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(Dis-)playground for (De-)signmakers @;-)

**A study of sign making and artistic expression –
from the cell phone to glass fusing**

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Every single written artifact consists of form and content. Playing with these in the cell phone's text message system can lead to a new aesthetic space in the subject of Arts and Crafts. I am in this study exploring that space. What can be the aesthetics, materiality and meaning of these small digital written formations in this room? A cell phone can be seen as a treasure chest, a playground and a sketch book for sign makers of all ages. This article presents results from two rhizome analyses of art school pupils' and teacher students' sketching games with written artifacts in transformation processes from cell phone display via paper sheets to glass plates. The forms of written artifacts have been analyzed in a hermeneutic way, separately and totally, as small meaningful texts. The changes which can be seen in the form and content of the written artifacts in these transformation processes tell aesthetic stories from young people's lives. The sketches which are made from written artifacts on the cell phone's display are transformed to aesthetic formations when they are set in an exhibition context. The transformation processes revealed a rarely described link between the materiality of the different media, such as LCD-screen, paper sheets and glass plates, and tactility and touch, which, together with the visual system, is supposed to be the most active part of the perceptual system in the subject of Arts and Crafts.

Key words: Arts and Crafts, Cell Phone Display, Glass fusion, Aesthetic Formations, Young Students

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In the beginning

There have always been links according to the different media in the subject of Arts and Crafts. Aesthetic experiences in historical media such as clay, wood and stone have resulted in beautiful and functional artifacts. Two- and three dimensional sketching games and creative processes have often been a starting point for sketches as pictures of thoughts or drawn metaphors. The rise of digital media such as the scanner, video camera, cell phone and drawing programs, have changed and supplemented the plurality of the media in creative processes and made the subject even more multimodal.

Perhaps the door is ajar for more aesthetic learning rooms. The rooms have been hidden until the small digital displays enlightened them. Potential rooms for the subject of Arts and Crafts could be glimpsed in the light of the screens. Some time ago tentative play with known letters on a gigantic, black cell phone first took me to the antechamber for late-comers before I stumbled into a dusk-dark corridor, where frivolous, enigmatic writing formations hovered in mid-air. From one wall of the corridor small beeps sounded from self-lit micro screens in rainbow colours. Picture surfaces in the form of paper, skin, plastic, clay, glass and stone echoed from each other. Like a golden, blue-eyed boy I scurried in, pulled down the symbols of beauty and spread them out on the picture surfaces. I could cut a written character, blow on it and see it disappear; I could let it lie alone or place it together with other significant symbols. I am still in this enjoyable corridor. I see doors opening by themselves. I am a sign maker.

The sign maker's significant work

When written artifacts are composed on picture surfaces and placed in an exhibition context, the meaningful texts can be seen as aesthetic formations. The concept, written artefacts, is inspired by the philosophy of Roger Säljö in *Læring og kulturelle redskaper* (2006) [Learning and cultural artifacts], who explains human beings' external memory systems as artifacts /.../ that is, mediating tools, where, through differing techniques of inscription, people preserve information and divert their experiences outside their own body (Säljö, 2006, p. 50, my translation). He describes clay tablets, databases, books, pictures and papyrus scrolls as hardware with great capacity and durability as tools that are thought out, communicated and worked with (Säljö, 2006, p. 51). With the help of inscriptions one can objectify one's own experiences through signs, symbols and other mediating tools. Objectivity implies that ideas become fixed as pictures

