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Acts of Deviation

Artistic Reflections on Memory and Identity
in Connection with Jewellery

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A study on (memory-related) deviation as an artistic strategy to reflect on whether objects are carriers of memories and how this relates to the formation and representation of identity.

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Preparing a Journey

Let's start with an assumption.

Let's assume that objects carry memories.



We are preparing for a journey that will take us to unknown places. Perhaps we will discover new things along the way. During the journey, we will have to learn sometimes to leave the path we had planned. We will have to learn to take risks to discover what we are looking for. And we will have to learn to lose control. In the end, we will have to learn to accept what has happened to us on the path we have taken. Perhaps we will realise in hindsight that we missed some things along the way, and perhaps we will have to plan a new journey, going part of the way again, this time turning at different crossroads, taking different risks. But before we set off, we should prepare ourselves well. So, let's assume that objects carry memories and start planning our journey on that assumption.

Introduction

I am by no means the first person to make the assumption that objects carry memories. According to cultural theorist Paul Connerton, objects can contain memories of their former owners.¹ One might even say they become charged with their memories. One of the clearest examples of this is probably the Museum of Broken Relationships (Zagreb, Croatia), which exhibits objects saturated with emotional memories. The museum was born out of the failed relationship of two former lovers who wanted neither to throw away the objects associated with their broken love nor to keep them (at least, not in the traditional sense). The result was an intriguing collection, presented to the public for the first time in 2006. At that point, it contained forty objects, with the initial collection (based on the failed relationship) having expanded through the addition of items given to the pair by friends

¹ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 87.

and strangers. Following its first presentation, the project grew quickly, and today the museum receives packages from all over the world.² A wedding dress stored in a jar, a wooden rooster, a key-shaped bottle opener, several shoes, rubber gloves, and various pieces of jewellery—the variety of objects shown in the publication *The Museum of Broken Relationships: Modern Love in 203 Everyday Objects* gives a small yet fascinating insight into the collection.³ For each object, a short story is included; reading these stories, it quickly becomes clear how emotionally charged the objects are.

The Museum of Broken Relationships illustrates something that lies at the heart of this investigation: the relationship between objects, memory, and identity is a special one. Objects can be carriers of memories—an assumption that, until recently, I always understood as fact—and, as this study illustrates, are part of what shapes our identity (see fig. 1).⁴

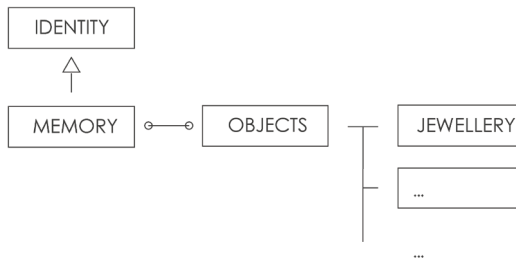


Figure 1: Illustration of the relationship between jewellery, memory, and identity adopted in this study.

² Olinka Vištica and Dražen Grubišić, *The Museum of Broken Relationships: Modern Love in 203 Everyday Objects* (London: W&N, 2017), 6–7.

³ For a more detailed insight, see Vištica and Grubišić, *The Museum of Broken Relationships*.

⁴ It is because of my committee member Colin Sterling that I now consider this to be an assumption rather than a fact.

By focusing on jewellery, this study will bring new perspectives to the relationship between objects, memory, and identity. Jewellery, often worn as an expression of identity, plays a special role in shaping our sense of self, and while jewellery is not the core focus of the Museum of Broken Relationships, it features heavily.

In this study, using deviation as an artistic strategy, I will explore and critique from different perspectives the assumption that objects carry memories. In doing so, this project will answer the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between jewellery, memory, and identity?
2. Specifically, what role does jewellery play in this relationship, and how can artistic strategies be used to explore this?
3. Do objects really carry memories? If so, what significance do memories contained in or connected to jewellery have for our identity?
4. What potential for misinterpretation or deliberate misuse can be found in the silence of objects?

To answer these questions, this study will explore (memory-related) deviation and its purposeful application as an artistic strategy. In addition, with and through material objects, this study will make visible the contradictory nature of the construction and discontinuity of identity and memory. The artistic strategy used in this project will therefore illustrate the unreliability of something that is fundamental to the basis of the self.

This research project assumes that deviation (particularly memory-related deviation) can be used as an artistic strategy to create art objects that stimulate reflection on the relationship between jewellery, memory, and identity. In the context of this project, deviation is defined

as a difference or change in comparison to a previous and/or planned state—a difference from what is normal, usual, expected, and/or objectively true. Deviation is a means to an end. Through a structured analysis of its principles and processes, the project will open new perspectives on the medium of jewellery. Before exploring this subject more deeply, I would like to give a brief overview of where and why this research originated.

I have an ambivalent relationship with jewellery; that much has always been clear. Certainly, in part, this study has grown out of that. Between 2008 and 2012, I trained as a goldsmith. Then, I studied jewellery design—firstly in Germany (2012–2017) and afterwards in Belgium (2019–2020). Between these two periods of study, I spent two and a half years working self-employed and had my first experience teaching. However—strangely, perhaps, given this seemingly straightforward path—I often doubted jewellery as a means of expression. Though I enjoyed most of my training, I was often frustrated by the public perception of the medium and unsure whether I should change careers. Silversmith, sculptor, product designer, restorer—I would often find myself at a crossroads, tempted. And yet, I only ever left the path a little. I have always been determined, sometimes even narrow-minded; that is probably what kept me going. But finally, a few years ago, I reached the point where I no longer wanted to make jewellery. I could only resolve this supposed crisis by reflecting on the medium of jewellery itself, alongside an examination of the topic of identity.

In 2019, as part of my master's studies, I explored European identity through cultural memory. My idea was to reflect artistically on certain aspects of collective memory. At the same time, this also meant an examination of the subjective perception of collectively experienced events. Through this process, I realised what many people already know: the perception of history is highly sub-

jective and characterised culturally. Events considered unforgettable or formative in one country may be overshadowed by much darker memories in another. The search for—and an artistic confrontation with—a European cultural memory was, therefore, a challenge.

Cultural memory is a subcategory of collective memory, a term coined by philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs and art historian Aby Warburg before being elaborated by historian Pierre Nora and (in the German context) humanities scholars Jan and Aleida Assmann.⁵ Collective memory can be understood as a reference point that helps with the formation of personal memory.⁶ According to Halbwachs, personal memory is always collectively influenced, which means it contains things that we have not personally experienced.⁷ Jan Assmann, who particularised the term together with his wife Aleida, subdivides collective memory into communicative memory and cultural memory.⁸ For Assmann, communicative memory is based solely on communication and, thus, is closely connected to everyday life, whereas cultural memory is very distant from everyday life.⁹ The importance of cultural memory arises from the fact that

⁵ Astrid Erl, *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen: Eine Einführung*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2017), 11.

⁶ Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, 3rd ed. (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2000), 35.

⁷ Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 35–36.

⁸ Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique*, Spring–Summer, No. 65 (1995): 126, <https://doi.org/10.2307/488538>.

⁹ Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 126–129.

it allows a group of people to shape their identity.¹⁰ Cultural memory is not inherited, but it must instead be actively kept alive.¹¹ My examination of these ideas as part of my master's studies ultimately led to an artistic project about places of remembrance and, subsequently, an examination of objects as carriers of memory.

According to Astrid Erll, a prominent figure within the field of cultural memory studies, collective memory needs storage media; in fact, preserving and passing on a shared past without such media is unthinkable for Erll.¹² She mentions basic media, such as orality and writing—printed books, radio, television, and the internet—and symbolic media, such as monuments or events of collective remembrance.¹³ Importantly, such media are by no means neutral; they shape the message.¹⁴

To answer the question of whether jewellery can be a medium of collective (or cultural) memory, we might turn again to the work of Jan Assmann, for whom cultural memory works in two different modes: substantiated memory, which refers to origins, and biographical memory, which refers to one's experiences. For Assmann, substantiated memory always works with linguistic and non-linguistic objectifications, or rather carriers. As examples, he cites rituals, myths, clothing, and jewellery. Due to their role in the formation of memory and identity, he

¹⁰ The idea that cultural memory is the preservation of a type of knowledge from which a particular group forms its identity can be found in the texts of Jan Assmann. He lists it as one of the characteristics of cultural memory. See Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 130.

¹¹ Jan Assmann, *Religion und kulturelles Gedächtnis*, 5th ed. (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2018), 53–54.

¹² Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen*, 135.

¹³ Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen*, 135.

¹⁴ Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen*, 136–137.

categorises them under the general term “memoria.”¹⁵ Jewellery, viewed as a form of non-linguistic objectification, or carrier, can therefore be seen as a storage medium, a carrier of memory, which, unlike many other cultural objects, has a very personal level.

Of course, one can argue that clothing or photographs also have this personal level, which is quite correct. However, there are many other cultural objects that lack it.

I felt the need to engage on a deeper level with this idea of jewellery as a storage medium. Of course, my interest in memory and identity continued to play a role in this. The fact that memory is so subjective—and yet forms the basis of our identity—presented an opportunity for deeper analysis. This train of thought was the starting point for the current study. To the four research questions given above, let us add a fifth:

5. How can artistic strategies be used to engage with the unreliability of something that is fundamental to our identity?

Later in the course of this research, the project would often focus on memories that are missing, unclear, or misremembered. This probably arose from my own mistrust of memories. Therefore, from the beginning of this study, it seemed sensible to use memory-related deviation as an artistic strategy because it can directly illustrate the connections and contradictions between jewellery, memory, and identity. I decided to broaden the topic and to look first at deviation as a whole, before building a bridge back to memory-related deviation. The study of deviation, which forms the first part of this project’s methodology, is intended to provide the research that follows with a framework, an input, and a starting point.

¹⁵ Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 51-52.

The originality of this study lies in its structured and applicable analysis of deviation—which brings new perspectives to the subfield of memory-related deviation—and its new artistic approach to the field of memory in connection with jewellery. The general use of deviation is not new, but the structured application and analysis of different forms of deviation presented in this study is. This study collects, applies, analyses, and structures deviation through the development of two archives to create comprehensible and applicable methods that can be used to generate future creative practice and research. Once this structure has been established, the findings are thematically linked to the topic of memory and translated into objects. Through a specific focus on the subfield of memory-related deviation, this research project stimulates reflection on the broader fields of memory research and memory studies and offers new perspectives on the medium of jewellery as a (potential) carrier of memory. Through an artistic reflection on memory, the project brings together various themes in such a way that the meaning of jewellery is both demonstrated and interpreted artistically. The focus on memory-related deviation forms the second part of this study's methodology. Ultimately, this research project combines an artistic interpretation of deviation as a methodology with a search for—and reflection on—identity and memory in jewellery.

While deviation could be investigated through various object categories, jewellery seems the most logical, not only due to my professional background in the medium. Although worn publicly in a way that is usually visible to others, jewellery is something very intimate. Because of this, it plays an important role among objects; it is linked to identity and its representation in a special way. Jewellery allows us to communicate with other people, and if the members of a community share cultural symbols, it

can also express status and affiliation.¹⁶ Furthermore, like all material objects, pieces of jewellery can be carriers of memory and therefore help to create identity.

Identity is often framed as the answer to the question “Who am I?”¹⁷ In this study, I provide a framework for investigating, classifying, and understanding the relevance of jewellery by showing its connections and interactions with identity and memory. The transition from memory to deviation is a logical one; when dealing with memory, it quickly becomes clear that every form of memory—including personal and cultural memories—is subject to various forms of deviation.

As described above, this study originated in ideas around memory-related deviation. To develop the project’s artistic strategy, it was first necessary to examine deviation in general before the focus shifted to the sub-field of memory-related deviation. This idea of starting with a broad focus and narrowing it down bit by bit was intended to allow room for as much inspiration as possible within a delimited area.

¹⁶ Among many others, the idea that jewellery allows us to communicate with other people can be found in a text by jewellery artist Norman Weber published in Christian Alandete, Frédéric Bodet, Caroline Broadhead, Christian Bontzolakis, Pierre-Damien Huyghe, François Seigneur, Yves Sabourin, Georges Vigarello, and Norman Weber, *Monika Brugger: Heimat* (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche Art Publishers, 2009), 95; the idea that jewellery can function as a marker of status and affiliation can be found in the work of numerous authors. One example is jewellery artist Karen Pontoppidan, who deals with the significance of markings worn on the body and illustrates this using the example of the wedding ring. See Karen Pontoppidan, “SCHMUCKISMUS” in *Schmuckismus*, ed. Angelika Nollert & Die neue Sammlung (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche Art Publishers, 2019), 11–12.

¹⁷ Heinz Abels, *Identität*, 3rd ed. (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2017), 196.

Through this study, we will look at various jewellery objects—from fast-fashion jewellery and second-hand finds to heirlooms and cultural treasures—and, via artistic examination, try to visualise the different narratives behind them. Following structured analysis, new perspectives on the relationship between jewellery, memory, and identity are opened up. Memory and deviation are the driving forces behind this research. They are inextricably linked, being both topic and methodology.

This research is practice-based; making objects was part of the process of investigating the research questions. An extensive review of the existing literature provides the theoretical framework for developing and categorising the practical results, but it must be clear that the aim of the study was not to achieve the same kind of theoretical elaboration that one might find in a thesis in memory studies. This is not a study on the subject of memory per se. While the fields of memory studies and memory research (like those of jewellery and identity) are touched upon in this thesis, they are not explored in depth. The purpose of summarising the existing research in these fields was to inspire and contextualise the artistic work and to give it the theoretical foundations necessary to develop and understand the objects created during this research project. The research presented here is artistic; it balances practical and theoretical processes. Structure and arrangement were key elements of this research project and provided a way to justify decisions logically. In some parts of this study, this approach may seem almost science-like. However, it is important to emphasise that this was always an artistic way of working.

One important (and the first) result of this research was *The Archive of Possibilities* (p. 114-143), which—together with *A Collection of the Existing* (p. 102-111)—helped to develop this project's general structure for applying deviation as an artistic strategy. *The Archive of Possibilities*

can be understood as the first part of the project's methodology and its first step in applying deviation. On the one hand, it is a collection of (currently) around 180 ring objects; on the other, it is a way of thinking, which offers a structured approach to unpredictable results. Further, this approach can and should contribute to setting creative processes in motion by allowing us to break free from familiar paths.

Drawing on the thought structures that emerge from the archive, the second part of the methodology focuses on the subfield of memory-related deviation through the creation of a variety of art objects. Here, I also make a distinction between objects whose design is based primarily on memory-related deviation and those that simply reflect it thematically. This second part of the methodology is probably more important than the first—it does not deal with the start of an artistic creation process but engages directly with the research questions guiding this study. While the first part of the methodology challenges me as a researcher and jewellery maker, the second examines the topics of this research project head-on.

I devised the terms that structure this project, such as *based on memory-related deviation* and *reflecting memory-related deviation*, to make the categorisation of objects and ideas easier to understand. Ultimately, this study aimed to reflect artistically on our initial assumption that objects carry memories—and on the five research questions—with the aim of creating a reproducible methodology, which, at least in part, is applicable outside the discussion of objects and memory.

At this point, it is useful to briefly define the understanding of reproducibility adopted in this study. Reproducibility should not be understood to mean that different artists would achieve the same result when applying the strategies laid out here. Instead, the point is that the thought processes behind the study are relevant outside the limits

of this research and that the instructions for action that were developed in the course of the study are therefore repeatable elsewhere. However, the results will always be—as is typical of art—different when applied by different artists.

In this thesis, the reader is guided through seven main chapters, each of which is divided into sub-chapters. The structure of the text and certain decisions regarding its layout are described in detail in *How to Read this Text* (p. 29-32).

At the outset, we will examine the topic of jewellery (p. 35-53), define what falls under the term, and take a look at some important historical changes that have influenced the perception of its relevance up to the present. From there, we will draw on the work of psychoanalyst Tilmann Habermas to build a bridge from jewellery to personal objects in general before returning to jewellery as a specific, personal object. This will underline jewellery's significant connections to the fields of identity and memory. At the end of this section of the thesis, a subdivision is introduced that will become relevant for understanding the objects created later on. Examples of other artists' work are given here to make this subdivision clearer.

The sub-chapter on memory (p. 54-72) begins with a definition and description of personal and cultural memory. According to Jan Assmann, cultural and individual memory—like collective and individual identity—are interdependent.¹⁸ Therefore, it is important to highlight both terms once more. The sub-chapter then deals with forms of deviation in personal and cultural memory, mainly referring to the work of Julia Shaw, Daniel Schacter, Aleida

¹⁸ Assmann, *Religion und kulturelles Gedächtnis*, 52–53.

Assmann, and Paul Connerton.¹⁹ Finally, it deals with the assumption that objects are carriers of memory. Here, the most important trains of thought are underpinned by examples of artistic practice.

The thesis then goes on to look at the topic of identity (p. 73-85), defining the concept in detail before dealing with the different forms of identity considered in this study: cultural and personal. The Metzler lexicon and the work of Egyptologist and cultural historian Jan Assmann and sociologists Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper provide the framework for exploring cultural identity. Meanwhile, the work of sociologist Heinz Abels and philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah is drawn on to elucidate personal identity.

In the sub-chapter on deviation (p. 89-99, 102-143), we begin with a general definition of deviation before moving on to a detailed explanation of *A Collection of the Existing* (p. 102-111) and *The Archive of Possibilities* (p. 114-143). Also, the strategy developed through this project for applying deviation as an artistic strategy is laid out.

Finally, we delve into memory-related deviation as an artistic strategy (*Memory-Related Deviation*, p. 155-281, 284-291), which is explained in more depth and detail using a number of objects developed during this research project.

¹⁹ See Julia Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis: Wie unser Gehirn Erinnerungen fälscht*, trans. Christa Broermann (Munich: Wilhelm Heyne Verlag, 2018); Daniel L. Schacter, *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind, and the Past* (New York: Basic Books, 1996); Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (Munich: C.H. Beck oHG, 2018); Connerton, *How Societies Remember*.

Topics such as structure (p. 100-101), the meaning of material (p. 146-149), touch (p. 150-151), smell (p. 282-283), and the meaning of making (p. 294-297) are touched on where necessary. The study draws to a close by reflecting on how this work could be continued and further developed in the future.

To conclude, it is important to highlight once more that this research project takes place in the field of contemporary (art) jewellery and objects, starting from a craft background and using various media and practices, such as glass, metal, ceramics, and printmaking. It is not always clear into which category the objects I created as part of this research project fall. References and connections can be made to the fields of crafts, jewellery, art, and design. In order to clarify these definitions somewhat, the sub-chapter *Jewellery* (p. 35-53) discusses the categories that I have coined to account for the objects created as part of this study.

How to Read this Text

This thesis is divided into seven chapters, creating a narrative structure and logic. Each chapter has a number of sub-chapters. To emphasise the narrative structure, neither the chapters nor the sub-chapters have numbers. In some of the chapters, from time to time, an additional column is inserted, containing either annotations or notes that refer to the main text. The annotations are small thought inserts, which interrupt the continuous text (see fig. 2). The notes that are inserted, which are also not part of the main text, are to be seen as longer annotations (see fig. 3). They touch on topics in brief terms and initiate trains of thought that are related to the main text. However, they do not aim to cover their topics in detail. For this reason, they are presented separately from the body of the thesis.

this research project and provided a way to justify decisions. Arguably, however, parts of the work, this approach may seem almost superfluous. However, it is important to emphasize that this was always an artistic way of working. One important and the first result of this research was the choice of readability (p. 47-70), which, together with a collection of the findings (p. 45-46), helped to develop this project's general structure for applying deviation as an artistic strategy. The choice of readability can be understood as the first part of the project's methodology, and as the first step in applying deviation. On the one hand, it is a collection of concepts around the key objects, on the other, it is a way of thinking, which offers a critical approach to a specific result. Further, this approach can and should contribute to ongoing creative processes, thereby allowing us to break free from familiar paths. Drawing on the thought structures that emerge from the archive, the second part of the methodology focuses on the subject of memory-related deviation through the creation of a variety of art objects. Here, I also make a distinction between objects whose designs have explicitly or memory-related deviation and those that simply reflect it thematically. The second part of the methodology is probably more important than the first. It does not deal with the start of an artistic creation process but engages directly with the research questions guiding the study. While the first part of the methodology challenges me as a researcher and poet/reader, the second examines the topics of the research project head-on. I devised the terms that structure this project, such as <i>historical memory-related deviation</i> and <i>epitaphic memory-related deviation</i>, to make the categorization of objects and ideas easier to understand. I think, this study should reflect critically on our initial assumption that objects are memories, and on the first research question – with the aim of creating a repeatable methodology, which, at least in part, is applicable outside the discussion of objects and memory.	<i>At this point, it is useful to briefly review the understanding of epitaphic objects in the study. Epitaphic objects tend to be used to reveal that different artists would achieve the same result when applying the strategies but not here. Instead, the point is that the shared processes behind the work and the way of thinking of the research and that the intention for action that were developed in the course of the study are themselves repeatable elements. However, the study will always be in a spirit of self-critique when applied to different artists.</i> In the thesis, the reader is guided through seven main chapters, each of which is divided into sub-chapters. The structure of the text and certain decisions regarding its layout are described in detail below to read the text (p. 83-84). In the context, we will examine the topic of poetry (p. 12-25), define what falls under the term, and take a look at some important historical changes that have influenced the perception of its relevance up to the present. From there, we will draw on the work of psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud to build a bridge from poetry to personal objects in general before returning to poetry as a specific, personal object. This will include the poetry's significant connections to the fields of identity and memory. At the end of this section of the thesis, a definition is provided that will become relevant for understanding the objects created later on. Examples of other artists' work are given here to make the definition clearer. The sub-chapter on memory (p. 22) begins with a definition and description of personal and cultural memory. According to Jan Assmann, cultural and individual memory – the collective and individual identity – are inseparable.¹⁸ Therefore, it is important to highlight both terms once more. The sub-chapter then deals with forms of deviation in personal and cultural memory, mainly referring to the work of Aki Kaurismäki.
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Figure 2: Double page with general annotations highlighted in orange.

the objects created during this research project and the subdivision of these objects. Smell and the meaning of making are also touched upon here. *Embracing What Happened* concludes and reflects on the research results and the process itself. *Things We Did Not See* looks at what was left out of this research and opens up perspectives on the future of this project and related work that might develop from it. *Waving Goodbye* is the final chapter. It ends with a farewell and thanks all those who have supported this project along the way.

It is important to emphasise that there are, broadly speaking, two types of writing in this dissertation. A part of the continuous text is mostly written using a standard academic tone, using the first person (either plural or singular) as little as possible. This text serves primarily to clarify the context of the research project and contains little in the way of personal perspectives. In part, it could also be seen as a literature review. However, in the introduction (*Preparing a Journey*), in the narrative introductions at the beginning of each chapter, in the concluding paragraphs at the end of each (sub-)chapter, and in the section that describes and categorises the objects created during the research, a more personal style of writing is employed. The annotations, which are not part of the main text, are always written in a more personal style, although not necessarily using the first person. The notes (*Structure*, *The Meaning of Material*, *Touch*, *Smell*, and *The Meaning of Making*) use both styles of writing.

The combination of these two writing styles was chosen to do justice to the academic context in which this artistic research project takes place while also emphasising the difference between this thesis and some more traditional academic research. Many of the decisions taken and classifications made in the course of this project are subjective, and another person may well have arrived at completely different decisions based on the same facts.

However, the methodologies developed in this study are intended to be reproducible in order that they are—at least partly—also suitable for teaching.²¹

²¹ I would like to emphasise once again that the understanding of “reproducible” here refers only to the methodologies and methods, but not to the results of their application. The point is that a logical system of actions is developed which - when applied by different individuals - offers enough flexibility to produce a variety of results.

Setting Out on the Road



Let's set out on the road, assuming that objects are practically saturated by memories, as if the memories were something physical.

Let's go one step further and say that identity is built from these memories.

Let's then conclude that objects are physical carriers of identity.

We have planned our journey. We're following the route. First, let's visit the things you definitely have to see—the sights, so to speak. Let's visit the fields of jewellery, memory, and identity.

Jewellery

In considering the relationship between memories and objects, we might focus on a variety of object categories. So, why choose jewellery? In the following this sub-chapter will try to answer that question. It will give a definition of the term itself and offer an insight into important changes in the history and meaning of jewellery through to its perception and relevance today, focusing in particular on contemporary (art) jewellery. Furthermore, jewellery's connection to identity will be made clear by elaborating on personal objects in general (as defined by psychoanalyst Tilmann Habermas) and jewellery as a specific, personal object in particular. The sub-chapter ends by making a linguistic distinction between the terms *jewellery*, *jewellery-related object*, and *body-related object*. The aim of this distinction is not to establish a hierarchy but to offer clarity with regard to the main function of the different types of objects referenced in this thesis, as well as the different types of objects developed as part of this research project. The distinction will be illustrated using examples of work by various contemporary artists.

According to Dutch art historian and jewellery specialist Marjan Unger, the term jewellery is defined as follows: "A piece of jewellery is an object that is worn on the human body, as a decorative and symbolic addition to its

outward appearance."²² Unger's definition works well here because, on the one hand, it includes the human body as a measure, and, on the other, it is not limited to the decorative function but also emphasises the symbolic potential of jewellery. This study sticks to Unger's definition in a rather strict way, which will be clarified further at the end of this chapter.

Jewellery is probably as old as humanity and—according to Unger—is an expression "of the fundamental human need for decoration and ornamentation."²³ It provides information about the wearer's identity and was (and still is) found in every culture on every continent.²⁴ Early pieces of jewellery probably consisted mainly of natural materials.²⁵ Unfortunately, there is little evidence left of those. One of the oldest documented pieces of jewellery are snail shells and seashells that have been worked in such a way that it can be assumed that they were worn on the human body; these pieces are estimated to be up to 82,000 years old.²⁶

While there are certainly several events in the (at least) 82,000-year history of jewellery that deserve to be highlighted, this text will focus on one particular period of time, which, shaped by two events, has had a significant influence on the perception of jewellery to this day. His-

²² Marjan Unger, *Jewellery in Context: A multidisciplinary framework for the study of jewellery*, trans. Ton Brouwers (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche Art Publishers, 2019), 18.

²³ Unger, *Jewellery in Context*, 11.

²⁴ Maren Eichhorn-Johannsen & Adelheid Rasche, "A Note on this Publication" in *25,000 Years of Jewelry*, ed. Maren Eichhorn-Johannsen and Adelheid Rasche (Munich, London, New York: Prestel, 2021), 11.

²⁵ Cornelia Holzach, "25,000 Years of Jewelry: An Introduction" in *25,000 Years of Jewelry*, ed. Maren Eichhorn-Johannsen and Adelheid Rasche (Munich, London, New York: Prestel, 2021), 13.

²⁶ Holzach, "25,000 Years of Jewelry: An Introduction," 13.

torically, large and important jewellery was mostly worn by men, intended to emphasise their status.²⁷ Examples can be found throughout the ages, from Egyptian signet rings to medieval chains of office, papal rings, and the crowns of emperors and kings.²⁸ However, the eighteenth century marked a turning point, due in particular to the French Revolution, which introduced the idea that clothing should be an expression of individuality and not a symbol of class.²⁹ The eighteenth century can therefore be seen as a shift in how people thought about clothing; suddenly worrying about this problematic tool within the construction and representation of identity.³⁰

²⁷ Unger, *Jewellery in Context*, 62.

²⁸ In ancient Egypt, signet rings were worn exclusively by pharaohs and priests as a sign of their high status. The rings were used to seal documents or certify the purity of sacrificial animals. For more details, see Anna Beatriz Chadour and Rüdiger Joppien, *Schmuck II: Fingerringe* (Köln: Bachem, 1985), 15; today's chains of office are an echo of the historical "s-collars" or chains of honour such as those worn by Henry VI. For more details, see Anna Beatriz Chadour and Rüdiger Joppien, *Schmuck I: Hals-, Ohr-, Arm- und Gewandschmuck* (Köln: Bachem, 1985), 72; papal rings, or "fisherman's rings," are rings that are made for and worn by a pope with the purpose of stamping and sealing papal documents. To this day, each pope receives his own ring, which is usually destroyed in a special ceremony following his death and connected to the inauguration of a new pope. For more details, see Sylvie Lambert, *The Ring. Design: Past and Present* (Crans-Près-Céligny: RotoVision, 1998), 69; one of the most famous crowns in Europe, which is still in use for coronation ceremonies, is the British St Edward's Crown. It was made in 1661 and consists of a solid gold frame which is set with numerous gemstones. The crown weighs an incredible 2.07 kg. For more details, see "St. Edward's Crown," Royal Collection Trust, accessed 16 July 2024, <https://www.rct.uk/collection/31700/st-edwards-crown>.

²⁹ Aileen Ribeiro, *Fashion in the French Revolution* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1988), 141.

³⁰ Jennifer M. Jones, *Sexing la mode: Gender, fashion and commercial culture in old regime France* (Oxford/New York: Berg, 2004), xvii.

Styles of adornment used by the upper classes and considered adequate before the revolution were no longer acceptable, and, as a consequence, men banned jewellery from their bodies.³¹ Men's clothing became simple and sleek in design, while women's was enhanced with luxurious fabrics and accessories.³² New ideas of femininity that arose during the revolution were combined with commercial developments.³³ As a result, the image of men changed, and extravagant jewellery was now seen as feminine.³⁴

Another change took place at the same time that also influenced the perception of jewellery. In the eighteenth century, a hierarchy began to emerge within the field of art that led to a separation that placed painting, sculpture, music, and poetry higher than the applied arts, which are connected to the domain of crafts; this gap increased during the nineteenth century.³⁵ Both of these developments strongly influenced feelings towards and perceptions of jewellery.

Despite jewellery having fulfilled a wide variety of functions throughout history, including as a status symbol, a reward, a sign of belonging or superstition, a love token, and many more, today, many people perceive jewellery

31 Ted Polhemus, *Body Styles*, revised edition (Independently published, 2018), 141–142.

32 Ribeiro, *Fashion in the French Revolution*, 141.

33 Jones, *Sexing la mode*, 75.

34 Pontoppidan, "SCHMUCKISMUS," 13–14.

35 Unger, *Jewellery in Context*, 34.

as unimportant.³⁶ Pharaohs expressed their divine power with signet rings, representatives wore rings to prove who sent them, mourners put on special jewellery to express their grief, spouses showed (and still show) their allegiance to each other through rings, and this is just a small

³⁶ Among many other authors, this idea can be found in the work of art historian and jewellery expert Liesbeth den Besten. For more details, see Liesbeth den Besten, "The Life of Jewellery Collections in Museums: The Netherlands, a Case Study" in *Documents on Contemporary Crafts No. 4: On Collecting*, ed. Andre Gali (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche Art Publishers, 2017), 51.

selection from hundreds of possible examples.³⁷ Nevertheless, the role of jewellery seems to have declined to the point that it is publicly perceived as a mere fashion item. This is underlined by the art historian and jewellery expert Liesbeth den Besten. According to den Besten, today, jewellery is still perceived mostly as something feminine, which “has little or no significance” in public thinking.³⁸ She also states that historic pieces of jewellery were far more important and integrated into daily

³⁷ In Ancient Egypt, signet rings were reserved for pharaohs and priests and emphasised their status, power, and dignity. For more details, see Chadour and Joppien, *Schmuck II*, 15; one form of ring that is assumed to have had this function is the so-called papal rings of the fifteenth century. Their exact function remains unclear, but it is assumed that they were worn to prove the credentials of couriers. The rings were of low material value, which made them unattractive to thieves. Physical examples of these rings can be found in the collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum (UK), the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore (US), and the Schmuckmuseum in Pforzheim (DE), among others. For more details, see “Ring,” Victoria & Albert Museum, accessed on 16 July 2024, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O123230/ring-unknown/>; jewellery worn by mourners originated in the late Middle Ages. Due to a changing relationship with death, special mourning jewellery and clothing emerged in Europe, starting in England. The pieces were intended to remind people of their own mortality. For more details, see Svenia Schneider, “Memorial, Friendship, and Mourning Jewelry” in *25,000 Years of Jewelry*, ed. Maren Eichhorn-Johannsen and Adelheid Rasche (Munich, London, New York: Prestel, 2013), 236; the earliest evidence of a ring being given to the bride-to-be as a promise of marriage dates back to the second century BC. At this time, such rings were probably primarily made of iron. From the second century AD, the gold engagement ring became established. Until the Middle Ages, however, fidelity was only pledged unilaterally. It was not until the thirteenth century that a mutual exchange of rings became established. For more details, see Chadour and Joppien, *Schmuck II*, 16.

³⁸ den Besten, “The Life of Jewellery Collections in Museums: The Netherlands, a Case Study,” 51.

life than contemporary jewellery is today.³⁹ It appears as though the meaning of jewellery has been largely lost.

So, why should one bother with jewellery? Why conduct research in visual arts in a niche field that is publicly perceived as unimportant, unconnected from, and irrelevant to daily life? To clarify the relevance of jewellery as a means of forming and expressing one's identity, it is important to expand the discussion a little to include personal objects and their significance in general. To do that, this section will mainly refer to the work of Tilmann Habermas, and particularly his book *Geliebte Objekte: Symbole und Instrumente der Identitätsbildung*.⁴⁰ Habermas is a German psychologist, professor, and author of a variety of books and articles on certain topics of psychology. In *Geliebte Objekte*, he looks at the psychological significance of personal objects. According to him, a personal object is defined as a thing that an individual assigns to themselves and that evokes a personal reaction from that individual.⁴¹ He also speaks of the significance of personal objects that are constantly carried with us, stating that they ensure that others identify the carrier through/with the objects and that they themselves do the same.⁴² Things that are seen together with a person provide information about that person;⁴³ they become identity objects. It is important to note that identity objects are not only used to show identity to others but also for self-communication, by reassuring oneself of a certain identity.⁴⁴ Habermas gives the example of badg-

³⁹ den Besten, "The Life of Jewellery Collections in Museums: The Netherlands, a Case Study," 51.

⁴⁰ Tilmann Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte: Symbole und Instrumente der Identitätsbildung*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2012).

⁴¹ Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte*, 494.

⁴² Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte*, 162.

⁴³ Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte*, 245.

