



PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

# ENABLING (E)MOTION

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## ABSTRACT

This article discusses a practical exploration of the ability of a textile to meet with and affect bodies. It builds on the inherent ability of textiles, particularly in the form of a garment, to evoke movements and emotions. This paper suggests a shift in focus of the design of bodily materiality, towards an expression emerging from interactions connecting materiality and performativity. The findings are the result of 2.5 years of exploration, during which four performances, ten workshops, and four exhibitions were performed. The entwined parameters of expressing and informing are applied as a material choreographic thinking, which in this case results in a material choreography of openness, where expressing and informing are essential as entwined design parameters in the design of body-material interactions. The material choreography is developed as a method for addressing somatic experience, with improvements in terms of wellbeing and presence as aesthetic goals, focusing on reducing movements and emotions relating to stress for people suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome.

**Keywords:** *Wearing, material choreography, somatic garments, somaesthetics*

## AUTHORS BIOGRAPHY

**Linnea Bågander** is PhD student in Artistic Research, Fashion Design at Swedish School of Textiles at Borås University. Through collaborations within the field of dance she is exploring dress as performative element. She works with movement, materials and bodies, how they co-exist and together create expressions and experiences. Her work ranges from how material interprets and expresses the body's movements to how materials give impressions, inspiration and movements to the body and how this enables new bodies entwined with materials. Before starting her PhD program, she was working with dance, performative art and film as costume and set designer.

**Karolin Kent** is a choreographer, dancer, educator, somatic movement practitioner and Laban movement analyst. Kent has her base in several adjacent disciplines, with an emphasis on movement-based and visual arts. Since 2011, Kent has been professionally active in interdisciplinary performing arts, performance and visual arts nationally and internationally. Kent has an interest in contexts outside the artistic institutions and in related fields such as pedagogy, rehabilitation, therapy and activism. Her artistic methods are improvisational, experimental, interdisciplinary and somatic. Artistic interests often concern existential questions though a contemporary context. Kent is educated at Trinity Laban and LSSI.

**Figure 1**

*The installation INSIDE/OUTSIDE exhibited at the Wu ArtSpace, Summer 2018.*



## TEXTILE AND MOVEMENT – WEARING

In costume design for dance, choreographers, together with costume designers, develop clothing that suits the characteristics of either their aesthetics or a specific performance. Ulrik Martin Larsen (2016, p.18) notes that “certain choreographers and dancers have become associated, and in some cases synonymous, with a particular style of dress/costume”. The expression of costumes in many cases focuses on what is conveyed to spectators, embodying different styles and narratives. Similarly, the tradition in modern Western clothing conventions has been largely concerned with appearance and communication, which Richard Shusterman (2012, p. 44) associates with “representational somaesthetics”; these represent a bodily silhouette, style, or idea, rather than helping to maintain or embody an actual idea, and in many cases are used as “an assertion of one’s own taste” (Shusterman, 2012, p. 44). Shusterman defines soamaesthetics as the beauty of the experience of one’s own body from within “the endorphin-enhanced glow of high-level cardiovascular functioning, the slow savoring awareness of improved, deeper breathing, the tingling thrill of feeling into new parts of ones spine” (Shusterman, 2002, p. 262), shifting the focus from the third to first person perspective on ourselves.

Specific items of clothing that tacitly and kinetically inform movements are sometimes used in specific dance styles, such as ballet. Here, clothing both creates the visual appearance of the performer and kinetically imposes movements and mind-sets mainly through the pointe shoe and the tutu. Costumes are utilized in the same way in some performances, where they enable a new movement vocabulary. Marie Chouinard’s *The Rite of Spring* (2013) is an example of this, where the wearing of a pair of crutches suggests a new possibility for movement. Additional reference can be made to Martha Graham’s *Lamentation* (1930), Alwin Nicolai’s *Noumenon Mobilus* (1953), and recently

- ▶ Sally Dean's work at the costume agency workshop (2019). In these examples variations of fabric tubes serve as abstractions of a garment from where movements are initiated by providing resistance and support. In such cases, external materialities "serve as a bridge between inner somatic experiences of performers and outer form as perceived by an audience. Since they operate aesthetically as well as kinesthetically, they tend to create a particular performance "world" (Dean, 2011, p. 180), wherein the performer also experiences the performance. Dean uses the notion of *somatic garment* as a garment that focuses on, and can be used to deepen, various forms of bodily awareness. She exemplifies the power of a somatic garment based on her own experience when trying Javanese dance:

I could clearly see and sense, but found I was unable to embody for myself – until I tried on the traditional Javanese dance costume. The costume itself created a kinesthetic experience of 'containment' in the mid to lower body: a sarong tightly wrapped around my legs and pelvis, held in place by a stagen (sash). The costume helped me to find an experiential understanding of the feeling state of 'containment' inherent in the movement I was seeing around me. (Dean, 2011, p. 168)

Clothing communicates on two levels – one kinetic and tactile, and one visual. In this sense, the expression of wearing is a result of the duality of an interaction; the wearer gives it form while it simultaneously forms the wearer.