in human experiences, Säljö says. Texts are fixed written constructions and always artistic productions Hans Georg Gadamer writes in *Truth and Method* (Gadamer, 2010, p. 221). A written artifact is, as I see it, developed as a separate tool of communication without the tangibility three-dimensional objects possess. It carries a mental multidimensionality despite a handwritten or rolled out and printed appearance. When written artifacts are combined, the written viewpoints become formations, which, in turn, become aesthetic in new contexts. The essence of the written artifacts as carrier of content- and form potentially opens multidimensional rooms for sign makers of different ages. And we are all sign makers according to Gunther Kress in *Multimodality – a social semiotic approach to contemporary communication* (2010). Kress has a social semiotic perspective of the creation of significance. Significance is created in social contexts. His theory has three principal components, which consist of firstly the semiotic resources, secondly, what can be expressed by means of them, and thirdly, what interpretation and diffusion potential they may have (Kress, 2010, p. 34). Multimodality refers to the ways of expressing oneself through combined systems of symbols, or modal ensembles. A modality is a representative expression. Monomodality is the opposite of multimodality and has influenced the Western school with isolated systems of symbols: the science of language studies language and the science of music studies music. Web technology has increased the consciousness of the totality of the systems of symbols. Cultural technologies such as speech, writing, sound, picture and movement admit mirroring, responses, instructions and actions and touching, while imagination and inner pictures hold sway on the mental level. Cultural technologies have codes which are read differently. A silent picture is perceived, decoded and read aesthetically, technically and materially in another manner than a living picture, where movement, sound and text are part of a continually changing process. The readings are characterized by visible and invisible cultural codes, which constantly become new symbols. Communication is a semiotic task where the worker, or symbol maker, makes use of tools. Just as keyboard and pencil are tools, so every single sign and symbol is a human-created tool which is used for inscriptions in the mediating process, as also Säljö explains written objects. Both Säljö and Kress say that meaning is the goal of all communication. Signs project meaning through metaphors, which sign makers have differing consciousness of. New meanings constantly arise when metaphors are understood. Meaning takes on a fixed or fluid form (Kress, 2010, p. 108). When the meanings are sharpened, discourse arises; they are dissected and overlapped and move away. Move-

ments between similar media are called transformation. Meanings also move across the modes. This movement of meanings is called transduction.

Digital caresses

The form and content of written artefacts, which are transformed from the cell phone's text message service, via handwritten signs on paper drafts to new aesthetic written signs on picture surfaces in a glass fusion technique, was investigated in *Sign of the times* (Bendiksen, 2004). Four eight-year-old girls from a municipal art school participated in organised workshops. In parallel to this, I explored my own creative work in the study as an equivalent process. The compositions in written signs are brought to visibility by the sign makers and start in the cell phone's default store of signs. In our transformation process I imagine that the cell phone's store of signs is a treasure chest for the sign maker's aesthetic learning processes. Written signs that arrange themselves in order on our small screens are like caresses.

The cell phone – a semiotic treasure chest

In accordance with other digital devices, this treasure chest is home for written artefacts such as numbers, symbols, letters and notes, which are accompanied by light, sound and movement. Even if something in the form and content of the written signs is constant, it appears as if they are always in motion. The SMS service on the cell phone can move to the outer extreme of the written signs as rough-hewn haiku-like compositions or give life to new smileys. The smileys made of symbols and written signs are referred to as ASCII-art (American Standard Code for Information Interchange) and can also set emotions in swing. They make me think of hieroglyphics, which are also stylized segments of human beings, animals, plants or objects which are recognisable and readable.

The storage possibility of the cell phone takes care of objective, ambiguous, ugly, sweet, exciting SMS's, which are saved because they mean something. On the screen, they can be reduced so that only the most meaningful written artefacts remain. Similarly to haiku poems, the reduction in the number of signs will increase the value of the remainder. The screen becomes a little sketch pad that can compose signs regardless of time and place. The overall spread makes it suitable as a creative treasure chest in the subject of Arts and Crafts.

The digital letter

SMS is certainly the grandchild of the handwritten letter. The text message is composed with the help of the writing symbols hidden beneath the screen's surface. Here they are, ready to be mobilized on the "pixel page" and placed automatically in a linear sequence. The screen letter is delivered by an invisible letter-dove which places it in the inbox and leaves behind an envelope symbol. The envelope protects private content, which is unknown until the envelope is opened. Sound, light and movement activate the telephone when the letter is delivered to the inbox. The moment before the envelope is opened is filled with curiosity and expectation. Opening an SMS can be compared to opening a present.

The parallel aesthetics of display and glass

Material similarities are perceived between the display and the medium of glass. The discovery of the cell phone as a creative tool and participation in several workshops to learn about heat-formed glass was enlightening. The similarities are obvious, with the cell phone in one hand and fresh glass mosaic pictures in the other.

