

Creating Meanings on Ice by Photos and Textiles

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Abstract

Northern residents experience ice as an element that shapes their everyday surroundings. This experience is physical, multisensory and mundane. It discreetly defines the aesthetic experience of everyday environment and the landscape of the soul. The aesthetic understanding of environment has both individual elements and culturally shared meanings. Different interpretations can be compared with children's accordion drawings, the art of *exquisite corpse*. In *exquisite corpse* the drawer or designer sees only a narrow slice of the whole image. Next designer is invited to the play and to continue the work based on his or her associations and interpretations. Thus different images and materials soon overlap each other in a continuous design process.

This article examines how a photographer's ice themed photographs and videos are created and how the initial works change when photographs are captured on jacquard woven fabric in a textile design process. This process resembles an *exquisite corpse* drawing and this paper provides information on how two different artists, the photographer and the textile artists, developed a working method for their common work. The study proposes a working method for multidisciplinary working, especially for multi-artistic workgroups.

The findings of this article are based on a series of free themed discussions between the photographer Eija Timonen and the textile artists Heidi Pietarinen. The aim of these discussions was to understand each other's perceptions and representations of ice. The concept of exquisite corpse (*Exquisite corpse 2015*) served as a metaphor for the construction of the discussions. It enabled on one hand ecstatic and eager discussions on the concrete doing of representations of ice, and on the other hand analytical reflections on the role of the ice in making art. Timonen and Pietarinen did not even try to control the direction of the discussion. When a certain theme began to reoccur, it was decided that the conversation had reached a saturation point (Hirsjärvi & Remes & Sajavaara 2004, 181 - 182). Recurring themes consisted of cultural understanding, spatiality, multisensory, colour, structures and materiality. With these themes the artists were able to understand each other and share interpretations. They also understood that the themes were like the connection points in the exquisite corpse illustration. Next, the article opens the debate on the underlying works, and the common themes that structured the discussion.

Keywords: ice, *exquisite corpse*, texture, material, multisensory,

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The Debate on the Underlying Works

Eija Timonen has photographed the abstract structures and forms of the ice for several years, mostly in the eastern lake district of Finland. The different forms, structures and phases of the ice or icy waters play a major role in Eija Timonen's works. In photos one can see the phase changes of water from the ice into melting water, from the standstill to movement. Pictures are taken mainly by a macro lens. At the studio images are treated lightly, but the colours seen in photos may be confirmed. The images reflect on the ice interpreted experiences. Timonen has built the images in videos and large scale photo collages or cut-outs consisting of hundreds of printed photos, each one scissored very detailed. The front view of the cut-outs looks like a multicoloured, vibrant tapestry. The rear view on the contrary reminds of a peaceful yet enormous lace structure. The third appearance of the cut-outs are the shadows casted on the wall (see Figure 8). While the imagery itself is entirely abstract, its shapes and patterns refer to and are based on natural and familiar phenomena, and are because of this associative (see www.lightoficenet). The scale of the phenomena is difficult to define: What is small and what is big? It is up to the viewer to decide, whether it is question about visions of outer space or micro cosmos in a tiny piece of the ice. Soundscapes for Timonen's videos have been composed by Vesa Tuisku.

At the very first sight Pietarinen was inspired by tactile qualities of Timonen's photographs. The colours of the bottom of the lake are neutral and deep dark but they work very well as a background for the colours of the ice which are nothing but one-colour, flat surfaces or strictly limited. Pietarinen find it interesting to conceive both tacit knowledge (like textures, weights and materiality) and three-dimensional woven structures in her design thinking while watching two-dimensional photographs. The photographs of the ice emphasis on texture rather than pattern and are like entrances to the narrative character of the ice. Pietarinen considers Timonen's ice themed photos through the weaver's eye and weaves colourfull jacquard fabrics. (see Figure 10)

Pietarinen is also curious about the historical creative potential contained in the jacquard technique invented in the 19th century by Joseph-Marie Jacquard (Ziek & Schlein 2006.). The technique inspires, because yarns are woven into unlimited designs, multicolour effects so that it brings a great versatility to the weaving process. The jacquard weaving challenge the opportunities in writing, weaving and mediating stories - design can tell a story.

