

Master Thesis  
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# **Who of me am I?**

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# Abstract

I have chosen to use the forum of jewellery, particularly lockets, to investigate the notion of a public and a private self as a main theme. In this text I will bring up different aspects of the locket to show which tools I have to work with, and then I will research the actual theme from a sociopsychological point of view.

Jewellery can be used as a manifestation of a public self and it can be a connection to a private self. The jewellery holds the possibility to tell its story when worn and the person wearing it might fill it with his/her own emotional value that might and might not be in correlation with the artists' intent.

The way lockets are and have been used is influencing the way we look at them; it charges them with symbolical meaning. The locket becomes a representation of a private, intimate part of the person wearing it. The locket has an outside and an inside, a public and a private part. When worn, it communicates to both the wearer and his/her surroundings. The action of opening a locket and of wearing a locket are deliberate acts that revolve around both the transgression between public and private and the secrecy of its content. These different aspects of the locket are tools that I can use in my work.

The creation of an outer, public-, self works as a tool to help us interact with each other. It simplifies communication, places us in an understandable setting (society) and might also help us improve our influence on our social status. In some situations this public self can give rise to a feeling of alienation and discomfort. The risk is that we identify ourselves with a one-dimensional image of ourselves. Or that we experience a too big gap between our public and private self. The representational self can also become an integrated part of our identity. In that sense we create ourselves. As the borders between our private and public sphere become more blurry, it might be hard to keep the balance between the public and the private self. The increased availability for social interaction sometimes restrains the private self and this stresses the need for determining and keeping a private sphere for oneself. I believe that the feeling of an outer and an inner self often is based in an ambivalence towards a social situation. That I pay attention to a framework that both attracts and repulses me. It is in those situations that our split self becomes apparent, and can be felt, but also questioned. I create my own public self. But there has to be a balance between our public and private self, and that stresses the need of setting up personal borders, not only for a bigger social benefit, but also to be able to cope with, to interpret and process everyday-life.

I believe that the urge of addressing the personal, and bringing up different aspects of identity within jewellery art, springs from the preconception of jewellery as no more than an embellishment. That is also why it becomes interesting. From my part I see an excitement in the contradiction of using what might be considered a fashion attribute to problematize, make aware of an awkward attitude towards the presentation of the self. To use the physical aspects of the locket to talk about a mental state, and an emotional reaction to a social situation. Because that is what the imbalance of a public and a private self does with me: it evokes an emotional reaction to the social situation I find myself in.

# Content

- Introduction..... 4
- An artists’ attitude towards the wearer ..... 5
- The locket ..... 7
  - The outside ..... 7
  - The inside ..... 7
  - The action of opening a locket ..... 8
  - The action of wearing a locket ..... 8
- A private and a public self ..... 9
  - The construction of a public self ..... 9
  - Borders ..... 11
  - Sharing and exposing..... 12
- The Locket as a representation of self ..... 13
- Final words ..... 15
- Abstract - Inside an artistic process. .... 16
- References..... 20
  - Books ..... 20
  - Internet sources ..... 20

# Introduction

What is it that we don't share with others and why? The need for restraining ourselves, for not sharing everything with others, can be triggered for different reasons. It might be a way of modeling our personalities so that they fit to the ideal of the group, but it might also spring from a feeling of need to protect our private self. Sometimes the public self becomes an armor too thick to penetrate... I often claim that I aim for an emotional communication in my work, that is reflected in the subjects I work with and in my attitude towards my work. I appreciate art that somehow evokes an emotional reaction and allow me to indulge in these "soft" values that might be overlooked in our everyday-life. For me it is a way of letting go of my intellectual, controlled, constructed self in order to connect with the private self that works on an intuitional, emotional level. I believe that I can choose who I want to be, I believe that I can choose in which way I define myself and I believe that I can

choose how I receive and am being received by my surroundings. But I also believe that my choices are being questioned, are conflicting and has to be confirmed in relation to other people. These choices are in that sense concerning a public self, a representational self that I construct myself. In this essay, I

would like to shed light on this division of self: the inner/private self and the outer/public self, and draw parallels to my own practice -jewellery. Jewellery has through history been an important marker of our position in society. It is something we choose to wear, not because of necessity (it doesn't keep you warm), but because of a will of expressing ourselves, demonstrating a public self. Is there also a way of using jewellery to get in contact with a private self and talk about this division?

I have chosen to use the forum of jewellery, particularly locket, to investigate the notion of a public and a private self as a main theme. In this text I will bring up different aspects of the locket to show which tools I have to work with, and then I will research the actual theme from a sociopsychological point of view.