Pixels and grids

Similarities in the construction of the cell phone display and glass picture in mosaic technique can be seen. At the beginning of the millenium the screen pixels were large and easily seen, and truly resemble the squares in the glass mosaic. The smiley's shiny glass chips resemble the haiku words on the screen's grid. The grid is described as flat, geometric and systematic. It gives no hiding places, says Rosalind Krauss (Krauss, 2002, p. 9). And the picture surface is – superficial. Mosaics are systematic and patterned picture surfaces which are repeated evenly in stone or glass (Jahr, 1999, p. 11). Both grids are picture surfaces where written artefacts are chips which depict meanings. There is a constantly aesthetic transforming process in the content and form of the written signs and on the picture surfaces. Form, colour and composition are especially active aesthetic means in both.

The visual similarity between the screen and the glass mosaic picks up speed with the discovery of mirror glass as a multidimensional mounting surface for glass pictures. The mirror glass background makes the written symbols expand inwards in the mirror glass. The interpretation possibilities of the glass picture gain multiplicity. This was not visible before the

glass picture, by chance, was placed upon a mirror surface in order to see the signs in another light. The effect was demonstrated well in Kgl8's glass picture, where her play with the question mark here acquires a holographic effect. The same effect as the mirror gives the glass picture can also be perceived in an SMS. This becomes a rewarding impression, since most cell phones presently appear to have LCD, liquid crystal display, consisting of two polarizing plates with a layer of liquid crystals between them. An electric current is sent through the liquid crystals and unites them so that light cannot pass through. Every crystal functions as a portal that either allows or blocks light. Crystal is a solid substance where atoms, molecules or ions are systematised in a repeating pattern in all spatial dimensions (Wikipedia, 2012). Thus, fusing glass and crystal glass are related. On closer examination of the cell phone's screen, the crystals can appear as microscopic squares. Even though both glass picture on the mirror and SMS on an LCD are two dimensional surfaces, they can have multidimensional characteristics. So the beautiful metaphor of the liquid crystals from the LCD – vocabulary leads my thoughts to the mounting process of a glass picture. Heat-formed glass is liquid also. The bottom three millimetre thick “puzzle plates” are covered with three millimetre thick “puzzle chips”, melting and flowing before they fuse together and cool to a frozen fixation. Behind the screen's protective cover bath liquid crystals appear almost like holographs on the grid's composite pixel surface. This leads one's thoughts to other composite picture surfaces, like the compound eye of a dragonfly. This is a mosaic in a pattern of light and dark hexagons, which can recall the honeycomb of bees. Dragonflies see everything! Even at night this eerie, winged helicopter creature sees with its metallic and light reflecting eyes.

To the eye, the screen and the glass mosaic are glossy and shiny picture surfaces that open up for multidimensional reflections and mirroring. Even though both surfaces reflect light from both outside and within, it is only the glass that is completely transparent. Nevertheless, the display can give the appearance of transparency. Apparently, there exists an ambiguity in the screen. Transparency arises when light waves pass through the apparatus so that the background can be seen (Wikipedia, 2012.).The screen lights up and signals activity when the phone is in use. The light on the cell phone's screen comes from within. It appears as though the crystals glitter and reflect. Imagine the signs flowing under the surface of the screen like a river of crystals, while they wait to climb up to the surface of consciousness as meaningful signs.

Incorporated in the knowledge of the media, the tactile feeling is hidden. The visual is, of course, easier to spot. The science of touch and of commu-

nication through touch is called haptic and is a part of the perceptual system, where also the visual system belongs (Gibson, 1966). Especially hands and fingers are the body's tools when media and artefacts are researched. The sense of touch is implied in this communication (Wikipedia, 2012). The feel of smooth, soft, cell phone plastic keys is different from the feel of paper, but resembles the feeling of touching the surface of glass. These feelings also probably have similarity with touch-screens. The tactile is important in the same way as the visual in the arts and crafts as well as in life. This sense is often used in connection with three dimensional sculptures. Pictures are usually not allowed to be touched in an exhibition context. The materiality which resides in the picture is, therefore, unknown for others except the artist. The tactile is subdued, but impressions and bodily memories are usually present in touch and play a role. The keyboard, or touch screen, has a shiny surface. The connection that arises between the fingertips and the keys can supplement the multimodality in transformation. There can be a multi-importance hidden in texting and typing. The media's multi-materiality might be one of the areas that make transformations important.

