

Aesthetic driven Co-creative writing method for short videos

By Cheryl Akner Koler, Elsa Kosmack Vaara, Annika Göran Rodel & Nina Bjørnstad

Authors' background:

Cheryl Akner Koler is Sculptor and Professor in Theoretical & applied aesthetics with a focus on how our everyday aesthetic experience in the real world drives creative processes. Her work involves making tangible connections with intangible experiences: form ↔ space, products ↔ interaction, food ↔ taste and touch ↔ emotions. Cheryl challenges the traditional definition of aesthetics as primarily engaging visual perception and have worked over the past 10 years to emphasize haptic perception in relation to other senses. She is dedicated to developing "applied aesthetics" that she defines as practice-based research, driven by artists and designers to support the creative making and performing process. The research project she is currently leading HAPTICA (2016- 2018) is driven in collaboration with Örebro University campus Grythyttan School of Hospitality, Culinary Arts and Meal Science. She has also been main applicant and project leader for two previous Swedish Research Council projects: NanoFormgiving through Haptic Aesthetic Laborations, 2009-2012 and Complexity and Transformation 2003-2005.

Elsa Kosmack Vaara is a classical and baroque violist who extended her profession through studies in product- and Interaction Design at Umeå Design School, Sweden. Elsa started her design research in 2010 as a research assistant at the Mobile Life VINN Excellence Centre in a project dealing with stress, biosensor technology and interactional empowerment (<http://www.mobilelifecentre.org/node/202>). Elsa holds a PhD in Human Computer Interaction from the KTH Royal Academy of Technology in Stockholm 2017 researching aesthetics of felt temporal interaction through music, Sourdough Baking and interactive technology. She is currently working at RISE SICS Västerås.

Annika Göran Rodell is an expert in sustainable leadership with a masters in Hospitality and a background as a performance sound arts and expressive art therapy. She current holds a teaching position at Campus Grythyttan giving courses in aesthetic gestalt process, event, presentation techniques and a teachers course in Higher education. She has been involved in the Center for University Education at Örebro University and recently won the prestigious award for the best pedagog of the year at ÖU. Her multidisciplinary background. She is also a central member in the HAPTICA research team working on a three-year project in collaboration with Konstfack, funded by the Swedish Research Council. Annika's profile in the project is about developing pedagogical methods in order to deepen the sensory sensitivity of the professional hotel and restaurant staff. She is also involved in developing courses in Theory U process.

Nina Bjørnstad is an associate professor in the Institute of Design at Oslo School of Architecture and Design, Norway (AHO), with a master of fine arts in industrial design from Konstfack. Her pedagogic merits include teaching; three-dimensional analysis of form and space, integrated with product semantics in the Bachelor's program and in master courses where she is responsible for supporting both incremental and radical design concepts for the future. Nina is a core member of Wonder research network, a Scandinavian network for women in design research. Her current research in physical and additive manufacturing is focused on "material agency". She has recently joined the Haptica project to take part in creating videos that document methods and models showing ways for designers to integrate crafting skills in clay-work during the design process. Nina is also tutoring diploma works at IDE where form, emotions, and aesthetical aspects are in focus.

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ABSTRACT

This is a work in process paper presenting an aesthetic driven co-creative writing method using short video clips. Our work is motivated by our long term goal to develop a rich multimedia publication that moves focus from academic text writing and emphasizes videos, photos, sound, visualization models etc, which, we believe, will be the future publication format for design (Ball 2017). For further inspiration we refer to the project VEGA a multimedia editing platform lead by Cheryl Ball (2018 January 15).

Workshop

We will run a workshop using this method at the Design Microconference Design School Kolding Denmark Sept 5 – 7, 2018

The method presented here highlights the subjective and qualitative aspects of design research and focuses on aesthetic methods that make design unique. Its' purpose is to strengthen the importance and use of our immediately felt experiences in design research. Through this method we reach out to grasp the haptic and emotional content of an expressive moment within a lab session that is presented in short 1-2 minutes raw videos. By working in small groups of 2-3 participants we share insights of ongoing work from each participants' research and engage each other in a structure method that respects each individual's own aesthetic experiences. The method offers time to share research through the videos, to formulate direct and immediately felt questions and it encourages the participants to actively listen to articulated answers. It also gave individual time for reflection, articulation and documentation of our subjectively felt experiences. The session ends in a collective performative act designed to share the entire experience that merges the short video with an oral performance. The development of this method is supported by the Swedish Research Council through the artistic research committee within the 3 year HAPTICA project. The results show that within a very limited time frame (one hour) we were able to gain a deep felt understanding of each of our individual research projects within our common research field of haptics.

