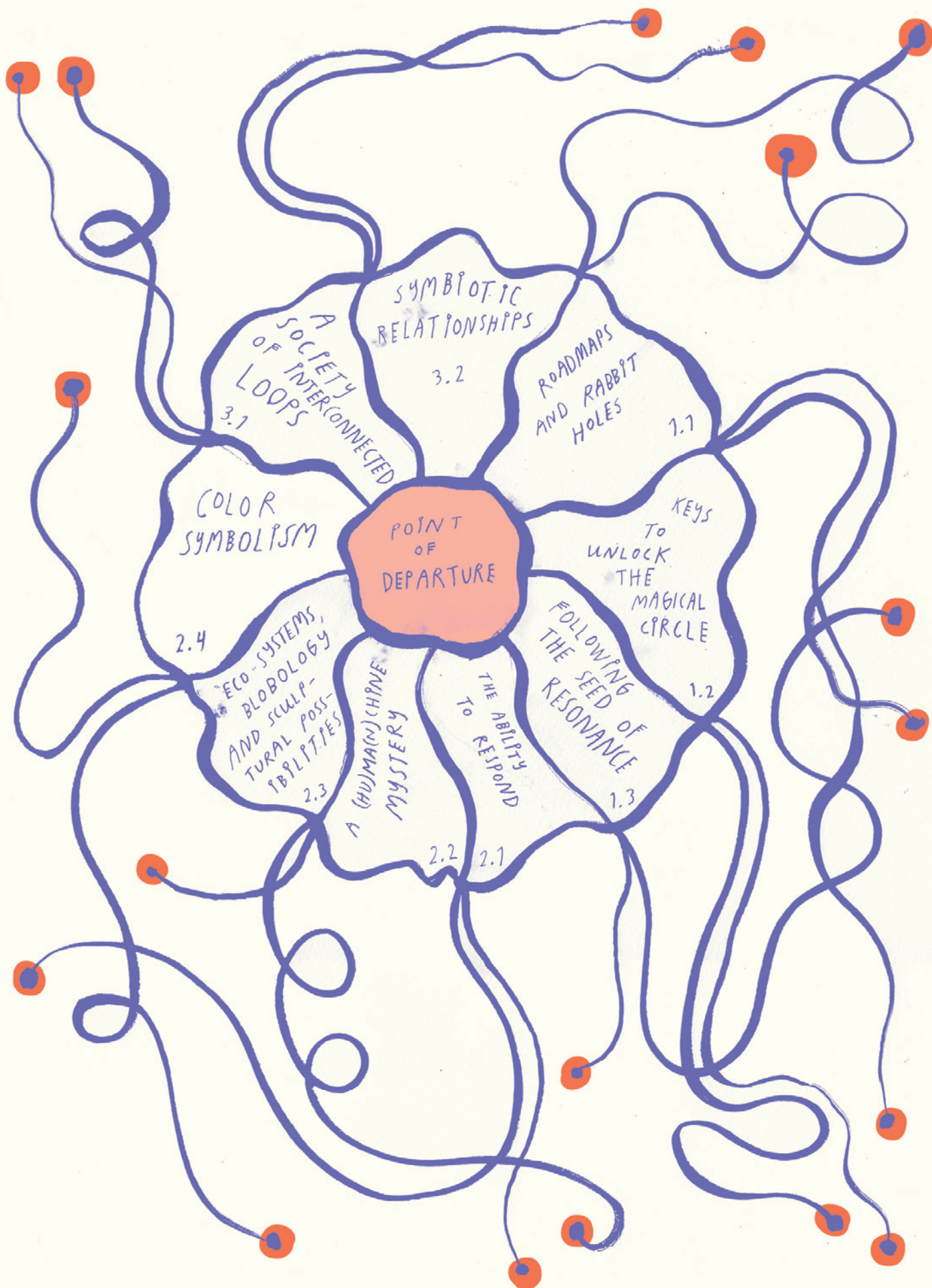






Image 3. Amandah Andersson, detail of work, 2022.

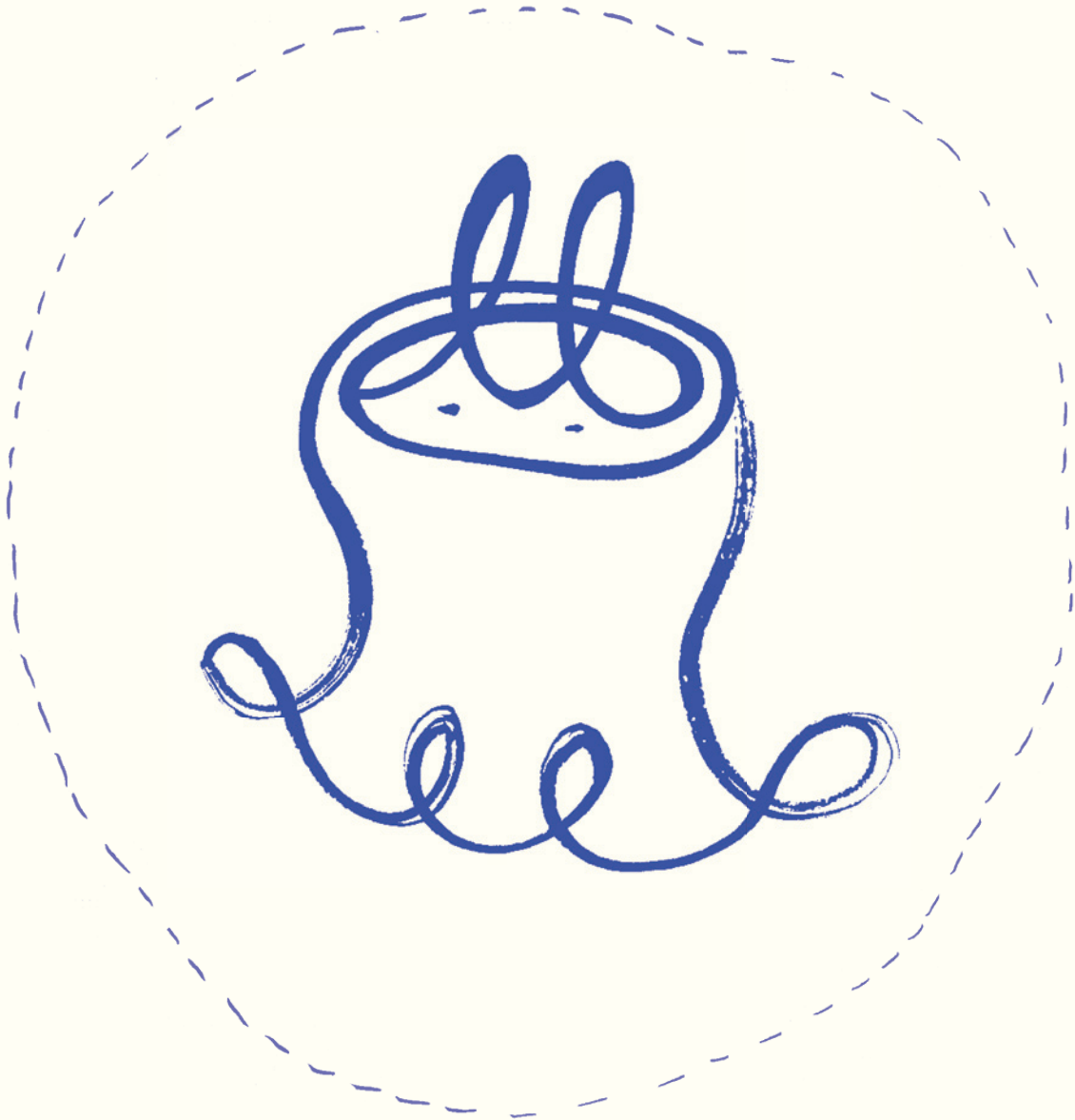


nique called *partial knitting*, where the fabric expands and decreases depending on active and resting needles on the machine. Depending on how you read the paper as your interpretation of partial knitting, it may or may not be visible.

From these nine parts there are free flowing threads of connectivity. These allow us to create bridges between the elastic properties of the fabric and the mind, through words and visual stimulations. The threads can support us

in using the concepts of stretching and resting our elastic minds, and push us towards unknown directions during the adventure. They will act as magical portals into theoretical rabbit holes.

While reading the paper you will know you are standing on a threshold into a rabbit hole when the symbol shown below appears. Go down the rabbit hole by following the thread. Allow the thread to be your guide for an explorative search for the garden of fiber delights.