I'm at the subway. Following the ping-pong-game of looks that occur at this time of the day. Emotionless faces. Phones. Papers. Dark windows used as mirrors. Thinking of this cliché that I'm situated in. How many people before me haven't already pinpointed this specific situation? Subway at rush-hour... People around me are barely more than bodies. Me myself becomes no more than part of the seat where I'm sitting. Compressed we become some sort of anonymous objects. It actually feels quite nice.... And I find myself smiling.

# An artists' attitude towards the wearer

In contemporary Western society today, jewellery, in everyday life is often used as a fashion attribute, and as such it functions as a communicational tool for the individuals' social identity. This is framed by cultural values such as gender, sexuality, social status, age, ecc.<sup>1</sup> Jewellery is also often becoming a personal object, loaded with emotional value<sup>2</sup>. It can become a symbol for another time and place (souvenir) or another person and the wearers' relation to that person. These two aspects of jewellery demonstrate how jewellery can be connected to both a public, social self, and to a private self.

Within jewellery art, author jewellery, the artist often uses jewellery in another way. It is then used as a medium of communication, not for the person wearing it, but for the artists' intention. The wearer becomes a plain body, a mannequin for the piece, and is often not even present when jewellery is shown.

*"Auteur jewellery has, above and beyond the artistic message specific to it, also adopted to a great extent the distribution forms and response models of the art sector. (...) jewellery qua art object is marketed primarily by galleries and is for the most part collected rather than worn on the body."*<sup>3</sup>

By presenting the piece of jewellery on a body instead of on a person, the wearer is becoming part of the display area. The wearer becomes a transmitter of an artistic argument. It gives the feeling that the message of the piece is directed to an audience, and not to the person wearing it. The author jewellery is, I would say, somewhere between an autonomous art object and a wearable commercial jewellery. And it has not yet clarified an ultimate attitude towards the wearer. The aspect of wearing is often present in discussions, themes and artist statements as one of the benefits of working with jewellery as a medium for art. It is a way of placing the communication in a public space and at the same time open up for an intimate setting for the piece. But that is talking about the *aspect of wearing*, not the wearer. Art-historian and writer Marian Unger states that: "People are not bodies. People are people. So jewellery should relate to people."<sup>4</sup> The maker should regard not only an audience that is supposed to see the jewellery, but also the wearer, the medium that brings forward the message. On the other hand one might also argue that the wearer, in the decision of wearing the piece of jewellery, accepts the role of the messenger and commits to the artist's vision of the piece of jewellery as the curator, artist and writer Rock Hushka does:

*"Wearing jewelry is the process in which the wearer invests and announces an alliance with the artist, absorbing the artist's intent and aesthetic and disseminates it into the world"*<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Fred Davis, Fashion, culture and identity p.191

<sup>2</sup> Tilmann Habermas, 'Diamonds are a girl's best friend' – The psychology of Jewellery as beloved objects, Thinkingjewellery, p.104

<sup>3</sup> ThinkingJewellery- on the way towards a theory of jewellery, W.Lindemann & FH Trier/ Idar-Oberstein, 2011, page 13

<sup>4</sup> Marian Unger, Freedom has its limitations – Jewellery today, seen from a duch perspective, lecture held at Munich's international design museum, <http://www.die-neue-sammlung.de/blog/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Marjan-A21.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Rock Hushka, Holding Objects: The psychoanalytic Mechanisms of wearing jewelry, Art Jewelry Forum 2010-09-20

This point of view is demanding a lot from the wearer, but at the same time it gives him/her respect and confidence. It expects from the wearer to take responsibility for the transcended message as well as his/her own personal connection to the piece itself. A person who chooses to wear a piece of author jewellery, is often informed of the field and prepared to regard the piece from both an artistic, aesthetical and conceptual point of view.

As a maker I must alas trust that my piece will be accepted and that the wearer will engage in it. To wear a demanding piece of jewellery means that the wearer, at least to some extent, needs to be personally engaged in the piece and make it his/her own. I find this intimate aspect of jewellery fascinating since it is so subjective and unpredictable. It also leads back to the two aspects of everyday use of jewellery I mentioned at the beginning: the manifestation of a public self and the connection to a private self. The jewellery holds the possibility to tell its story when worn and the person wearing it might fill it with his/her own emotional value that might and might not be in correlation with the artists' intent.

