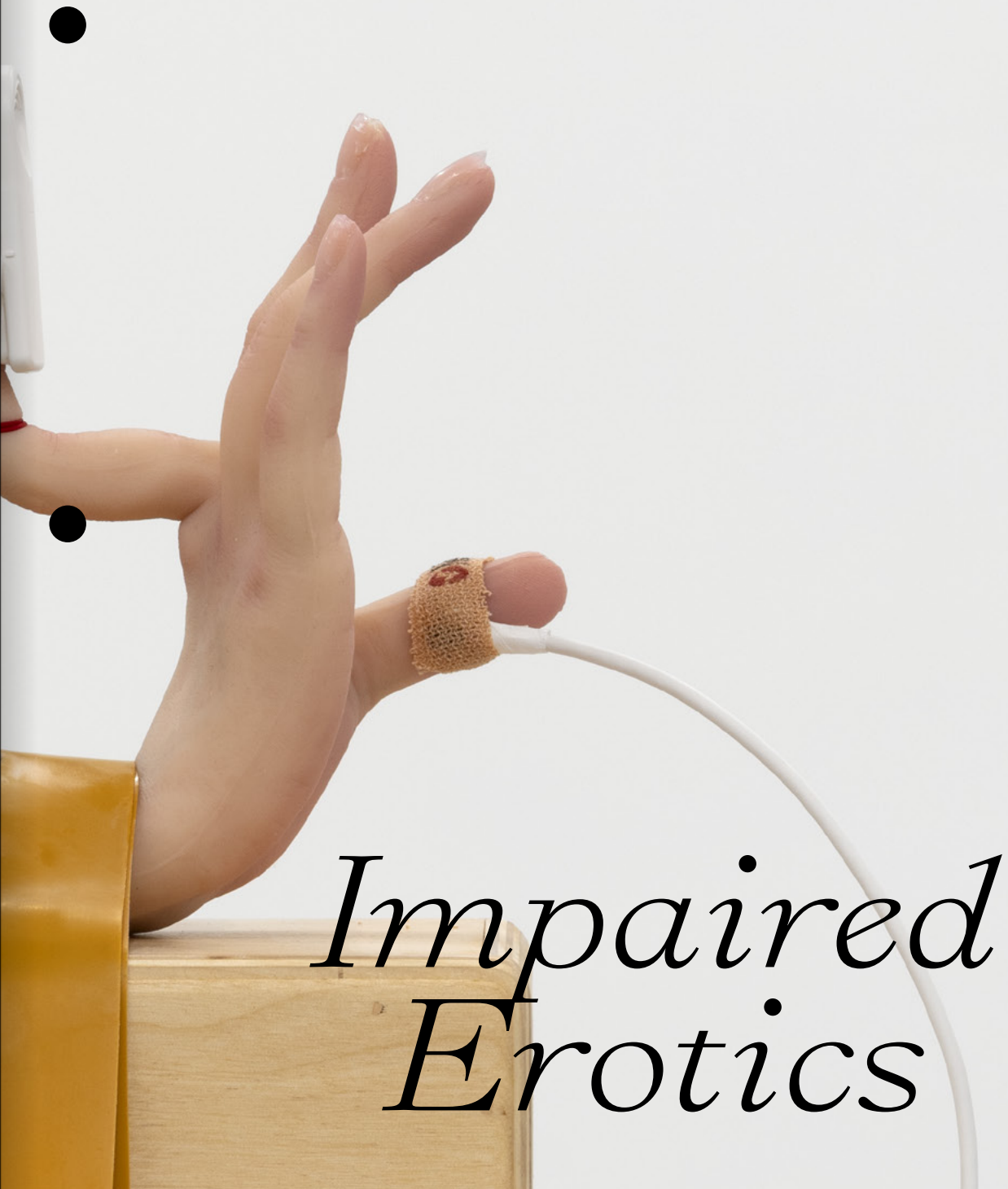


# Panteha Abareshi



*Impaired  
Erotics*



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Panteha Abareshi  
*Impaired Erotics*

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O-OVERGADEN  
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# INTRODUCTION

It is a great pleasure to introduce this publication, a companion to the exhibition *Impaired Erotics* by Panteha Abareshi at O—Overgaden. Since 2021, O—Overgaden has, with the generous support of the Augustinus Foundation, published a monographic series in conjunction with our large-scale in-house exhibitions, aiming at expanding the conversations around each show and producing new, offspring material. In this case, Panteha Abareshi has contributed a text on the Sick/Disabled or “Crip” body as a fetishized object, while the publication also includes an essay about art critique as auto-erotic reflection by researcher and art critic Frida Sandström.

In addition to thanking the writers for their contributions, the O—Overgaden team for their remarkable effort in connection with the exhibition, a warm thank you must go to fanfare, our graphic designers, and editor Anne Kølback Iversen for their exceptional work with this publication. Last, but not least, special thanks to the artist, Panteha, for so generously sharing their research and practices with all of us, both through the development of their exhibition and this publication.

In arresting sculptural gestures, the American artist Panteha Abareshi (b. 1999, they/them) employs the experience of living in a chronically ill and disabled body, and its associated stigma.

From their position as a wheelchair user living with an incurable blood disease, Abareshi exposes how the sick body is also one of continuous (medical) observation—and thus objectification. In their new series of sculptural works, created specifically for O—Overgaden, Abareshi, in their own words, unapologetically unfolds “the collision of violence and tenderness in caregiving to the sick body.”

Through braces, belts, straps, and medical tubing, the support and treatment of the body is made visible as a jarring domain of restraint and domination.

In brief, Abareshi points to how caregiving, whether in the hospital or the home, can itself contain violence; how systemic, societal “help” also cages and disciplines the sick or disabled body, relegating it to a position of obligatory gratitude and servility, rendering it disempowered in its medicalization and care.

Through elements such as leg-spreading orthoses or a gaping mouth mechanically forced open, *Impaired Erotics* questions the complex dynamics within caregiving, including implications of domination and submission, towards a taboo fetishization of the disabled body. The installations explore eroticism and pleasure around the disabled subject, drawing critically and aesthetically from “Crip Porn”—a highly charged visual material typically kept within hidden spaces.

The double-edged exhibition title, *Impaired Erotics*, on the one hand critically examines how the crip body is often misunderstood as one with a broken or “impaired” access to intimacy or “erotics.” On the other hand, Abareshi employs the title as a manifest insisting on an *Impaired Erotics*—an erotics of the crip body beyond this stigma of inability.

The exhibition thus confronts the volatile vulnerability and dependency inherent to support structures—whether it be a mobility aid, clinical devices, or human care—casting light upon the different notions of violence that shapes the othering of the disabled body.

Rhea Dall,  
Director, June 2024

Panteha Abareshi (b. 1999, Montreal, CA) is an artist and scholar based in Los Angeles. Abareshi’s work has recently been shown in solo and group exhibitions at venues including Kunsthall Trondheim (2023); MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt (2022); Kunsthau Zürich (2022); and Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery (2021).

# THE SICK/ DISABLED BODY

Panteha Abareshi

The Sick/Disabled body is allowed to live and exist only as a sum of its parts, each part wholly hyper-examined and labeled on the claustrophobic spectrum of decrepitness. Each part of the disabled body lives separately; each part of the body its own hollow receptacle for the able-bodied gaze and the heavy weight of performing legibility. Each body part is treated as object, and each object carries with it an inane fetishism—a precious and potentially charged eroticism that speaks volumes in the examination of how the othering of disability ties into the taboo fascinations, fetishes and fantasies (sexual and otherwise) of the able-bodied viewer as they relegate the disabled body to a permanent stage as simultaneous patient, subject, and performer.

An immense criticality must be exercised in considering the dynamics of power, control and “autonomy” when examining the Sick/Disabled body as performer and as willing artistic subject. Even when a performance is over, and the Sick/Disabled body exits the stage, even when an exhibition is concluded and the installations are dismantled, the Sick/Disabled body is not allowed a moment’s rest from spectacle. It is within this perpetual role as subject, and with an awareness of the relentless able-bodied examination, that the othered body has radicalized its own corporeality, and made cunning material of its experience. We must give continuous acknowledgment to the labor that the Sick/Disabled body must undergo in its autonomous representation, and make concerted and collective effort to validate new forms of looking, knowing, imaging, and discussing otherness. The Sick/Disabled body is making demands in its representation, and is begging difficult questions of its audience. Discomfort is immensely valuable in driving forward new and radical forms of thinking and knowing, for we must fundamentally disrupt the normative standards of Sick/Disabled corporeality, and continue that disruption in order to create and hold space for the bodies that have long been exiled to unknowable, invisible spaces.

It is within these unknowable, invisible spaces that the disabled body is *cared for*, whether it be a medical space and the administration of medicalized care, or a space such as the domicile, where caregiving is undertaken more intimately. There is a potent hierarchy of power within caregiving, wherein the disabled body is made a placid, docile thing.

Normative, ableist perceptions of the sick body house it perpetually within the medicalized space, typically leaving little space for a more nuanced and expansive perception of where a body that requires care can rest.

As the sick, disabled body is brought out of the medical space and into the domestic, the dynamics of care between the care “giver” and care “receiver” are complicated. Indeed, the systems of power, control, and violence that exist inherently within the handling of the chronically sick and disabled body that go largely unseen and unspoken is the manner in which the Sick/Disabled body is subdued as a method of care. The able-bodied caregiver is understood to be bearing a great and unfathomable burden, and the notion of care itself is so painfully tormented, as the Sick/Disabled body must fight tirelessly to grasp onto corporeal autonomy, and against the passive, often subconscious dehumanization that stems from able-bodied resentment of those broken, mutilated subjects who require help and external intervention in their existence. The domestic space is one associated with warmth, safety and comfort, all of which are seen to be perverted and marred by the augmentations to the home that are made to accommodate the sick and disabled body. There is a sterility that trails after the sick thing, following it from the hospital into its own bed, seeping from the oxygen cannula, leeching into the home, from the alcohol swabs and sharps containers nestled on beside tables. The caregiver is understood to be, for all intents and purposes, the disabled body’s *handler*, as the necessity for help, and for care, is equated to infantilizing disempowerment, and a marking of the Sick/Disabled subject as a fundamentally incapable *thing*. The Sick/Disabled body becomes a passive object, as able-bodied individuals will defer to the caregiver in situations spanning all social calibers, as though the Sick/Disabled subject is a dog, or small child, or invalid incapable of speaking for itself. The power dynamic between the caregiver and the Sick/Disabled body is one that falls into a stark imbalance, and can only be brought closer to a balanced state through a concerted and intentional resistance of the normative systems of control that would demand a passive submission, silence, and a complete surrender of corporeal autonomy.

Indeed, the caregiver is expected to exercise complete corporeal command and control over their Sick/Disabled charge, because any able-bodied individual, regardless of their relationship to the Sick/Disabled subject, is understood to have indisputable corporeal authority simply because they are more able. In moments when the Sick/Disabled body takes up more physical or emotional space, and thus encroaches upon the comfort of the able-bodied populous, anxious and expectant looks are cast upon the caregiver, with silent urges to handle the body which is so systemically disallowed from existing wholly and boldly and unabashedly as a cripple.

This projection of what caregiving *should* look like, and this ableist construction of what caregiving entails, eclipses the space for the incredibly necessary representation of the complex nuances of care. Normative notions of human intimacy rely upon a simple ternary of platonic,<sup>1</sup> romantic, and sexual, where any relationship can be any combination of the three. But there is an unspoken and largely unknown fourth form of intimacy, which is embodied in the care-giver/care-receiver relationship. The Sick/Disabled subject and those involved in their care are thus privy to a quaternary of intimacy, wherein caregiving joins the normative mix and serves as a wholly unique dynamic that can stand alone, or fall into complex combination with the other prescribed forms of intimacy.

It is imperative that caregiving is understood as wholly unique in its intimacy, because it is such a deeply layered form of exchange, and calls for a physicality and trust that demands extreme vulnerability, and yet can, and very often is, independent of any romantic or sexual intimacy.