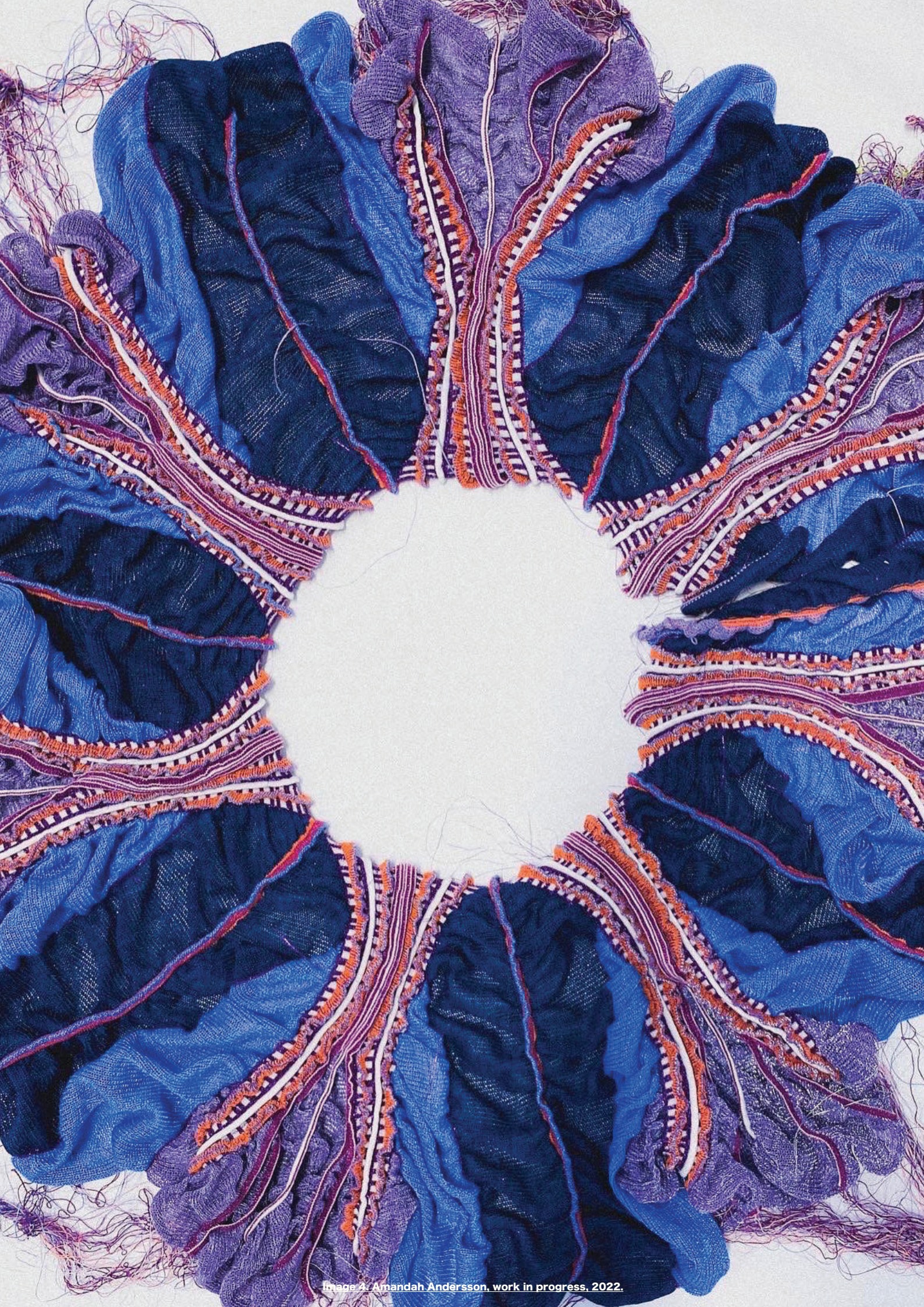


Image 4. Amandah Andersson, work in progress, 2022.



## 1.2

# Keys to Unlock the Magical Circle



### **Key Intentions**

The intention of *the Search For the Garden of Fiber Delights* is to explore how craft can offer support in a healing process and how it can act as an alternative method for stress reduction. I want to explore the possibilities to stretch a stressed-out mind by activating our senses through materiality and meditative states within craft. I intend to explore this through the tradition of machine knitting, while using the concept of elasticity to expand the sculptural possibilities within this field of textiles.

With this paper I also aim to deepen my relationship to my craft, by letting the crafted objects be highly present while I transform my thoughts into words. They are present as resting objects, as well as active objects in progress. The theoretical work is nurtured by following guidance through the objects in making.

### **Key Wonders**

A great fascination for me is the act of observing and connecting things through an elastic movement of going in and out of micro and macro perspectives<sup>4</sup>. Being present in the craft of making does not only make the knitwork of loops visible, but will also show us relevant metaphors on how to understand ourselves on intimate levels, in relation to the social networks we exist within.

The main wonder that guides me in this project is how stress management can be supported, understood, and applied through both

4 To support this movement of going in and out of micro and macro perspectives, I suggest you to take a look at the video by Eames Office, *Powers of Ten™*, [video], YouTube, published 27 August 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfKBhvDjuy0&t=4s>, accessed 8 February 2022.

subjective and objective perspectives. In this paper, I refer to the subjective as micro, and the objective as macro. What will happen when I start to respond to the seed of resonance within me, instead of following the stress-induced norms and expectations emerged by capitalism? And how can this experience be helpful for others?

### Key Boundaries

The boundaries for the project are defined by the strive for finding a sustainable approach within the artistic practice without compromising other important aspects of everyday life. I aim to create a durable foundation to stand on for the future. To balance work, play and well-being is central for this sort of foundation within the creative practice. If the sense of resonance is lost, the boundary of the magical circle is broken. When dream and reality dance together, there will be flow flow. That is the essence of the borders of the magical circle.

### Key Context

To understand my work in relationship to the art scene, I want to point out some of the artists that are of relevance to the project. These are the textile weaving artists' Birgitta Nordström and Malin Bobeck Tadaa. I have also been looking at and interviewed the artist Cecilia de Jong, whose focus is on embroidery and painting with connections to the spiritual realm. Within the art of painting, I am resonating with Yayoi Kusama, Hilma af Klint and Niki de Saint Phalle, all connected by their fascination for the subconscious. These artists create a context about the relations between play, healing, spirituality, craft processes and tacit knowledge. They also represent a variety of gardens, mysticism, connectivity, material intimacy and innovation. The book *Craft in Art Therapy*<sup>[5]</sup>, has also been an important source within the project.



5 Lauren Leone, *Craft in Art Therapy: Diverse Approaches to the Transformative Power of Craft Materials and Methods*, New York: Routledge, 2021.







Image 7. Malin Bobeck Tadaa, *Emerging Sensation*, 2019.



Image 8. Birgitta Nordström, *Dress for an Amazon*, 2005.

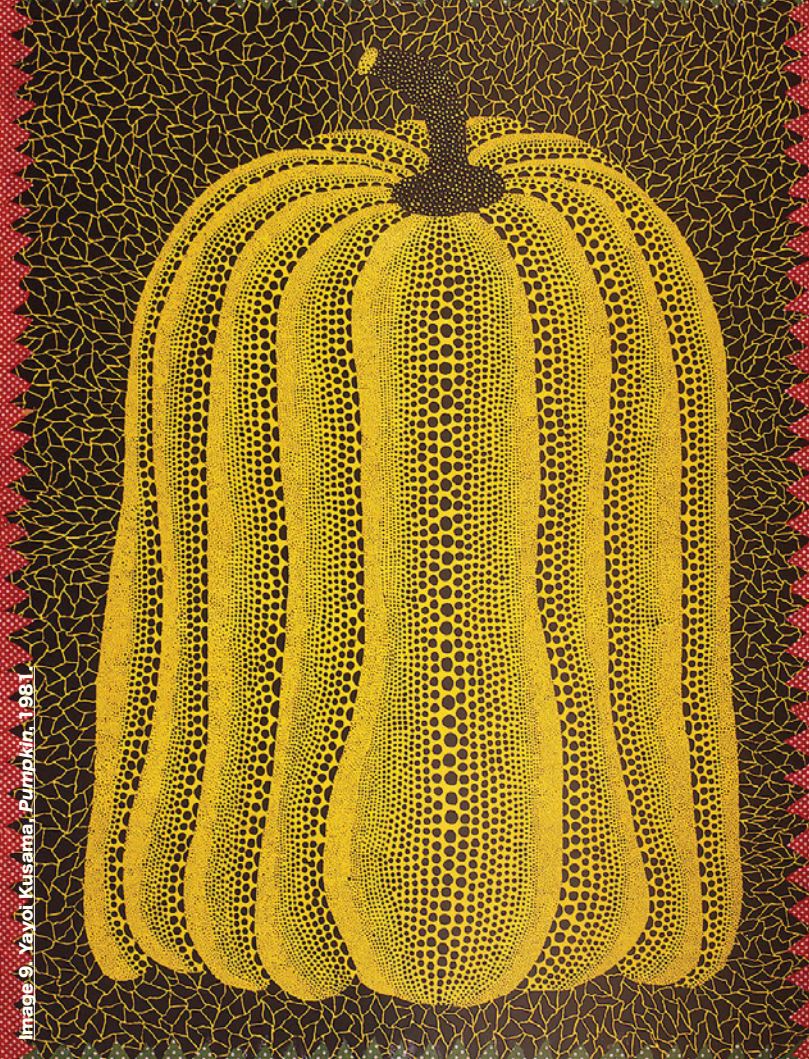


Image 9. Yayoi Kusama, *Pumpkin*, 1981.



Image 10. Niki de Saint Phalle with *Clarice Again*, 1981.





Image 11. Hilma af Klint, *Gruppe IV, nr. 2. Barnaäldern*, 1907.



Image 12. Cecilia de Jong, *no title*, 2021.

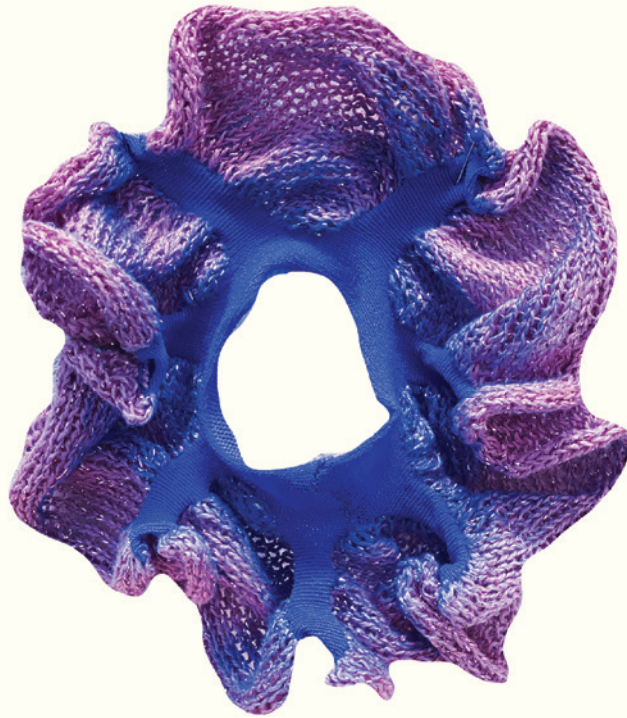


Image 13. Malin Bobeck Tadaa, *Emerging Sensation*, 2019.