# The locket

The locket has left, in its construction, room for the person wearing it. Unlike other types of jewellery, the locket has a concealed part that is intended only for the wearer. This part can be physically filled with something chosen by the wearer and is often loaded with emotional value. Nationalencyklopedin defines the locket like this:

“A locket is a pendant in the shape of a small circular or oval case or box, which contains a photo, a miniature painting, a lock of hair or similar. The locket became popular during the last decades of the eighteenth century. Some older rewarding medals have the same style and then contain an image of the emperor, or a jeweled miniature portrait.”<sup>6</sup>

The traditional locket is often used as a memory of someone. It might be someone deceased, or a loved one. But it has also been used as carrier of poison or medicine. Older containers for relics and portraits of saints have also taken the form of lockets.<sup>7</sup>

The way lockets are and have been used is influencing the way we look at them; it charges them with symbolical meaning. The locket becomes a representation of a private, intimate part of the person wearing it. A part that the wearer doesn't show and shows at the same time. The locket is often connected to a feeling of nostalgia, but if one looks at the locket per se and examines its actual parts, it might also have an extended meaning.

## The outside

The outside of a locket is the representational side. Independently of what the locket contains, its outside communicates to whoever the wearer meets. It is public. A locket might be worn only in regard to its outside visual appearance. Lockets can be found in many shapes, such as hearts, squares, circles, irregular and even more elaborate, sculptured shapes. A classical locket though has an oval shape. The oval comes from the shape of the classical cameo that the early miniature portraits, which were often kept in lockets, adapted. The outside of a locket shows some sort of sign alluding to the fact that it can be opened. The outside of the locket is touched. It's often worn around the



She said that she loved lockets.

“You can put a photo in it and hair and you carry it with you all the time and it's intimate and...  
...and I always wanted one as a kid but I never got one...”  
When I was nine I got one. It was made of a nonprecious metal. It was small. Pink. Heart-shaped. Empty. I never knew what to put inside it.

neck, sometimes hiding under the clothes, sometimes on display. It has a strong connection to the hand; it is caressed, fiddled with.

## The inside

The inside of a locket is private. It is intended for the wearer and it is up to the wearer to decide who is allowed to see it. If a locket is

<sup>6</sup> medaljong. <http://www.ne.se/lang/medaljong/253405>, Nationalencyklopedin, hämtad 2013-11-04.

<sup>7</sup> Joan Evans, *A history of jewellery 1100-1870*, p.50

worn on a chain around the neck it is an aggressive act to reach for it and open it, since by doing so, you not only enter the wearers' intimate sphere, but you also intrude on, violate, her/his personal belonging. The inside of a locket has no representational aspect, in regards to an outer audience. It contains an aspect of secrecy. To keep something in a locket is also a way of protecting it. It is carried around on the body at all times, but is not for everyone to see. The inside of the locket is the core; it is loaded with emotional value. Just the fact that it is hidden makes it emotionally valuable, because it is intended for just a few, it is exclusive.

### **The action of opening a locket**

The inside of a worn locket is intended to be revealed only within an intimate situation, when the wearer looks at it or shows it to someone. To open a locket that is not your own has an aspect of theft, intrusion, espionage. Almost like reading some-one's diary. While opening the locket, for a short time, one can see the inside and the outside at the same time. The public and the private part of the locket are for a few seconds part of the same picture. The action of opening a locket is symbolically loaded. It is a transition from the public to the private. The movement and the posture of the person wearing a locket changes with the action of opening it. The head tilts down, both hands are used for opening it, the gaze becomes concentrated, and the posture may become more relaxed. From being a communicative subject with the attention to the surroundings, the wearer, his/her attention and posture become introverted and concentrated.

### **The action of wearing a locket**

By wearing a locket you show off that you are hiding something. You are hiding your secrets in plain sight. The wearer walks around with the knowledge of what's inside, this fact can give him/her a feeling of comfort, a connection to another place or time, or be a reminder of another person. To wear a locket is to demonstrate an ownership of something with a personal value so high that it is not for others to see. To wear a locket is an act of exclusion; it gives the wearer the power of knowing something that others don't. But to carry around a reminder of something that the wearer has chosen to not share with others can also be considered a burden. It is in that sense an exclusive act in both directions. Until it is opened. A closed locket triggers the curiosity, the urge of discovering, revealing its secrets. It triggers our imagination. It is a strong incitement for a start of a conversation. It attracts people, draws them in, and then it is up to the wearer to decide to include or exclude.