### **BODY-MATERIAL INTERACTION**

Design has been suggested by Herbert Simon (1988, p. 111) to change "existing situations into preferred ones"; however, this is not necessarily the case, as design itself often proves unable to take more than a few factors at a time into account, resulting in a fragmented version of, for a particular purpose, a preferred situation. Later, when the product is designed we often approach it by focusing on the intention of the predetermined usage and adopt the gestures it suggests. Nevertheless, Karen Barad (2003, p. 818) suggests we can change our relations to a designed environment through intra-actions. In intra-actions, similarly to James Gibson's (1979, p. 169) affordances, the world is viewed as an ongoing process in which phenomena come to matter in and through relational encounters, where objects are not fixed into categories defined by their common features.

Barad describes the difference between intra-actions and interactions as:

The notion of intra-action (in contrast to the usual "interaction," which presumes the prior existence of independent entities/relata) represents a profound conceptual shift. It is through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of the "components" of phenomena become determinate and that particular embodied concepts become meaningful. (Barad, 2003, p. 815)

- ▶ Many designers try to retain a sense of openness in their products, and Philip Starck (as reported by Shah, 2017), for example, claims that “I have always mixed everything to be sure that I give a richness of choice for people, and never a final solution”. Similarly, speculative design as defined by Antony Dunne and Fiona Raby (2013, p. 189) does not aim for “a solution”; instead, it seeks “just another way. For users to make up their minds”. Despite these examples, design is generally perceived as being a final solution, since the products, though there might be many variations of them, usually suggest a particular way of usage. Acknowledging that materiality and performativity are indistinguishable, intra-action provides a critical perspective on the process by which materializations form us. Further, Marci Webster-Mannison suggests that there is a lack of knowledge on how designers’ ideas are shaped by social assumptions and values (2012, p. 170). A step towards intra-actions might equally imply another way of designing as another way of engaging.

Kristina Höök argues that most interactions are so specific that the holistic perspective is forgotten, suggesting that they are “reinforcing the separation of mind and body - and favoring mind” (2018, p. 3). This further results in human emotion being seen as units that could be isolated, classified and predicted. Höök takes the example of the heart rate monitor, and suggests that “at least initially, a heart rate monitor will force you to understand your body as an object - not as an embodied subjectivity” (Höök, 2018, p. xxiv).

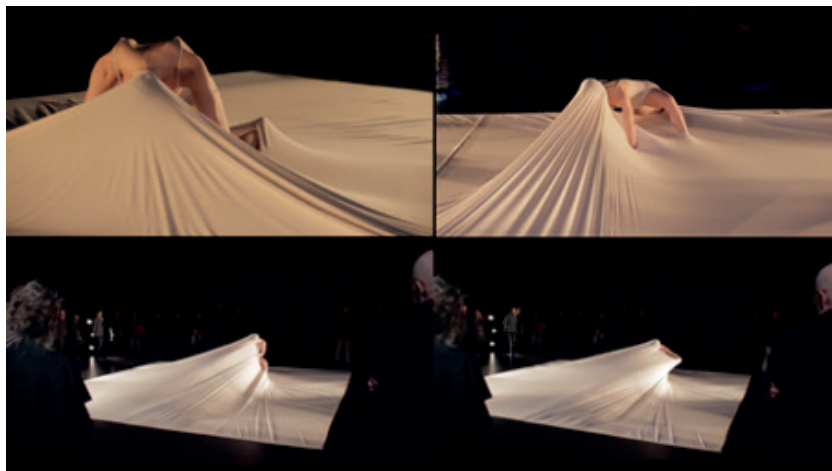
Dean’s description of a somatic garment, as something that operates kinaesthetically and aesthetically, and bridges between inner and outer expression, is similar to how Lars Hallnäs (2011, p. 4) describes the expression of a guitar as one that emerges from the act of playing the guitar; in the same way, the expression of the clothed body emerges from wearing, and is therefore concerned with how the body is formed in interaction. This statement is similar to what Youn-Kyung Lim et al. (2007, p.8) define as the interaction gestalt and what Höök describes as the dynamic gestalt (2018, p. 161), where the static appearance of the design is secondary to the interactive behavior.

Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1999, p. 162) claims “the expression of emotion in man and animals is a kinetic phenomenon” and further describes the relationship between movement and emotion as a generative as well as expressive relationship. This kinetic phenomenon is to a great extent affected by the material contexts of architecture, clothing, various tools and objects. A garment is unique in its relation to the body: temporarily becoming part of the wearer’s body, it is simultaneously interpreting and informing movements, emotions and behaviors (Bågander, 2017, p. 40). These aspects are part of a garment’s natural state, whether worked actively with or not. The entwined relationship between the two expresses and informs body movements. Further, Jessica Bugg (2007, p. 29) suggests that clothing affects the wearer physically and psychologically by enhancing and restricting movements. Restriction and enhancement are important aspects that influence the body-material conversation of expressing and informing. The abilities of clothing described above in many cases depend upon the responsiveness of its material. In this exploration, textiles, how they are formed and how the dynamic space between body and garment changes and responds to motion, are transformed ▶

from garments into scaled-up versions where the essential features are extracted and explored in a relational, responsive meeting with materials. These interactive qualities are the essence of the interaction with a garment in the form of wearing, and are what the practical explorations are based on.

**FIGURE 2**

The first performance of *INSIDE/OUTSIDE* at Falkhallen, spring 2017.  
Video documentation of the performance: <https://youtu.be/9SHC6zRA6TA>



## DEVELOPING THE PERFORMANCE

The practical explorations described in this article departed from the process of developing a performance in collaboration between author 1, Linnea Bågander, and author 2, choreographer Karolin Kent. In the rest of the article “I” means author 1, whereas author 2 is referred to as “she”.

Kent’s background as a somatic practitioner, educated at Laban/Bartenieff Somatic Studies International, is reflected in her working process, in which the exterior form is secondary and her own awareness and inner experience of movements are the primary choreographic materials. She further describes that in her practice materiality guides and bridges somatic experiences and outer form, facilitating the entwining kinaesthetic elements reflected in aesthetics expressions. During the research period for the performance, materials were used to explore awareness of the skin as a means of deepening the experience of the interior body and creating a *grounded feeling*. We were also inspired by the skin’s ability to communicate between with the inside and the outside and used the textile in the same way, as a filter that communicated between the inner, the outer and as an extension of the body. The material was a nylon/lycra 2-way stretch fabric of approximately 80g/m that was chosen due to its highly elastic yet light weight that proved itself strong enough to allow Kent to lean on it with full body engagement.

- ▶ The form Kent co-created with did not represent anything other than itself and its materiality; rather, the textile and Kent created the narrative. As the qualities of the material changed during use, and as Kent brought different intentions to bear and prepared differently, the narrative differed slightly in each rehearsal and performance. Kent described her relationship with the material as follows:

The material used felt very organic, even though it is not an organic material. The movement of the material had its own life and inspired me in my choice of movement. How it was made, in relation to how I interacted with the form, made it become a partner in movement. It allowed for numerous potentials for movement, but also acted in the manner of a counterweight, giving both support and resistance. Its restrictions directed my pathways in space as well as in my own body, which then moved in space.

Kent's reflections support Dean's (2011, p. 180) description of somatic costumes, which can be used to bridge the inner somatic experiences of performers and outer forms perceived by an audience and support the creation of the expression of the piece. Kent's experience invited us to explore how materials can be used to create internal experiences and awareness for an audience by transforming the audience into participants engaging with the material choreography.

**FIGURE 3**

*The installation INSIDE/OUTSIDE exhibited at Järnhallen, Gothenburg, spring 2018. Video documentation of the installation, Järnhallen at <https://youtu.be/P-1KW7wYpOA>*



### DEVELOPING THE INSTALLATION

We set out to transform the reflection of Kent into a spatial textile installation that would enable a change of movements and emotions. We aimed to develop an environment where one could reduce movements and emotions relating to stress for people ▶

suffering from stress or chronic fatigue syndrome. The intention was to create a mindful encounter and make the participants aware of their habits and actions, and open the sensory capacities within the experience. The installation acknowledged the role our context and environment have on us, as described by Emma Felton: “The source of emotions is the unconscious and the imagination, which are engaged in a relationship between the self and the environment, and connected through dialogic exchange. This process informs subjectivity and the experience of everyday urban life” (2012, p. 131). The installation aimed to remove these habits and stress that our daily context unconsciously suggests to us through generating a movement vocabulary that differed from how our designed surroundings usually form us. As Mary Starks Whitehouse, the founder of Authentic Movement, notes: “[m]ovement, to be experienced, has to be ‘found’ in the body, not put on like a dress or coat. There is that in us which has moved from the very beginning: it is that which can liberate us” (1963/1999, p. 53). Hence, we treated the material as an open instruction giving context and framework for movement. For example, simply crawling on the floor might not give the same emotional response as when a materiality proposes you to do so. Without a material instructing you to break your habits it might give you a feeling of being out of place or uncomfortable in the movements and situation; here, the material acts as a bridge. Further, the textile installation aimed to act as a counterweight to common architectonic space as the textile invited participants to equally shape, and be shaped by, the surroundings, as in the dialogue the garment preforms. The form was developed during three residencies, the first one at Skogen, Gothenburg, the second at Järnhallen Gothenburg and the third at Skövde Art Museum, Skövde.