## 1.3

# Following the Seed of Resonance



By using our inherent sensational systems and deepening the understanding of our spectrum of haptic knowledge, there is a strong potential for a nurturing process of catharsis. This is fundamental for a healing process to be able to take place. Keys to locked doors can be found in the power of listening to what is truly alive in oneself, by following that voice of truth with dedicated trust and bravery. During this project I have been reflecting about what that voice could be defined as in relation to what is considered *true*. To understand this inner voice, which also can be described as an impulse, I have directed my focus to concepts such as lust, desire, and libido (in the Jungian tradition). But the concept that makes most sense to me in these regards is the theory of *resonance* by sociologist Hartmut

Rosa<sup>6</sup>, where resonance is the concept of being in a responsive relationship to the world - not as its opposite: an alienated one.

The sort of resonance I am paying attention to is the one that wants to create life and *join the dots*<sup>7</sup>. It is a force of life. The experienced resonance can also be a kind of lust which is beyond affective reactions and aims to deep dive into something to gain a wider understanding of the deeper dimensions of what that *something* might be. A deep desire that wants to un-

6 Hartmut Rosa, *Acceleration, modernitet och identitet. Tre essäer*, second edition, Gothenburg: Daidalos, 2013, p. xx.

7 Harvard University, Lecture: Bruno Latour | On Not Joining the Dots || Radcliffe Institute, [video], YouTube, published 16 November 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wTvbk10ABPI>, accessed 14 February 2022.



XI



TRUMPS

Lust





derstand how and why the glowing seed arises from the dark pile of ashes, and longs for greater connectivity.

To deepen the understanding of the concept of libido in a symbolic context, I suggest that we direct our focus towards the tradition of the tarot deck, specifically the *Thoth Tarot*<sup>[8]</sup>, where the card of Lust is described as: "a threshold to the second decade of the Major Arcana<sup>[9]</sup>, beyond which the journey into one's own depths begins. It is the dark, mysterious side. Its depths conceal not only great dangers but also redemption and becoming whole."<sup>[10]</sup> I wonder if 'becoming whole' is the same as finding acceptance of the new and organic version of being? In the further explanation of the card, it "...indicates the mastering and taming of our animalistic (sinful?) nature and strength, the courage, and the initiative that grow when these elemental forces are channeled. It is not a matter of fighting or repressing these forces, but rather accepting them."<sup>[11]</sup> This is a key point in my project; to respond to what is real by accepting the present, being in a responsive relationship to the world and honoring the state of resonance.

The glowing seed of this project derives from a need to care for my own inner garden, due to long term stress and external as well as internal pressure. I needed to decode myself internally to establish new nourishing routines. I started to formulate the need for a reminder to take care of my inner garden, instead of letting it wither as a consequence to a long burning fire.

By starting to formulate this need for myself, a series of coincidences directed me towards the metaphor of the garden as a healing

spot, which also taught me how to shift focus from a never-ending firefighting towards a more sustainable way of wellbeing. A fire of stress causing mental illness finally clarified the importance of gardening my inner mental health. By identifying what I was lacking in my garden to make it fully alive, I realized I did not prioritize the things that brought me joy. To work with my hands and my mind in collaboration was something I was missing and in need of to function.

The relation between me and the knitting machine has been ongoing for a lengthy period, but through the realization of what my garden was lacking, we entered another level in our relating to each other. The experience of losing the compass made me even more responsive to truly listening to my inner sensations - and there they suddenly were. While teaching a class on the subject of machine knitting, I found a technique that really sparked joy within. I tried to express the possibilities with that technique to my students, but realized that it was my joy, not necessarily theirs.

So, I chose to take that sensation of joyful lust seriously and respond to it. Intuitively I knew I needed to follow this unknown path for a while, to befriend the veil of fog and fire for real. I continued to develop the knitwork into various sizes, colors, and materials. What fascinated me was its volume, elasticity, and the loose threads. It spoke to me in an unknown language, which I did not know I knew so well.

The use of metaphors to describe abstract concepts is an effective way to expand the understanding of what that abstract concept might be. When we perform in our personalities in our everyday life as other might know us, we use parables like for example "you shine like the sun", explaining present states of moods, needs, emotions or personality traits that put a visual image inside of us to highlight what we mean. To describe an overwhelming process of transformation, from a parasitic state of being caused by stress into wellbeing through the work of prioritizing healing, might have a lot of metaphors that could describe this metamorphosis in many diverse and rewarding ways.

The inner garden is a useful metaphor

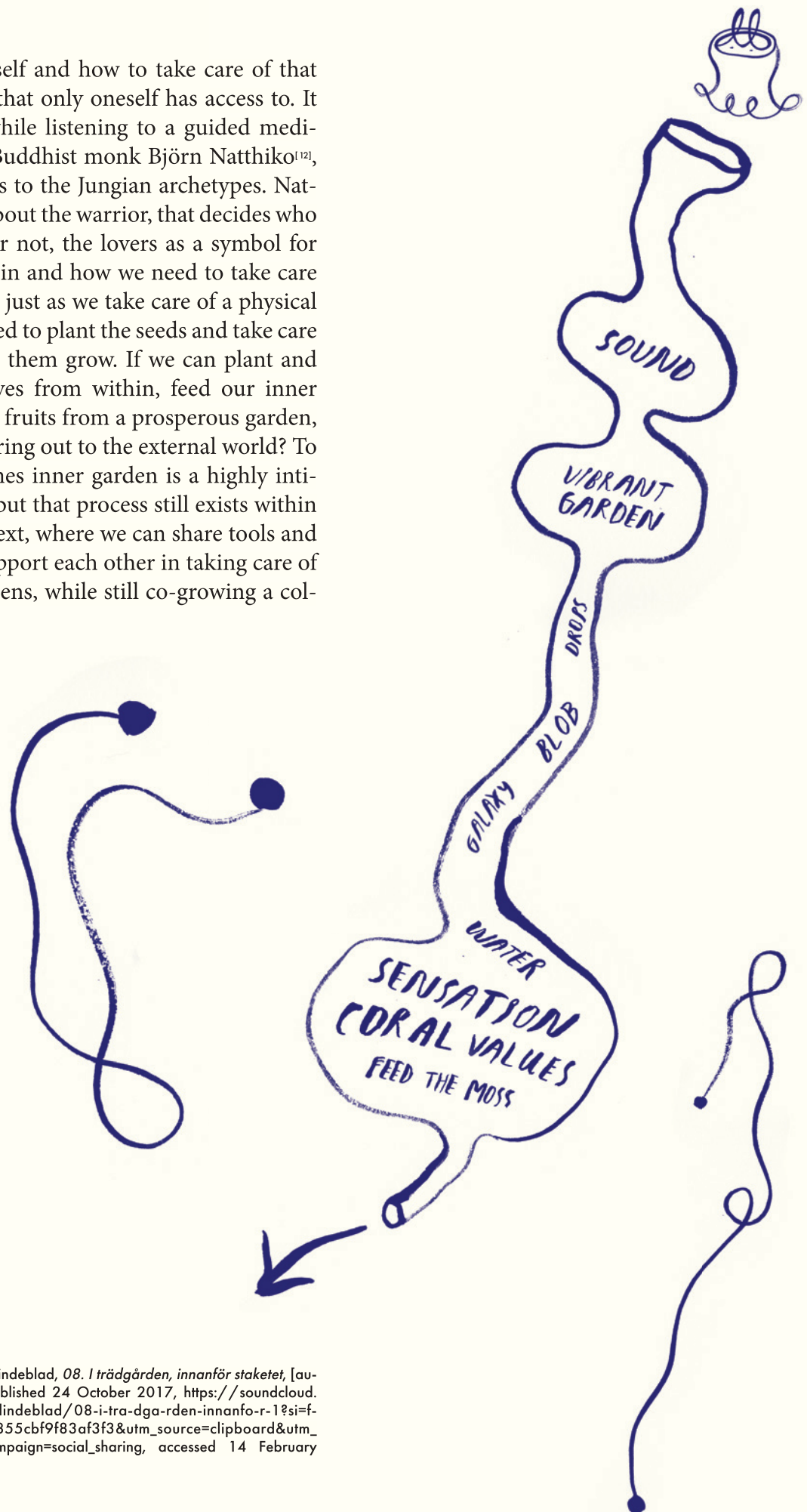
8 Lady Frieda Harrys and Aleister Crowley, *Thoth Tarot* [deck of tarot cards], Ordo Templi Orientis, England, 1969.

9 The tarot deck is built upon seventy-eight cards which are divided into two sections: the Major Arcana and the Minor Arcana. The Major Arcana consists of twenty-two cards and is considered the most powerful cards of the game.

10 Akron Banzhaf & Hajo Banzhaf, *The Crowley Tarot - The Handbook of the Cards*, Stamford: U.S. Games Systems, Inc., 1995, p. 73.

11 Ibid.

for the inner self and how to take care of that mental world that only oneself has access to. It came to me while listening to a guided meditation by the Buddhist monk Björn Natthiko<sup>[12]</sup>, where he refers to the Jungian archetypes. Natthiko speaks about the warrior, that decides who can come in or not, the lovers as a symbol for wellbeing within and how we need to take care of that garden, just as we take care of a physical garden. We need to plant the seeds and take care of them to see them grow. If we can plant and garden ourselves from within, feed our inner selves with the fruits from a prosperous garden, what will we bring out to the external world? To take care of ones inner garden is a highly intimate process, but that process still exists within a societal context, where we can share tools and methods to support each other in taking care of our inner gardens, while still co-growing a collective one.



12 Björn Natthiko Lindeblad, 08. *I trädgården, innanför staketet*, [audio], SoundCloud, published 24 October 2017, [https://soundcloud.com/bjorn-natthiko-lindeblad/08-i-tra-dga-rden-innanfo-r-1?si=f0f4521a9fd5412f9855cbf9f83af3f3&utm\\_source=clipboard&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=social\\_sharing](https://soundcloud.com/bjorn-natthiko-lindeblad/08-i-tra-dga-rden-innanfo-r-1?si=f0f4521a9fd5412f9855cbf9f83af3f3&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing), accessed 14 February 2022.



