



Expression and Treatment of Fear in Contemporary Art

Creativity as a Tool for Fear Processing

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this bachelor's thesis was to analyse the relationship between fear and creative work. Fear is explored from different perspectives to gain a better understanding on the multidimensional nature it contains. Defensive behaviour and the manifestation of loneliness in modern society are also explored.

I show examples of contemporary artists who have used fear as a subject or as a method in their artistic processes. The thesis includes sources from psychology and behavioural science literature, interviews, and research articles.

In the final paragraphs I reflect the research with my own interactive art installation, which was the artistic part of my bachelor's thesis. The installation was presented in the Blind Spot Degree Show of the Fine Art study path of Tampere University of Applied Sciences during 4.4. – 28.4.2019 in Gallery Himmelblau. The artistic part of the thesis serves as a reference point for the fear handling process on a personal basis.

Key words: fear, defensive behaviour, installation art, contemporary art, fine art

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1 INTRODUCTION

We humans have a tendency to avoid discomfort, even though we know it is an inevitable part of life. In this thesis, I examine the ways fears can be faced, alleviated and addressed through creative work. I present examples of how fear appears in the field of contemporary art and how it is utilized in works of art.

My interest in the subject has arisen through a fascination in psychology and the aim for personal development, as well as through impressive artworks which have affected me on a personal level. I have experienced the works of performance artist Marina Abramović to be interesting since I became acquainted with her work about ten years ago. Abramović has successfully used her fears as a fuel in her performances, exploring the human mind, consciousness, physicality, and the connection between the audience and the artist. I will present her work *Rhythm 0* in this thesis and also show examples of Finnish contemporary artists' (Kari Vehosalo's, Nastja Säde Rönkkö's and Markus Copper's) ways of dealing with fear through creative work.

There are several phenomena around fear that can affect a person, and if they are excessive they can be detrimental in life. In this thesis, I examine a few of such examples such as loneliness, as well as defensive behaviour. As my main source of information to address these themes I have used the book *The Act of Living – What the Great Psychologists Can Teach Us About Finding Fulfillment* (2020) by Frank Tallis.

The artistic part of the thesis, the interactive art installation "We Got This" was a way to structure these fragmented ideas around the subject. It was also a way of exploring the themes of fear in my own life. According to Päivi Venäläinen's dissertation *Contemporary Art as Learning Environment – Perspectives on Contemporary Art, Learning and Their Intersection* (2019), it is precisely the fact that artistic experience is often built more clearly on personality than it is, for example in economic or religious issues, that makes art important for learning (Venäläinen 2019, 185).

The process of creating an interactive video work was new to me and therefore also a process of encountering the unknown. When creating the artwork, I tried to implement it in ways where I would learn as much as possible. In this thesis, I go through the process of creating this mixed media installation and its impact on my own thoughts on the importance of creative work in dealing with fear.



PICTURE 1. Marina Abramović, Rhythm 0, 1974 (Delphian Gallery, 2018)

2 FEAR

2.1 The science behind fear

Fear is a physiological response to our perception of danger, which helps us optimize our survival. Our neurobiological system has evolved to help us within this pattern of behaviour by creating intelligent coping mechanisms for us. (Frontiers in Neuroscience 2015.) Also new-born babies, when their nervous systems are still developing, feel fear. The first common fears are fear of loud noises, falling, separation from parents and fear of strangers. (FLO 2020.)

However, in the light of current research, it also seems that fear can touch us even before we are born. According to study conducted by Saara Nolvi at the University of Turku, maternal stress and depression symptoms during pregnancy were associated with a stronger experience of fear in babies regardless of gender (Nolvi 2017, 5). A sense of security is so important and fundamental to us that it can be seen as the foundation of identity (Tallis 2020, 48).

Several different factors affect our sensitivity to the experience of fear, such as genes, personality, previous experience and environment (Ward 2013, 3). Fear also affects us as a social and sociological phenomenon, as an instrument of the exercise of power and as a manifestation in cultures. According to Milan Ambroz and Boris Bukovec, fear is a global feeling and a belief, insecurity that eventually turns in to a habit in people's lives. Government actions, crime and perceptions of the future are all related to the experience of fear in today's society. (Ambroz & Bukovec 2015, 164.)

Emotions rooted from fear can be difficult to banish, as they may cause very strong physical reactions in their experiencer. Such sensations in the body are for example stomach pain, nausea, sleep issues, pounding heart, rapid breath, sweating, trembling, or muscle tension (Healthline 2019).

The famous Stoic Epictetus said it is not death or pain to be dreaded, but the fear of pain or death. According to the Stoic view everything that happens nec-

essarily happens, so why create more pain for the inevitable. If we were all Stoic, we would approach our fears calmly and rationally, but since most of us are not, we can only do our best to understand ourselves as holistic beings and thus improve the control of our emotions.