The locket has an outside and an inside, a public and a private part. When worn, it communicates to both the wearer and his/her surroundings. The actions of opening a locket and of wearing a locket are deliberate acts that revolve around both the transgression between public and private and the secrecy of its content. These different aspects of the locket are tools that I can use in my work. The locket is the forum I work within. Now I will proceed to discuss the theme that I will take on within this forum.





## A private and a public self

The idea that a person has a self that she shows to others and one that she keeps to herself intrigues me in its complexity. It is a rough thought construction, but it is often the way I perceive myself in interaction with other people. I observe all the choices we constantly make, conscious or not, about what we show or don't show of ourselves. What we choose to share with others and in which way. How we present ourselves. I've chosen to examine the sociopsychological view on identity. Social-psychology can be said to be a discipline where the intention is to understand and explain the interaction between the thoughts, feelings and actions of an individual and the society surrounding her/him.<sup>8</sup> Or, put differently, an examination of the meeting of an outer (social studies) and an inner (psychology) self.

### The construction of a public self

What is it that drives us to keep up a façade? And in which situations does the façade become apparent? Erving Goffman was an American sociologist and writer who argued that social interaction could be compared with theater and that, in our daily life, we constantly shift between playing different roles. By doing so we consciously hide some parts of ourselves and accentuate other parts of ourselves. Uncomfortable situations, conflicts and social misbehavior are expressions of our insecurity within the common roles we are cast in. Such expressions may indicate that a role is being played in the wrong setting, or that it is played by the wrong person. Or that the audience consists of individuals from different settings. Or that the acting of an individual is not cohesive. The actor must constantly relate to an unspoken script of social expectations. Goffman claims that sometimes, when the impression of an individual seems false, it's actually more a question if the individual is *entitled* to play the part she/he is playing.<sup>9</sup> His view of social interactions might seem quite single minded. His book *The presentation of self in everyday life* was written almost fifty years ago, and a lot has changed since then. It is a very simplified description of complex social interactions. It is a constructed view of the world where a human being is degraded to a simple stereotype to fit the specific situation. But there is a point with the social games, that we, to some extent, apprehend social interactions as theater. It

It is late. The psychopath comes in to the place. Looks around, looking for contact. I hide as well as I can behind my beer and my phone. Avoid directing my attention to the other end of the room. Feel the look from behind. Feel the movement in the room. I understand that I have to react. I am put in front of a choice. Still concentrated looking down in week-old sms-conversations. Hear a discrete clearing of the throat. A man in his prime age. He's actually not that offensive. He's quite polite most of the time. It's just that other thing. An uncomfortably intensive gaze maybe. An aura of... ..what? Desperation? Maybe, but still not. A slippery oiliness mixed with a bitter despise. Something within him that makes me feel nailed to the floor. Exposed. A man that I would normally reject. A man that would normally just become a part of the background, anonymous and unattended for. If I hadn't met him before. If we hadn't known about each other for almost ten years. If hadn't felt that he knew me to some extent. Since he actually does. One part of me. One me of all the me I consist of. A strictly limited me. A working-me. A me that is constructed to be pleasing, at service. A drawling hello forces me out of my shelter of dated electrical communication. He kind of extends the words. My name seems to consist of so many more letters than it actually does. And I am presented with a choice. Who of me am I?

<sup>8</sup> Angelöw och Jonsson, *Introduktion till socialpsykologi*, p.9

<sup>9</sup> Erving Goffman, *Jaget och maskerna*, p.58

The couch is made of corduroy. If I were to fall asleep for a little while, you know as it happens sometimes when it's late, I would get striped marks on my cheeks and red ears. But I'm not sleeping now. I'm concentrated and tense. I feel attacked. We are discussing if there exists a self. He's teaching philosophy and religion. I think that it's quite natural to raise this question with him. We are drinking the wine I brought. Not that cheap one, but a quite okay bottle, since we were only going to have a glass. Now I suddenly feel exposed. Is it because he might be right? That the feeling of not being comfortable in ones' self is founded in an exaggerated self-confidence. That it is founded in a fear of being exposed as something less than the claimed. To comfortably gazing down upon everyone else with an awareness of ones' own superiority. Anxiously. It's a long way down.

Is he talking about me?