Kent has previously worked with methods from LSSI (Laban/Bartenieff Somatic Studies International). Within this work, the Bartenieff movement principles and pre-concepts were focal. This also includes the mind-body-emotion link that was introduced in movement therapy by Bartenieff. As various somatic practices that focus on the present moment have been successful in aiding recovery from chronic fatigue syndrome (Sollie et al., 2017 p. 241), we have used the soma as the entry point for establishing presence and focused on the material’s ability to evoke this through situating. In Kent’s thesis from LSSI, she addressed her own experience of chronic fatigue syndrome and her path to recovery, within which she came to understand the role that balance has in relation to this syndrome and stress in general, as in such a state the body becomes fixed in polarities. Therefore, Laban’s bipolar movement themes have guided the work in order to clarify the importance of balancing these oppositions. These are “[i]nner/outer exertion/recuperation function/expression mobility/stability” (Fernandes et al., 2015, p. 270), wherein the relationships between the polarities create senses of mental and physical balance.

All these aspects were present in the installation, but the relationship between the interior and exterior had the greatest relevance since an inner, a somatic focus, aids the mind-body link. We used the fabric that made this clearer through yet another physical border. It functioned as a method for increasing awareness of the somatic experience of our bodies. The fabric also blurred the border between one’s own body and other bodies



- ▶ by extending movements, bridging not only the interior and exterior of one's body but also the self and others. The movement theme of stability/mobility was applied to the textile material, which both supported and resisted movements. Exertion/recuperation were themes that were present as the installation was a place for recuperation that opened up for exertion for those who felt ready, and function/expression were united with movement, creating an embodied experience.

*Key methodological aspects*

The process of developing the installation was defined by the interdisciplinary group of practitioners: a somatic practitioner and choreographer, a textile-based artist and fashion designer, a filmmaker and musician, and a producer. All of them brought different methods to the collaboration that required different preparations and processes. From these practices, the somatic method was the one that differed most from the rest. Aside from Kent, we others often ignored listening to somatic signals so that we could focus on and push our work further. Since somatic practice was the focus of the project, Kent invited all creative practitioners to participate in her morning training and the open workshops she conducted. Several workdays started by establishing contact with the somatic perspective. The sessions functioned as an embodied sketching, a somatic activity to engage with before the design work. This provided both an in-depth understanding of the possible role of the installation, as well as a shared space from where we all could continue into our individual practices, similar to how the traditional 'mood board' or script is used. Elena Márquez Segura et al. (2016, p. 6014) describe embodied sketching as a "way of practicing design that involves understanding and designing for bodily experiences early in the design process". They describe its potential as follows:

- i) support ideation rather than evaluation,
- ii) support the inclusion of bodily experiences early in the design process, before the construction of fully-functional prototypes, and
- iii) support creativity by harnessing play and playfulness, in a way that is grounded in and inspired by the lived experience.

(Márquez Segura et al., 2016, p. 6014)

I experienced that starting the day with a somatic class gave a sort of satisfaction and slowed down my natural tempo. This resulted in a slower practice with less stress and more reflection; less than usual was produced, but with more coherency in what was produced. ▶

**FIGURE 4**  
*Visualization of the work process*



Kent and I worked closely when developing the form. We tested and evaluated it together mainly by moving and exploring the interior of the form. While I provided knowledge of constructions, a material expertise and worked practically on the structure, Kent provided an awareness of movement and flow of movements that was translated into the installation as a material choreography. Kent gave the project the perspective of the soma; for example, she expressed what types of qualities and paths the form needed, and often pushed the ability to be carried by and to lean on the material further, something that was a challenge from a material perspective. Since focus was on the experience of being inside, this required full-scale prototyping from the start, and all materials and forms were evaluated in at least 3m<sup>2</sup> tests in more or less enclosed space. Due to the scale, the installation was developed as a site-specific work. This meant that the installation was remade either completely or adjusted to suit the new technical and aesthetic possibilities in the different residencies and exhibition spaces. This also meant that in one sense the form was never finished as each new exhibition and residency provided new possibilities. The scale of the installation made site-specificity a necessity as it had to co-exist within an already existing space.