Next, we present themes that structured our discussion. These themes represent us metaphorically the drawing points in accordion drawing, in exquisite corpse.

The Ice as a Cultural Understanding

Many northern inhabitants have the experience of the ice as a natural element that shape the habitat and living conditions. The ice covers every year marshes, lakes and rivers. Experiences have cultural and communal significance in human interaction, in art and in children's play activities. In Finnish language there are many names for the ice, such as the pack ice, clear ice, stick ice, hair ice, snow ice. The ice is connected to many parables and riddles, too. They are cultivated in everyday speech and in poetry as well as in literature. (Timonen 2014, 187.)

The ice is often associated with death. This appears to be, among other things, in the Finnish visual arts (Juho Rissanen's *Father's death* (1902) (see Hautala-Hirvioja 2003, 12;), lyric poetry (Lasse Nummi's *Demon Calm* (*Hiidentyven*) (19984), drama (Timo Mukka's *The Earth is a Sinful Song* (1964), Ulla-Lena Lundberg's *Ice* (2012), as well as in industrial arts (Tapio Wirkkala's *Ultima Thule* -serie). A link between the ice and death has a wider meaning at least in Western culture. Dante described Hell's lowest level as icy prison. Science fiction and explorers' travel literature has a number of such descriptions where the ice and the death are combined, like in Harry Martinson's *Aniara* (1956), Stanislaw Lem's *Solaris* (1973), Arthur C. Clarck's *Space Adventure 2001* (1968). Arctic Circle researchers Richard E. Byrd (1888-1957) and Fridtjof Nansen (1861-1930) linked the polar ice areas to death, solitude and timelessness. (Yi-Fu Tuan 1993, 148-154). In this sense the ice has been the core material to the visions of cosmological dystopia.

The ice and cold are inextricably linked. When a person dies, the body will grow cold and heat escapes. The deceased is also often kept frozen during the period of the death and funeral (Raittila 2014, 111, Siikala 2013). Aristotle in his *Metorologica* book claimed that the cold is not an independent feature, but the lack of heat (Raittila 2014, 111). Perhaps we accompany this analogy on icy lakes, too. The sun shines in the pale slightly above the horizon. A moment ago the free surging water has lost its heat and closed the flow of water under the icy sheet. The union of free and in bondage, hot and cold creates a white veil on the surface of the lake, while providing new ways of perception of the environment.

Elsa Montell is a famous Finnish textile designer. In her raanu designs (the word denotes a woollen bed cover) a viewer may find the spell of Lapland, raanu's colourful world and the winter landscape opens as an icy and arctic horizon. Montell was fascinated by the severity of the landscape: there is nothing superfluous. *In the Night on the fell* (1963) -textile the freezing water appears as a narrow line in the northern landscape. She had emphasis on texture rather than pattern. The ice-cold colours and materiality of soft wool warm up and create a slowly woven moment such as Montell's story about carpet washing with her sister during the winter time. She loved age-long tradition of washing her carpets on the shore in an icy water. (Tenkama 1998)

The changes of various surfaces can be suddenly seen in our everyday environment. For example, the frozen textiles designed and made by interior and textile design students at the Faculty of Art and Design at the University of Lapland. Students created public art in public spaces during the Arctic Design Week in Rovaniemi. The modified surfaces were frozen with water and frost so that colours of textiles became brighter and voluptuous. The frozen textiles outlook changed also according with seasons and weather conditions. The weather of the installation day was 30 degree below zero with the polar light. Later that changed into the warmth of the late winter sun. The icy surface of frozen textiles are seen and sensed cold, but the haptic surface is downright palpable (see Figure 2). Touch sense allows experienced natural ice as cold, dry and crack split sharp. The spring ice remain cold, too, but is soft and its firmness compared in the winter ice is weak. The spring ice is watery and puddy just before melting.