The societal taboos that remain around the notions of requiring help to carry out basic bodily functions, or “routine” acts of hygiene, brandish a great stigma, shame, and degradation upon Sick/Disabled bodies. Caregiving is, like most of the Sick/Disabled experience, relegated to the most private of spaces: it is in the hospital room, it is in the domicile behind drawn curtains, it is in the accessible toilet with door locked that the dynamic unfolds, and so much is lost to the shadows. The Sick/Disabled subject speaks an expanded language of intimacy, one which has a rich lexicon to articulate the myriad complexities that come with being helped, being handled, and being held. There is a sword that cuts upon the double edge of tenderness and violence, and a navigation of intimacy that encompasses a spectrum holding the deepest hurts, and the brightest pleasures, and this is so easily lost to the able body that, in its “privilege,” is precluded from knowing the language of intimacy that comes with a great succession of control, willingly or otherwise. When the intimacy of caregiving does fall under the able-bodied lens, it is like a petri dish under a powerful microscope, where taboo sprouts fervently like parasitic micro-organism. The ever-complex dynamics and exchanges within caregiving, and its intersections with the other forms of human intimacy, are violently collapsed. Instead, the prescribed imbalance of power, and the expectation for the hyper-objectification of the Sick/Disabled body, breeds fetishistic imaging which roots itself in the disempowerment and [s]exploitation of the Sick/Disabled body. The able-bodied perception of caregiving, and the innate fetishism within it, imbues caregiving as an act with the ever-privileged assertion that any *weak* and *vulnerable thing* must be used to do whatever those bodies that hold privilege and power over it desire.

Fetishism is charged in the duality of its gaze, as looking but not seeing, as using the subject to cover or deflect taboo desires, as indulging in and withholding from simultaneously.

The able-bodied viewers, as they cast their devouring, objectifying gaze upon the disabled subject, act as passive, violent scopophiles, rendering the Disabled Body an object before disassembling it and making it piecemeal.

It is a consumption that castrates, a form of looking that makes deft tool of the Disabled Object[body], unwittingly used as erotic prism in the reflection, deflection, and refraction of what the viewer cannot and will not confront in themselves. The Disabled Body as fetish object embodies the able-bodied fixation on perceived and projected absence: absence of ability, absence of corporeality, absence of agency. These are the subjects of the cripple’s castration. The Disabled Body represents all that is fundamentally unsafe about human corporeality, and while it also represents the universally inescapable reality of our fallibility and mortality, it acts as cavernous receptacle to contain these insecurities for the able-bodied viewer.

The idealized able body has been long established as the standard for *humanness*, and the Disabled Body’s fundamental inability to adhere to said standard holds it steadfast in this space of abject dehumanization and utilitarian objectification.

The Disabled Object[body] is of great fascination to the able-bodied observer, especially in its pursuits of *human* behaviors, as they are often met with knee-jerk reactions of shock and repulsion. The able-bodied observer of the Disabled Object[body] is all too quick to voice their disgust, but would never dare look away—and Freud’s suggestion of disgust masking a fervently repressed desire rings with piercing clarity in the examination of this inter-abled dynamic.<sup>2</sup>

The Disabled Body is simultaneously castrated and unsexed, while being hyper-sexualized and shaped non-consensually into an erotic object as it is flayed and splayed under the able-bodied scrutiny that follows it into even the most private of spaces.

Indeed, the Disabled Object[body] is not awarded the right to privacy, as it is expected to ceaselessly and tirelessly perform coded significations of comfortable legibility, using a visual lexicon that eclipses a majority of the disabled population. Inherent and degrading sexualization is automatically inserted into the act of *looking* when the Disabled Object[body] is serving as subject to able-bodied viewer.

There is an innately human instinct to sexualize what we find most vulnerable, to identify the thing we perceive as the “weakest,” and to discern how best to use it. Indeed, there is an overwhelming abundance of vulnerability in the way that we examine the Disabled Object[body], and specifically as it is essentialized as something that fundamentally *cannot*—returning to the projected perception of absence.

Not only is the Object[body] simply *dis*-abled, but intrinsically *un*-able to function normatively.

Societal understanding and definition of the Disabled Object[body] hinges upon this perceived absence of ability: the Disabled Object[body] *cannot* take care of itself, it *cannot* walk, *cannot* move, *cannot* feed itself, *cannot* bathe, *cannot* communicate, and *cannot* function with romantic or sexual autonomy in their desires (if they are even allowed any). The Disabled Object[body] as an “invalid object” is reinforced in its representations, its rampant use as metaphor, and through the language in our highly limited lexicon of [in]ability.

This immediate and ruthlessly nuance-less castration of any individual that fails to adhere to able-bodied standards, and/or requires care, illustrates the abounding stigma around vulnerability and inability, as well as the violent gendering inserted into dynamics of care and ability. Inability is feminized as a means of degradation, and this feminization of inability invites, again, an inherent, predatory sexualization.

Freud’s theory of fetishism articulate the critical moment in which the fetish is detached from the individual, and becomes the sole sexual focus.<sup>3</sup> Herein lies an important elucidation on the collapsing of the disabled subject into fetish object, as the able-bodied scopophilic obsession with the disabled body has reduced it to the confines of the mere specimen. Splayed and pinned in a proverbially entomological manner, the disabled body is unable to escape a perpetual voyeurism.

There is a poignant link between the erotics of this voyeurism and the essential nature of the *subject* as an *object*. A hierarchy of power exists unspoken in even the most passive of able-bodied gazes, and the dynamic of object fetishism within this scopophilic *looking* provides crucial contextualization to the mechanics of powerlessness in how the Disabled Body is fundamentally seen, understood, and represented.

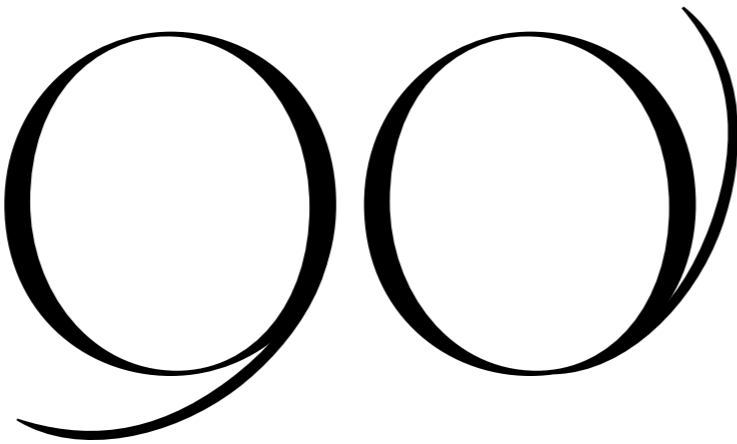
The Disabled Body is, in all manners of its representation and discussion, taboo. As Freud asserts, the shroud of obscurity, “the force which opposes scopophilia, but which may be overridden by it (in a manner parallel to what we have previously seen in the case of disgust), is *shame*.”<sup>4</sup>

Julia Kristeva defines the abject as “what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.”<sup>5</sup> Indeed, any earnest examination of the Disabled Body would reveal the immense complexity to its otherness, and an inability to adhere to the flattening expectations and regulations placed so staunchly upon its existence.

*Impaired Erotics* presents raw representations and iterations of the Disabled Body as evoked through disruptive channels, taken to its parts and re-assembled in the form of the Invalid Object. The Disabled Body as Invalid Object refuses definition, and slips out from beneath it with confounding ease, instead begging for the viewer to step over the threshold of the taboos that bring to the surface their most human fears.

*Impaired Erotics* explores the autonomies of the Disabled Object[body], and the ways in which pleasure functions outside the realm of the able-bodied norm. From the non-sexual erotic to the explicitly pornographic, the Impaired, Disabled Object[body] is earnestly imaged and examined, from the perspective of an artist whose illness and disability serve as both subject and critical catalyst for their artistic practice.

The exhibition brings forth a perspective that aims to pry open and shed light upon what we shrink away from discussing around the bodies we deem to be the least valid, the least desirable, the least whole. What does autonomy look like for the Disabled Body? What does consent look like for the body that is served up as banquet meal for the hungry eyes of those privileged above it? When cast into a space of nebulous corporeal definition, what can we be made to understand about those bodies, those Invalid Objects that fight against ferocious essentialization as they move through fundamentally hostile spaces? My installation-based work captures an exhausting building-up and breaking down of the body, again and again—making material of both fetish subject and fetishizing viewer as it chews up the Disabled.



1. Familial intimacy could be argued to stand as its own independent category but, within this discussion, it is folded into the platonic.

2. See Sigmund Freud, “Fragment of an Analysis of Hysteria,” [1901], in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. VII: A case of hysteria; Three essays on sexuality and other works (1901–1905)*, London: Hogarth Press, 1975, available at [sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Freud\\_SE\\_Dora\\_complete.pdf](https://sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Freud_SE_Dora_complete.pdf).

3. Sigmund Freud, “Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. VII*, p. 153f, [sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Freud\\_SE\\_Three\\_Essays\\_complete.pdf](https://sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Freud_SE_Three_Essays_complete.pdf).

4. Ibid., p. 157.

5. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay of Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez, New York: Columbia University Press, 1982, p. 4.

# EROTIC SELF- REFLECTIONS: SOME NOTES ON ART AS SEXUALITY

Frida Sandström

Rather than rendering recognizable bodies, abstraction stages relationships among forms and their contexts, allowing us to see differently the ways in which those relationships can unfold. That is, abstraction is about relations, and a queer investment in abstraction can be a way to allegorize social relations through a playing out of formal relations. Distinct forms of embodiment, deviating desires, and new ways of relating to bodies can be proposed through abstraction. Artists who turn to abstraction as a more open or apt way of subverting the “normal” (or a more pleasurable way of proposing its abandonment) all do so differently.<sup>1</sup>

What is the difference between sensing and thinking? The answer is the way that we produce difference itself. In short essay, I will speak of the ways in which the art critic and the spectator, the audience member and the everyday passerby, sense and relate. By proposing the critic as an object of desire, and the art object as the subject of that erotic encounter, I invite you into the theatricality of formalism. I take my starting point in the excerpt above by art historian David Gettsy. The quotation is found in a set of notes on “queer abstraction” from 2019, in which he describes the abstraction at work in the way we sense bodies—be they people or artworks.

The seemingly thin line between people and things is not only central to art but also to how capital relations are impregnating social life. These are the formal relations between subjects and objects with which we identify ourselves; but they are also producing social, sexual, and racial repression. The question is, how are these relations “played out” in art, as Gettsy puts it. This is where queer abstraction comes in. Through the eroticization of the abstract relations that form all our experiences, social reality is transformed into what Gettsy thinks of as “new ways of relating.” This process simply allows for new ways in which abstract objects—art and people—are “sensed,” he proposes. So, what is the consequence of that?

Well, the ways that we sense people and things are inherently related to what we think of them, and whether we think with or against them.

By understanding the critique of art as a sensual practice, we join the history of sabotage, perversion, and subversion of the presupposed relations between artworks and people. As American-German artist Adrian Piper has shown over decades, the encounter with art may in fact affect the ways in which we also encounter people. Most often, the line between the human body and the art object is very thin. As a result, the judgment of what is good or bad art can easily be transposed to the severe ways of distinguishing what is human. Put bluntly, the critique of art easily camouflages the biopolitics of modern life. Who is granted subjectivity and at whose cost? The so-called “subject-object” dialectics of modern thinking are at work in art institutions as well as in the legal structures of the nation state. All these contexts have a conceptualized relation between artist and spectator, student and teacher, police and citizen, according to which they are supposed to “play out” as subjects or objects within the bourgeois public sphere. This is formalism, broadly speaking.

As long as our life is modeled according to modern capitalism within and between nation states, we will have formalism. Formalism—understood as the social reality of a subject that emerges with and through a body—is thus no choice, but rather a situation that we are all in. I would not be able to write this text without it. Only through its own means can formalism be turned on its head. This was essentially the point in Marx’s social critique of value in the late 19th century, which was developed further in German critical theorist Theodor W. Adorno’s concept of the modern artwork, one century later. It is, too, what Gettsy underscores with his proposal for a queer critique of the modern concept of sexuality. Capital, art, race, gender, and sexuality are all played out in the way that we can either accept the game, or rather, turn formalism against itself. As critical theorist Fumi Okiji made clear a few years ago, the critique of modern life is seldom a choice, but rather a need for survival if one lives under racial or sexual repression.<sup>2</sup> Taking cue from her proposal, we may assume that such detournement is a capacity that we all have, as differently racialized and sexualized subjects, artists or spectators, citizen or surplus population. We simply embody the experience of modern life differently. This difference is central to our practice of social critique. What Gettsy proposes in his work on the subject is to make explicit how queer formalism is a central yet overseen capacity in the 20th-century history of art, and especially in the case of minimalist and conceptual works of art, which contemporary art still feeds from enormously.

