



Since 2021, I've been mainly researching the topic of exhaustion. I call it after the German term **Erschöpfung**:

Schöpfung: - to scoop (e.g. water)
- history of (religious) creation
- creation of art
- accomplishment
- drawing profit from abilities and/or resources

Erschöpfung: - exhaustion of resources and/or physical abilities
- burning out one's own capacities or those of others

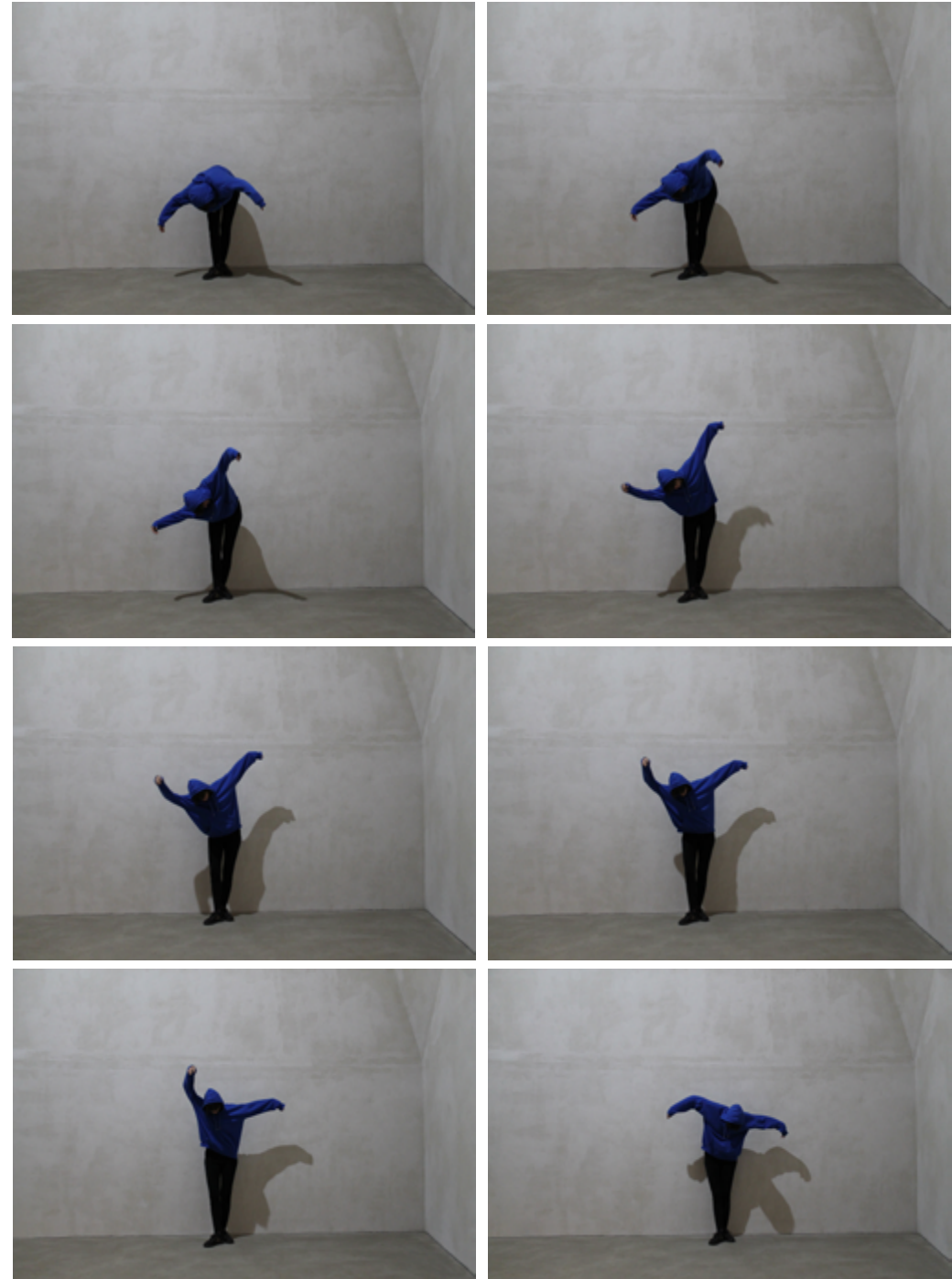
My research is rooted in the question „what sculptures must feel like holding the same position throughout a lifetime?“