Culturally learned aesthetic and metaphorical collection of pictures of the ice is written in our experience and in soul. On the ice we accompany these icy pictures and stories, whose roots can extend far into history. Our childhood and adult experiences of playing on the ice winter scene (Ice Palace, skating rinks, cross-country skiing on the ice) guide ice observation and its interpretation too. The ice lives in our body and cultural experiences regardless of whether we live in a city or country (Timonen 2014, 189).

Spatiality

In our discussions spatiality rose as a regular basis. It had many different forms, including two- and three-dimensional rotation that was the most important. Walking on the icy surface of the lake is being like in three-dimensional mode. Icy lake opens freely to the horizon and the gaze slides without any impediment in the landscape. The feeling of spatiality is strong. The ice appears in three dimensions: depth, width and length. But the captured images seen on a computer or printed copy are two-dimensional. Textile artist, in turn, has the challenge how to imagine these two-dimensional images into three-dimensional textiles.

Pietarinen started by developing a colour, construction and texture palettes by using Photoshop to compose images and TC-1 loom for weaving. Her goal was to translate Timonen's two dimensional *If Kiss... (2014)* -photograph (see Picture 6) into three dimensional woven fabric. The final weaving is going to be intricately tied to original photograph, because she use a photograph as a direct reference point to weave from, taking note of colour, balance and proportions, then recreate these in woven fabric. Pietarinen may work with colours, layers, filters, and all sorts of enhancements along the way to bring photograph to fruition, but the last step is the flattening and conversion of the design file to a single two dimensional layer of only black and white pixels. Woven textures are drawn together from different two- and three-dimensional sources, with a central *If Kiss... -*photograph as a starting point. (See Schlein & Ziek 2006, 25, 47; Shelby 2011, 11-23.)

A Finnish designer Eero Aarnio has a vision of how to approach or look at a space and its forms (Sykkö, 2008, 7, 55). Looking at the ice photos and woven structures, materials, colours and lights can be compared with looking through one room to another. The white ice and woven surfaces are closest while the dark groundwater surfaces are more far from the viewer. At its best the woven surface become delicately translucent when mixing the different coloured yarns and materials. This gives a water colour effect and a feeling of moving from one space to other. Image of the ice is like a multilayered woven fabric. Textures and surfaces are not only seen, but interaction between text, image, sound, smell, taste and function. The process can be described as a multi-sensory design process (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Examples of the three dimensional textile surfaces based on the two dimensional photograph. (Pietarinen 2014)

Also, the cut-outs based on two-dimensional photographs are three-dimensional. They organize in the place according their mode of the front and rear and their shadows. This is the way how two- and three-dimensional spatiality alternated every moment in observation the ice and in the interpretations based on that. (Figure 2)