I want to discuss how an auto-erotic sensation of social and sexual difference can develop as a social critique and, furthermore, as a refusal toward the forms in which people and things are distinguished. Let's have a look at the ways in which such refusal allows for an erotic sensibility with and against the social abstractions that they "speak through." Taking cue from the words of literary scholar Amy De'Ath's words, auto-eroticism allows us to

*feel* the economics of the moment in a more abstract, expansive sense than we might do in, say, our more immediate irritation at an expensive grocery bill, or our sense of anxiety and precarity in a temporary contract job.<sup>3</sup>

Importantly, the feeling of and thinking through social and sexual abstractions "resist representation," De'Ath reminds us.<sup>4</sup> This is our first cue to queer abstract thinking. In art historian Leo Steinberg's words from 1975, the formal relations through which art objects are represented allow the spectator to transgress the preconceived limits of identification and imagine otherwise. In this sense, an erotic encounter can liberate the artwork from the way it is exposed. Steinberg describes the encounter with art in the following way:

Not art but objects, and these objects touted as things beyond art, though they were conceived with legitimate esthetic objective: to keep the thing made unarticulated, its internal relations so minimized that nothing remains but an immediate relation to its external environment.<sup>5</sup>

Steinberg's argument is central to our discussion. He writes how the immediate, that is non-formalized relation to that which is "external" to, is given space by formalism itself. If we understand this externality as an unarticulated experience, it can take whichever form it wants in the imagination of the spectator.

I believe that the "inarticulation" of objects that Steinberg points toward is a question of immanence that differs largely from what post-war formalist Clement Greenberg famously coined as the essentialist idea of immanence in painting in the early 1960s.<sup>6</sup> Steinberg's inarticulation diverts from Greenberg's purism in the way that difference is not only *content* as in identity, but also *form*, which refuses specific identifications. In a Marxian vocabulary, the sensation of this inarticulate difference, which diverts from essentialist forms of identification, is a question of human nature expressed in praxis.<sup>7</sup> Rather than the unfortunate naturalism of Marx's original model,<sup>8</sup> I draw upon Queer and Transgender Marxism from the 21st century.<sup>9</sup> Through this theoretical framework we can understand sensibility as an erotic, social, and non-procreative category. This makes it possible to think difference aesthetically without stabilizing a particular kind of art or genre. As art historian T. J. Clark wrote in 1991, "one thing the myth of the end of art made possible was the maintenance of some

kind of difference between art's sensuous immediacy and that of other (stronger) claimants to the same power."<sup>10</sup> The difference that he points toward is essentially the formal abstractions through which we sense the objects that we conceptualize as art. As already discussed above, this is also the case for the way in which we define sexuality, race, gender, value, and other social categories.

Clark, Steinberg, and Gettsy are far from the only social art historians to have critically investigated the role of sexuality in our encounter with art and people. A central reference in this context is Steinberg's seminal essay "Other Criteria," as referred to above. In this text from 1975, Steinberg famously states that "the critic interested in a novel manifestation holds his criteria and taste in reverse."<sup>11</sup> This means that the critic is no longer searching for the fulfilment of predefined criteria for aesthetic beauty that is sensed in the subject of the critic solely—which, essentially, is what German Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant famously proclaimed in 1790, and which the 20th-century founders of formalism took onwards into the late modern art world market.<sup>12</sup> By holding these criteria "in reverse" and, furthermore, turning them against themselves, the critic rather seeks to follow sensations that are already practiced as experiences in the form of the artwork itself. This approach fundamentally swaps the subject-object dialectics of artwork and critic and, instead, allows for an understanding of the work of art as a subject in relation to the subject of the critic.

Beyond or even before aesthetic criteria, the subjective forms in art and in critique—artists and spectators, objects and people—critically sense their own relations and sensations as if from the outside. This kind of formalism is what I speak of elsewhere as a collective practice of critique.<sup>15</sup> Central to such collective practice is that the critical judgment is replaced by collective reflection and, hence, *relation*. What Steinberg proposed in his essay is that the critic

suspends judgment until the work's intention has come into focus and his response to it is—in the literal sense of the word—sympathetic: not necessary to approve, but to *feel along with it* as with a thing that is like no other.<sup>14</sup>

I am interested in the way that the critic who *feels along* with a work of art also may sense the social impact of their own objectifying concepts. This essentially socializes the individualizing aspect of critical practice and feeds from social critique throughout the last two centuries. As made clear by literary scholars and philosophers such as David Lloyd and Stella Sandford, concepts only accumulate particularity and distinguish difference. Importantly, aesthetic concepts and categories are used to define gender, sexuality, race, value, and so on. What Steinberg's and Gettsy's thinking allows for is an understanding of the way in which an abstract object of art allows for a *sensation* of such formal abstraction. Through this collective sensation, the *detournement* is in our hands.

To feel along with social abstraction as an aesthetic abstraction allows the critic to sense the consequences of their own concepts employed in aesthetic judgments. If I happen to be that critic, which I essentially am as a modern subject and spectator of art and legal theatricality, it simply allows me to *sense my own abstractions* through which they shape my subjectivity by means of distinguishing myself from others. It can be a matter of how I distinguish myself as citizen, as gender, or as employee, to mention only a few categories. To critically sense the way in which I distinguish myself from others makes me, as a critic, an abstract object under and against my own objective judgment—just like the object of art in the encounter with a spectator. Such a process, I believe, short-circuits the critical transcendence of aesthetic subjectivity as presupposed by art-critical judgments still at work these days. These judgments are at work in social and legal structures, as well as in the context of art.<sup>15</sup> More humbly, Steinberg describes this process as *a suspension* of the aesthetic judgment. The "suspended" judgment, I would add, is also *a suspension* that implies the erotic aspect of feeling along with an abstract object, and to imagine oneself through such abstraction, as many queer art critics did in the 1960s. Poet and art critic Frank O'Hara is one example; Jill Johnston and Douglas Crimp are two others whom I discuss elsewhere.<sup>16</sup>

In a television interview with artist David Smith in 1964, O'Hara provokes the question of gender in Smith's sculptures, which the artist was titling anthropomorphically with words such as "father," "son," "girl," and so on. In an in-depth analysis of the interview, Gettsy states that "the compulsion to assign gender to [Smith's] statues points to a larger problematic for the rendering of the abstract body in the post-war era."<sup>17</sup> Taking a cue from Steinberg's proposal to suspend such a formal judgment of sexual identity, a non-identified, non-binary abstract form is perceived beyond or before the assignments of art and gender alike. Such pre-conceptual form demands that the critic relates to the work differently than according to a binary logic of sexual procreation and aesthetic beauty.<sup>18</sup> This is what O'Hara does when he states the following in an essay on Smith published in ArtNews: "the best of the current sculptures didn't make me feel I wanted to have one, they made me feel *I wanted to be one*." Soon after, he writes a letter to Smith in which he clarifies the statement: "I want to be one of those sculptures."<sup>19</sup>

The desire of an art critic to be the abstract object in the hands of the artist indeed accelerates the erotic sensibility in the aesthetic abstraction of art and critique. In this case, such sensibility is personified not only in the artist's "personas" but also in O'Hara himself. This is a perfect example of queer formalism. Already in 1961, O'Hara described Smith's artworks in the following way:

Unification is approached by inviting the eye to travel over the complicated surface exhaustively,

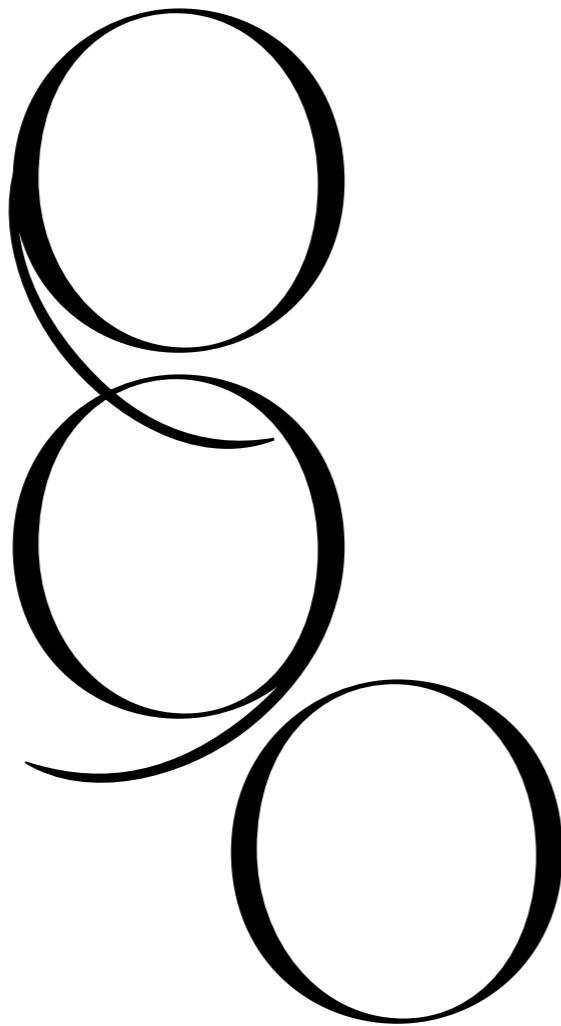
rather than inviting it to settle on the whole first and then explore details. It is the esthetic of culmination rather than of examination.<sup>20</sup>

The sensual travel of the eye across the abstract object in play up until the "aesthetic culmination" may also be understood as an erotic culmination, caused by the afore mentioned erotic-critical "suspension." I have already discussed how the erotic suspension in the sensation of an abstract object causes a "pause" in the critical judgment, as exemplified with the case of Smith and O'Hara. Yet, I would like to take this discussion even further and argue that this is also a suspension of capitalist abstraction. We can call it an "abstract hedonism." In the essay "Gender as Accumulation Strategy," poet and Marxist scholar Key Gabriel writes:

A transsexual hedonism recognizes that the signification of sexual difference mediates every relationship between people in the social world, including one's relation to oneself; it insists on embodiment as both the mediator of that social world and the enabling of agency towards and autonomy over desiring interventions into that process of mediation.<sup>21</sup>

In this paragraph, Gabriel argues that all social relations—in other words, abstractions—are mediated by sexual difference, which also operates internally to every individual. This is what I discuss elsewhere as a critique of the critiquing subject that is known to itself. Such a self-reflection is both self-referential and social.<sup>22</sup> In her text, Gabriel concludes with the precise point that such "double" critique both enables social abstraction and simultaneously subverts it. Importantly, it also subverts one's sensual and objective relation to oneself, Gabriel states. This allows us to argue that the feeling of any abstraction also implies the imagination of oneself-as-abstract, as Gabriel put it so clearly regarding the experience of sexual difference as transsexual. This is also the point of Queer Marxist scholar Kevin Floyd in his seminal book *The Reification of Desire* from 2009. In this book, Floyd describes the liberatory aspect in the eroticization of social alienation in the context of labor relations. Departing and diverting from this proposal, Gabriel's emphasis on the aesthetic quality of such transgressive, eroticizing practice allows us to understand *critical sensibility as erotic sensibility*. In this sensibility, the so called "auto-affectation" of the individual transcendent critic at work, since Kant's introduction of critique as a practice, is transformed into an auto-erotic sensation of oneself in relation to others. To understand how aesthetics and critique are social, we therefore need to take the long way around queer formalism. And, essentially, we need to do it together.