2.2 Modern fears

Fear is visible around us every day. Modern society encourages trends that fuel fear and keeps citizens in an atmosphere of fear. On the other hand, organizations and individuals use a lot of money and effort to feel safe and protected. (Ambroz & Bukovec 2015, 164.)

Society and cultures teach us to be afraid of different things in different eras. This is also clearly seen in religions. Paul Auster, an American writer with a Jewish background, describes his childhood as follows: “The God who was everywhere and reigned over everything was not a force of goodness of love but fear” (Auster 2013, 12). Fear was heightened by the idea of one’s own helplessness before God, as Auster puts it: “God was the commander of the celestial mind police, the unseen, all-powerful one who could invade your head and listen to your thoughts” (Auster 2013, 12).

According to Sigmund Freud, religious faith is a defense by which humans protect themselves from existential horrors (Tallis 2020, 293). Modern people, in their existential crisis or not, may find the teachings of the Church and other religious institutions contradictory or old-fashioned. Faith has not disappeared, but it has somewhat changed its form. The number of Evangelical Lutheran Church members has clearly fallen in recent years (Suomen Evankelisluterilainen Kirkko). Answers and help for internal anxieties are searched from spirituality instead of church. New-spirited beliefs are becoming more common, especially among young adults. (Yle 2021.)

As for the 21st century, some of the fears experienced are real threats, but a considerably big part of people’s fears are also imaginary fears. We live in an era where information is very fast and easy to access through internet and me-

dia, and our worldview is constantly shaped by these mediums. Social media is used for communication and participating, and it can be a positive thing, but smartphones are geared towards consuming information. If we use smartphones just for consuming information, it impacts our anxiety levels. (House of Commons 2019, 12.) Modern man also suffers from new phobias that our new technology has created, for example nomophobia, which is a fear of being without one's mobile phone (Psychology Today 2014).

Today, help is more easily sought from therapy. Newer generations no longer perceive the stigma of psychotherapy as strong as it was at the turn of 20th century, when those receiving treatment were almost always labelled "crazy" or "psychotic". In contrast, in modern times, therapy is a mainstream service to a wide audience, including people with common everyday problems. (Gopaldas 2015, 265.)

2.3 Loneliness

One third of women fear loneliness more than a cancer diagnosis (Forbes 2017). Being alone is a different matter than experiencing loneliness. Loneliness increases the risk of various illnesses, depression and premature death, while people who are happy with their social life do not get sick as easily, age more slowly and sleep better (Brain Pickings 2014). According to the director of the Harvard Longitudinal Study, Robert Waldinger, loneliness kills – it is as powerful as smoking or alcoholism (Tallis 2020, 43).

Existential psychotherapists consider aloneness as one of the fundamental terrors of human (Tallis 2020, 31). It makes sense we don't want to be alone for too long. For a social being, aloneness is distressing and anxiety provoking. Being alone reminds us of existential prehistorical threats. (Tallis 2020, 41.)

We need security created by other people around us and some sort of point of reference, something to focus on, something to give us meaning in life and a sense of belonging to it. Social factors play a more important role with a sense of cohesion than geographical factors (Tallis 2020, 199). We also need the

sense of belonging to experience independence. When we don't feel like we belong anywhere, we forget our own identity (Tallis 2020, 139).

2.4 Defense mechanisms

In psychoanalytic theory, defense mechanisms are explained to be normal mental processes, often unconscious ones, that allow the mind to find compromise solutions to conflicts or anxieties. We use defences to hide emotions that may threaten our self-esteem. (Simply Psychology 2020.) Defense mechanisms play an important role in diluting negative emotions to maintain a more balanced mind (Bowins 2004, 2). A certain amount of defense is normal, but too much limits opportunities for personal growth (Tallis 2020, 96).

In essence, the purpose of defense mechanisms is to make life more enjoyable in the short term. Difficult memories and unpleasant desires can be suppressed in the unconscious to reduce anxiety and discomfort. This creates a more pleasing version of oneself, albeit erroneous and imperfect. (Tallis 2020, 96.)

Often mental growth takes place through disruption, and for that we need to face our own shortcomings and erroneous behaviours. This seems challenging to many, as our patterns of behaviour are rooted so deep and early learned. Facing our weaknesses is uncertain activity, which is why it might seem unpleasant, but it is also a fundamental threat to our sense of self (Tallis 2020, 109). Thus familiar negative patterns might appear safer, no matter how harmful they may be. Another reason for repeating ineffectual behaviours is because they have sometimes been useful to us. They have served us and made sense to us in the past. (Tallis 2020, 109.)

We also learn defensive mechanisms through our environment. An unhelpful way of thinking about oneself and the world is created through social observation. Children mimic their parents' behaviour, including unreasonable behaviour. The resulting anxiety or destruction is always associated with beliefs, therefore such uncomfortable states of mind can be treated by shaping beliefs. (Tallis 2020, 103.) Escape from the unfortunate and unfavorable patterns of behaviour

can be achieved by gaining better self-awareness, but achieving it is arduous (Tallis 2020, 73).

