



Representation of obsessions and compulsions in art

Tick-tock on the clock // but the party don't stop video
installation as a case study

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to gather information on artworks that explore themes of obsessions, compulsions and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Alongside this written part of the thesis, a two-channel video installation titled Tick-tock on the clock // but the party don't stop was created. The study was conducted in order to form a theoretical basis for the video installation, and to place the installation in the context of contemporary art.

The data for this thesis were collected from a variety of sources, including articles, books and video interviews about relevant topics such as obsessive-compulsive disorder. Artworks from the 1990s to 2010s by artists Yayoi Kusama, Bruce Nauman and Léonie Hampton were analysed.

It was found that the artworks had several connecting elements, especially a focus on repetition of forms and actions, ritualistic behaviour and physicality. Furthermore, it was found that obsessive-compulsive disorder is a mental disorder not commonly explored in the field of contemporary art or talked about publicly. This would suggest that there is a need for more depictions of the disorder, in order to reduce misunderstandings and shame surrounding it. Art on the topic can lead to a better understanding of the disorder and help people suffering from it feel correctly represented.

Key words: contemporary art, video installation, obsessive-compulsive disorder, ocd

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ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

OCD obsessive-compulsive disorder

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the written part of my thesis is to define how contemporary artists explore obsessions, compulsions and OCD in their artworks. I focus on analysing the artists' working processes and physical and mental ways in which their works can affect the viewer. My aim is to create a theoretical basis for my two-channel video installation, which is made together with this research. I intend to discover joining elements in the artworks that I can apply to my own artistic process. The working process is documented, and a report of the final artwork is presented in this thesis.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder is not widely represented in the context of contemporary art and rarely comes up in public discourse. As mental health issues are today more talked about than ever, obsessive-compulsive disorder still has a lot of misconceptions and shame surrounding it. People suffering from OCD are often one-sidedly portrayed as being obsessed with cleanliness and order. In popular culture, the most known representation of a person with OCD is most likely Adrian Monk from the television series *Monk*. The series aired from 2002 to 2009 in the US. Adrian Monk is a detective that suffers from a fear of contamination. (IMDb n.d.) The disorder is used as a source of humour in the series, and as a way to lead the detective into funny incidents. In everyday language, OCD is used to define enjoyable actions, far from the reality of the disorder, where the person in hand suffers and the symptoms may lead to panic attacks or even depression.

Art exploring the disorder can lead to portrayals that do not seek to commercialise or use the illness as a peculiar character trait. It can better understanding of the disorder and help people suffering from it feel correctly represented. Artists have a possibility to explore extremities of the human condition and approach them from a perspective of creativity. In the context of art, disorders that might otherwise be seen as off-putting and strange seem to find a new meaning. Artists can translate illnesses to a form where they become something other than just a medical condition.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder affects people suffering from it comprehensively, both mentally and physically (IOCDF 2019). Therefore, I find it essential to analyse artworks that deal with both aspects. I analyse artworks by artists Yayoi Kusama, Bruce Nauman and Léonie Hampton. Yayoi Kusama has stated that all her art is a product of her obsessive-compulsive disorder. I analyse Kusama's painting series Infinity Nets, that she has worked on since the 1960s. Infinity Nets are paintings, often made in a large scale, that Kusama started painting based on repetitive hallucinations she was seeing. (Kusama 2011.) Bruce Nauman works with themes of human mind, body and discomfort. He has an array of work that portray compulsive-like behaviour and incite feelings of anxiety. I focus on Nauman's video work *Raw Material Washing Hands* from 1996, that shows the artist washing his hands for 55 minutes. (National Galleries of Scotland n.d.) Léonie Hampton focuses on documentary photography. In a series titled *In the Shadow of Things*, photographed between 2007 and 2010, she captures the life of her own family. Hampton's mother, Bron, suffers from obsessive-compulsive disorder and lives in a house full of objects she has accumulated. (Granta 2012.)

My objective is to find connecting factors in the artworks that, in my opinion, successfully portray the nature of OCD. I am looking to define the elements that evoke a sense of anxiety and the means the artists use to affect the viewer's body and mind. I am also interested in the role of artist's own body when making a piece of work, especially the labour and endurance it takes to produce works with repetition in a large amount. In order to form a theoretical basis for my analysis, I am defining obsessions and compulsions from the viewpoint of the medical condition, OCD. I find it important to discuss the medical condition itself, since it is the starting point of my own artwork. I focus on artists that are essential to my own artistic process and have affected the way I reflect on my work.

2 OCD

OCD, which stands for obsessive-compulsive disorder, is a mental disorder that is characterized by either obsessions or compulsions, or both. Obsessions are unwanted and reoccurring thoughts that cause anxiety. Compulsions are behaviours that a person with OCD does repeatedly in response to obsessions. (International OCD Foundation 2019.)