1. David Getsy, "Ten Theses on Queer Abstraction," in Jared Ledesma (ed.), *Queer Abstraction*, Grand Ave: Des Moines Art Center, 2019, pp. 65-75.
2. Fumi Okiji, *Jazz As Critique: Adorno and Black Expression Revisited*, Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2018, p. 19.
3. Amy De'Ath, "Unsociable Poetry: Antagonism and Abstraction in Contemporary Feminized Poetics," unpublished PhD dissertation in Philosophy, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, Canada, 2017, p. 77.
4. Ibid.
5. Leo Steinberg, *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art* [1972], Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007, p. 65.
6. Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in Francis Fascina and Charles Harrison (eds.), *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, London: Routledge, 1982, pp. 5-6.
7. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx and Engels Collected Works, Vol. 5, March 1845 - August 1844*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010, p. 296.
8. For a critical discussion regarding Marx's anthropology, see Etienne Balibar, "From Philosophical Anthropology to Social Ontology and Back: What to Do with Marx's Sixth Thesis on Feuerbach?" *Postmodern Culture*, vol. 22, no. 3, May 2012, [pomoculture.org/2015/06/10/from-philosophical-anthropology-to-social-ontology-and-back-what-to-do-with-marxs-sixth-thesis-on-feuerbach-2](http://pomoculture.org/2015/06/10/from-philosophical-anthropology-to-social-ontology-and-back-what-to-do-with-marxs-sixth-thesis-on-feuerbach-2).
9. See, for example, M.E. O'Brien, *Family Abolition Capitalism and the Communizing of Care*, London: Pluto Press, 2023; Jules Joanne Gleeson and Elle O'Rourke (eds.), *Transgender Marxism*, London: Pluto Press, 2021; Kevin Floyd, *The Reification of Desire Toward a Queer Marxism*, Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 2009; Peter Drucker, *Warped: Gay Normality and Queer Anti-Capitalism*, Leiden: Brill, 2015; Emma Heaney (ed.), *Feminism Against Cisness*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2024.
10. T.J. Clark, "In Defense of Abstract Expressionism," in Richard Pipes (ed.), *Reading Abstract Expressionism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991, p. 137.
11. Steinberg 2007, p. 63.
12. See Sam Rose, *Art and Form From Roger Fry to Global Modernism*, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2019.
13. Frida Sandström, "Carla Lonzi och krisens kritik 1969-1970," *Kultur & klasse*, vol. 52, no. 137, pp. 55-137, [doi.org/10.7146/kok.v52i137.145764](https://doi.org/10.7146/kok.v52i137.145764).
14. Steinberg 2007, p. 63.
15. Mikkel Bolt, James Day, Frida Sandström, Fredrik Svensk, "Introduktion," in David Lloyd, *Kunstkritikkens almene subjekt*, Copenhagen: Billedkunstskolens forlag, 2024.
16. Frida Sandström, "The Disintegration of Autonomy Jill Johnston's Anti-criticism," in Christine A. Payne and Jeremiah Morelock (eds.), *Feminism and the Early Frankfurt School*, Leiden: Brill, 2025, pp. 162-92.
17. David Getsy, *Abstract Bodies: Sixties Sculpture in the Expanded Field of Gender*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015, p. 44.
18. For a discussion of the reactionary or self-defensive critic, see Frida Sandström, "A Crisis of Autonomy. Critique of Art and Sexuality in 1974," in Solveig Daugaard, Cecilie Ullerup Schmidt, and Frederik Tygstrup (eds.) *Infrastructure Aesthetics*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024 (forthcoming).
19. Frank O'Hara, letter to David Smith, cited in Getsy 2015, p. 59.
20. Getsy 2015, p. 72; O'Hara, *Color of Steel*, 1961, p. 69.
21. Key Gabriel, "Two Senses of Gender Abolition: Gender as Accumulation Strategy," in Heaney 2024, p. 147.
22. Sandström 2025.



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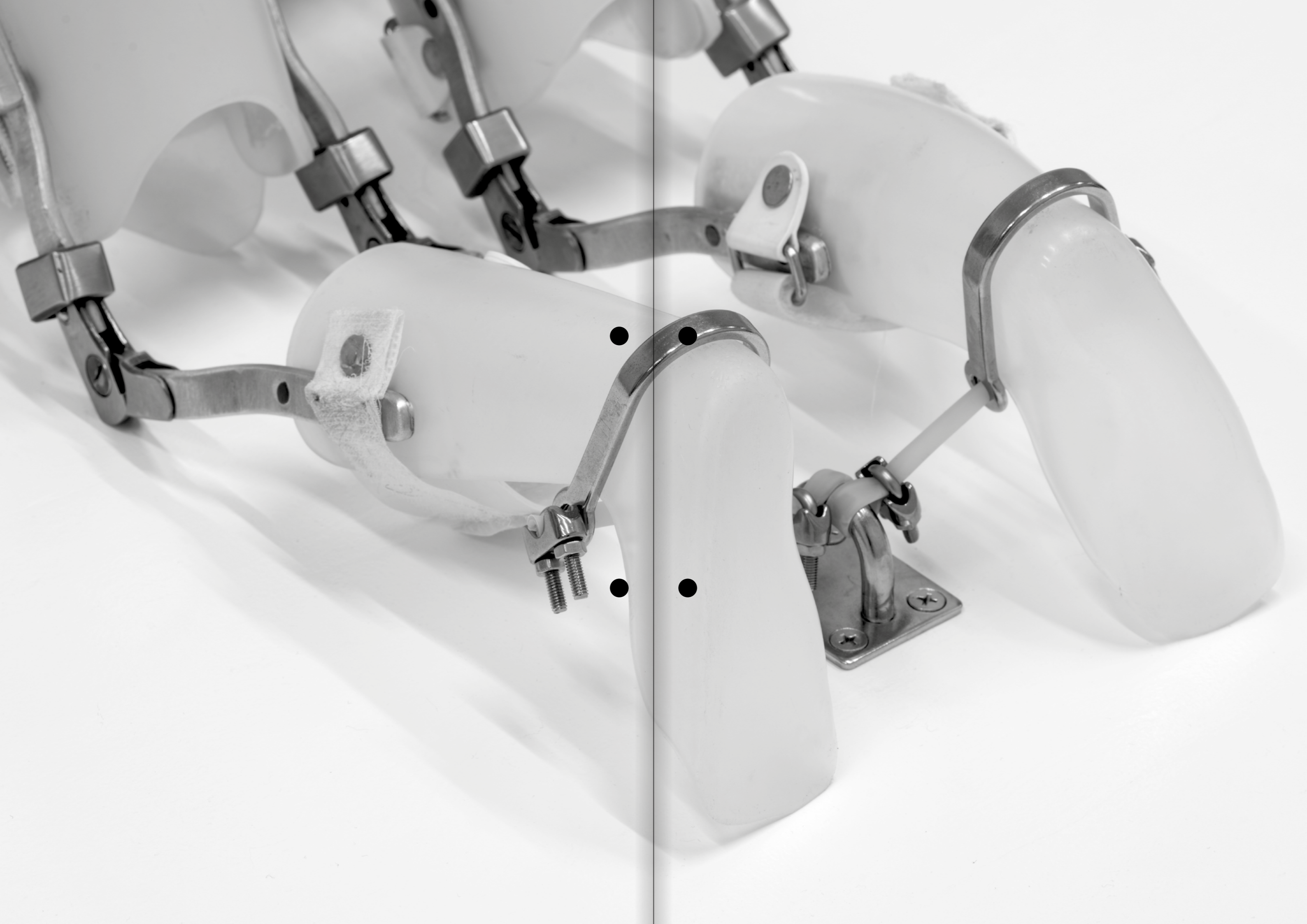
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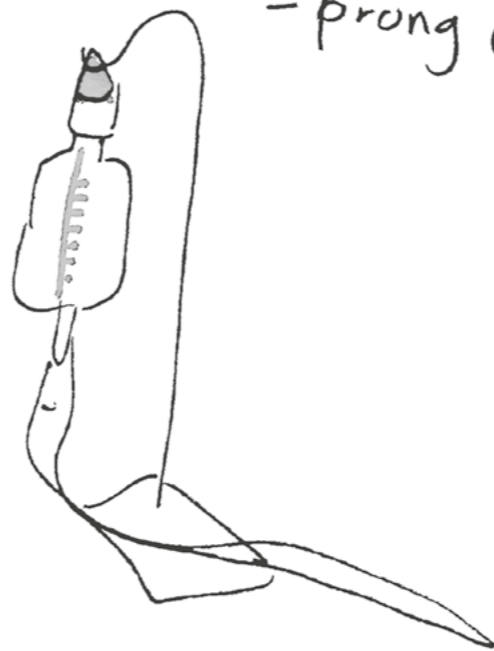
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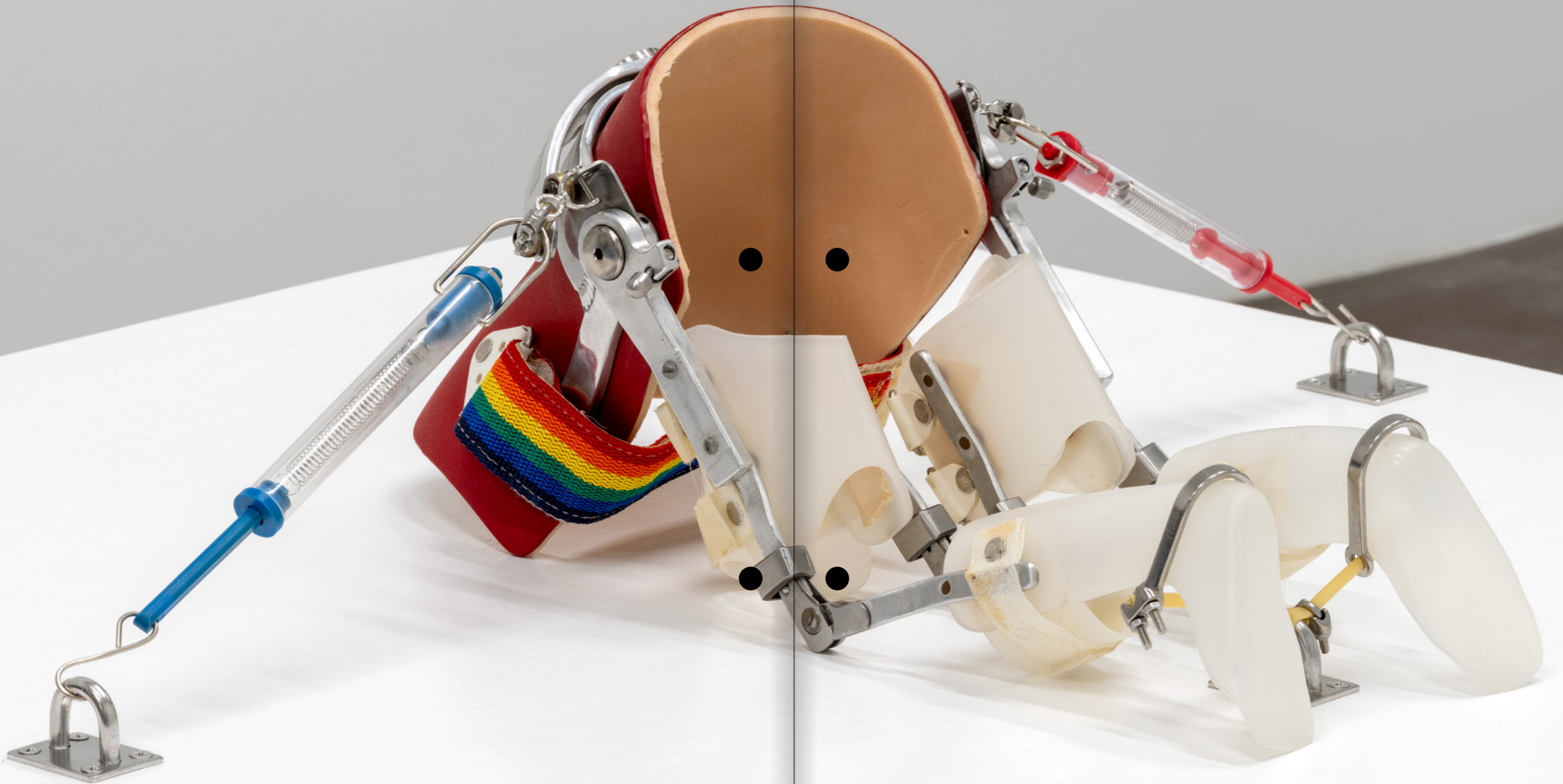
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- metal stand + hanging bottle
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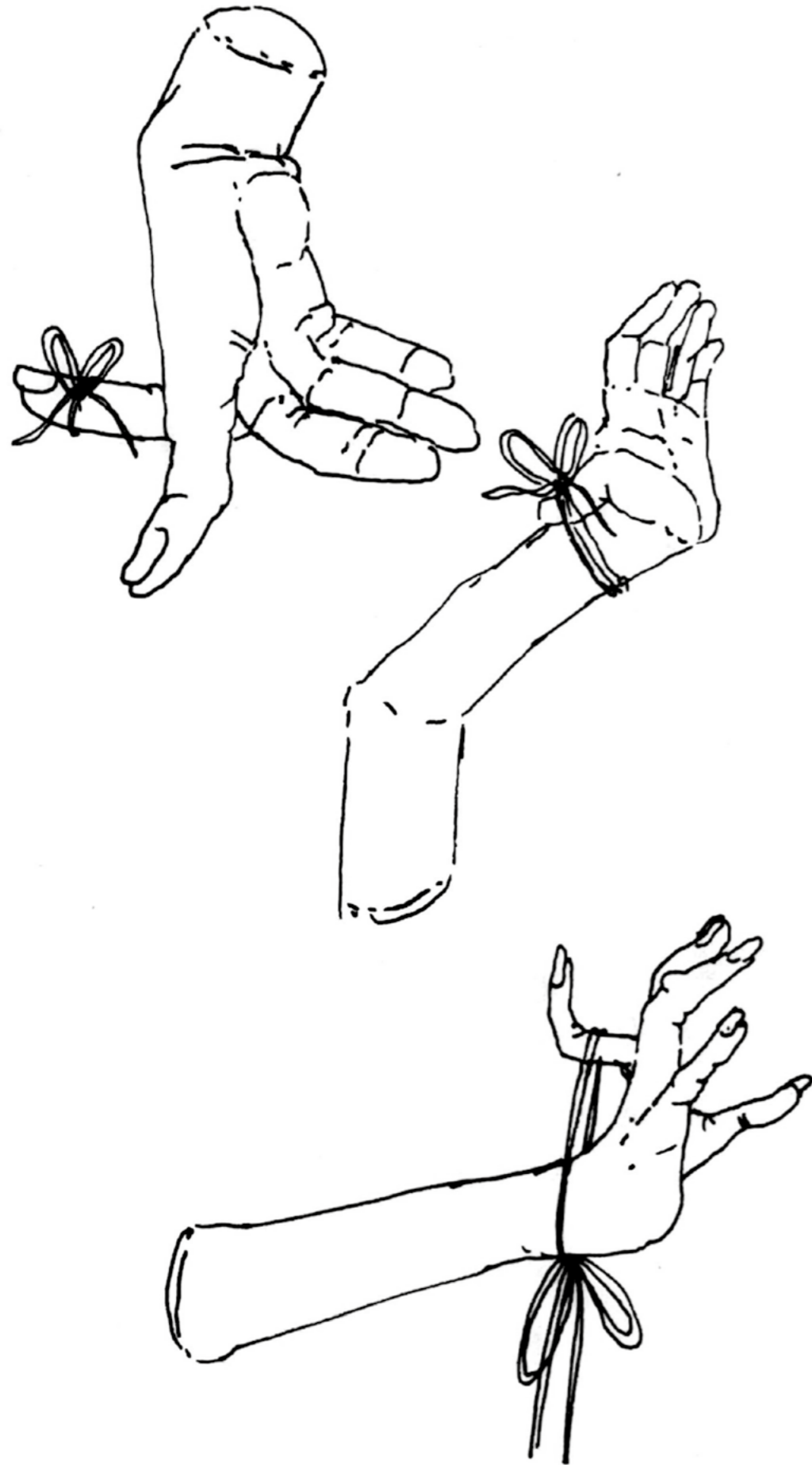