⁴⁴ Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte*, 257.

es, stickers, or buttons as the simplest types of identity objects.⁴⁵ With this, he helps us to build a bridge back to jewellery; according to Habermas, jewellery can be considered a category of object that primarily serves to publicly communicate identity.⁴⁶

He is not alone in this opinion. In *Sammeln: Ein philosophischer Versuch*, German philosopher Manfred Sommer elaborates on collecting and other related topics.⁴⁷ The book also contains a very short section on jewellery, in which Sommer emphasises that jewellery objects are collectors' items that, being worn, can be observed constantly. This means that not only the jewellery itself but also the wearer is observed, transferring the onlooker's admiration from the object to the wearer.⁴⁸ Taking this idea further, this gives pieces of jewellery a special position as items that mark our identity. For Unger, also, jewellery is a means of marking and expressing one's identity.⁴⁹

There is a long list of scholars and makers who agree with this. Jewellery artist Karen Pontoppidan describes jewellery as a means of self-identification; according to her, it enables social flexibility through the possibility of adopting different identities. She also sees jewellery as having the potential to express one's convictions. Furthermore, for her, jewellery is an expression of social construction; it can be a marker of status or enable the expression of group membership.⁵⁰

Given all this, the connection between jewellery and

⁴⁵ Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte*, 247.

⁴⁶ Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte*, 459.

⁴⁷ Manfred Sommer, *Sammeln: Ein philosophischer Versuch* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002).

⁴⁸ Sommer, *Sammeln*, 66.

⁴⁹ Unger, *Jewellery in Context*, 69 and 163.

⁵⁰ Pontoppidan, "SCHMUCKISMUS," 12.

identity is clear. Jewellery enables us to show who we are (or who we want to be) and what we stand for (or what we want others to think we stand for). It allows us to express our identity, both in public and to ourselves.

The functions of jewellery are diverse and have different relevance depending on whether we look at them historically, from the perspective of indigenous societies, or from the perspective of today's so-called Western world. In *Body Styles*, the American anthropologist Ted Polhemus begins his list of the functions of adornment with the following:

- 1) Making the individual more attractive
- 2) Weapon in the battlefield
- 3) Protection against ghosts and spirits⁵¹

From today's perspective, this seems to refer more to indigenous, or at least more traditionally rooted, societies. Therefore, Polhemus lists five additional functions with which (according to him) people in the so-called Western world identify more than the first three:

- 4) Showing off wealth
- 5) Sign of the relationship
- 6) Indicator for mood
- 7) Indicator for sexual intentions
- 8) Sign of personal identity⁵²

Whether Polhemus's list fully reflects the functions of jewellery is debatable. However, it features a number of points that are important for this study. He suggests that adornment (including jewellery) is a powerful medium of expression and communication;⁵³ think of the wedding

⁵¹ Polhemus, *Body Styles*, 105–108.

⁵² Polhemus, *Body Styles*, 109–110.

⁵³ Polhemus, *Body Styles*, 115 and 120.

ring, for example, or political buttons, extravagant art jewellery, medals, or other wearable awards. We can therefore agree that jewellery is an important means of showing one's identity. Additionally, jewellery can carry and/or represent collective, or cultural memory and help to form cultural identity. In order to better understand this, the sub-chapter *Memory* (p. 54-72) will elaborate further on objects as carriers of memories, and the sub-chapter *Identity* (p. 73-85) will deal with the meaning and formation of (cultural) identity before connecting it back to jewellery.

The next step is to build a bridge to the field in which this research is conducted, namely, that of contemporary (art) jewellery and objects. Generally speaking, contemporary jewellery is an elusive term that can encompass both global brands and small-scale artists and includes everything that reflects the spirit of the times. New Zealand art historian and curator Damian Skinner describes body orientation, wearing (in most cases), the definition as craft, influences from art and design, as well as the affiliation to the visual arts as characteristics of contemporary jewellery, which in his opinion most practitioners in this field would agree with.⁵⁴

Following this definition, the field appears to be very wide. The explanations given for the significance and perception of contemporary jewellery in this study in no way attempt to illuminate the entire industry. Instead, this research project focuses on the comparatively small field of artistic author jewellery, also called (contemporary) art jewellery, and is linked to the field of contemporary objects. This focus seems sensible, given that I am active in this field, and the objects created as part of this re-

⁵⁴ Damian Skinner, "Thinking about Contemporary Jewelry," in *Contemporary Jewelry in Perspective*, ed. Damian Skinner (New York: Lark Jewelry & Beading, 2013), 17.

search project are also located here, or at least in related fields. The term “art” (or “author”) jewellery describes “pieces of jewelry that were made with artistic intent.”⁵⁵ It goes under various names, with slightly varying definitions. For the purposes of this study, the term is narrowed down to indicate pieces that are usually produced as one-offs or in small editions, that are sold through galleries (or by the artists themselves), and in which classic hierarchies of materials (common among goldsmiths) are often completely ignored. Given that those working in the field of art jewellery often see it as existing within the fine arts, we also occasionally come across objects here that are not wearable but are still considered jewellery- or body-related. Therefore, to conclude this sub-chapter, I will introduce a linguistic distinction to add to the aforementioned definitions, which will help to subdivide the objects referenced during this thesis (including those objects made as part of this research project).

In contrast to many people in the contemporary art jewellery scene, I have a somewhat narrow view of the term jewellery; I would therefore like to make a linguistic distinction that is important to me and which is in no way intended to establish a hierarchy between the separate terms. On the contrary, it is intended to create clarity around the intention and possible use of the objects defined by the terms.

As stated, this text follows Marjan Unger's definition of jewellery in a rather strict way. Therefore, not all artworks developed during this research project will be defined as jewellery. In the following, I make a distinction be-

⁵⁵ “SMALL ART PIECES - AUTHOR JEWELLERY IN THE DECEMBER AUCTION,” Neumeister, accessed on 1 November 2024, <https://www.neumeister.com/en/magazine/magazinesarchive/no1223magazinedecember-auction2023/highlightsschmuckdezember2023/authorsjewellery/>.

tween the terms jewellery, jewellery-related object, and body-related object. Within this distinction, the term jewellery represents everything that fulfils Marjan Unger's definition: jewellery has to be a wearable, decorative addition to the body and have a symbolic function.⁵⁶ The symbolic function seems crucial here. British jewellery artist Lin Cheung describes jewellery as "a medium through which ideas and concepts can be presented."⁵⁷ Jewellery is indeed a medium of personal or cultural expression, a form of sculpture that consciously incorporates the body and, thus, touches the viewer emotionally. In contrast, while jewellery needs the body—and, according to Unger, its main shapes are also defined by the shape of the human body, or rather, by where on the body it shall be worn—an object stands for itself, without needing anything else.⁵⁸

What I would like to define separately are jewellery-related objects and body-related objects; most of the objects created as part of this research project will fall under these terms. I define jewellery-related objects as those objects that, visually, (mainly) refer to (classical) jewellery but which are clearly not wearable, meaning that they do not have proportions that are designed to fit on, or stand in relation to, the human body. Finally, anything that, visually, (mainly) refers to the body but which cannot actually be worn (in a practical sense) will be referred to as a body-related object. Body-related objects often give the impression of being wearable to awaken the idea in the viewer that they could be placed on the body, but they are not wearable in a practical sense. The following two examples should clarify this distinction.

⁵⁶ Unger, *Jewellery in Context*, 18.

⁵⁷ Lin Cheung, *Tomfoolery: Objects and Jewellery by Lin Cheung*, (London: Tomfoolery Publishing UK, 2014), 5.

⁵⁸ The idea that jewellery's main shapes are defined by the shape of the human body can be found in Unger, *Jewellery in Context*, 65.

Jewellery-related object

Urban Jewellery (2009), Liesbet Bussche

Liesbet Bussche (b. 1980) is a Belgian artist and researcher who lives and works in the Netherlands.⁵⁹ She is known mostly for her urban jewellery pieces, which often use archetypical jewels as a starting point. In her work, Bussche looks at the city with the eye of a jewellery artist and tries to emphasise and/or open up new perspectives on what others tend to overlook. In her *Urban Jewellery* installations highlighted here (see fig. 4), which she started in Amsterdam as part of her graduation show at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy (2009), she turns objects from the city into giant pieces of jewellery.⁶⁰ One particularly interesting piece shows boundary spheres located in the urban space, which she transforms into oversized pearl earrings by adding giant ear studs. Bussche's objects clearly refer to jewellery; however, the human body is not directly included in her work. Instead, she searches for the jewels contained in the city, often working with the traditional and recognisable shapes of jewellery. Her pieces therefore serve as a clear example of what I term jewellery-related objects.

⁵⁹ "CV Liesbet Bussche," Liesbet Bussche, accessed on 17 January 2024, http://liesbetbussche.com/pic/PDF's/CV_LiesbetBussche_August2021_EN.pdf.

⁶⁰ The information that *Urban Jewellery* was part of the graduation exhibition at Gerrit Rietveld Academy can be found at "Liesbet Bussche," Françoise van den Bosch Foundation, accessed on 14 January 2024, <https://francoisevandenbosch.nl/en/liesbet-bussche-2/>.



Figure 4: *Urban Jewellery (Earrings)* (2009), Liesbet Bussche; Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Body-related object

Handspiegel (1982), Otto Künzli

Otto Künzli (b. 1948) is a Swiss jewellery designer and one of the most important representatives of the field of contemporary art jewellery.⁶¹ His work is characterised by an extremely high standard of both craftsmanship and artistry. Künzli was a professor at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Munich for over twenty years, where he influenced generations of jewellery designers.⁶²

⁶¹ For the artist's biographical information, see "Otto Künzli," Danner Stiftung, accessed on 22 February 2025, <https://danner-stiftung.de/kuenstler/otto-kunzli>.

⁶² Florian Hufnagl, ed., *Otto Künzli: Das Buch* (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche Art Publishers, 2013), 8–9.

Künzli's *Handspiegel* (see figs. 5-6) serves as an example of what I term a body-related object. The piece, which is somehow performative, was only worn once and was captured in a photograph.⁶³ The image shows Künzli holding a small amount of mercury, which collects in the centre of his hand. Mercury is a toxic heavy metal. Due to its harmful vapours, contact should be avoided at all costs. However, Künzli's work needs the body, but at the same time, it harms it undeniably and is therefore basically unwearable (apart from the self-destructive act that Künzli himself performs while taking the photograph). Without the carrier, the piece does not exist (or, at least, cannot attain its full meaning). It therefore serves as a clear example of a body-related object.

Figures 5-6: *Handspiegel* (1982), Otto Künzli.



⁶³ Hufnagl, *Otto Künzli: Das Buch*, 64–65.

In reality, the distinction between the three categories—jewellery, jewellery-related objects, and body-related objects—is not usually as clear as it is in the examples above. Nevertheless, it is important to understand and differentiate the different functions of the object categories as they pursue divergent ideas. Jewellery is intended to adorn the wearer, while body-related objects place the body in relation to a sculpture, and jewellery-related objects place a sculpture in relation to jewellery. Here, I will add one more example to illustrate an object that falls between two categories, as they occur far more frequently in reality.

Body-related object/Jewellery

Necklace (2016), Lisa Walker

Lisa Walker (b. 1967) is a New Zealand jewellery artist who is known mostly for her unconventional use of existing objects and for challenging the concepts of jewellery and wearability.⁶⁴ She originally trained “in the tradition of goldsmithing.”⁶⁵ Today, however, she works with a variety of materials. Her piece *Necklace* (2016) (see fig. 7) consists of six taxidermied male ducklings threaded onto a string. The fact that they are male is important; industrially, they are seen as unwanted by-products that would normally be destroyed and disposed of, as Liesbeth den Besten highlights in a text about the necklace.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ For the artist's biographical information, see “CV,” Lisa Walker, accessed on 12 March 2024, <http://www.lisawalker.de/home.html>.

⁶⁵ “Lisa Walker's Biography,” The Arts Foundation, accessed on 22 February 2024, <https://www.thearts.co.nz/artists/lisa-walker>.

⁶⁶ Liesbeth den Besten, “Jewellery Making,” in *Contemporary Jewellery in Context: A Handshake Blueprint*, ed. Peter Deckers (Stuttgart: Arnold-sche Art Publishers, 2017), 37.

Instead, Walker uses them in this confrontational necklace, in which the emotional contrast between cuteness and horror is visceral. It is difficult to imagine anyone wearing this piece, even though it is theoretically wearable. Categorising Walker's *Necklace* is not straightforward; it tends towards the category of body-related objects, but at the same time, it is theoretically wearable and is thus very close to the category of jewellery. While the object relates to the body and makes the viewer think about the possibility of wearing it, it does not appear to have been designed to be worn.



Figure 7: *Necklace* (2016), Lisa Walker.

While others may opt to use different categories, the subdivision outlined above is relevant for this study because

the objects listed all originate from the field of jewellery. However, their relation to the body and connection to jewellery differ significantly.

How does the relationship between object, memory, and identity change when we look at jewellery-related and body-related objects? Jewellery draws attention to the wearer; it can be seen as a means of communication. Both jewellery and body-related objects present an opportunity to connect artistic creation with the body and thereby create emotional connections. However, due to a certain degree of unwearability, body-related objects are not as closely connected to (personal) identity and (personal) memory as pieces of jewellery are. Nevertheless, they still allow for statements about identity and memory, using their relation to the body as a tool to involve the viewer conceptually by asking, for example, "What if I wore this object?" In contrast to this are jewellery-related objects, which open new perspectives and viewpoints, bringing jewellery to fields to which it is not usually connected. By completely excluding the body, jewellery-related objects are more suited to general statements without involving the viewer on a direct, emotional level, since no one will ever ask themselves, "What if I wore this object?"

Regarding the physical objects that were created as part of this research project, there are few (classic) pieces of jewellery that follow Unger's definition. Instead, most are "borderline" objects that move between the categories of jewellery-related object, body-related object, and (contemporary) art jewellery; they attempt to revive the perception that jewellery is socially and culturally relevant, as well as relevant to discussions of identity.

This excursion into the field of jewellery has provided us with an overview of its cultural significance historically, as well as its potential for storing memories and expressing

identity. As a carrier of memory, jewellery operates on a very personal level, which appears to be more closely linked to identity than many other types of objects. We also established an understanding of the field of art jewellery, which was defined as pieces produced with an artistic intent as one-offs or small editions, sold through galleries or by the artists themselves, and ignoring classic material hierarchies. Finally, this section also introduced the distinction between jewellery, body-related objects, and jewellery-related objects. Following the work of Unger, jewellery was defined as “an object that is worn on the human body, as a decorative and symbolic addition to its outward appearance.”⁶⁷ In contrast, jewellery-related objects were defined as objects that, visually speaking, mainly refer to jewellery. Conversely, body-related objects were defined as mainly referring to the body. Both of these object categories refer to objects that are not classified as jewellery because they are not practically wearable. However, it was also clarified that in reality (in the field of art jewellery), such clear borders between categories are rare, and there are many “borderline” objects that walk the line between at least two of the aforementioned terms. Regarding their relationship with identity and memory, jewellery and body-related objects connect artistic creation with the body, while jewellery-related objects open new perspectives by bringing jewellery to fields to which it is not usually connected. This distinction will be exemplified later on by the objects created during this research project.

⁶⁷ Unger, *Jewellery in Context*, 18.

Memory

According to memory expert Daniel Schacter, we only remember a small part of everything we experience in the course of our lives.⁶⁸ Yet, memories form the basis of the ideas we have about ourselves.⁶⁹ Paradoxical when you think about it. The following section will provide a detailed summary of topics from the field of memory studies and memory research that are relevant to this study. First, it will offer a definition of the term memory and clarify which type of memory—personal and/or collective—is being discussed. Further, this section will also look at deviations in both personal and cultural memory and how they can be structured. A number of different approaches will be highlighted here. In particular, the work of Daniel Schacter and Julia Shaw is consulted for explanations of personal memory, and the work of Jan and Aleida Assmann, as well as Abby Smith Rumsey and Paul Conner, is referred to regarding cultural memory. Other authors will be consulted where necessary. Finally, the relationship between objects and memories—and objects as potential carriers of memory—will be examined. Here, the possibility of the unintentional misinterpretation and the deliberate misuse of objects as potential carriers of memory will also be addressed.

The cultural historian Abby Smith Rumsey describes memory as the entire knowledge that is acquired during a lifetime, which is not preprogrammed in the DNA.⁷⁰ A more general definition might describe memory either as the ability to remember or as something that is remem-

⁶⁸ Schacter, *Searching for Memory*, 16.

⁶⁹ Schacter, *Searching for Memory*, 7.

⁷⁰ Abby Smith Rumsey, *When We Are No More* (London/New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2016), 11.

bered.⁷¹ According to Rumsey, memories are seldom fixed; instead, they change and weaken over time.⁷²

The English word memory corresponds in German to the words Gedächtnis and Erinnerung (or, in Dutch, to geheugen and herinnering). Gedächtnis refers to the ability to store experiences in the brain and recall them to consciousness.¹ Erinnerung, on the other hand, refers to an experience recalled to consciousness, or the ability to remember. However, it is also sometimes used as a synonym for Gedächtnis.² For readers that are (mentally) translating this thesis into German or Dutch, it is deliberately emphasised that the fact that memory covers both meanings is used deliberately.

1 "Gedächtnis," Duden, accessed on 22 May 2024, <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Gedaechtnis>.

2 "Erinnerung," Duden, accessed on 22 May 2024, <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Erinnerung>.

Julia Shaw, researcher and author of several popular science books, sees our self-definition as being based on memory.⁷³ Further, she suggests that memories shape our experience and, based on that, what we believe we are capable of.⁷⁴ Therefore, if we begin to question our memory, it also means questioning the foundations of our identity.⁷⁵

This project creates a visual manifestation of the deceptive aspects of the connection between memory and identity. As literary scholar Aleida Assmann emphasises in *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, memories are

71 "Memory," Cambridge Dictionary Online, accessed on 26 September 2023, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/memory>.

72 Smith Rumsey, *When We Are No More*, 11.

73 Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 11.

74 Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 11.

75 Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 11.

among the most fleeting and unreliable things that exist.⁷⁶ Assmann makes clear that memories can not only change but can sometimes be lost completely.⁷⁷ However, she also says that without memories, we cannot build a self or communicate with others;⁷⁸ they are essential for the formation of our identity.

It is important to note that although we are looking at various memory experts, a lot of mental connections that were built in the later stages of this research project were triggered by the work of Aleida Assmann. On the one hand, this may be because I read her work in my mother tongue (which is also her mother tongue), and, in the end, language matters. On the other hand, it is also due to the fact that she (and her husband) look at memory from many different angles, and the multiplicity of their work corresponds most closely to the multiplicity of my perspectives on the field.

According to the social anthropologist Paul Connerton, we tend to perceive memory as largely individual, although there are many thinkers who subscribe to the idea of a collective memory.⁷⁹ While the concept that personal, or individual, memory is concerned with one's own experience and is bound to the individual seems understandable, the idea of a collective memory probably needs some more explanation.

From a historical perspective, one of the most important figures in memory studies is Maurice Halbwachs, who is credited with developing the early concept of collective memory. According to him, our memories are shaped by our cultural environment; collective memory is the social frame of reference with the help of which personal or

⁷⁶ Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, 24.

⁷⁷ Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, 25.

⁷⁸ Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, 24.

⁷⁹ Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 1.

individual memory is constructed.⁸⁰ According to Halbwachs, memory is always collectively characterised and contains things that we have not experienced ourselves but have learnt from stories and which have thus proven to be significant.⁸¹ Jan Assmann—who, together with his wife, Aleida, further elaborated the term—subdivides collective memory into communicative memory and cultural memory.⁸² Assmann defines communicative memory as being based solely on oral communication, meaning it cannot extend more than eighty or one hundred years into the past and is closely connected to everyday life.⁸³ Cultural memory, on the other hand, does not have this limited time frame and is very distant from everyday life.⁸⁴ However, its importance arises from its ability to preserve a kind of knowledge that can be utilised by a particular group to shape their identity.⁸⁵ It is not a fixed preservation of the past; rather, it is always reconstructed socially.⁸⁶ While Assmann does offer more characteristics to describe cultural memory, they will not be explored here. Instead, it makes sense to refine the definition of the term adopted in this study by turning to

⁸⁰ Stef Craps, "Introduction," in *Memory studies and the Anthropocene: A roundtable*, *Memory Studies* 11, no. 4 (2018): 500; Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 35.

⁸¹ Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 35–36.

⁸² Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 126.

⁸³ Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 126–129.

⁸⁴ Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 56; Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 128–129.

⁸⁵ The fact that cultural memory preserves knowledge that can be used by a particular group to shape their identity is one of the characteristics of cultural memory that Jan Assmann emphasises. See Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 130.

⁸⁶ Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 130.

Nicolas Pethes's *Gedächtnis und Erinnerung*, according to which cultural memory is the identity-forming knowledge of a certain group of people.⁸⁷

Rumsey sees personal and collective memory as being connected and developing together.⁸⁸ According to her, our ideas of the future are based on our memories of the past.⁸⁹ She describes collective memory as the shared knowledge to which each of us contributes and from which each of us draws.⁹⁰ Connerton sees our perception of the present as based on our knowledge of the past; our images of the past provide the justification for the current social order.⁹¹ According to him, our knowledge of the past is based on the traces it has left behind; our culture influences our perception of an experience and therefore our memory of it, so that one event can be remembered differently by different cultures.⁹² Following this, the leap can be made to memory-related deviation. Deviations are a large and often unnoticed part of our memory. An inspiring artistic visualisation of these deviations in individual memory can be found in the work of the artist Al Hopwood.

***False Memory Archive* (2013/2014), Al Hopwood**

Al Hopwood, who also works under the name A.R. Hopwood, is an artist who dedicates a large part of his work to false memories. His projects are often based on collaborations, including

⁸⁷ Nicolas Pethes, *Gedächtnis und Erinnerung: Ein interdisziplinäres Lexikon* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag GmbH, 2001), 329.

⁸⁸ Smith Rumsey, *When We Are No More*, 109.

⁸⁹ Smith Rumsey, *When We Are No More*, 12.

⁹⁰ Smith Rumsey, *When We Are No More*, 12–13.

⁹¹ Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 2–3.

⁹² Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 13, 15, 28.

with scientists and members of the public.⁹³ In 2013 and 2014, a series of artworks consisting of or based on memories was shown in various cities around the UK.⁹⁴ In the context of this study, it seems reasonable to highlight a part of Hopwood's *False Memory Archive* (see fig. 8). The installation featured a display case containing stacks of paper. While the work was not particularly impressive at first glance, the full effect unfolded as the viewer became immersed in it. To make the archive, Hopwood asked people to submit false memories, i.e., memories that they know to be untrue or which they do not trust.⁹⁵ The stories included, for example, a recollection of a person's own birth from the perspective of an outsider and memories of visiting a cathedral under construction, which was completed seventeen years before the person's birth.⁹⁶ The memories in the collection were astonishingly detailed, yet all of them were clearly false.

⁹³ Al Hopwood, "About," False Memory Archive, accessed on 29 May 2024, <https://www.falsememoryarchive.com/about>.

⁹⁴ Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 39.

⁹⁵ Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 39.

⁹⁶ Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 39–41. For more information, see Al Hopwood, "Archive," False Memory Archive, accessed on 23 November 2024, <https://www.falsememoryarchive.com/archive>.



Figure 8: *False Memory Archive* (2014), Al Hopwood.

Hopwood's artwork illustrates something that is well known in memory studies and yet is often excluded from one's perception of reality: it is entirely possible for memories to feel absolutely real, even though the remembered events never took place.⁹⁷ Through the work, Hopwood makes visible the extent to which the mind can deceive, leaving the viewer to question whether they themselves also have false memories.

In *The Memory Illusion: Remembering, Forgetting and the Science of False Memory*, Julia Shaw elaborates on the unreliability of the mind.⁹⁸ In doing so, she goes into detail about a wide variety of deviations: biological weaknesses, perceptual errors, contaminated memo-

⁹⁷ Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 14.

⁹⁸ For this research, the German translation was consulted. Julia Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis: Wie unser Gehirn Erinnerungen fälscht*, trans. Christa Broermann, 6th ed. (Munich: Wilhelm Heyne Verlag, 2018).

ries, attention distortion, overconfidence, and confabulation.⁹⁹ The possibilities seem endless. According to Shaw, memory errors occur constantly.¹⁰⁰ However, her categorisation is by no means universal. Other memory experts, such as Daniel Schacter, are more restrictive in their definition of memory errors. In *The Seven Sins of Memory*, Schacter defines seven types of what I term memory-related deviations. Transience refers to the impermanence of memories, meaning: with time we forget. Absent-mindedness addresses the lack of attention that can make recalling impossible. Blocking is about the tip-of-the-tongue phenomenon in which we desperately try to remember but cannot. Misattribution deals with assigning memories to the wrong source, mixing correctly recollected and incorrectly recollected information. Suggestibility is the incorporation of misinformation due to leading questions. Bias is defined as the distortion of memories due to prejudices. And, finally, persistence is about the unintentional recall of unpleasant memories that cannot be stopped.¹⁰¹ Schacter's categorisation is interesting because it is more structured than Shaw's. Different memory experts arrive at different categorisations, and it is impossible to consider them all in this dissertation.

We will return to some of these memory deviations in the chapter Losing Control, where they will be used to directly inspire certain groups of objects.

Not only personal but also collective memory can be disturbed by deviations. In *Formen des Vergessens*, Aleida Assmann describes seven forms of forgetting, all of which are connected to groups and/or societies at large: au-

⁹⁹ Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 265.

¹⁰⁰ Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 14.

¹⁰¹ Daniel L. Schacter, *The Seven Sins of Memory: How the Mind Forgets and Remembers*, 2nd ed. (Boston/New York: Mariner Books, 2021), 6–7.

tomatic forgetting, custodial forgetting, selective forgetting, punitive and repressive forgetting, defensive and complicit forgetting, constructive forgetting, and, finally, therapeutic forgetting.¹⁰² She also assigns qualities to them, whereby, for her, automatic forgetting, custodial forgetting, and selective forgetting are neutral; punitive and repressive forgetting and defensive and complicit forgetting are negatively loaded; and constructive forgetting and therapeutic forgetting are positive.¹⁰³ Connerton also divides forgetting into seven different types: repressive erasure, prescriptive forgetting, forgetting that is constitutive in the formation of a new identity, structural amnesia, forgetting as annulment, forgetting as planned obsolescence, and forgetting as humiliated silence.¹⁰⁴

Seven seems to be a magic number in memory studies, as Schacter, Assmann, and Connerton all categorise seven forms of memory errors.

The subdivision of memory errors is complex and offers a variety of possibilities, depending on which memory one refers to and what kind of focus is adopted. We will return to this in the second part of the methodology section of this thesis and use aspects of these categorisations as sources of inspiration. In this chapter, however, now that we have established an understanding of the variety of categorisations that exist, it is important to explore the connection between objects and memories. To do this, let's start with an example.

George Orwell's *1984* is probably the most famous novel to thematise collective forgetting, which it depicts as oc-

102 Aleida Assmann, *Formen des Vergessens*, 4th ed. (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2018), 30–67.

103 Assmann, *Formen des Vergessens*, 67.

104 Paul Connerton, "Seven Types of Forgetting," *Memory Studies* 1, no. 1 (2008): 59–70, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698007083889>.

curing through memory suppression.¹⁰⁵ It is also a good example of the alteration of cultural memory through changing or destroying its bearers. The events of the novel are set in a dystopia in which the Ministry of Truth not only controls the present but also has power over the past, which is being constantly rewritten. Newspaper articles, books—everything—is adapted to meet the new demands of the present. Objects also play a central role here. An example of this occurs when one of the protagonists, Winston, discovers a paperweight in an antiques shop. The object seduces him into dreaming, symbolising his attempt to reconnect with the real, unaltered past. When Winston is arrested later in the novel, the paperweight falls to the floor and shatters—not just a powerful metaphor for a shattered dream; it almost feels as if the past disappears when the object is broken.

Orwell's novel connects to the assumption with which this thesis began: objects carry memories. However, there is some debate around this. According to Colin Sterling, who writes and teaches on the intersection of museums, heritage, art, and ecology, memory is neither captured nor contained.¹⁰⁶ Instead, Sterling sketches it as something that is constantly created in relation to the demands of the present.¹⁰⁷ If we follow this thought, Winston's paperweight is not filled with memories; it serves to project and/or shape our memories based on the demands of the present. Given these divergent understandings, the connection between memory and objects requires further examination.

According to Rumsey, memories can be strengthened

¹⁰⁵ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Penguin Books, 2008).

¹⁰⁶ Colin Sterling, *Heritage, Photography, and the Affective Past* (Oxon/New York: Routledge, 2020), 31.

¹⁰⁷ Sterling, *Heritage, Photography, and the Affective Past*, 61.

by physical objects; she sees the existence of cultural memory as dependent on the permanence of its carriers, or record media, and those who protect these media for future generations.¹⁰⁸ Thinking again of Orwell's dystopia, we can see how destroying these record media changes memory. Aleida Assmann, whose work resurfaces frequently throughout this study, understands collective as well as cultural memory as being based on experiences that have been transferred from living into material carriers.¹⁰⁹ This transfer makes it possible to stabilise memories across generations.¹¹⁰ Following this thought, it appears that everything that does not make this transition will eventually disappear.

Of course, objects are not only linked to cultural memory; as emphasised by Daniel Miller, objects can harbour personal and cultural memory simultaneously.¹¹¹ For a moment, let's focus once more on personal memories via an installation by Karen Wuytens.

When objects talk #2 (2023), Karen Wuytens

Karen Wuytens (b. 1977) is a Belgian designer with a background in jewellery and product development.¹¹² Currently, she works as a teacher and researcher at PXL-MAD School of Arts, Hasselt, Belgium. Much of her current work is related to the meaning of objects, specifically in the context of loss. Particularly interesting for the

¹⁰⁸ Smith Rumsey, *When We Are No More*, 37–38, 46.

¹⁰⁹ Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, 34.

¹¹⁰ Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, 34–35.

¹¹¹ Daniel Miller, *Stuff* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 151.

¹¹² "Karen Wuytens," de Mijlpaal, accessed on 14 January 2024, <https://demijlpaal.com/en/participating-artists-en/karen-wuytens/>;

"Over mezelf," Karen Wuytens, accessed on 18 November 2024, <http://www.karenwuytens.net/over-mezelf.html>.

topic of memory is her installation *When objects talk #2* (2023) (see figs. 9-10), which she created for the exhibition *In Absence*. The installation shows fifty coffee mugs that are compiled at the entrance to the exhibition space together with personal, handwritten texts. Each mug belonged to someone who has died; each text was written by someone who was left behind. Like precious objects in a museum, the mugs are placed under glass covers, next to the handwritten texts. According to Wuytens, everyday objects can take on a special meaning following a death; they allow a tangible connection to the person who has been lost.¹¹³ The work, created as a one-off installation and intended to make it easier to cross the threshold into the exhibition, is highly relevant for this research.¹¹⁴ Wuytens's installation shows, in a highly emotionally charged way, the interaction between objects and memory.

¹¹³ Karen Wuytens and Cathérine Verboven, *When Objects Talk #2*, n.p., 2023, 8.

¹¹⁴ Karen Wuytens, in discussion with the author, 1 June, 2024.



Figures 9-10: When objects talk #2 (2023), Karen Wuytens.

Wuytens's installation demonstrates that objects can be meaningful for holding on to personal memories. However, without the texts, the mugs would not have the same effect on the viewer. This raises the question: Do objects really carry memories? Or do we merely project memories onto them? And—if we continue to follow our initial assumption that objects really do carry memories—do they only become comprehensible through narrative? According to Aleida Assmann, material supports for social memory only come alive through conversation. With the death of the memory bearer, they become fossils of a past that can no longer be easily awakened.¹¹⁵ Let's imagine Wuytens's installation without the texts. It becomes clear that Assmann is right: alone, the objects are mute. Perhaps they harbour memories, or perhaps we project memories onto them. What is certain is that we cannot read them without an intermediary—and, due to their muteness, they offer plenty of scope for interpre-

¹¹⁵ Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, 28.

tation, or misinterpretation, which harbours the potential for deviation.

A spectacular example of misinterpretation, or rather a deliberate deception that inspires deviation, can be found in the *Tiara of Saitaferne*, which was titled “the greatest goldsmith fraud of all time.”¹¹⁶

***Tiara of Saitaferne* (c. 1894), Israël
Rouchomowsky**

The *Tiara of Saitaferne* (see figs. 11-12) was purchased by the Louvre, Paris, in 1896 as a historic artefact, sold by the Russian art dealer Schap-schelle Hochmann. The tiara, which still belongs to the Louvre’s collection, is made of gold and actually looks more like a bonnet than a tiara. The surface is decorated with fine ornaments and chiselled scenes from the Iliad and the daily life of the Scythians. The Louvre presented it for several years as the tiara of the ancient Scythian king Saitaferne, although its authenticity was doubted by many, including professionals. In 1903, the piece was finally exposed as a forgery. In reality, the maker was Israël Rouchomowsky,¹¹⁷ a goldsmith from a small town near Odessa who had constructed the tiara not as a forgery

¹¹⁶ Adnan Qiblawi, “The Ornate Tiara—and Fabulous Fake—that Fooled Even the Louvre,” *Artnet News*, October 27 2024, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/the-hunt-the-tiara-of-saitaphernes-2558944>.

¹¹⁷ JStore offers several different spellings of the name of the goldsmith who created the piece. For more details, see “Tiara of Saitaferne,” JStore, accessed on 10 November 2024, https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.10594614?searchText=Tiara+of+Saitaferne&-searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3DTiara%2Bof%2B-Saitaferne%26so%3Drel&ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3A2c7c7fed2a09d1568502b9bc209fe871.

but as a commissioned work. His client, Schap-schelle Hochmann, had given Rouchomowsky precise instructions and claimed that the piece was intended for a friend. However, Hochmann then sold the piece to the Louvre, feigning its authenticity.¹¹⁸



Figures 11-12: *Tiara of Saitaferne* (c. 1894), Israël Rouchomowsky, photo © GrandPalaisRmn (musée du Louvre) / Hervé Lewandowski.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Archaeological Institute of America, "Saitaphernes' Golden Tiara," Archaeology: A publication of the Archaeological Institute of America, accessed on 10 November 2024 https://archive.archaeology.org/online/features/hoaxes/saitaphernes_tiara.html.