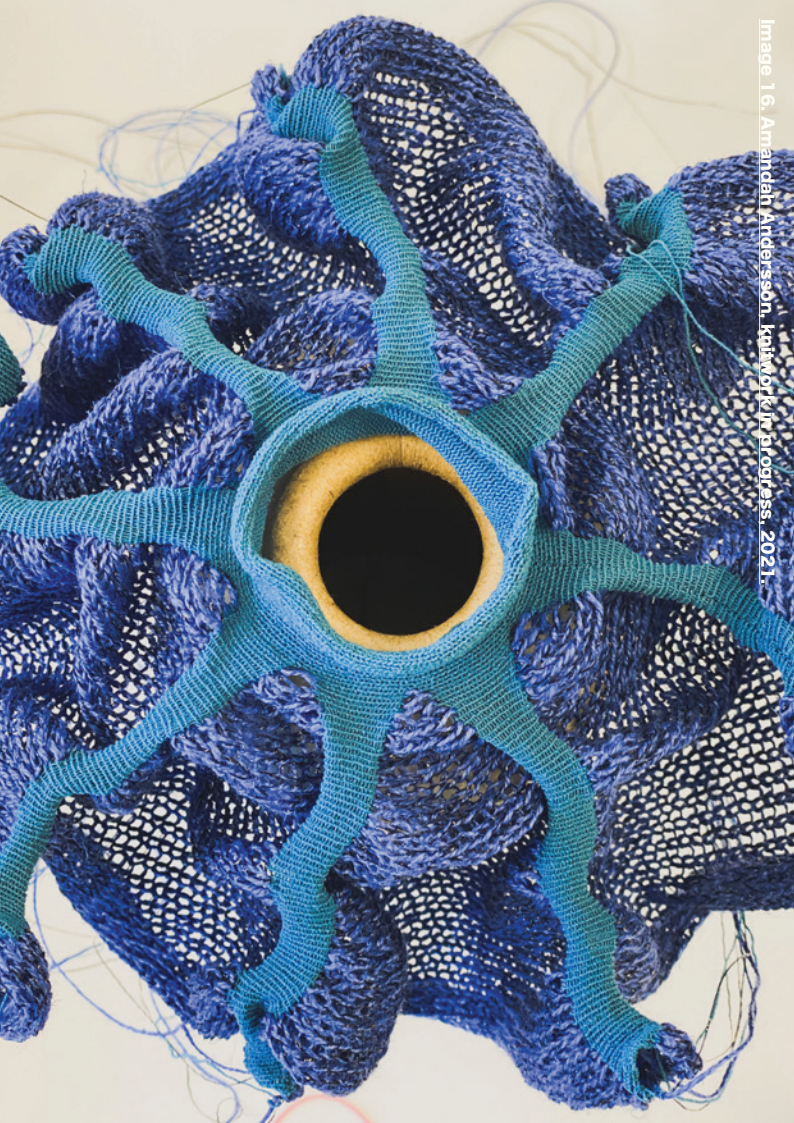


Image 18. Amanda Andersson, knitwork in progress, 2021.

Image 16. Amanda Andersson, knitwork in progress, 2021.

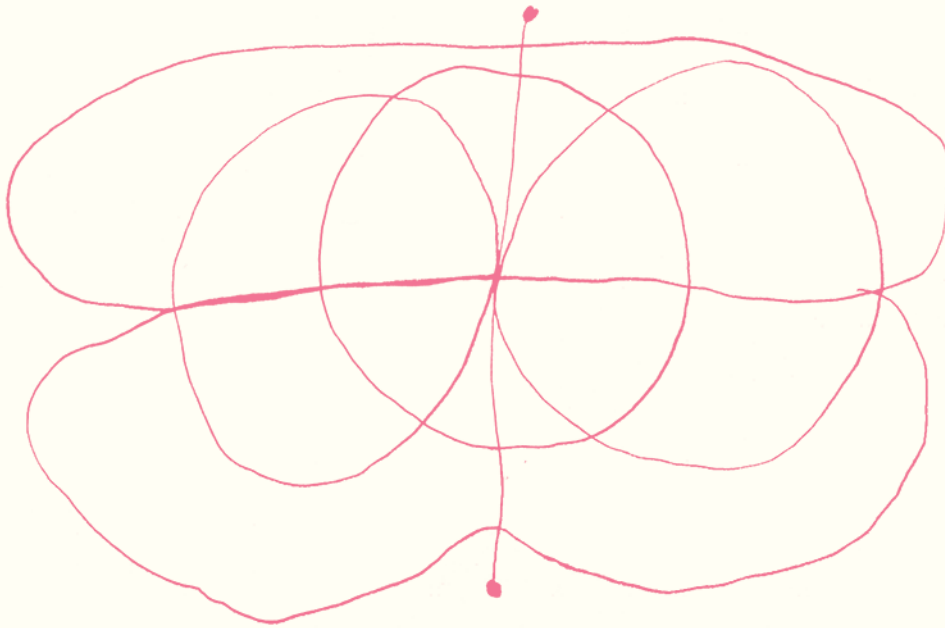
Image 17. Amanda Andersson, knitwork in progress, 2021.

Image 5. Amanda Andersson, knitwork in progress, 2021.



## 2.1

# The Ability to Respond



Within my artistic practice the intimate meeting of hand, mind, material, and machine is central, whereby textiles and illustration constitute the dominant roles. Recurring methods of interest within my practice are the craft of machine knitting, fiber sculpting, print making, illustration and painting. Recurring themes are connected to explorative processes through play and making; progressive knowledge production through experiential practice, and the inherent property of stress reduction in the making of craft. These themes lay under the umbrella of an overall interest in psychology, epistemology, sustainability, and spirituality. I am interested in how knowledge of our inner worlds can support us in our daily navigation of physical and mental life, both regarding the relationship to others, as well as the intimate relationship we have to ourselves. I argue that the act of observing ourselves

from an inner perspective supports us to make more thought-through decisions in physical reality and everyday life. I also believe that this act can support better communication between human beings, as well as the relationship between humans, objects, and nature.

In the prologue of the Swedish textile artist Birgitta Nordström's licentiate thesis *In a Room of Rites - Cloth Meeting Human* (2016), she writes about the word *responsibility*<sup>13</sup>, and presents a reflection on how to understand its meaning by pulling the word apart: respons-ibil-ity — or *the ability to respond*.

These reflections of Nordström have followed me in my own thoughts about what it

13 Birgitta Nordström, *In a Room of Rites - Cloth Meeting Human*, licentiate thesis, Gothenburg University, 2016, p. 12.



means to be present. To be present is vital for our process to heal, and this presence is centered in the ability to respond. Being fogged by the veil of stress puts us in an opposite, alienated position in relation to the world.

When we are able to strengthen our communication skills in regards of emotional needs and experiences, we also expand the possibilities to mirror ourselves in others. Through expanded skills and possibilities within communication and relational mirroring we can create sustainable methods for *the art of living*<sup>14</sup> in the physical world we do exist in, by practicing self-knowledge and sharing that with others — where craft and the research of the agency of objects can expand our understanding for symbiotic relationships and life systems. These thoughts trigger wonders of how I can illustrate this through the tradition of machine knitting; making knits, nets, mending loops and observe the symbiosis of threads working together.

We are all actors in an ongoing network-knitwork, constantly in relation to ourselves and others, objects, and spaces. The consequence of this constant relationship is beautifully put into words in this citation by physician John Wheeler: "*Matter tells the space how to curve. And space tell matter how to move*".<sup>15</sup>

14 This formulation can be further understood by reading the book "The Art of Loving" ("Kärlekens Konst") by psychologist Eric Fromm (World Perspectives. Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York).

15 Quora, General relativity, as summarized by John Wheeler (...), <https://www.quora.com/General-relativity-as-summarized-by-John-Wheeler-says-matter-tells-space-how-to-curve-and-space-tells-matter-how-to-move-is-there-a-hypothesis-theory-as-to-the-mechanism-by-which-matter-affects-the-geometry-of-space>, accessed 14 February 2022.





Image 19. Amandah Andersson, knittwork in progress, 2021.



Image 20. Amandah Andersson, knittwork in progress, 2021.



Image 21. Amandah Andersson, knittwork in progress, 2021.



Image 22. Amandah Andersson, knittwork in progress, 2021.





## **2.2**

# **A (hu)Ma(n)chine Mystery**

The title of this chapter is addressing an often-recurring misunderstanding that I as a knitter have observed in conversations with people who are not familiar with the craft of machine knitting. The misunderstanding could be formulated that machine knitting is based on the fact that there is a machine that knits by itself, without any human interaction involved in the process. That there is a button you push on, and then magically a knitwork is produced by the machine.

This misunderstanding has often led me into frustration, but also into a greater understanding of how alienated people are from the process of production. Though, I cannot blame anyone, because when it comes to machine knitting, the name “machine knitting” is not at all describing the factual essence of the craft; a human-machine knitting process, or as I suggest in

the title of this chapter; a (hu)ma(n)chine mystery of concentration, metaphors, needlework, and allowance for a symbiotic relationship between human, machine, and material.

I have therefore been trying to catch the genesis of the making in collaboration with the machine, to show the integration of mind, material, hand, and machine. There is a reason for why we discuss craft practices as silent knowledge, which is a shame since these processes contains so much valuable knowledge. One step to make it more of a loud knowledge is to start articulating what is happening within the process.

So, let yourself follow me when I let myself follow the process. A beautiful balance between the feeling of being in control, knowing what I do and at the same time listening and observing the constantly changing needs of the

machine and the material.

In collaboration with the machine, I am knitting a representation of a flower. Something that is supposed to remind us of an organic creature that is considered beautiful and complex. The material used is flax dyed in coral, blended with a white, almost transparent, thread of lurex. The meeting of the two different fiber combinations sometimes creates a friction in the yarn rod, the part of the machine that separates the threads before it goes into the arm of the carriage, which is the part that activates the threads with the needles.

This friction reminds me to breathe and to be constantly vigilant regarding the organic material and its movement in relation to the machine. Suddenly I feel a resistance in the movement when I push the carriage over the active needles, how the thread tenses and how I am asked to slow down and move more methodically to solve the situation. Then I am asked to dissolve the friction and look over the settings of the machine. I reflect upon if I need to change the yarn tension in the yarn rod, or if it would be enough with my vigilant glance and observing ear when listening to the material and the machine.