I'm especially interested in the depiction of the female body and how it has been utilized to introduce gender-stereotypes into our society. Furthermore, I'm seeking physical experiences with the aim to unlearn the body-mind-dualism.

Visual: I look into art-history to find positions of sculpted and painted bodies. By making use of both the historical story as well as my intuition, I chose postures which I hold until I meet my physical boundaries and finally have to collapse. With the help of artistic means, the physical sensation is translated back into a visual language. This creates sculptures, photographs, performances and video material, which focus on the visualization of embodiment.

Theory: I want to understand the creation of our western world and the connected views towards its members. I started by looking at Paleolithic times; the ideas of the old Greek philosophers; the Civilizing process described by Norbert Elias; while consulting contemporary feminist movements.

This portfolio aims to give an insight into the current state of my research and questions which came up throughout the process.



History of the question:

While being an Erasmus student in Barcelona, in 2015, I visited a garden close to Montjuic. When looking at this sculpture, the question about the state of exhaustion of sculptures first came to my mind.



I was wondering about the motivation of artists and/or those who carry out commissioned work. While following the beauty standards of that time, no one seemed to approach the depicted body through an empathetic feeling for what it must feel like to hold a position.

These thoughts occurred now and then throughout the years. Finally, in 2019, when visiting Annie Gentil's Gallery in Antwerp, I observed an embossment in one of the chimneys. The work showed a woman retuning from the fields. She's wearing a corsage dress with an expanding skirt. Her left hand holds on to a tray, which she carries on her head, and is filled with fruit. In her right hand lays a fruit, which she seems to be enjoying after a work day out on the fields. This scenery brought another thought to my mind: I began to wonder about the stereotypes of gender roles, which are exposed to people constantly, even before social media began to irritate the body image.

Images of the human body have appeared since the Upper Paleolithic. The image, a kind of writing or communication that can exist independently of spoken language, reassures people of their own existence. Looking at images in two- and three-dimensional space (starting with (cave-) painting, via sculpture, photography, film through to animated bodies) causes a mirroring image with which one compares and identifies. The nature and

manner of what is portrayed is related to the place, time and social construct in which the portrayers find themselves.

From my point of view, the perception of the body is highly influenced by the division of body and mind. In ancient Greece, about 400 years before Christ's birth, philosophers like Plato or Aristotle were looking for the „true“ knowledge, which according to their assumption could not be found in sensory perceptions, but only in incorporeal realities. From the depiction of superhuman bodies in temples, to the imagery of the Christian church, to commissioned works depicting women and men in their ideal social positions (e.g., domestic labor, care work, field work, warfare, servants of the state, etc.), social demands were subliminally influenced and respective „ideal bodies“ were defined. The treatment of the human body to this day is primarily superficial and viewed from the outside. Proprioception (Latin: proprius ‚own‘ and recipere ‚to take in‘) is an intrinsic sensation often called the sixth sense. It describes the perception of one's own body in space as well as the positions of the head, trunk, and limbs in relation to each other. Additionally, the self-perception of bodily changes is characterized by movements related to heaviness, tension, force, and speed. By consulting the sixth sense, I aim to unlearn the externally shaped social construct of the body to be able to redefine a perceiving one.