Suddenly I wish that I hadn't raised this discussion. Suddenly I wish I had just asked him to name-drop some literature, and be cool with that. The bottle is almost empty. It was a nice bottle of wine.

makes our handling of everyday life easier. It creates a social frame that we, participants in the interaction, can relate to and use as foundation. We simplify our communication by accepting an already defined relation between us. Goffman calls this collective representation:

"Apart from the fact that one can use the same facade for various procedures it should be noted that a given social façade tends to become institutionalized in the sense that it gives rise to abstract, stereotyped expectations (...) The facade becomes a collective representation and a reality of its

own."<sup>10</sup>

Goffman claims that the participants in a social interaction always strive to achieve this accord. If the scene is changed or a new actor enters the arena, or if someone temporarily is out of character, the other participants try to, as smoothly as possible, fit their own roles to the new situation. This might seem natural and is often happening unconsciously. Sometimes though, this transformation happens too suddenly, or becomes in other ways too apparent for this transition to happen smoothly, and that is when we become aware of our roles, our façades. One could argue that the façade becomes visible when it somehow finds itself in conflict either with the established agreement of the social interaction, or with a subjective standing point in relation to the situation. And it is when the façade becomes visible, when the social game becomes outspoken that we feel uncomfortable in the situation. Emma Engdahl, in relation to Goffmans' theory of role-playing, argues that we need other peoples' acknowledgement for us to integrate our roles in our personalities. "*We just have to agree with other people that who we claim to be is actually who we are.*"<sup>11</sup> That is, the creation of a representational self, an identity, is constructed and confirmed in interactions with our surroundings.

Swedish sociologists Nils Hammrén and Thomas Johansson discuss identity as a social phenomenon that is connected to social roles and is closely related to the perspective of Erving Goffman. They claim that the social identity *places* the individual in the society.<sup>12</sup> That is, what we show to other people, through our actions, visual appearance, statements, etc, tells them how to react, and what relationship we have to each other. Our behavior, our representation of our social, public self, is guided by our social background and cultural inheritance but can consciously be modified to suit our private goals. Hamrén and Johansson claim that in our post traditional society, we can create our own identity but they also enlighten the conflict in the freedom that we have to do so.

<sup>10</sup> Erving Goffman, *Jaget och maskerna*, p.33

<sup>11</sup> Emma Engdahl, *Konsten att vara sig själv*, p.52

<sup>12</sup> Nils Hammarén & Thomas Johansson, *Identitet*, p.27

*“People actively write their own stories. There is also an accentuated tendency to question social, cultural and material borders. The notion that one can choose sexuality, body, profession, life and ways of relating to the social reality is very strong. At the same time we know that it in many cases occur a great gap between expectations, actual possibilities and results.”<sup>13</sup>*

So the creation of an outer, public self works as a tool to help us interact with each other. It simplifies communication, places us in an understandable setting (society) and might also help us improve our influence on our social status. In some situations this public self can give rise to a feeling of alienation, and discomfort. The risk is that we identify ourselves with a one-dimensional image of ourselves. Or that we experience a too big gap between our public and private self. The representational self can also become an integrated part of our identity. In that sense we create ourselves.

### **Borders**

As discussed above, the public self works mainly as a communicational tool in interaction with others, but it can also function as a protection for the private self. There is a thought that we human-beings are constantly working on defending our intimate relational sphere and our integrity against society<sup>14</sup>, and that it is in this private sphere that the self is

cultivated. In that sense, the façade that we put up is like an armor. To put up borders around one’s private self is not only a way of simplifying communication or hiding unflattering aspects of one’s personality but also works as protection. It is important to make it clear to oneself where this border is drawn and to keep something within the intimate personal sphere. This preserves the feeling of authenticity and also keeps an emotional charge in the private. But when the public and the private are no longer oppositional, but integrated with each-other, it’s hard to determine such a border.

Hammarén and Johansson claim that the increased media-consumption dissolves our view of the borders between real/imaginary and private/public.<sup>15</sup> The media can contribute with an emotional connection to our surroundings. Take for example the girl that sits on the subway listening to music. She enters a certain kind of mood that is totally independent of the people and the environment around her. What is the actual reality in that situation, her apprehension of the situation or the physical one? It is as though the real and the imaginary reality are being morphed together. In a similar way the private and the public are being morphed together when our surroundings more and more enter our private sphere. In the morning we relate to coffee-making at the same time as we relate to hurricanes. But the private is also, although in a semi-staged form, invading the public space

Some of us are standing on the balcony. I’m a bit afraid that the neighbors might hear us. I usually am. We are all a little bit chocked. A collective agreement of where to set the borders. That’s not how to behave! She reads the post one more time. Completely wrong forum! Really! How does she think! I would never! We would never! We’re standing there safe in our agreed unity; we certainly know how to behave. A post on a social forum on internet. An inverted trespassing. Emotional exposure. A big fucking spotlight on some-ones’ misery. We never asked for such a confidence. We don’t want to know. Not from this person that we actually don’t know. At all. We decide to not engage in it. I mean, we’re no emotional trash-bin where anything, disregarding origin, can be dumped. Cigarettes are stumped out in the little glass-jar with a lid. Not throw on the ground. We reenter. Puts on some music. I’m a bit afraid that the neighbors might hear us. I usually am.