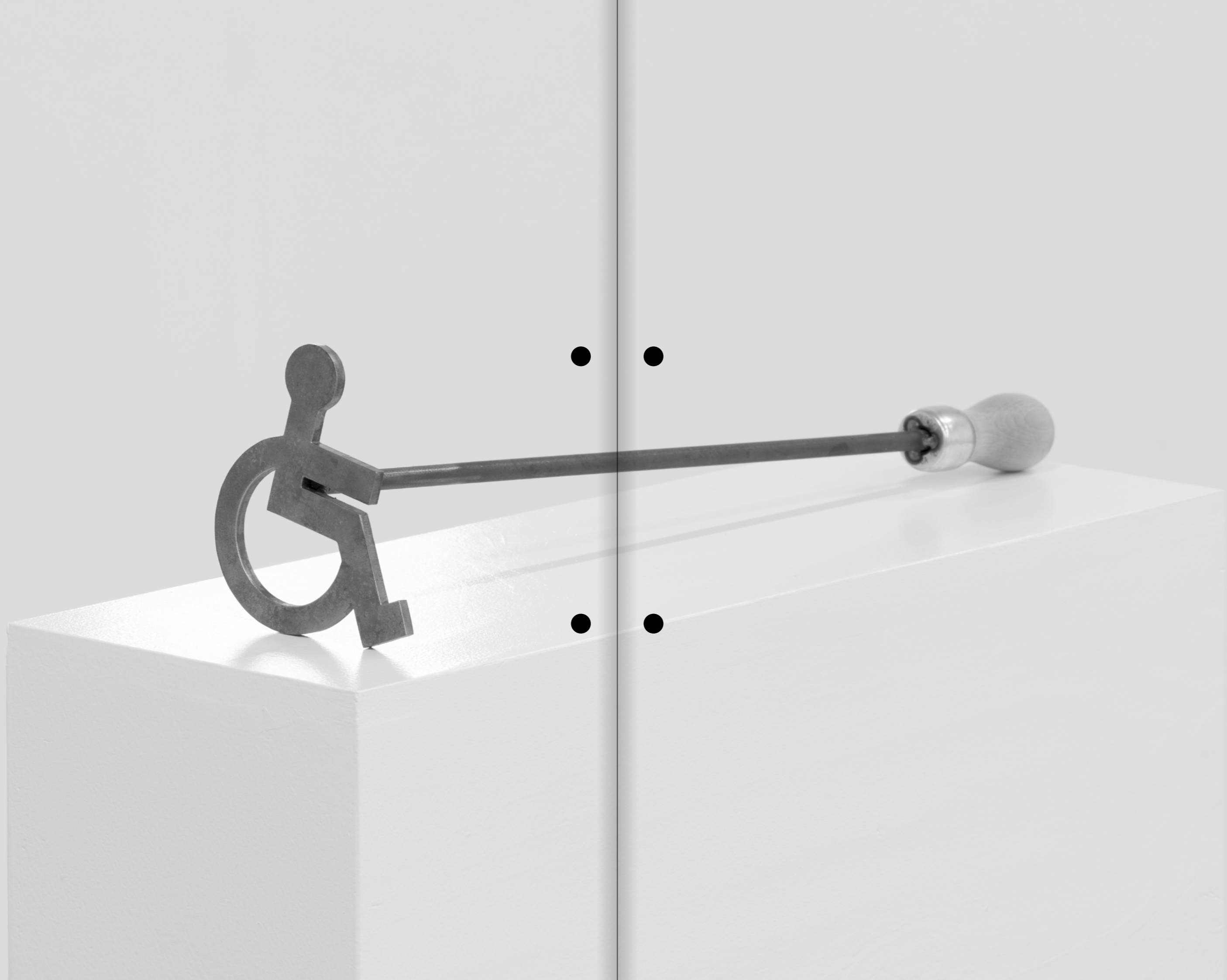






Aug 7 - CONTORTIONS.





At føle sig frem via social abstraktion som æstetisk abstraktion giver kritikeren mulighed for at mærke konsekvenserne af egen tænkning anvendt i æstetiske domme. Hvis jeg tilfældigvis er den kritiker, hvilket jeg grundlæggende er som moderne subjekt og kunstpublikum og tilskuer til juridisk teatralitet, tillader det mig simpelthen at *sansé mine egne abstraktioner*, som de former min subjektivitet ved at adskille mig fra andre. Det kan være et spørgsmål om, hvordan jeg forstår mig selv som borer, som køn eller som medarbejder, for blot at nævne et par kategorier. Kritisk at fornegne måder, hvorpå jeg adskiller mig fra andre, gør mig som kritiker til et abstrakt objekt under og imod min egen objektive vurdering – ligesom kunstobjektet i mødet med beskueren. En sådan proces, tror jeg, kortslutter den æstetiske subjektivitets transscendens, der stadig den dag i dag betvinger vores kunstneriske domme. Disse domme anvendes i sociale og juridiske strukturer såvel som inden for en kunstkontekst.<sup>15</sup> Mere beskedent beskriver Steinberg denne proces som en *suspendering* af den æstetiske dom. Den "suspenderede" dom, vil jeg tilføje, er også en *suspendering*, der omfatter det erotiske aspekt af at sansé et abstrakt objekt og at forestille sig sig selv gennem en sådan abstraktion – som mange queer kunstnerikere gjorde i 1960'erne. Digter og kunstneriker Frank O'Hara er et eksempel, det samme er Jill Johnston og Douglas Crimp, som jeg diskutere anderledes.<sup>16</sup>

I et TV-interview med David Smith i 1964

fremprovokerer O'Hara spørgsmålet om køn i de skulpturer, som Smith gav antropomorfe titler, hvor ord som 'far', 'søn', 'pige' indgår. I en omfattende analyse af interviewet udtaler Geisy, at "trangen til at komme [Smiths] statuer peger på et større problem i efterkrigstidens repræsentationer af den abstrakte krop."<sup>17</sup> Med udgangspunkt i Steinbergs tanke om at suspendere den formelle vurdering af seksuel identitet, kommer en ikke-identificeret, ikke-binær abstrakt form før tildelelserne af køns- og værkatégorier. Denne før-begrebslige form kræver, at kritikeren forholder sig anderledes til værket end i henhold til æstetisk skønhed og en binær seksuallogik om ArtNews-essay om Smith udtaler: "de bedste af hans nye skulpturer fik mig ikke til at ønske at jeg ejede en, de fik mig til at ønske at være en." Kort efter skriver han et brev til Smith, hvor han præciserer udsagnet: "Jeg vil være en af de skulpturer."<sup>19</sup>

Ønsket fra en kunstneriker om at være det abstrakte objekt mellem kunstnerens hænder accelererer virkelig den erotiske sensibilitet ved kunstens og kritikkenes æstetiske abstraktion. I dette tilfælde personificeres en sådan følsomhed ikke kun i kunstnerens 'personae', men også i O'Hara selv. Det er et perfekt eksempel på queer-formalisme. Allerede i 1961 beskrev O'Hara

Smiths kunstværker på følgende måde:

and then explore details. It is the esthetic of culmination rather than of examination.<sup>20</sup>

Øjets sensuelle bevægelse hen over det abstrakte objekt, der er i spil op til den "æstetiske kulmination", kan også forstås som en erotisk kulmination, forårsaget af førnævnte erotisk-kritiske "suspendering". Jeg har allerede diskuteret, hvordan den erotiske suspendering i sansningen af et abstrakt objekt, udløser en 'pause' i den kritiske dom, som i eksemplet med Smith og O'Hara. Jeg vil dog gerne føre diskussionen videre og argumentere for, at dette også er en suspendering af kapitalistisk abstraktion. Vi kan kalde det en 'abstrakt hedonisme'. I essayet "Gender as Accumulation Strategy", skriver digter og marxistisk teoretiker Key Gabriel:

process of mediation.<sup>21</sup>

I afsnittet oven for er Gabriels argument, at alle sociale relationer – det vil sige abstraktioner – er medieret af seksuelle forskelle, som også er på spil i hvert enkelt individ. Det er, hvad jeg tidligere har diskuteret som en kritik af det kritiske subjekt, der er bekendt med sig selv. En sådan selvrefleksion er både selvteferende og social.<sup>22</sup> Gabriel konkluderer, at med en præcis pointe, og en sådan 'dobbelt' kritik på en gang muligvis og undergraver social abstraktion. Samtidig er det vigtigt at bemærke, papeger Gabriel, hvordan det også undergraver ens sanselige, objektive relation til sig selv. Således kan vi argumentere for, at fornekmelsen af enhver abstraktion også indebærer forestillingen af sig-selv-som-værende-abstrakt, som Gabriel så klart beskriver i forhold til transsekuelle erfaringer. En lignende pointe optræder hos den queer-marxistiske forsker Kevin Floyd (RIP) i hans skelsættende bog *The Reification of Desire* fra 2009. Denne bog beskriver det befriende aspekt ved

erotiseringen af social fremmedgørelse i arbejdsforhold. Med udgangspunkt i og som afvigelse fra dette forslag, gør Gabriels væg på den æstetiske kvalitet i denne slags grænseoverskridende, erotsættende praksis os i stand til at forstå *kritisk sensibilitet som erotisk sensibilitet*. Med denne sensibilitet bliver den individuelle kritikers såkaldte 'auto-affektion' – der har været på spil siden Kants introduktion af kritik som praksis – forvandet til en auto-erotisk opfattelse af selvet i relation til andre. For at forstå, hvordan æstetik og kritik er sociale størrelser, må vi derfor tage den lange vej rundt om queer-formalisme. Og, vigtigst af alt, vi må gøre det sammen.

1. David Geisy, "Ten Theses on Queer Abstraction", i *Queer Abstraction*, red. Jared Ledesma (Grand Ave: Des Moines Art Center, 2019).

