

Artist Statement Yuka Oyama

My artistic practice employs the human body and worn objects, namely jewellery/wearable sculpture, performance, video, and photography. By juxtaposing an adorned object and a wearer, I compose my artistic language by asking “who is the wearer, where does she wear it, what does the worn object represent about her, what does she represent about the object?” The interactions between a human body and a worn object as a direct line allows me to convey ideas such as the disconnection in contemporary life: the degeneration of human to human communication skills, and the implications of nomadism on a person’s sense of belonging. Eventually I seek to stage situations, where (worn) objects become agents to strengthen bonds among people and communities.

My thorough training in traditional jewellery making and sculpture has influenced me to base my art from the perspective of a person, a wearer, and her/his body. Unlike conventional artistic media such as painting and sculpture, jewellery/wearable sculpture is touched and worn, and presented on the human body, at the division of a person’s private and public worlds. This proximity to people is where the authentic and fascinating attributes of jewellery lie. It continues to fascinate me how jewellery/wearable sculpture as an artistic media can act directly on a person’s everyday life experiences, sensations and emotions.

Schmuck Quickies (2002 – 2012), a jewellery performance project, was my departure to begin working in public spaces. I constructed jewellery out of recycled materials on to the bodies of volunteers based on their wishes. Through immediate exchanges and collaborations with the wearers, I was reintroduced to jewellery’s potential to facilitate teamwork and dialogues among people. I also discovered the capability of jewellery to display a person’s interiority and subjectivity, and how much the worn object transforms the appearance, body movements, behaviours and feelings of the wearer.

From 2002 until 2008, I expanded the relational potential of jewellery making in *ASQ Factory* (2006), *Berlin Flowers* (2007), and *Wunschwear* (2008). All the projects facilitated random by-passers, neighbors, friends and family members to engage in a collaborative craft. The results were then presented in public space.

From 2008 onwards, I have continued to display the hidden subjective realms of wearers through adornments in public space. In *Metamorphic Spirits* (2008), I activated an outdoor digital screen to project animals hidden in my participants’ minds into public urban space. The video clips, *Modern Fairy Tales in the Berlin Underground* (2010) are based on fantastic stories told by underground train drivers. They were projected on monitors of all underground train lines in Berlin.

The Stubborn Life of Objects (2012 - 2017) was an artistic research project (PhD), where I investigated the physical and psychological impacts of worn objects on the wearers. Especially, how worn objects could empower the wearers to engage in performances. During this period, I produced five video works: *Cleaning Samurai* (2014), *Encapsulation Suits* (2015), *Helmet – River* (2015), *Modern Ballet Duo and Trio* (2016), and *The Stubborn Objects Psychodrama* (2017). I explored materials and working techniques to construct life size sculptures, which was followed by exploring choreography with choreographers, dancers, and object theatre actors. Towards the end of my research, I elaborated jewellery’s potential

to carry personal memories. I created a miniature of my large sculpture, *Piano*, and made a pendant, *Piano and I* (2017).

In my recent artwork *HELPERS – Changing Homes* (2018) produced by The Dowse Art Museum in Wellington, New Zealand, I employed my wide-ranging, layered approach towards wearable art objects. Through paying attention to a person's relationships to a handful of portable objects, I researched how each person, who leads a transient life, sought to strengthen a sense of belonging and home. For this work I created wearable sculptures for each interviewee and asked her/him to participate in a public procession, which I filmed. I also made pendants that represent personal relics.

I continue to explore in order to understand the relationship between identity and objects that owners develop strong emotional ties to. In particular, I focus on investigating personal methods on how a person stabilizes her/his centre, when faced with extremely transient life situations due to migration and alternative family structures. My investigation will be manifested through wearable sculptures which portray these aspects of human life.