<sup>13</sup> Nils Hammarén & Thomas Johansson, *Identitet*, p.30

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Johansson, *Bilder av självet*, p.140

<sup>15</sup> Nils Hammarén & Thomas Johansson, *Identitet*, p.47

through personal interviews and reality shows. And then, in that grey zone we have all social media; the places where our persons might take a step into the medial world and the relations that used to be placed in the private sphere, suddenly become public. As the borders between our private and public sphere become more blurry, it might be hard to keep the balance between the public and the

I call him my idol. When I was five I wanted to marry him. At that time I was the brave one. I climbed the highest trees and I was the first of us to dive into the water. He was more of a careful kind of character. It shifted. Now I feel quite like a coward. I call him my idol. Once he used to walk around in our country house in a torn old robe and ugly second hand underwear. Now when I see him he looks smart. Maybe even hot. Tall and dark with a strong character. He's quick. He comfortably holds a conversation with anyone. Warm. That's it, warm. I call him my idol. He works with one of those important jobs. He works with one of those jobs were you meet desperate people. He works with one of those jobs where you have to choose, not the best, but the least bad alternative. And he's still warm. I call him my idol. Not so much because of what he does. What he achieves is of less importance. I've followed him during different periods of time. He seldom speaks about it. But I know. I know what he's carried and still carries. I call him my idol. He never became bitter. He's still warm. I call him my idol.

private self. The increased availability for social interaction sometimes restrains the private self, and this stresses the need for determining and keeping a private sphere for oneself.

### Sharing and exposing

Although there is a great need for determining borders and protecting one's private sphere, it is also essential to expose it. To get to know and be known for real. What do we mean by knowing someone for real? Isn't that thought grounded on the thought that there is some kind of authentic core within that we normally don't show? Or is it a way of referring to a more complex and diverse person than an applied identity? That this someone shows all of her/himself. Johansson claims that a friendship relation is a place for resting. To just be. And it is in that situation that the self is constituted:

*"The bounds that people ties during their life*

*create the foundation of collected confirmations and identifications that are used to formulate an identity. These bounds – both historical and current – are one of the foundations for creating a somewhat cohesive story of the self."*<sup>16</sup>

To let someone in to the most private sphere means also an acceptance that this someone gets access to an unaltered image of one-self. At least in the best of worlds. There is something liberating about that, to let go of the outer view of oneself. There's no underlying agenda in a friendship relation. There are no demands for an outer prestige. You don't have to achieve something in particular. In such a situation it's easier to trust to be met by an uncritical gaze, even without restraints of the personality. In this uncensored stage, it is easier to come to understand which parts of the self feel most comfortable. Looking at it in that way, the sharing and exposing of our private self plays an important part in our self-awareness and it is necessary for our creation of a complete self. Without the exposé of our private self, there will be a sensation of a gap between our public and private self that will be almost impossible to bridge.

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas Johansson, *Bilder av självet*, p.140

# The Locket as a representation of self

As I've already mentioned I will use the locket as a medium, a representation of this split notion of self that I have discussed above. To use a locket as a representation of self is somewhat problematic. It is a way of using the locket as a whole, the inside and the outside at the same time. The private aspect of the locket becomes a representation, that is, it is used to tell a story, and is no longer intended only for the wearer. The *idea* of the locket becomes more important than its original function. Having said that, there is an interesting parallel to be drawn using the locket, in its essence, as representation of self:

The outside/The public self

The inside/The private self

The action of opening a locket/Sharing, opening up to other people

The action of wearing a locket/Awareness of borders, to consciously not sharing

Even though the thought construction of an inner/private and outer/public self is very rough, it still applies to many situations in our daily life. It is in the meeting with other people that the need for an identity arises<sup>17</sup>.

I believe that the feeling of an outer and an inner self often is based in an ambivalence towards a social situation. That I pay attention to a framework that both attracts and repulses me. It is in those situations that our split self becomes apparent, and can be felt, but also questioned. What, and in which way, we choose to communicate to each other is subjective and in constant change, but it is partly decided by our surroundings' expectations; I choose to either follow or break the current norms. I create my own public self. But there has to be a balance between our public and private self, and that stresses the need of setting up personal borders, not only for a bigger social benefit, but also to be able to cope with, to interpret and process everyday-life.