2. Fumi Okiji, *Jazz As Critique: Adorno and Black Expression Revisited* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press 2018), s. 19.

3. Amy DeVath, *Unsocial Poetry: Antagonism and Abstraction in Contemporary Feminized Poetics*, PhD afhandling i filosofi (Simon Fraser University, 2017), s. 77.

4. Ibid.

5. Leo Steinberg, *Other Criteria. Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art* [1972] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), s. 63.

6. Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting", i *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, red. Francis Frascina & Charles Harrison (London: Routledge, 1982), s. 5-6.

7. Karl Marx og Friedrich Engels, *Marx and Engels Collected Works, Vol. 3, March 1843 – August 1844* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010), s. 296.

8. For en kritisk diskussion af Marx' antropologi, se Etienne Balibar, "From Philosophical Anthropology to Social Ontology and Back: What to Do with Marx's Sixth Thesis on Feuerbach?" *Postmodern Culture*, Volume 22, Number 3, maj 2012. Online June 10, 2015: pomoculture.org/2015/06/10/from-philosophical-anthropology-to-social-ontology-and-back-what-to-do-with-marx-sixth-thesis-on-feuerbach-2.

9. Se for eksempel M.E. O'Brien, *Family Abolition Capitalism and the Communitizing of Care* (London: Pluto Press 2023).

10. T.J. Clark "In Defense of Abstract Expressionism", Emma Heaney (Durham: Duke University Press 2024).

11. Steinberg, *Other Criteria* (2007), s. 63. Oversat til dansk af oversættelsen Yale University Press (1991), s. 137. Oversat til dansk af oversættelsen *Reading Abstract Expressionism*, red. Richard Pipes (New Haven: Yale University Press 1991), s. 137.

12. Se Sam Rose, *Art and Form from Roger Fry to Global Modernism* (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press 2019).

13. Frida Sandström, "Carla Lonzi och kritiskens kritik 1969-1970", *Kultur & klasse*, vol. 52, no. 137, s. 55-137, doi.org/10.7146/bokv52n137145764.

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16. Frida Sandström, "The Disintegration of Autonomy Jill Johnston's Anti-criticism", i *Feminism and the Early Frankfurt School*, red. Christine A. Payne & Jeremiah Morelock (Leiden: Brill, 2023), s. 162-192.

17. David Geisy, *Abstract Bodies: Sixties Sculpture in the Expanded Field of Gender* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2015), s. 44.

18. For en diskussion af den reaktionære eller defensiv seksualitet i 1974", i *Infrastructure Aesthetics*, red. Solveig Daugaard, Cecilie Ullerup Schmidt og Frederik Tygstrup (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024 (forthcoming)).

19. Citeret i Geisy, *Abstract Bodies* (2015), s. 59.

20. Geisy, *Abstract Bodies* (2015), s. 72; O'Hara, *Color of Steel* (1961), s. 69.

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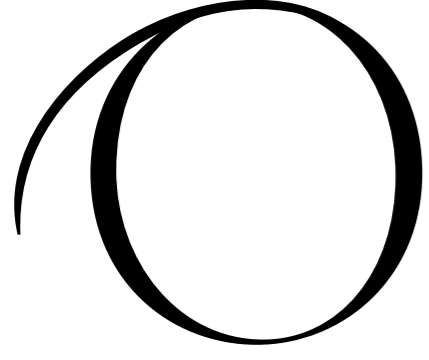
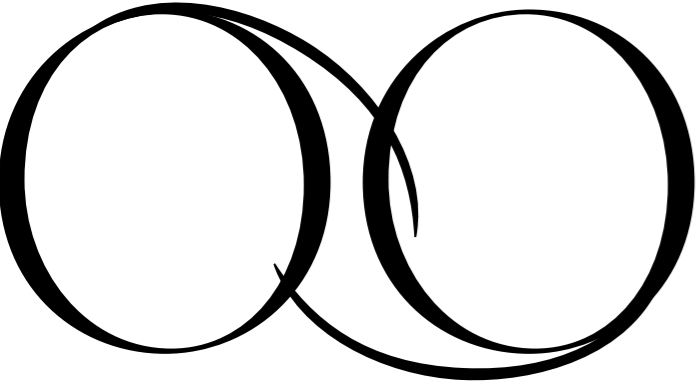
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# EROTISKE SELV- REFLEKSIONER NOTER OM KUNST SOM SEKSUALITET

Frida Sandström

kunst og mennesker – – “sanscs”, foreslår han. Og hvad er konsekvensen af det? Jo, måden, hvorpå vi sanser mennesker og ting, er grundlæggende relateret til, hvad vi tænker om dem, og om vi tænker med eller imod dem.

Ved at forstå kritikken af kunst som en sanselig praksis, underminering af de forudindtagne relationer mellem kunstværker og mennesker. Som den amerikanske tyske kunstner Adrian Piper har tydeliggjort gennem værker, kan mødet med kunst faktisk også påvirke vores opfattelse af kunst. Offtest er grænsen mellem menneskekroppen og kunstobjektet hårfin. Som resultat kan dommene over, hvad der er god og dårlig kunst nemt overføres til den alvorlige bestemmelse af, hvad der er menneskelig. For at sige det, som det er: Kunstskritikken kommer let til at være en del af den offentlige debat om seksualitet, og på bekostning af hvem? Den såkaldte subjekt-objekt-dialektik i moderne tænkning er på spil i kunstinstitutioner såvel som i nationalstatens retslige strukturer. Alle disse kontekster rummer en konceptualiseret relation mellem kunstner og tilskuer, elev og lærer, polit og borger, ud fra hvilken de forventes at ‘agere’ som subjekter eller objekter inden for borgerskabets offentlige sfære. Det er i grove træk formalisme.

Så længe vores liv er formet efter den moderne kapitalisme inden for og mellem nationalstaterne, vil formalismen bestå. Formalisme – forstået som subjektets sociale virkelighed, der opstår med og gennem kroppen – er således ikke et valg, men en omstændighed vi alle deler. Jeg ville ikke være i stand til at skrive denne tekst uden den. Kun gennem dens egne mekanismer kan formalismen vendes på hovedet. Det var den grundlæggende pointe i Marx’ sociale værdikritik i slutningen af 1800-tallet, som blev videreudviklet i den tyske teoretiker Theodor W. Adornos ide om det moderne kunstværk et århundrede senere.

Det er også det, Getsy understreger med sit forslag om en guet kritik af den moderne opfattelse af seksualitet. Kapitalisme, kunst, race, køn og seksualitet udfolder sig på en måde, hvor vi enten kan acceptere spiller, eller vende formalismen mod sig selv. Som teoretikeren Fumi Okiji understregede for nogle år siden, er kritikken af det moderne liv sjældent et valg, men snarere en nødvendighed for at overleve, hvis man lever under racemæssig eller seksuel undertrykkelse.<sup>2</sup> Ud fra hendes forslag kan vi antage, at en sådan *omtvungne* [detournement] er en kapacitet, vi alle har, som – på forskellig vis – racialiserede og seksualiserede subjekter, kunstnere eller beskuer, borgere eller overskudsbeholdning. Vi legemliggør simpelt hen erfaringen af det moderne liv forskelligt. Denne forskel er central for vores socialkritiske praksisser. I sit arbejde med emnet pæpger Getsy vigtigheden af at tydeliggøre, hvordan guet-formalisme er en central, men overset, egenskab ved det 20. århundredes kunsthistorie, og især hvad angår minimalisme og conceptkunst – som samtidskunsten stadig i vid udstrækning beror på.

Jeg ønsker at diskutere, hvordan en autoerotisk oplevelse af sociale og seksuelle forskelle kan udvikle sig som en social kritik og desuden som en afvisning af måder, hvorpå mennesker og ting bestemmes. Lad os se på, hvordan en sådan afvisning muliggør erotisk sensibilitet med og mod de sociale abstraktioner, de taler igennem. Ifølge litteraturforsker Amy DeAth, skaber auto-erotik potentialer til at:

*feel the economics of the moment in a more abstract, expansive sense than we might do in,*

say, our more immediate irritation at an expensive grocery bill, or our sense of anxiety and precarity in a temporary contract job.<sup>3</sup>

Vigtigt er det, pæpger DeAth, at både sansning

og tænkning gennem sociale og seksuelle abstraktioner

“modsettes sig repræsentation”<sup>4</sup> Dette er vores første sårkord til en guet-abstrakt tænkning.

Med kunsthistorikeren Leo Steinbergs ord fra 1973

muliggør de formelle relationer – gennem hvilke kunstobjekter repræsenteres – beskueren at overskride

forudbestemte grænser for identifikation og i stedet forestille sig noget andet. I den forstand kan et erotisk

møde frisætte kunstværket fra måden, det udstilles på. Steinberg beskriver kunstopplevelsen på følgende måde:

Not art but objects, and these objects touched as things beyond art, though they were conceived with legitimate esthetic objective: to keep the thing made unarticulated, its internal relations so minimized that nothing remains but an immediate relation to its external environment.<sup>5</sup>

Steinbergs argument er centralt for vores diskussion.

Han skriver, hvordan den umiddelbare, det vil sige ikke-formaliserede relation til det, der er ‘udenfor’, får plads af formalismen selv. Hvis vi forstår denne ekstermalitet som en uartikuleret oplevelse, kan den tage hvilken som helst form i tilskuerens fantasi.

Jeg tror, at den objekternes “uudsigelighed”, som Steinberg peger på, er et spørgsmål om immanens, der adskiller sig meget fra, hvad efterkrigsstidsformalisten Clement Greenberg betegnede som den essentialistiske ide om malerets immanens i begyndelsen af 1960’erne.<sup>6</sup> Steinbergs uudsigelighed afviger fra Greenbergs purisme, idet forskellene ikke kun ligger i *indholdet*, forstået som identitet, men også i *formen*, som afviser specifikke identifikationer. Med et marxistisk vokabular er fra essentialistiske former for identifikation, netop et spørgsmål om menneskelig natur udtrykt i praksis.<sup>7</sup> Snarere end den uheldige naturalisme ved Marx’ oprindelige model,<sup>8</sup> trækker jeg på det 21. århundredes guet- og transkønnede marxisme.<sup>9</sup> Med denne teoretiske ramme kan vi forstå sensibilitet som en erotisk, social og ikke-prokterende kategori. Således kan forskelle opfattes rent æstetisk uden at favorisere en bestemt slags kunst eller genre. Som kunsthistorikeren T.J. Clark skrev i 1991: “noget som myten om kunstens endeligt muliggjorde,

var opretholdelsen af en slags forskel mellem kunstens sanselige umiddelbarhed og den af andre (stærkere) kandidater til den samme magt.”<sup>10</sup> Det, han peger på, er grundlæggende de formelle abstraktioner, gennem hvilke vi fornemmer de objekter, vi anser som kunst. Som diskuteret ovenfor, er dette også tilfældet, når vi definerer seksualitet, race, køn, værdi og andre sociale kategorier.

Clark, Steinberg og Getsy er langt fra de eneste kunsthistorikere, der kritisk har undersøgt seksualitetens rolle i vores møde med kunst og mennesker. En central referencer i denne sammenhæng

er Steinbergs allerede nævnte, skelsættende essay, “Other Criteria”. I denne tekst fra 1973 pæpger han,

at “den kritiker som er interesseret i en nytænkende manifestation, sætter sine kritierer og smag i bagekar”<sup>11</sup> Dette betyder, at kritikeren ikke længer stræber efter

at imødekomme prædefinerede kriterier for æstetisk skønhed, som udelukkende sanses i kritikeren selv

– hvilket ellers blev proklameret af Immanuel Kant i 1790, og som det 20. århundredes første formalister

brugte ind i det moderne kunstmarked.<sup>12</sup> Ved at sætte

sine kriterier i “bagekar” og desuden vende dem mod sig selv, søger kritikeren snarere at følge sansning,

såvel som beskuer, objekt og menneske – på

kunsten og kritikens subjektiviserer – kunstner Hinsides eller endda forud for æstetiske kriterier opfatter

hæveder Steinberg, at kritikeren af kollektiv refleksion og dermed relation. I sit essay

with a thing that is like no other.”<sup>14</sup>

Jeg er interesseret i måden hvorpå kritikeren, når vedkommende følger langs med et kunstværk, også markerer de sociale konsekvenser af sine egne objektiverende begreber. Denne mekanisme individualiserende aspekt og næres gennem to

århundreders sociale kritik. Som litterater og filosoffer som fx David Lloyd og Stella Sandford har gjort klart, ophober begreber udelukkende særegenheder og

markerer forskelle. Vigtigt er det, at æstetiske begreber og kategorier anvendes til at definere køn, seksualitet, race, værdi osv. Hvad Steinbergs og Getrys tænkning peger på, er en forståelse for måden, hvorpå et abstrakt kunstobjekt rent faktisk muliggør en *sansning* af den formelle abstraktion. Gennem denne kollektive sansning ligger *omvendtgen* [detournement] i vores hænder.