One example of defensive behaviour is *rationalization*, in which a person presents logical justifications for actions that were in fact morally unstable or suspicious and were formed with a focus on the person's own interests. Another example is *splitting*, where emotional conflict is resolved by simplifying the world into good and bad (people and deeds) and thus avoiding encountering and dealing with complex or worrying topics. *Passive aggressiveness* – being silent, obstructive or unwilling to cooperate – on the other hand, can hide for more violent intentions. (Tallis 2020, 96.)

Even though much of our activity is unconscious, we humans still have the opportunity to observe and practise our behaviour as if it were through the eyes of an outsider. We can evolve in our behaviour and in what we think. Anthony de Mello writes in his book *Awareness* (1990): “This is an interesting phenomenon that has never ceased to cause wonder to philosophers, mystics, scientists, psychologists, that the “I” can observe “me”” (de Mello 1990, 43).

3 FEAR AND CONTEMPORARY ART

In the field of contemporary art, fear is not always as self-evident and directly expressed as in some other fields of culture, and often not that direct horror we find from artworks from past decades. Partly because of this, the editor of Art Review, Martin Herbert, raises a question in his article “Is Contemporary Art Frightened of Fear?” (2020) whether contemporary artists process much fear in their public artworks at this moment at all. He believes it might be so, due to the fact that we have become so accustomed to it because of the current climate of fear we live in. (Art Review 2020.) Herbert writes:

Where once one might have turned to art, or culture generally, to be placed in a temporary state of affect, of heightened emotion, the latter has become the daily norm – hardly any art at all seems capable of, or willing to, engage with fear as an embodied quality, in an age and at a moment when it’s all around us. The existential era, reckoning with the horrors of the Second World War, had – the sculptural movement known as “the geometry of fear”. Go to a gallery now, when arguably we have rather more to be frightened of – and the modern version of such productive quivering mostly isn’t there. (Art Review 2020.)

Herbert is not alone with this thought; also Kelly Grovier considers in her BBC article “The most terrifying images in history?” (2020), whether descriptions of fear in contemporary art have been left behind and if contemporary art manages to “frighten us into new consciousness” (BBC 2020).

Perhaps the ways of portraying fear have changed, but it is still definitely there. Some contemporary artworks seek strength from shock value, others present threatening images more subtly, some deal with fear directly, others deal with its marginal manifestations. But it does seem that capturing and publicizing awkward themes is not an easy task for contemporary artists. According to visual artist Kari Vehosalo, we are currently living a delicate time where difficult things are hard to express – or receive (Yle 2021).

Personally, I find more subdued visual expression to be a more effective approach than direct shock, but art, however, is in the eyes of the beholder, and

what I find effective can be boring to another. There are also as many reactions to fear as there are artists. Artists might also have other goals in their work than just showing the emotional states of our time. As Marina Abramović said in her interview for the Art Newspaper: “During the Second World War, when everybody was painting the disasters of the war, Matisse was painting flowers and this was a really great response because the news is so depressing, so repetitive. It’s more a question of how to lift human spirits”. (The Art Newspaper 2020.) Next I will present some examples of how contemporary artists are using and showing different fears in their artworks.

3.1 Horrors of existence – Kari Vehosalo

Contemporary artist Kari Vehosalo (born 1982) has become known for his hyperrealistic paintings. In his solo exhibition in Sara Hildén Art Museum in the spring 2021, the paintings revolved around the themes of perceptions of reality and the meaning of an individual or a group in a society. They also dealt with the human perception of self as well as drives and emotions such as lust. When I saw these detailed, partly disturbing works, I got conflicting feelings and my mind got filled with questions. The paintings seemed to evoke both delight and horror in me. They were absolutely beautiful but at the same time menacing. Fear, or more aptly, perhaps dread, the horrors of being a human was present in them. Yet, the cause of fear was not always clear. There were no ready-made answers given to the questions raised by the works, which is what I enjoyed about them.

The painting series *Fear of Violent Death* (2009 -) contains paintings reminiscent of black-and-white photographs, in which the bourgeois environment and mysterious, sophisticatedly dressed people in various, often seemingly violent situations create a disturbed, unpleasant atmosphere. It felt like I was witnessing something I shouldn’t see. The black and white of the paintings added to the impression of the weight of the past.



PICTURE 2. Kari Vehosalo, Play, 2011, oil painting from the series The fear of violent death.

The paintings are technically stunning. They are pleasing to watch from an aesthetic point of view and the vague background atmosphere just added to my desire to explore the content further – to some extent. I liked the paintings, but I didn't want to look at them for too long. As I left the exhibition, I thought about the absurdity of living as a human being, our history, and whether we understand much of ourselves or life at all.