For a lot of people, it is common to have some kinds of obsessions and compulsions from time to time. However, having an unpleasant thought and checking your door lock a few times is not considered obsessive-compulsive disorder. OCD is a time-consuming disorder that disturbs day-to-day functioning and complicates relationships. (International OCD Foundation 2019; The National Institute of Mental Health 2019.)

2.1 Obsessions

Obsessions are distressing, uncontrollable thoughts, mental images or impulses that occur repeatedly (The National Institute of Mental Health 2019). According to the International OCD Foundation (2019), some of the most common obsessions include

- fear of contamination
- fear of causing harm to others or being responsible for something bad happening
- fear of losing control, for example acting violently on an impulse
- concerns related to perfectionism
- unwanted sexual thoughts
- religious obsessions.

A person with OCD finds these thoughts unwanted and unsettling, and uses different ways in an attempt to reject, ignore or neutralize them (International OCD Foundation 2019). For example, a person who is afraid of being responsible for a fire might check their oven knobs over and over.

2.2 Compulsions

Compulsions are repetitive behaviours or rituals that a person with OCD engages in to relieve anxiety caused by obsessions, to get rid of intrusive thoughts or to prevent something terrible from happening (NIMH 2019). According to the International OCD Foundation (2019), some of the most common compulsions include

- washing and cleaning
- checking
- repeating activities, such as touching an object
- arranging things meticulously
- mental compulsions, such as counting.

If you suffer from OCD, you would rather not perform these compulsions, but engage in them to relieve anxiety. A person with OCD often realises the illogical nature of their doing, which can add to the pain. (IOCDF 2019.)

2.3 Occurrence

Occasional mild compulsions and obsessions are common but about two to three percent of adults suffer from the actual disorder. OCD usually starts in teenage years or young adulthood but can also start in childhood. For most people, the symptoms vary, occurring to a different degree for decades. For every sixth person suffering, the symptoms worsen by time and may lead to disablement. Different kinds of stressful situations and life changes often relate to the start or the worsening of the symptoms. (IOCDF 2019.)

2.4 OCD in everyday language

The word obsession is often used in colloquial language to describe something a person has a keen interest in. You could be very keen on a television series, but it most likely has nothing to do with a mental disorder. Often, people describe themselves as being OCD when they like arranging objects symmetrically or

cleaning. Usually these kinds of habits do not cause extreme anxiety or get in the way of daily life, but rather feel pleasant. Even if not having your pencils in a perfectly straight row annoys you, you can most likely move on with your life. A person suffering from OCD might fear that if the pencils are not in a straight row, something disastrous will happen. They can get stuck in a cycle of organizing them for hours.

3 YAYOI KUSAMA

Yayoi Kusama has been diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder and she calls herself an obsessional artist (Medium 2016). In her autobiography, she describes her art as an expression of her mental illness. Kusama says that as a young girl, she began painting and drawing to cope with the repetitive hallucinations and obsessional images she was seeing. She tried to get control over the images that were haunting her by recreating them visually. Kusama states that creating art is both the symptom of her illness and the only way she can relieve it. (Kusama 2011.)