Sketching games

Sketching became a playful approach in the transformation process. Play is associated with childhood and adult free time and can be defined as movement play, construction play, role play and rule play in the educational context; forms of play that occur in keeping with the child's increasing age. This is a narrow definition. Play is a life form which characterizes everything living, explains Gadamer in *Truth and method* (2010). Nature also plays. Think of the *aurora borealis* and the lapping of the waves, rustling leaves and fishes jumping. Play is something that happens when we understand something. For humans it is a bodily activity which happens in the invisible realm that surrounds the game. The game is characterized by a spontaneous flighty expression that constantly changes in the space between the players. New patterns are created every time they play. The players commit themselves, are stimulated and participate in the game's seriousness. In the game we forget ourselves. We step outside ourselves and open ourselves. Play is risky, full of conflicts, tensions and opponents. This leads to genuine experiences and changes; we grow in play, and it pushes us further on new imaginary journeys, dreams, games. In Gadamer's universe, experience and education are intertwined, and within the German word for experience, *Erfahrung*, is the idea of a journey. Through play and art we

travel within ourselves. Play characterizes art. Gadamer investigates what processes happen when the work of art initially meets us half way. Art will tell us something about the reality of the world we live in, it will be read and understood. Something in art is recognisable and enriching, it leads to constantly shifting horizons, says Gadamer. Through art we understand ourselves. To create we must play and be played with.

To sketch is to practise something. A rough copy is also a sketch. A sound draft, a movement sketch – these airy, quick rasps and scratches come from the symbol maker's bodily hiding places. Parallel to doodling in the medium, sketching also happens as the activity of the thoughts, not insignificantly all forms of creative activity. *Screen sketches* are made up of play with written signs on the cell phone; they are composed on the aesthetic backdrop of the screen surface and are lifted up to the surface because they have a beautiful form or clever content. Because written artefacts are so small and slender there is something locked over the typed dialogue. Concurrently, the screen sketches are displayed in a common ideas service. The typed written artefacts are in contrast to the illuminated grid and create a linear rhythm in significant miniature compositions. As Gadamer points out, play can take on ever new forms in the area between players. The ambiguity of the symbols is part of the charm in screen play. Cell phones with separate screen and keyboard make the keyboard just as important as the screen. Cell phones with touch screens of course lead to almost similar plays. Only one's fingertips are used for typing. There is no variation in pressure on the typing keys; typing meets very little resistance from the apparatus.

Paper sketches get a graphic appearance with dark written formations against light writing surfaces. The written artifacts (be consistent – artefact or artifact) of the sketches are more durable because they are written with felt-tip pen. When the format of text messages on the cell phone screen is so small, the paper sketches do not press up in a large format; meanings do not need size. Mini-sketches are suitable, about five centimetres in height and breadth is perhaps enough. Form, composition and text are central here, not colour. Sketches can be created in express tempo and appear almost identical. The tempo in the sketching may increase or decrease. It is not so easy to say when the sketching process is over since the final sketch is based on intuition. The rhythm in the sketching may follow natural recurrences in the body. Every finger on the hand is used to hold the felt-tip pen. The grip on the drawing implement can be hard or light. The variation in grip gives the variation in expression. The meeting between hand, paper and felt-tip gives the sign maker a certain resistance.