¹¹⁹ "Tiare de Saitaphernes," Louvre, accessed on 24 February 2025, <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010256592>.

Despite its impressive history, the Tiara of Saitaferne is not part of the Louvre's permanent exhibition.¹

¹"Tiare de Saitapharnes," Louvre, accessed on 10 November 2024, <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010256592>.

Although the *Tiara of Saitaferne* is a deliberate deception, it can be used to illustrate one of the many ways in which memory can be rewritten through the misinterpretation and/or misuse of its (supposed) carriers. These deviations hold the potential to influence not only our worldview but also the image we hold of our identity, including the possibility of interpreting objects as evidence of things that never happened. If Hochmann had not tried to create an artefact linked to a well-known story (referring to the Scythian king Saitaferne) but for some other purpose, something that would have changed history, the outcome could have been very different. If the fraud had never been discovered, and if that had changed the writing of history, fraud could also be said to be about memory.

A final example that helps us to examine the power of objects as evidence for false stories is a series of rings from Robert Baines's exhibition *Fake News and True Love: Fourteen Stories*.

***Fake News and True Love: Fourteen Stories*
(2018/2019), Robert Baines**

The Australian artist and Emeritus Professor Robert Baines (b. 1949) is one of the most prominent figures in contemporary (art) jewellery making.¹²⁰ He is particularly well known for his contempo-

¹²⁰ For the artist's biographical information, see "Robert Baines," Hedendaagse sieraden, accessed on 24 May 2024, <https://hedendaagse-sieraden.nl/2020/01/08/robert-baines/>.

rary and humorous work in the historical filigree technique. From October 2018 to March 2019, Baines had an exhibition at the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD), New York, entitled *Fake News and True Love: Fourteen Stories*. The exhibition showed jewellery pieces that Baines had created as supposed evidence for false stories and fake news.¹²¹ One of these pieces was a casket containing five rings decorated with large, uncut stones (see fig. 13), which were supposedly souvenirs of the Apollo 11 moon landing and are dedicated to Buzz's "little darlins."¹²² Through the handwritten note and the attached photo, one immediately thinks of Buzz Aldrin, who appears to have commissioned these moonstone souvenirs for his children, based on a literal interpretation of the words "love, daddy". The casket with the rings thus creates a fake story about the astronaut who has his moonstones transformed into souvenirs for his loved ones. Considering that Buzz Aldrin only has three children, the question of who the other two rings are for arises.¹²³

121 "MAD Exhibition Explores Fake News, Sensationalist Headlines, and Conspiracy Theories Through Jewelry," MAD Museum, accessed on 24 May 2024, <https://madmuseum.org/press/releases/mad-exhibition-explores-fake-news-sensationalist-headlines-and-conspiracy-theories>.

122 "Fake News and True Love," MAD Museum, accessed on 29 May 2024, <https://madmuseum.org/exhibition/fake-news-and-true-love>.

123 Although now divorced and remarried several times, Buzz Aldrin was still with his first wife Joan Archer Aldrin when he returned from the moon. The two have three children. For more information about their marriage, see Elaine Woo, "Joan Archer Aldrin dies at 84; dealt with the spotlight as astronaut's wife", Los Angeles Times, accessed on 13 April 2025, <https://www.latimes.com/local/obituaries/la-me-joan-aldrin-20150802-story.html>.

The casket, together with the other pieces in the exhibition not only explores the influence of fake news but also the role that objects play in shaping our (collective) memory.



Figure 13: *Five Rings*, year unknown, Robert Baines, Photography by Garry Sommerfeld.¹²⁴

Like Rouchomowsky's tiara, Baines's rings demonstrate the power of objects to create memories. Even if they are clearly recognisable as fake, Baines's rings still offer the potential to be misread in the future and thus create future false memories. Again, this raises the question, "Do objects really carry memories, or do we project memories onto them?" What seems clear is that objects are

¹²⁴ The exact year of production remains unclear. In line with Baines's story, the rings are usually exhibited with the inscription "California (?), 1969 (?)", suggesting that the rings are actually historical artefacts. For an example of this, see MAD Museum, "MAD Exhibition Explores Fake News, Sensationalist Headlines, and Conspiracy Theories Through Jewelry," news release, 28 August 2018, <https://madmuseum.org/press/releases/mad-exhibition-explores-fake-news-sensationalist-headlines-and-conspiracy-theories>.

perceived as proof that history has taken place; they prove what we want to remember or hope to forget.

Does that mean that if we want to erase a memory, we must destroy the objects that relate to it?

In this chapter, we explored the two types of memory that inform this research project—the personal, or individual, and the collective, which can be further divided into communicative and cultural memory. Personal memory deals with our own experiences, whereas collective memory is the shared knowledge held by a specific group; the two are linked in that collective memory influences personal perception and experience and, thus, also personal memory. This chapter illustrated that deviations occur in both forms of memory, though they can be influenced by very different factors. For each form of memory, different experts categorise the deviations that occur differently. While the question of whether objects carry memories—or whether memories are constantly recreated with the help of objects—remains controversial, it is clear that objects have a special significance as embodiments of memory. Objects certainly seem to make it easier to remember. However, due to their muteness, they also offer plenty of room for interpretation or deliberate misuse.

Identity

How identity is defined in this study and which forms of identity are to be considered—personal identity or collective (and also cultural) identity—is important for understanding identity's connection to jewellery and memory, as well as its relevance to this research project as a whole. This section summarises existing definitions of identity so that a comprehensible picture emerges. First, it defines the term and then looks at the relationships between personal and collective (specifically, cultural) identity. Following this, a bridge will be built to the topics of memory and jewellery.

While this applies to the entire dissertation (and the research project in general), I would like to emphasise in this section, particularly, that this work does not aim to provide a global (or historical) analysis of the terms used. The project's definitions and analyses are shaped by my own identity as a white, female European (generation: Millennial) who grew up in the Eastern part of a newly reunified Germany and has now lived in Belgium for several years. All of the perspectives in this study are informed by these factors, and when an attempt is made to define terms, the definitions used cover a contemporary European, Western view.

In the novel *J* by British author Howard Jacobson, set in a dark world after an unspecified event that everyone wants to forget, the importance of identity is perfectly illustrated in a short dialogue between Ailinn, one of the protagonists, and Esme, her assigned secret spy and protector. Shortly before the end of the book, and after several sad revelations and twists, Esme claims that “identity is nothing but an illusion,” to which Ailinn replies, “If it's all illusion ... why has it caused so much misery?”¹²⁵ You could also say that the book reminds us of the dark

¹²⁵ Howard Jacobson, *J* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2014), 315.

side of identity, or, as Esme puts it: "I am me because I am not her, or you."¹²⁶ It is about demarcating ourselves from others.

Identity can be summarised as the answer to the question, "Who am I?" This is answered by confronting further questions about experiences from the past, deeds in the present, and dreams for the future.¹²⁷ Family, nationality, gender, class, sexuality, origin, and religion all shape our sense of self. This is emphasised by the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah in *Identitäten. Die Fiktionen der Zugehörigkeit*.¹²⁸ In his view, identity is significant because it gives us a sense of how we fit into the world.¹²⁹ It also gives us a reason to do certain things and to speak of the "I" under the "we."¹³⁰ Yet "I" and "we" are not completely separate. According to Aleida Assmann, every "I" is linked to a "we" and derives an important part of its identity from it.¹³¹ However, our conscious perception of identity, i.e., the "I" within the "we," has not always existed; German sociologist Heinz Abels calls the Renaissance the birth of the individual, the beginning of our awareness that we are different from others.¹³² According to Abels, at this time, the idea of a predetermined place in life was changing towards the idea that one could shape their own place, and the search for our own identity began.¹³³ However, there is not just one layer to the idea of identity; the understanding of "I" and "we" already implies that there are different types of identity

¹²⁶ Jacobson, J, 316.

¹²⁷ Abels, *Identität*, 196.

¹²⁸ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Identitäten: Die Fiktionen der Zugehörigkeit* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2020), 13.

¹²⁹ Appiah, *Identitäten*, 28.

¹³⁰ Appiah, *Identitäten*, 28.

¹³¹ Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, 21.

¹³² Abels, *Identität*, 13.

¹³³ Abels, *Identität*, 5.

that one can deal with.¹³⁴ This thesis focuses on personal identity in relation to—and in connection with—collective (specifically, cultural) identity.

Regarding collective and cultural identity, both terms are used in the specialist literature and, according to their definitions, their meanings overlap. A text from the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung even uses them interchangeably without going into further detail! This thesis uses existing definitions to consider cultural memory as a form of—or approach to—collective memory. A more detailed explanation will follow.

↑ Bernhard Giesen and Robert Seyfert, "Kollektive Identität," *bpb.de*, accessed on 5 June 2024, <https://www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/156774/kollektive-identitaet/>.

The Metzler lexicon of literature and cultural theory defines personal identity not as static but as something that is situated within a network of relationships. It is a process of constructing and revising self-images that takes place at the intersection of individual biography and social interaction.¹³⁵ Collective identity, on the other hand, is defined as a form of identity that is analogous to personal identity but which is linked to the formation of group-specific, special characterisations of culture achieved by a community—it requires constant reinforcement through cultural memory.¹³⁶ Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper define collective identity "as an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader

¹³⁴ Jan Assmann makes it clear that, in addition to the "I" and the "we," there is also the "they," which has a special significance in connection with understanding the meaning of identity. It is only with this triad that the theme and potential problem of identity becomes apparent. For more details, see Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 15–16.

¹³⁵ Ansgar Nünning, ed., *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart/Weimar: J.B.Metzler, 2004), 277.

¹³⁶ Nünning, *Metzler Lexikon*, 276.

community, category, practice, or institution."¹³⁷ They also see it as an imagined relation, which may form a part of personal identity, whereby having positive feelings for other members of a group with which one identifies is part of this identity and distinguishes it from ideology.¹³⁸

The work of author and sociologist Anton Sterbling is helpful in shedding more light on our relationship to cultural identity. He sees collective identity as a category that encompasses different concepts, such as group identity, cultural identity, regional identity, and/or historically specific forms of community building.¹³⁹ Because the term is used in the following, a definition of cultural identity is also briefly touched upon here.

Cultural identity is defined as self-definition in relation to a group;¹⁴⁰ one could say that cultural identity refers to an individual's affiliation to a particular cultural group with which they share an identity. It includes a sense of belonging to this group and ideas about values, beliefs, and/or ideals adopted from the group.¹⁴¹ It is important to mention here that individuals are never part of just one group; according to Aleida Assmann, we usually share a multitude of identities with a multitude of

¹³⁷ Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper, "Collective Identity and Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001): 285, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2678623>.

¹³⁸ Polletta and Jasper, "Collective Identity and Social Movements," 285.

¹³⁹ Anton Sterbling, "Collective Identities," Oxford Academic, accessed on 8 June 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198829911.003.0037>.

¹⁴⁰ Seth J. Schwartz, Marilyn J. Montgomery, and Ervin Briones, "The Role of Identity in Acculturation among Immigrant People: Theoretical Propositions, Empirical Questions, and Applied Recommendations," *Human Development* 49, no. 1 (2006): 6. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26763865>.

¹⁴¹ Schwartz, Montgomery, and Briones, "The Role of Identity," 7.

groups.¹⁴² It must also be made clear that personal and collective (and also cultural) identity are strongly linked. Robyn Fivush highlights that our autobiographical stories are not just about our personal identity but also about the culture in which they were shaped.¹⁴³ Abby Smith Rumsey follows a similar train of thought. According to her, our autobiographical memory gives us a sense of who we are, but individual identity also arises from cultural influences that are affected by other factors, such as the time in which we live or the country in which we grow up.¹⁴⁴ Culture seems to play a central role in the formation of identity.

Connected to this are the unavoidable downsides of identity that were tackled at the beginning of this section. According to Appiah, identity is strongly linked to categorisation and stereotypes, which can lead to expectations that people will behave in a certain way.¹⁴⁵ According to Appiah, we divide the world into those with whom we share an identity and those with whom we do not. In doing so, we tend to favour those with whom we share something.¹⁴⁶

With regard to the concept of cultural identity, there is an interesting approach by French philosopher François Jullien, who argues in favour of speaking of cultural resources instead of cultural identity. The idea behind this is that resources are the property of all those who use

¹⁴² Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, 21.

¹⁴³ Robyn Fivush, "Remembering and Reminiscing: How individual lives are constructed in family narratives," *Memory Studies*, Volume 1, Issue 1 (2008): 56. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698007083888>.

¹⁴⁴ Smith Rumsey, *When We Are No More*, 26–27.

¹⁴⁵ Appiah, *Identitäten*, 39.

¹⁴⁶ Appiah, *Identitäten*, 57–58.

them.¹ He sees identity as a concept that is suitable for individuals but not for cultures, as these are, according to him, a collective creation.² Jullien sees change and deviation as the origin of everything cultural and therefore finds it impossible to speak of a fixed (non-changing) cultural identity.³

¹ François Jullien, *Es gibt keine kulturelle Identität*, 5th ed. (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2019), 8.

² Jullien, *Es gibt keine kulturelle Identität*, 62–63.

³ Jullien, *Es gibt keine kulturelle Identität*, 47.

Appiah identifies three basic characteristics of identities:

- 1) A set of categories ascribed to a person;
- 2) These categories have meaning for the person and shape their behaviour;
- 3) The categories influence the behaviour of others towards the person.¹⁴⁷

I draw on these three main characteristics of identity to finalise the working definition adopted in this study.

At this point, it is important to examine the connection between identity and memory. Memory expert Julia Shaw understands the source of identity as being based in our personal memories.¹⁴⁸ According to her, memories not only tell us what we have experienced but also what we believe we are capable of.¹⁴⁹ They form our identity, which, as Appiah argues, influences our experiences.¹⁵⁰ Adopting and combining Shaw's and Appiah's ideas produces a closely interwoven circle (see fig. 14), which is applied to the present study.

¹⁴⁷ Appiah, *Identitäten*, 198.

¹⁴⁸ Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 11.

¹⁴⁹ Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 11.

¹⁵⁰ Appiah, *Identitäten*, 43.

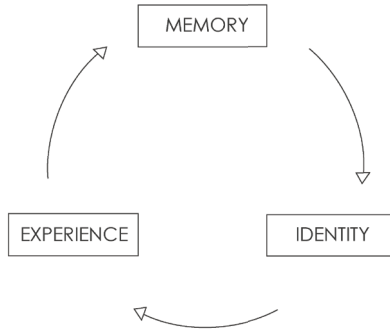


Figure 14: Illustration of this study's understanding of the relationship between memory, identity, and experience.

Being aware of the influence of identity and the factors that determine it is essential to gaining an understanding of the subjectiveness of experience. However, the following question then arises: what meaning are we to attribute to objects in connection with identity? This dissertation started with the assumption that objects carry memories. Do they, then, also influence identity?

In *Stuff*, the anthropologist Daniel Miller highlights the relationship between identity and objects by emphasising that objects shape the world around us and can become part of what we are.¹⁵¹

Miller is not the only author to assign objects a special relationship to identity. Tilmann Habermas agrees, suggesting that objects can serve to actively shape one's identity.¹⁵² Habermas also claims that most authors who deal with personal objects assign to them a central identity function.¹⁵³ He himself emphasises that personal objects are significant for one's individuality, arguing that they

¹⁵¹ Miller, *Stuff*, 59-60.

¹⁵² Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte*, 303.

¹⁵³ Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte*, 503.

can be used specifically to characterise a person.¹⁵⁴ In this way, objects serve as props with which people claim certain identities for themselves.¹⁵⁵

However, this raises the question of why one actually needs public symbols of identity. Habermas also provides an answer to this, justifying their existence with reference to the requirements of social interaction.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, he explains that objects integrate the individual into the common history and assign them a place in culture and society.¹⁵⁷ Following Habermas, then, objects seem essential to our identity.

For this study, it is necessary here to build a bridge to jewellery as a category of object that holds a particularly special significance for identity. According to Daniel Miller, wearing a particular object can come with expectations and experiences. He illustrates this using the example of a sari.¹⁵⁸

A sari is an approximately six-metre-long shawl traditionally worn by Indian women. It is usually wrapped around the body.¹

¹ Miller, *Stuff*, 23.

However, another obvious example linked to the field of jewellery is the engagement or wedding ring, which

¹⁵⁴ Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte*, 13, 21.

¹⁵⁵ Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte*, 14.

¹⁵⁶ Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte*, 245.

¹⁵⁷ Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte*, 498.

¹⁵⁸ Miller, *Stuff*, 23–31.

leads to expectations of certain behaviour from—and towards—the wearer.¹⁵⁹

The sub-chapter on jewellery has already given us an insight into jewellery as a means of showing one's own identity. Here, we will return to the subject by linking our thoughts on contemporary (art) jewellery to the topic of identity. To do this, I will focus on the idea of jewellery as a public symbol of identity and suggest that contemporary (art) jewellery (as well as craft objects in particular) not only reveal and shape the identity of the owner (or wearer) but also say something about the time and culture in which they were produced. Following this, they also tell us something about the identity of the maker.

It is important to mention that, historically, the identity of the jewellery maker was by no means always important. In the nineteenth century, jewellery underwent a decisive transformation; suddenly, goldsmiths and factories were marking their work with engravings or brand stamps that identified the manufacturers.¹

¹ Chadour and Joppien, *Schmuck I*, 61.

A particularly interesting example of jewellery that communicates the identity of the maker—and, at the same time, says something about the time and culture in which

¹⁵⁹ Recent reports suggest that many women now wear fake engagement rings to prevent unwanted advances or harassment. For more details, see (e.g.) Léa Rose Emery, "The Worrying Trend of Women Wearing Fake Engagement Rings at Work," *Brides*, accessed on 16 July 2024, <https://www.brides.com/story/fake-engagement-rings-at-work>; Oliver Pritchard, "'My Friends and I Get so Harassed at Bars We Wear Fake Engagement Rings to Say F*** Off,'" *Express.co.uk*, 6 July 2023, www.express.co.uk/life-style/life/1788200/Woman-wears-fake-engagement-ring-bar; Kelly O'Connell, "I Wear a Wedding Ring to Avoid Being Sexually Harassed, Not Because I'm Married," *Metro*, 27 May 2019, metro.co.uk/2019/05/27/wear-wedding-ring-avoid-sexually-harassed-not-im-married-9478137.

it was made (directly reflecting thematically on the topic of identity)—can be found in the work of J Taran Diamond.

Limp Wrist (2022), J Taran Diamond

J Taran Diamond (b. 1998) is an American jewellery artist whose work often tackles socio-political topics.¹⁶⁰ Most of the time, she offers a perspective influenced by her background as a queer, Black American who has spent a large part of her life in Texas and Georgia. She currently lives in Baltimore, Maryland. In her series *Tenderheaded*, Diamond deals with the special role of braiding hair in Afro-American culture and combines this with visual elements she sees as often being associated with queerness. According to Diamond, within Black braiding culture, hair can occupy “a space somewhere between body and ornament.”¹⁶¹ Her work *Limp Wrist* (see fig. 15) demonstrates this in a decorative way, mixing hair, colourful silicone, and metal elements. Interestingly, the potential wearer would not only be placing an enormous emphasis on a part of the body that is associated with prejudice against queer people but would probably also be restricting its mobility, thereby fulfilling that prejudice. Diamond's work is a critical examination of identity, mixing cultural elements with stereotypes. Her work is also a good example of a personal approach to expressing the identity of the maker through the creation of a piece of jewellery. Diamond creates her pieces not to

¹⁶⁰ For the artist's biographical information, J Taran Diamond, personal correspondence with the author, 18 November 2024.

¹⁶¹ “TENDERHEADED,” J Diamond, accessed on 19 January 2024, <https://www.jdiamondmetalsmith.com/copy-of-contact-objects-2020>.

satisfy the taste of the wearer but to express herself and tell a story. Even if the future wearer (or collector) also expresses their own taste through the choice of the piece, in terms of public perception, as long as she is still remembered, Diamond's identity will always take centre stage.



Figure 15: *Limp Wrist* (2022), J Taran Diamond.

Diamond's work illustrates something that is typical of works from the field of contemporary (art) jewellery: the creator remains dominant, often being the centre of attention. Although wearers will try to express their own identity by choosing, buying, collecting, and wearing the pieces, the jewels never fully detach themselves from their creator (at least, not as long as the makers are still known and thus present in a shared memory). You could say that the relationship between jewellery artist and piece is similar to the relationship between creator and artwork in the art world; meaning the artist (or their name) is always a part of the artwork.

Maybe, then, jewellery has made the leap into the art world after all?

Jewellery may be used to shape and represent the identity of the wearer, but it also shows the identity of the maker and contains information about the culture and time in which it was produced.

So far, the chapter on identity defined identity as the answer to the question "Who am I?" and suggested that memories form the basis of this answer. Identity helps us to understand how we fit into the world and is strongly linked to categorisation. It influences not only our behaviour but also the behaviour of others towards us. It is not fixed. In addition, the difference between personal and collective (including cultural) identity was outlined. Personal identity is the process of answering the question of who you are. Collective (including cultural) identity is one's connection to a group with which one feels a sense of belonging and sympathy. One also shares and adopts certain things from this group. Collective identity can therefore form a part of personal identity.

Finally, the meaning of objects for the representation and formation of identity was discussed. Objects can be used actively to shape identity; with regard to pieces from the world of contemporary art jewellery, it is worth noting that they not only reflect the identity of the wearer but (like many objects from the art and craft sectors) also carry the identity of the maker, as well as information about the time and culture of their production. Drawing a link to our previous discussion of memory, at this point one might say that jewellery objects are perhaps not certain carriers of memories but definitely meaningful representatives of them, and that memories in turn form identity.

In this first chapter, the inseparable relationship between the three topics—jewellery, memory, and identity—which are the focus of the following sections of this thesis, was clarified, and that relationship will form the basis of this research project. The following chapters, *Leaving the Path* and *Losing Control*, deal with the methodology and build on this foundation, using the insights from this opening chapter as inspiration and a starting point for artistic reflection.

Leaving the Path

Let's now ask: Is there potential for deviation here?



We have seen what we planned to see; maybe we have reached the point where we have to leave known paths, otherwise we will not discover anything new. It's time for an adventure. So, let's get off the beaten track and delve into the unknown.

Deviation

This study applies deviation as an artistic strategy. While memory is arguably the central topic of this research, deviation is equally important. This section begins by defining the term before explaining why deviation is used here. The role of deviation as a principle in artistic practice is then outlined using two examples, and, finally, a conclusion is reached that builds a bridge to *A Collection of the Existing* (p. 102-111) and *The Archive of Possibilities* (p. 114-143). Both are analysed not only as applications of deviation but as works of art in their own right. *The Archive of Possibilities* also represents the first deliberate experimental use of deviation as an artistic strategy, from which a controlled and reproducible application procedure is developed.¹⁶²

Since my brain still works mainly in German, the conceptual origin for this project actually lies in the German word Abweichung, which can be translated as the English word deviation.¹ Both Abweichung and deviation have negative connotations.

¹ Langenscheidt, *Langenscheidt Praktisches Wörterbuch Englisch* (München/Wien: Langenscheidt, 2013), 121, 440.

¹⁶² Reproducible does not mean here that the results are always the same, but that the way of thinking is reproducible. While the same strategy can be used by various artists, it will always lead to different results. This is intentional and results from its interpretability.

Deviation, or, more precisely, deviant behaviour arises from the violation of rules that are set by certain groups.¹⁶³ At least, this is how the American sociologist Howard S. Becker defines it in *Outsiders*.¹⁶⁴ Looking at a more general definition, deviation describes a difference and/or a change compared to a usual and/or expected state or way of behaving.¹⁶⁵ It can also be used in a social or political context and describes the action of doing something that is different from the usual or common way of behaving (*deviant; deviate*).¹⁶⁶ In science, it describes the difference between a particular number and the average, or normal, number.¹⁶⁷ Among its synonyms are, for example, divergence, anomaly, discrepancy, irreg-

¹⁶³ Howard S. Becker, *Außenseiter: Zur Soziologie abweichenden Verhaltens*, trans. Norbert Schultze (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag GmbH, 1973), 8.

Comment: From today's perspective, the use of this book can be questioned, as it uses examples that would not be considered as deviant today and are completely out of date. Yet it is considered a classic on the psychology of deviance and provides a good definition of deviation and deviant behaviour. It is therefore still used here, at least for the purpose of the definition.

¹⁶⁴ In the course of this research, the book was read in the German translation from 1973, listed above.

¹⁶⁵ "Deviation," Cambridge Dictionary, accessed on 2 May 2024, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/deviation>.

¹⁶⁶ A "deviant" is defined as a person whose behaviour is perceived as aberrant. Source: "Deviant," Cambridge Dictionary, accessed on 15 March 2024, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/deviant>.

To deviate means to behave different from the generally accepted way of behaving. Source: "Deviate," Cambridge Dictionary, accessed on 15 March 2024, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/deviate?q=deviating>.

¹⁶⁷ "Deviation," Cambridge Dictionary, accessed on 15 January 2022, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/deviation>.

ularity, difference, variation, variance, alteration, and aberration.¹⁶⁸

A look at the Dutch language shows why a definition of linguistic agreement is important. Abweichung or deviation, is usually translated as afwijking.¹ Afwijking is synonymous with aberration, difference, abnormality, anomaly, imperfection, and even perversity.² It refers to technical deviations, but in addition, it is used in medical terms to describe a mental defect. According to the online dictionary Ensie, it also describes the sick, abnormal, and/or wrong.³ Its meaning and usage in everyday language differ significantly from German and English. Therefore, the somewhat emotionally loaded meanings of deviation used in this project refer to the German word Abweichung and/or its English equivalent deviation. Meanings and usage in other languages may differ due to the difficulty of translating the term.

¹ For translation between English and Dutch see: Van Dale, *Groot woordenboek Engels-Nederlands*, 4th ed. (Utrecht: Van Dale, 2016), 507.

For translation between German and Dutch see: Van Dale, *Groot woordenboek Duits-Nederlands*, 4th ed. (Utrecht: Van Dale, 2014), 33.

² Van Dale, *Thesaurus: Synoniemen en betekeniserwante woorden* (Utrecht: Van Dale, 2010), 34.

³ “Afwijking,” Ensie, accessed on 9 February 2022, <https://www.ensie.nl/wiktionary/afwijking>.

In the context of this project, *deviation* is defined as a difference or change in comparison to a previous and/or planned state—a difference from what is normal, usual, and/or expected—ignoring the negative connotation that many people may feel when reading this definition. Instead, this research project welcomes the surprises that

¹⁶⁸ “Deviation,” Thesaurus, accessed on 9 February 2022, <https://www.thesaurus.com/browse/deviation>.

arise from deviations and seeks to discover their creative potential.

From the outset, it was clear that this study would deal with memory deviation and that this would probably be reflected in the project's artistic strategy. We have already seen that memory can be permeated by numerous forms of deviation. Therefore, a methodology that connects to this seemed useful to reflect on objects as carriers of memory. At the same time, a direct connection could be drawn to the topic of identity, because a focus on memory-related deviation points directly to the discontinuities in the foundations of the self.

After some consideration, however, I decided to extend the project and divide the methodology into two parts. The first part examines deviation as a whole; the second focuses on memory-related deviation. The advantage of this approach is that it goes from broad to narrow and therefore not only presents the opportunity to discover a general strategy for generating ideas, but, by jumping into the unknown, there is also the potential for surprises and challenges.

By expanding our focus to deviation as a more general phenomenon, links can also be drawn to the topic of identity, as François Jullien showed us when he said that change and deviation are the origin of everything cultural! Even though he argued in favour of using the term cultural resources instead of cultural identity, the idea remains transferable.

¹ Jullien, *Es gibt keine kulturelle Identität*, 47.

Usually, if we recognise deviation, it means that we recognise something that is familiar to us, and, at the same time, we recognise that something is not right. Deviation attracts attention; it confuses, irritates, and breaks the rules. It is important to note that deviation needs the rule

in order to be perceived as a deviation at all.¹⁶⁹ In a social context, those rules are usually determined by certain groups. According to Howard Becker, the rules can be different in different groups; behaviour that conforms to the ideas of one group may be completely inappropriate in another.¹⁷⁰ Becker adds that it can also happen that deviation occurs but is neither recognised nor punished.¹⁷¹ Whether this can be considered a genuine deviation is up for discussion.

In art, deviation is by no means a new principle, and it can be used and applied in a variety of ways. The silversmith David Clarke provides an interesting contemporary example of this using deviation as a principle of design.

OOH LALA (2008), David Clarke

David Clarke (b. 1967) is an English silversmith and one of the masters of deviation.¹⁷² His unconventional use of materials breaks with classical silversmithing traditions. While his work clearly shows that he has mastered the craft, he often goes against the standards in the field. A particularly interesting example of his use of deviation is *OOH LALA* (see fig. 16), which he created in response to the traditional notion that you are not a true silversmith until you have made

¹⁶⁹ In connection with the sociological context, Becker states that the certainty of deviant behaviour within a group depends on the existence of established rules. See: Becker, *Außenseiter*, 7.

¹⁷⁰ Becker, *Außenseiter*, 13–14.

¹⁷¹ Becker, *Außenseiter*, 18.

¹⁷² For the artist's biographical information, see "Clarke CV," Mister Clarke, accessed on 2 May 2024, <https://mister-clarke.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CLARKE-CV.pdf>.

a teapot.¹⁷³ Clarke's teapot is a found pot that he sawed up and filled with lead. The result is a completely non-functional yet thoroughly provocative (and even poisonous) piece. In the work, Clarke uses deviation as a genuine creative principle. He deliberately breaks with the traditional approach to materials and objects, as well as with the hierarchies associated with them. In this way, he strives for new perspectives on familiar paths.



Figure 16: *OOH LALA* (2008), David Clarke.

¹⁷³ "Pots," Mister Clarke, accessed on 13 January 2024, <https://mister-clarke.com/object-category/pots/>.

In her foreword to an exhibition catalogue published in 2023, Cornelia Holzach, former director of Schmuckmuseum Pforzheim (Pforzheim Jewellery Museum), emphasises that increasing numbers of goldsmiths and silversmiths are challenging the boundaries of their craft by using unusual materials or producing unconventional objects.¹⁷⁴ Clarke's work is a good example of this. He wants to puzzle, surprise, and perhaps even provoke. He created his teapot by deliberately breaking the rules of the object, as well as the rules of the field in which he is active; it is about analysing an existing system of expectations and then deliberately disregarding it. It is about using deviation as a principle in the design process.

In her popular book about memory errors, Julia Shaw mentions the bizarreness effect, which leads us to remember things better when they are unusual or bizarre in some way.¹ If we apply this effect to perceivable deviations, we have the possibility of remembering them more clearly than things or events that do not deviate.

¹ Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 274.

Of course, there are other approaches to working with deviation that focus more on the technical side, using deviation as a process within the design.

Glitch in the Copy (2016–2017), Annika Pettersson

Annika Pettersson (b. 1981) is a Swedish jewellery artist and researcher whose work often centres around the use of digital design and production

¹⁷⁴ Cornelia Holzach, "Vorwort" in *Auf Abwegen: Zeitgenössische Gold- und Silberschmiedekunst am Rande der Vernunft. Gefäß Schmuck Gerät / Gone Astray: The Art of Gold- and Silversmithing on the Edge of Reason. Holloware Jewelry Utensils*, ed. Cornelia Holzach & Ellen Maurer Zilioli (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche Art Publishers, 2023), 11.

techniques.¹⁷⁵ Many of her works show an approach that is deeply rooted in artistic research. Her series *Glitch in the Copy* (see fig. 17), which she created in 2016–2017 as part of a one-year research project at Konstfack University, Stockholm, Sweden, is particularly interesting for the topic of deviation. Within the work, Pettersson explores the loss of information that occurs during translation between physical and digital states. Focusing on 3D scanning and 3D printing as manufacturing techniques, the project resulted in a series of brooches that Pettersson created by 3D scanning an “original” and printing out the scan; the resulting 3D printout was scanned again, creating a copy that was, again, 3D scanned and printed. Pettersson repeated this process several times, whereby each time only the latest print was scanned, and each time there was a loss or change of information.¹⁷⁶

175 For the artist's biographical information, see “Annika Pettersson,” Charon Kransen Arts, accessed on 2 May 2024, <http://www.charonkransenarts.com/artists/pettersson.html>.

176 “Glitch in the Copy,” Annika Pettersson, accessed on 13 January 2024, <https://annikapettersson.se/glitch-in-the-copy>.

Figure 17: *Glitch in the Copy* (2016–2017), Annika Pettersson.



In *Glitch in the Copy*, Pettersson works with a technical deviation that evolved due to a form of translation from one medium/technique/material to another. Her deviations follow a very different approach to Clarke's; she does not challenge an existing system but rather shows its imperfections. The outcome is presented as a group of objects (common in artistic research) in which the individual pieces recede into the background. The works of Clarke and Pettersson represent two opposing ways of thinking; their intentions when designing the works may well have been different, and yet they both work with deviation. Clarke's approach uses deviation as a principle, whereas Pettersson uses it as a process. This distinction will become relevant again in *The Archive of Possibilities*.

The boundary between error and deviation is not always clearly defined in this project. In general, every error can be considered a deviation. Conversely, however, not every deviation is considered an error. Deviations harbour potential; errors give the impression of failure.

Following these thoughts, three steps were identified to integrate deviation into this project:

1. Start looking for existing deviations from all fields and document and categorise them.
(*A Collection of the Existing*, p. 102-111)
2. Start creating deviations. Categorise them and, from that, create reproducible and applicable guidelines for action.
(*The Archive of Possibilities*, p. 114-143)
3. Link deviation with the field of memory and/or focus entirely on memory-related deviations.
(*Memory-Related Deviation*, p. 155-281, 284-291)

In this project, deviation is defined as a difference or change in comparison to a previous and/or planned state—a difference from what is normal, usual, and/or expected. It is clear that there are both permissible and impermissible forms of deviation, those that we recognise and those we do not. Deviation always needs an ideal or stereotype in order for us to recognise that something is wrong. In this respect, different groups may have different ideas of what is wrong. In art, the use of deviation is not new. In the works discussed above, we saw deviation used as a principle (by David Clarke) on the one hand and as a process (by Annika Pettersson) on the other. This division will be explored in greater depth in *The Archive of Possibilities*. This short section was intended to give a framework for understanding deviation. In the next step, it is important to find a structure suitable for this research. This is done in three phases. The first one looks

at documents and categorises existing deviations. The second deals with creating new deviations and builds a reproducible strategy from that. The third one links the field of memory to all these trains of thought.