PICTURE 3. Kari Vehosalo, *Secret*, 2011, oil painting from the series *The fear of violent death*.

Vehosalo commented on his works in an interview with Yle (2021) as follows:

I have portrayed – how we can come true in a common reality which we constantly share with other people – who feel and want. This gives rise to its own problems, the cross-pull between the individual and the society – it is always on the stage in my works. The role of human in society, the existential difficulty of being human. (Yle 2021. Translation by the writer.)

3.2 Fear for the climate – Mustarinda and Nastja Säde Rönkkö

In contemporary art, fear sometimes manifests itself as vague figures and indirect questions, sometimes as a direct description and taking action. Many con-

temporary artists create works related to environmental destruction, biodiversity conversation, and the ecological state of the planet. Antti Majava of Mustarinda comments on the role of artists in dealing with the climate crisis in Yle's interview. He emphasizes in creating a positive narrative: "The most important thing is to create a positive narrative that our lives can be meaningful even if we consume less. And that is where the artists and cultural life play a key role" (Yle 2016).

Artists can explore the surrounding problems through action, presence and vulnerability, as in Nastja Säde Rönkkö's (born 1985) video performances *for those yet to be*, 2016 – 2018. The work is a one-person protest against climate change. It includes 27 videos where we see the artist in front of the camera with short text written on a cardboard sign. The videos are filmed in ecologically vulnerable areas of the world, places that change as a result of human activity. The amount of information about the ecological state of the world that the artwork produces is an important part of it.



PICTURE 4. Nastja Säde Rönkkö, *for those yet to be*, 2016 – 2018, video artwork, still photograph.

Through a performative approach and her own body, Rönkkö consciously participates in the artwork. *For those yet to be, 2016-2018* evokes the idea of the burden of guilt as the destroyer of the environment, but, for me, also the idea of man's existential crisis due to distancing from nature.

3.3 Fear in performance art – Marina Abramović

Performance art can be a very effective tool in meeting your own fears. The most famous performance artist Marina Abramović (born 1946) is known for her performances that challenge a person's physical and mental abilities. Abramović has faced fears and used them as a driving force in her works since the beginning of her career, for example in dealing with her traumatic and violent childhood through physicality. In her works she also explores the relationship between the artist and the audience.

In 1974, Abramović created perhaps her most famous work, *Rhythm 0*, a social experiment in which she gave the audience the freedom to do what they wanted to herself. In this six hour performance, she gave the audience 72 objects, others to possibly give pleasure, such as a feather, perfume and grapes, and others that could potentially cause pain, such as scissors, a whip, a pistol and a bullet. The experience began humanely, but as the performance progressed, the audience began to unleash their sadistic desires to Abramović; a man sliced her with a razor to her neck, after which he tasted Abramović's blood from the wound. The gun was also pointed to her head by someone and put to her own hand. Abramović was also touched to intimate places. (Delphian Gallery 2019.) When the performance ended, Abramović changed from a passive object into a human being and started moving towards the audience. The people run away, unwilling to face their own horrendous behaviour and actions. (Lone Wolf Magazine 2016.)



PICTURE 5. Marina Abramović, Rhythm 0, 1974, performance artwork.

In this artwork fear was real, not created. As Benjamin Murphy writes: “Performance art is similar in many ways to theatre, but as Abramović has shown there are some subtle but definite differences. Horror within the theatre is inauthentic, but at least in some cases, within performance art it is real”. (Delphian Gallery 2019.)

Abramović believes the dialogue between the artist and the audience can be through suffering, because it is a more powerful transformative force in human life than steady happiness. In an interview from 2017, she said:

People change when they have terminal diseases, when there are accidents, when they lose someone close to them. So when you exhibit difficult situations in front of the public – there is a realisation they are forced to comfort. I create these concepts, but my energy is drawn from the public. Humanity started with the fear of death and pain. In every art, you can see suffering in some form. (Khaleej Times 2017.)

About facing her own fears she said in the same interview:

When I get an idea, if I am not afraid of it, I will not do it – I am terribly afraid till the moment I go into the performance. But once I am in front of the public, I don’t think about it anymore. I block my fears

because I think whatever is going to happen will happen. (Khaleej Times 2017.)

3.4 Processing threats – Markus Copper

The Finnish sculptor Markus Copper (1968-2019) was an artist who created large-scale and space consuming sculptures made of metal, wood or other materials. Many of Copper's sculptures have an aggressive nature, and some of his works could also be concretely dangerous due to the possibility of explosion. (Helsingin Sanomat 2020.) Copper was also interested in manmade disasters; for example, he created an artwork of the sinking of the MS Estonia, and the sinking of the Kursk nuclear submarine.



PICTURE 6. Markus Copper, Kursk, 2004, installation.