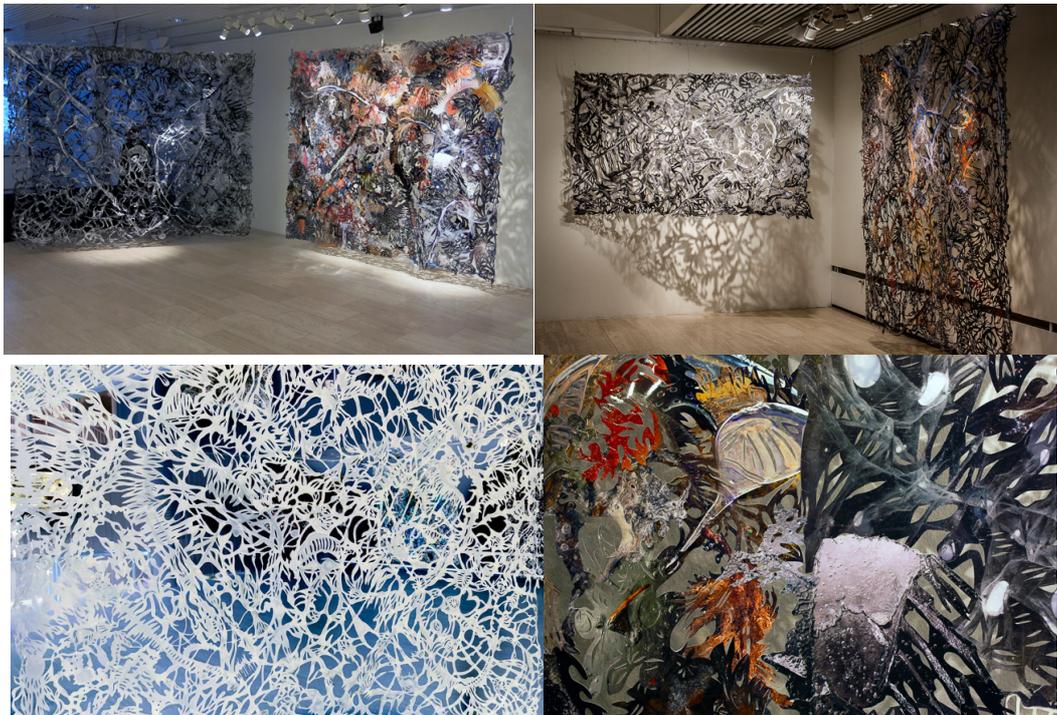


Figure 2 Examples of a three dimensional cut-outs: the fronts, rear, shadows and detail, too (Eija Timonen *Light of the ice*, Espoo 2013; see. www.lightofice.net).

The changes of spatiality had a number of other manifestations, too, like indoor and outdoor space rotation, time scale changes. When a photographer use a macro lence suddenly close appearance objects lose touch and tiny, microscopic cracks on the ice grow highways. At the same time, the observation of the place turns into the obsevation of the ice as material and light reflections in it. (see. Timonen 2014, 191-194).

The Finnish photographer Pertti Kekarainen (2007, 37-38) see with reference to the concept artist Robert Morris (1968) that the place of observation is a fragmentary, haphazard and multi-stage. Perception of the space is not only based on the status of properties, such as width, length, height, material and light, but also on the smell, the atmosphere and their own past experiences with.

Movement of Multisensory

As well as the experience of spatiality is diverse, also the sensation is interlaced, overlapping and changing all the time. For example, by using the sense of touch the the ice is perceived cold, hard and sharp crack split. The spring ice remains to be cold, too, but soft and it's firmness compared to the winter ice is weak. The spring ice is watery and pudgy just before melting.

The viewer does not necessarily see textiles as three-dimensional surfaces, but rather two-dimensional. But the opportunity to touch textile, sense its thickness, temperature, hardness or softness change the experience into three-dimensional experience. In the same time the viewer may return to the memories, stories and sensations of being on the ice. Thus the textile can in its three-dimensional materiality represent the cultural, ice-related imagery. This experience is strengthened if the textile is connected to the ice, by title or some other choice attached in the ice.

The conversation of multisensory revealed that the sensation of the ice is intelaced and changing all the time. Even the sense of touch is varying from the cold ice in nature to the soft, warm paper or dyed yarns. The unsmelling cold winter turns into the smell of chemicals of yarns and paper. At the end these sensations may carry memories far from our history and cause our memories, which combine these sensations into unexpected feelings and experiences of synthetic.