Structure

There is a variety of possibilities for artistic research. The approaches are as diverse as their practitioners. Usually, the method chosen reflects not only the project but also the personality of the artist conducting the research. With that in mind, it was clear from the outset that structure would be an important element of the artistic strategy for this research project. Of course, (memory-related) deviation can be analysed in many different ways; the research carried out for this project was initially orientated towards a clear structure, which deformed and developed into a personal perspective as it progressed. The structure should not only help to classify the objects created as part of this study; it also serves to organise the entire process.

In general, structure (noun) is defined as the manner in which the parts of a system are arranged or (verb) as planning, organising, and arranging the parts of something. It can also be used in a building context to describe something that is made from parts or in a medical context to describe an organ (or part of it) that fulfils a task.¹⁷⁷ The engineer J. E. Gordon describes a structure as “any assemblage of materials which is intended to sustain loads.”¹⁷⁸ Structure, both as a noun and a verb, is an important part of the way I work. For this research, it was important to find out how structures function generally in order to transfer these ideas to the structures created for this project.

In the first chapter of Structures: Or Why Things Don't Fall Down, J.E. Gordon discusses natural structures and talks about how animals are never stiff creatures but are usually made up of a mixture of rigid, supporting, and soft, flexible structures.¹⁷⁹ Later on, he elaborates on the spine, which is made up of a combination of hard and soft parts, with the soft elements allowing room for manoeuvre and movement.¹⁸⁰ His explanations are a perfect metaphor for the structure that is needed for this project. If we want to create a structure that supports this research, we need a rigid part (a basic structure) that is able to carry it and serve as its scaffolding. At the same time, we also need a soft, flexible part (the possibility of interpretation) to protect the scaffolding. Together, these will form the backbone that supports us and helps us to walk the chosen path. While the structure might change as a

¹⁷⁷ “Structure,” Cambridge Dictionary, accessed on 30 November 2024, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/structure>.

¹⁷⁸ J.E. Gordon, *Structures: Or Why Things Don't Fall Down* (New York: Hachette Books, 2020), 17.

¹⁷⁹ Gordon, *Structures*, 19–20.

¹⁸⁰ Gordon, *Structures*, 196.

result of its application, the change should be so small that the flexible parts (interpretation) absorb it, so that the basic structure can carry the weight of the research while maintaining enough flexibility not to break (until such a break may be desired).¹⁸¹ Gordon ends his book with a recommendation that the best way to learn about structures is through observation, practical application, and destruction.¹⁸² Let us follow his advice; let's learn through observation, application, and destruction.

¹⁸¹ According to Gordon, all structures and materials deflect under load (even if it is just on an atomic level). Gordon, *Structures*, 38.

¹⁸² Gordon, *Structures*, 388.

A Collection of the Existing

Observation: Start looking for existing deviations;
document and categorise them.

A Collection of the Existing (see figs. 19–66) is the first step on the way to integrating deviation into this project. It is the introduction, but it is also a constant companion to this research. The focus here is not to create an archive through the production of objects but the creation of an archive through observation (documentation and categorisation) of the environment. However, before delving into this, it is important first to briefly define what archives are.

By definition, an archive is a storage location for non-public documents.¹⁸³ However, following the art critic Knut Ebeling and the philosopher Stephan Günzel, it can be a method as well as a place.¹⁸⁴ According to them, the term archive is commonly used in visual arts to describe practices of collecting and storing.¹⁸⁵ In this context—despite this differing from the original definition—simple collections are often referred to as archives. In the context of this study, the term archive will be mostly used to refer to a method. This corresponds to common language usage and not necessarily to the definition of archives as places where non-public documents are stored.

Archives are collections. And in collections, people bring together things that were previously scattered.¹⁸⁶ There-

¹⁸³ Pethes, *Gedächtnis und Erinnerung*, 53.

¹⁸⁴ Knut Ebeling and Stephan Günzel, "Einleitung," in *Archivologie: Theorien des Archivs in Philosophie, Medien und Künsten*, ed. Knut Ebeling and Stephan Günzel (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos Berlin, 2009), 10.

¹⁸⁵ Ebeling and Günzel, "Einleitung," 13.

¹⁸⁶ Sommer, *Sammeln*, 20–21, 24.

fore, archives give meaning and order to things that would otherwise be lost, and although there is often an object that was the start of a collection, there is neither a beginning nor an end to an archive. At least, that is what Ernst van Alphen says.¹⁸⁷ He also highlights that structuring can be useful to keep an overview. The creation of categories for collected objects enables both collectors and users to find their way around archives.¹⁸⁸

Manfred Sommer also points out that, usually, objects in a collection must have something in common to end up there.¹

¹ Sommer, *Sammeln*, 26.

Because archives have a lot to do with order and selection, they are a perfect way to bring structure. Here, the idea of the collection (or archive) was to document existing deviations and use them as inspiration and reflection on the topic in general (see fig. 18). A *Collection of the Existing* currently contains around 300 images taken since 2021. Because there is no finite goal to be achieved, it can be regarded as endlessly progressing. It is a constant process of searching and finding, with the aim of developing new perspectives on the initial topic and, thus, becoming inspired.

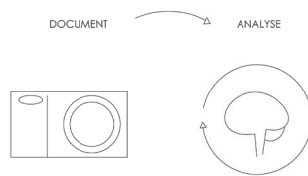


Figure 18: Creative process around the development of *A Collection of the Existing*.

¹⁸⁷ Ernst van Alphen, *Staging the Archive: Art and Photography in the Age of New Media* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2018), 153.

¹⁸⁸ van Alphen, *Staging the Archive*, 183–184.

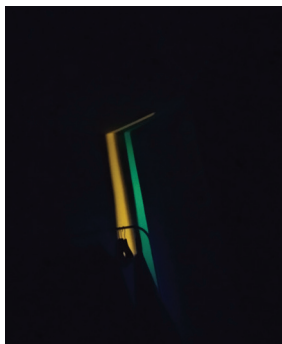
All the pictures in *A Collection of the Existing* show something related to the theme of deviation. All can be seen as source material that is supposed to trigger new trains of thought. Despite the variety of images, categories can be found, such as out of place; broken, damaged, or disrupted; unexpected; disappearing; misplaced; improvised repair; inexplicable phenomena; natural phenomena; the feeling of a parallel universe; process errors; and redirection. The subdivision of the collection is, of course, subjective and can certainly be made differently. It differs significantly from the kinds of categories applied to works of art, as it is an observation of the environment and not (yet) connected to the process of art creation. However, it represents the perspective and perception that led to the pictures being included in the collection.

A Collection of the Existing is the first step on the way to using deviation as an artistic strategy. It starts with the creation of an archive through observation of the environment. The main idea behind the archive is the search for inspiration; next, we move onto the more applied part of this project.









The Archive of Possibilities

Practical application: Start creating deviations.
Categorise them and, from that, create reproducible and applicable guidelines for action.

After *A Collection of the Existing* set the thought process in motion, it was continued in *The Archive of Possibilities*, which is (at least emotionally) the actual beginning of the active, practical part of this research project. While the *Collection of the Existing* can be compared to a constant background stimulus, *The Archive of Possibilities* is active creativity. The process began with the reproduction of a simple ring and culminated in two trains of thought on the use of deviation as an artistic strategy: the use of deviation as a process and the use of deviation as a principle. However, before exploring this in more detail, it is important to define the role archives can play in artistic research.

Archives that are created by and for artists are a special category with particular relevance to this project. In order not to expand the field too much, these will be the focus; other archives will not be considered in detail.

Anyone who is interested in archives as a source of creative inspiration for art production and who lives within a reasonable radius of Switzerland should be advised to visit the Sitterwerk Archive at least once in their life. The Sitterwerk Foundation, which, among other things, houses a materials archive and an art library, was established in 2006 by Felix Lehner, Hans Jörg Schmid, and Daniel Rohner as a charitable foundation. It is located on the site of the former St. Gallen textile dye works. The Kunstgiesserei St. Gallen (St. Gallen art foundry) is located on the same site! The materials archive and the art library

¹ "Leitbild," Sitterwerk, accessed on 14 January 2024, <https://www.sitterwerk.ch/de/Stiftung/Kontakt>.

are constantly growing collections of books and material samples. The collection samples themselves come from a wide variety of fields. The idea of the collections is to provide a source of inspiration. Both collections are highly interactive, as all objects can be touched, rearranged, and compiled into collections of the visitor's choosing, which can then be stored digitally and/or printed and thus taken away as inspiring memory aids.

Red I (2018), Lena Kaapke

Lena Kaapke (b. 1989) is a visual artist who lives and works in Germany.¹⁸⁹ Her work mostly centres around ceramic installations that emerge from artistic research. Most relevant for this chapter is her installation *Red I* (see fig. 67), which is based on research she conducted around the colour red in ceramic technology. The installation consists of numbers handwritten in porcelain, each representing a glaze recipe that she discovered during the research. Due to the possibility of variation in glazes, in the installation, numbers can appear several times; for example, different firing programmes can lead to different colour variations using the same recipe.¹⁹⁰ What is interesting about her work is that Kaapke initially started with very technical research, which she used not only to (re)discover different glaze recipes but also to create an impressive installation that makes manifest the different shades of red and their unpredictability in connection with seemingly unimportant process details. The archive formed the basis for many of her other works.

189 "Vita," Lena Kaapke, accessed on 4 May 2024, <https://lena-kaapke.com/en/vita>.

190 "Rot I," Lena Kaapke, accessed on 3 May 2024, <https://lena-kaapke.com/de/arbeiten/rot-i>.

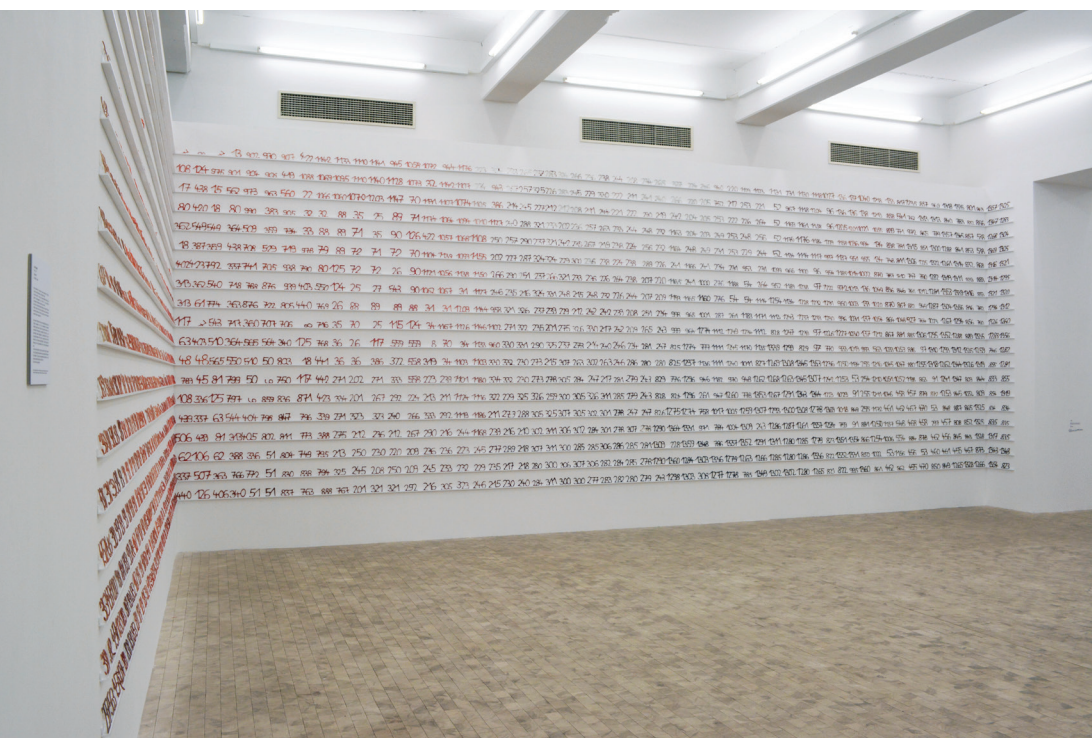


Figure 67: Red I (2018), Lena Kaapke.

Kaapke's work offers an example of how artists and designers can integrate archives or archiving into their practice. Artists' archives usually serve an end in themselves. Their aim is to improve the artist's practice, and they are not necessarily intended to share inspiration with a broader audience. However, Kaapke goes one step further by making her archive visible through her work.

Claire Bishop, contributing editor of Artforum, criticises the overload of information that is often given in artistic research presentations. Bishop is also critical towards PhD programs, suggesting that “art, under the pressure of academicization, becomes tame, systematic, and professional.” However, her view of the field is not completely negative; she also sees great potential in artistic research, but only when

installations do not simply present existing information in a new way but instead transform information into a (new) narrative that questions truth and presents the results in an aesthetic way!

¹ Claire Bishop, "Information Overload," Artforum, accessed on 4 December 2024, <https://www.artforum.com/features/claire-bishop-on-the-superabundance-of-research-based-art-252571/>.

This leads to the question of what an ideal archive for this research project might look like. The archive or collection created here is, like Kaapke's, intended to form the vocabulary of the research project. At the same time, it is also intended to be a work in itself—not through the transformation of the collected information into an appealing work but by collecting the information in an appealing way. The idea is to be inspired by the previous image collection (*A Collection of the Existing*), to analyse it, and to build a second, very different archive based on production instead of documentation. In this way, as little thought as possible should be given to the process of creation, but above all, production should take place using as many techniques and materials as possible. This production shall then be analysed at a certain point and conclusions drawn from it (see fig. 68).

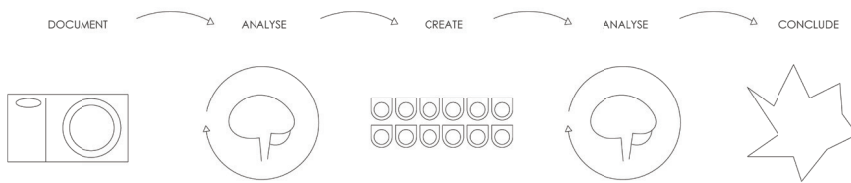
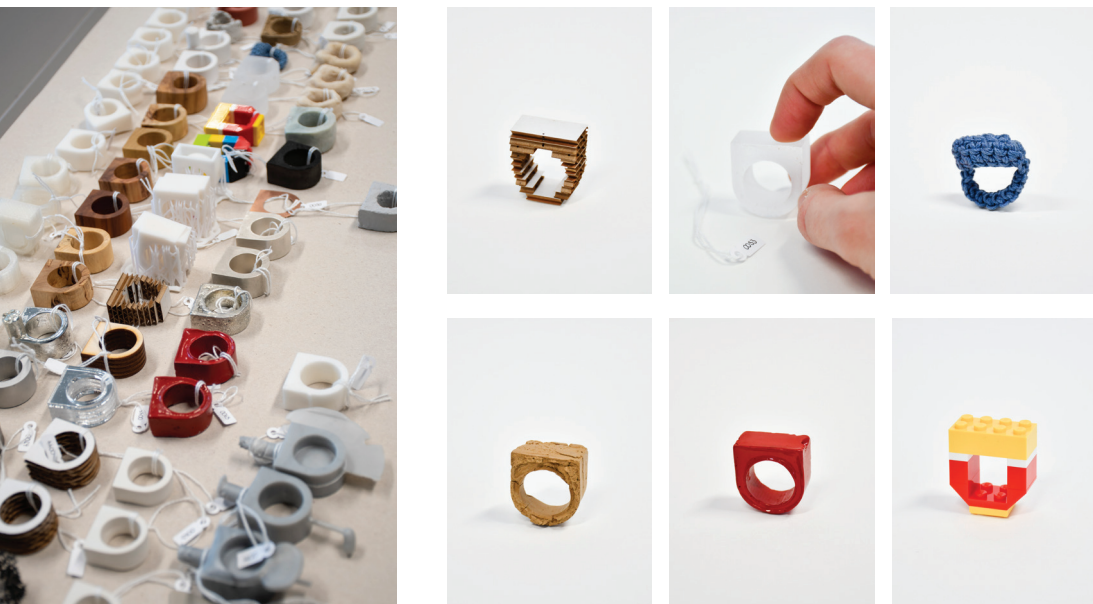


Figure 68: Creative process around the development of *A Collection of the Existing* and *The Archive of Possibilities*.

For *The Archive of Possibilities*, a plain signet ring was (re)produced several times using a wide variety of materials and techniques (see figs. 69–75). The (re)productions

were characterised by intended deviations, which can be roughly divided into two categories: those caused by the use of deviation as a principle and those caused by the use of deviation as a process. This subdivision emerged from the work of the artists listed as examples in the chapter *Deviation*. By continuing and elaborating on those trains of thought, a series of objects is produced, each of which is characterised by a partial loss, a partial change, or a partial expansion of information. In this context, information does not just describe the physical appearance but also the material iconological information of the object.



Figures 69–75: Rings from *The Archive of Possibilities* (2021–2024), Maria Konschake.

The shape of the object to be (re)produced was chosen based on its ease of reproducibility and recognisability (representing an archetypal object). Since this project began with a focus on rings (and a sub-focus on signet

rings), the object category was clear from the beginning. Several designs were made, from which the one that could be (re)produced most easily and cheaply, and in as many techniques and materials as possible, was selected.

This project started in November 2021 with a focus on rings only. Among all forms of jewellery, rings are often seen as having the closest connection to our identity.¹ Given that they are worn directly on the skin, they have a very intimate connection to the body. With the often personal engravings on the inside (worn on the skin) and the representative shape on the outside of the ring, they also illustrate the special position of jewellery as a carrier of private identity in public.² Furthermore, the ring is one of those pieces of jewellery where size matters the most. Very often, rings are made to fit one particular person. One of the oldest existing forms of ring is the signet ring; even Egyptian Pharaohs used to wear them as symbols of authority and godly dignity. Over time, they have taken many shapes and materials. Today, they exist mostly as nostalgic status symbols.³ Even though, within the development of this project, it was decided to broaden the focus to include other types of jewellery, the archive that was created as a starting point still focuses on ring-shaped objects.

1 Chadour and Joppien, *Schmuck II*, 15.

2 In her text "SCHMUCKISMUS," Karen Pontoppidan emphasises that jewellery can either be seen as an object that stands between private and public identity or as a social phenomenon. Source: Pontoppidan, "SCHMUCKISMUS," 11.

3 Chadour and Joppien, *Schmuck II*, 15-16.

The Archive of Possibilities is a way of learning how shapes and materials react and how this not only changes the formal appearance of the object but also its inherent meaning.

In essence, only the initial idea can be described as free of deviation because every subsequent materialisation carries the potential for changes of information. At least, that is the idea of the archive. Of course, this can be discussed.

Within this part of the research, I did not apply any restrictions when choosing techniques or materials. Given that imperfection was the intention, the choice of techniques and the ways of (re)producing were selected in a highly specified manner, generating a variety of interesting results based on applied material and technical knowledge. The archive is not intended to make the technologies themselves the object of research but uses them as means to an end. The chosen ways of working are intended to show the subtle, the drastic, and everything in between; it is about using a variety of techniques to create a variety of possibilities. The archive is endless.

Aleida Assmann makes a distinction between functional and storage archives, whereby functional archives are defined as places that contain what is still needed in the present.¹⁹¹ According to this definition, *The Archive of Possibilities* can clearly be regarded as a functional archive. The idea here is to not only learn from the archive but also from the process of creating it and, in doing so, to actively stimulate inspiration. Rethinking every technique and material ensures that the mind is constantly stimulated anew. Preserving, organising, and systematising are essential methods here; only through them can the structure behind the objects be recognised. The archive is a continuously evolving work of art in which the individual pieces develop their meaning in relation to the group.

The Archive of Possibilities serves as an inspiration and cornerstone of this research. In order to understand it in more detail, the two subdivisions that were developed during the process—deviation as a process and devia-

191 Aleida Assmann, "The Archive as a Laboratory of the New: Where Remembering and Forgetting Meet," in *Productive Archiving: Artistic Strategies, Future Memories, and Fluid Identities*, ed. Ernst van Alphen (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2023), 30.

tion as a principle (see fig. 76)—and the resulting guidelines for action will be discussed below.



Figure 76: Division of the archive objects according to those that use deviation as a process and those that use it as a principle.

Deviation as a Process

Conceived of as a process, deviation is used in such a way that within the (re)production process there is a deviation that changes the identity-forming (formal and/or content-related) characteristics of the object. For example, a signet ring might lose its signet surface, the ring hole may no longer be accessible, or the meaning of the ring might change due to its reproduction in a different material or its unfamiliar shape.

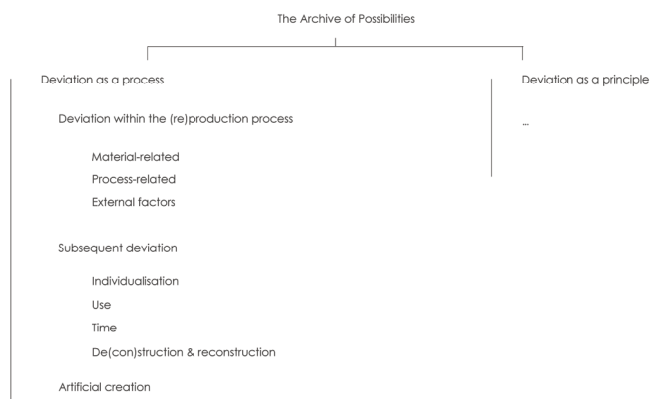
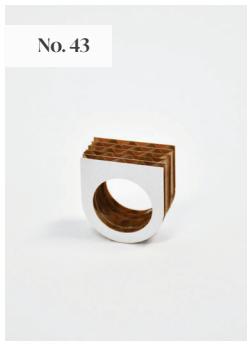


Figure 77: Subdivision of deviation as a process within *The Archive of Possibilities*.

Within this project, there are three sub-forms of deviation as a process. It can occur within the (re)production process, subsequent to it, or through artificial creation. Within the (re)production process, it can be material-related, process-related, or caused by external factors. Subsequent deviation can be caused through individualisation, use, time, de(con)struction, and reconstruction. Artificial creation is not subdivided further; it is a more intentional kind of deviation since here, usually, the de-

violation is already designed as such, whereby the other forms of deviation arise during the production process. To illustrate this classification, a brief example is given for each category.

It is important to emphasise that objects do not necessarily belong to only one of these categories. In reality, there are often overlaps, and pieces may have deviations from two or more categories. Nevertheless, in order to better understand the subdivision, in each case, only one of the deviations is highlighted as an example here.



No. 43:

Cardboard

Deviation as a process

Deviation within the reproduction process

→ Material-related

Despite the material being used in the best possible way, there is a deviation in shape caused by the structure of the cardboard layers.

No. 47:

Cardboard

Deviation as a process

Deviation within the reproduction process

→ Process-related

Compared to No. 43, the material was used in an unsuitable orientation.

Due to this, there is a deviation in the shape of the object.

This object also illustrates that not only one category applies, as it also fits into the following category:

Deviation within the reproduction process

→ Material-related

No. 93:

Resin

Deviation as a process

Deviation within the reproduction process

→ External factors

A technical error occurred when 3D printing the object (cause unclear, repetition impossible). Therefore, there is a deviation in shape.

This object also illustrates that not only one category applies, as it also fits into the following category:

Deviation within the reproduction process

→ Artificial creation

No. 69:

Silver

Deviation as a process

Subsequent deviation

→ Individualisation

The object was cast in silver and then personalised with a name stamp.

No. 99:

Resin

Deviation as a process

Subsequent deviation

→ Use

The object was used several times as a stencil. The surface is therefore damaged and dirty.

No. 23:

Copper

Deviation as a process

Subsequent deviation

→ Time

The object was cast in copper. A reaction with the air causes the surface to age (oxidise).

This object also illustrates that not only one category applies, as it also fits into the following category:

Deviation within the reproduction process

→ Process-related

No. 90:

Marble, wax

Deviation as a process

Subsequent deviation

→ De(con)struction and reconstruction

A broken marble ring was repaired in an improvised manner with wax.

This object also illustrates that not only one category applies, as it also fits into the following categories:

Deviation within the reproduction process

→ Material-related

Deviation within the reproduction process

→ Process-related

No. 17:

3D file (later also realised as resin print)

Deviation as a process

Artificial creation

The 3D file of the ring was intentionally distorted digitally.

Deviation as a Principle

When deviation is used as a principle of design (prior to (re)production), there is a conscious intervention that occurs by examining and then breaking the basic rules of the design and creation process. Deviation as a principle can be further divided into two categories: controlled and uncontrolled (see fig. 86).¹⁹² The distinction is made clear below.

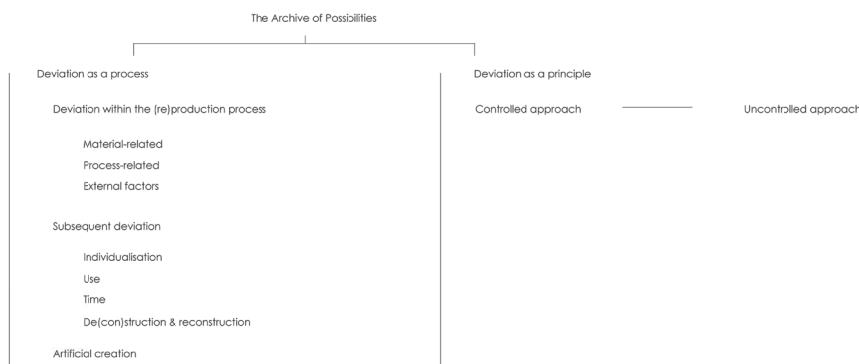


Figure 86: Subdivision of deviation as a principle within *The Archive of Possibilities*.

¹⁹² In spring 2023, the publication *The Archive of Possibilities* (2023) was published, which contains a preliminary version of the categorisation explained here. This categorisation has since been revised so that deviation as a principle is divided into a controlled and an uncontrolled approach. The uncontrolled approach is missing from the first publication.

Controlled Approach

In order to take a controlled approach to the use of deviation as a principle, the existing system of (unspoken) rules must be analysed and then consciously questioned. This results in general instructions for action. In short: break the system of rules, habits, and values. Or, more precisely: break the rules of the object. Break the rules of the material. Break the rules of the process. Question everything you know.

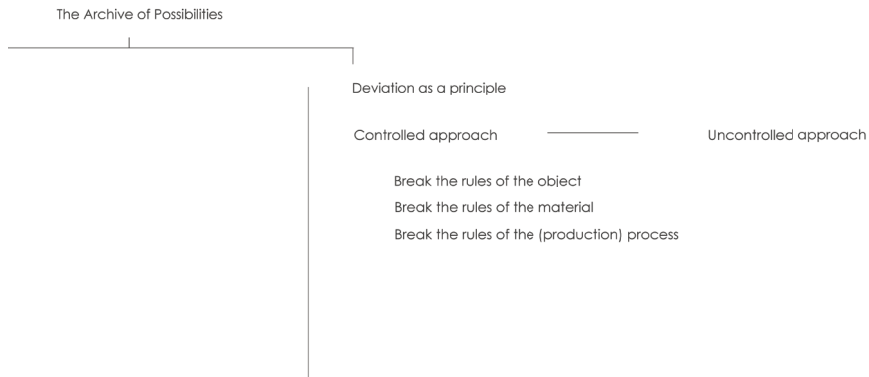


Figure 87: Subdivision of controlled approach to the use of deviation as a principle within *The Archive of Possibilities*.

Breaking the rules of the process can mean:

- To disrupt the process
- To use an unsuitable process
- To use the process in an unsuitable way

To break the rules of the material can mean:

- To disrupt the material
- To use an unsuitable material
- To use the material in an unsuitable way
(e.g., to contaminate the material)

To break the rules of the object can mean:

(e.g., to break the rules of jewellery)

Jewellery is constant → Make it ephemeral

Jewellery is visible → Make it invisible

Jewellery is wearable → Make it unwearable

Jewellery does not harm you → Make it harmful

Jewellery tells stories → Erase the story

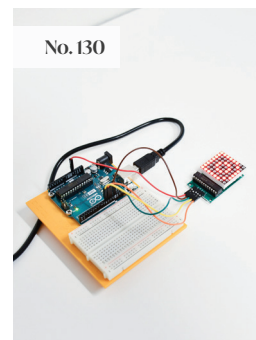
Jewellery should be beautiful → Make it ugly

Jewellery comes finished → Create something unfinished

The maker creates the work → Let the wearer create the work

Due to the jewellery-related context of this research, no further strategies are listed. However, this way of thinking can also be applied to other areas (such as exhibition design, advertising design, book layout, etc.). In principle, it is about recognising the rules of an existing system and then deliberately breaking them.

To illustrate the classification, a brief example is given for each category.



No. 97:

Model-making foam

Deviation as a principle

Controlled approach:

Break the rules of the process.

→ Disrupt the process.

The modelling foam used here should not normally be touched during the curing phase. However, this rule was disregarded, which led to the material contracting.

This object also illustrates that not only one category applies, as it also fits into the following categories:

Deviation within the reproduction process

→ Material-related

Deviation within the reproduction process

→ Process-related

No. 59:

Soap

Deviation as a principle

Controlled approach:

Break the rules of the material.

→ Use an unsuitable material.

Soap is not an ideal material for ring production due to its unstable nature. A simple hand wash will immediately deform the object. That's exactly what happened here.

This object also illustrates that not only one category applies, as it also fits into the following category:

Deviation within the reproduction process

→ Material-related

No. 130:

Arduino board, LED panel

Deviation as a principle

Controlled approach:

Break the rules of the object.

→ Jewellery is wearable.

With the help of the small illuminated display, the construction provides an image of the ring but breaks with the basic principles of jewellery.

(With reference to the chapter *Jewellery*, this is no longer jewellery but a jewellery-related object).

This object also illustrates that not only one category applies, as it also fits into the following category:

Deviation within the reproduction process

→ Material-related

Uncontrolled Approach

In order to take an uncontrolled approach to the use of deviation as a principle, uncontrollable components must be integrated into the (re)production process (see fig. 91), which influence the creation of the art object. This might involve working in an unfamiliar space, working with unfamiliar techniques and materials/media, working with unpredictable techniques and materials/media (e.g., memory), or including unpredictable (external) human and/or non-human factors.

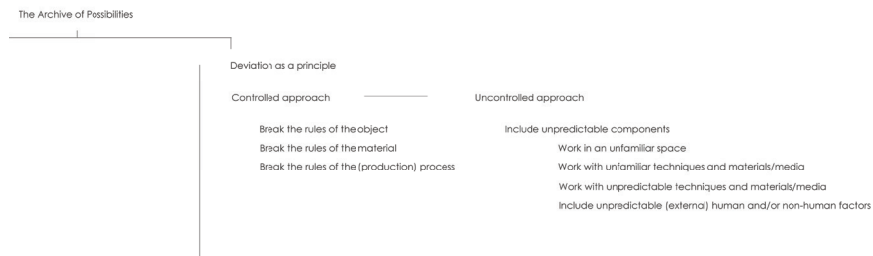


Figure 91: Subdivision of uncontrolled approach to the use of deviation as a principle within *The Archive of Possibilities*.



No. 83:

Recycled plastic

Deviation as a principle

Uncontrolled approach:

Include unpredictable components.

→ Work in an unfamiliar space.

Even if the object bears deviations that can clearly be assigned to other categories, the production process was nevertheless characterised by working in an unknown place (and with unknown techniques).

This object also illustrates that not only one category applies, as it also fits into the following category:

Deviation within the reproduction process

→ Process-related

No. 92:

Steel and iron waste

Deviation as a principle

Uncontrolled approach:

Include unpredictable components.

→ Work with unfamiliar techniques and materials/media.

Again, the object bears deviations from various categories. However, the production process was mostly influenced by working with an unknown material.

This object also illustrates that not only one category applies, as it also fits into the following categories:

Deviation within the reproduction process

→ Material-related

Deviation within the reproduction process

→ Process-related

No. 104:

Wood

Deviation as a principle

Uncontrolled approach:

Include unpredictable components.

→ Work with unpredictable techniques and materials/media.

The ring was carved in freshly cut, wet wood. During the (artificially accelerated) drying process, it deformed unpredictably.

This object also illustrates that not only one category applies, as it also fits into the following categories:

Deviation within the reproduction process

→ Material-related

Deviation within the reproduction process

→ Process-related

No. 55:

Yarn

Deviation as a principle

Uncontrolled approach:

Include unpredictable components.

→ Include unpredictable (external) human
and/or non-human factors.

The ring was made to order by a person outside the project. She was provided with measurements and a form as a guide. However, there was room for interpretation in the realisation.

This object also illustrates that not only one category applies, as it also fits into the following categories:

Deviation within the reproduction process

→ Material-related

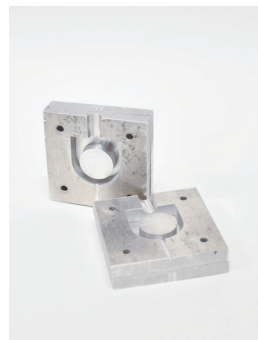
Deviation within the reproduction process

→ Process-related

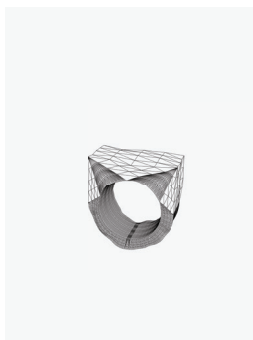
The Archive of Possibilities shows that archives can play an important role in bringing structure to artistic research. They can also serve to develop the vocabulary of a project. Within this archive, the reproduction of a simple-shaped signet ring helped to develop reproducible methods that could be used to initiate thought processes and, subsequently, a bridge back to the topic of memory. An uncontrolled approach to the use of deviation as a principle will help us here; we have established that uncontrolled deviation occurs (among other things) when working with unpredictable media. If we now consider memory as a medium of information transport, we can build a bridge to the second part of the methodology, *Memory-Related Deviation* (p. 155-281, 284-291).

Following pages: Figures 96-176 with various rings from *The Archive of Possibilities* (2021–2024), Maria Konschake.