During the work I think about the incredible respect I experience for what I and the machine in collaboration are able to create, a whole body of net and of interconnected loops, synergizing fragility, and strength. I think about the future with this specific coordination of fibers. I get excited by the thought of what the object is going to become and what it will induce, in me and in others. You – the object – are becoming. You will continue to be in the state of becoming in the meeting with other people as well as in the meeting with other objects, the family of objects that you are going to be a part of and feel belonging to. What kind of dialogues will emerge; what kind of experiences will be

produced? What kind of play will you invite us to?

Due to an event of losing concentration during the process of machine knitting, it became apparent how fragile the concentration of mind is. To succeed in the making of craft a state of full presence is required. I was going to describe for a friend how I implemented the technique of partial knitting, which is the most central technique I am using in this project. How I went from regular stockinette stitch with the basic settings to the method of partial knitting, by rearranging the positions of the needles from the position of B to the position of D, putting the russel levers at number one at the carriage, and changing the yarn from elastane into the blending of flax and shimmering lurex.

But by being in the act of describing this moment, I also lost a bit of concentration and forgot a crucial step in the routine. This realization became visible a vast number of rows later, which put me in a resonating state for myself if this gap in concentration should be adjusted or if I should let it stay as a sign of the factual event of human interaction?

I was confronted with the question in my inner landscape of whether I would stand that this specific part of the knitting was deviating in relation to the knitted piece as whole. As mentioned above, I asked myself if this event of “failure” in concentration could add something to the knitted object, if it could show how fragile the mind is or if it could act as a symbol for the meeting between the human mind and machine. Or would I be disturbed by this in the continuing exploration and feel some sort of resistance to using the object as intended in my further research?

Finally, I made the choice to unravel the rows and revert to the preferred order that I myself had created. I do not know if that was the right choice to do, but I found satisfaction in the act of adjusting what had been considered “wrong”.





Image 23. Amandah Andersson, detail of blob, 2021.



## 2.2

# Eco-Systems, Blobology and Sculptural Possibilities



Throughout the creative process, I have come to the realization that I unconsciously have created an eco-system for the material I use within my practice. Besides the process of machine knitting, the process of fiber sculpting is of relevance for my project, which I also refer to as *blobology*<sup>16</sup>. I play with the consideration of myself as a blobologist. The blobs arise from an urge to take care of waste material and enter a process of mending, adding value and life to what might have been considered dead by being defined as waste. I make these fiber sculptures in the formation of blobs, and all sorts of waste material that comes from other techniques can act as

filling material. Through this process, a feeling of frustration about creating waste material can be eliminated. To blob, or blobbing, is the verb I use describing the process of filling stuff with stuff. Stuff can be defined as broken stockings in nylon, scraps of textiles that I make into tiny bags as the shell of a blob, left over threads from the tufting or knitting studio, worn out garments and anything else that I find fitting the mission of being filling material, or material to fill. After the filling process I close the bag of filling material, by making a knot or stitched solution. The needle and the thread have now become my tools for sculpting the mass of fibers into a new state of being. I repeat stitch after stitch, as in the

16 BBC News, What is 'blobologi' and how is it transforming biology?, [www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-49359137](http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-49359137), accessed 14 February 2022.



Japanese technique *sashiko*<sup>17</sup>, to shape the blob, as if it were a clay of fibers. Through touch I notice a tickling experience in my fingertips, and I get a grip of the material that is left on the other side of the knot. I screw it into some sort of rope. When I realize that I can make stitches in a certain way to make it stay in the position explored by playing with the material, a sensation of exhalation embraces me. The process made it visible that there is inherent need within me to be in control of my surroundings, but also mend what can be mended. I feel an urge to transform trash, as anything that does not add functional, aesthetic, or spiritual value to my life, into treasures, as everything that does.

The objects that emerge out of the methods of machine knitting and blobology can be considered as representations of abstract concepts directed towards explorations in the fields of psychology and spirituality, rather than considered as imitations of already existing objects. These material representations can for example be embodied as a plant-like object, unfolded in the imaginary scene of an internal, psychological garden. Observing my work in progress from a poetic perspective I envision that these blobs can represent fictional fruit in the textile garden of fiber delights.

The creative decisions within my artistic practice are made based upon a fine balance of technical plannings and improvisation. The process of machine knitting requires a great amount of concentration, counting and needlework, and not at least patience. When I add that knowledge to a more emotional approach to the machine knitting practice, I reach a feeling of dancing and painting in collaboration with the machine.



17 The Spruce Craft, *Sashiko Folk Embroidery: A Japanese Art*, [www.thesprucecrafts.com/sashiko-embroidery-1177614](http://www.thesprucecrafts.com/sashiko-embroidery-1177614), accessed 14 February 2022.



Image 25. Amandah Andersson, knitted experiment, 2022



Image 26. Amandah Andersson, knitted piece on body, 2022.



Image 27. Amandah Andersson, knitwork in progress, 2022



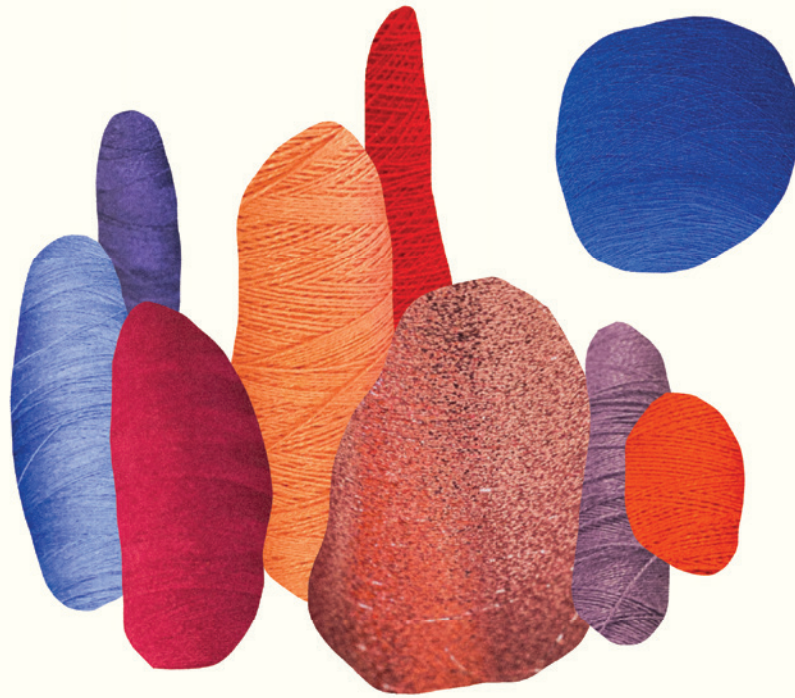
Image 28. Amandah Andersson, knitted experiment, 2022.





## 2.3

# Color Symbolism



Colors have a certain role within my artistic practice. I feel dependent on the vibrance of the colors while making, but also while observing other artists' work. Vibrant colors have always been central in my life, and I do think color has a keen sense of being an emotional trigger for how we build our identities and connections with our surroundings.

When referring to colors in this text, I refer to the perceptual experience of colors, not the technical knowledge of dyeing. The following discussion is briefly touching upon the symbolic meaning of colors within this project. The color scheme I work with is based on my investigations from my bachelor project *Body-scape Sublime* (2013), where I developed a color scheme that resonated with my interpretation of a psychological body. The colors were blue, red, purple, and coral, in combination with black

and white. Ever since I have been reusing that color scheme as a base in my artistic practice. By adding colors that are not included in this scheme I can load these color meetings with new symbolic meaning, creating interesting relations between the colors.

For my master project I decided to follow that color scheme further and freely adding other colors to create even more vibrance into the garden of fiber delights, but by always questioning the reason I am adding that specific color. My aim is to not be too rigid about the color scheme by put too much control over it. The color scheme is more of a frame to work from. Most important is that I know the reason for the choice of color myself. It can be as simple as that it sparks joy, which Niki de Saint Phalle puts so well in the citation in the beginning of this paper as "something terribly serious", and in my



opinion; complex, too.

When I developed the color scheme for my bachelor project, I based it on research about the symbolic meaning of colors in history, religion, and psychology. How colors have been used to communicate different hierarchies, emotions, spirituality, behaviors, and states of mind.

Blue has repeatedly been defined as the color for the intellect and higher states of mind, while it is also considered the color of protection. Niki de Saint Phalle used it in that sense of protection, but also as the color when she communicated visual stories about the subconscious.<sup>[18]</sup>

Red is historically used as the color for passion, lust, life, and contains connotations for the flesh of the body. In contrast to blue, red is the color for the material world and practical work. I reflect upon this as it could be the color for tactility, haptic knowledge, and bodily experiences.

Purple is for me the color that refers to spirituality, since it is the combination of blue and red, a symbolic color meeting of body and mind. To be in a spiritual state of mind, the meeting of body and mind is essential. This meeting of two colors making a third one with symbolic meaning can also be seen in Hilma af Klint's way of using yellow for masculinity and blue for femininity, which together becomes green, and which, in Hilma's color theory, symbolizes the unity of the masculine and feminine.<sup>[19]</sup>

Coral is the warm branching of red that for me subjectively is the color of the Self, since it speaks to my personal history and is especially connected to my grandmother Ebon, who has always been an important woman in my life.

Black and white are two important components when putting the colors together. They create a sort of balance and contrast. They also contain the meaning of darkness and light.

These are the primary colors within the color scheme. From these colors I then use various tints, hues and saturations to expand the coloristic language.

Within the actual knitting process, the act of changing color means that I change the yarn in the yarn rod. The yarn rod is the part of the machine that is guiding the threads from their cones into the machine. The machine that I am using, a model of Silver Reed SK280, allows me to work with two yarn rods, each one allowing two passages for threads flowing into the machine. In one of my samples that I have been working with during my master project, I made the choice to maximize the expression, by using a change of color that contains seven assorted colors. But the more colors there are, the more time goes to changing the yarns into the machine. During my process I envision other sorts of innovations that could solve this for me in a more efficient way. In parallel, every color change reminds me of taking pauses, and becomes natural breaks in the process. The many changes of colors keep me in concentration and counting, and if I miss one or more moments when color change was planned, a lack of concentration or the starting point of a manic behavior becomes visible.