INTRODUCTION

We believe, in line with other design researchers [see Höök 2016, Shiphorst 2009, Sheets Johnston 1999, Loke & Robertsson 2013) that design is about being moved. Moved in the meaning that it appeals to our felt, sensory and emotional sense of life. Design that moves us presents a flow of human experience that we can relate to.

The method presented here was developed in a workshop for the research project HAPTICA, to support the use of short raw videos (approximately 1-2 minutes) that focus on immediate haptic (touch) perception.

“There is, in fact, no pure touch sensation, for by the time we have perceived touch, it has been blended with other sensory input plans for action, expectations and a healthy dose of emotions.”
David J. Lind 2015

By creating this method we would like to challenge ourselves and the design research community to think about the value of aesthetic reasoning and how we as design researchers can stay in touch with our own aesthetic response as we build on a common research area. We would like to

emphasize that our aesthetic responses are motivated by our individual real experiences, thoughts, cultural background and emotional feelings.

Conference theme

This conference is about questioning “The preferred natural science formats in design research writing tend to underplay the qualitative. Consider the structuring formula of background, literature review, hypothesis, methods, data and analysis.” Our paper focuses on the on-going development of an applied co-creative method for aesthetic driven writing that complements short videos. We are working to develop a rich multimedia publication that moves focus from academic text writing and emphasizes videos, photos, sound, visualization models etc, which, we believe, will be the future publication format for design (Ball 2017). Although the present paper applies a more structured formula for writing scientific papers, the method itself is very much influenced by artistic research with focus on process and subjective experiences.

Aesthetics, Haptics and Co-creation

To begin we need to point out that an immediate aesthetic response goes beyond quick judgmental acts and simple dichotomies. Aesthetics is not about making statement about what is beautiful and ugly or the wow/ yuk factor. When we express an immediate felt response about a situation at hand we still have access to our prior experience that can be both nuanced and complex. It is also important for us to underline that an aesthetic response is not restricted to our visual senses and retinal information. It can directly and indirectly engage all our senses, our intellect and most important our emotional response (Dewey 1980 [1934]). In this paper we present short videos of lab sessions from our research in haptics that emphasize the tactile and hands-on experience of working with particular materials in a unique context. The idea of this method is to co-create texts that articulate the viewers own emotional and embodied response to the event captured in the videos.

The HAPTICA research project is a three year artistic research project (<https://www.haptica.se>) funded by the Swedish Research Council. It is run from the Design program at Konstfack, University College of arts, crafts and design in Stockholm in close collaboration with Örebro University (ÖU, Campus Grythyttan, School of Hospitality, Culinary Arts and Meal Science (RHS) at). The unique academic, multi-disciplinary profile at Campus Grythyttan ÖU has professional and academically merited culinary artists with long experience in the aesthetic gestalt process as well as researchers from the learning & life sciences.

AIM

The aim of the study is to bring together video media with written documentation and oral performances in order to deepen the research process and through aesthetic and haptic ways engage all of the participants in each other’s work. It is thought to help both the individual researcher and the collaborative group to explore and develop the artistic and research potential in the ongoing HAPTICA research project on haptic perception. We refer to immediate aesthetic reactions as explained by the pragmatist view on aesthetics [see Dewey 1980] where experience is ever present. By daring to put something of ourselves into the viewing, interviewing and writing process, we can offer a more personal account of how the video moved us. We are able to reflect on our own feeling of arousal (Berlyne, D 1960) for each action and interaction, which brings energy to the different stages of the method and further to the ongoing research exploration. Haptic is usually referred to as the sense of touch. Touch involves experiences of texture, temperature and vibration, perceived by the nervous system through the skin. As soon as touch includes intentional muscle movement, such as grasping a 3-D volume and sensing its weight,

proportions, density & shape, or picking up a tool to use it, we transcend touch and tactility and enter haptics

METHOD

In the initial session for prototyping this method we were a group of four professional designers/researchers prepared to explore its' potential. Let us unfold the **5-stage** method: *Co-creating writing method for short videos*, that captures subjective experiences felt while watching short video clips (see figure 1).