The Meaning of Material

According to Elizabeth Edwards, “what things are made of—how they are materially presented—relates directly to their social, economic and political discourses.” She sees an object’s material as central to its meaning.¹⁹³

Materials hold meaning and, therefore, contribute to the meaning of a work of art.¹⁹⁴ We associate emotions and memories with materials based on our experience of them and/or their cultural imprint. In the following, I use the term material iconology. Material iconology is not concerned with the aesthetic but with the content-related properties of materials.¹⁹⁵ The term material iconology used here is based on Thomas Raff’s Habilitationsschrift from 1991, at which time, according to Raff, the question of material iconology in the context of art history was relatively new.¹⁹⁶ In his work, Raff looks at historical art objects and discusses whether and how materials contribute to their content. While, today, charging objects with meaning through the selection of certain materials is a common way to communicate content in art, Raff’s work remains inspiring.

Raff’s approach looks at materials from the point of view of content; each material is assigned a certain meaning, which is transferred to works that consist of that material.¹⁹⁷ Of course, there is a certain amount of room for interpretation here. As Raff points out, materials usually have an abundance of properties. Still, only a few selected ones are perceived as striking or characteristic. Among other examples, he illustrates this with lead, which is soft, easily melted, toxic, and inexpensive. However, in his opinion, lead is usually associated only

193 Elizabeth Edwards, “Photographs as Objects of Memory,” in *Material Memories: Design and Evocation*, ed. Marius Kwant, Christopher Breward, and Jeremy Aynsley (Oxford, New York: Berg, 1999), 223.

194 Among many other authors, this idea can be found in the work of Thomas Raff. For more details, see, Thomas Raff, *Die Sprache der Materialien: Anleitung zu einer Ikonologie der Werkstoffe*, 2nd ed. (Münster: Waxmann Verlag GmbH, 2008), 191.

195 Raff, *Die Sprache der Materialien*, 11, 27.

196 Raff, *Die Sprache der Materialien*, 7, 11; a *Habilitationsschrift* is a written thesis that exists in Germany, (among other countries,) and must be completed at universities in order to obtain the *venia legendi*.

“Habilitation,” Duden, accessed on 18 February 2025, <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Habilitation>;

“Habilitationsschrift,” Duden, accessed on 18 February 2025, <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Habilitationsschrift>.

197 Raff, *Die Sprache der Materialien*, 45.

with being heavy.¹⁹⁸ Raff also makes clear that the emotional value—or, rather, the meaning of materials—can change, often being very different depending on the time and place.¹⁹⁹

A special form of material usage that Raff discusses is “spolia.” Following the definition still used today, spolia are either pieces of booty, captured weapons, or reused components from buildings.² According to Raff, they play an important role within material iconological considerations as they can be used, for example, as material relics or topographical or historical references.³ In other words, they can emphasise a new level of meaning in the artwork.

1 Raff, *Die Sprache der Materialien*, 111–113.

2 “Spolien,” Duden, accessed on 23 May 2024, https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Spolien#google_vignette.

3 Raff, *Die Sprache der Materialien*, 113.

Within this research, two materials are used particularly intensively, both of which were chosen because of characteristics generally associated with them. The materials and their meaning within this project will be explained below.

Wax

Wax is malleable. It exists in a wide variety of consistencies. It is changeable, yielding, discontinuous, and rarely considered a final material for art or craft objects. Wax artefacts are always at risk because the medium is so impermanent.

I love working with wax.

According to Monika Wagner and Dietmar Rübel's encyclopaedia of artistic material, on a metaphorical level, wax has often been associated with memory because of its ability to be used as a storage medium.²⁰⁰ A good example of this can be found in Sigmund Freud's text “Notiz über den ‘Wunderblock’” (“Note upon the ‘Mystic Writing-Pad’”), in which Freud compares the function of a mystic writing pad (available today with a slightly different function

198 Raff, *Die Sprache der Materialien*, 49.

199 Raff, *Die Sprache der Materialien*, 193.

200 Monika Wagner, Dietmar Rübel, and Sebastian Hackenschmidt (eds.), *Lexikon des künstlerischen Materials: Werkstoffe der modernen Kunst von Abfall bis Zinn*, 3rd ed. (Munich: C.H.Beck oHG, 2019), 233.

under the term magic tablet) with the function of our perception and memory storage.²⁰¹ The mystic writing pad was a tablet made of resin or wax with a translucent sheet on top, which allowed non-permanent records to be made. The sheet was only attached to the upper end of the tablet and consisted of two layers that could be lifted away from each other. The upper layer was a transparent celluloid sheet; the lower layer was of translucent wax paper. The tablet was used by making notes on the celluloid sheet, which became visible because the pressure of the writing instrument pressed the wax paper against the wax tablet, resulting in a dark imprint on the surface of the celluloid. To destroy the note, one simply had to remove the sheet from the wax tablet.²⁰²

In the text, Freud compares our perceptual apparatus with two layers of paper, whereby the celluloid serves as a filter and only the sensitive wax paper underneath actually absorbs stimuli. Both can be cleaned by lifting off the sheet and are once again receptive. However, the wax plate underneath retains all traces of what has been written on it. According to Freud, this is analogous to our unconscious (memory system).²⁰³

Wax's metaphorical meaning, as well as its fragility, made it ideal for this project.

Almost all objects created during the reflections on memory-related deviations were first modelled in wax; even if it was only rarely used as a final material in this project, its metaphorical meaning is omnipresent throughout. Wax has shaped the entire process.

Glass

Spontaneously, one might associate glass with words like transparent and breakable. Glass feels brittle and fragile.

Glass can withstand extreme conditions and is not as fragile as we often tend to think. The glass façade of the Crystal Houses in Amsterdam is an impressive example of this; for the Crystal Houses

201 Sigmund Freud, "Notiz über den 'Wunderblock,'" in Sigmund Freud *Studienausgabe Band III: Psychologie des Unbewussten*, ed. Alexander Mitscherlich, Angela Richards, and James Strachey (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1975), 363–369.

202 Freud, "Notiz über den 'Wunderblock,'" 366–367.

203 Freud, "Notiz über den 'Wunderblock,'" 367–369.

project, a large part of the façade of an Amsterdam townhouse was constructed from glass bricks.¹

¹ For more information about this project, see: “CRYSTAL HOUSES,” MVRDV, accessed on 8 December 2024, <https://www.mvrdv.com/projects/240/crystal-houses>.

American artist Kiki Smith says, “I like glass first because it’s a liquid. It’s always a reminder that things aren’t what they appear.”²⁰⁴ Even if that is an exaggeration—glass is not a liquid—from the point of view of material iconology in this project, glass becomes interesting through its physical definition. Here, it is often referred to as a supercooled liquid, since the material lacks the crystal structure typical of solids.²⁰⁵ However, it is a solid material and has the unique property of not having a definite melting point; instead, it liquefies when heated.²⁰⁶ These properties are the key reference to memory, which also usually seems solid. However, as the chapter on memories showed, they can easily be changed. Just like glass when heated, memory can deform and then take solid shape again. Under the right circumstances, this deformation can happen again and again. Therefore, like wax, glass is used in this project as a metaphor for memory.

It is important to highlight that glass is not a liquid. Its physical structure appears like one, which is why scientists came up with the term “supercooled liquid.” However, solid glass does not move or flow.¹ It is an amorphous solid, meaning that it has a noncrystalline structure “in which the atoms and molecules are not organized in a definite lattice pattern.”²

¹ Watkins-Baker, *Kiln Forming Glass*, 28.

² Gerald D. Mahan and Richard Zallen, “amorphous solid,” Britannica, accessed on 26 April 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/science/amorphous-solid>.

204 Quoted in Wagner, Rübel, and Hackenschmidt (eds.), *Lexikon des künstlerischen Materials*, 119.

205 Wagner, Rübel, and Hackenschmidt (eds.), *Lexikon des künstlerischen Materials*, 113.

206 Helga Watkins-Baker, *Kiln Forming Glass* (Marlborough: The Crowood Press, 2019), 27.

Touch

According to the Canadian philosopher Richard Feist, touch “is perhaps of all the senses the most deeply plugged in to the corporeal world.”²⁰⁷ It is impossible to go into sufficient detail on the subject of touch within the scope of this work, but it should at least be explored briefly, as touch occupies an important position in connection with memories.²⁰⁸ In an article from the book *Surface Tension*, Lesley Millar makes clear that our skin is an active medium of information processing and that we interact with the world by touch rather than by mere observation.²⁰⁹ According to her, physical memory (touch) can guide us when conscious memory fails.²¹⁰ She also suggests that we touch the past when we touch an object that can connect us to history.²¹¹ However, it is not just touching the object that evokes memories but also the touches that have already taken place and are reflected in the object.

This almost automatically builds a bridge to Glenn Adamson’s thought that craft always means an engagement with the material properties.¹

¹ Glenn Adamson, *Thinking Through Craft* (London/New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2020), 39.

According to Elizabeth Pye, every man-made (pre-industrial) object contains traces of the maker’s touch, as each of their tools leaves characteristic traces.²¹² Pye also suggests that touch gives us a sense of reality and can even reawaken memories.²¹³ The idea that objects carry the trace of the maker’s touch can be extended to post-industrial objects, as these

²⁰⁷ Richard Feist, “Thinking About Touch,” in *Touch in the Helping Professions: Research, Practice and Ethics*, ed. Martin Rovers, Judith Malette, and Manal Guirguis-Younger (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2017), 33.

²⁰⁸ It can be argued that smell also occupies an important position in connection with memories. The importance of smell is by no means ignored. A note dealing with it appears shortly before the end.

²⁰⁹ Lesley Millar, “Surface as practice,” in *Surface Tensions: Surface, finish and the meaning of objects*, ed. Glenn Adamson and Victoria Kelley (Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 2013), 26–27.

²¹⁰ Millar, “Surface as practice,” 27.

²¹¹ Millar, “Surface as practice,” 28.

²¹² Elizabeth Pye, “Understanding Objects: The Role of Touch in Conservation,” in *The Power of Touch: Handling Objects in Museum and Heritage Contexts*, ed. Elizabeth Pye (Oxon/New York: Routledge, 2016), 125.

²¹³ Elizabeth Pye, “Introduction: The Power of Touch,” in *The Power of Touch: Handling Objects in Museum and Heritage Contexts*, ed. Elizabeth Pye (Oxon/New York: Routledge, 2016), 14, 19–20.

also contain traces of (non-human) production.²¹⁴ Use also leaves traces of touch, as Pye emphasises.²¹⁵ All of this can be referred to as visible traces of the past, or references to invisible memories, which are (or might be) connected to the object.

Danielle Mages Amato's book The Hidden Memory of Objects can be seen as a non-scientific inspiration on recognising the importance of touch and its connection to memories. The novel tells the story of a girl who, after the death of her brother, begins to see the memories of objects as soon as she touches them.¹ In the story, objects are presented as carriers of memories to which we don't normally have access.

¹ Danielle Mages Amato, *The Hidden Memory of Objects* (New York: Harper Collins, 2017).

²¹⁴ In their text "Digitally Produced Jewellery: Tactile Qualities of the Digital Touch," Sofia Hallik and Darja Popolitova talk about digital technologies, their tactile qualities, and the different fingerprints technologies leave on objects. Source: Sofia Hallik and Darja Popolitova, "Digital Produced Jewellery: Tactile Qualities of the Digital Touch," accessed on 24 November 22, <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/612909/715222>.

²¹⁵ Pye, "Understanding Objects," 126.

Losing Control

What happens if we misremember the objects we have seen?

What happens if we lose the objects we have owned?

And finally, what happens if we forget that those objects ever existed?

Our small deviation hasn't led us far into the unknown. It seems like, so far, we have still played safely. We had a map and a structure to keep us on our way. Let's go one step further, and who knows, maybe we'll manage to lose control after all. So, let's break the structure we've just built and rethink our way of working. Let's deviate once more.

Memory-Related Deviation

Destruction: Link deviation with the field of memory and/or focus entirely on memory-related deviations.

The previous chapter showed how deviation can be used as an artistic strategy, not only for this research project. However, the bridge to memory was still missing, or at least, it was not elaborated on. This chapter focuses on directly including memory—an unpredictable medium—in the creation process. This step derives from *The Archive of Possibilities* (p. 114-143) and connects to literature research in the field of memory studies and memory research. It begins with a continuation of the strategies developed in the archive(s). However, the structure for deviation is no longer completely applicable and must, therefore, be broken up. It will not disappear completely, but it will move into the background, and instead, a new, more flexible structure focusing on memory as a medium will be created, including a map of the thoughts from which this approach emerged. This chapter explains the creation of this new structure and guide, as well as this project's creative process in general. Furthermore, all object groups created in the course of this research will be explained.

Let's take a step back to understand how the bridge to memory-related deviation came about. The sub-chap-

ter *Deviation* (p. 89-99, 102-143) showed that an uncontrolled approach to deviation can be applied through the inclusion of unpredictable components, such as the following:²¹⁶

1. *Work in an unfamiliar space*
 2. *Work with unfamiliar techniques and materials/media*²¹⁷
 3. *Work with unpredictable techniques and materials/media*
 4. *Include unpredictable (external) human and/or non-human factors*
- ...²¹⁸

Not only is the inclusion of unpredictable components essential for working with deviation in a surprising (and not just a controlled) way, but the strategy of working with unpredictable media (bullet point 3 above) also

²¹⁶ For more information, see the sub-chapter *Uncontrolled Approach* (p. 131-134).

²¹⁷ I follow the Cambridge Dictionary's definitions to distinguish between material and medium. Material is the substance of which something is made, whereas medium can have different meanings. Among other things, it can be "a method or way of expressing something" or a means of communication (e.g., television, radio, etc.). In the arts, the word medium can refer to both the material and the method used to create things. This definition can also be found on the Tate website, where it is stated that medium "can refer to both to the type of art (e.g., painting, sculpture, printmaking), as well as the materials an artwork is made from."

Sources: "Material," Cambridge Dictionary Online, accessed on 22 July 2024, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/material>.

"Medium," Cambridge Dictionary Online, accessed on 22 July 2024, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/medium>.

"Medium," Tate, accessed on 22 July 2024, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/m/medium>.

²¹⁸ Theoretically, this list could certainly be extended.

helps to build a bridge back to the topic of memory. In what follows, memory will be considered a medium of information transport, which—as shown in the chapter *Memory* (p. 54-72)—can be seen as quite unpredictable. For this reason, it is important to involve memory directly in the creative process and to build a new structure from it, which allows not only a more personal perspective but also links all previously explained theoretical knowledge.

However, this does not mean that all of the objects described in the following are directly based on memory deviations, but that memory was involved in the creation process in such a way that all of the objects refer to it. The directions derived from the thought process around an uncontrolled approach to deviation served as inspiration here, but they were not rigorously implemented.

Memory that is connected to objects has been an important part of this project since the beginning. As shown in the chapters *Memory* (p. 54-72), *Identity* (p. 73-85), and *Jewellery* (p. 35-53), memory forms the basis of identity, can be marked by deviations for a variety of reasons, and can be strongly connected to objects, such as jewellery.

Whether objects are really carriers of memories or mere projection surfaces for them is still a matter of debate.

Combining all previous thoughts about deviations of memory—and having an artistic strategy in mind—it seems sensible to create original categories for this research project. The aim of this categorisation is not to be congruent with any of the aforementioned categories (in the chapter *Memory*) but to find a structure of its own that makes sense as an artistic guideline. The intention is by no means to operate at the level of thinkers in memory studies or memory research but to create an artistic springboard that helps to generate and structure ideas.

It should be made clear that these categories are the result of an absolutely subjective consideration of the material at hand.

In the beginning of this research, deviation was defined as a difference or change in comparison to a previous and/or planned condition—a difference from what is normal, usual, and/or expected—ignoring the negative connotation. Referring to the topic of memory, it makes sense at this point to expand the definition and add the following: a difference from what is objectively true.

My thoughts for categorisation within this project began with three initial ideas. All three revolve around deviation (as defined above) in relation to memory as it interacts with objects.

1. A lost object
2. The lost story of an object
3. The lost meaning of the story of an object

The following ideas were linked to three consequences connected to these possible losses:

1. Memory is still there
2. Memory isn't there anymore
3. Memory is unclear/not fully there

Of course, these initial ideas proved to be incomplete as they were not able to cover all the thought processes associated with the topic. They were, therefore, developed further. Through a combination of various thoughts, a catalogue of questions and categorisations was drafted. This catalogue, integrated into a map of thoughts that contains various other relevant separations (see fig. 177), forms a pillar of the second part of the methodology for this project.

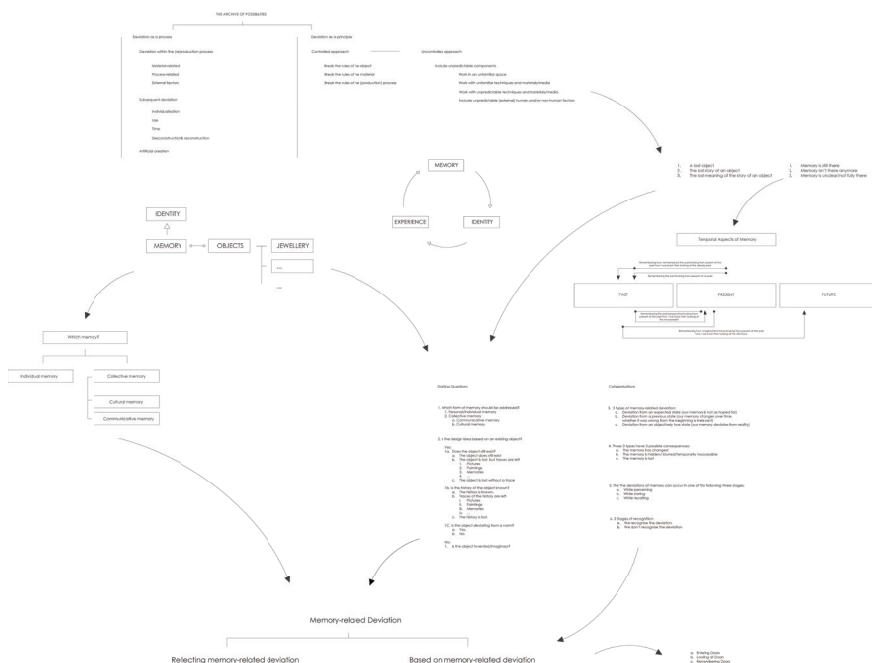


Figure 177: Visualisation of the thought process that connects various ideas around jewellery, memory, and identity in combination with the use of deviation as an artistic strategy.²¹⁹

These thoughts, as well as all included questions and categories, were developed in connection with creating the first objects of this research project and are therefore based on the thought processes that led to their creation. Part of the map of thoughts resulted from conclusions drawn after studying the authors discussed in the chapter *Memory* (p. 54-72). The rest was developed through and during the creation of the objects.

The questions and categories listed below form a special part of this map since they directly refer to the cre-

²¹⁹ The original thought map was significantly larger. The model shown here is a simplification, but it contains the most important parts of the original.

ative process. They did not always precede the objects; at times, they served to categorise them afterwards. It is also important to point out that the catalogue of questions and categories can't be used in full for all object groups; for some object groups, only the first part of the questions is relevant, while others focus on the second part. The questions always refer to the initial context, not necessarily to the final objects.

The catalogue should not be seen as a fixed set of rules but rather as a helpful framework, classification, and decision-making tool—a structure that can be applied and broken when necessary. Again, it should be made clear that this is an artistic reaction to work from the fields of memory studies and memory research. Even if it appears to be scientific in part, it should be understood ultimately as an artistic approach to the subject. The methods for organising and structuring adopted in this project reflect my personal way of working as an artist; the structure helps me to justify and make sense of decisions (to myself). That is to say, while it satisfies my desire for arrangement and order and may appear semi-scientific (although inspired by the fields of memory studies and memory research), it is not to be understood as a well-founded philosophical examination, but rather as an artistic perspective.

Starting questions:

1. Which form of memory should be addressed?
 1. Personal/individual memory
 2. Collective memory
 - a. Communicative memory
 - b. Cultural memory
2. Is the design idea based on an existing object?

Yes:

 - 1a. Does the object still exist?
 - a. The object does still exist
 - b. The object is lost, but traces are left
 1. Pictures
 2. Paintings

- 3. Memories
 - 4. ...
 - c. The object is lost without a trace
 - 1b. Is the history of the object known?
 - a. The history is known
 - b. Traces of the history are left
 - 1. Pictures
 - 2. Paintings
 - 3. Memories
 - 4. ...
 - c. The history is lost
 - 1c. Is the object deviating from a norm?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- No:
- 1. Is the object invented/imaginary?

Helpful restrictions/categorisations to create a framework to work with:

- 3. Three types of memory-related deviation:
 - a. Deviation from an expected state (our memory is not as hoped)
 - b. Deviation from a previous state (our memory changes over time; whether it was wrong from the beginning is irrelevant)
 - c. Deviation from an objectively true state (our memory deviates from reality)
- 4. Those three types have three possible consequences:
 - a. The memory has changed
 - b. The memory is hidden/blurred/temporarily inaccessible
 - c. The memory is lost
- 5. The deviations of memory can occur in one of the following three stages:
 - a. While perceiving
 - b. While storing
 - c. While recalling

6. Two stages of recognition:
 - a. We recognise the deviation
 - b. We don't recognise the deviation

These questions—combined in the thought map with other classifications, categories, and conclusions about jewellery, memory, and identity—form something that inspired the decision-making process. It is a form of conscious reflection on unconscious or subconscious decisions made during making.

The structure that is connected to the design of the objects may now seem rather overloaded. It should therefore be emphasised once again that this is for guidance only. The visualisation of the thought processes (see fig. 177) shows how complex some aspects of this research project are. It is not a fixed structure but a safety net whose tangled wires and connections are not necessarily always comprehensible to outsiders.

As already mentioned, within this research, several groups of body-related objects, jewellery-related objects, and sometimes, even pieces of jewellery were created. To make the text easier to read, the various categories of pieces are hereinafter referred to using the term “objects.” These objects will be described in the following. Their designs were inspired by and/or categorised through this catalogue and the thoughts above, as well as by *The Archive of Possibilities*. They can be divided into two main groups according to how they were created:

1. Objects that reflect memory-related deviation
2. Objects that are based on memory-related deviation

Both these subcategories are a result of the thought processes shown in Figure 177, including the catalogue of questions and categories.



Figure 178: Subdivision of memory-related deviation related to the process of creating the objects in this project.

The objects that *reflect* memory-related deviation were mostly based on *artificial creation(s)* combined with other techniques of (mostly, but not exclusively) controlled deviation from *The Archive of Possibilities* (p. 114-143). These objects reflect phenomena referred to in memory research and memory studies and combine them with insights into the medium of jewellery. The idea was to explore these different phenomena in an artistic way and thereby visualise the connection between jewellery, identity, and memory while trying to refer to the initial research questions.

The objects *based on* memory-related deviation were (mostly) not artificially designed to depict specific phenomena, but the shape of the pieces is often based directly on errors of memory (involving uncontrollable human factors). Therefore, this category is a direct result of the uncontrolled approach to working with deviation. The classification is not aesthetically recognisable in the shape of the objects but relates entirely to the design process itself.

Reference to each category can be found at the beginning of the description of the respective object group.

Nevertheless, two questions remain: How were the objects we look at below designed? And how did these ideas and decisions come about? The process is depicted in Figure 179!

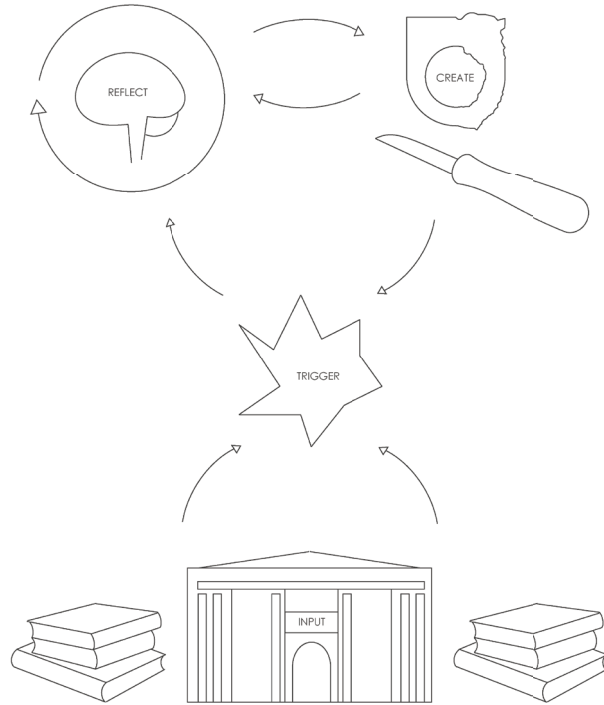


Figure 179: Visualisation of the creative process.

First, there is the research: poring over books, visiting exhibitions, and

¹ This visualisation was developed during the project and was repeatedly optimised and edited in order to depict the process as accurately as possible. However, it remains personal and does not aim to illustrate a process that applies to all artists. Furthermore, it is important to mention that during development, the process of creating the objects also changed, as *triggers*, *reflection*, and *creation* were perceived more consciously as different stages within the process. This also led to a better understanding of the individual stages.

searching the world.² This is necessary to understand the context and stimulate the mind. There is an initial trigger—an object, a painting, a text, a thought, a conspicuous feature that is connected to the theme of memory or memory-related deviation. This is where everything starts. After finding this initial trigger, the idea that arises from it is further developed (which might require more research, experiments, or further triggers). As a reaction to the theoretical knowledge gathered, a decision is made as to whether this trigger initiates an object group based on memory-related deviation or whether it merely reflects it. How can the topic be narrowed down, framed, or limited? All of this ultimately results in a framework for action that guides the design. However, many decisions on the design of objects are made as emotional reactions based not only on questions and theoretical knowledge but also as reactions to material, skill, and failure within the making process. In part, this also happens as a form of less conscious and more intuitive action during the making process.³ It is often a back and forth between making and reflecting, whereby each fertilises the other. And ultimately, even the making itself can serve as a trigger for new object groups. The object groups are discussed in detail below to illustrate this procedure.

2 For reasons of simplification and because they form the majority of triggers in this project, only reading and museum visits are shown in the graphic. However, input can come from all external factors: a walk through a (foreign) city, a visit to a gallery, an evening at the cinema, and much more. It is basically about an open perception of the world and its triggers. Trigger perception thereby depends heavily on personal circumstances, current life focus, and personality. In short, each of us perceives different triggers, and things that are a trigger one day can be completely overlooked the next.

3 The distinction between *Reflect* and *Create* shown in the diagram does not mean that no reflection takes place during creation, just that it is more unconscious then, which prompted me to make the distinction.

Explanations for the respective object groups are divided into *The Trigger* and *The Consequence*. *The Trigger* explains the inputs that were consciously perceived and that led to the basic idea of the objects. *The Conse-*

quence describes part of the process of reflection and creation, as well as the outcome.

The order in which the objects are listed within the respective thought categories corresponds to the order in which they were created. The chronological listing was chosen deliberately, as many of the objects have their trigger in the creation process of a preceding object or in reading a related book.

It is important to emphasise that not every series of objects developed during this research was of the same consistency, nor did they all clearly fit one of the categories defined in the chapter *Jewellery*. Still, all are discussed (and categorised) in the following, as all were important to the research. This is also a process in which one group of objects inspires another, and even if some were not as consistent and coherent as others, it may be that their creation was helpful in terms of content and/or for the progress of the project.

Reflecting Memory-Related Deviation

All objects within this sub-chapter *reflect* memory-related deviation without being based on it. The designs are based on *artificial creation(s)* paired with other techniques from *The Archive of Possibilities* (p. 114-143). In every case, techniques and materials were chosen in such a way that, from a material iconological point of view, they underpin the content message in the best possible way. Each object section begins with an explanation of the initial trigger(s). Subcategories are to be found after this trigger description. The decision-making process for the design is made clear in *The Consequence* section of each object category. All objects in this category attempt to stimulate reflection on the assumption that objects carry memories by illustrating phenomena discussed in memory studies and memory research.

Shadows of the Past

The Trigger

I

It is winter 2020/2021, and I am working on my PhD application. I know I want to work with deviation and reflect on the relationship between jewellery and identity. It is clear that memory will play a key role in this, but what exactly it will look like is still uncertain. While reading *Formen des Vergessens* by Aleida Assmann, my thoughts begin to wander. Among other things, Assmann uses the example of a monument to Karl Lueger to write about dealing with problematic history and, in particular, problematic monuments. She also talks about how the monument, which was previously a mere backdrop in the city, was brought back into the present with the help of a debate.²²⁰

I ask myself: Can I do that with jewellery?

Main thought categories:

Reflecting memory-related deviation

Forms of deviation used in the creation process:

Deviation as a principle

Include unpredictable components

→ Work with unfamiliar techniques and materials

Deviation as a process

Artificial creation

Deviation as a principle

Break the rules of the object

→ Break the rules of jewellery

²²⁰ Assmann, *Formen des Vergessens*, 81–83.

The Consequence

According to Kwame Anthony Appiah, none of us creates the world anew; we develop our ideas and values through a dialogue with the past.²²¹

Among other things, the sub-chapter on *Memory* (p. 54-72) gave an insight into cultural memory and its significance. It also argued that cultural memory is far more removed from our everyday lives than communicative memory.²²² Museum objects are (or can be perceived to be) carriers of cultural memory.

Although they might in fact be representations instead of carriers.

They bring us closer to the past, and yet we often find it difficult to connect with them. That might be because museums confront their visitors with objects taken out of context, resulting in the absence of the world they belonged to.²²³

I continue to think about Aleida Assmann's *Formen des Vergessens*, about different perspectives on history, the reinterpretation of history, and the destruction and/or loss of material cultural heritage. I think about remembering, forgetting, and perception, about the plurality of cultural memory, and about the temporal aspects of memory.

The idea for *Shadows of the Past* was one of the first that came into my mind at the time I prepared my funding

²²¹ Appiah, *Identitäten*, 105.

²²² Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity", 128–129.

²²³ Among many other authors, this thought can be found in the texts of Ernst van Alphen. For more details, see van Alphen, *Staging the Archive*, 211.

application and, apart from *The Archive of Possibilities* (p. 114-143), probably the only one that was already clear in my application letter. The central theme was cultural memory.

Within this group of objects, the idea was to work with historical jewellery from certain museum collections and reflect on the memories they might carry, as well as on our perception of those (the objects as well as their memories). The idea behind this group of objects was also to question the notion of reality by visualising the simultaneity of multiple versions of the world.

The wearers/former owners of most museum artefacts have long been forgotten. There is, therefore, often a certain amount of room for interpretation as to the true meaning and/or function of the objects. Even if they still carry memories, it is usually impossible for us to decipher them clearly. Instead, negating or emphasising certain details can skew our perspective.

For *Shadows of the Past*, several historic rings were selected from the collection of the Schmuckmuseum Pforzheim (Pforzheim Jewellery Museum).²²⁴ These rings were then 3D scanned and changed digitally (keyword: *artificial creation*). The idea was to make some elements stand out while others fade into the background.

Which elements were highlighted and which were distorted was a purely emotional decision, and only a few of about 300 digital files (created with Blender) were finally realised.

The rings used as templates were once symbols of power and authority. However, today, they are often unable to reawaken their past glamour.

²²⁴ This museum was chosen because it is within reasonable reach, has an extremely interesting collection, and was willing to co-operate.

For the final material realisation, I decided to limit myself to one of the rings—object no. 1963/58 I MF 75, a historical papal ring from the fifteenth century—as it seemed the most suitable for a variety of distortions due to its volume and details.



Figures 180–181: Object no. 1963/58 I MF 75, so-called papal ring with inscription "Papa Pio", Schmuckmuseum Pforzheim | photos: Maria Kon-schake.

In this context, "papal" does not mean that the ring was actually worn by a pope; rings of this type, made of gilded bronze or brass and decorated with the insignia of the pope or cardinal, date from the fifteenth century. The function of these rings is not clearly documented.

However, it is assumed that they were given as a sign of credibility to a courier to prove the authenticity of a message.¹

¹ "Ring," V&A Museum, accessed on 6 June 2024, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O123230/ring-unknown/>.

Fifteen distorted versions of this papal ring were finally produced in kiln-cast black glass. The surface of the cast ring objects was sandblasted—a combination of process and material that bears the special feature that every touch leaves a trace. The surface captures the memory of the touch, so to speak.²²⁵ The result is a group of ring objects (partly jewellery, partly body-related objects) that symbolise different perceptions and/or memories of the original historic ring.

How does the character of the piece change when we partially or completely disturb its appearance? Is the origin still recognisable?

Shadows of the Past is a group of objects that, while appearing different, not only have the same origin but also share many key elements of design, such as coats of arms, keys, or certain letter combinations. However, the intensity and legibility of these elements vary greatly.

²²⁵ The surface mark is not permanent and can be removed with soapy water.



Figures 182-186: Rings and/or body-related objects from the series *Shadows of the Past* (2022-2023), Maria Korschake.





Figures 187-188: Rings and/or body-related objects from the series *Shadows of the Past* (2022-2023), Maria Konschake.



Bearers of Memories

The Trigger

1

I am reading the book *Surface Tension* and stumble across Lesley Millar saying that when we touch a historical object, we are also touched by it, and our touch meets that of the maker.²²⁶

2

With that in mind, I wander through New York's second-hand shops in the summer of 2022. You could spend hours in these shops, and I am particularly fascinated by the jewellery sections, where you can get hold of imitations for little money. However, I am hardly thinking about the makers; most of all, I am thinking about the wearers who once owned these jewellery pieces.

Main thought categories:

Reflecting memory-related deviation

Forms of deviation used in the creation process:

Deviation as a principle

Include unpredictable components

→ Work with unfamiliar techniques and materials

Deviation as a process

Artificial creation

Deviation as a process

Deviation within the (re)production process

→ Process-related

²²⁶ Millar, "Surface as practice", 28.

The Consequence

What is the significance of touch in connection with objects and memories? The note on *Touch* (p. 150-151) gave us a small insight into this complicated relationship: touch as trace of the maker, touch as a general trace of the use of an object, touch as a memory aid.

