



Hannah Mevis

Since 2021, I have mainly been dealing with the topic of exhaustion. I call it exhaustion after the German term [Erschöpfung](#):

Schöpfung:

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

Erschöpfung:

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

My research starts from the question:

What must sculptures feel like holding the same position for a lifetime?

History of the question:

During my Erasmus stay in Barcelona in 2015, I visited a garden near Montjuic. While looking at the sculpture (see image on the left), the question of the exhaustion state of sculptures came to my mind for the first time. I wondered about the motivation of the artists and/or those who commissioned the works. While following the beauty-standards of the time, no one seemed to approach the depiction of the body with an empathetic sense of what it must feel like to hold a position. From my point of view, besides empathy, a critical point of view on the generation of body norms - caused by emphasizing e.g. symmetrical corporal forms, or incomplete representation of social diversity (e.g. people with disabilities, people of color, transgender- or intersexual people) - is missing in commonly taught (art-) history. These thoughts came up on and off over the years. Finally, in 2019, when I visited Annie Gentils gallery in

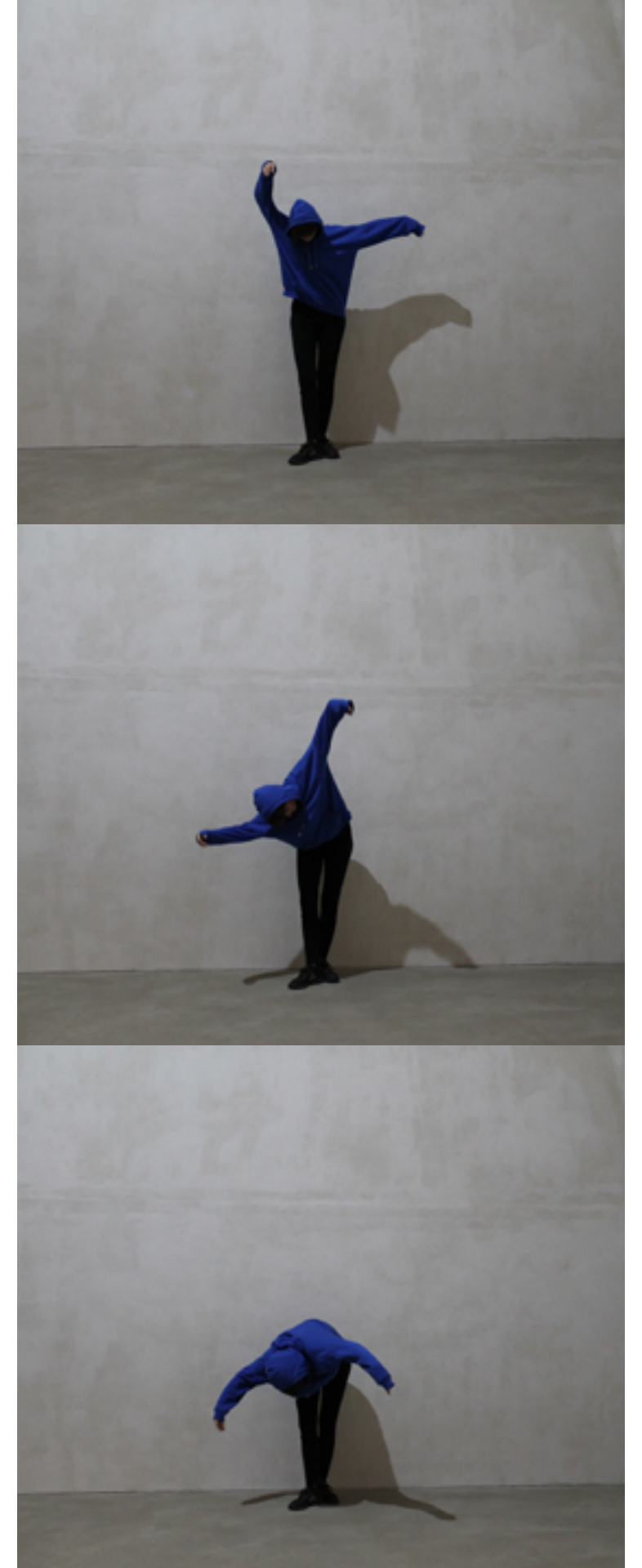


Antwerp, I observed an embossing in one of the chimneys. The work showed a woman returning from the fields. The way she is depicted contradicts her activity. This scenery gave me another thought: I began to wonder about the stereotypes of gender roles that people are constantly exposed to, even before social media began to irritate body image.

Visual research: I look to art history for positions of sculpted and painted bodies. Using both historical accounts as well as my intuition, I choose postures to hold until I reach my bodily limits and eventually have to collapse. With the help of artistic means, the physical sensation is translated back into a visual language. This results in sculptures, photographs, performances and video material that focus on the visualization of embodiment.