Fetichering er lader i sit bilks dobbeltled: at betragte uden at se, at bruge subjektet til at dække over eller aflede tabubelagt begær, på samme tid at hengive sig til og holde sig tilbage. De funktionsnormative beskuer, idet de kaster deres altopslugende, objektiviserende blik på det handikappede subjekt, agerter som passive, voldelige voyurer, der gør den handikappede krop til et objekt, før de skiller det ad i enkeltled.

Der er et iboende menneskeligt instinkt til at seksualisere det, vi finder mest sårbart – at identificere det, vi opfatter som det 'svageste', og skelne, hvordan det bedst kan udnyttes. Faktisk er der en overvældende overflod af sårbarhed i den måde, vi undersøger det Handikappede Objekt(krop) på, og specifikt, idet den bliver essentialiseret som noget, der fundamentalt *ikke kan* – for at vende tilbage til den projicerede opfattelse af fravær.

Der er en fortæring, der kasterer, en måde at se på, som gør det Handikappede Objekt(krop) til et behændigt værktøj, der ubevidst bruges som et erotisk prisme i refleksionen, afladningen og brydningen af, hvad bekværen hverken kan eller vil konfrontere i sig selv. Den Handikappede Krop som fetichobjekt legemliggør den funktionsnormatives fikse på oplevelse og projicerede fravær: fravær af evne, fravær af kropslighed, fravær af handlekraft. Disse er temaerne for den forkøbledes kastration. Den handikappede krop repræsenterer alt, hvad der er fundamentalt usikkert ved den menneskelige kropslighed, og mens den også repræsenterer svaghedens og dødelighedens unudgælig realitet, fungerer den som en tom beholder for disse usikkerheder hos den raske besker.

Ikke alene er kroppen simpelthen *u-duelig*, men også i sig selv *ude af stand* til at fungere normativt. Samfundets forståelse og definition af det Handikappede Objekt(krop) afhænger af dette opfattede fravær af evne: Det Handikappede Objekt(krop) *kan ikke* tage vare på sig selv, *kan ikke* gå, *kan ikke* bevæge sig, *kan ikke* spise, *kan ikke* vaskes sig, *kan ikke* kommunikere og kan *ikke* fungere med romantisk eller seksual autonomi i sit begær (hvis de overhovedet tillades at have et). Det Handikappede Objekt(krop) som et ugyldigt [invalid] objekt forstærkes gennem dets repræsentationer, dets udbrøede brug som metafor og gennem spørgt i vores stærkt begrænsede leksikon for (u)duelighed.

Den idealiserede fungerende, raske krop har længe været etableret som standarden for det *menneskelige*, og den Handikappede Krops fundamentalt manglende evne til at opfylde denne standard fastholder den i denne position af 'abjekt' dehumanisering og utilitaristisk objektivering.

Denne øjeblikkelige og ubarmhjertigt unuancerede kastration af enhver person, der ikke overholder de funktionsnormative standarder og/eller kræver omsorg, illustrerer det omfattende stigma omkring sårbarhed og funktionsnedsættelse [invalidity] samt den voldelige kønethed, der er indlejret i dynamikken for omsorg og funktionsdygtighed. Manglende [invalidity] er feminiseret som en form for nedværdigelse, og denne feminisering af funktionsmangel inviterer igen til en iboende, brutal seksualisering.

Julia Kristeva dehner det abjekte som "det, der forstyrrer identitet, system, orden. Det, der ikke respekterer grænser, positioner, regler. Det midt-mellem, det tvetydige, det sammensatte."<sup>5</sup> Enhver ærlig undersøgelse af den Handikappede Krop ville i sandhed afsløre den enorme kompleksitet i dens anderledeshed og en manglende evne til at overholde de normaliserende forventninger og regler, der pålægges dens eksistens.

*Impaired Erotics* præsenterer rå repræsentationer og gentagelser af den Handikappede Krop, som den fremkaldes via forstyrrende kanaler, der er skilt ad og genopbygget i form af det Uegnede/Ugyldige Objekt [invalid Object]. Den Handikappede Krop som Uegnet/Ugyldigt Objekt undersøger sig definition og undslipper den med forvirrende lethed for i stedet at bide beskeren om at træde over tærsklen til de tabuer, der bringer deres mest menneskelige frygt til overfladen. *Impaired Erotics* udforsker det Uegnede/Ugyldige Objekts autonomier og måderne, hvorpå nydelse fungerer uden for det funktionsnormative. Fra den ikke-eksuelle erotik til det eksplisite pornografiske afbildes og undersøges det Uegnede/Ugyldige Objekt ærligt fra kunstnerens perspektiv, hvis sygdom og handikap fungerer som både genstand og kritisk katalysator for deres kunstneriske praksis.

Udstillingen bringer et perspektiv frem, der siger mod at åbne og kaste lys over, hvad vi krymper os over at diskutere om de kroppe, vi anser for at være de mindst gyldige, de mindst ønskværdige, de mindst hele. Hvordan ser autonomi ud for den Handikappede Krop? Hvordan ser samtykke ud for den krop, der serveres som festmåltid for dem, der har privilegier over den, og deres sultne øjne? Hvad kan vi forstå om de kroppe, disse Uegnede/Ugyldige Objekter, der kæmper imod voldsom essentialisering, mens de bevæger sig gennem fundamentalt fjendtlige rum, når de kastes ind i et rum af uklare kropslige definitioner? Mit installationsbaserede arbejde indfanger en udmartende opbygning og nedbrydning af kroppen, igen og igen og igen – ved at gøre både fetichsubjektet og den fetichiserende besker til mit materiale, i færd med at gennemtygge den Handikappede

Der Handikappede Objekt(krop) er til stor fascination for den funktionsnormative betragter, især i sine bestræbelser på at udføre *menneskelige* handlinger, der ofte mødes med spontane reaktioner af chok og afsky. Den funktionsnormative betragter af det Handikappede Objekt(krop) er alt for hurtig til at udtrykke sin afsky, men ville aldrig drømme om at kigge væk – og Freud's forslag om, at afsky maskerer et voldsomt undertrykt begær, ringer med skærende klarhed i undersøgelsen af denne inter-funktionelle dynamik?

Freud's teori om fetichering artikulerer det kritiske øjeblik, hvor fetichen løsrives fra individet og bliver det eneste seksuelle fokus.<sup>3</sup> Heri ligger en vigtig belysning af sammenfaldet mellem det handikappede subjekt og fetichobjektet – idet den funktionsnormative voyeuristiske besættelse af den handikappede krop har reduceret den til et rent eksempel. Udspændt og fastholdt på ordspørgsagtige entomologisk facon [*entomologi* = læren om insekter] er den handikappede krop ude af stand til at undslippe en fortsat voyeurisme.

Den Handikappede Krop bliver på samme tid kasterer og askeualiserer, mens den hyper-seksualiseres og uden samtykke formes til et erotisk objekt, når den flås og splittes ad under den funktionsnormative gransknings linse, som følger den ind i selv de mest private rum.

Der er en markant forbindelse mellem denne voyeurismes erotik og subjektets essentielle natur som *objekt*. Et udtalt magthierarki eksisterer selv i det mest passive funktionsnormative blik, og objektfetichismens funktioner som en afgørende kontekst for de mekanismer af magtesløshed, der ligger i, hvordan den Handikappede Krop fundamentalt ses, forstås og repræsenteres.

Der Handikappede Objekt(krop) er sandelig ikke givet retten til privatliv, da det er forventet, at den nophørligt og utæretligt performer kodede betydninger af komfortabel læsbarhed ved hjælp af et visuel leksikon, der overskygger størstedelen af den handikappede befolkning. En indlejret og nedværdigende seksualisering omfarter automatisk af *betrugningen*, når det Handikappede Objekt(krop) fungerer som genstand for den funktionsnormative besker.

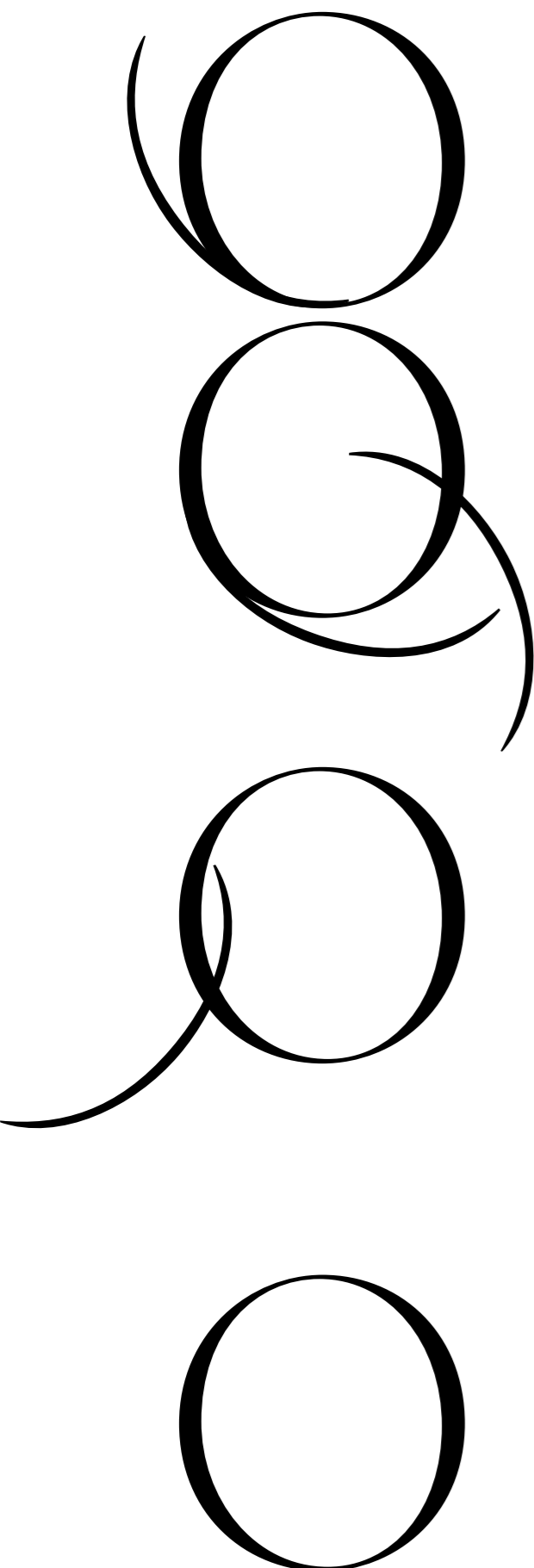
Den Handikappede Krop er, i alle aspekter af dens repræsentation og diskussion, tabu. Som Freud hævder: "Obskurens læge, "[den kraft, der modsætter sig voyeurismen, men som kan overvindes af den (på en måde parallelt med hvad vi tidligere har set i tilfældet af sky) er *skam*."<sup>4</sup>

1. Man kunne argumentere for, at familiært intimt står som sin egen uafhængige kategori, men inden for denne diskussion er den foldet ind i den platoniske.

2. Se Sigmund Freud, "Fragment of an Analysis of Hysteria," [1901], i *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. VII: *A case of hysteria; Three essays on sexuality and other works* (1901-1905) (London: Hogarth Press, 1975) sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Freud\_SF\_Dora-complete.pdf. "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality," i *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. VII: s. 153f. sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Freud\_SF\_Thee-Essays-complete.pdf

3. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay of Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), s. 4. Oversat til dansk af oversætteren.

4. Ibid., s. 157. Oversat til dansk af oversætteren.





# DEN SYGE/ HANDIKAPPEDE KROP

Pantcha Abareshi

Den Syge/Handikappede Krop har kun lov til at leve og eksistere som en sum af sine dele – hver del hyper-undersøgt og kategoriseret inden for skrøbelighedens klausrofobiske spektrum. Hver del af den svækkede krop lever separat; hver del af kroppen er sin egen hule beholder for det funktionsnormative [able-bodied, red.] blik og den tunge byrde at optæde som læsbar. Hver kropsdelt behandles som et objekt, og hvert objekt bæres på absurd fetischisme med sig – en dyrbar og potentielt ladet erotik, der vjævr tungt i undersøgelsen af, hvordan fremmedgørelsen af handikap og svækkede dele hænger sammen med tabubelagte fascinationer, feticher og fantasier (seksuelle og andre) hos den raske beskuer.

mens de henviser den svækkede krop til en permanent status som på samme tid patient, subjekt og performer.