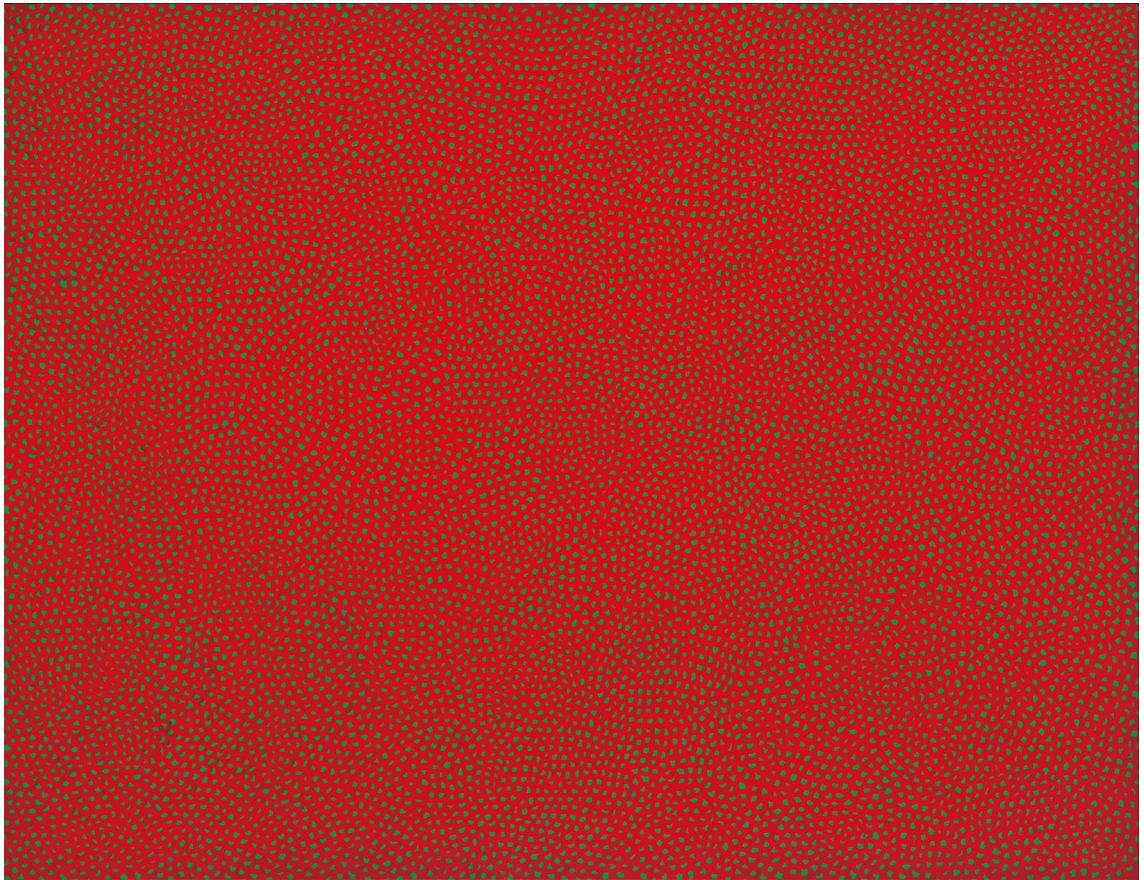
3.1 Infinity Nets

Though as a child, Kusama might have just painted the images as they came to her, as an artist, she has successfully turned her obsessions into an artistic process. Her work is more so a translation of the illness and the repetitive imagery works as an inspiration that she can turn into a piece of art (Medium 2016). To me, the most appealing part of Kusama's work is the idea of self-obliteration, erasing the self and its existence, becoming one with the universe and part of infinity. Obliteration is achieved through repetition of form and theme.

Kusama's Infinity Net paintings are some of her most iconic works, and the net is a motif that has been present in her work since the 1960s (Phillips 2016). The net pattern is inspired by her hallucinations and one representation of her idea of self-obliteration (Medium 2016). Kusama's paintings discard the limits of the canvas. As she explains in her autobiography (2011), while painting her first Infinity Nets, she suffered from serious episodes of neurosis and would paint the canvas with nets and then continue all over her studio and finally her own body.

The bodily experience is present in Kusama's works in various ways. In the Infinity Net paintings, the significance of physical labour is highlighted. The paintings are often large in scale and painting them requires concentration and endurance. Each new gesture is like the previous one. Painting a repetitive pattern demands

self-control and constant awareness. It is very different from the romanticised image of a painter who paints in their atelier whenever inspiration strikes.



PICTURE 1. Yayoi Kusama, Infinity Nets, 2009 (Artsy 2019)

The seemingly endless repetition of a shape makes the paintings mesmerizing to look at, but there is also a threatening tone to them. The feeling of obsessiveness in the Infinity Net paintings is caused by the repetition of the same pattern over and over, in a large amount and scale. Also, the concentration and time required to make such paintings lead to an image of an obsessed painter. There is both a sense of safety and unease in repetition. Knowing that the catalyst for the nets is Kusama's hallucinations, it is easy to see the patterns turn from a lattice into a depiction of a mental illness. The nets spread like a persistent infection in a human body, like intrusive thoughts in a mind of someone with OCD. Staring at the pattern makes me feel like I am being transported to another reality, a world of infinite nets that exists in Kusama's mind. Through repetition, Kusama manages to blur the limits of the physical presence.

This sensation is enhanced by the large scale of the paintings, and in the painting presented in PICTURE 1, the use of complementary colours that seem to be vibrating when placed next to each other. Due to the large scale, the viewer is forced to relate to the paintings with their own body. The paintings relate to the space where they are presented and to anyone who enters the space.

3.2 Summary

It is difficult to disregard Kusama's background when analysing her works, although some critics might think an artist's mental state is to be overlooked. But I find it important to note that Kusama has aesthetic control over her obsessions and that she can channel them into an immersive experience. Her obsessions guide the themes and methods of her artworks, but do not solely define her as an artist. Kusama's views of the universe, the self and infinity are at the core of her work. She uses repetition in an attempt to self-obliterate and to cope with her mental disorder. She brings her illness to the context of culture and arts and translates it into large-scale works that alter the viewers experience of reality. While Kusama tries to obliterate herself, the viewer gets absorbed into her universe.

4 BRUCE NAUMAN

While Kusama's artworks help the viewer forget the limits of their physicality, Bruce Nauman's do the opposite. Nauman explores psychology and physicality in a way that evokes unpleasant feelings. Many of Nauman's video pieces portray the human body, often the artist's own, in an unusual situation. The body is shown performing repetitive, compulsive-like actions, that last for long periods of time and stretch the viewer's patience.

