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Computing Textiles RFP

Name of Project. A Body, Space, Time Process: 4,467 knots.

Keywords. Data, Handmade, Therapeutic

Short Description. To be part of a collective history, we should trust in age old methods of textile making to provide solace, encode information and act as markers of place and time. Utilising mobile screen time data as tool to create therapeutic textile expressions that convey passing of time and emotion, exploring the body as processor.

Project Description.

Can digital data provide the basis to create therapeutic textile networks?

As if it were a byte collected and processed by a computer, we can consider the knot a unit processed and recorded by the body.

In this unique period of isolation, we are drawn to our digital devices to provide a source crucial news, a connection to people and a sense of escapism from the uncertain. Digital networks and online platforms are where many people find comfort but continuous exposure can also create anxiety. With one swipe we can be bombarded with overwhelming news and devastating headlines or amidst an aimless scroll through social media. At the end of the week our phone has collected an alarming amount of data, minutes and hours spent across various applications. What does this platform have that we as humans do not? This is no body, no hormones and no memory of place. To remedy this vacant time, hand/material connection can provide solace and a way to digest our emotions far from the digital sphere.

One of the earliest forms of textile structures, the knotted cord, will serve as the base to conduct this form of this data visualisation. Inspiration is found in ancient Venus figurines which represent the earliest incarnations of string garments, from 25,000 years ago. The amount of screen time data on a specific day may affect the choice of material, colour or tension of technique. Materials will be dependent on what is to hand in the domestic space. Time will become coded through technique, it will become soft and tangible but bear a resemblance to its digital informer. As knots and loops are

built up, threads represent a web of circuitry, a sensitive tangle of wires. This will also be complimented by written words in relation the ideas of body, hormones and memory of place and will intertwine between this matrix.

The final outcome of this project will be a diary, a knotted network in textile form which is the physical manifestation of the data collected during isolation. This will go on to have a connection to the maker through body draping, movement and spoken word. This exploration is relevant to a worldwide audience at this time who may also be seeking the catharsis that a textile practice can bring. This work as an outlet that they too can pursue or find reassurance in its quiet permanence during these uncertain times.

Timeline

WEEK 9: Collect daily phone data and begin textile making. Start diary entries relating to emotions, techniques chosen and screen time spent.

WEEK 10 - 11: Collect daily phone data and continue textile making. Continue diary entries relating to emotions, techniques/materials chosen and screen time spent. Soft Network continues to grow. Photograph progression of piece.

WEEK 12: Collect daily phone data and continue textile making. Continue diary entries relating to emotions, techniques chosen and screen time spent. Begin summary essay of project experience.

WEEK 13: Final Presentation

Influences.

Cecilia Vicuna.

Cecilia Vicuna's work explores the poetic expression of traditional textile methods to contemplate language, interaction and the passing of time. A large body of her work explores Quipu an ancient technique derived from the Incas which records information through varying knotting techniques. Her work is predominately site specific and considers the timely themes surrounding the environment and social justice.

Susan Kuchera.

I found the essay *The Weaver and Their Information Webs: Steganography in the Textile Arts* by Susan Kuchera very insightful and a key stimulus for this project. Contemplating the idea of historically how textiles as a medium, specifically in times of uncertainty or when people are experiencing oppression, have been used as a method of therapy. Textile processes have an innate ability to store emotion and become an important marker of a specific time period. Through a connection with traditional techniques we can unite communities, recording and portraying poignant messages, whether this be in secret or plain sight.

Elizabeth Wayland Barber

Elizabeth Wayland Barber's book *Women's Work: The First 20,000 Years* is a pivotal text and inspiration for this work. The chapter "The String Revolution" is especially relevant. This documents the development of textiles in the Palaeolithic period, the importance of the string and knotting. It also examines the Venus figurines, symbolic nature of women's labour and woven goods thousands of years ago.

Motivation.

I am interested in the similarities that lie between textiles and computing in relation to input and output, units, repetitions and processing. Whether this be pixels, digital information to create an image or physical links, knots and loops that build up to create a texture field. This project encapsulates these ideas for me. Exploring revisionist histories and the pursuit of reviving traditional techniques which are historically associated with females, women's work and domestic spaces is a core theme in my practice. So to ensure I produce a tactile outcome in this class is important for me.

At this present time I only have access to the yarns and fabrics I have to hand in my apartment. My laptop is extremely old and unpredictable, alongside my internet connection which is another factor of why I wanted to utilise the data collected specifically from my mobile device for this work.

Reflection

Completing this work was a very emotional process for me during the uncertain time that we all find ourselves in. I found a deeper connection to my thoughts through hand work and the common history of textile making through reading which felt meaningful and important. I found it rewarding to think of what the body can do and compute with basic materials and how this primitive form of processing can be related and valued in comparison to the digital sphere that we find ourselves in now. There is a power in textiles that they can capture the feelings of a transient moment, feelings of instability can be made stable and tangible. This project is not something that I will continue in this format but the methodologies behind it I have no doubt will continue influence my practice moving forward.