In his book *Geliebte Objekte; Symbole und Instrumente der Identitätsbildung*, Tilmann Habermas refers to the ethnologist Andreas Kuntz, who asked 60-year-olds to tell their life stories using objects in their homes. The objects they chose appeared to symbolise significant themes in their lives.²²⁷

Following Kuntz, the objects often carried things that are remembered, but that are not always worth telling, or the telling of which is not desirable, such as the story of three deceased husbands or the violent death of a child, for which carelessness was partly to blame.¹

¹ Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte*, 297-298.

According to Habermas, the objects seem to store these memories.²²⁸ What if we now imagine that touch gives us access to them?

In 2022, I brought five rings back from New York's second-hand shops. Five rings that—at least in my mind—are linked to the life stories of five New Yorkers I have never met. Let's imagine that each ring carries the memory of its owner, who decided—for whatever reason—to bring it to a second-hand shop.

Did some of them belong to the same person? Do they come from different corners of the city?

²²⁷ Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte*, 296.

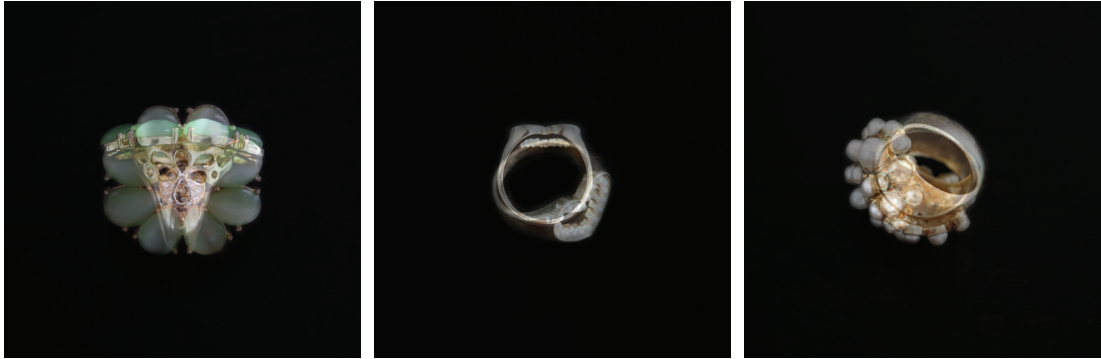
²²⁸ Habermas, *Geliebte Objekte*, 297.

I am not sure if I can feel the touch of the maker in the rings from New York, but I imagine that I can touch the stories of the former owners. *Bearers of Memories* is, therefore, about visualising the simultaneity of different memories connected to objects. For the project, I created artificial multi-exposures of the rings from New York by taking pictures of them from various angles and then combining those pictures in *Adobe Photoshop*. The idea was to create something that visualised my perception of the simultaneity of the different memories captured in the pieces.

Based on these images, I then made drawings and began searching for the shape of the objects I wanted to create. When I finally found it, it was modelled, duplicated in wax, and cast in glass.

The resulting glass objects deliberately utilise technical flaws such as bubbles, impurities, and incompletely melted glass. In contrast to classic monuments, which compel reverent commemoration, the intention was to create monuments to the memories captured in small objects, characterised more by interaction and physical proximity. They are not awe-inspiring but marked by irregularities and impurities (just like memory itself). While, in the long term, interaction will definitely destroy them, that is what they are made for. The fragile glass objects are like mem-

ories themselves, impermanent. In this sense, they might even fit into the category of counter-monuments.²²⁹



Figures 189–191: Multi-exposure images from the series *Bearers of Memories* (2022–2023), Maria Konschake.

²²⁹ In "The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today," James E. Young defines counter-monuments as "brazen, painfully self-conscious memorial spaces conceived to challenge the very premises of their being." He also speaks of the fact that they are characterised, among other things, by interaction and non-constancy. In Young's view, they challenge the idea (or illusion) of the classical monument, which is that the permanence of the material guarantees the permanence of the idea conveyed. Source: James E. Young, "The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today," in *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 2 (1992): 271, 273–284, 295, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343784>.



Figure 192: Body-related objects from the series *Bearer of Memories* within the exhibition "MIDTERM", September 7 - 19, 2023, MAD Gallery, PXL-MAD School of Arts, Hasselt (BE).



Figures 193–201: Body-related objects from the series *Bearerers of Memories* (2022–2023), Maria Konschake.

Collectors of Traces

The Trigger

1

In 2021, I attend a lecture by jewellery artist Ted Noten at PXL-MAD School of Arts, Hasselt, Belgium, in which he claims that (contemporary) art (or "author") jewellery has a jewellery-market share of about 5%. I have never been able to find any statistics to back this up. But if you look at the jewellery world, this seems a realistic figure. Still, doesn't it seem like a paradox? In today's society, which is so fixated on individuality, shouldn't jewellery be bought to underline one's own identity and not just to symbolise status and belonging? I keep thinking about individuality and belonging. I wonder about the reasons why we adorn ourselves.

2

It is January 2022, and I am wearing a vacuum-cast ring from *The Archive of Possibilities* (p. 114-143). The idea is to create surface traces through wearing so as to expand the archive. While on a field trip, a friend of mine wants to take a closer look at the ring, and while doing so, she drops it heavily on the stony ground. This leaves not only a little surface trace but a big dent. On top of this, it creates a story that is connected to the ring (and its surface). A very fortunate accident. In my mind, something clicks into place.

Main thought categories:

Reflecting memory-related deviation

Forms of deviation used in the creation process:

Deviation as a principle

- Include unpredictable components
- Include unpredictable (external) human factors

Deviation as a principle

- Break the rules of the object
- Break the rules of jewellery

Deviation as a process

- Subsequent deviation
- Use (+ time)

Deviation as a principle

- Include unpredictable components
- Work in an unfamiliar space

Deviation as a principle

- Include unpredictable components
- Work with unfamiliar techniques

The Consequence

"Materials store and carry memories." At least, this is what is emphasised by Norwegian curator Hilde Methi in *Documents on Contemporary Crafts No. 5*.²³⁰ Maybe that's true; maybe it's not. The sub-chapter on *Memory* (p. 54-72) was not able to answer this. It focused on objects. What was made clear, however, is that objects (and maybe also materials) have a special significance as representatives of memories.

But let's ask ourselves once more: Do they carry memories? We do find visible physical evidence of the things

²³⁰ Hilde Methi, "Paying Attention to Material Responses in Local Ecologies" in *Documents on Contemporary Crafts No. 5: Material Perceptions*, ed. Knut Astrup Bull and André Gali (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche Art Publishers, 2018), 167.

an object experiences in the surface traces that it collects over the course of its life. Aren't these traces of memories?

Collectors of Traces is a reflection on the relationship between individuality and belonging. It is also about appropriation and the documentation of the physical traces of invisible memories. For the project, forty-four machine-made rings were distributed to forty-four different people for a certain period of time. In fact, there were two versions of this project, with twenty-two rings and participants in each version.

In one version, I knew the participants and had chosen them myself. These people wore their rings for a period of one year; they shall be called test group one. In the second version, the participants wore their rings for a period of 4–6 weeks. This time, I did not choose the participants myself, nor did I initially know who was participating. The rings were distributed anonymously as part of a cultural event during an artist residency at the Baltimore Jewelry Center (MD, US) in July 2022. Those participants shall be called test group two.

The rings given to the two groups had two different basic shapes, whereby the rings within a test group were formally identical, and, due to their automated, machine production, there was the least possible variation between the rings handed out.

Of course, the ring sizes differed—a necessity in order for them to be wearable.

The mechanical production process was chosen in order to use a starting product that was as pure as possible. In both test groups, the participants decided how often they wore the rings. After the predetermined time had elapsed, the rings were to be returned to me so that I

could document the surface traces that had been created and continue to work with them.

Nineteen rings were returned from test group one. Ten rings were returned from test group two.

The results I developed from the traces of wear are visible in various five-times-enlarged prints showing traces of the surfaces of the rings. The prints based on the second, shorter version of the project (test group two) show etchings of the complete ring surfaces, again enlarged by a factor of five.

Each participant was able to pick up a print of their ring's surface traces as a thank you.

The prints based on the first, longer version of the project (test group one) were realised during an artist residency at Künstlerhaus Lukas in Ahrenshoop, Germany, in July 2023. In contrast to the Baltimore prints, I decided not to work with the entire surface but to create two five-times-enlarged tricolour linoleum prints per ring, each showing a square section of the jewellery's surface traces.

Again, each participant received a print of their ring's surface traces.

The decision to use a five-fold size increase for the images was made for purely practical reasons. A five-fold increase was the minimum size for a technically sensible realisation and, at the same time, the maximum size that could be implemented within a reasonable timeframe.

Both versions of the project showed clear differences in the surface traces of the rings, concerning not only the intensity but also the character of the traces. In short, different individuals left different types of marks.

A special aspect of this work that should be mentioned is the divergent relationship between the wearer and the jewellery. The rings were on loan, which is unusual for jewellery, and in some cases, probably influenced the way the wearers treated their piece (physically and emotionally). One of the participants in particular mentioned that she noticed this emotionally unusual situation. Having to give something back that has been with you for so long can be quite unpleasant.

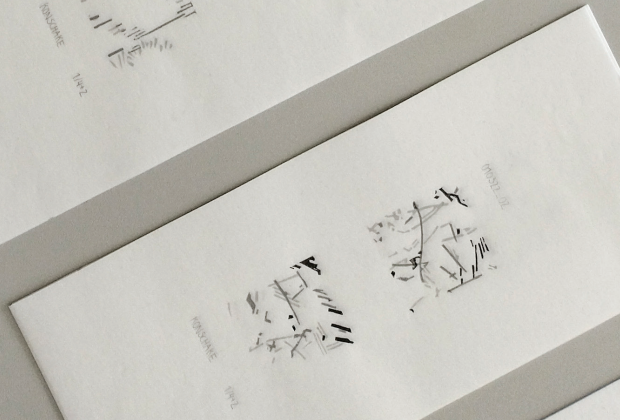
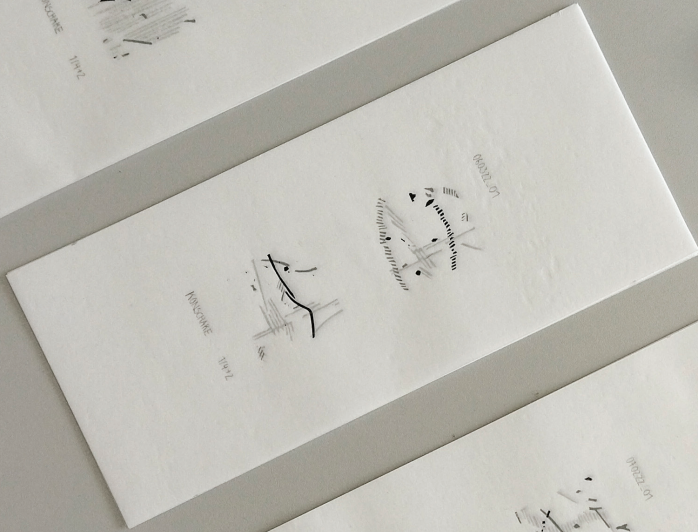
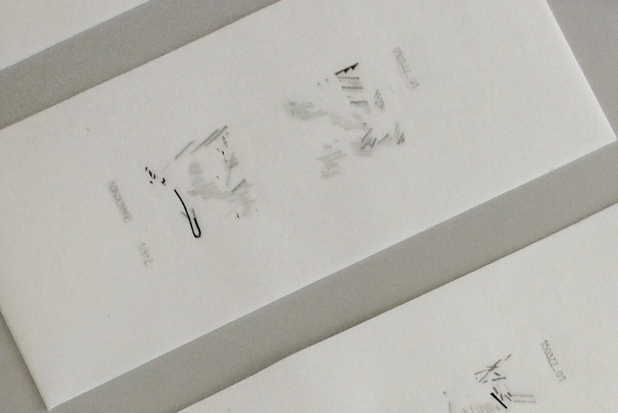


Figures 202–203: Prints from the series *Collectors of Traces* (2022–2023), Maria Konschake, test group two, on display at the Baltimore Jewelry Center in Mai 2023.





Figures 204–205: Prints and rings from the series *Collectors of Traces* (2022–2023), Maria Konschake, test group one, on display at Künstlerhaus Luskas in Juli 2023.



Monuments of Grief

The Trigger

1

In spring 2022, while searching eBay, I come across an advert for a "Verlobungsring - quasi neu" ("Engagement ring - virtually new"). The listing not only describes the piece but also the context. The engagement never took place. The relationship ended. The object was contaminated. And yet, the seller expressed his hope that the piece would find a home after all. On a purely personal level, I felt a fright. Who would start a marriage (or an engagement) with an object contaminated by sad memories or even bad luck? It's an absurd question because memories are something imaginary and not really linked to the object. Or are they? I start searching and find numerous such adverts.

"I am selling this following a break up, so I'm open to sensible offers." Stuart²³¹

Main thought categories:

Reflecting memory-related deviation

Forms of deviation used in the creation process:

Deviation as a principle

Include unpredictable components

→ Work in an unfamiliar space

²³¹ "Diamond engagement ring," Gumtree, accessed on 23 July 2023, <https://www.gumtree.com/p/jewellery/diamond-engagement-ring/1461785311>.

The Consequence

What happens to objects that are contaminated by memories because the experiences we had with them were different than expected? We are talking here about objects that might never, or no longer, fulfil their initial purpose, such as engagement rings where the proposal has failed or wedding rings where the marriage ended.

In the *Introduction* (p. 15-28), we took a look at the Museum of Broken Relationships (Zagreb). The museum is probably the most impressive example and, to my knowledge, the largest collection of such objects. But what about the objects that do not end up there? The museum aims to preserve and remember, but what happens to objects that remain in the world outside the museum? Do they get a second chance? Can their story be rewritten?

Monuments of Grief is an examination of objects that are contaminated by sad memories and yet are not removed from the economic cycle. It is also about the marks those objects leave and the memories that are connected to them. The project was inspired by numerous adverts for used or "barely used" engagement and/or wedding rings which I found on several websites for selling second-hand items.

*Why don't they melt the rings, reduce them to their material value?
Why do they want to forget the memory and yet not completely destroy the object?*

The installation *Monuments of Grief* consists of ninety-nine handmade cardboard boxes. Each contains a sheet of paper with an advertisement text and a ring imprint embossed on the paper. The texts are based on sale listings found on various websites.

The shape of the boxes refers to the shape of the adverts and thus relates more to the text than to the rings.

None of the texts used in the installation were presented exactly as they appeared in the original listing. Yet none of the sentences are fictitious. All the texts are composed of fragments found in the advertisements.

The decision to reassemble the texts followed a long process of deliberation. Ultimately, I decided that the owners deserved some privacy (even though they had posted the adverts on the internet). The installation featured thirty-three texts in German, English, and Dutch (the three languages between which I currently live).

The ring shapes embossed onto the sheets were inspired by rings found in the listings. However, due to practical feasibility, the shapes were simplified and partially enlarged. The imprints themselves were intended to represent the traces and memories that resonate even after the sale of the rings. Although the sellers intended to part with the rings, they will certainly keep them in painful memory for a long time to come. The memory of the ring, therefore, seems to be a door to the sad memory of the events that surround it. Both should be forgotten.

This work was realised during a one-month artist residency at the Künstlerhaus Lukas, Ahrenshoop, Germany.



Figure 206: *Monuments of Grief* (2023), a jewellery-related installation, Maria Konschake.



Figures 207-208: *Monuments of Grief* (2023), a jewellery-related installation, Maria Konschake.



Surface of Projection

The Trigger

1

I have always been obsessed with films; I probably watch at least five or six per week. When I start my research project in 2021 with a focus on signet rings, I suddenly realise how many films feature signet rings as props.²³² It almost seems as though they are still a completely normal part of our everyday reality, even though, back in 2021, I had never seen anyone wearing a signet ring in my life.

I start to ask myself about the film props: Are the rings individually made, or are they mass-produced?²³³ Another question emerged from here: How can an industrialised production process be used to visualise individual identities in a diverse society (through the process of deviation)?

When I travelled to the USA for the first time in July 2022, I finally saw someone wearing a signet ring: the border official who permitted my entry. I was so excited. However, the situation was tense, and unfortunately, I didn't have an opportunity to ask him about it. Still, I did not

232 The following is a small selection of films using signet (or signet-like) rings as props: *The Gentlemen* (2019), *The Cleansing Hour* (2021), *Pig* (2021), *Hotel Artemis* (2018), *Snatch* (2000), *American Hustle* (2013), *White Boy Rick* (2018), *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019), *Dune* (2021), *Abattoir* (2016), *Halloween Ends* (2022), *Planet Terror* (2007), *8mm* (1999), *Shadow of the Vampire* (2000), *Memory* (2022), *Copshop* (2021), *Taken 3* (2014), *Prometheus* (2012), *Alien: Covenant* (2017), *Conclave* (2024), *The Nice Guys* (2016), and *Be Cool* (2005).

233 A ring that definitely deserves this question (and one of the most extravagant film rings I've ever seen, though not a signet ring) is the one on Nicolas Cage's left index finger in *The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent* (2022).

forget about it. Since then, I have actually seen a few men (strangely enough, never women) wearing (real) signet rings from time to time. Every time I spot one, my heart leaps a little. However, none of them excites me as much as the first one did.

Main thought categories:

Reflecting memory-related deviation

Forms of deviation used in the creation process:

Deviation as a process

Deviation within the (re)production process

→ Process-related

Deviation as a principle

Break the rules of the process

→ Disrupt the process

The Consequence

Contemporary art jewellery (as described in the *Jewellery* sub-chapter, p. 35-53) is a small field. As we have established, the jewellery market is dominated by serial products. Still, these work through the personal connection we build with the objects. Despite being serially produced products, the pieces become ours because we attach memories (and traces?) to them. We appropriate the objects, so to speak. This is both individuality and belonging at the same time. Can this simultaneity be integrated into the production process?

How can individuality and belonging be realised in a serially produced object? With *Surface of Projection*, a possible answer is found through the use of a manufacturing process characterised by deviation, as found in *The Archive of Possibilities*.

The group of rings also deals with the potential of mass objects to carry individual memories.

In the process, various signet rings were moulded in wax and then vacuum cast. This is actually an industrial process, but one that is somewhat misused here. The rings were cast without a sprue, meaning that the ring head was both sprue and seal at the same time, creating a unique seal structure for each ring.

The rings in this work are, in a sense, serial products. They are formally identical and shaped like signet rings—a classic symbol of belonging. They differ only in ring size. Nevertheless, because there was a deliberate flaw built into the manufacturing process, each ring is clearly unique, and so, despite the semi-industrial production, each reproduction will look different. This allows for the creation of a mass product that is nevertheless individual and, therefore, provides the perfect basis for individual memories to be projected onto it.

The signet ring shape was chosen due to the initial trigger moment and due to its connection to identity. As stated in the sub-chapter Jewellery (p. 35-53), rings are the pieces of jewellery that have the closest connection to our identity, or at least, they are, according to Hannah Korn, “particularly associated with” it.¹ Also, this research project, which began with a focus on signet rings, still had quite a narrow focus at the time this group of objects was created.

¹ Hannah Korn, “Arms and Hands,” in *Jewelry: The Body Transformed*, ed. Melanie Holcomb (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2018), 51.

Figure 209: Rings from the series Surface of Projection (2023), Maria Konschake.



Sources of Belonging

The Trigger

1

The debate around cultural appropriation arrived relatively late in German national discourse and flared up particularly strongly in 2022.²³⁴ While following this flare-up, I stumble across a train of thought in a book by Aleida Assmann, in which she formulates—and demonstrates via the film *Leninland*, about the Lenin Museum in Gorki—that it is not easy to part with something that once belonged to one's own identity.²³⁵

Main thought categories:

Reflecting memory-related deviation

Forms of deviation used in the creation process:

Deviation as a process

Artificial creation

Deviation as a principle

Break the rules of the object

→ Break the rules of jewellery

²³⁴ An article debating cultural appropriation as one of the hot topics of 2022 using a few examples can be found in Rolling Stone Magazine. Source: Jens Balzer, "Rückblick 2022: Kulturelle Aneignung oder Darf ich noch 'Winnetou' lesen," Rolling Stone, accessed on 16 June 2024, <https://www.rollingstone.de/dreadlocks-winnetou-und-kulturelle-aneignung-2533723/>.

²³⁵ Assmann, *Formen des Vergessens*, 98–99.

The Consequence

The American lawyer and scholar Susan Scafidi defines cultural appropriation as the act of using the cultural property of another culture to express one's own taste and/or identity or to enrich oneself financially.²³⁶ According to this view, culture is the property of a certain group. However, the author and journalist Jens Balzer sees things a little differently. According to him, there are no self-contained cultures, and appropriation between cultures has always taken place. He sees appropriation as a creative force that generates culture.²³⁷ Yet Balzer does not ignore the negative aspects of appropriation, which can often be entangled with violence and exploitation. In his book *Ethik der Appropriation*, he mentions colonial exploitation and other examples in which members of a ruling upper class make use of the cultural achievements of a discriminated minority.²³⁸ Still, he sees appropriation as showing that identity grows from a network of influences.²³⁹ He also argues that we need to be aware that we live in a post-colonial world in which white people have more influence than others.²⁴⁰ Balzer, therefore, distinguishes between good and bad appropriation. According to him, bad appropriation occurs when members of a more powerful culture exploit another and enrich themselves from it.²⁴¹ In contrast, he describes legitimate appropriation as one that shows that identity is a constant transformation triggered by different influences and that the culturally pure does

236 Jens Balzer, *Ethik der Appropriation*, 3rd ed. (Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2022), 12–13.

237 Balzer, *Ethik der Appropriation*, 18.

238 Balzer, *Ethik der Appropriation*, 18–19, 30–31.

239 Balzer, *Ethik der Appropriation*, 53.

240 Balzer, *Ethik der Appropriation*, 52.

241 Balzer, *Ethik der Appropriation*, 53, 55.

not exist.²⁴² According to Balzer, good appropriation reveals and questions power relations.²⁴³ Kwame Anthony Appiah also argued in favour of not seeing culture as property but rather sharing traditions with one another.²⁴⁴

Sources of Belonging explores the simultaneity of different (individual and cultural) memories that are used to (pre)form our identity. It is closely linked to the theme of cultural appropriation.

The objects in this group are designed through digital intersections between historical treasures from the Schmuckmuseum Pforzheim, Germany; items from a flea market; and personal pieces. All are cast from coloured glass—bright, trendy, and perfect for expressing individual taste. However, potential wearers need to be careful. Not only do some of the glass items contain lead, but some of the rings also have extremely sharp edges, which can cause nasty injuries. The pieces are, therefore, on the borderline between jewellery and body-related objects and make the wearer aware of the potential danger of thoughtlessly combining existing elements to present one's own individuality.

242 Balzer, *Ethik der Appropriation*, 58–59.

243 Balzer, *Ethik der Appropriation*, 71.

244 Appiah, *Identitäten*, 282–283.

Figures 210–212: Rings and pendant objects from the series *Sources of Belonging* (2023–2024), Maria Konschake.





Figures 213–215: Rings from the series *Sources of Belonging* (2023–2024),
Maria Korschake.



Evidence of Failure

The Trigger

1

It is 2023, and I am reading *Documents on Contemporary Crafts No. 5*. In his text "From a System of Objects to Speculative Realism," André Gali stresses that "objects have biographies and ontologies." According to him, they "take part in shaping the world both physically and emotionally."²⁴⁵ The most interesting point he emphasises is that "to set an object in motion in the world is a risky affair" since "you cannot control how it will be used, misused, abused, understood, misunderstood or handled."²⁴⁶ In short, we can't know what consequences will arise from creating something.

I keep thinking about this, and I start to connect it with a novel I read more than ten years ago, *Das Fräulein von Scuderi (Mademoiselle de Scuderi)* by E. T. A. Hoffmann. The book is about René Cardillac, a serial killer who, it turns out, is a goldsmith who cannot part with his pieces and takes them back after selling them by murder and robbery.²⁴⁷ I think about how I normally feel when selling an object.

2

I am reading Daniel Schacter's *The Seven Sins of Memory*, and I am particularly triggered by the sin of per-

²⁴⁵ André Gali, "From a System of Objects to Speculative Realism," in *Documents on Contemporary Crafts No. 5: Material Perceptions*, ed. Knut Astrup Bull & André Gali (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche Art Publishers, 2018), 69.

²⁴⁶ André Gali, "From a System of Objects to Speculative Realism," 70.

²⁴⁷ E. T. A. Hoffmann, *Das Fräulein von Scuderi*, Reclam ed. (Ditzingen: Reclam, 2015).

sistence—the unwanted, constantly repeating recall of unpleasant memories.²⁴⁸ These memories can become worse with each recall. They haunt the person affected and can drive them mad.²⁴⁹ Forgetting seems to be impossible. However, according to Aleida Assmann, forgetting is essential to finding the strength to start anew after conflicts and defeats.²⁵⁰ I think about how often I have wanted to forget something.

Main thought categories:

Reflecting memory-related deviation

Forms of deviation used in the creation process:

Deviation as a principle

Include unpredictable components

→ Work with unfamiliar techniques

Deviation as a process

Artificial creation

Deviation as a process

Deviation within the (re)production process

→ Process-related

Deviation as a principle

Break the rules of the process

→ Disrupt the process

²⁴⁸ Schacter, *The Seven Sins of Memory*, 7.

²⁴⁹ In his book, Schacter gives the example of a baseball player, Donnie Moore, who was unable to forget a defeat in his career and was so burdened by it that he finally sank into depression and ended up killing his wife and himself. Source: Schacter, *The Seven Sins of Memory*, 234–235.

²⁵⁰ Assmann, *Formen des Vergessens*, 204.

The Consequence

How much do we want to control what the world remembers about us? For artists, objects are not only part of their identity but also traces they leave behind. They can decide for themselves what to show and what not to show, what remains and what is destroyed. However, once an artwork has been sold, this control is lost. Not only do you lose control of the object, but you also lose control of its interpretation. Following the idea of André Gali, it's in the world, and you don't know what the consequences will be.

Evidence of Failure is a confrontation with this loss of control and the possible consequences for an artist—persistence, the memory of the artwork that haunts us.

For *Evidence of Failure*, I created alienated duplicates (false memories) of various objects from each group of objects created during this research project.

This also plays with the idea that all of the objects are possibly migrating into the world and leaving me with their memories.

Those memories—visualised here in black, bubbly, partially ground glass—are broken versions of the originals, a visualisation of what the mind can do to you and what is left after the originals are beyond your own control.

Figure 216: Jewellery- and body-related objects from the series *Evidence of Failure* (2022-2025), Maria Konschake.





Figures 217-218: Jewellery- and body-related objects from the series
Evidence of Failure (2022-2025), Maria Konschake.



Unstable Keepsakes

The Trigger

1

Once again, I am reading *Formen des Vergessens* by Aleida Assmann, and once more, one of her formulations triggers something inside me. She talks about "die Stunde des Containers" [the hour of the container].²⁵¹

2

My colleague, Nedda El-Asmar, works with gold. For her research project 999,9, she puts out a call to borrow gold from people to create her art objects.²⁵² She melts their jewellery down for her source material, reducing the objects to their material value. The memories of different individuals melt together in a crucible. I am shocked and fascinated at the same time. I continue thinking about the loss of objects.

Main thought categories:

Reflecting memory-related deviation

Forms of deviation used in the creation process:

Deviation as a process

Deviation within the (re)production process

→ Process-related

Deviation as a principle

Break the rules of the process

→ Disrupt the process

²⁵¹ Assmann, *Formen des Vergessens*, 31. Translation by Konschake.

²⁵² Nedda El-Asmar, leaflet "999.9," 2021.

The Consequence

What determines the value of an object? According to Marjan Unger, jewellery is always connected to monetary value.²⁵³ However, here, we started from the assumption that objects are linked to memories. Therefore, another value should be attached to them: emotional value. Unfortunately, in reality, this value is often relativised, since emotional values are commonly considered inferior to material values.

Unstable Keepsakes is an exploration of the transience of memory-bearing objects. It deals with the idea that with the loss of an object, the memory attached to it is also lost. This refers not only to items that we lose but also to those that we consciously sell and/or destroy, the ones where financial value was prioritised. Therefore, this group of objects also reflects on questions of value.

Material values vs. emotional ones. Which weighs more? In the case of the source objects here, the answer is clear: material value took precedence over emotional, or even historical, value. And if the value of an object is only to be found in its material or monetary worth, then the longevity of the object seems by no means certain.

The objects in this series are based on 3D scans I took of pieces of jewellery acquired by the company Argentero (Antwerp, Belgium) in the course of buying old gold. These 3D scans were then used to create cast glass objects, which were produced via a process that is only partially predictable. The idea was to reflect the transience of the pieces of jewellery that served as the source material. The resulting objects show alienated versions of the source jewellery, which appear to melt and sink into their grey bases.

²⁵³ Unger, *Jewellery in context*, 114.

This effect was created by a kiln-casting process in which the casting temperature is only maintained for a short time, preventing the material from flowing out completely. It, therefore, takes on the rough shape of the objects but does not reproduce any details. In addition, the surface of the glass remains shiny, which gives the material an almost liquid appearance.

Despite their size, the objects seem more jewellery-related than body-related; no one would think of wearing them. Their statuesque character seems too clear. They appear like little collector's items.

The viewer will never see the original jewellery on which these objects are based. All the jewellery scanned at the start of the project has since been melted down and is, therefore, lost forever.



Figure 219: Jewellery-related objects from the series *Unstable Keepsakes* (2024), Maria Konschake.



Figures 220–221: Jewellery-related objects from the series *Unstable Keepsakes* (2024), Maria Konschake.



Proof of Never-Happened

The Trigger

1

On November 3, 2020, Joe Biden wins the election to become the 46th president of the United States with 81,284,666 votes, or 306 electoral college votes.²⁵⁴ The election is followed by the storming of the Capitol Building by supporters of the defeated US President Donald Trump on January 6, 2021. Among other things, this is provoked by Trump's repeated claim that the election victory has been stolen and that Biden will be illegally sworn in, accompanied by a call to take back the victory.²⁵⁵ I am shocked and wonder how Europe will react.

2

I am sitting in a consultation with one of my supervisors, and we are talking about false memories. The conversation is about the unreliability of the mind, AI Hopwood's *False Memory Archive*, and much more. My supervisor tells me about a false childhood memory she has—a day at the zoo that never happened. I am intrigued by that. What if she had a souvenir from that day?

Main thought categories:

Reflecting memory-related deviation

²⁵⁴ "PRESIDENTIAL RESULTS," CNN, accessed on 13 June 2024, <https://edition.cnn.com/election/2020/results/president#mapfilter=flip#map-mode=lead>.

²⁵⁵ A discussion of whether Donald Trump's speech caused the riots can be found here: Simon Cabral, "Capitol riots: Did Trump's words at rally incite violence?," BBC, accessed on 19 June 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-55640437>.

Forms of deviation used in the creation process:

Deviation as a process

Artificial creation

Deviation as a process

Deviation within the (re)production process

→ Material-related

Deviation as a principle

Break the rules of the material

→ Disrupt the material

Deviation as a principle

Break the rules of the object

→ Break the rules of jewellery

The Consequence

An article in *The Guardian* published in January 2024 claims that about one-third of Americans still believed that Joe Biden won unfairly and that the election was rigged.²⁵⁶ The example shows how easily a (collective) memory can be manipulated and the terrifying consequences this can have.

Proof of Never-Happened is an examination of this. It creates false artefacts for events that never happened. It is false evidence, so to speak. The idea was to choose two stereotypical forms for its realisation: a button or badge (a symbol for cultural memory) and a child's ring (as a symbol of individual memory). The button was chosen as a symbol of politicians who deliberately manipulate memory. The children's ring was chosen as a symbol of a time in our lives when it is easiest for us to have false

²⁵⁶ Martin Pengelly, "More than a third of US adults say Biden's 2020 victory was not legitimate," *The Guardian*, accessed on 13 June 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/jan/02/poll-biden-2020-election-illegitimate>.

memories, as the boundary between reality and fantasy is still thin.²⁵⁷

Both pieces were realised in kiln-cast glass, whereby each of the two was made of two types of glass that are not compatible with each other. After an indefinite period of time, they should self-destruct due to the internal tension between them. This is also an expression of the hope that false memories—especially on a cultural level—will not endure.

Both pieces are unwearable and are defined as body-related objects. This is not only due to the danger of the glass breaking at some point but also to their non-functional design, which includes a non-functional brooch needle and the impractical weight distribution of the ring.

257 In *Das trügerische Gedächtnis: Wie unser Gehirn Erinnerungen fälscht*, Julia Shaw reports on a study by psychologist Deryn Strange, who investigated whether false memories of complex events can be created in a test group of children. She presented the children with pictures of impossible events. The result was that younger children were more susceptible to false memories of impossible events than older children. Source: Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 38.



Figures 222–223: Body-related objects from the series *Proof of Never-Happened* (2024), Maria Konschake.

Lost Relics

The Trigger

1

Over the past few months, I have read a lot about the unreliability of memory, thought about faded or lost memories, and been doubting the mind. I keep thinking about forgetting, about old age, illness, and dementia. What is it like when everything slowly disappears? How do you deal with the frustration of not being able to grasp something? I can't get the destructive power of dementia and forgetting out of my mind. I have never met a person who has dementia or Alzheimer's disease until spring 2024. That is my trigger.

Main thought categories:

Reflecting memory-related deviation

Forms of deviation used in the creation process:

Deviation as a principle

Include unpredictable components

→ Work with unfamiliar techniques

Deviation as a principle

Include unpredictable components

→ Work in unfamiliar spaces

Deviation as a process

Artificial creation

Deviation as a process

Deviation within the (re)production process

→ Process-related

Deviation as a process

Deviation within the (re)production process

→ Material-related

The Consequence

Memories have great power over us. Colin Sterling's text "Not Here Anymore" illustrates this power in an emotional way.²⁵⁸ In it, he writes about the day he and his father cleared out the house of his grandmother, who was suffering from dementia and had moved to a retirement home. He writes about his own memories evoked by the objects in the empty house, about photographs he took that day, and about the power of memory more broadly. Two of the photographs he took are particularly interesting here. The first one shows an item of floral, upholstered furniture. In the text, Sterling describes how the surface of this furniture is "charged with memory."²⁵⁹

This description, together with the photograph, expresses the force of objects—and in particular the force of worn surfaces—in an exemplary manner.