Theoretical research: I want to understand the emergence of our Western world and the associated views of its members. By looking at the Paleolithic period; the ideas of ancient Greek philosophers; the process of civilization described by Norbert Elias; and contemporary feminist movements, I aim to understand a bigger picture in which historical events and the impact on members within our society are intertwined.

In my opinion, the perception of corporality is highly influenced by the separation of body and mind. This is, from how I observed it, related to ancient Greece, about 400 years before Christ's birth, when philosophers such as Plato or Aristotle were searching for the "true" knowledge, which they believed was not to be found in sensory perceptions, but could only be found in incorporeal realities. To this day, the treatment of the human body in the Western World is mainly superficial and viewed from the outside and comes from a male centered gaze/research. This is why I - as a female artist - have chosen somatic and empirical tools to trigger the creation of works around the perceiving body.



holding Nut's position

2021

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

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



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

Excerpt of: *Upper Paleolithic Venus Figurines and Interpretations of Prehistoric Gender Representations*
by Kaylea R. Vandewettering

bOdy

2022

avatar, web-app diary, 3D printer

bOdy

Artistic investigation of embodiment and sensory corporeality from a female perspective.

The work bOdy is composed of:

- An avatar whose appearance is based on a body scan of the artist.
- A web app which makes it possible to manipulate the avatar's body (volume, size, distortion of individual body parts or entire bodies). The web app is used to visually record the artist's daily sensations in a diary-like form.
- Sculptures translated from the web app back into analog space. This is done by using a 3D printer, which can be understood as a contemporary Michelangelo.

[bOdy](#) was also compiled into a publication containing the visual and written diary entries.



default

save import export

archive average

04 November 2022
having a cold

02 November 2022
Getting a cold

01 November 2022
beginning of the month
and no one payed their
bills

31 October 2022
intermediate state
between rubber snake
and cervicalgia

30 October 2022
the blues

29 October 2022
inhibited

28 October 2022
trying to calm arrive
and down

27 October 2022

intermediate state between rubber snake and cervicalgia

morphs

head

shoulderL

shoulderR

backL

backR

neck

upperarmR

upperarmL

lowerarmR

lowerarmL

handR

handL

breastR

breastL

bones

- root
- crotch_right
- hip_right
- knee_right
- feet_right
- spine_01
- spine_02
- shoulder_01_left
- shoulder_02_left
- elbow_left
- wrist_left
- shoulder_02_right

Landscapes of a Body

2021 - ongoing

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

Growing collection of different body parts imprints, molded in concrete.

The cuboid shapes are covered in a skin of nylon as finishing.



What Bodies Are Made For

2021

selection of video stills, video of 7:25 minutes

<https://vimeo.com/685647290>

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

Exhibition view: Annie Gentils Gallery, Antwerp, 2022.





Body vs. Volume vs. Speed

2021

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

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

filled to brimming

2022

selection of video stills

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



Have you ever asked yourself when stereotypes were born?

Who is disregarded in the process?

When did our social behaviour infiltrate our body language?

Can we live up to what we have learned subconsciously?

Who embodies which standards?



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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

In the Face of Exhaustion

2022

participatory lecture-performance

The lecture performance proceeds as follows:

- Introduction to my current research on the topic of exhaustion visualized by images and underlined by references to (art) history.
- Collective performance moment in which the audience joins me in holding positions until exhaustion.
- Exchange about the experiences of the participants. Ideally, everyone can have their say at this moment, which opens up a diverse picture and reveals differences and commonalities (age, perception of exhaustion, body perception).

The focus of the performance is to create a space for exchange. As an artist, I am particularly interested in the perspective of the participants and the potential of the moment to change again and again depending on the individuals involved. Thus, each time the lecture-performance takes place, it becomes a unique moment from which I can learn and stories are being exchanged.

The images show the documentation of a participatory moment, in summer 2022, which was joined by fellow artists. I had already reached my own point of exhaustion, so I was able to capture Anais Chabeur (film-maker) using her camera as a performance tool. While she was pushing her physical limits with her tool, she was filming Sarah Smolders (painter and sculptor) who was in turn using a stone as a performance tool. The stone came from one of Sarah's works, which she held onto until reaching her point of exhaustion.