4.1 Raw Material Washing Hands

One of Nauman's video installations from 1996, called *Raw Material Washing Hands*, shows the artist washing his hands for 55 minutes. The installation consists of two monitors stacked on top of each other, both showing the act of hand-washing, with an echoing sound of running water. (National Galleries of Scotland n.d.) The mundane act itself does not raise a feeling of obsessiveness. It is the duration of the video and the intensity with which Nauman performs the washing. Excessive washing and cleaning compulsions are common for a person suffering from a fear of contamination (IOCDF 2019).



PICTURE 2. Bruce Nauman, *Raw Material Washing Hands*, 1996 (ARS, NY and DACS, London 2019)

However, the viewer is not given a context as to why this extreme handwashing is taking place. It creates a threatening tone to the video. Has something bad happened? Why would anyone wash their hands for 55 minutes straight, unless they feel it is necessary? The close-up video does not leave room to breathe or to observe anything in the surroundings. Because of the restricted view, it is inevitable to stare at Nauman's hands. It makes the viewer very aware of the performer's physicality as well as their own.

Performing an action like handwashing repeatedly makes it lose its original purpose. There is a certain point after which your hands will not get any cleaner. The repetition turns into a sign of something abnormal, like obsessive-compulsive disorder. Watching a simple gesture be repeated can get boring quite quick. Since the sound stays the same, there is no stimulation for the audience from that side either. It puts the viewer's patience to the test and evokes an anxious feeling. Even if I stop watching, Nauman will continue washing his hands.



PICTURE 3. Bruce Nauman, Raw Material Washing Hands, 1996 (ARS, NY and DACS, London 2019)

On the other hand, there is a hypnotic aspect to the video. Watching the same gesture being performed over and over can feel engaging, like a religious or a meditative practice. The stacking of two monitors creates a circle. My gaze moves up and down between the screens. It feels like watching a strange nature documentary. I keep waiting for something else to happen, but everything remains the same.

4.2 Summary

Nauman's work challenges the viewer in a different way than Kusama's. *Raw Material Washing Hands* does not have a pleasing element to it, whereas I find Kusama's *Infinity Nets* aesthetically attractive. Though, they both have similarities that successfully convey a feeling of obsessiveness. Both works have repetition and physicality at their core. The same gesture is repeated over and over, just in a different format. The visual outcome is straightforward, with nothing unnecessary. Also, the meaning of labour is evident. Kusama paints her paintings for hours straight (Kusama 2011), Nauman washes his hands for 55 minutes. It takes an obsession or endurance and self-control to make art that is repetitive in such a big scale. The simple mundane nature of the actions makes you question the purpose. Why is the same thing repeated over and over? It both enhances and diminishes the meaning of the gesture. As a child I would repeat a word until it lost its meaning and did not sound like a real word anymore. It can be a cathartic experience, or a very distressing one. But certainly, the fact that Nauman is performing an action common for someone suffering from a certain type of OCD, helps to interpret his video as obsessive-compulsive. In Kusama's case, her personal background plays a big role as to why the paintings can be seen as portraying an obsession.

5 LÉONIE HAMPTON

Léonie Hampton's approach to obsessive-compulsive disorder is rather different than that of Nauman and Kusama. Léonie Hampton focuses on documentary photography and often portrays the life of people other than herself in a subtle manner. Unlike her usual practice, in a series titled *In the Shadow of Things*, photographed between 2007 and 2010, Hampton captures the life of her own family. Hampton's mother, Bron, suffers from obsessive-compulsive disorder and as a result her home is flooded with things. Hampton photographs her family as they attempt to sort through the items her mother has gathered. (Granta 2012.)

5.1 In the Shadow of Things

In the Shadow of Things was published as a book in 2011. In the book, Hampton's photographs are presented alongside pictures from family albums, transcripts of conversations between family members and Bron's descriptions of how she got into the situation she is in. (The Guardian 2011; Granta 2012.) Hampton's presentation of the disorder is comprehensive. She has not translated OCD into something else, but it is solely documented in versatile ways.



PICTURE 4. Léonie Hampton, Bron in the green room, 2008

Of course, Hampton has control over the viewer's perspective. The framed view I get through her photographs is not the same I would get if I were on the spot. Hampton is part of the family she is documenting, which affects the photographs in many ways. The whole series has a mysterious feel to it, despite being documentary. The personal connection she has with her subject makes the series feel authentic, but OCD is a mental illness with shame at its core. It can be difficult to show her mother's life to an unknown audience truthfully.