The Colours of Ice and Flavor of the Lingonberry

The colours were the fourth theme that raised regularly in our discussions. The ice in the refrigerator's freezer is white or transparent, depending on the degree of the crystallinity of the ice. Also the ice in wild nature is associated with white because the icy lake is mostly covered with snow or the mid-winter's crystallized ice is condensed to a white monolithic block. White colour brightens in its own presence the other colours, but in the woven fabric white warp can get weft colours to turn off more or less opaque pastel-coloured glow (see Rihlama 1997, 110). In sunlight the surface of the ice reflects the entire colour spectrum, and a moment ago a grayish or the whitish ice reveals its colour spectrum. The eye may not be able to distinguish the colour of this colour spectrum but only in those moments when the light is cut off from the ice crack in a multi-colour plume or when the ice crystals are glittering like a dewdrop in the wintry sun. High-quality camera lens captures the colour spectrum often in a way that is astonishment even to the photographer. The ice is like a mirror. On the other hand, it reflects the sun's colour spectrum and on the other hand, it reveals the below world of the ice, the diverse colour scheme of beach stones and plants. Thus the ice covers, reveals and change what it has reflected.

The textile artist selected for her examination Timonen's photo *If kiss...* (2014) because in it the viewer can see the translucence of the icy surface which again opens

a wide range of possibilities of the colours, structures and textures for weaving. The three-dimensional spatiality of colours is impressive. However, colours can be seen as a two-dimensional surface of a rug, which is enhanced by the warm red colour in different shades. In this case, instead of woven structure, attention is drawn to colours and materials, such as in the collection of rugs of Dutch designer Hella Jongerius *Danskina* -collection (2014). Jongerius described her collection as follows: "A rug is a two-dimensional product...There is no construction needed, just an expression of yarn and colour. A *Danskina* rug has clear colour concepts, the colour and texture on the floor is very important in giving a space a certain atmosphere. (Jongerius 2014.)"

Thus the experience of the ice in the photo *If kiss...* differs from the experience gained in the ice in the wild nature. The ice offers multisensory and deeply aesthetic experiences. Aesthetic of the ice includes among others the multisensory appearance of smells, sounds, feel and taste. Thus the red shades in the image of *If kiss...* are in the hands of textile artist like the different shades of red colours in *Tencel*-yarns. *Tencel* is soft, silky, shiny material, it does not wrinkle easily and feels soft against the skin. The words barely reach the feel of *Tencel* yarns because the visual, tactile, kinetic and emotional experiences are difficult to translate into words. Multisensory experiences often follow the dream like logic. The sensations are intertwined smoothly and form a kind of flow of feelings. If one attempts to remove some feature from the flow, it has already changed into something else and continued its way. Even a description of the feeling of *Tencel* is not the the feeling of *Tencel*. Even the wide colour tone we see with our eyes are a lot more detailed than we can tell. (Tencel 2015; Naukkarinen 2011, 154, 158 - 159.)

Could the slow movement from fuchsia red into tangy red express the smell of the red lingonberry or the taste of its bitterness? As we know synaesthetic experience of the senses convey to each other irritations. So, the sound may appear as colours or as flavors (Haverkamp 2013.). This was the question that the textile artist thought when searching the ways how to transfer the warm colours scale and the translucency of the *If kiss...* photo. She got another example of modification of colour scales from Dutch graphic designer, Irma Boom. Based on the research of synesthesia and on Boom's research the textile artist planned the following colour scale for the Timonen's image of *If kiss...* In image there are much more colours than that can be woven. The textile artist searched the main colours of image and reduced them into the following scale of colours keeping into mind the Boom's method of colour's dna. (Irma Boom 2015; Haverkamp 2011; Bacci & Melcher 2011) Figures 3 and 4 show how Pietarinen Heidi has been looking colours for Eija Timonen's photograph *If kiss...*



Figure 3 Eija Timonen *If kiss...*(2014). (Timonen 2013)



Figure 4 The experiments with colours from the photograph *If kiss...*
(Pietarinen 2014)

The conversation of colours revealed that at least the transparency, translucency, opaque, impenetrable, the colour spectrum and reflections were elementary parts for understanding the life of colours combined into the ice.

Interwined Structures

Mid winter's solid, thick and bright ice will turn as spring progresses to brittle, gauzy and matt ice. The water passes through the melting ice and bubbles begin to replace the mid-winter's harsh, sharp-edged, and cracky ice. The structure of the ice is changing all the time randomly and uncontrolled way. The beauty of the structures are in its hazard, huge scale movement.