Erschöpfung

2021

digital time-lapse-collage

Translation of the physical experience of exhaustion into the visual.



holding Nut's position

2021

clay-sculpture, approx. 15 x 20 x 30 cm,
revisualising a performance

Feet and hands to the ground, rest of the body up in the air.
I could hold this position for 8 minutes, realizing how the
feeling for my body changed until I finally had to collapse.
The sculpture visualizes the interoceptive experience, drawing
attention to the perception of corporal volumes.

It traditionally has been assumed that the Venus figurines were created by men to serve male agendas as erotic representations of sexuality, beauty and fertility. This androcentric view of the Venuses has been espoused both in archaeological and art history scholarship... it is assumed by the Victorian-era archaeologists who found the figurines that nudity indicated eroticism, but it is unlikely that the people of the Upper Paleolithic viewed nudity as western society does today. In this way, we are imposing our own cultural standards and values upon ancient peoples... The androcentric understanding of the figurines assumes that women were acted upon, rather than exerting any agency over themselves or their image...
excerpt of: „Upper Paleolithic Venus Figurines and Interpretations of Prehistoric Gender Representations“ by Kaylea R. Vandewettering



What Bodies Are Made For

2021

selection of video stills, video of 7:25 minutes <https://vimeo.com/685647290>

The human body finds shelter in corpuses of concrete. There are similarities in inner structures of bones to steel. However, the concrete housing follows mathematical precision while the body's motivation for shape comes from its genetic constitution. The work examines the moment, when both elements come together.



Landscapes of a Body

2021 - ongoing

Concrete, nylon, each piece approx. 31 x 14,9 x 3 cm

Growing collection of different body parts imprints, molded in concrete.
The cuboid shapes are covered in a skin of nylon as finishing.



behind the still lifes

2022

digital created series of superimposing
time-lapse-images

Further procession of performance documentation.
Content: holding fruit until exhaustion to emphasize
with the marginalized importance of domestic work
and the act of feeding the family, carried out by
women. The title draws attention to those, who take
care of the every-day, enabling others to appear on
the surface. Position has been hold for 30 min.





on the face of shaping

2022

digital image creation

Excerpt/collage of visual research into the shaping of female attributes, such as beauty, commitment, devotion, attentiveness, care, worthiness, loyalty etc. The focus lies on images which represent these attributes and have been infiltrated into our society's understanding of the female body throughout art history.

Image: Jupiter und Io painted by Antonio da Correggio, 1532.



Body vs. Volume vs. Speed

2021

multi channel video, <https://vimeo.com/678368132>

Juxtaposition of a human body to a body of water and a distance in space. The act of carrying a bucket has been repeated five times, at five different speeds. The result is the visualization of physical processes.



filled to brimming
2022
selection of video stills

Water is the most essential element of life. Taking up the position of a fountain until exhaustion to emphasize with the sculpture itself, drawing focus on the activity of maintaining the water-cycle through bodies, and a functioning society. The position was held for 30 minutes and served as first performance-inquiry.



Era: Romanesque Period, 1200
 Title: Altar frontal from Avia
 Artist: unknown
 Place: Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Spain



Era: Gothic Area, 1310–1311
 Title: The Raising of Lazarus
 Artist: Duccio di Buoninsegna
 Place: Siena, Italy



Era: Renaissance, 1485
 Title: The Birth of Venus
 Artist: Sandro Botticelli
 Place: Italy



Era: Mannerism, 1534–1540
 Title: Madonna with Long Neck
 Artist: Parmigianino
 Place: Italy



Era: Barock, 1613–1614
 Title: Venus at a Mirror
 Artist: Peter Paul Rubens
 Place: Antwerp, Belgium



Era: Romantik, 1783
 Title: Landschaft mit Wasserfall
 Artist: Johann Caspar Pitz
 Place: Saarbrücken (Alte Sammlung), Germany

In the Face of Exhaustion

2022

participatory-performative lecture

During the lecture, I'm sharing my current research on exhaustion. Since I approach the content from my own point of view and experience, it is therefore female. By reducing images from art history to the shape of bodies, the representation of beauty standards and social duties highlights itself. While showing examples of different eras, I give historical context to what happened at that time. For example: The history of female hysteria starting from ancient Egypt and Greece towards Freud and the present day, attempts to overcome the condemnation of women (the book of the city of ladies, 1405, Christine de Pizan), false interpretation of Paleolithic figurines during the Victorian Era (please see holding Nut's position in portfolio), the capitalization of the female body (Caliban and the Witch, 2004, Silvia Federici).



