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“The importance of the everyday and the mundane. Everyday aesthetics and the art of cleaning”

My research focuses on cleaning, specifically the unpaid cleaning that we all engage in when we, for example, vacuum the floor, wash the car or clean our teeth. Cleaning is mundane, yet fundamental and common to all humanity. It is an area that intrigues me firstly, because we all do it and secondly, the reasons why we clean, our motivation and its affect on us raises intriguing questions.

My work addresses the connection between artistic research and communities because on the one hand, as cleaning relates to largest group of all – the global community – it is universal, it is something we all have in common, we all do it, we all know what it means to wash our hands or wipe our feet and in this sense it is a leveler. On the other hand cleaning is a divider – cleaning jobs are often relegated to the people perceived as being on the lower rungs of society. And there can be marked differences in approaches to cleaning; for example, in some communities laundry is a communal activity, but in others of which I have first-hand experience – Estonia, Australia, England – laundry is a private task not warranting serious attention.

I am at the beginning of my research and still formulating my research question, defining the topic and identifying the possible directions my artwork and writing will take. In addition to defining what I mean by cleaning, I am also looking at what we clean? Who cleans? Why? How, and what effect cleaning has on us? My methodology will depend on the focus of my research question, but so far I have been using myself as a research subject by keeping written and visual diaries, collecting ideas, drawing and making object-sketches. I want the art-making process to be an integral part of my research; in other words, it will be one of my methods, as well a guide for the research. Narrative analysis and the world of storytelling also interest me in this regard. I would like to find out what people really think – beyond TV commercials and commonly voiced, often stereotypical ideas – about cleaning. I am considering how to use art-making and art performances to gather such stories.

Feminism and everyday aesthetics form the main frames of reference for my study. I am interested in the feminist rejection of the view posited by neuroscience that gender differences are hardwired, suggesting that efforts toward greater equality are pointless (Cordelia Fine¹). In addition the field of everyday aesthetics and its role within and beyond the world of art, supports the relevance of my research and provides connections between cleaning and art (Yuriko Saito²; Pauliina Rautio³).

¹Fine, Cordelia., *Delusions of Gender. The Real Science Behind Sex Differences*, London, Icon Books, 2010

²Saito, Yuriko., *Everyday Aesthetics*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010

³ Rautio, Pauliina., *On hanging laundry. The place of beauty in managing everyday life*. *Contemporary Aesthetics*, Vol 7, No 9. 2009



The Cleaner–drawing performance, 2015, Ronneby Kulturcentrum Konsthall, Sweden