Maleficia

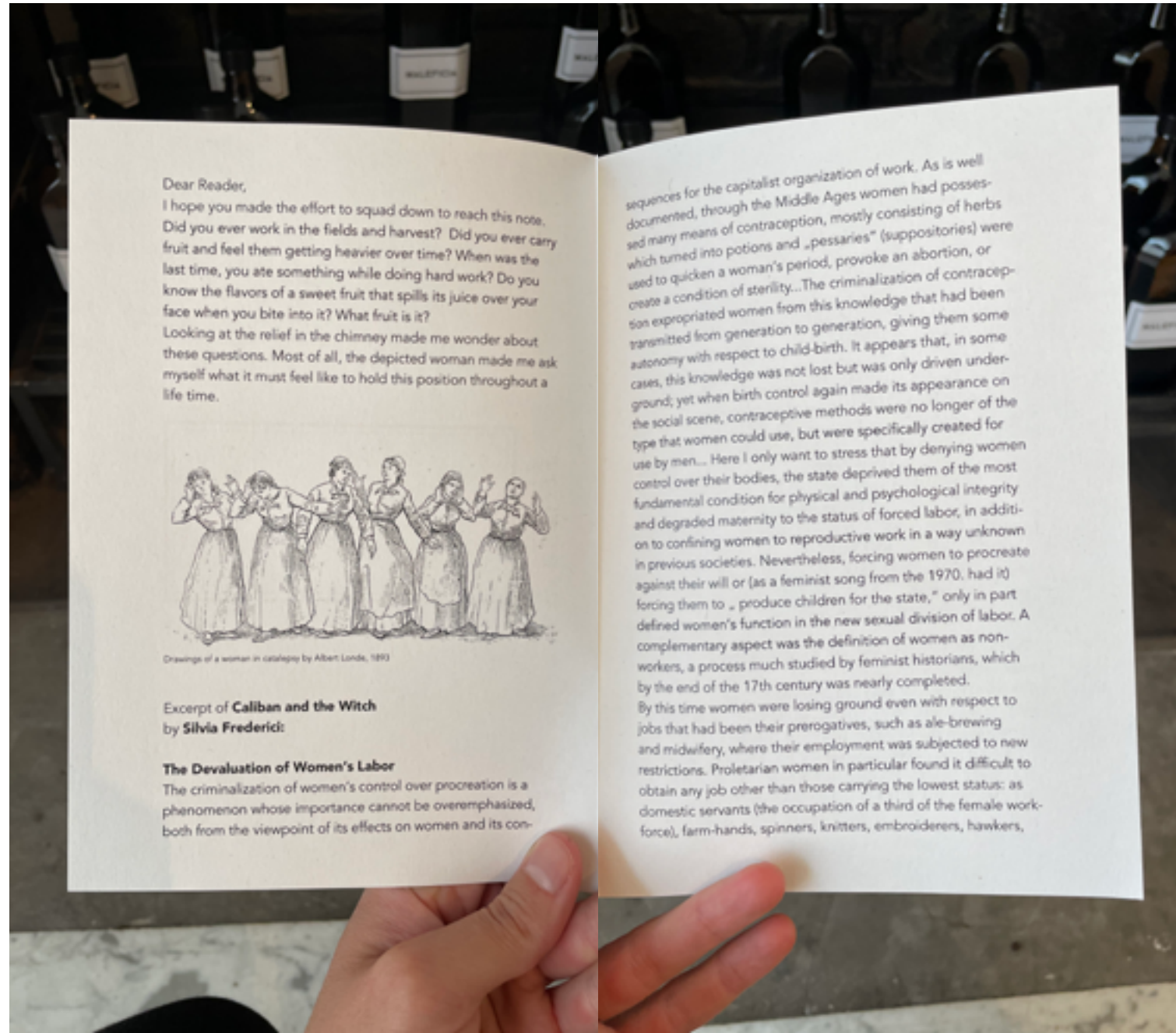
2020-22

Maleficia is a site-specific installation inspired by a relief in the fireplace of an exhibition space in Antwerp. The relief shows a woman who is just returning from working in the fields. Her clothes, however, look nothing like hard work, nor does her posture: she seems to be balancing a basket filled with the harvest on her head with ease, while she courageously bites into a fruit.

The installation is composed of the following elements:

- An iron shelf built for the fireplace.
- An edition of schnapps distilled from canned peaches by artist Frédéric Ehlers for the occasion of the exhibition *Pale Burnt Lake* at Annie Gentils Gallery.
- A handout that communicates context and concept and is placed in such a way that visitors have to bend down to pick it up.
- An „exhausted“ plum cast in bronze resting on the mantelpiece.

Visitors of the exhibition were invited to drink the schnapps in uncomfortable positions, on various occasions.



behind the still lifes

2022

video-performance resulting in time-lapse-images

Further procession of performance documentation.
Content: holding fruit until exhaustion to
emphasize with the marginalized importance of
domestic work and the act of feeding the family,
carried out by women.

The title draws attention to those, who take care of
the every-day, enabling others to appear on the
surface. Position has been hold for 30 min.





Erschöpfung

2021

video-performance: resulting in digital
collage as flag print 355 x 208 cm

Translation of the physical experience of
exhaustion into the visual.