PICTURE 5. Léonie Hampton, *These are not our clothes #2*, 2010

However, I do not find it necessary to get a direct documentation. The photographs are not flashy or seeking attention. In my opinion, Hampton's mindful approach fits very well into documenting a mental illness. Hampton has a way of portraying her subject in a way that does not feel calculated. As a viewer, I do not find a hidden agenda or an intent to guide my thoughts on a certain path. Hampton does not emphasize certain aspects of the disorder. She skilfully stays in the background, capturing moments of happiness, despair, and family life without disturbing her environment. She presents the many ways the disorder affects relationships, daily life and living conditions. Hampton could have chosen to show only the loads of things Bron has gathered and leave people out of her photographs. But her decision to portray her mother's illness through her family makes the series more humane and approachable, thus making OCD more relatable as well.

The essence of obsessions and compulsions is conveyed through reality in *In the Shadow of Things*. Hampton's photographs show how her mother's OCD and the objects she has accumulated invade the physical and mental space of everyone in their house. The sensation of being in a cramped space is relatable to most people. Having a messy, object-filled living space is seen as a sign of failure. Imperfection is unwanted. The viewer can relate to the struggle through their own living space. Taking care of a lot of things is demanding. I could not live in an environment filled with things and seeing the images makes me feel distressed. Excessive objects make you adjust your behaviour and movement. Everyone in the family is preoccupied by things. But since Hampton shows the people directly affected by the situation, the space turns from a cluttered house into a home with an OCD-sufferer. Hampton's family is unknown to me, but a delicate human condition is beautifully portrayed through their experience.



PICTURE 6. Léonie Hampton, *The Yellow Room*, 2007

5.2 Summary

Léonie Hampton portrays both the mental and physical strain obsessive-compulsive disorder puts on a person, their relationships and environment. Her mother's obsessiveness is presented through the family's attempt to sort things out. Since the nature of Bron's OCD is very physical, it makes the viewer relate to the dis-

order from a perspective of space and home. Including Hampton's family members in the photographs creates personal depth and relatability to the series. Compared to Kusama's and Nauman's work, Hampton work is documentary. A documentary approach can be more touching for a wider audience and make OCD easier to understand. Though Hampton has other people in the focus of her work, her personal life is reflected in the photographs. A reflection of the self is evident in Kusama's Infinity Nets, as well as in Raw Material Washing Hands, where Nauman himself is giving the performance. Moreover, the strong effect of repetition is also present in Hampton's work: things on top of things on top of more things. However, I think the most essential feature in Hampton's work is best described by herself:

We spent so many years hiding the problem and that did nothing for us. To open the door into that personal, protected world is therapeutic. It's helping us change, let go and find a direction we want to go in. It is good that something creative exists out of an experience that at times is destructive and negative but at other times is full of tenderness. (Time 2011.)

6 VIDEO INSTALLATION TICK-TOCK ON THE CLOCK // BUT THE PARTY DON'T STOP

6.1 Background and themes

I have explored anxiety, obsessions, compulsions and repetition in many of my past artworks and the same themes keep me intrigued. In my thesis artwork, I wanted specifically to focus on obsessive-compulsive disorder. It is not widely represented in the context of contemporary art, whereas in popular culture and social media, the disorder is often inaccurately or one-sidedly portrayed. Furthermore, OCD has a lot of shame and misconceptions surrounding it. The behaviour of a person with OCD might seem funny or exaggerated to someone watching from the outside. Therefore, as an artist, I find it important to reflect on the disorder through my work.

Certainly, a question of whether it is ethical for an artist to portray a mental disorder in a way they see fit, arises. Since I deal with OCD myself, I consider my work to be ethical. I do not state that my work portrays the feelings of every OCD sufferer, I merely explore my own experiences. Though my work is a representation of a mental disorder, my aim was not to make it educational. Much like Kusama, I wanted to transform obsessions and compulsions into an artistic process. I wanted to convey a sense of being preoccupied by something distressing and find elements that would portray being stuck in a cycle of intrusive thoughts and compulsive actions.

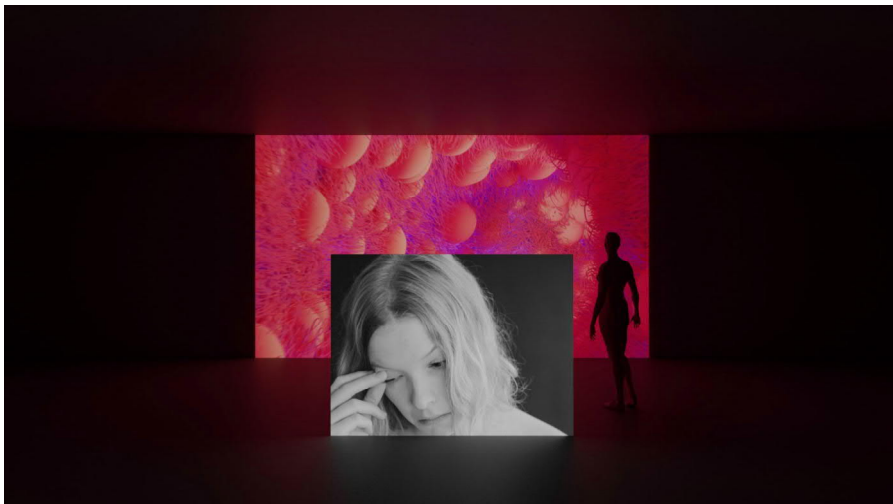
My research started with the intent of defining the factors that convey feelings of distress in the artworks of Kusama, Nauman and Hampton. Since repetition is a key element in OCD, the obsessive nature of the works can cause them to be seen as meditative, especially in Kusama's case. I found this juxtaposition very interesting and it became an essential feature in my own work as well. Repeating actions and sounds can create a sense of safety as well as great pain, which is also a characteristic of OCD.