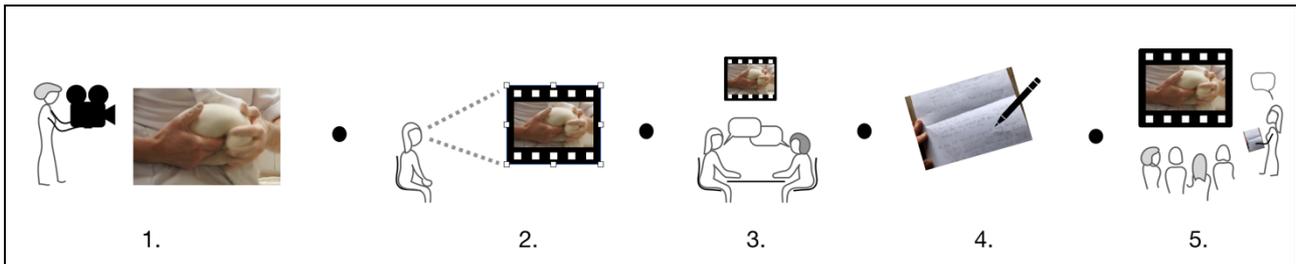


Fig 1. Co-creative writing method for short videos

1. Video making
2. Viewing
3. Interview
4. Reflection & poetic writing
5. Show video & oral performance

1. Video making

Each video maker prepares a 1-2 minute short video presenting physical interaction with materials and people. The videos should be raw and authentic with no additions such as effects, sounds, voiceover or text. It should engage the viewer in a core experience of the ongoing haptic research.

2. Viewing (1-2 minutes)

A co-creation video session begins in groups of 2-3 participants. The participants take turns viewing each other's short videos with the intention of stimulating immediate felt responses.

3. Interview (5-7 minutes)

The viewer interviews the video maker. The interviews should be honest & open and build on the immediate felt experiences of the viewer. It should not be about technical or meta questions concerning the research project. *See below for examples of interview*

4. Reflection and "poetic" writing (10 minutes)

The viewer reflects on the following:

- What part of the video worked best for me?
- What aesthetic / emotionally experiences did you feel?

Based on the reflection on the interviews a "poetic" text is formulated to be later read out loud in stage 5.

The purpose of the reflection and "poetic" texts is to mediate between the haptic, aesthetic experience of a real design exploration (shown through video) and participants that do not have a first person experience of the particular research project. By focusing on how we are

immediately moved by the material and activity, we challenge ourselves to reflect and reach out to each other's research through our own aesthetic, haptic experiences.
See below for examples of "poetic" writing

5. Show video and oral performance (3-4 minutes per video)

All of the video groups then gather to watch each video and take part of the oral performance by the viewers, reading their own text out loud. Each performance is followed by a short discussion.

Example of *interview* - Elsa shows her video to Annika / Annika interviews Elsa



Fig. 2a



Fig. 2b

Fig.2 a-b two photos from Elsa's video about sourdough bread.

Annika: So what did you find most interesting in your work?

Elsa: It is the way people have to give in to make it work. They have to let go of control and allow the sourdough to be part of the creation.

Annika: Did someone not let go?

Elsa: That's a very good question. Some participants thought the sounds were very aggressive when we were kneading the dough. Some might actually have been a bit uncomfortable. I mostly focused on the positive experiences, for example one participant told us in the reflection session that he managed to relax when he realized that the dough will keep together even though it was very loose in the beginning.