The workshops performed also informed the process of developing the design. While the early workshops informed the scale of spaces, types of spaces and pathways utilized, the later ones provided smaller changes and adjustments. This will be further discussed in the workshop and participation section.

#### *Designing forms – partners in movement*

During the explorations of the different types of forms, the conclusion was quickly reached that a large-scale installation consisting of many smaller units and pathways was optimal as it would create opportunities and exploratory movements without restricting participants to particular movements or positions. Though the final installation varied

- ▶ in size and form, it was always approximately 50m<sup>2</sup>, containing three layers, and proposing four levels in which participants could explore. The enclosed spaces came in various formations, but consisted of eight spaces that were enclosed to varying degrees.

#### *The types of spaces*

As an empty form it levitated between 1–1.80 meters from the ground. This was a key aspect in how some of the spaces appeared, as when assigning pressure to the *floor*, these spaces appeared. While some spaces demanded more exploration to be discovered, others could not be avoided from being witnessed as they were suspended in the fabric. Following the latter, other participants could clearly see and understand how to enter the installation. Below follows a more detailed description of the function of the various forms. Note that since the installation varied, not all forms were incorporated in all installations.

The big open space: Between the form and the ground floor there was an open space. The function of this space was to invite people, who, for various reasons, were hesitant to enter the form, e.g. they had trouble with balance or emotional hesitation. Here, participants could take part and be affected by the change of the form from a safe place, and at all times easily find a way out. This space was mostly used for resting and being still.

The big enclosed space: On top of the big open space there was a big enclosed space, that also acted as a floor on which the smaller forms were attached. This space was approximately 50m<sup>2</sup>. In this large space you could move freely; it was used both for resting and moving and was designed to contain many people simultaneously.

The semi-enclosed space 1: This space was approx. 3x5m. It was sewn to the sides of the big enclosed space and had two of its sides open. It was a space only visible when you assigned pressure to the floor, as then this form revealed its opening, and so it was a form to discover. While inside, you were still visually connected to others, as the form did not completely enclose you.

The semi-enclosed space 2: This space was approx. 3x3m. It was sewn to the sides of the big enclosed space, and had two of the sides open and was connected to the tall vertical forms described below. It was a place where the centre of the form was held up by a cord, making the space obvious to participants. This space functioned as a private room for resting and was designed to contain one person.

The semi-enclosed space 3: This space was approx. 3x4m. It was sewn down on the floor, only leaving a 1.5-meter opening. The far end of the form was held up by a cord, but most of the form was created through the pressure of the floor. Since it was mainly created by applying pressure, this room encouraged movement slightly more than the tensed-up rooms. This space functioned as a private room for resting and moving, and was designed to contain one person.

The space inside another space: Inside what I described as the semi-enclosed space 3 ▶

▶ there was a small enclosed space that functioned as a connection or pathway between this space and the two vertical spaces. This was a connection you had to find, and it was not clearly announced like the other spaces that sort of opened up more invitingly. It was a space to discover and to move in.

The two vertical spaces: In the centre of the space there were two vertical spaces. They started as horizontal forms, stitched approximately 4 meters to the big enclosed space, and then turned into twisted forms of approximately 4 meters in length and reaching towards the ceiling or a tree. These spaces were narrow and had a circumference of 1.5 m. They were designed for more active movements, since within this space you could lean fully on the materials while they completely enclosed you. When you were at the center your movements also affected most of the form and the other participants. It was a space designed for one person, though as the two spaces were connected, they invited a close relation between the participants in the different forms.

This overall design was for a maximum of five participants. The amount of space was evaluated so that there would always be space for participants to move around and have the possibility to find their own space. The textile form also enabled variation in movement patterns as it wrapped around the participants, following their movements and opened up as a stream of changing motions and pathways that were neither straight nor obvious. The installation allowed participants to explore by providing opportunities instead of defining a fixed way of moving. It was more about an embedded choreography of responding to moving material. The installation opened up for different degrees of movement, from being passive and experiencing the movements of other participants through the lulling motional echo of the material, to being active and challenging the limits of the material. At all times the movement of the fabric was a peaceful echo; even when being moved intensely, the fabric maintained a slow response. It provided resistance and support, activating bodies that were free to choose to work with or act against it. The installation embraced the whole body of the participants so as to invite them to concentrate on the felt-sense of their bodies and the intimate space around them. The installation thus prompted the participants to function more on the basis of first-person somatic perceptual awareness.