At times, Copper's violent works have been perceived as threatening and distressing. However, Copper's intention was to arouse people's feelings of insecurity and not to harm them. (Liukkonen 2019, 41.) In 2015 Copper commented on his artistic work on an interview for Susanna Liukkonen's master's thesis *Dealing with scary topics in visual arts education – Kursk and workshops at Rovaniemi Art Museum* (2019): "I am an organism that moves in this world, and of course you are working with your own traumas, and the traumas of the whole world at the same moment, when you move somewhere – it's not *just* about

some trauma – it's about being on the move" (Liukkonen 2019, 40-41. Translation by the writer).

Copper reflected on the processing of threat images in his art as follows:

Closer to death, you suddenly begin to respect life much more – you begin to respect much more that you are whole and healthy. The fact that you are neither wounded nor tortured nor dead makes life and existence much more valuable – by showing such threats, I am throwing viewers in the opposite direction, which is meant for you to live and be happy in life. I show violence so that people don't want violence – anymore. So I am a humanist, even though not everybody immediately understands it. (Liukkonen 2019, 41. Translation by the writer.)

4 “WE GOT THIS” – THE FINAL EXHIBITION INSTALLATION

As an artistic part of my bachelor’s thesis I created an interactive art installation under the name “We Got This”. It was presented in the Blind Spot Degree Show of the fine art study path students of Tampere University of Applied Sciences during 4.4.-28.4.2019 in Gallery Himmelblau. The installation included an interactive video work and two photography paintings arranged in glass boxes. The boxes were transparent and illuminated with LED strips on the back of the boxes.

The work dealt with fear and more specifically with the fear of loneliness and the defense mechanisms we have developed to deal with this fear. My aim was to encourage the public to think about how many of our actions and behaviours are rooted in fear.



PICTURE 7. Elina Pasanen: We got this, 2019, video installation, an installation view at Gallery Himmelblau’s Puuvillasali.

4.1 Background of the artwork

During my Fine Art studies at Tamk, I spun several different ideas in my head for the final exhibition art work, but little by little, one after another, they were eliminated. In the end, the work ended up dealing with fear. It was a way to structure my own thoughts around the subject; naturally, this work was also dealing partly with my own fears. Since I couldn't get my thoughts in order for myself at that time, I tried to structure them through artistic work.

Primarily, the work got its starting point through observation of the people around me. I saw people in my immediate vicinity attempting to avoid inconvenient realities and fears, which resulted in unpleasant situations. With the artwork, I wanted to try to arouse recognition of the fears which might dictate our lives sometimes. My goal was to show fairly mundane situations where defensive behaviour occurs and perhaps make the recipient understand it.