Figures 224–225: Little Nan's House, 2010. Photos by Colin Sterling.

The second, even more touching photograph shows a note placed on a kitchen device and intended to re-

²⁵⁸ Colin Sterling, "Not Here Anymore," in *Request and Response: Conviviality and Reflexiveness*, ed. R. Burchardt (Stockholm: IASPIS, 2021), Retrieved from <https://colinsterling.com/2021/12/15/not-here-anymore/>.

²⁵⁹ Sterling, "Not Here Anymore," 30.

mind his grandmother of the following: "TURN GAS OFF/ PHIL NOT HERE ANY MORE." While the first part of the note is a practical safety reminder, the second part is intended to make Sterling's grandmother aware of the absence of her long-deceased husband.²⁶⁰ It is a shocking and sad visualisation of how memory distortions—in this case, dementia—can blur the distinction between past and present.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines dementia as "a syndrome that can be caused by a number of diseases."²⁶¹ Over time, nerve cells are destroyed by those diseases, and the brain is damaged in such a way that thought processing deteriorates and memory, thought, and the ability to carry out everyday activities are impaired. Mental impairment is often accompanied by changes in mood and behaviour. The most common cause of dementia is Alzheimer's disease. Anxiety, sadness, or anger about memory loss are common mood and behavioural changes in people with dementia.²⁶²

Dementia is probably the most terrible and destructive form of memory deviation. Within this study, when dealing with the topic of memory and its associated deviations, forgetting is widely considered and discussed in detail, but diseases that affect memory are not specifically analysed. The focus is on a general discussion of the topic, which, of course, includes diseases, albeit leaving them unnamed.

Can forgetting be visualised? Can the frustration of the inaccessibility of memories be depicted? The objects in the series *Lost Relics* explore precisely these questions.

²⁶⁰ Sterling, "Not Here Anymore," 31.

²⁶¹ "Dementia," World Health Organization, accessed on 20 July 2024, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/dementia>.

²⁶² "Dementia," World Health Organization, accessed on 20 July 2024, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/dementia>.

The series was technically realised during an artist residency at S12 in Bergen, Norway.²⁶³ It consists of glass cylinders that have a cavity inside and are partly made of foam glass. The cavities were created by protrusions in the plaster/silica moulds that are used for casting and depict different pieces of jewellery. After casting and removing the plaster/silica core, the cavity was closed with an additional glass cylinder so that the object—or hollow space inside the cylinder—can be guessed at but not directly recognised.

The foam glass was created by adding 3% fine-ground eggshell to fine glass frit. The difference in intensity was achieved by mixing different ratios of fine and coarse frit with billet parts.

The cylinders are an exploration of the disappearance of memories. Referencing the general aesthetics of natural history collections with natural objects in glass cylinders filled with formaldehyde, the series shows pieces of jewellery (symbolic of objects as carriers of memories) embedded in the fog of oblivion, shortly before sinking into disappearance. Some of the pieces of jewellery are still quite clear, others can only be guessed at, and some have already disappeared completely.

The idea is for the viewer to feel the same frustration that they might when failing to remember. They know something is there, but they can't access it.

The forms of the pieces embedded in the cylinders are based on existing jewellery that I acquired at flea markets in Belgium and the USA.

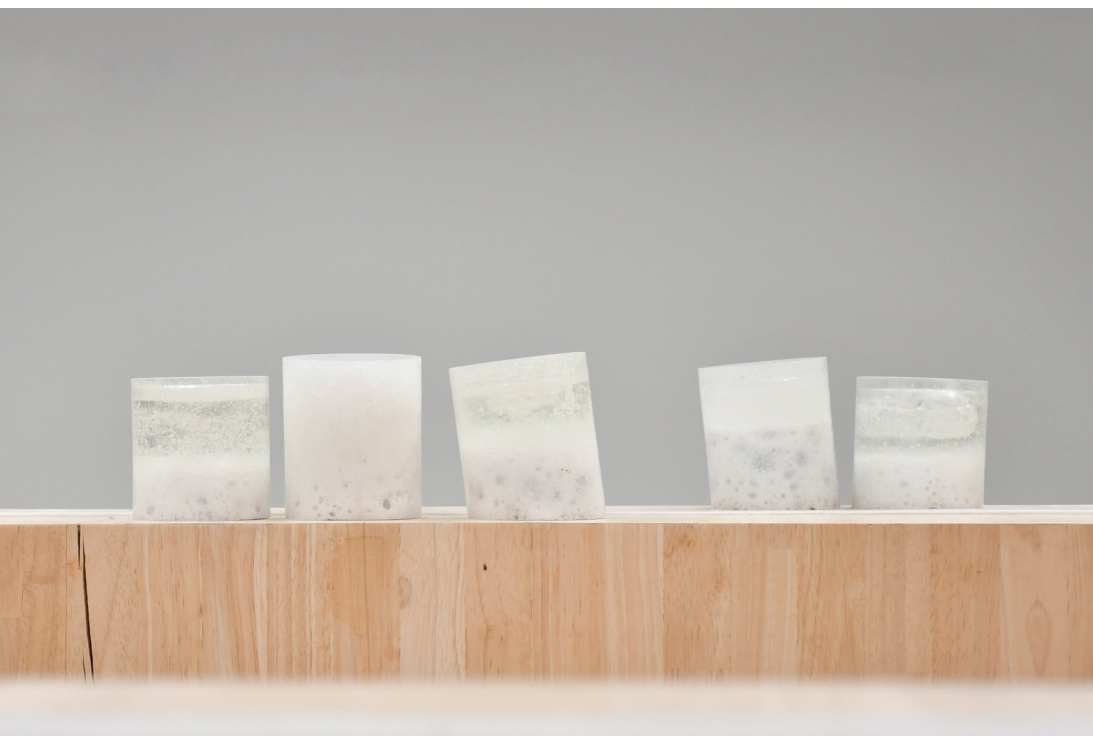
²⁶³ S12 is a studio and gallery specialised in working with glass. They also have an artist residency programme.

Source: "Mission," S12, accessed on 21 January 2025, <https://www.s12.no/en/mission/>.





Figures 226–227: Jewellery-related objects from the series *Lost Relics* (2024), Maria Konschake.



Figures 228–229: Jewellery-related objects from the series *Lost Relics* (2024), Maria Konschake.



Windows to the Past

The Trigger

1

It is April 2024, and I am walking through Bergen, Norway. I am on a two-week artist residency at S12, a studio and gallery that specialises in glasswork. For my main project, I am working with a combination of core casting and foam glass. I have spent the last five days almost continuously under the noisy extraction system: building moulds, making firing tests, and steaming out wax. Now, all the moulds are in the kiln, and it's time to wait and hope. I am stressed, nervous. I am trying something I've never done before and in a shorter than average time frame. A lot has gone wrong already, and there's no time to start over. The pressure is high and so is the risk.²⁶⁴ Despite having two days off ahead of me, I find it difficult to switch off. After closing the kiln valve at 7:30 a.m. as planned, I set off in search of a distraction. I take the Fløibanen funicular at 9:00 a.m. and go hiking on Mount Fløyen. Exercise usually helps me to switch off, and switching off helps me to think. After two hours, my head clears. I decide to hike down and set off on my search.

At Vågsallmenningen 3, the first thing I notice is Husfliden's shop window. Traditional Norwegian costumes and jewellery are on display. In Nikolaikirkeallmenningen 2, I eventually enter the Steinkjelleren Antikvitetshandel. I am not quite sure what I am looking for, but a box of old photos in the back corner of the shop catches my eye. They are mainly studio shots from the end of the nine-

²⁶⁴ To find out whether the experiments were successful, turn to pages 226-233 and look at the *Lost Relics* object group. There, the results of these core casting and foam glass experiments are discussed.

teenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.²⁶⁵ I am immediately fascinated. Many of the pictures show young women, many of whom are wearing the kinds of jewellery I have just seen at Husfliden. However, one of them stands out. She is wearing a pearl necklace that seems far too big for her. Her look is rebellious, unyielding, and, unlike all the other young girls, her hair is a little wild. A deviant? I can't relax; a new project has found me.

Main thought categories:

Reflecting memory-related deviation

Forms of deviation used in the creation process:

Deviation as a principle

Include unpredictable components

→ Work in an unfamiliar space

Deviation as a process

Artificial creation

Deviation as a principle

Break the rules of the object

→ Break the rules of jewellery

The Consequence

In his book *Staging the Archive: Art and Photography in the Age of New Media*, Ernst van Alphen mentions that the amount of detail that photographs contain can lead to different readings.²⁶⁶ Due to these different ways of interpreting the photographs, he does not consider them as simple records.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ This dating is based on information provided by the shop owner.

²⁶⁶ van Alphen, *Staging the Archive*, 22.

²⁶⁷ van Alphen, *Staging the Archive*, 27.

I see the photos I found in Bergen as traces of objects that are lost and traces of the memories associated with them. They enable me to create a new version of a memory, to bring a lost object—and the history associated with it—back to life.

I cast forty glass beads of the pearl necklace worn by the deviant in the photograph. They are a bit too clunky and without a hole—unusable, unwearable, just a trace of the past. I do not significantly interpret or change the original piece; my aim is to create a shadow of the original. A trace of what is lost. A trace of something that was forgotten. A trace of a story.



Figure 230: Photograph found at Steinkjelleren Antikvitetshandel in Bergen, Norway, photographer unknown.

Figure 231: Jewellery-related object from the series *Windows to the Past* (2024), Maria Konschake.



Imagined Companion

The Trigger

1

I read and write a lot about the importance of memories attached to jewellery. Heirlooms seem to be particularly interesting here. I realise that I don't know where my jewellery heirlooms are. I don't think I have ever appreciated their importance. Instead, I've focused on other things.

2

I am in Norway, working on the pearl necklace of the deviant in the photograph, and suddenly something clicks into place.²⁶⁸

Main thought categories:

Reflecting memory-related deviation

Forms of deviation used in the creation process:

Deviation as a process

Deviation within the (re)production process

→ Process-related

The Consequence

The Cambridge Dictionary defines an heirloom as "a valuable object that has been given by older members of a family to younger members of the same family over

²⁶⁸ If you are not sure what I mean by "working on the pearl necklace of my deviant," see pages 234-237.

many years."²⁶⁹ If we combine this with the assumption that objects carry or represent memories, an heirloom can almost be seen as the giver's embodied memory. But, what if we were to challenge this concept a little?

What if I were to create an heirloom? I don't think the giving of the heirloom should be limited to younger members of my family only; I'd prefer to split it into parts and give these parts to members of my whole family, regardless of age. In the course of doing this, I'd also like to challenge the concept of family, which can also be defined as "a group of people who care about each other because they have a close relationship or shared interests."²⁷⁰

I've wanted a pearl necklace for a long time. If I did own one, it would certainly be full of memories—an object that accompanied me for a large part of my life. How nice it would be to look at the pearls and be reminded of a whole life. Let's imagine that I own this necklace. It would currently have thirty-five beads, or pearls—one for each year of my life. Each one would be ready to carry memories, ready to become an heirloom one day, ready to be lost and forgotten.

I decide to create this object. It is cast in glass. The beads are hemispheres. They have a diameter of 8cm and are mirrored on the back. The world around them will thus be reflected in their surface. This is not directly visible due to the thickness and surface of the glass, and yet it happens. The string of the necklace is made of yarn and is reminiscent of the classic silk strings that are used for the cousins of my necklace. It is wound on a roll, and with

²⁶⁹ "Heirloom," Cambridge Dictionary, accessed on 12 January 2025, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/heirloom>.

²⁷⁰ "Family," Cambridge Dictionary, accessed on 12 January 2025, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/family>.

each year of life a piece is unwound and a knot is added. Also, a new glass hemisphere is cast, mirrored, and added each year. Unlike those hemispheres (or beads) that are meant to be given away, the string shall stay with me until there is no knot left to add.

Unfortunately, a few of the beads will stay with me. This is because the people to whom I would like to give them are no longer alive and can therefore no longer receive them.

My necklace is a jewellery-related object; it is not wearable. It is made to be given away. It is made to connect, to remember, to be remembered, and, finally, to be forgotten.

Interestingly, although I am able to add a new bead and a new knot every year, at least the last knot that closes the necklace will have to be tied by someone else.

According to the anthropologist Daniel Miller, societies are created through the circulation of things. This is because we create relationships when we give something to one another.²⁷¹ Let my pearl necklace be an object that is made to create relationships, an object made to connect memories, which is given away at the end of this research.

271 Miller, *Stuff*, 67.

Figure 232: Beads from *Imagined Companion* (2025), Maria Konschake.





Figures 233–234: Yarn and beads from *Imagined Companion* (2025),
Maria Korschake.



Food for Oblivion

The Trigger

1

I am reading *The Candy House* by Jennifer Egan,²⁷² I discovered it in my favourite bookshop, and it seems to be connected to my research topic. The novel connects different lives in a world where personal memory can be extracted and uploaded. When uploading a memory, it is possible either to use a personal memory cube, allowing the memory to be viewed only by you and those you want to share it with, or to upload it to the Collective Consciousness, making it available to the whole world. Memory cubes contain the entire contents of the brain: thoughts, feelings, what you remember, and what you don't remember.

The book adopts the controversial idea that everything we have ever experienced remains in our minds, but we just can't access it. An interesting detail of the story is that the memory cube of the inventor of this technology—called Own Your Own Consciousness—programmed his personal cube to self-destroy in the event that anyone tries to upload it to the Collective Consciousness.

While reading this, I think of Aleida Assmann. According to her, erasure is a radical technique of forgetting, perhaps the most radical, as it makes remembering impossible.²⁷³ Nevertheless, forgetting, or being forgotten, seems to be an essential right. The European General Data Protection Regulation even includes the Right to be Forgotten.

272 Jennifer Egan, *The Candy House* (London: Corsair, 2022).

273 Assmann, *Formen des Vergessens*, 21.

ten.²⁷⁴ I start to think about the importance of forgetting, and I come across another passage of text: ">Periit Pars Maxima<: Der größte Teil geht verloren." [The largest part is lost.]²⁷⁵

Main thought categories:

Reflecting memory-related deviation

Forms of deviation used in the creation process:

Deviation as a process

Deviation within the (re)production process

→ Process-related

Deviation as a process

Deviation within the (re)production process

→ Material-related

Deviation as a principle

Break the rules of the process

→ Use the process in an unsuitable way

Deviation as a principle

Break the rules of the material

→ Disrupt the material

The Consequence

That the largest part is forgotten is arguably both a tragic fact and an incredible opportunity. *Food for Oblivion* is an exploration of forgetting, a visualisation of everything that has been lost in the course of this research, everything that went wrong. *Food for Oblivion* was created entirely out of failure, and, at the same time, it is a way of

²⁷⁴ "Right to be Forgotten," GDPR, accessed on 6 June 2024, <https://gdpr-info.eu/issues/right-to-be-forgotten/>.

²⁷⁵ This is a text (and its translation) on an illustration of memory from a book from the Baroque period cited in Assmann, *Formen des Vergessens*, 13–14. Translation by Konschake.

dealing with failure. By anticipating the ravages of time and intentionally destroying objects, it makes clear how much of this project will be forgotten.

At the same time, this destructive process turns failures into a new work that would not have been possible without failure and destruction. Therefore, it also emphasises the opportunities that arise from failing, as well as from forgetting.

For the series, I melted several objects that were created during the course of this research project—and that I deemed to be unsatisfactory—together with test, left-over, and waste pieces, casting channels, sprues, and contaminated glass remnants.

In addition, 3% finely ground eggshell was added to the fine frit part of the mixture as a foaming agent.

The result was a series of thick, picture-like, square and rectangular panels of different sizes. The panels in the series are clearly objects; they are perhaps not jewellery-related or body-related, but they are definitely memory-related.

Food for Oblivion is one of the more emotional works within this research project, not only because it destroyed work that had been created but also because it deals with forgetting, failure, and new beginnings. This may seem contradictory, because Food for Oblivion actually erases all evidence that there were any tests and failures at all. In reality, however, the work presents them very directly, as the production of the panels would not have been possible without testing, searching, and failing.

There is potential in darkness.

Figure 235: Objects from the series Food for Oblivion (2024–2025), Maria Konschake.





Figures 236-237: Objects from the series *Food for Oblivion* (2024–2025), Maria Korschake.



Based on Memory-Related Deviation

Memory can change the world; the sub-chapter *Memory* (p. 54-72) showed us that memory errors and false perceptions persist.

In this part of the research project, these memory deviations are consciously used and triggered. All the objects described in this sub-chapter are *directly based on* memory-related deviation. This means that human memory was involved, in whatever form, in the design or creation process. As with the previous objects, each section begins with an explanation of the initial trigger(s), subcategories are to be found after the trigger description, and the decision-making process for the design is made clear in *The Consequence* section.

Like the objects in *Reflecting Memory-Related Deviation* (p. 170-249), all the objects in this category attempt to stimulate reflection on the assumption that objects carry memories, as well as on the general relationship between jewellery, identity, and memory.

Fleeting (memories)

The Trigger

I

It is 2022, and I am sitting in my studio at the Alter Holzhafen in Wismar, Germany. I am working on *The Archive of Possibilities* and listening to an audiobook by Julia Shaw. She says that in memory research, it is known that recalling a piece of information intensifies a memory and that we, therefore, remember something better than if we simply study it.²⁷⁶ It is also known that with each recall, a new piece of information is created, so to speak; the old memory is erased and replaced by a new one. This means that a memory can change over time as a result of retrieval.²⁷⁷ I continue to think about this and wonder: what if I played with it?

Main thought categories:

Based on memory-related deviation

Forms of deviation used in the creation process:

Deviation as a principle

Include unpredictable components

→ Work with unpredictable media

The Consequence

Particularly interesting in Shaw's book is her explanation that the memory of images fades as soon as we have to put them into words, and that this effect probably ap-

²⁷⁶ Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 238.

²⁷⁷ Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 85–86.

plies to other senses.²⁷⁸ According to Shaw, every time we remember, there is a chance that something of the original memory will be changed or lost.²⁷⁹

In her own research, Julia Shaw experiments with the manipulation of memory and convinces people that they have done things that never actually happened.¹

¹ Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 152.

A similar train of thought can be found in the work of Abby Smith Rumsey. On the one hand, she emphasises that a memory becomes stronger the more we recall it.²⁸⁰ On the other, she admits that recalling a memory means rebuilding it, and that our memories often don't portray the experience as it actually was.²⁸¹

Does this mean that while it feels more real, it is actually further away from reality? Rumsey also explains that our minds tend to fill gaps in perception.²⁸²

Perception is a central theme here, and Julia Shaw emphasises its role; according to her, the formation of memories depends on it. Incorrect perception, or misinterpretation, can thus trigger errors of memory.²⁸³ She goes so far as to claim that every memory probably contains some errors of perception and, therefore, mistakes.²⁸⁴ Our perception depends on and is influenced by our experiences, meaning it is by no means objective.²⁸⁵

²⁷⁸ Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 201.

²⁷⁹ Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 239–240.

²⁸⁰ Smith Rumsey, *When We Are No More*, 114.

²⁸¹ Smith Rumsey, *When We Are No More*, 114, 119.

²⁸² Smith Rumsey, *When We Are No More*, 127.

²⁸³ Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 46, 47, 50.

²⁸⁴ Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 71.

²⁸⁵ Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 52.

There is another topic that becomes important here: attention. Shaw highlights that, generally, the formation of memories requires attention.²⁸⁶ However, attention inevitably means focusing on something and ignoring something else, which entails not memorising all the information.²⁸⁷

Or maybe, rather, not perceiving all the information.

It all seems connected.

Fleeting (memories) is a visualisation of the fallibility of my memory. It is also a reflection on how the way we access objects can influence our perception, attention, and thus our memory of them. The first version of this project started during an artist residency at the Baltimore Jewelry Center (BJC) in July 2022.²⁸⁸ During this period, I visited a number of different museums and decided to try to remember jewellery from their collections. Every time I visited a museum, I chose a ring that was on display. Then I looked at it for as long as possible or as long as my concentration allowed. When I felt that I could remember enough of the details, I returned to the BJC's studio and carved my memory of the ring in wax. While studying the rings, I did not take any pictures or make any sketches or notes. I worked solely from my memory. A selection of the wax carvings were cast in silver.

²⁸⁶ Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 131.

²⁸⁷ Shaw, *Das trügerische Gedächtnis*, 135–136.

²⁸⁸ The Baltimore Jewelry Center (BJC) is an educational non-profit in Baltimore, Maryland, USA. It holds a prominent place in the field of jewellery and metals, since the BJC has a growing programming remit which reaches an ever-expanding community in Baltimore and beyond. They offer everything from simple workbench rental to goldsmith courses, gallery exhibitions, and artist residencies (among other things). Source: "Home," Baltimore Jewelry Center, accessed on 13 January 2025, <https://www.baltimorejewelrycenter.org/>.



Figure 238: Silver casts made from wax carvings (2022), Maria Konschake.

Perception and memory are influenced by many factors. How concentrated am I? How is the piece presented? Can I see everything? Am I distracted by bystanders? Sometimes, I looked at the ring only once. With others, I returned and gave it a second or even a third chance. Each time, I started a new object. I never changed existing wax carvings.

The results were not intended to be exact copies of the originals; they were intended to visualise the unreliability of my memory.

Memories are fleeting.

The subject of privileged access to objects was also addressed here. Of course, I remember a piece better when I can touch it or even turn it over. However, with these rings, that was obviously not possible.

The first experiments were interesting but seemed incomplete, so I started over. In April and May 2023, I was lucky enough to undertake another residency at the BJC; I used it to start a second attempt. I visited the Baltimore Museum of Art and the Walters Art Museum—one museum per day, followed by a few days of studio time. During those days in the studio, I tried to reproduce all the pieces I could remember after one visit to each museum. I didn't choose objects consciously; I just visited the exhibitions in the morning and then went for lunch and drew everything I remembered. After lunch, I went into the workshop with the drawings and only left when all the objects had been reproduced in wax.

It was hard for me to influence what my mind remembered. I also tried to make the museum visits as natural as possible. Of course, I had my project in mind and therefore focused a little on looking at jewellery, but I visited the entire collection in both museums.

After reproducing in wax all the pieces that I remembered, the reproductions were packed into a box and sealed. They stayed in the box for a period of one year. After exactly one year, I started reproducing them again from memory without opening the box. However, this time, I reproduced them using the materials from which the original pieces were made, according to my memory. The idea was to see if the pieces—or my memories of them—would last. The exercise was a simple visualisation of the unreliability of memory, which is partly influenced by attention and perception.

As I produced the final pieces in June 2024, I realised that I hardly remembered any of the originals. The reproductions I made during my artist residency, on the other hand, were still at least partially present in my mind. Above all, I remembered the production steps, even if the objects themselves were a little blurry. Elements

that were more difficult to depict quickly emerged from oblivion.

While filing beads to reproduce a cherry necklace that I remembered seeing at the Baltimore Museum of Art, I remembered the first reproductions I made in wax. Back then, I had only faceted them—not because the originals weren't round, but because the process was so strenuous, and I thought that this process would be enough to create a rough visualisation. This time, however, they had to be round—but were the originals circular or just amorphously round? I no longer knew. I decided in favour of cherry-round.

I also looked for stones for two pope rings that I remembered seeing at the Walters. As I scrolled through the Ruppenthal website, I tried to remember their colour.²⁸⁹ Purple, orange, golden? I was totally confused and finally decided to go with orange-gold glass stones. Whether the originals really had this colour or whether the choice was influenced by scrolling through Ruppenthal's selection, I couldn't say. While finishing the surfaces of the rings, I also asked myself whether the objects I saw had traces of use. I found it difficult to remember clearly. I decided that the answer was "yes." Finally, I opened the box with the wax reproductions and compared them to the new ones I had made. Both the similarities and differences were impressive; I had forgotten a lot and yet also remembered a lot.

²⁸⁹ Ruppenthal is a world-renown gemstone company. Its headquarters is in Idar-Oberstein, Germany. For more information, see: "History," Ruppenthal, accessed on 22 January 2025, <https://ruppenthal.com/historie>.



Figure 239: Wax carvings from spring 2023 showing memories of jewellery from the Baltimore Museum of Art and the Walters Art Museum, Maria Korschake.

Figures 240–243: Reproductions of object nos. 2022.79, 2022.84, and 2022.80 from the Baltimore Museum of Art (2024), Maria Konschake.





Figures 244–247: Reproductions of object nos. 57.1921, 54.433, and 54.432
from the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (2024), Maria Konschake.





Deceptive (memories)

The Trigger

1

"Ein Foto, eine Brosche oder ein Möbelstück, ein Sprichwort, ein Rezept, eine Anekdote, das ist – wenn es hoch kommt – alles, was bei den Enkeln oder Urenkeln noch von dem einst prall gefüllten Leben ihrer Großeltern ankommt." [A photo, a brooch or a piece of furniture, a proverb, a recipe, an anecdote - if it comes to it, that's all that grandchildren or great-grandchildren will remember of their grandparents' once full lives.] Aleida Assman ²⁹⁰

I read the above sentence in Aleida Assmann's *Formen des Vergessens*, and suddenly I remember a ring that once belonged to someone in my family.

Main thought categories:

Based on memory-related deviation

Forms of deviation used in the creation process:

Deviation as a principle

Include unpredictable components

→ Work with unpredictable media

Deviation as a principle

Include unpredictable components

→ Include unpredictable (external) human factors

²⁹⁰ Assmann, *Formen des Vergessens*, 31. Translation by Konschake.

The Consequence

How do we remember heirlooms that we can no longer find but that held great significance for their former owners? What do these memories tell us about the subjective value of objects? And how does the memory of others influence our own memory? *Deceptive (memories)* explores all these questions. In the work, I go in search of a lost past, trying to retrieve a blocked memory or, at least, to consciously create a “false” replacement of that memory.

My grandmother had a garnet ring. I think, for her, this ring was an important part of her identity. I don't know where the ring came from or where it is now, but I want to try to remember it or perhaps to create a false version of that memory. The garnet rings of *Deceptive (memories)* are based on family memories of the heirloom. These memories—visualised in gold and garnets—emerged during conversations with two family members who described the ring to me as they remembered it. After each description, which was accompanied by a sketch, I built two rings: the object they remembered and another based on my new memory of the ring as influenced by our conversation. Every ring in this work is reminiscent of the same heirloom, and yet they are all different.

I will remember the ring.

Ring no. 1:

My first attempt to remember the ring. I remember a 333 gold garnet ring. The ring had a large garnet in the middle surrounded by smaller garnets. As a child, it was too big for me. Even when I was older, I think it only fitted me on my middle finger at the most. The ring band was narrow.

Ring no. 2:

Family member 1 described the ring as a slim gold ring with an ornate set red stone. The stone in the centre was about the size of a small fingernail and sat in a kind of nest of other stones. The ring head was reminiscent of a crown. Her sketch showed two rows of stones that surround the centre stone.

Ring no. 3:

I try again to remember the ring, but I am not sure if I remember two rows of stones. I felt pretty sure that if there really were two, the outer row was smaller.

Ring no. 4:

Family member 2 described a ring with a prominent stone in the centre, around which sat small, delicate garnets. Everything was set in gold, with the centre stone sitting a bit higher than the others. The ring band was solid, but the stone settings were openwork, forming a sort of soft lattice through which light would reflect off the stones. The centre—the accent stone—was oval. She described the surrounding stones as being round. Her drawing showed one row of stones surrounding the centre stone.

Ring no. 5:

I try to remember the ring again, influenced by the memories of two other people. I think I remember the ring; the proportions were slightly different.

I will remember the ring.

After making five reproductions, it felt like time to stop. The process had begun to feel artificial. I showed the two family members involved the final ring (*ring no. 5*), and we all agreed that it was a faithful reproduction of the ring. I can only guess how close we really got to the original.

Figure 248: Ring no. 5 from the series *Deceptive (memories)* (2023), Maria Korschake.





Figures 249-250: Rings from the series *Deceptive (memories)* (2023), Maria Korschake.



Contaminated (memories)²⁹¹

The Trigger

1

It is 2012, and I am on a guided tour of the Deutsches Goldschmiedehaus (German goldsmith's house) in Hanau. The artist Peter Bauhuis is guiding us through his exhibition. He starts to tell a story about an unusual find: a treasure from the sixth century BC—an item of jewellery made of gallium. Gallium melts at 30°C, and because of this, the jewellery cannot be worn. The story appears to be nonsense, as the objects clearly bear his signature. I am confused because what he is telling us doesn't make sense. I am young and too shy to ask or argue. It is many years later that I find out that this was some sort of performative story, a lie. I was so angry.

2

I am writing the application for my research scholarship. I am writing about "creating objects that embody an invented tradition."²⁹² What a terrible, artificial sentence, and yet, it triggers a thought.

3

I am in Ahrenshoop, Germany, for a month-long artist residency at Künstlerhaus Lukas. It is summer—July 2023—and that means an old tradition in the region is coming back to life: *Tonnenabschlagen* (barrel knocking). Together with one of the other guest artists, I cycle to Wustrow to watch the spectacle. The procedure is as follows:

²⁹¹ Part of the text of this sub-chapter was presented as part of a conference paper during the Museums and Memory Working Group Conference in January 2025. The working group is part of the Memory Studies Association.

²⁹² Quote from the author's FWO application from 2021.

A herring barrel is attached to ropes and hung high, and horse riders try to knock it off while in full gallop, doing laps under the barrel. They are allowed one blow per lap, using a wooden club. It takes many blows before the barrel falls. It is a tiring spectacle. The winner—the rider who knocks the last piece of wood off the fastening—becomes the *Tonnenkönig* (the barrel king). Other titles that can be achieved are the *Sandkönig* (the sand king), the first to fall off their horse; the *Bodenkönig* (the ground king), the person who knocks the bottom away; and the *Stäbenkönig* (the baton king), the person who knocks the last baton away.²⁹³ It is a strange tradition; it seems like some kind of joke.

4

It's Sunday, April 7, 2024, and I am in Bergen, Norway. I have just put eight moulds full of glass into the kiln at S12.²⁹⁴ The firing is crucial because almost everything I've brought with me is now in the kiln, and the project is relatively experimental. To distract myself, I visit the Bryggens Museum. Upon my entering, the museum attendant describes to me what I am going to see. My expectations are low, but I will be surprised. In the basement, I find the highlight of the collection—the Bryggen rune sticks. The Bryggen rune sticks are part of a group of objects with runic inscriptions that were discovered during excavations after a fire in Bergen's old Hanseatic quarter (Bryggen) in 1955. The runes on the sticks show everyday communications ranging "from lewd insults to expressions of person-

²⁹³ The origins of the *Tonnenabschlagen* are not clearly documented. Nevertheless, the tradition is still practised today as a folk festival. Source: "Tonnenabschlagen auf Fischland-Darß-Zingst," Ahrenshoop Travel, accessed on 20 July 2024, <https://www.ahrenshoop.travel/magazin/tonnenabschlagen/>.

²⁹⁴ For more information on S12 and whether this firing process worked out, see *Lost Relics* (p. 226-233).

al feelings to business correspondence."²⁹⁵ The objects are so unique that they make everyday life in the distant past more tangible than anything else in the collection, and, at the same time, they are clearly something that was never intended to last or to end up in a museum.

5

It is summer 2024, and I am sitting in the library of the ModeMuseum (Fashion Museum) in Antwerp, Belgium, reading *Jewelry: The Body Transformed*. I stumble across the following sentence: "A diamond necklace proclaims status and prosperity."²⁹⁶ I start thinking about people for whom diamonds are inaccessible.

6

It's September 2024, and I am starting an artist residency at DIVA, the Antwerp Museum of diamonds, jewellery, and silver. On the second day of the residency, I visit the permanent exhibition. I've done this many times before. Today, however, I am specifically on the lookout for my new project, for gaps in the collection, for one-sided stories. I am looking for something to get my teeth into. Finally, I stand in front of my favourite display case, the one with the Flemish hearts. I listen to the audio guide.

It tells me that at the time of their creation, these hearts—made of silver and decorated with diamonds—were common in different social classes. It is assumed that they were given to the church.²⁹⁷ After the visit, I start researching in books and on the internet to find addi-

²⁹⁵ Elisabeth Maria Magin, *The Bryggen Papers, Main Series No. 10: Date-Based Runes, Macro Studies on the Bryggen Runic Inscriptions* (Bergen: The University Museum of Bergen & The Faculty of Humanities, University of Bergen, 2023), 13.

²⁹⁶ Melanie Holcomb, ed., *Jewelry: The Body Transformed* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2018), 39.

²⁹⁷ Audioguide, DIVA Museum, last accessed on 15 November 2024.

tional information. The website of the museums in Bruges has an article about Flemish hearts, which says that they were also given by children to their mothers, especially for birthdays or on the Assumption of Mary (August 15).²⁹⁸ DIVA's website also states that these hearts were given by children to their mothers, mentioning birthdays and Mothering Sunday.²⁹⁹ Children giving silver hearts with diamond to their mothers? I know immediately what I have to do.

Main thought categories:

Based on memory-related deviation

Forms of deviation used in the creation process:

Deviation as a principle

Include unpredictable components

→ Work with unpredictable media

Deviation as a principle

Include unpredictable components

→ Work in unfamiliar spaces

The Consequence

According to Ernst van Alphen, archives shape cultural memory.³⁰⁰ For him, memory isn't *found* in archives but rather constantly made and remade there.³⁰¹ Doesn't that also apply to museums?

²⁹⁸ "My heart belongs to... een kostbaar hartjuweel," Musea Brugge, accessed on 12 December 2024, <https://www.museabrugge.be/collections/kunst-werk/24-hartjuweel>.

²⁹⁹ "Flemish heart surmounted by trophy," DIVA, accessed on 15 December 2024, <https://www.divaantwerp.be/en/collection/explore/s9048-26150>.

³⁰⁰ van Alphen, *Staging the Archive*, 14.

³⁰¹ van Alphen, *Staging the Archive*, 16.

Museums show us the (soon to be) past. At least they try to. The objects they contain are considered memory carriers. They embody history, and yet they do not contain absolute truths. First, because we can't always read them, and second, because history can always be reinterpreted. Although museum treasures are studied endlessly, they can still carry secrets. So, even if the objects do carry memories, often, we can hardly read them. Therefore, we tend to project our ideas onto them. The work presented here focuses primarily on museums and their role in the creation of history. It is not just about the stories they tell but also about the selections they make. Both are important elements in the shaping of our cultural memory.