Kent's description of the installation focused on its status as a moving partner – as a visual, tactile, kinetic, and sonic body. The visual and tactile elements of the material were inherent qualities, while the sonic and kinetic elements were subtler. The kinetic response – the movement language – was to an extent already set by the material, but its response depended on the scale of and amount of stretch the material was put through. By ensuring that there was variation between how the material qualities were used in the installation, a greater sense of exploration was created for the participants. Sound strongly impacts how we are affectively situated in environments; for this reason, the sonic expression became an artificial construct, with Kent creating a monotone soundscape that was designed primarily to distance the participants from everyday life. The light pink color of the fabric enabled light to be transported and create a soft light-scape with various shades in the interior of the form, making it appealing to enter. ▶

▸ *Design of openness – express and inform*

In line with the already mentioned description of Whitehouse (1963/1999), finding the movement, instead of putting it on like a dress or coat, was a challenge in the design development. This related to the aspect of openness – designing a space that enabled individual exploration, rather than a predefined journey, but without causing the participant to get ‘lost’ without a map. The installation provided an open-ended space of opportunities for sensing and movement alike. This type of work is the opposite of what a designer is usually faced with, as the task was not related to a particular action or movement; rather the opposite was the case. What does it mean to design an openness? How could we possibly make participants see beyond familiar categories that keep us in the same contextualized perspective?

We approached the design task by working with it as an abstract form. As an analogy, a specific chair instructs us to sit down in a specific way, while a stone as a form with a less articulated intention encourages us to explore and find our individual ways of relating to it, perhaps sitting on it, too. This was how we tried to enable some sense of interactions. Additionally, how it moved and responded further contributed to the removal of traces from our typical daily context.

As previously mentioned, garments are unique in their close relation to bodies and how they simultaneously express and inform movements, within my own practise often designed as systems of opportunities for the materialization of choreography. The installation was a temporal form, a form designed to change between defined states, and intended to be both empty and have varying amounts of people within, moving and changing its appearance. This demands a process of designing that maps all possible expressions that come from movement with an entwined interior and exterior perspective. The spatial scale and complexity were designed to encourage participants to enter and move around since our insight was that you had to move and change perspective to fully perceive. Further, the movement that they performed was encouraged by the change taking place in the form. In some cases, it encouraged small movements and rest, while in others it encouraged exploration and larger movements.

For us, design of openness meant avoiding clearly defined intentions that limit the movements that would come spontaneously to the body. Though design of openness avoids direct instructions, it requires awareness of how expression and impression are linked within designs, as well as what possibilities might come from this. A degree of material expression always informs an action at the same time as it informs both emotions and movements. Therefore, vital to designing was that the installation supports movement expression through informing participant activity by material cues. These two aspects were important in thinking about the kind of interior space the installation consisted of and the kind of experience it prompted for the participants. However, it was not always easy to communicate. For example, the external aesthetics of the installation should present an invitation to the participants to enter and to establish a dialogue between the installation, their movement and their felt-sense. The main challenge of designing was actively to make sure that the material offered inviting cues for somatic

▸

- ▶ participation and that the installation offered an external expression of the quality of the participation, similarly to the way a garment can communicate one kinaesthetic and tactile idea to the wearer and a visual that is perceived from a third person's perspective.

## THE WORKSHOPS, PARTICIPATION AND CONVERSATIONS

Through the workshops we continued to evaluate, apply, and develop the installation, especially concerning its ability to support awareness and presence, as well how it enabled a flow between movement and stillness. We invited participants through social media, reaching out through our personal and professional networks, platforms of the venues we were at, as well as directing invitations to organizations working with this target group; for example, Fusig and the unit for individual-centered care. The first seven workshops were open to everyone but directed at those who suffer from stress, have experience of, or were at risk of, experiencing chronic fatigue. However, the final three sessions were only open to those with experience of chronic fatigue. Apart from the conversations we had with the participants during the workshops, afterwards there was no follow up with them, and in some cases participants came back for more than one workshop, but this was nothing we particularly followed up on. We foremost developed the form based on the immediate effects and responses from participants. Between the sessions, I and Kent, alone or with one or two other members of the team, evaluated and developed the installation. In total, ten workshops were conducted, consisting of one to two hours of guided somatic practice in the textile installation, followed by roughly two hours of discussion. The discussions were an open space for participants to share their experiences. Neither the workshops nor the discussions were documented in order to respect the privacy of the participants and to establish an informal setting where participants could express themselves freely. Nor did we ask particular questions, but asked the participants what they experienced. We listened to them and asked further questions if something particular about their experience attracted our attention. Before the start of each workshop we communicated that both the way they moved and related to the installation and their shared reflections would be used to improve the form and to evaluate the project, but that all participant reflections would be kept anonymous. After the sessions, we discussed the response and evaluated what was successful and not successful in the installation, and key findings from the workshops were incorporated into new prototypes aiming to enhance the experiences of the participants. In general, these findings were related to how much space and what types of space the participants preferred.