I decided early on to make a two-channel video installation, representing both the physical and mental side of OCD. Since I found the simple approach successful

in the works of the artists I analysed, I adopted a similar way to create my videos. I made a video performance to represent compulsions and a 3D video to portray obsessions.

6.2 Two channels

Whenever there is information to perceive from more than one source, the viewer's attention on either decreases (Alleydog.com n.d.). Therefore, I gave a lot thought to the relationship between the two channels in my artwork. I wanted the viewer to be able to watch both videos at once and each of them separately. I decided to project the 3D video on a wall and the performance video on a MDF-board standing a few meters apart from the wall. The 3D video is projected in a bigger scale than the performance video. I wanted it to look like the performance video, representing compulsions, has the 3D video, representing obsessions, constantly in the background, as if being in the back of one's mind and ruling one's actions.



PICTURE 7. Installation view of Tick-tock on the clock // but the party don't stop with scale human, 2020

I planned my installation to be presented in a large space, where a small projection might lose impact. Therefore, I decided to make the 3D projection over 4 meters wide and 2,5 meters tall, and the performance projection 2 meters wide and 1,5 meters tall. Since the videos are presented in a flat format like Kusama's paintings, a big projection makes it easier to relate to and experience the work

with one's own body. I wanted the viewer to feel as if they could be in the 3D video and see the performance as a significant element in front of it, one that could not be disregarded. Furthermore, both projections start from floor level and my work stands on the same ground as the viewer to add to the bodily experience.

6.3 Performance

In the performance video, I continually try to get an imaginary trash out of my eye. I ended up choosing the action through experiments. I choreographed different movements and recorded myself performing them. The act of trying to get something out of my eye looked the most authentic. It is frustrating, relatable, and easy to perform in an untheatrical way. I decided to make the performance long, a little over 18 minutes, so that the viewer would have time to observe my actions and follow the slight progression in my expressions as the video continues.



PICTURE 8. Close-up still from the performance video in *Tick-tock on the clock // but the party don't stop*, 2020

However, I questioned whether performing the same action over and over would be engaging for the viewer, or artistically interesting enough. In the late 1960s, when Bruce Nauman first started to make video performances, he stated that since he is an artist, anything he does in his studio can be considered art (MoMA n.d.). I found his reasoning reassuring. My performance does not provide the viewer with constant new information, but the monotony enhances both the soothing effect and the obsessive-compulsiveness of the work, which I find essential.

As stated, OCD is life-controlling. It stops you from doing the things you love and hurts your relationships. (IOCDF 2019.) Having something in my eye makes me repeatedly change my behaviour and blocks my vision. Touching my eye is an action that has the potential to make the viewer uncomfortable, though a lot of it happens in a hidden way. I turn my gaze away from the viewer, as if ashamed, but also look directly at the person looking at me, sharing a piece of myself. Marina Abramović says that it is important to share one's own suffering, so that it can become collective (Vice 2016). Though Abramović suffers in her performances and I use suffering as a driving force behind my work, the idea resonates with me. I hope that my work can provide a sense of representation for people dealing with similar issues and something to reflect on for others.



PICTURE 9. Still from the performance video in *Tick-tock on the clock // but the party don't stop*, 2020

I also gave a lot of thought to the way my performance is framed. In Nauman's *Raw Material Washing Hands*, only his hands and part of a sink are shown. The viewer is not given a context or an identity. Unless the description of the work said that the hands are his, I would not recognise them. I found it important to stay recognisable in my work, but I decided not to show my surroundings or other features in my appearance. The way my video is framed focuses the viewer's attention on my gesture. If the video was an extreme close-up of my eye, it could make the viewer more uncomfortable but restrict my range of motion. My performance is more organic, and I have freedom to look elsewhere when I have my

whole face showing. It also leaves room for the viewer to question whether I will change my action. As Tony Oursler says in an interview with ARoS art museum, projecting a human face puts the viewer in a position of choice. They can feel empathy or choose to look away. Either way, the viewer must relate to another human in some way. They must take a stand. (ARoS 2013.) Showing a face creates a different kind of relationship between the work and the audience than showing something inhumane or unrecognisable would.