Glass-sketches are the third method of sketching. Glass bricks are composed of glass plates and the size, form and colour are taken into consideration. Where the signs are composed on the glass plate is important. The background to the picture must hold the written signs in place. The bricks are laid tightly into each other and are variants of the written signs that were composed on the screen and the paper. The bricks can be moved and placed in new combinations again and again in the course of the play. The size of the bricks determines how many letters remain on the glass plate at the end. Ideas can be picked up by seeing what the others are doing. New ways of making the picture beautiful are perceived in one's thoughts. The sketch process on the glass plate is as short lived as the screen play is before the signs are stored. Since the glass pieces are not permanently mounted to the underlay plate, surface changes can be made. The furnishing of a glass picture can take place anywhere on the plate. However, usually the artist starts in the left-hand corner and moves towards the right in the same manner as writing in Western culture. Another variant is starting at the centre of the picture surface and placing the bricks around in ever widening circles or placing them freely and easily, seemingly aimlessly, and seeing what happens. The glass bricks can be varied endlessly before they are sealed to the glass plate. The use of colour is tempting when it comes to glass. Colour symbolism can easily be overlooked when there are so many colours to choose from. All the transparent and opaque coloured surfaces that appear apropos glass fusing – this is like entering a sweet shop. It resembles falling in love.

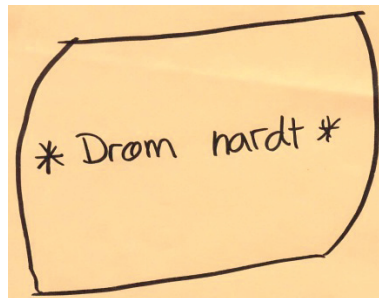
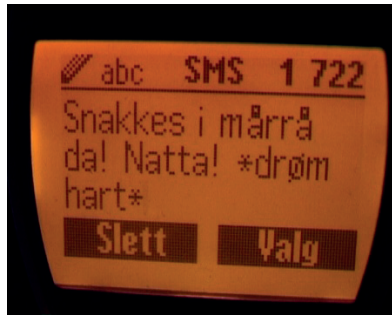
Freedom and playfulness characterize all sketching methods and there is excitement connected to changes in the written signs in transformation in the various methods.

A rhizome analysis with a hermeneutic view

According to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (2004), the term rhizome opens for multiple, non-hierarchical entries and exits in data representation and interpretation. Deleuze describes a rhizome as an “image of thought” which mirrors a botanical root system in a never ending story. The following rhizome analysis therefore has no starting and ending points and is characterized like a nomadic system of growth and propagation, always volatile, always moving, always inter-being.

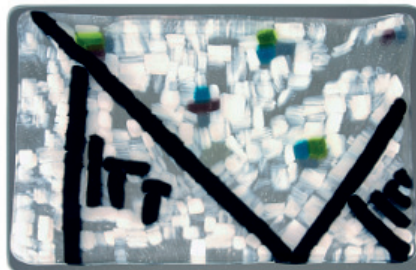
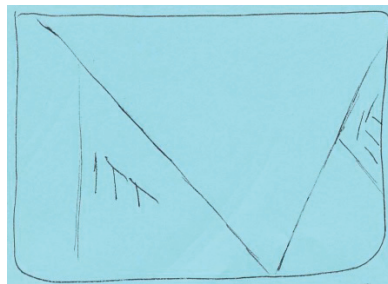
Sign of the times

Examples of transformation processes:



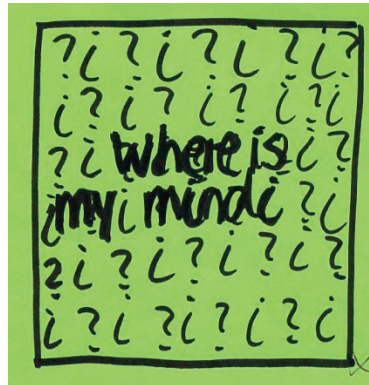
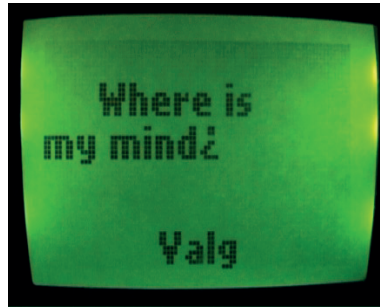
Picture 1

In the interview Rg18 says that she did not work so much with the form of the symbol on the cell phone, but that there is *//..a much more exciting thought than that the symbols should absolutely mean something. You can do what you want with them and be bound up in what a symbol means, but that it is something good, a form.*