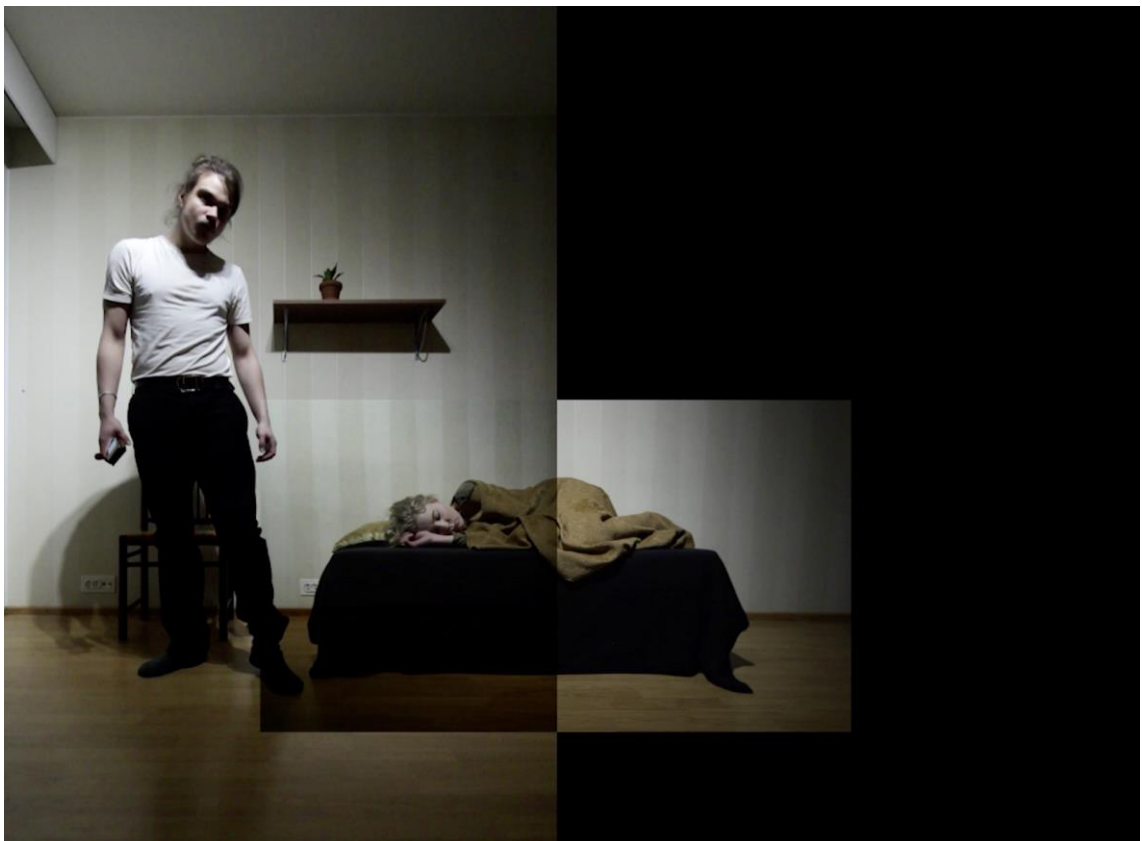
4.2 The artwork and medium choices

I wanted to include moving image in the artwork from the beginning. The idea of making the artwork interactive and engaging the audience as part of it was also something I had wanted to do for many years, but in this specific project, by taking the audience as an active part of the artwork, I wanted to emphasize their ability to influence their own actions. I was also fascinated by the idea of the experiencer's influence on the essence of the work. I found a way to combine interactivity with the concept of fear by describing the defensive behaviour of humans.

In the artwork, two human figures are in simple, light-toned room. A woman is lying in a bed and a man sitting next to her in a chair browsing his phone. If the viewer went too close to the characters, the male character reacted by getting up and moving threateningly straight towards the viewer. Next to the video projection were the glass boxes, one on each side. In the boxes, one of the two

characters was painted with black and gold ink, while the other character was presented realistically through a transparent photograph.

I wanted to emphasize the behaviour of the characters by visual choices, using a rectangular shape and placing them in boxes to depict individuals intertwining with their own realities, their own defensive behaviour. The other characters defense mechanism was to stay still, to curl up to herself, to not encounter unpleasant reality. The other characters defense mechanism was a need to control another person's life and a manner to get immersed in mundane hobbies over the phone.



PICTURE 8. Elina Pasanen: We got this, 2019, video installation, detail of the video.

4.3 Process

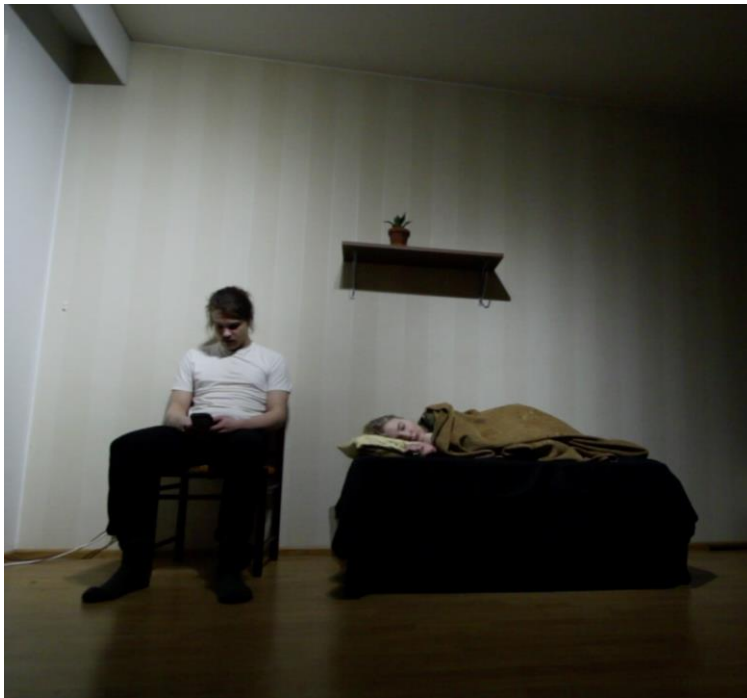
My working process began with shooting the video material. The video features Roni Kuulasvuo and Veera Nelimarkka. Working with them was easy and flow-

ing, although the nature of the shooting process was partly experimental. I guided them as the shooting progressed and it worked well. The fact that we all knew each other in advance most likely had an impact on the easy progress of the working process.

I filmed the characters both together and separately as their own shots. It was a good decision, as in the editing phase I ended up using separate clips that I connected together, instead of my original idea of using only one shot of both of the characters together. In the editing phase I tested many possible visual choices but the rectangular shapes were most fitting.