PICTURE 10. Installation view of Tick-tock on the clock // but the party don't stop, 2020

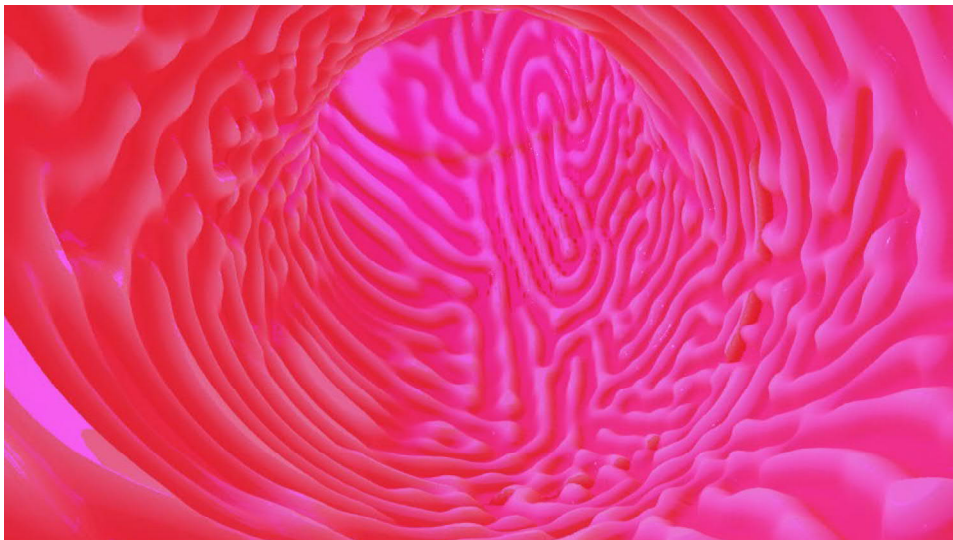
Additionally, I wanted my performance video to be free from the meaning of different colours. The focus should be on the action, not the colour of my hair or shirt. Leaving the colours out took away a distraction from the performance. Also, even though my work explores something originally negative, I wanted to make it aesthetically pleasing. The performance looked more engaging and appealing in black and white than in colour.

6.4 3D video

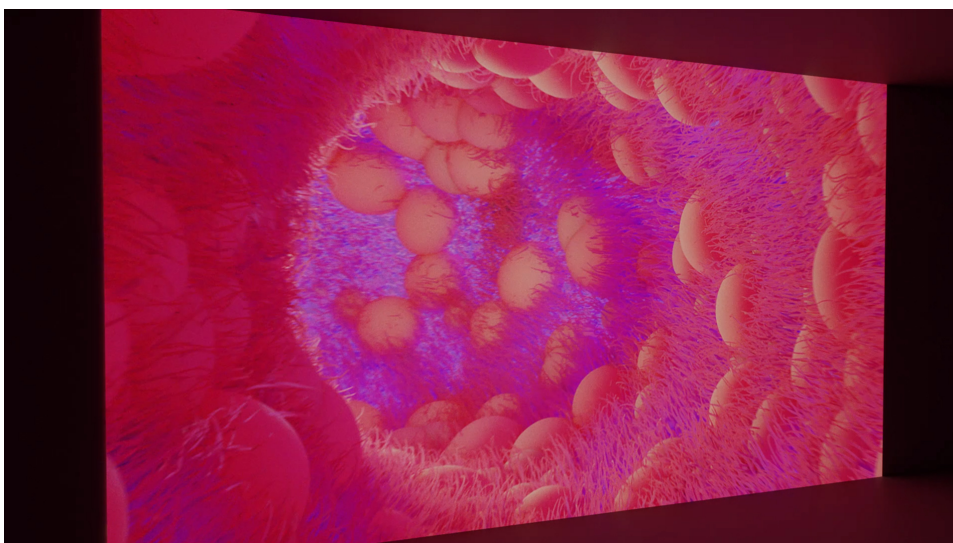
The process of making the 3D video started with an idea of a journey through intestines. Though the video is a depiction of something mental, I wanted to create a physical experience. My aim was to make the viewer feel as if they were inside a never-ending tunnel with intrusive thoughts reaching towards them. I made various 3D tunnels with different characteristics and then chose the one

that best fit together with my performance. I ended up mixing two experiments together: animated spheres and hair. They resemble eyeballs and -lashes and highlight the action in the performance.

Originally, all my video experiments were fast-paced and overwhelming. I figured since the 3D video loops for over than 18 minutes, it might make the viewer feel nauseous. Therefore, I made the video quite slow. The viewer can keep waiting for something new to happen, for something more than the same tunnel to be presented. Staring at a slowly moving video can also feel meditative and more immersive than something that changes quickly.