Picture 2

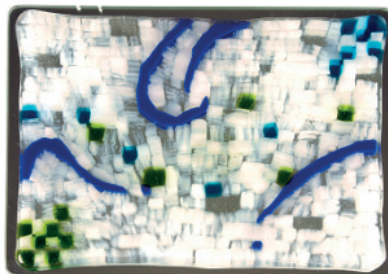
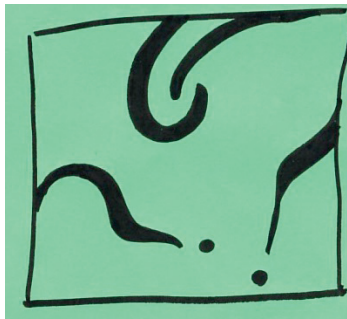
Tg18 investigates her nick-name, TITT-TITT, with which she signs her text messages. In the paper sketch she discovers that the diagonal stroke over the T's looks like the rear side of an envelope and says that this gives the picture a double meaning as letter and self-portrait. The difference between working on the display, paper and glass lies in the composition of the glass picture, she believes. //..*You get a quite different experience from looking at the glass picture; in the SMS it is just straight across: TITT-TITT, but on the glass picture it can be associated with different places, the symbols acquire new meaning.*



Picture 3

Kg18 works with the question mark and the song title *Where is my mind?* She starts by looking at all the symbols on the cell phone, writes them on a sheet of paper, and decides on the question mark because she can then //..make something of the question itself. She turns the question mark on its head, just like Spanish language does, when she works with the cell phone

sketches and the rotation follows on into the transduction; she feels it gives anticipation to the expression. She shifts much //..round about with the written symbols on the display before she decides where the question marks look best. //..The cell phone symbols are a bit square, have a determined size and everything is rather severe. With glass you can do what you want, stretch a letter. You decide yourself. You are free.



Picture 4

Sg18 works with only one symbol's form because she *//..has more room on the screen then*. She discovers that much can be done with letters and their meaning because *//..you can develop them and investigate them on glass, and then the symbols become something more than sending a symbol in an SMS*. The question mark *//..has a nice form, a fine bow*, and the symbols become more *//..alive in glass, where they get //..more and //..other forms set in new contexts*.

About aesthetics, materiality, meaning and aesthetic formations

Rg18 says that working with the form of symbols is more exciting than just working with the content of the symbol; she sees the symbols as lovely forms. In terms of form, the context is seen as diagonal lines above the T's which are changed to become the back of an envelope. This is Tg18's significant discovery. Kg18 describes play with the symbols on the cell phone as a composition game where she moves the symbols around before she makes up her mind. She describes the difference between the grid forms of the digital signs as compared with the signs she forms in glass, where she can change the form of every single sign. Sg18 chooses the question mark because the form of the sign is attractive. She trims and enlarges it at the same time as she breaks with the linear composition which the display sets up.

The transformations take place in several areas. The individual sign is transformed when it is pushed into text surfaces with different material. The sign's power inhabits the signs regardless of their physical size on the screen where the typing game started.

A clear change is seen in the outward format, from the microscopic picture surface of the display via small paper sketches to glass pictures in approximately A4 format. The need to economize with the number of written artefacts is easy to see. If the text message is too long the number is reduced to isolated signs. As the examples show, only one or a few motivating signs remain on the glass pictures. It appears that the consciousness around each individual sign's significance and form increases. This selection may stem from technical and motor challenges in cutting such small formats in an unaccustomed medium. The need for text reduction so that each individual sign becomes more strongly charged, the awareness of the time involved in making a glass picture, and a creative freedom that grows in transformation characterizes the sketching games.

The screen, the paper and the glass have their own materiality. While the screen and the paper are well known surfaces, glass is still undiscovered for these girls. The tension that arises in dealing with new media can be important.