18 Art Basel, *Niki de Saint Phalle: Rebel with a cause*.

19 Guggenheim Museum, *Hilma af Klint*, [video], YouTube, published 11 October 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHdud9km-7bQ>, accessed 14 February 2022.





Image 32. Amandah Andersson, detail of knitwork, 2022.



Image 30. Amandah Andersson, knitted experiment in the patina studio, 2022.



Image 33. Amandah Andersson, sculpture in the patina studio.

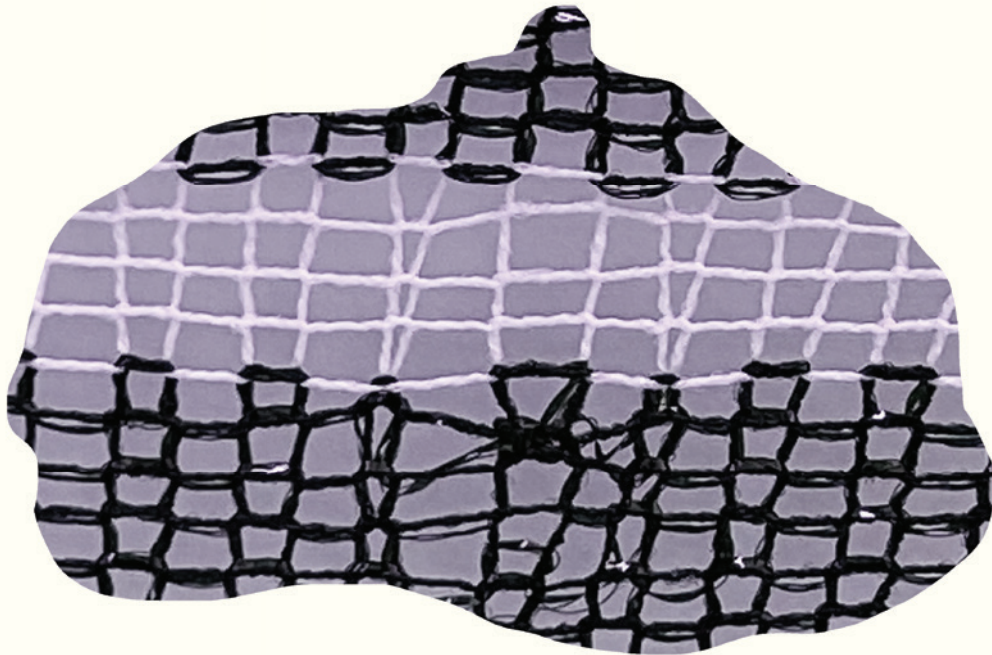


Image 31. Amandah Andersson, detail of knitwork, 2022.



## 3.1

# A Society of Interconnected Loops



Through dedicated listening and a state of being in contact with each present moment during the knitting process, I can reduce upcoming problems in front of me. The process allows me to experience an embodied illustration of how to understand strategies for reducing upcoming spirals of stress. My presence and how I choose to adapt to the natural pace of the process diminish the risk that the thread is breaking and that loops are falling off the upholding hooks of the needles. My body, mind and senses are focused on the following iteration: inhaling - observing, listening, touching – exhaling / inhaling - observing, listening, touching - exhaling. Etcetera.

By addressing the perspective of norm criticality through the lens of building knitworks, the body of a knitwork can visualize properties within a social network, such as the

role of individuals, connections, collaboration, elasticity, fragility, and strength. The process of machine knitting has the possibility to act as a helpful metaphor to understand the question above from a visual and practical perspective. As theorist and hacktivist Otto Von Bosch argues in his article *Zen and the Abstract Machine of Knitting*, the process of knitting requires a state of Zen. The citation shared below presents a brief introduction to his elaboration on this argument:

“...we could approach this type of innovation as a certain ‘Zen of knitting’, not only as a mode of operation in the mind of the knitter, that is, as a state of mind, but ‘Zen’ as a process of investigation and intervention. This kind of intervention happens on an emergent level, more in resonance with the biological growth of organisms and the growth of complexity in



living systems, than the restraining tendencies of patterns and top-down organization. If using special mindful attention of reverse engineering and decoding of the material code of knitting, the artisan can employ a 'hacker mentality' when approaching the way, the loops are interconnected, thus enabling the knitter to 'bend reality itself'."<sup>[20]</sup>

This can be put in relation to the problem of our constantly accelerating society of modernity, as well as working as inspiration for a life growing out of resonance. We live our best lives when we can enter the portal of being in the present. A present state of mind allows us to hack, as I propose to understand as undressing, the norms in front of us. Norms based on expectations of modes of constant efficient productivity, modes of competing and comparing, as well as modes of upholding functionality based on hard values, with burnouts as one example of its negative consequences. Instead, I suggest slow processes to be considered as protests of the capitalist system, while the concept of *slow processes* contains a problem as well. They are slow only because they stand in relation to *faster processes*, the processes we have gotten used to by living in a capitalist system where production and efficiency is what counts. By naming a process that does not fit that system by calling it slow would be to agree on that system, and to not confront it. To use *natural* or *humane* processes instead of slow processes, would put the concept of fast processes in another position, as e.g., *accelerating*<sup>[21]</sup> or destructive processes.

Compared to hand knitting, the machine knitting process is often considered a more effective one. It is a faster one, if the collaboration is built upon values of dedicated focus and respect for the machine. But a central part within machine knitting is to deepen the

20 Otto Von Bosch, "Zen and the Abstract Machine of Knitting", *The Journal of Cloth and Culture, Textile*, 11:1, 2013, p. 6-19

21 Läsarpodden, *Sommarspecial del 1: Hartmut Rosa om tillvarons acceleration*, [audio], published July 2021, <https://open.spotify.com/episode/ONBqKONeQB3RnLL6wedXvH?si=a8f5375281154d24>, accessed 14 February 2022.





Image 35. Amandah Andersson, entanglement of threads, 2021.

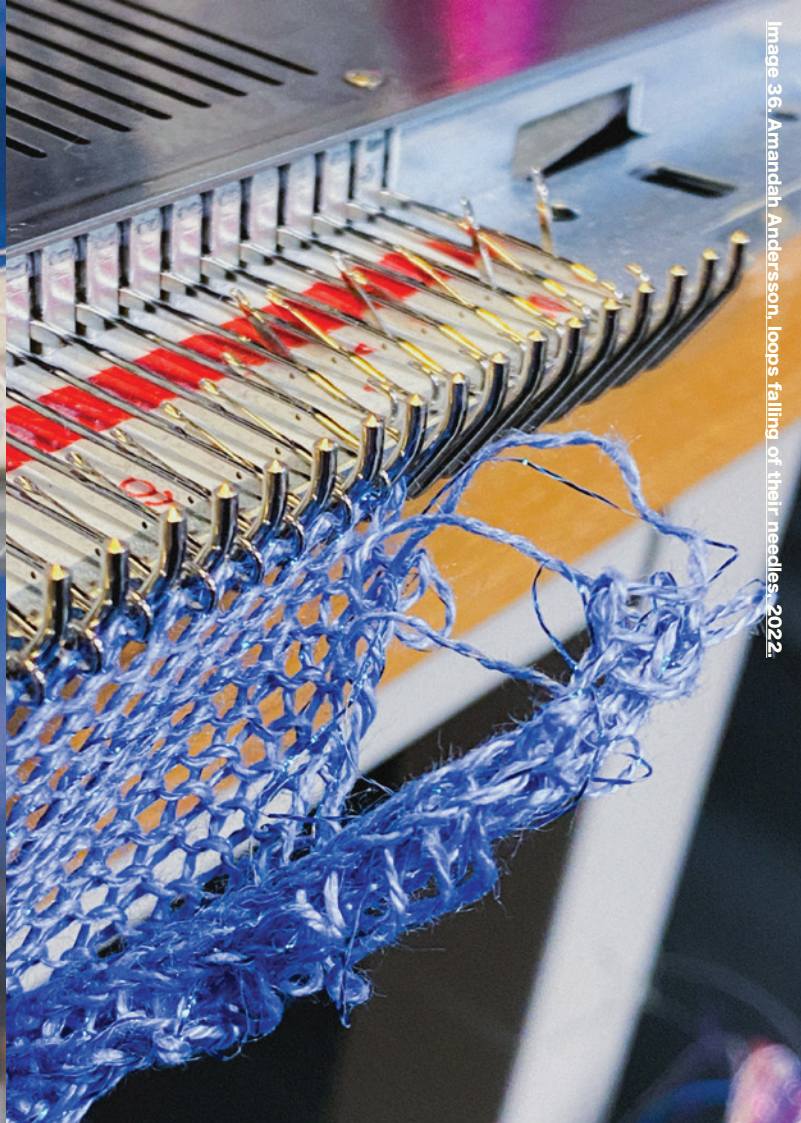


Image 36. Amandah Andersson, loops falling of their needles, 2022.



Image 37. Amandah Andersson, micro-perspective of loops and needles, 2022.



Image 38. Amandah Andersson, hanging up stitches to create a canal, 2022.



relationship to the machine through the process of unravelling mistakes and mishaps, and this is a much more time-consuming process than the actual knitting.

And is that not true for life itself? I think of that unravelling process as a metaphor of stress as a symptom of fast paced living and its power of paralyzing its victims into never stop running, never stop producing, never stop believing the imagined strive for constant efficiency, even when the concept of efficiency becomes ambiguous. If we just continue to run in this fast pace, even when the loops are falling off, our energy is lacking increasingly, the glaciers are melting, the reefs are dying, the biggest problem will not be the sum of it all. It will be the great procrastination each time we are not able to respond to what is internally and externally in front of us at this present moment.

By listening to the sound of how the thread is moving in the machine as well as how the machine is singing with the thread dancing inside of it, a growing possibility of diminishing the risk of loops falling off their hooks happens.