En enorm kritisk sans må udøves i overvejelserne omkring de indlejrede dynamikker af magt,

kontrol og 'autonomi' i undersøgelsen af den Syge/Handikappede krop forstøret som performer og som villigt kunstnerisk subjekt. Selv når en forestilling er slut, og den Syge/Handikappede krop forlader scenen, selv når en udstilling er afsluttet og installationerne er demonteret, tillades den Syge/Handikappede krop ikke et øjebliks hvile som spektakel. Det er i denne evige rolle som genstand, og med en bevidsthed om den funktionsnormatives utrættelige undersøgelser, at den anderledes-gjorte krop har radikaliseret sin egen kropslighed og lavet udspekuleret materiale på baggrund af sin oplevelser. Vi må kontinuertigt anerkende det arbejdede, den Syge/Handikappede krop må gennemgå i sin autonome repræsentation og gøre en fælles og målrettet indsats for at validere nye måder at se, forstå, forestille sig og diskutere der anderledes på. Den Syge/Handikappede krop stiller krav i sin repræsentation og stiller svære spørgsmål til sit publikum. Ubælag er en enorm værdifuld drivkraft for nye og radikale former for tænkning og viden, for vi må fundamentalt forstyrre normative standarder for styrrelses for at skabe og holde plads til de kroppe, der længe har været eksileret til ukendte, usynlige rum.

Når den syge, svækkede krop føres ud af det medicinske rum og ind i det hjemlige, kompliceres omsorgs-dynamikkerne mellem den, der modtager og den, der giver pleje. De systemer af magt, kontrol og vold, der eksisterer i håndteringen af den kronisk syge og svækkede krop, som i høj grad går uset og usagt hen, er de måder, hvorpå den Syge/Handikappede krop undertrykkes som en metode til pleje.

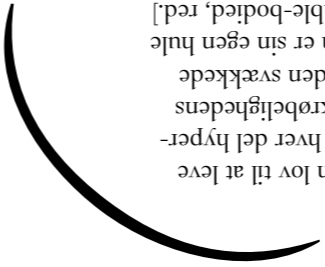
Den raske omsorgsgiver anses for at bære en stor og ufattelig byrde, og selv begrebet omsorg er så smerteligt plaget, idet den Syge/Handikappede krop utrætteligt må kæmpe for at opnå kropslig autonomi og imod den passive, ofte ubevidste dehumanisering, der stammer fra de funktionsnormatives foragtede omdeltede subjekt, der har brug for hjælp og ekspern indblanding for at kunne eksistere. Det hjemlige rum er et forbundet med varme, sikkerhed og komfort – alt sammen noget, der synes at blive fortrængt og ødelagt af de ændringer, der foretages i hjemmet for at imødekomme den syge og svækkede krop. Der er en sterilitet, der følger som et spor efter den syge ting fra hospitalet og ind i dens egen seng, som siver fra ilkanylen, driver ind i hjemmet fra alkoholiseretivierne og kanylbokscene på nabordene. Omsorgsgiveren anses for, i alle henseender, at være den svækkede kropps *hænder*, da nødvendigheden for hjælp og omsorg sidestilles med infantiliserende afmagt og en mærkning af det Syge/Handikappede subjekt som en grundlæggende uegnet *ting*. Den Syge/Handikappede krop bliver et passivt objekt, idet funktionsnormative indvider vil henviser til omsorgsgiveren i situationer, der spænder over alle sociale sammenhænge, som om det Syge/Handikappede subjekt er en hund, et lille barn eller invalide, ude af stand til at tale for sig selv. Magtdynamikken mellem omsorgsgiveren og den Syge/Handikappede krop fortæller om en skarp ubalance og kan kun bringes tættere på en afbalanceret tilstand gennem målrettet og bevidst modsat mod de normative kontrolsystemer, der ville afkræve en passiv underkastelse, stilhed og en fuldstændig afgivelse af kropslig autonomi.

Det forventes endda, at omsorgsgiveren udøver en fuldstændig kropslig kommando og kontrol over deres Syge/Handikappede ansvar, fordi ethvert funktionelt lablet individ, uanset deres forhold til det Syge/Handikappede subjekt, anses for at have ubestridelig kropslig autoritet, simpelthen fordi de er bedre fungerende. I øjeblikke, hvor den Syge/Handikappede krop tager mere fysisk eller følelsesmæssig plads og dermed trænger ind på den raske befolknings komfort, kastes ængstelige og forventningsfulde blikke på omsorgsgiveren med tavse opfordringer til at *hænder kroppen*, som så systematisk nægtes at eksistere fuldt ud, dristigt og uden skam, som krobbling.

Denne projektion af, hvordan omsorg *burde* se ud, og denne abstrakte konstruktion af, hvad omsorg indebærer, overskygger pladsen for den utroelig nødvendige repræsentation af de komplekse nuancer af omsorg. Normative forestillinger om menneskelig intimitet afhænger af en simpel tæcnighed af en platonisk, romantisk og seksuel, hvor ethvert forhold kan være enhver kombination af de tre. Men der er en uudtalt og stort set ukendt fjerde form for intimitet, som legemliggøres i forholdet mellem omsorgsgiver og omsorgsmottager. Det Syge/Handikappede subjekt og de involverede i deres pleje er således fortløbig med en firedele af intimitet, hvor omsorg tager del i den normative blanding og fungerer som en helt unik dynamik,

der kan stå alene eller indgå i komplekse kombinationer med de andre definerede former for intimitet. Og det er bydende nødvendigt, at omsorg forstærkes som helt unik i sin intimitet, fordi det er en så dybt lagdelt form for udveksling, der kalder på en kropslighed og tillid, som kræver en ekstrem sårbarhed, men samtidig kan være, og meget ofte er, uafhængig af enhver romantisk eller seksuel intimitet.

Samfundets tabuer omkring behovet for hjælp til at udføre grundlæggende kroppsfunktioner eller 'rutinemæssige' hygiejnehandlinger påfører Syge/Handikappede kroppe et stort stigema, skam og nedværdigelse. Omsorg er, ligesom det mest nedværdigede og oplevelse, henviser til de mest private rum: Det er på hospitalets stue, der er i hjemmet bag nedrullede gardiner, der på handikaptoiletet med last dør, at dynamikken udfolder sig, og så meget går tabt i skyggerne. Det Syge/Handikappede subjekt taler et udvidet sprog for intimitet, et som har et rigt leksikon til at artikulere de utallige kompleksiteter, der følger med at blive hjulpet, blive håndteret og blive holdt. Der er et svær, som skærer igennem dobbeltheden af omhed og vold, og en navigation af intimitet, som omfatter et spektakulært rummer de dybeste sår og de lyseste glæder, og dette går så let tabt for den fungerende krop, der i sit 'privilegium' er udelukket fra at kende intimitetens spog, som følger med den store vidde af kontrol, frivilligt eller ej. Når omsorgens intimitet rent faktisk falder under det funktionsnormative blikke linse, er det som en petriskal under et kratigt mikroskop, hvor tabuer ivrtigt sprer som parasitære mikroorganismer. De altid komplekse dynamikker og udvekslinger indlejret i pleje og omsorg, og krydsningen med de andre former for menneskelig intimitet, kolliderer med stor voldsomhed. I stedet avler den forskræmte magtubalance og forventningen om hyper-objektivering af den Syge/Handikappede en fetischistisk billeddannelse, som rodfæster sig i den Syge/Handikappede kropps afmagt og (seksuelle) udnyttelse (*exploitation*). Den funktionsnormative opfattelse af omsorg, og dens medfødte fetischisme, indhyler omsorg som handling med den altid-privilegerede påstand om, at enhver *svag og sårbar ting* skal bruges til hvad end de kroppe, der har privilegium og magt over den, ønsker.



# OVERGADEN

## INTRODUKTION

ISBN: 978-87-94311-19-9  
EAN: 978879431199

Pantcha Abareshi  
*Impaired Erotics*  
Udstillingsperiode: 25.05.2024 – 04.08.2024

O – OVERGADEN  
Overgaden neden Vandet 17, 1414 København K,  
overgaden.org

Det er en stor glæde at introducere denne publikation, der udkommer i forbindelse med Pantcha Abareshis soloudstilling *Impaired Erotics* på O – Overgaden. Siden 2021 har kunsthallen med generøs støtte fra Augustinus Fonden produceret en publikationsrække, der udgives i forbindelse med O – Overgadens store udstillinger. Formålet med denne serie er at mangfoldiggøre samtalene under og efter udstillingerne og åbne op for, at nyt materiale kan udspringe heraf. I dette tilfælde har Pantcha Abareshi selv bidraget med et essay om den Syg/Handikappede – eller 'crip' krop – som feticheret objekt. Parallelt sætter den svenske forsker og kunstkritiker Frida Sandström i sin tekst fokus på kunstkritikken som en slags autoerotisk refleksion.

Udover at takke skribenterne for deres bidrag og O – Overgadens team for den store indsats i forbindelse med udstillingen skal der lyde en varm tak til vores grafiske designere, fanfare, såvel som redaktør Anne Kølbaek Iversen for det dedikerede arbejde på denne publikation. Sidst, men ikke mindst, en særlig tak til kunstneren, Pantcha, for så generøs at dele både sin forskning og kunstneriske praksis med os alle sammen, både i forbindelse med tilblivelsen af udstillingen og i denne publikation.

Den amerikanske kunstner Pantcha Abareshi (f. 1999, de/dem) arbejder i sine fængslende skulpturer med oplevelsen af at leve i en kronisk syg krop og den stigmatisering, der følger med.

Fra kunstnerens eget perspektiv, som kørestolsbruger, der lever med en uheldredelig blodsygdom, udstiller Abareshi, hvordan den syge krop konstant observeres og behandles. I sin nye serie af skulpturer skabt særligt til O – Overgaden peger Abareshi med kunstnerens egne ord på "sammenstødet mellem vold og omhed i behandlingen af den syge krop."

Ved brug af bøjler, bælt, spænder og medicinske slanger bliver det synligt, hvordan støtten og behandlingen af kroppen også indeholder en voldsom form for tvang og dominans.

Kort sagt peger Abareshi på, hvordan plejearbejdet, hvad enten det finder sted på hospitalet eller i hjemmet, i sig selv kan indeholde en form for vold; hvordan samfundets systemiske 'hjælp' også indspærrer og disciplinerer den syge eller handicappede krop og sætter den i en position, hvor taknemmelighed og undertakstelse forventes – en magtesløs tilstand af medicinering og behandling.

Via skulpturelle elementer som udsprende benskinner og en gabende mund, der mekanisk tvinges åben, sætter *Impaired Erotics* spørgsmålstegn ved den komplekse dynamik indlejret i behandlings- og omsorgsarbejdet – med referencer til dominans og undertakstelse og den videre forbindelse til en tabuiseret fetichering af den handicappede krop. Værkerne sætter her spørgsmålstegn ved forholdet mellem erotik og seksual nydelse for kroppe med handicap ved kritisk og æstetisk at læne elementer fra den særlige genre af 'crip porn' – et meget ladet visuelt materiale, som typisk holdes skjult.

Den dobbelttydige udstillingsitel *Impaired Erotics* kritiserer på den ene side, hvordan den handicappede krop ofte misforstås som en, hvis adgang til intimitet og 'erotik' er ødelagt eller 'svækket' (impaired). På den anden side bruger Abareshi titlen som et manifest, der insisterer på en *Impaired Erotics*, dvs. en erotik for den syge eller 'crip' krop, der ikke følger typiske fordomme omkring funktionsnedsettelse. Udstillingen udpeger således den ladede skrøbelighed og afhængighed, der er indbygget i behandlings- og støttestrukturen – fra kørestol og medicinske slanger til menneskelig omsorg – og sætter fokus på de forskellige former for systemisk vold, der udgrænser den handicappede krop.

Rhea Dall  
Leder, juni 2024

Pantcha Abareshi (f. 1999, Montreal, CA) er billedkunstner og forsker bosat i Los Angeles. Abareshis værker er senest blevet vist på solo- og gruppeudstillinger på blandt andet Kunsthall Trondheim (2023); MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt (2022); Kunsthau Zürich (2022) og Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery (2021).