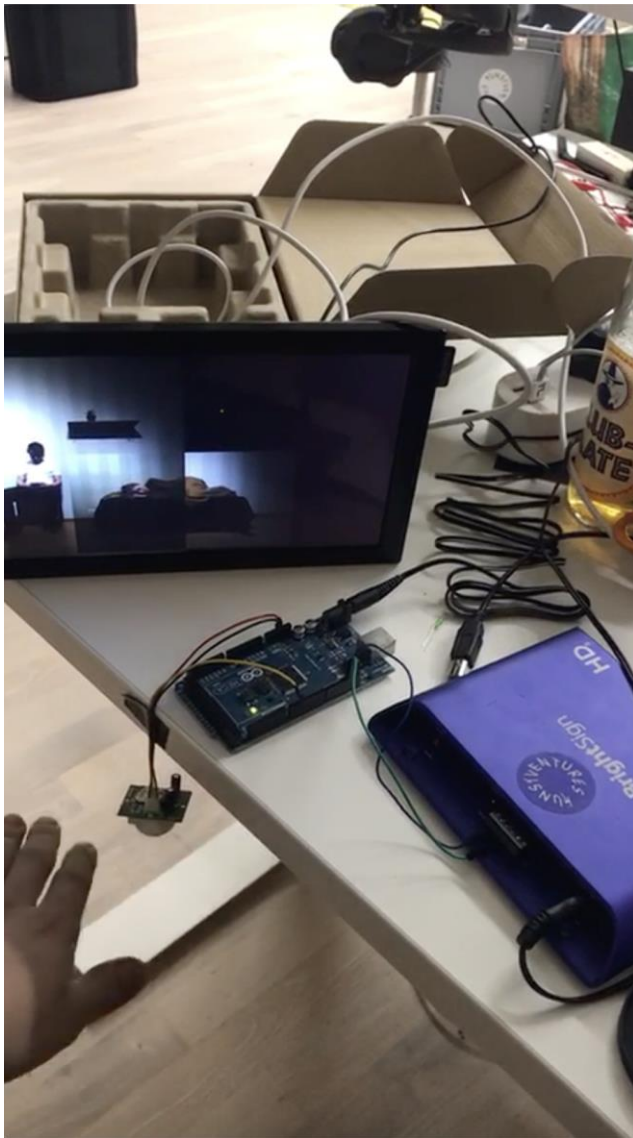
PICTURE 9. Elina Pasanen: We got this, 2019, still photograph of the video by Elina Pasanen.



PICTURE 10. Elina Pasanen: We got this, 2019, still photograph of the video by Elina Pasanen.

After I had decided on the visual layout in the video, I had to figure out how to get it interactive in the exhibition space. I hadn't used motion sensors in my artworks before, so I needed help. After hunting for a week for a skilled person I could ask for help, I ended up finding one in my own class, Tatu Heinämäki. Tatu helped me to create the final result for the exhibition space, using a motion sensor.

Using a motion sensor with video works may sound like a simple task in theory, but to get the required result, several details need to be paid attention to. As the work progressed, I noticed many things that I need to improve in future, such as the exact length of the video clips and the functionality of the final video loop. These must be taken into account already at the shooting stage. Even though I knew that the video clip had to be just the right length and the characters' movements, postures, and actions had to be considered very carefully, achieving the desired end result was more challenging than I had expected. To keep the scene in the video from cluttering and the loop working well overall, the extremely small details meant a lot.



PICTURE 11. Testing the motion sensor. A screenshot from Tatu Heinämäki's WhatsApp message to Elina Pasanen, 2019.

The functionality of the motion sensor in the exhibition space also had to be carefully considered. The sensor required a certain distance from the audience to function, and I had to think about how to get the audience close enough to the work for the character in the video to react. However, this issue was resolved this time by the fact that the artworks of the other artists in the exhibition space were quite close to mine and forced the viewers close enough to the motion sensor.

The glass boxes were not part of my original plan, which was to add two mixed media pieces, photography paintings, next to the video. But as I was creating the photography paintings, I discovered that on their own they felt somehow

detached from the whole. After having a discussion with Sari Tervaniemi, one of the art teachers in Tampere University of Applied Sciences, I decided to create the images in glass boxes. The boxes were 52 cents high, 64 cents long and 45 cents deep. The boxes fit the theme of my artwork a lot better than my previous idea and they were also more visually pleasing with the end result.



PICTURE 12. Process photo. Photograph by Elina Pasanen, 2019.