I want to believe that this is not just me trying to be in control, by diminishing critical events by planning for no mistakes. It is more about being brave enough to let go of control, to fully understand the machine and the crafting process, and by that let oneself flow into a state of symbiosis.

When I observe the knitwork I see a society of loops. Loops made of thread, thread made of fiber, fiber made of flax, lycra or shimmering plastic. I am imagining each loop as an individual being. For a knitwork, each loop is essential to create a strong net. If one loop falls it will affect the whole knitwork if it is not adjusted. This is because of the structure of each loop being connected by the one thread that *follows*<sup>22</sup> through the knitting. If we would imagine ourselves as loops in a knitwork we would be interconnected, and when one loop falls, we — as in the whole of a knit work — needs to slow down and take care of that broken loop. By *acting care and love*<sup>23</sup> we are being responsive to that specific event. Soft values create a strong net.

22 In the introduction of the book *Reassembling the Social - An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, sociologist Bruno Latour explains the origin of “the ever shrinking meaning of social” at page 6, which I think is connected to how the thread is following through a knitwork: “There is a clear etymological trend in successive variations of the ‘social’ word family (Strum and Latour 1987). It goes from the most general to the most superficial. The etymology of the word ‘social’ is also instructive. The root is *seq-, sequi* and the first meaning is ‘to follow’. The Latin *socius* denotes a companion, an associate. From the different languages, the historical genealogy of the word ‘social’ is construed first as following someone, then enrolling and allying, and lastly, having something in common.”

23 Fromm, Eric. “Kärlekens praxis”, in *Kärlekens Konst*, edited by Assar Asker, 120-148. Falkenbergs Tryckeri AB.





Image 39. Amandah Andersson, detail of threads reacting to UV-light, 2022.



## 3.2

# Symbiotic Relationships



In the search for the garden of fiber delights, the aesthetic of the knitworks and the blobs puts me in different directions for visual and conceptual references. The garden of fiber delights can grow in an immense variety of shapes. Though, it is inevitable for me to not jump down the rabbit hole of the structure of coral reefs and use it as a reference for understanding how symbiotic relationships might be construed.

To fully understand it, I ask myself what the word *symbiosis*<sup>24</sup> really means. In the doc-

umentary *Chasing Corals*<sup>25</sup>, the PhD student Zackary Rago uses the explanation of the symbiotic relationship pointing toward the relation between an anemone and a clownfish, where he explains the symbiosis as “*two separate organisms that have adapted to each other and are now benefiting each other.*” I am putting my mind in an elastic state of imagination and applying that definition of symbiosis to my own experience of how I relate to the knitting machine.

In an interview with Joachim Granit, creative leader for Färgfabriken in Stockholm and the exhibition *Symbiosis*, Joachim explains

24 The definition of symbiosis is formulated as a “*lasting coexistence between different types of organisms*”, Nationalencyklopedin, symbiosis. <http://www.ne.se/konstfack.idm.oclc.org/uppslagsverk/encyklopedi/lång/symbios>, accessed 15 February 2022.

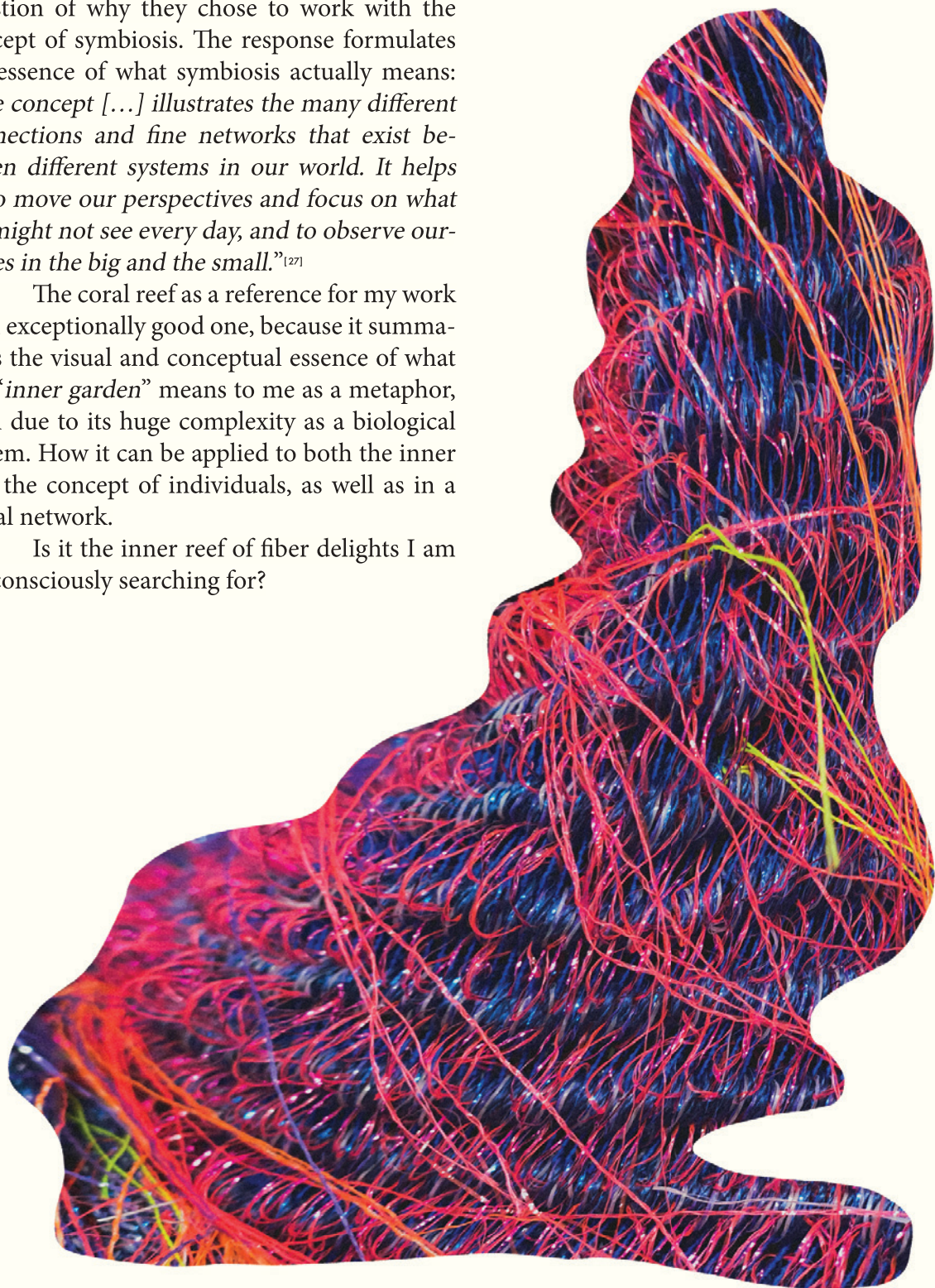
25 Jeff Orlowski, *Chasing Coral*, [documentary], Exposure Labs, 2017.



the opposite to symbiosis as *parasitism*<sup>[26]</sup>. In the end of the interview Joachim responding the question of why they chose to work with the concept of symbiosis. The response formulates the essence of what symbiosis actually means: “The concept [...] illustrates the many different connections and fine networks that exist between different systems in our world. It helps us to move our perspectives and focus on what we might not see every day, and to observe ourselves in the big and the small.”<sup>[27]</sup>

The coral reef as a reference for my work is an exceptionally good one, because it summarizes the visual and conceptual essence of what the “inner garden” means to me as a metaphor, even due to its huge complexity as a biological system. How it can be applied to both the inner self, the concept of individuals, as well as in a social network.

Is it the inner reef of fiber delights I am subconsciously searching for?



26 The definition of parasitism is “the fact that an organism uses resources at the direct expense of another organism”, Nationalencyklopedin, parasitism. [http://www.ne.se.konstfack.idm.oclc.org/uppslagsverk/encyklopedi/lang/parasitism](http://www.ne.se/konstfack.idm.oclc.org/uppslagsverk/encyklopedi/lang/parasitism), accessed 15 February 2022.

27 *Symbiosis*, folder #2, Stockholm: Färgfabriken, 2021, p. 6-7.





Image 42. Amandah Andersson, detail of knitwork changing on the machine, 2022.



Votes 24.11.10

Structures. Tactility. Haptic knowledge  
sensations. Presence. Bodily experi-  
ences. Material relationships.  
Emotional language.  
What makes a garden?



The Web of Loops  
One loop - One Word

A simple repetition  
calms the mind  
One, two, three  
Rows of Time  
One, two, three

A room  
of ~~no~~ ones  
own  
in a Garden  
Breathly Tree



## 4.0

# The Arrival



This project has truly been an adventure in the making of craft, in the aspect of deepen my understanding of how craft can support in a healing process. It has repeatedly visualized what stressful situations and decisions made by either joy or stress affects the outcome. It has also been a struggle to overcome important aspects of trying to be in control, let go of it, my own expectations on myself and how that creates stress within. Treasures of experiences has been gathered, and I will share some of them in this last chapter of arrival by conclusive reflections.

The starting point of the search for the garden of fiber delights happened in a time of personal crisis as well as when the covid pandemic where in full growth. There was an internal need within of handling a long-termed stress situation and get back to a state of feel some sort of con-

trol in life. This also put me in the resonating state of questioning the feeling of being in control, and what that means, both as an individual but also in the macro perspective of how we function in the world. The work has led me into epiphanies about how the be in the world, and how that can be applied to the artistic process and research, and vice versa. How the craft of textiles can manifest and visualize ways of being and not being in control, finding focus within an accelerating society and how I as a human being can reprogram my relationship with the machine, into a symbiotic state of being.

What the project taught me in the end was the importance of let go of control in one sense, while it also visualizes the power of mastering a craft to be able to go into creative flow and let that lead me forward in the artistic practice



Image 45. Amandah Andersson, sketches of sculptures, 2021.