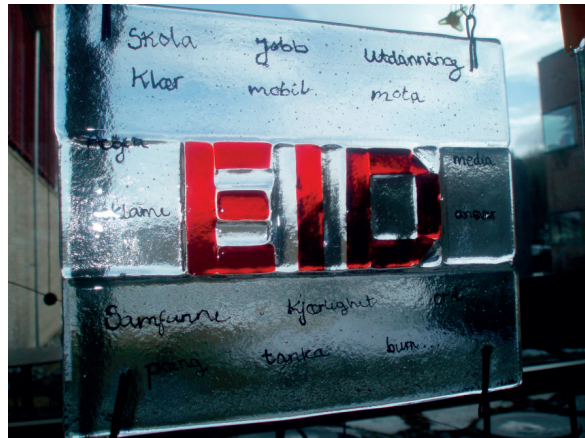
The transformations end in an exhibition. Even though the whole process is displayed, the glass pictures are seen as the end result, and it is these that are read as aesthetic formations. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see the changes which have come about in the signs' leap between media. The mirror surface that forms the pictures' backdrop lifts the glass pictures forward as aesthetic formations, and this mounting increases the similarity with the original text message. The screen's shiny pixels respond to the materiality of the mirror and the glass; it seems that the multidimensionality of the written artefacts increases. Aluminium bails are mounted behind the mirror surfaces and cause the pictures to stand out about five centimetres from the exhibiting wall. The glass pictures come towards the viewer; they become close at hand, just as the typing on the cell phone once was. The lighting mounted straight above the pictures causes the light to flow through the transparent glass picture. This gives an almost luminous effect and increases the similarity with the screens where they are illuminated. In an otherwise dim exhibition room the glass pictures illuminate themselves.

The certainty that the glass picture can be read in an exhibition appears to influence the formulation of the glass pictures. It seems important to disclose something, but not too much of one's self. *Dream hard, Titt-Titt, Where is my mind?* are strong and meaningful pictures that must be read in a youthful context.

As I understand it, to dream hard is an encouragement to realise one's dreams. If one thinks hard enough, dreams can be fulfilled. The text is bedded on a starry sky as an unending place for dreams. The nick-name, Titt-Titt, refers to childhood's playful era, from small children's hide-and-seek with grown-ups to a desire to be seen. In connection to the envelope symbol, the picture gains a double base. The white envelope covers the picture surface, while the text conforms to the envelope's sloped closing flap. As understood, the envelope is a symbol for unopened letters. In this picture letter Titt-Titt gives a little wave, the envelope increases the expectation of opening the letter and finding signs which maybe lead to Titt-Titt. *Where is my mind?* is a picture that opens for meaningful readings. The title is a philosophical question at the same time as the viewer herself can speculate: where is my mind and where do I have my thoughts? The repetition and pattern formation of the question mark that lies behind the text underlines the wondering which each question mark can evoke. The picture asks an

even more open question. It can mean that it sets a question mark beside several unknown areas in life. As distinct from *Where is my mind?*, the question mark is played with and cut into; the blue question marks form swaying and playful formations.

Below are examples of glass pictures from the student exercise *Digital letters*, where screen sketches and paper sketches also are used as bases. The exercise is a continuation of the experiences in *Sign of the times*.





These sign makers have discovered other possibilities in the transformations. The mirror background is absent. Light and perforation show the possibilities which can exist in working on the back of the picture. A tactile surface comes into sight on burning at a low temperature, and a meaning-saturated youth-culture expression appears as a shout. The first example shows a glass picture based on a word play around a poster text which existed in the 1970's. The poster *Why?* was a political statement against the Vietnam war. The text is furnished with a counter question: *why not* and, together, they can be read as optimism and hope. To send a question in return and see something from the opposite angle gives new perspectives and possible solutions. The text is formed from fusing wire placed between two glass plates, and the puzzle pieces are large in red, yellow and green transparent glass. The student wants to find a light source which comes from within, so that the light lifts the symbols from the screen. The effect is obtained by perforating a baking powder treated copper plate. The holes can be associated with the screen's pixel surface. Myhre chooses three symbols from the cell phone's store: R, @, and S, which are formulated on separate glass plates linked together by thin glass stems. The picture is fused at a low temperature so the red glass points on the surface become tactile touch points. Because she chooses red opaque glass for the signs, these become readable contrasts to the red transparent background plate. The text is coded in the student's language and can give meaning separately and together, as initials, for example. It can be understood as an avalanche of warm feelings or as a flow of ideas. Sandvik's text takes its starting point

in a typical youth-culture saying: to feel oneself “owned” or steered by something or someone. The three written artefacts are centred as main text, while the words *school, job, education, clothes, cell phone, fashion, society, love, thoughts* and *house* hover around on the picture surface. These give the feeling of being owned by the expectations of the future. Together, the texts can be understood as meanings in a youth cultural context. The picture’s texts circle around dreams, play and wondering: hope and future plans formulated at an age where many important decisions are made. Existential questions such as who am I, what will I do with my life and where do I have my thoughts need to be asked in order to find a form of meaning in life. In spite of the demand for decision, it can mean much to retain one’s childhood nick-name even if the age of majority is passed. In the midst of all this perhaps hard dreams are a necessity.