For example, a particular space that was expressed as successful by participants could be incorporated more, or if Kent observed a limit in the number of pathways for the participants to move within, it was reworked. This direct link between the participants' feedback and development of the form was mostly present in the residency at Skogen, where we announced it as a work-in-progress installation and workshop. When the form was exhibited and none of the creators were there to collect or respond to thoughts, we had a book by the installation that allowed participants to record their thoughts. All the documentation in the form of images and videos in this article are staged interactions ▶

▶ between the practitioners of the crew.

Some workshops combined materials and verbal instructions, while the others used only materials. However, in all cases, participants were asked to leave shoes, bags, and mobile phones outside, encouraged to respect others and entering the form was expressed from our side as a choice. The verbal instructions varied between the workshops and were delivered as offerings, inviting the participants to choose their own direction and interest in their journey. The instructions aimed to maintain openness and offer space for curiosity, to guide and suggest somatic focus rather than dictating instructions suggesting a specific form. They could, for example, ask participants to notice their breath, feel the weight of their bodies on the fabric, and suggest variations in tempo and intensity in movement. The purpose was to allow for a somatic journey, in relation to oneself, others and the environment. The number of participants in each workshop varied between one and ten, aiming to find the suitable number of participants. Practically, this was incorporated as more pathways for every participant, which provided further opportunities for exploration and discovery.

#### *Reflections from the workshops*

Kent's experience of the development sessions and workshops was that the installation constituted a simple way for her to enter into stillness and being. The material helped her to distance herself from a reflective mode and to move into a mode of somatic experiencing. Following stillness and rest, the installation encouraged participants to move as a result of the materials' slow lulling echoes of their movements, as a soft response. In some cases, participation was further encouraged by verbal instructions by Kent. Whether expressed verbally or materially, the participants, with few exceptions, went through both stages of stillness and movement. Movements in the installation were expressed by the participants to grow organically, from an unconditional sense of being – from the body, rather than from the mind – allowing space for authenticity.

The participants often expressed that when entering the installation, they experienced high energy levels. They entered with a sense of doing, which over time transitioned into a state of being. For some, this happened immediately, but it generally took place after some ten minutes. Here, we found that preparations, such as entering into the room in which the installation was, taking shoes off, and receiving the small instruction to respect others within the installation, helped to calm down the mind-set of the participants and made it easier for them to enter the form openly. The sense of doing that they experienced was, in general, followed by a period of rest, which varied in duration between a few minutes and one hour, depending on what the individual needed. Since the instructions were offered as openings, they made it possible for one participant to stay in resting mood for a whole session while others started to move. In some of the workshops Kent was in the form from the very start to suggest interactions and help people settle. However, this was described by Kent herself to be distracting to the participants' own experience. When she was in the form, she received too much attention, and some participants focused on her instead of their own journey. Over the course of the workshops she spent less and less time in the form to avoid the unnecessary distraction.

When the installation was exhibited and not announced as a workshop, the responses generally differed. From what we could experience from those occasions when we were at the exhibition, people were often looking for a place to rest and started to move only later or just stayed in one place and then exited. One visitor felt that “it was so pleasant to be still and rest until I felt like moving, and then I could explore” another stated “I just needed to rest for an hour, but I didn’t know it before I laid down in the installation. After that I started to move around.” These quotations from the notebook we had next to the installation both indicate the need they felt to rest. Many participants described the slow lulling echo of the textile as calming and that it reminded them of being in nature, where the surroundings usually ‘move’ slightly. However, some participants chose not to enter and instead stood outside, claiming that the visual experience was enough. For some, the somatic experience and moving through the installation were too intense, and viewing the installation and watching others engage with it from a distance were satisfactory enough. In the follow-up conversations, these participants described a deep bodily experience generated from the visual and sonic sense.

The drastic change of context – from a non-responsive space to a responsive one – and the separation of the participants and their phones were expressed to release habitual movements and habitual ways of engaging related to stress, replacing them with feelings of presence in body and situation, and a general sense of awareness. The textile made the participants feel more comfortable in breaking habitual patterns as it proposed a new spatial framework that provided a feeling that was compared by one participant to being inside a light cocoon. Many participants experienced a heightened awareness of their bodies at the same time as experiencing a connection with the other participants. They found it easier to interact with each other through the material as this extended their movements, and these aspects made people dare to move closer to and touch each other, as they had already met when extended within the material. The interactions between the participants was always based on their own choices, and occurred on different levels, depending on how ready each one was to meet others. All of the meetings, whether they were direct (skin to skin) or enacted through the material or the echoing of the material, were described as being respectful, humble, and aware. The meetings with others increased bodily awareness and slowed down the tempo, as the participants had to be careful not to step on or bump into others, and be aware of the movements of the installation. Touch and interactions between people belong to the intimate sphere, especially when it comes to strangers; in this case, the material facilitated encounters, due to what was described by the participants as a neutralization of identity and an enabling of degrees of interaction, as well as the ability to hide altogether. For some, it was not about meeting individuals, but about meeting other humans. One participant stated that it felt like being in a “moving landscape”, where all forms were equal.