A Finnish textile artist Eva Anttila's the *White City* -tapestry (1932 - 1933) comes into mind while watching the ice themed photos. In that tapestry different wire materials, structures and combinations of colours dominate the surface. Tapestry is dominated by the white buildings with its geometrical shape, which again appears to be extremely simple against the dark, almost black background. The tapestry is formed by the material and texture. (Salo-Mattila, 1997, 73-74; Salo-Mattila, 1994, 10-11) Also the images of the ice can be understood in the same way. The ice in nature is changing at every moment by freezing and cracking. It gets new elements on its surfaces. Also the surface of tapestry is same like according the levels of textures, structures and the light on it.

The conversation of structures revealed that at least there were five different types of structures that were involved into the ice and each of these were perceived (Goldstein 1999) differently.

Materiality

In our discussions materiality were an ambivalent concept. It dissolved into many other concepts, at the very end it was organized as a separate theme. Materiality can be described as a concrete material, as well as all those tools we work the ice out (see Siukonen 2012; Barrett & Bolt 2012). Such tools are cameras, shovels, brushes, loom, yarns, whiteboard, image processing programs, and countless of other elements that actually guide the observation of the ice and the working out our images and concepts of the ice.

The materiality is associated into the material thinking which is non-verbal, in our case often visual. Things emerge as images, sensations of ice and yarns, by which the ice-related cultural meanings are visualized. (see theme 1 The ice as a cultural understanding). Material thinking also allows those images, which do not have direct contact with the ice, such as cold, death or love to be worked out. The material thinking allows to present in visual form the emotions and experiences that are difficult to verbalize. (Mäkiranta & Timonen 2015; Barrett & Bolt 2013). For example, the textile artist connected into Timonen's photo *If kiss...* the red lips and the sweet-and-sour taste of lingonberry. The process crystallizes into the question, what kind of materials and colours the intertwined cord of the ice, passion, sour and bitter can be described.

Conclusions

At first our discussion were metaphorically based on accordion drawing, *exquisite corpse*. The themes of our conversations, such as the texture and colour, were like hidden areas in accordion drawing. At the same time the joint debate revealed our different viewpoints and created circumstances for understanding each other.

We argued that the accordion drawing, *exquisite corpse*, can be used as an associative working method. It allows people from different fields to generate a common shared understanding of the selected theme. In this case, *exquisite corpse* expands concrete drawing as an abstract thinking tool. A bridge or a unifying factor is shared thinking and conversations. *Exquisite corpse* can be more than just individual's own associative sketching or children's accordion drawings. This method provides to find themes as the basis for a common understanding. Some of the themes may be guiding themes, such as in this case colour, material and structure. Some of the themes may be defining themes, like the ice as a part of the cultural understanding. These defining themes responded drawing skill in *exquisite corpse* drawings. Not the *exquisite corpse* -drawing or discussion method criticize each other's drawing skills. Opened *exquisite corpse* image revealed the entire network of concepts, which allowed us to work together, creating meanings on the ice by photos and textiles. This revealed also our tacit knowledge concerning the arctic aesthetic.

By its nature, *exquisite corpse* always contains a secret or surprise. The surrealists have been chasing for this. For us, this kind of a surprise was the theme of death, which was invisible, but stubbornly part of our discussions. The face of death were multiple. It was on the other physico-psychic equivalent of the fear of death while working on fragile the ice. On the other hand, it was associated with a variety of images and tales of death, rooted deep in the national and international art and mythology. Moreover, death revealed its face of Janus. In addition of the dark side of the face it revealed the cycle of life and love of colours. The double faces of Janus gave birth to a great variety of ideas for new artefacts and research projects. This was the way how the *exquisite corpse* returned to the joy and surprise of accordion drawing. We recommend *exquisite corpse* as a discussion and working method for all those who are interested in surprises, searching new ideas for common understanding.

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