I printed the photographs on a transparent film and added some centimeters to have enough image area to be cropped out if necessary. After testing a few prints to see which paint would work best for my intentions I decided to use black and gold ink mixed. I also tested it with resin but it made the end result too mobile and liquid looking. I measured the figures and drew their shaped areas into a mold on the clingfilm where I poured the mixture to dry. The end result

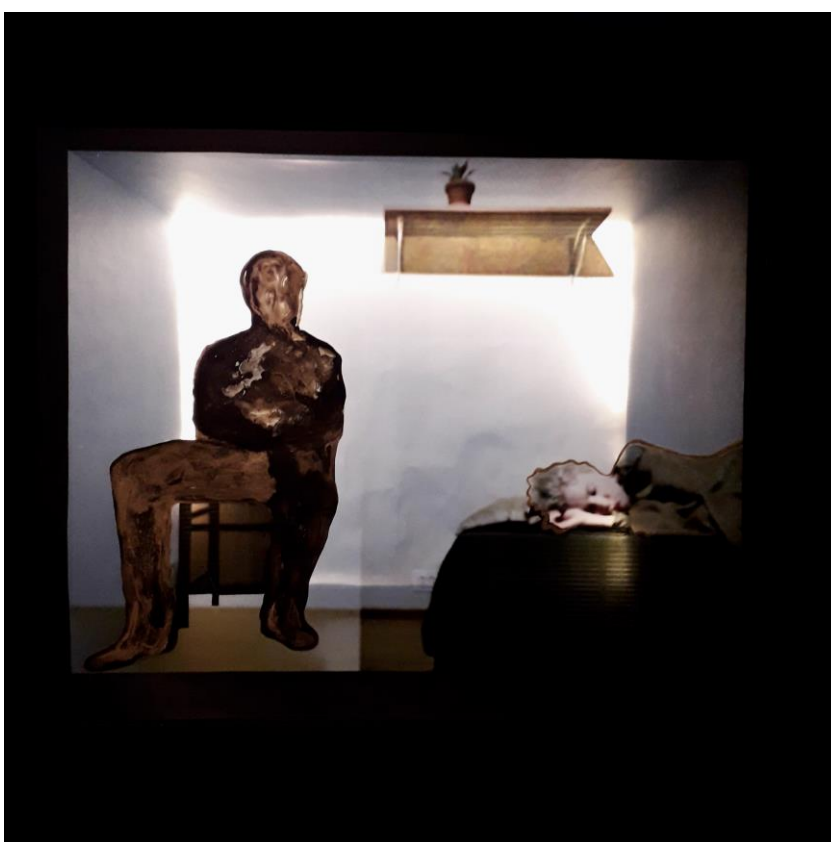
was therefore one image of a female figure and one image of a male figure in a semi abstract form. The idea of these characters was to emphasize how they wrapped on to their own worlds of thought and to emphasize the mental distance between the two. Although the characters in the picture were close to each other, in reality they did not face each other, as both had their own defenses as a barrier to communication.



PICTURE 13. Testing the inks. Photograph by Elina Pasanen, 2019.



PICTURE 14. The print before the painted character was added. Photograph by Elina Pasanen, 2019.



PICTURE 15. A detail of the painted version of the mixed media in the glass box. Photograph by Elina Pasanen, 2019.

I covered the edges of the glassboxes with black cardboard and black tape and built copper chips on the back of the box, on which I placed the LED lights. The back of the box and the lights were then covered with a black cloth. The lights themselves were not visible, only their glow.



PICTURE 16. Process photo of building the boxes. Photograph by Elina Pasanen, 2019.



PICTURE 17. Process photo of building the glass box, a view from behind the box when the lights were built. Photograph by Elina Pasanen, 2019.

The name “We Got This” had two meanings for me. First, it could be seen as an expression of the real situation, expressing; this is what we have. A reality that may not be clearly visible to the participants, where negative states are experienced and we are ourselves the obstacles in our way. Second, it could be seen as an incentive, as the saying “we got this” itself is. A willingness to take action and a possibility to move forward.

5 CONCLUSIONS

There are several works in the field of contemporary art that deal with fear and art can be used effectively as a tool for dealing with it. Artists use a wide variety of means and medias to deal with fear. In this written part of the thesis I chose artists and works that felt interesting to me and with which I felt a sense of identification.

The process of making this artwork into reality was long and started already years ago somewhere in the back of my head. The actual, concrete creating process was fast in that sense. I learned a lot concretely as well as mentally during the process. The artistic work brought me comfort and clarity to the themes related to fear. I feel that the frustration with the subject diminished when I got to make it into something concrete. I also believe that after this, it will be easier for me to let go of unnecessary thoughts while I work.

In the future, I will know better what things need to be addressed in order to make the interactivity work even better. It was interesting to study the relationship between the artwork and the audience and the dialogue between them. Experimenting with a motion sensor in works of art was new to me and I want to use it in the future to generate ideas as well.

According to the feedback I received, I think I somewhat succeeded in my goals of evoking thoughts about human behaviour, although the interpretations of the artwork naturally varied. The characters in the work reflected different things to different people, but most of the interpretations I heard included observation of emotional behaviour. Clearly the interactivity seemed also interesting to many.

The amount of information I found for the written part of the thesis crystalized many things about the common factors we all share when it comes to fear. The more productive ways we learn to deal with and understand our own fears, the better we will understand each other. Through art, we can create a path to this.

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