Era: Realism/Impressionism, 1863
 Title: Olympia
 Artist: Edouard Manet
 Place: Paris, France



Era: Impressionism, 1886
 Title: The tub
 Artist: Edgar Degas
 Place: France



Era: Art Nouveau, 1907–1908
 Title: Der Kuss / The_Kiss
 Artist: Gustav Klimt
 Place: Vienna, Austria



Era: Kubism, 1907
 Title: Les Femmes d'Alger
 Artist: Pablo Picasso
 Place: Spain/France



To give an example:

The Hippocratic Corpus (Latin: Corpus Hippocraticum), or Hippocratic Collection, is a collection of around 60 early Ancient Greek medical works strongly associated with the physician Hippocrates and his teachings. The Hippocratic Corpus became the foundation upon which Western medical practice was built. In this medical work, the first definition of Hysteria: „Disease of Women“ can be found. The word hysteria originates from the Greek word for uterus = hystera. *“The Greeks and Romans called almost all female complaints hysteria, and believed the cause of all these female maladies to be a wandering uterus.”* E.g. in Plato’s dialog Timaeus compares a woman’s uterus to a living creature that wanders throughout a woman’s body, „blocking passages, obstructing breathing, and causing disease“. In the Middle Ages, it was thought that demoniacal forces were attracted to those who were prone to melancholy, particularly to single women and the elderly. When a patient could not be diagnosed or cured of a disease, it was thought that the symptoms of what would now be diagnosed as mental illness, were those

of someone possessed by the devil. This assumption supported the collection of evidence regarding interpreting the breakout of women, from the socially prescribed norm. Ultimately, it legitimized the persecution of witches and the related expropriation of land, torture, and even the burning of women. The myth of the wandering womb as a perpetrator of female malaise has been maintained until the 19th and 20th century. The American Psychiatric Association did not drop the term „hysteria“ until the 1950s. By the 1980s, feminists had begun to reclaim hysteria, using it as a symbol of the systematic oppression of women and reclaiming the term for themselves. Especially among sex-positive feminists, who believe sexual repression and having it called hysteria is a form of oppression. The idea stemmed from the belief that Hysteria was a kind of pre-feminist rebellion against the oppressive defined social roles placed upon women.

Sources:
 Once upon a Text: Hysteria from Hippocrates, Helen King, <https://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft0p3003d3&chunk.id=d0e760>
 Wikipedia: Hysteria & Female Hysteria

In the Face of Exhaustion

2022

participatory-performance lecture

Following the introduction into the theoretical and historical approach, I introduce the audience to the tool of physical exhaustion to pay attention to the sixth sense (=proprioception).

During a communal performance, people place themselves in positions with or without the objects I offer them to hold on to. One after the other stops the performance according to the individual’s understanding of exhaustion and movement. Finally, participants are invited to share their experience, compare and listen to what has happened in the performance, as well as share their states of exhaustion in the present life.

The first In the Face of Exhaustion performance was realized in cooperation with Stadtgalerie Saarbrücken and took place at Deutsch-Französischer-Garten (German-French-Garden) in Saarbrücken Germany. Supporting the event artists Chloe Op de Beeck, Anais Chabeur, Sina Hensel and Sarah Smolders were on site to expand on the question of the prevalence of states of exhaustion through their individual artistic approaches.

Duration: around 2 hours

Participants: 15



Selection of objects to chose from during participatory-performance.