PICTURE 11. Still from an experimental 3D video, 2020



PICTURE 12. Installation view of the 3D video in Tick-tock on the clock // but the party don't stop, 2020

Unlike in the performance, I wanted the meaning of colour to be present in the 3D video. Pink and purple are colours that portray physicality to me. In my mind, they are colours that I connect to the insides of a human. Placed behind the performance video, they create a pleasing contrast with the black and white. Moreover, the colour pink is typically associated with something of a cheerful and sweet essence. I wanted to use it to portray an opposite.

6.5 Sound and name

Counting and repeating words and phrases are all ways in which OCD can manifest. For example, counting can be used to make sure something is done a certain, “safe”, amount of times. (IOCDF 2019.) I wanted to use a same kind of formula for the sound in my work: a monotonous, repeated sound that would work as addition to the other continuous elements. I ended up using a sound of a ticking clock. I felt like repeating a word might add unnecessary meaning to the work. I did not want to distract the viewer and have them start seeing the work through the word I was repeating. The ticking clock accurately portrays an anxious wait to me, unlike repeating a word. It creates an anticipatory atmosphere, where the viewer can wait for something to go off, for tension to be released or for a change to happen.

Regarding the name of my video installation, I found the lyrics from a Kesha song that I used to listen to as a teenager to be fitting. The song is not a lyrical masterpiece in the least, but I have always liked to name my works ironically. If you know the song, it might be hard to take the name seriously. I wondered whether choosing that name would make it seem like I am ridiculing my own work and downplaying its theme. Tick-tock on the clock// but the party don't stop can sound funny at first, but as time goes by and the clock keeps ticking, I am still stuck performing my compulsions. The party keeps going and OCD is having the time of its life.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The aim of my research was to define how Kusama, Nauman and Hampton explore OCD in their artworks. I focused on analysing the artists' working processes and defining different physical and mental ways in which their works can affect the viewer. I was especially interested in the elements that incite feelings of discomfort. Though all three artists utilize different mediums, the works I analysed have several connecting elements, such as repetition of forms and actions, portraying ritualistic behaviour and physicality.

While my starting point was to look for factors that evoke anxiety, all the artworks proved to be multidimensional with meditative and empathy-evoking features as well. Hampton photographed her family directly affected by her mother's OCD, which makes her work relatable and approachable. Seeing real people and their living conditions evoke a different kind of interest in the disorder, a one that is empathetic and reflective. In Kusama's and Nauman's works, the same elements that convey sensations of obsessive-compulsiveness also cause a relaxing and mesmerizing effect: constant handwashing, a seemingly endless pattern, long duration, large scale and focusing on a few simple things in their expression.

The physicality in all three artists' works is different. Hampton's photographs show a home filled with clothes and miscellaneous objects, and the people trying to sort them out. Cramped and confined spaces can easily make anyone both physically and mentally uncomfortable. In Kusama's case, the labour it takes to produce such a painting, the vibrating colours and large scale all play a role in making the viewer relate to her work on a physical level. In Nauman's performance the tight framing, duration of the video and the energy with which the hands are washed make the viewer aware of both the artist's physicality and their own.

All the artworks give a religious-like impression, due to the intense nature of OCD. Washing hands for 55 minutes, gathering a house full of objects, and painting nets in a large scale seem exaggerated to a by-stander. Would anyone commit to those actions unless they find it necessary? Compulsions are like religious

rituals performed in a certain manner. Moreover, there is a mysterious quality to the artworks. An atmosphere of not blatantly revealing everything, which fits the sensitive nature of the theme well.

Though I am open about my own artistic process and the inspiration behind my work, I wanted my installation to leave room for the viewer's own reflections. My video works are often action-packed but the artworks I analysed encouraged me to adapt a minimalistic approach. I made multiple 3D and performance experiments in the beginning of the process. Using only a few of them ended up fitting my purpose better. Also recognising the meditative influence of repetition and simplicity helped me refine both my videos. The repetition in my installation works like repetition in OCD. It can both relieve anxiety and increase it. The possibility of more than only one emotional response can add the viewer's interest. I found Kusama's and Hampton's works aesthetically appealing and it helped me accept the fact that my work can be beautiful as well, though it is exploring a negative topic.

According to the feedback I got, my video installation elicited the reactions I hoped it would. It was also recognised that not many contemporary artists explore OCD, so I feel like my research and artwork are a welcomed addition to the field. The private can become public through an artistic process. Exploring taboo topics that are not universally represented can be especially fruitful in an art context. Artists can provide new perspectives on unattractive issues, better understanding and reduce shame surrounding them. In the future I wish to continue my exploration into feelings of distress and comfort. I am interested in the combination of the two and want to develop my minimalistic form of expression.

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