Annika's poetic text about Elsa's video (translated by Elsa from Swedish to English)

*I caress the dough,
it caresses me back.
I feel happiness in the soft skin.
We become one.
Sensual, playful meeting wakes my trust
If I listen to our meeting
I understand something more about myself
about the time it takes to breathe
In
Exhale*

*[...]
I'm smearing
Me in you
Until something happens
Everything comes together
What I did not think was possible
A unit is emerging*

*It becomes skin
and body
I'll become skin and body
I'll become alive
[...]
Beat thump fight
Rest beat
Wait, wait, wait, changeable
Processing
Happy being together
If I listen to you
I listen to myself at the same time
Time may stop
Open a source within
Without noticing it
my heart calmed down.
The breath found
Roads of re-establishment*

*of my own
creativity
Who am I before?
flour anonymously dry*

*Before the rise of life
Who am I now?
Now I'm changed
Tastes the bread!*

Cheryl interviewed Nina

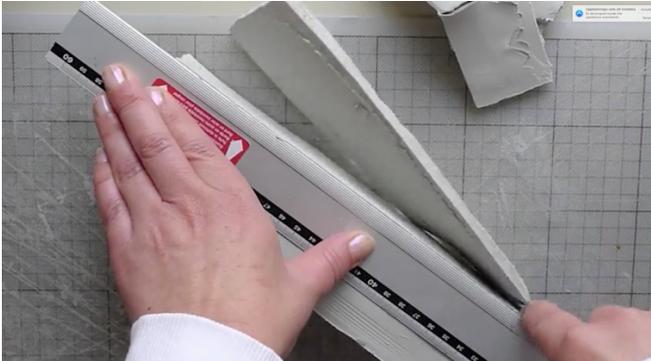


Fig. 3a



Fig. 3b

Fig.3 a-b two photos from Nina's video about working with modelling clay

Cheryl's poetic text- about Nina's video

*Formgiving, giving form, in clay
simple curved surfaces
hands holding, turning, flipping*

*Gentle, yet determined actions
precision tools
sounds of scraping
shaping transitions*

*Take care not to hard
not to deep*

*Sliding on the surface
slight changes with each action
active movement
the subtracted materials
is scraped away
as the form emerges.*

FINAL REMARKS

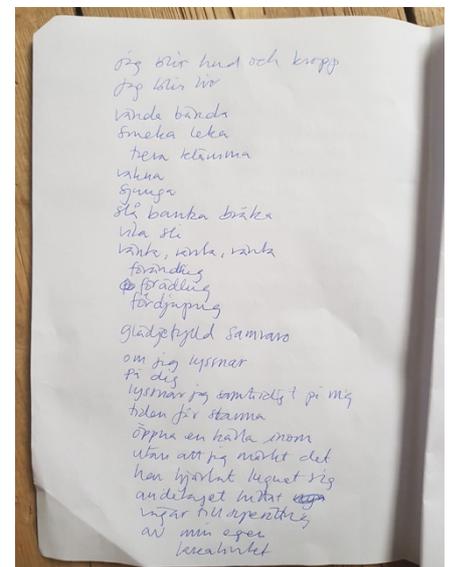


Fig.4 a We returned to the attic to present the videos and read the text. Fig. 4b an example of the handwritten text.

Both video recording, editing and interviewing users are tools taught at design schools and frequently used by design practitioners [Wilde et al 2017, Buur & Søndergaard 2000, or Buur 2018] The concept of sharing and co-creating, however has a lot of potential within design. We highlight both challenges and opportunities of sharing haptic explorations that emphasize sensual, intellectual and emotional experiences. The presented method aims to actively engage participants as co-creators in a particular research study with minimal need for prior detailed knowledge of the study. We found this method to be valuable, offering rich exchange of experiences in a very limited time frame.

We will end this paper by noticing some pitfalls that may hinder designers to work this method through: First about video making: Although filming and recording with higher quality are skills that some researchers need to consider, it is the goal of this paper to inspire designers to have less prestige for the production of videos. We are not producing Hollywood films but rather learning to co-create short and simple videos with poetic text that open up the design space and that support on going aesthetic research from the inside. Second, the text that is produced by the viewer has often artistic integrity, it might even have stronger qualities that could alter the intensions of the lab. This should not be seen as a problem. Our work supports generosity within a research group, and the alternate interpretation could offer new insight for the material. The method presented in this paper moved us because the videos, the writing and performative act call to our individual experiences through haptic interaction and imagery that engaged our whole selves.

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