As discussed above, attention to the soma can aid recovery from chronic fatigue syndrome. According to our conversations with and feedback from the participants, the installation seemed to open their senses and to create a bridge between their interior



▶ and the exterior environment, allowing them to experience inner stillness. The two hours of discussions that followed each workshop gave the participants the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences. Although these sessions were optional, all the participants stayed. During the discussions, all of the workshop participants described having had positive experiences; some felt that they had new tools for self-care, and the majority experienced a reduction in tension and pain in their bodies – a sensation of being in their bodies, of being present and relaxed, while simultaneously energized, in a somewhat mindful state Francisco J. Varela et al. (1991, p. 25) note that, when in a mindful state, we are often reminded of how “disconnected humans normally are from their very experience”; similarly, in many of the discussions the participants expressed that presence and mindfulness are lacking in their everyday lives, as are spaces such as the one in question, which highlighted the stressful nature of society from a critical material and verbal perspective.

**FIGURE 5**

*The installation exhibited at WuArt Space, Sjönevad Festival, Summer 2018.*

*Video documentation of the installation, Sjönevad: <https://youtu.be/enaPeIRIELU>*



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## CONCLUSION / DISCUSSION

The artistic process described in this article proved beneficial on many levels: first and foremost, the development of a performance piece shows the benefits materiality has as a performing partner; how, in a very practical and material way, it inspires and suggests motion and emotion. Secondly, as pointed towards by the installation, the somatic potential can have therapeutic effects; displaying the effect of materials and spatial constructs on our movements and emotional state. This further exemplifies the benefits of including a somatic practitioner/choreographer in spatial design, as their perspective of movement differs from material based designers, who traditionally focus on form and material. Thirdly, it suggests another type of work process, where a shared somatic warmup unites the creative practitioner of the project in a shared embodied understanding of the design task.

The installation exemplifies the possibilities that textiles and spatial constructs have in imposing and changing movement patterns, positioning, tempos, and emotions. It embodies a movement language that helped the participants to find stillness and time for reflection. Manuel DeLanda and Karen Barad (as reported by Dolphijn & Van der Tuin, 2012, p. 89) argue that phenomena reveal themselves through their relationships; this installation, similarly, is nothing but an open map in which to lose and find oneself in relation to a textile and other participants: a counterweight revealing the phenomena that we are exposed to in our daily lives. In this sense, the material installation in itself opened up for somatic reflection as a particular mode of participation. This heightened understanding can be beneficial for society more generally, too, as when “we increase our knowledge of ourselves, we increase in understanding and compassion for others” (Bainbridge Cohen, 1993/2017, p. 6).

The intimate relationship between the textile and the participants – the responsive context and the meetings that this enables – has been a tool for the release of stress. The participants received tools with which to be in their bodies – to experience the body, specifically its somatic felt dimensions. The installation also gave the participants new ways of reflecting on their own sense of being, by moving, touching, and sensing the material, and in turn, being touched by it. It suggests a critical perspective, while simultaneously deepening our understanding of the implications the designed world has on us. For future development, links between this type of installation and multi-sensory rooms, that for example are used for people with autism, could be explored further to both develop perspective and understanding of the potential role these kinds of artistic installations can have within a healthcare system.

The installation exemplifies a shift in designing. It proposes a dialogic design in which the intertwining of the material’s impression with the body’s expression produces form. These are the key factors behind what Lim et al. (2017) define as the interaction gestalt: Höök’s (2018) dynamic gestalt, or what Hallnäs (2011) refers to when describing that expression emerges from an action. Behind action there is dialogue, and when designing we have to be aware of what this dialogue suggests. Bringing understanding about a

user's interaction with garments into a spatial design helped in questioning and deviating from predefined connotations that a conventional architectonic environment suggests. In conclusion, the installation exemplifies a material choreography; it establishes an approach for encounters, wherein expressions and impressions are entwined design parameters. It builds on an aesthetic link between emotions and motion accessed through the material choreography. It proposes a material choreography of openness as a generator of introspection, reflection and awareness, and a choreography that aims to support escape from the many suggestions the surrounding world most often proposes to us.

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