The power of museums in the creation, preservation, and communication of cultural memory seems to be almost unlimited.

Contaminated (memories) is intended to offer an artistic reflection on objects as carriers of memories, as well as on museums as agents of cultural memory. It is also meant to show how much we don't know.

In the work, I tried to imagine the origins of the Flemish heart—a piece of jewellery that might have been widespread, maybe even given by children to their mothers, and certainly given as a gift to the church. I wanted to tell a fairytale, to question if objects carry memories, and to visualise their potential to be mere surfaces for projection and sources of false memories. Yet I also wanted to be honest with the past, to create something that is orientated towards historical facts and fits into the historical context.



Figure 251: Flemish heart surmounted by trophy, Henricus Franciscus Coettermans, Antwerp, 1832 – 1869, collection City of Antwerp, DIVA museum, S90/48 – photo: Dominique Provost.³⁰²

What follows is a fairytale.

What follows is fiction!

Let's start with *once upon a time*, or, more precisely, let's start in the seventeenth century when Belgium did not yet exist. The part of the world that we now call Belgium was war-torn—first part of the Low Countries, then

³⁰² "Flemish heart surmounted by trophy," DIVA, accessed on 15 December 2024, <https://www.divaantwerp.be/en/collection/explore/s9048-26150>.

part of Spain, and later ruled by Austria.³⁰³ Despite these unfavourable circumstances, in a small coastal town in the part of the world we now call Flanders, an extraordinary craftsmanship developed at precisely this time. The oyster sellers of Ostend (all women, of course) no longer spent long, dark winter evenings only making lace (a source of additional income); they had developed a new source of revenue: oyster carving. Oysters had been a well-known food source since Greek and Roman times, offering not only a delicate but also a cheap substitute for meat, especially for the lower classes.³⁰⁴ In Ostend, these oysters were not yet commercially cultivated and were mostly imported.³⁰⁵ Excessive consumption left behind enormous piles of shiny mother-of-pearl waste. Not surprisingly, this wondrous material eventually attracted attention and inspired the locals to develop

303 It is impossible to cover the entire history of Belgian war during the relevant period here. However, it can be roughly summarised that the Southern Netherlands (now Belgium) was largely under Spanish rule from 1555 to 1700 and under Austrian rule from 1713 to 1794.

For more information on the Spanish dominion, see Guy Vanthem-sche and Roger De Peuter, *België: 2000 jaar geschiedenis*, trans. Guy Vanthem-sche and Roger De Peuter (Berchem: Epo, 2023), 167–209, 210–213.

For more information on the Austrian dominion, see Vanthem-sche & De Peuter, *België: 2000 jaar geschiedenis*, 209.

304 A number of depictions of oysters can be found in Dutch and Flemish oil paintings from the seventeenth century. While the oysters certainly have a symbolic meaning, their depiction is also an indication that they were common, everyday objects and food. Oysters clearly seem to have been part of the food culture at this time. Information on this can be found in Rebecca Stott, *Oyster* (London: Reaction Books, 2004), 131–150.

305 In the seventeenth century, there appear to have been no wild oyster beds off the Flemish coast. Oysters were, therefore, imported from France, England, and Zeeland. Source: Alexander Lehouck et al., *Oesterpassie* (Oostkamp: Stichting Kunstboek, 2015), 69.

something from it. European oysters are by no means as easy to carve as their tropical relatives. Their mother-of-pearl is often thin and can be very brittle. However, this was not enough to deter the people of Ostend.

The patterns used for the first carvings were initially derived from bobbin lace and common votives (*ex votos*). Within a few years, however, the oyster women quickly developed their own design language, and the Ostend oyster hearts (see figs. 252, 254-255) spread as far as Bruges, Brussels, Antwerp, Mechelen, and even Liège. They were not just used as votives given to the church but also became a common gift on Mother's Day.

The upper classes ridiculed the new folk art of the oyster women. However, this did not detract from its popularity, and it spread. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the hearts had become so popular that Antwerp goldsmiths began to produce silver copies of the oyster hearts in order to satisfy the demand of the upper classes. They even set them with precious diamonds. And yet, they remained copies of the beautiful oyster carvings.

Of course, while the silver hearts have survived to this day and are among the key pieces in many Belgian museums, most of the oyster hearts have been lost over time. Despite their popularity at the time, few have endured. The fact that they were made by the lower classes from cheap waste materials meant that they were never included in large, important collections. Because they were not considered collectable due to their materials and the status of their makers, the oyster hearts were almost forgotten entirely.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁶ In *Oysters, Sex and Seduction*, Rebecca Stott emphasises that there are many texts from the seventeenth century that prove that oyster sellers were associated with prostitution. Source: Stott, *Oyster*, 157.

Recently, however, a statue of the Virgin Mary with these oyster hearts was found in an undiscovered side room of a church in Ostend. The oyster carvings appear to be perfectly preserved. The side room was probably walled up during one of the numerous wars to protect the statue—and the offerings presented to it—and then forgotten. Surprisingly, some of the oyster carvings are reminiscent of the famous Belgian seafood-shaped chocolates that we know today (see fig. 253);³⁰⁷ it almost seems as if the oyster women were the origin of the very different Belgian specialities.

The fiction is over. While the Flemish heart does exist, there is no evidence of its origin.

The oysters I used for the votives were not the historically correct European oysters—which are, unfortunately, threatened with extinction—but they did come from Europe and were served in Belgian restaurants.³⁰⁸ They were, therefore, at least genuine Belgian waste. The clay I used for the Virgin Mary, on the other hand, really did come from Belgium.

A Belgian fairytale, as realistic as possible.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁷ According to Guylian's website, the seafood-shaped chocolates were developed in 1967 after the founders of the company, Guy Foubert and his wife, Liliane, returned home from a holiday on the Belgian coast. Source: "About Us," Guylian, accessed on 16 January 2025, <https://guylian.com/about-us/>.

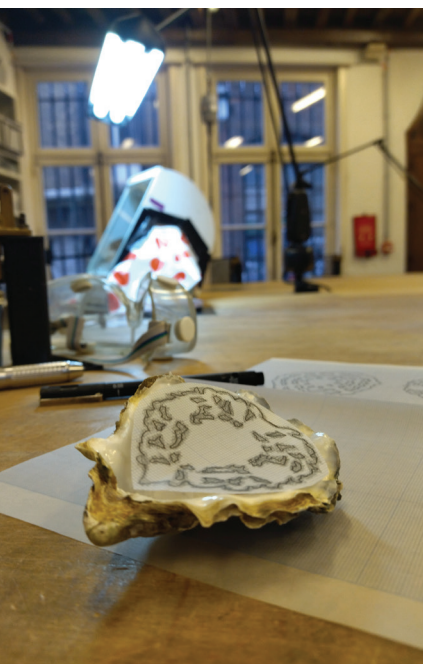
³⁰⁸ Regarding the endangered status of the European oyster (*Ostrea edulis*) and for further background information, see Andreas Ammer, *Austern* (Berlin: Matthes & Seitz Berlin, 2022), 50.

³⁰⁹ This group of objects was shown from 28 February to 30 March 2025 as part of the exhibition "Secret, Sacred & Scattered" at the DIVA museum, Antwerp. The objects were arranged as an installation with a short explanatory text summarising the fairytale of their origin.



Figures 252-255: Votives from the series *Contaminated (memories)* (2024),
 Maria Korschake.





Figures 256-260: Votives and work in progress from the series *Contaminated (memories)* (2024), Maria Konschake.





Figure 261: Votives from the series *Contaminated (memories)* (2024) in the exhibition "Secret, Sacred & Scattered", February 28 - March 30, 2025, DIVA museum | photo: Victoriano Moreno.

Figure 262: Exhibition "Secret, Sacred & Scattered", February 28 - March 30, 2025, DIVA museum | photo: Sigrid Spinnox.



Smell

The British zoologist Matthew Cobb says that smell might be the oldest sense of all.³¹⁰ Interestingly, we don't actually smell directly with our noses. We inhale odours through them, but the identification of the odours is generated by neurons that have direct contact with the brain.³¹¹ Their perception is, therefore, by no means consistent. According to Cobb, memory and stress can influence the perception of smell.³¹²

Also interesting is that odours appear to become firmly anchored in our memory; we only have to smell things once to remember them forever.³¹³ According to Cobb, smell brings back not only a simple factual memory but also emotions that can be associated with a particular place or time.³¹⁴

It is September 2024. I am working on Contaminated (memories), farming my source material—oyster shells—when I start to realise how important smell can be and the power it has in connection to memories.

My bathroom smells because I stored oysters there. My fingers smell from cleaning the oysters. The workshop in which I am working smells because this is where the oysters are crafted into artefacts for a fake history. The smell seems to follow me everywhere. I can't wash it off. It seems to have absorbed into my skin. I feel what probably millions of oyster sellers have felt before me. Strangely enough, I also feel Heimat (home or belonging)!¹

I grew up on an island—most of the time, right on the coast in a vil-

¹ The word *Heimat* cannot be translated fully into English or Dutch. In English-German dictionaries, you will find *home* or *hometown* offered as translations, and yet that doesn't come close to the true meaning. *Heimat* is not just a place. It is also a feeling, a sense of belonging.

³¹⁰ Matthew Cobb, *Smell: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 1.

³¹¹ Cobb, *Smell*, 5.

³¹² Cobb, *Smell*, 20.

³¹³ Cobb, *Smell*, 75.

³¹⁴ Cobb, *Smell*, 66.

lage near a harbour. We didn't have oysters there, but old oysters don't smell much different to anything else that fishermen pull out of the sea. The smell is familiar to me. I smell my former home, and yet it seems to overwhelm me. How strange; I thought I had detached myself from it. I thought I had become a nomad. Yes, it is the smell of Heimat. Suddenly, it's everywhere.

Literature scholar Sebastian Groes and psychologist Tom Mercer make clear that smell has a special ability to reactivate childhood memories.³¹⁵ Smell also seems to be “particularly good at evoking nostalgia”.³¹⁶

Smell is special.

³¹⁵ Sebastian Groes & Tom Mercer, “Smell and Memory in the Black Country: The Snidge Scrumplin’ Experiments,” in *Smell, Memory, and Literature in the Black Country*, ed. Sebastian Groes & R. M. Francis (Cham: Springer Nature, 2021), 61.

³¹⁶ Groes & Mercer, “Smell and Memory in the Black Country,” 63.

Missing (memories)

The Trigger

1

In *Formen des Vergessens*, Aleida Assmann talks about W.G. Sebald's novel *Austerlitz*, and of course, again, I stumble over a phrase. She talks about a "Suche nach der verlorenen Vergangenheit," a search for the lost past.³¹⁷

2

Jewellery artist Mar Juan Tortosa visits PXL-MAD School of Arts. She presents one of her projects. She is searching for lost memories.

3

It's August 2024, and I am visiting "De Oudheid in Kleur" (Antiquity in Colour), an exhibition at the Gallo-Roman Museum in Tongeren, Belgium. On display are colourfully painted reproductions of historical statues based on the latest scientific findings. Although the knowledge that statues in antiquity were painted has never really been lost, even today, many people still believe that the statues were white.³¹⁸ The exhibition catalogue reinforces this with its poor preservation of colour so that we can no longer see it, as do the images of antiquity created during the Renaissance and contemporary depictions in films, videogames, and TV series.³¹⁹ I also thought for a long time that sculptures in antiquity were white. I still

³¹⁷ Assmann, *Formen des Vergessens*, 36.

³¹⁸ Vinzenz Brinkmann, Ulrike Koch-Brinkmann, and Sam Cleymans, *De Oudheid in Kleur: Hoe antieke standbeelden er echt uitzagen* (Leuven: LannooCampus, 2023), 11, 91.

³¹⁹ Brinkmann, Koch-Brinkmann, and Cleymans, *De Oudheid in Kleur*, 11.

remember the feeling I had when I first learned that they were actually painted in colour, long before the impressive exhibition in Tongeren. It was as if something was breaking. My idea of the aesthetic sensibilities of our ancestors was shaken to its core, and I struggled for a long time to accept this historical change. Absurd when you think about it. But, somehow, I had always admired the Greeks and Romans for their pure white statues. As I walk through the exhibition in Tongeren, however, I realise that I actually quite like this new history. After all, it is much more cheerful, less cold and distant.

4

I am in the second week of my artist residency at the DIVA museum, and I am digging through their online catalogue. I am looking for pieces that are incomplete and/or broken, for something whose function is not clear. I am looking for jewellery, but I don't really find what I am looking for. So, I expand my search area. Maybe it's time to close the subject of jewellery for the time being. I find pieces of candle sticks. I have often imagined what it would be like to be a real silversmith. Maybe this is my chance.

Main thought categories:

Based on memory-related deviation

Forms of deviation used in the creation process:

Deviation as a principle

Include unpredictable components

→ Work with unpredictable media

Deviation as a principle

Include unpredictable components

→ Work with unfamiliar techniques and materials

The Consequence

Archives are institutions that collect, record, and preserve documents. Through these documents, they seek to make history tangible.³²⁰ But in doing so, they also regulate access to information.³²¹ According to Ernst van Alphen, today, archives are often seen as “repositories of the past,” but in reality, they are very selective places.³²² The German philosophers Knut Ebeling and Stephan Günzel see archives as places where a particular story begins.³²³ Again, can’t all this be said about museums, too?

Once more, I want to reflect on the power of museums and the influence their decisions have on our perception of the past. DIVA—the museum for diamonds, jewellery, and silver in Antwerp—is the result of the merging of the Diamond Museum and the Silver Museum, both of which were formerly located in the province of Antwerp.³²⁴ Its collection focuses on objects relating to those topics, with a regional and timely focus on works from the Low Countries from the fifteenth century to the present day.³²⁵ However, while new acquisitions are not limited to Antwerp or to Flemish or Belgian pieces, there must be a link between the acquired piece, or its artist, and the region.³²⁶ The collection plan of the DIVA illustrates what is all too often forgotten by visitors: museums have to make selection decisions all the time. Museums tell a story based on their collection’s focus.

³²⁰ Pethes, *Gedächtnis und Erinnerung*, 53–54.

³²¹ Ebeling and Günzel, “Einleitung,” 8.

³²² van Alphen, *Staging the Archive*, 44, 54.

³²³ Ebeling and Günzel, “Einleitung,” 9.

³²⁴ DIVA, “Collectieplan 2024–2028,” unpublished document, 4, 6.

³²⁵ DIVA, “Collectieplan 2024–2028,” 8.

³²⁶ DIVA, “Collectieplan 2024–2028,” 19.

We rarely realise how much of the past is actually lost, how little we know. Traces of some things remain, while others are completely forgotten simply because they are not part of a museum's collection focus. *Missing (memories)* aims to reflect on this. The idea was to work with traces, pieces that were incomplete, things that are lost. However, there were no incomplete pieces of jewellery at DIVA, or at least, I couldn't find them. What I did find, however, were parts of candlesticks. So, I started from there.

Missing (memories) started with remnants, parts that were incomplete and functionless. Based on this, an attempt was made to imagine artefacts that may have had a similar design vocabulary but were never considered worth collecting and were, therefore, lost. For the objects, various pieces of jewellery and utensils were first modelled in wax (based on the aesthetics of the candlestick parts) and then realised in *pâte de verre* (glass paste). The resulting objects appear fragile and delicate. They are ghosts of the past—body-related, jewellery-related, and, of course, memory-related.



Figures 263-265: *Missing (memories)* (2024-2025) within the exhibition "Secret, Sacred & Scattered", February 28 - March 30, 2025, DIVA museum | photos: Sigrid Spinnox.





The chapter on memory-related deviation showed how this research uses deviations of the mind both by creating objects that *reflect* memory-related deviations and by creating objects that are *directly based on* them.

Various categorisations and structures were used to guide and organise the decision-making and creation processes. The object groups themselves were always precipitated by one or more initial triggers, which were then developed into object groups through reflection and elaboration. The different number of triggers may well also be due to the fact that I became increasingly sensitive to and aware of potential triggers over the course of the investigation. It is perfectly possible that some triggers for the first object groups in particular are not listed because I was simply not aware of them yet, or perhaps I noticed them at the time but did not note them, and they were, therefore, forgotten.

This increased awareness naturally led to better processing of the triggers over the course of the project.

The topics of the object groups are very different, but all relate to the initial research questions and the structures that were established to serve as guidelines. Within this research project, several pieces of jewellery and jewellery- and body-related objects were developed. Looking back at the definitions outlined in the chapter *Jewellery* (p. 35-53), it appears that the jewellery pieces connect the artistic creation to the potential wearer while also drawing attention to them. Body-related objects also create this emotional connection; they also connect the creation to the body. However, in contrast to jewellery, they are not wearable in a practical sense. Jewellery-related objects, on the other hand, seem more suited to general statements about identity and memory, connecting them to jewellery without involving the viewer on a direct, emotional, or bodily level.

Finally, it should be emphasised that it is debatable whether the object groups *Contaminated (memories)* and *Missing (memories)* can be clearly assigned to the category based on *memory-related deviation*. They are not based on errors of individual memory but on errors of cultural memory. A clear categorisation is therefore more difficult. Nevertheless, I decided to assign them to their respective categories; as with many things in this research, this was a subjective decision—one that was weighed up for a long time.

The Meaning of Making

Making has a special meaning in artistic research, particularly in those projects that are connected to the domain of craft. It can be seen as the artist's form of analysing. A text by ceramic artist Caroline Slotte, in which she elaborates on the results of her research fellowship at Bergen National Academy of the Arts, illustrates this in a very distinct way, clarifying the meaning of making by putting it into relation with her writing. In her text, Slotte highlights that the development of knowledge in her work is to be found directly in her artistic outcomes and that she uses the process of writing to understand these outcomes.³²⁷ She describes writing as a way of learning, which allows for the visualisation of the underlying expertise that has shaped her art work.³²⁸ Slotte continues by saying that "art is created through a sequence of major and minor decisions. In these concrete, visual, tactile, practical, conceptual and aesthetic considerations, we find what could be called the artist's expertise."³²⁹ She isn't alone in understanding the meaning of making in this way. According to Henk Borgdorff, a Dutch academic who specialises in artistic research, artistic practice is a key component of the research process and outcome in the arts. For him, theory and practice are always closely interwoven.³³⁰ It seems clear that making is an important (or even the key) element here. But what is it that makes making so special? American artist Robert Morris might have an answer to this. He says that "the production of objects (...) involves bodily participation."³³¹ It involves our hands, which, as highlighted by Korean artist Lee Ufan, connect us to the "outside world" and are therefore able to create artworks that, according to him, stand at the threshold between the self and this "outside world."³³² Ufan elaborates that "the hand is a friend of the brain. The hand and brain work together to paint a picture or make a sculpture. The hand is extremely important to the brain, but at times betrays it. That is because the hand is part of the body. Like the eyes, mouth, feet, ears, buttocks, the

327 Caroline Slotte, *Second Hand Stories: Reflections on the Project* (Bergen National Academy of the Arts, Norway: 2011), 5–6.

328 Slotte, *Second Hand Stories*, 6.

329 Slotte, *Second Hand Stories*, 26.

330 Henk Borgdorff, *The Debate on Research in the Arts*, (Amsterdam School of Arts, 2006), 7, https://www.ahk.nl/fileadmin/download/ahk/Lectoraten/Borgdorff_publicaties/The_debate_on_research_in_the_arts.pdf.

331 Robert Morris, "Some Notes on the Phenomenology of Making: The Search for the Motivated," in *The Craft Reader*, ed. Glenn Adamson (New York: Berg, 2010), 545.

332 Lee Ufan, "The Art of Encounter," in *The Craft Reader*, ed. Glenn Adamson (New York: Berg, 2010), 549.

*brain itself, and internal organs, it is an organ of the body. Because the hand is an organ connected to the other parts of the body, it can see and feel and think.”*³³³

*If we follow this thought, we can say that making involves a form of feeling, seeing, and thinking that is unique to the hand—a form of intuitive thinking. Making requires time, effort, and skill, as well as pain, sweat, and failure. Making involves the slowness of the process. In this research project, making involved hours of modelling, mould making, wax working, casting, waiting, hoping, and grinding. It involved hours spent under the rhythmic sound of machines; hours during which I was fully absorbed in the process of making, which left me with pain in each of my muscles and a satisfaction unknown to those who don't make.”*³³⁴ *All this is part of the analysis.*

The process of making is part of the process of thinking and also part of the process of design. Making involves change and adaptation, reactions to knowledge, environment, machines, material, and skill. Making is reflecting, analysing, and concluding, even if it often happened more unconsciously or subconsciously here.

To me, there is nothing more beautiful than making.

*While I tried to analyse and be transparent in the thought and development processes that are outlined in this dissertation, there are always small subjective decisions, which actually happen in the studio, which happen in the making, which can be seen as analysis through making, and which aren't always made consciously. Their connections are visualised in the back and forth between reflect and create of the process of creation, shown on page 164. And still, they can never be visualised in their entirety. In the end, what results is a simplification that aims to make understandable something that we might never be able to fully understand. Caroline Slotte expresses this perfectly when she says “I have tried to make meaningful objects, after which I have tried to say something true about why I made them.”*³³⁵

333 Ufan, “The Art of Encounter,” 548–549.

334 This assertion, of course, stems from a subjective perspective and can certainly be questioned.

335 Slotte, *Second Hand Stories*, 5.



Figures 266-270: Pictures from the workshop.



Embracing What Happened

Do they really carry memories?



We have reached the end of our journey. It is time to look back and reflect on what we have seen, what has happened to us along the way, and perhaps even what mistakes we have made.

Conclusion

I started this study by assuming that objects carry memories. The aim of the research project was to reflect on this assumption, on the general relationship between jewellery, memory, and identity, and on the role of jewellery in this relationship specifically.

The sub-chapters on the topics of *Jewellery*, *Identity*, and *Memory* initially served to define the content framework, to provide the necessary background knowledge, and to inspire the creative process. Evidence of jewellery can be found into the distant past. Jewellery can be connected to memories and is certainly closely linked to identity. This research project explored the power of jewellery in various ways. The study showed how not only deviation in general but also memory-related deviation, in particular, can function as artistic strategies.

Within the first part of the methodology—*A Collection of the Existing* and *The Archive of Possibilities*—an artistic strategy was developed that can also be used as an idea generator in teaching. The aim here was to break out of familiar paths and seek new stimuli and inspiration. The use of memory-related deviation as the second and even more important part of the methodology was intended to stimulate reflection on the relationship between jewellery, memory, and identity. It was also a way to visualise the unreliability of the basis of the self. Various object groups demonstrated a critical approach to the potential for misinterpretation and deliberate misuse that can be found in the silence of objects. In this study,

deviation and memory were used as both techniques and topics.

The structures created formed the backbone of the investigation and were intended to provide reproducible methods. At the same time, they also offer sufficient flexibility to remain interpretable. This means, as mentioned previously, that although the instructions for action are repeatable, the results will vary from artist to artist. The approach to structure and organisation seen in this research project is a personal one that reflects my own practice and which may appear to some to contrast traditional ideas about the fluidity of art-making. It demonstrates a sense of order that has always accompanied my way of working while never excluding subjective, emotional decisions within the process of making. Memory itself is a field of study in both the classical sciences and the humanities; perhaps it is this crossing of boundaries that gives this project its special character.

The development of the objects that were created during this research project was based on research, trigger perception, and deduction. This also reflects a personal approach, which may be different for every artist. Why each trigger triggers something cannot be definitively explained; it is like a kind of gearbox in which a lot of information accumulates. The triggers are like the final, missing part that makes everything click into position and thus sets everything in motion, like clockwork. For many of the object groups, the objects could not have been developed without the theoretical investigation that provided the framework and triggers. Conversely, the artistic strategies could not have been developed without the creation—and the experimentation in the process of creation—of the objects. It remains impossible to visualise all the small decisions that are made in the workshop during the manufacturing process. To illustrate the creative process is to simplify it, to make it understand-

able—for the reader and also for me. It is clear that in the process of making, a critical reflection takes place that cannot always be fully understood.

Throughout the project, theory and practice were closely interwoven and continuously supported each other. Writing was also an essential part of this, as it was often through written reflection that new trains of thought were triggered, and things became clear and comprehensible. Writing also made me realise how and why I began this research project in the first place; it was about searching for the answer to the questions of why I work with jewellery, why I feel so drawn to this medium, and why my work has meaning.

Jewellery is a small sculpture whose creation requires not only the eye of a sculptor but also the hands of a craftsperson and the analytical mind of a designer (or researcher?). At the beginning of this research project, I adopted Marjan Unger's definition of jewellery: it has to be worn—or have the possibility to be worn—on the human body. Many of the objects created in the course of this research are, therefore, definitely not jewellery; they are instead defined as jewellery-related or body-related objects, as illustrated in the chapter *Jewellery*. Nevertheless, the entire body of work outlined here has a connection to the field of jewellery, from which I no longer wish to separate myself.

The results of this investigation are not just the methods and structures but also the objects and exhibitions, the talks and presentations given over the course of the project, which all together present a view on the field of memory (as it connects to jewellery) that I hope resonated with the respective audiences, helping them to re-understand the processes by which memory (and identity) is constructed and to think about them in a different way.

In the end, the question remains: Do objects carry memories? Maybe they don't. Maybe they just help us to carry or visualise them. Maybe they simply help us to remember. And yet, I still somehow prefer the initial assumption.

Wouldn't it trigger a much more conscious approach to the world if our environment wasn't just made up of inert matter? Wouldn't it be a little less self-centred if we allowed other things to have a memory?

The Use of the Archive

What distinguishes common artistic practice from research? And what remains of artistic research after the artist has completed their project? Henk Borgdorff argues that art qualifies as research if its intention is "to expand our knowledge and understanding by conducting an original investigation in and through art objects and creative processes." Artistic researchers use experimental methods that "reveal and articulate the tacit knowledge that is situated and embodied in specific artworks and artistic processes." Documentation and communication of results and processes should be part of this.³³⁶ So, the idea is always that others can learn from the methods. During my four years at the university, I learned a lot from my colleagues via discussions and shared critiques of this issue. My own position on this is still not entirely clear to me, but the debates I have listened to have definitely influenced my artistic path.

While not a direct goal at the beginning of the project, the first part of the methodology for this research project is now intended for use in teaching. Initially, the development of *A Collection of the Existing* (p. 102-111) and *The Archive of Possibilities* (p. 114-143) were primarily intended to inspire this project. However, it turned out that they were designed in such a way that they can be applied directly in teaching. *A Collection of the Existing* is the first step in developing perception and awareness. In the second step, the creation of *The Archive of Possibilities* should actively set the creative process in motion by following a simple instruction to produce.

The use of similar processes might be familiar from creative study exercises, and they definitely work without the focus on deviation.

336 Borgdorff, *The Debate on Research in the Arts*, 18.

However, the use of The Archive of Possibilities (and A Collection of the Existing) in their existing form—focusing on deviation—offers the advantage that topics can initially be viewed from a different perspective, and new possibilities can be identified.

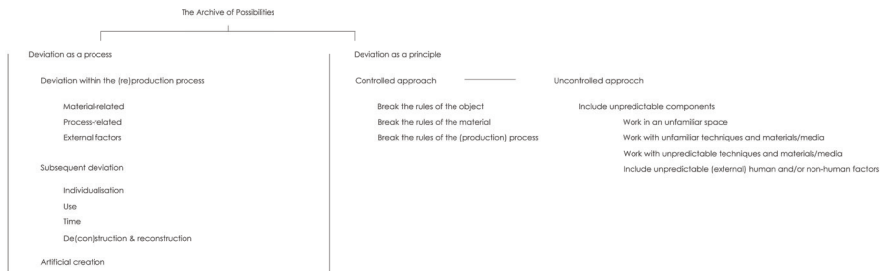


Figure 271: Subdivision of deviation techniques within *The Archive of Possibilities*.

To apply the methods from *The Archive of Possibilities*, proceed as follows:

Firstly, look for a representative and easily reproducible basic shape. Then, focus on the use of deviation as a process and reproduce this basic shape using as many different techniques and materials as possible. The aim is to achieve deviation within the (re)production process through material-related factors, process-related factors, and/or external factors, meaning an external interference.

After that, the focus is turned to subsequent deviation, and deviation through use, time, de(con)struction, and reconstruction can be integrated.

Finally, deviation within the (re)production process is completed by the use of artificial creation, meaning artificially created (or designed) deviations. When the

first part of this archive has been created, the focus is placed on the use of deviation as a principle. In the controlled variant, the instructions for action are as follows:

Break the rules of the process

- Disrupt the process
- Use an unsuitable process
- Use the process in an unsuitable way

Break the rules of the material

- Disrupt the material
- Use an unsuitable material
- Use the material in an unsuitable way

Break the rules of the object

- (e.g., break the rules of jewellery)
- Jewellery is constant → Make it ephemeral
- Jewellery is visible → Make it invisible
- Jewellery is wearable → Make it unwearable
- Jewellery does not harm you → Make it harmful
- Jewellery tells stories → Erase the story
- Jewellery shall adore you → Make it ugly
- Jewellery comes finished → Create something unfinished
- The maker creates the work → Let the wearer create the work

The last part, in particular, may require customisation depending on the subject area. Finally, the uncontrolled approach to deviation is addressed, and uncontrollable factors are integrated, such as the following:

- Work in an unfamiliar space
- Work with unfamiliar techniques and materials/media
- Work with unpredictable techniques and materials/media (e.g., memory)
- Include unpredictable (external) human and/or non-human factors

It is important to work with the same basic shape through-

out the entire production and to document and analyse all steps and deviations precisely, as this is the only way to enable proper reflection and the re-utilisation of acquired knowledge. Also, remember that objects often fit into several categories. If the method outlined here is applied correctly, the self-created archive should offer plenty of inspiration.

To conclude, it should be highlighted that, in addition to creating a physical archive, the approaches used in The Archive of Possibilities can also be applied to other fields. The branch of this research that holds the most potential here is probably the use of deviation as a principle (controlled approach), which, as outlined above, focuses on analysing an existing system of (unspoken) rules and then consciously breaking it. When using these approaches, they should not be regarded as a fixed skeleton but as a flexible support structure, ready to be interpreted and bent to suit the field of application. Build on it, and make it your own.

Things We Did Not See

We might need a new assumption.



The Memory of Source Materials

What has (deliberately) been excluded from this study—but has great potential in terms of memories—are the memories of the source materials.

In an article about jewellery, hair, and the body, Marcia Pointon states that memory isn't a real component of the object. She talks about the example of a lock of hair in an archive and suggests that our emotional reaction to the hair is not determined by the material itself but by our social and religious beliefs.³³⁷ From a rational point of view, this may be the case; and yet from an artistic perspective, a train of thought that allows the material to harbour the memories of all it has experienced is still much more appealing to me. Although this study was not able to prove if objects really carry memories—or if we simply project memories onto them—this train of thought remains tempting.

It is also possible to deduce the idea that every object is imbued with memories from the material itself. Materials could carry the memories of their creation, their extraction, and their various processing steps. Gold, for example, would carry the memory of its creation in a supernova, as well as the memory of the thousands of years it spent under the earth, the chemicals it came into contact with during its extraction, the workers who extracted it from the earth, and the foundries that ultimately produced the bars, sheets, pipes, and wires that we use in classical jewellery. All these memories accu-

³³⁷ Marcia Pointon, "Materializing Mourning: Hair, Jewellery and the Body," in *Material Memories: Design and Evocation*, ed. Marius Klint (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1999), 43.

mulate before the artist lays their hands on the material. Following this idea, no material is truly pure. Everything is contaminated or emotionally charged through its creation, extraction, and processing. In theory, this could lead to an almost unbearable abundance of associated emotions.

Those memories offer great potential for further exploration. In this project, however, I deliberately decided to exclude them in order to narrow down my field of research to personal memory and collective (as well as cultural) memory. However, future investigations should certainly deal with this topic. Emotional contradictions could be particularly interesting here. Materials such as gold, silver, diamonds, and other precious stones offer great potential as they are largely viewed positively and hold high value to the general public. Their genesis is the story of the origins of the universe. They are formed in supernovae or in the liquid interior of newly forming planets. However, their extraction is linked to environmental destruction and exploitation, which probably makes many classic pieces of jewellery unwearable by modern ethical standards and certainly raises questions of sustainability.

What should objects that attempt to visualise or deal with this diverse and contradictory material memory look like? How can an ethically conscious approach to material memories be used to discover new materials and exclude established ones? Could this even be used to raise a general awareness of the consequences of our actions on the planet? And can the examination of material memory serve to stimulate the more conscious use of materials in art, craft, and jewellery-making? Naturally, the final question then arises: How can this be linked to the field of glasswork that I have explored for four years now?

One logical consequence might be to look not only into the memory of existing and established materials but to look also into the extraction of new materials, dealing with the legacy of destroying the planet, in order to obtain materials that follow the principles of a circular economy and have comparatively “uncontaminated” memories. What if we were to search for our raw materials in the already existing legacies of the Anthropocene instead of further devastating the planet? Just as it takes thousands of years to form oil, rocks, and precious stones, humans have left completely new materials and objects on the earth within the last few centuries, even decades. What if we were to look for alternatives to rare earths, precious stones, and precious glasses here? Wouldn't that be a logical way of dealing with the realisation that our influence on the planet will still be visible after our disappearance? Wouldn't the objects become much more wearable if we looked at them from the perspective of material memory? Referring to “anthropogenic causes and the consequences of climate change”, Mahlu Mertens and Stef Craps highlight that “cultural responses to the problem might help make people care about and relate to it.”³³⁸ While Mertens and Craps focus on novelists, their approach can certainly be applied to other cultural responses.

I hope to be able to explore this in a follow-up study.

338 Mahlu Mertens and Stef Craps, “Contemporary Fiction vs. The Challenge of Imagining the Timescale of Climate Change,” *Studies in the Novel* 50, no. 1 (2018): 134, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48559260>.

Waving Goodbye

We have had an interesting journey. We have seen a lot and discovered many things. It's time to say goodbye and thank everyone who has accompanied, supported, and encouraged me along the way. Without them, none of this would have been possible.

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Mother tongue matters.

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