The end?

In the course of the years during which these projects evolved I started to miss handwriting.

Cell phone typing, mouse movement and use of the keyboard may have contributed to a nimbleness of finger different from that which is used for handwriting. To write with a pen and on a keyboard are two divergent processes in relation to simultaneity. Handwriting constitutes a tactile meeting between the hand, the writing implement and the medium and leaves behind analogous marks on the paper while the writing takes place. Digital writing has simultaneity both on the keyboard and on the screen. In spite of the possibilities of choice that the digital tool gives, there is little similarity of formulation between the keyboard's block letters and those that jump forth on to the screens, in another place than where they are typed in. What is going to happen with pencils and personal handwriting in the future?

It is in the outer zone of *Sign of the times* and *Digital letters* that the doctoral thesis *Are you experienced?* has emerged. I have developed writing workshops, or so called tactile meetings, where three- to five-year-olds, materials and hand implements meet. Here, small sign makers can write their autonomous writing on writing materials with hand instruments that give differing resistance. I examine the aesthetic formations of these written signs, register the fine motor hand grip and hunt for possible hybrid signs from these children’s intercultural written artefact repertoires. Because the written language tradition wanders through the generations and the children have different ethnicity, the parents are an important reference group

and have the offer of participating in the workshops. Video film, log, interview and exhibition are collection methods in this art based research project. When the sign makers' written artefacts are made visible in a display context, they will, in the same way as with the transformations in the two other projects, emerge as aesthetic formations.

New rooms

As Kress says, it can appear that the awareness around new systems of signs has given new perspectives on communication. As I have experienced, the cell phone gives possibilities that few other digital tools do. The spread and the format make it convenient and available. As a treasure chest for written artefacts, the screen's small text surface can lead to creative processes in every subject. In the curriculum for knowledge promotion (LK06), the use of digital tools is one of five skills in every subject. Recently, I tried out the exercise "Glasspartitur" (Glass score) for music teacher students. I now have proof that musical sign makers can compose and improvise from a graphic score they themselves have formulated in glass; it is possible to play a picture and do transductions in several modes, of course. Among many other interdisciplinary minded artists, the painters Paul Klee (1879-1940) and Vasilij Kandinskij (1866-1944) worked in the intersection between paintings and music.

Many significant choices are made in the course of a transformation process. The aesthetic choices around the written artefacts and the composition of a picture take place in a continually meaning-concentrated process. It is easy to forget that the materiality of the medium and the tactile feel which is hidden in the medium can give aesthetic experiences that influence the creative process. Because of the cell phone's proximity to the body, the written formations can also be seen as quite directly derived from the body. There are clear meanings that emerge in the given examples. Without the stamp of prying the written formations can be read as significant contemporary pictures from a quite private sphere.

Kress highlights the picture medium as the fastest expanding of the cultural methods of expression. But written symbols follow. E-mail, Facebook and SMS can be examples of the renaissance of written symbols.

It is unknown whether this corridor has an end, but I have my doubts. Doors still stand ajar. I have been into some of the rooms. And there are more doors to open. Now I have captured written symbols over a long period of time. I have ventured into many tactile encounters. Perhaps it is nostalgic to cling to handwriting. But compared to ready typed written

artefacts handwriting tells more personal stories than ready typed writing does. The handwritten signs are alive.

People are The DeSigners. We juggle with symbols from differing media and supplement with ever new signs from the private sign universe and make new signs in never ending stories. Sign makers never rest. Even in sleep surrealistic beings arise like formations in colourful slow motion. They are the meaningful and meaningless signs from waking life.

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