My interest lies in when the imbalance occurs, when there is a feeling of holding back, of not saying everything or sometimes of exposing, saying too much. I want my work to show the ambivalence and

Jewellery more than any other object I can think of, is the closest example of something that represents both a person's identity and their soul and not surprisingly we associate jewellery objects easily to a person, real or imagined. Jewellery is not for something; it is for and of someone.



Lin Cheung

Each person have their own values an view-points. And each person judge and perceive all matters from an aggregation of these various values and viewpoints. Our individual perception seems absolute to us. Although it is only the accumulation of the feeling and movement of one mind and therefore has no claim to be taken as the truth. What is in front of us and the things we hold in our hands may be illusion. Because the senses that create images in our mind derive from identity . And I do not think that our identity is always clear. (...) My aim is to find the source of my identity by creating.

Sachiyo Higaki

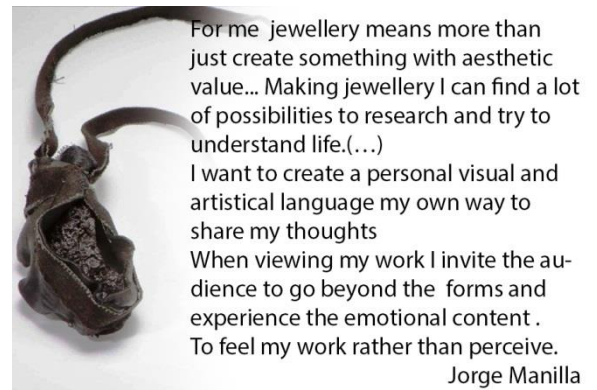


this split notion of self. In its construction, one can say that the locket already possesses this duality. But it becomes even more complex when one regards the locket in relation to the wearer. To use the private part of the locket as part of the storytelling means that I rob the wearer of the possibility to fill it with his/her own personally loaded objects. Instead I must trust the wearer to engage in the story told through the locket. I use the locket to tell the story of a misbalance between a private and public self, and then I leave it to the wearer to make it the story

<sup>17</sup> Angelöw och Jonsson, *Introduktion till socialpsykologi*, p.24

of his/her private and public self.

In the introduction I mentioned that I, in my work, aim for an emotional communication. It is a way for me to validate my practice, to try to find a meaning in what I do beyond an aesthetically pleasing outcome and a subjective joy of making. I do this by choosing themes that I can approach from an emotional angle. Even though the research behind my project might have a more intellectual character, it is based on an emotional state of mind. I am not alone in this strive to try to communicate on a personal, emotional level. The quotes found in these last pages are taken from artist statements and interviews on jewellery sites on internet. The



To me, making has a lot to do with a notion of loss, guilt and destruction. Or more precisely: human loss, human guilt and human destructive nature. If all we've got as humans is body and if all representations we make are guilty for merely being representations of the real thing, can objects resembling body fragments then perhaps still convey some truth?

Hannah Joris



cited artists are: Jorge Manilla,<sup>18</sup> Hannah Joris,<sup>19</sup> Bettina Speckner,<sup>20</sup> Sachiyo Higaki,<sup>21</sup> Tanel Veenre<sup>22</sup> and Lin Cheung.<sup>23</sup> I believe that the urge of addressing the personal, and bringing up different aspects of identity within jewellery art, springs from the preconception of jewellery as no more than an embellishment. That is also why it becomes interesting. From my part I see an excitement in the contradiction of using what might be considered a fashion attribute to problematize, make aware of,

an awkward attitude towards the presentation of self. To use the physical aspects of the locket to talk about a mental state and an emotional reaction to a social situation. Because that is what the imbalance of a public and a private self does with me: it evokes an emotional reaction to the social situation I find myself in.

"I never work with the intention to decorate things or to make them look prettier", Bettina Speckner points out. "I try to discover the soul of an object or the essence of a photograph and want to shape something new which appeals to me and to other people far beyond the optical appearance."



A beautiful piece of jewellery is exciting. Excitement is a quality that comes into being upon collapse of the quantifiable and measurable into the inexplicable and personal. Fleeing from gold-edged emptiness binds the artist's soul with the thing being created. It's all somehow wordlessly conspiratorial. Artist and jewellery become witnesses to a crime in which they are both complicit. (...) A talented jeweler says: The quality of the jewel is in its intellectuality. For an artist the jewel is something very personal through which he can express his concerns, feelings, ideas.