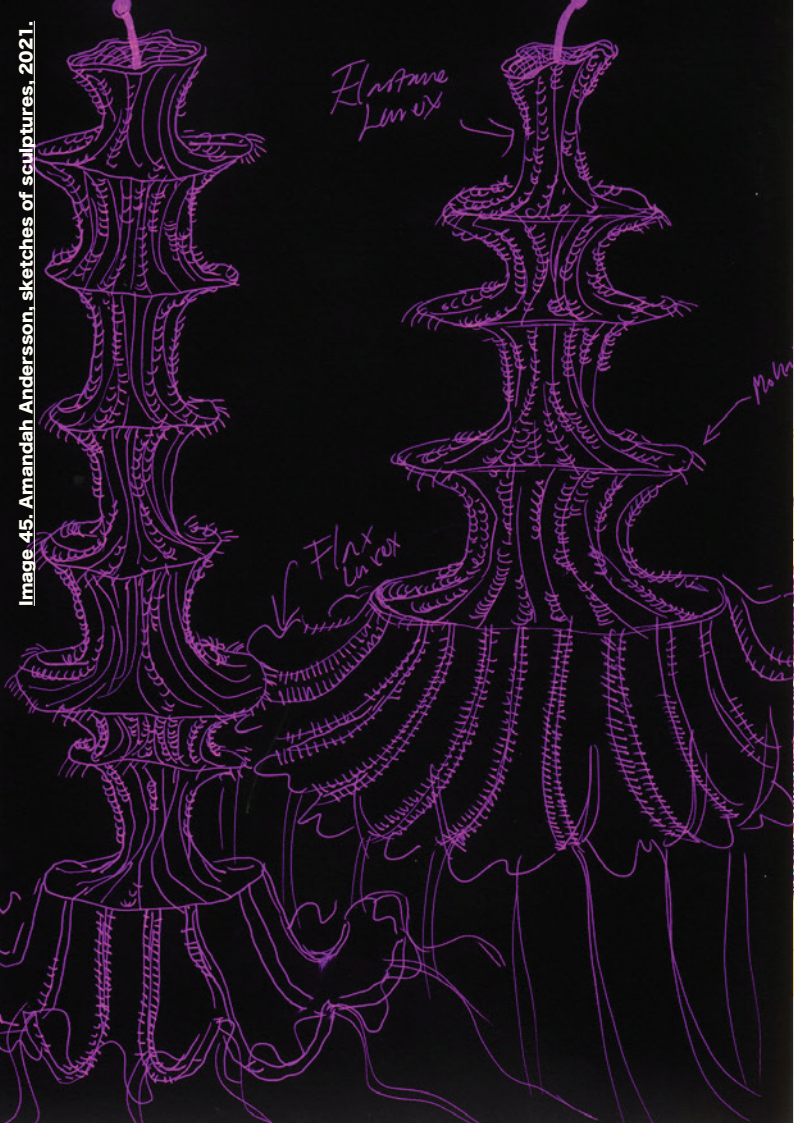


Image 46. Amandah Andersson, sketches of sculptures, 2021.



to get into the soul of the craft.  
The "core" = the "soul")  
Use poems.  
Written poems. } And automatic  
Visual poems. } writing.  
Get into  
flow.  
Repetition

to stretch  
a thought  
↓  
to stretch  
a fabric  
↓  
to stretch  
a thread  
↓  
to stretch  
a fiber  
↓



WHAT  
COMES  
NATURAL  
↓  
WHAT IS  
NATURAL  
↓  
WHAT  
IS  
FORCED

Image 47. Amandah Andersson, extract of sketchbook, 2021.

When is  
stretching  
imposed?  
Where is the  
healing part  
in stretching?

Image 48. Amandah Andersson, sketches of sculptures, 2022.





är en visuell, en materiell sensation.  
A FIBER SENSATION. A reminder  
Maybe a guide towards taking care  
of one self's inner garden.

Gemenskap, koncentration, färg,  
form, lekfullhet, meditation  
kom jag experimentera med  
"det estetiska rummet". Från  
mikro (fiber) till makro  
(samhällets nätverk, det  
kollektiva, det kollektiva)  
och som individ finns i  
närheten, i fiberen — i  
närheten, i fiberen. i utförda  
i lagandet, i anknäpningarna  
färdigheter.

---

En ritual, en guidad meditation  
en sens? Vill jag ritualisera,  
vill jag symbolisera, representera

---

A-fiber sensation. Skapa fröpp  
minnen, etablera dem i det  
inne. Bodily memories.



and exploration. The healing aspect of this project has been in relation to both time and the findings in recurring states of creative crises. The creative process in relation to the knitting machine taught me about the fragility of mind and focus, and the value of being present in each moment to be able to respond to what is happening in front of me, to reduce moments of stress. The adventure has taught me about daring going into the unknown, to dare follow flow and resonance. This has been visible each time I have been trying to create a sketch and then following this with the knitting machine. My mind puts a lot of thinking into the process, trying to construct the art pieces before they happen at the knitting machine. When I then realize that "this is not meant to be", since the imagined technique and idea not fit the actual reality, I have become disappointed and found myself in micro-crises within the creative process. Tough, these micro-crises have been the most productive moments in this project, since it has showed me new ways of doing things, new solutions, new ideas, which my mind would never think of, since it is not in the collaboration with the material. The magic happens when mind, material, hand and machine is connected. To establish that experience within myself has been a struggle, but each time my mind is proved wrong, this has been visible to me again, and I can reconnect to a state of flow and growing within the creative process.

I consider this project as the beginning of a continuing exploration of what a textile garden can be like, how it can grow through the making of craft and what kind of questions regarding interpersonal, societal, and environmental healing can arise from the project. This is also a way for me to shape new connections for collaborations with people from other professions. One example is the collaboration with light artist Olle Bjerckås. This collaboration has been based on playfulness and to explore how light can be integrated into the textile sculptures.

For the spring exhibition at Konstfack I am planning to put the garden of fiber delights into a dark room and use light spots and sources

of UV-light to create a magical experience, where I connect the poem of the seed of light growing from the time of darkness. The garden will be attached to the ceiling and be experienced as a flying sculpture, constructed and connected out of smaller pieces, with small scale sculptures and blobs in combination with bigger knitworks. When the installation is finished, I will start to elaborate how this could be a space for dialogues about healing processes.

Other collaborations for the future could be based on the following questions: What would happen in a collaboration with a biologist? How can I make the knitworks even bigger, by using industry? How could textile sculptures act as a support in a healing process, in collaboration with an art therapist for example? Relevant ideas that I want to take further is how I can implement my healing experiences into a more collaborative practice, including workshops and performances. I also would like to connect my textile practice to the development of recycled plastic from the oceans and put light of the healing of our oceans and especially coral reefs, through the textile sculptures.

This project does not end here at Konstfack. I consider this project as a seed of what to come, a prototype for the continuing of my artistic practice. Due to external events and the on-going life outside the art context, I have not had the time to source and develop all the kind of ideas that have come up during the project. Though, I need to find acceptance and peace regarding this and let my view be connected to the future.

The purple portal opens, when the now is near. Which can be understood as when a present state of body and mind is prioritised, magic may appear.





Image 50. Amandah Andersson, documentation of integrated LED-lights, 2022.

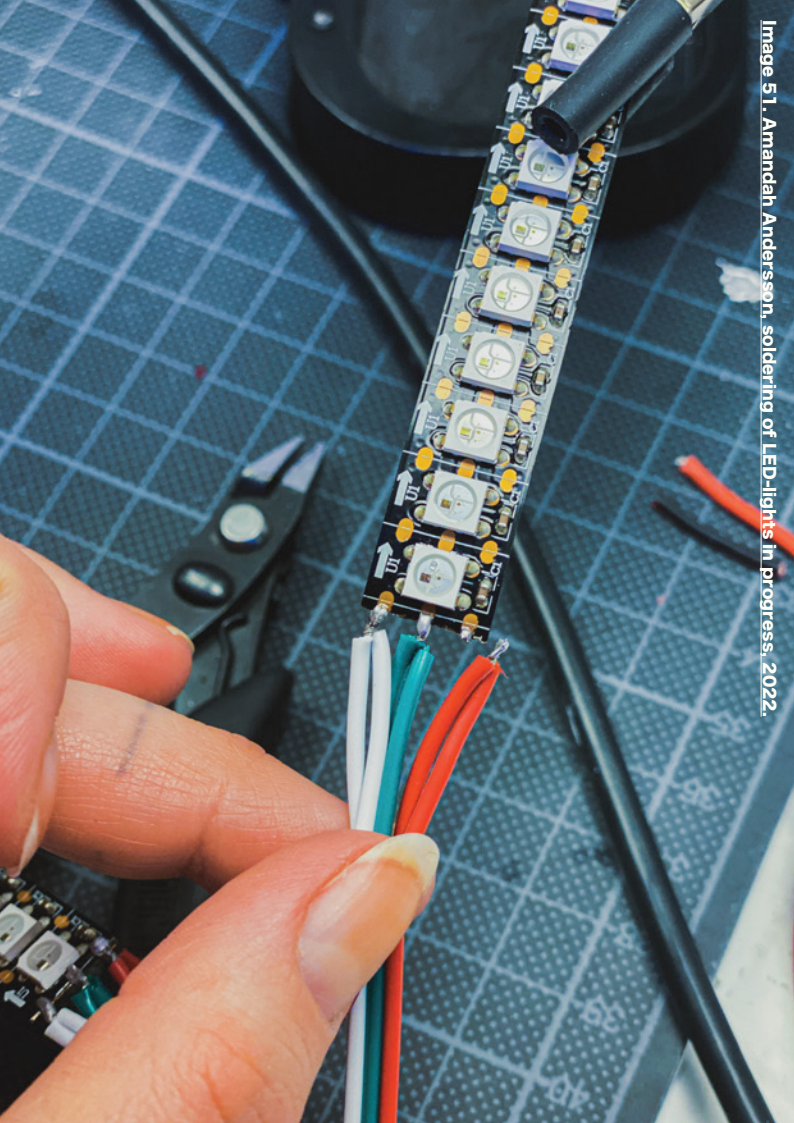


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Image 52. Amandah Andersson, sculptures in progress, 2022.



Image 53. Amandah Andersson, experiment with light, 2021.



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# **Appendix**