Tanel Veenre



<sup>18</sup> <http://www.jewellerysessions.com/?p=468>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.jewellerysessions.com/?p=316>

<sup>20</sup> <http://klimt02.net/jewellers/bettina-speckner>

<sup>21</sup> <http://klimt02.net/jewellers/sachiyo-higaki>

<sup>22</sup> <http://klimt02.net/jewellers/tanel-veenre>

<sup>23</sup> <http://current-obsession.com/Averagely-Unique-with-Lin-Cheung>

## Final words

To work with the theme of an imbalance of a public/private self feels relevant to me, today maybe more than ever. The world is shrinking, and I feel like we have to relate to more behavioral rules today than just twenty years ago. The freedom of expressing ourselves has almost become a *demand* of expressing ourselves: it demands a presence in different social environments (both physical and virtual) and a clear readable display of our identity within these situations. I understand it as the focus on our public selves has increased. Within social psychology the function of a split self is examined. The two main aspects of constructing a public self are to simplify communication in social interactions and to set up a border to protect a personal sphere. I choose to approach this theme in my jewellery. I work with the locket which in its construction already has a public and a private part, but by using the locket as a whole in my storytelling, also the private part becomes public. Instead I must trust in the wearer to emotionally connect to the piece, and in that sense create his/her own personal connection to it. Art-historian and writer Marian Unger says:

” In the end, I think the social and emotional values of jewellery are the strongest of them all, with money currently being a runner up. Put concisely: jewelry feeds on human nature. Both makers and beholders of jewellery have to respect what feeds them, otherwise they have a hollow profession.”<sup>24</sup>

I also believe that the social and emotional values of jewellery are the strongest. That jewellery has the ability to be part of a set of tools to demonstrate a public self, but at the same time connect to a private, personal self. That is why it becomes interesting for me to use jewellery as a forum to approach the theme of a public and a private self.

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<sup>24</sup> Marian Unger, Freedom has its limitations – Jewellery today, seen from a duch perspective, lecture held at Munich’s international design museum, <http://www.die-neue-sammlung.de/blog/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Marjan-A21.pdf>



## Abstract - Inside an artistic process.

Well it can work two ways... It can feel like a restraint, a hindrance and it can be the protection we hold on to. This façade, this social persona we display. Often our public selves evoke both of these emotions simultaneously. It is never black or white. There is a build in ambiguity in this theme, and in this project.

*May 2013: "I have chosen to work with the theme of an inner and an outer self."* Well, I was quite convinced that that was what I was going to do, but as it often ends up, the shape of the project changes during the course of its development. It took quite some time to crystallize where I stood and where my interest actually lies. This dualistic view on humankind is explored in so many different areas such as philosophy, psychology and religion. So where do I stand? What is my take on it? I am quite a self-reflecting person by nature. I grew up as an observer in social situations. I was most comfortable standing by, listening and observing people. I changed my behavior growing up, but this interest in inter-human relations and behavior still interests me. Our behavior is what makes us human, and it is also what defines who we are in other people's eyes. These self-reflecting and observing aspects of my person are some of the reasons why I have



Someone told me that I have to sell myself. That my person is my brand. That I have to network. That I have to be present at all times, in all kinds of forum. That I have to be aware of how I present myself since my person is my greatest capital. That that is the way the society works today...

been aware, and taken a great interest, in what I choose to not say in certain situations. Which impulses I choose not to act on. Secrets are intriguing. *"I have chosen to work with the theme of an inner and an outer self."* It is a big and blurry theme. So it developed into: *"An investigation of the misbalance between a public and a private self."* Which is what I'm working with, where my interest lies, but as I started doing the actual physical work I felt that it was still quite undefined. I believe that I am a craftsman in the sense that I

have to think with my hands. While actually doing work I become aware of where my interest lies, and where the thinking has gone astray. For me, working with a project, never ends up where I imagined it would in the beginning. It is an organic development that takes many (too many?) sidetracks. Whilst working, and looking at, analyzing, my own work I can see that what I'm actually trying to express are the feelings that might be evoked by holding back impulses and not speaking your mind. That is: When it becomes more important what you appear to be than what you feel.

Situations where it almost becomes a choking feeling of restraint. A lonely, fragile feeling of self-inflicted exclusion. Layers, layers, layers. A shiny surface, a need to pretend to be as smooth as expected of one. Secrets. Many secrets. Too many secrets.



There are some key-words that have had a prominent position within this project and those are:

Force.

**Fragility.**

**Secrets.**

**Restraints.**

Exposure.

Loneliness.

Confusion.

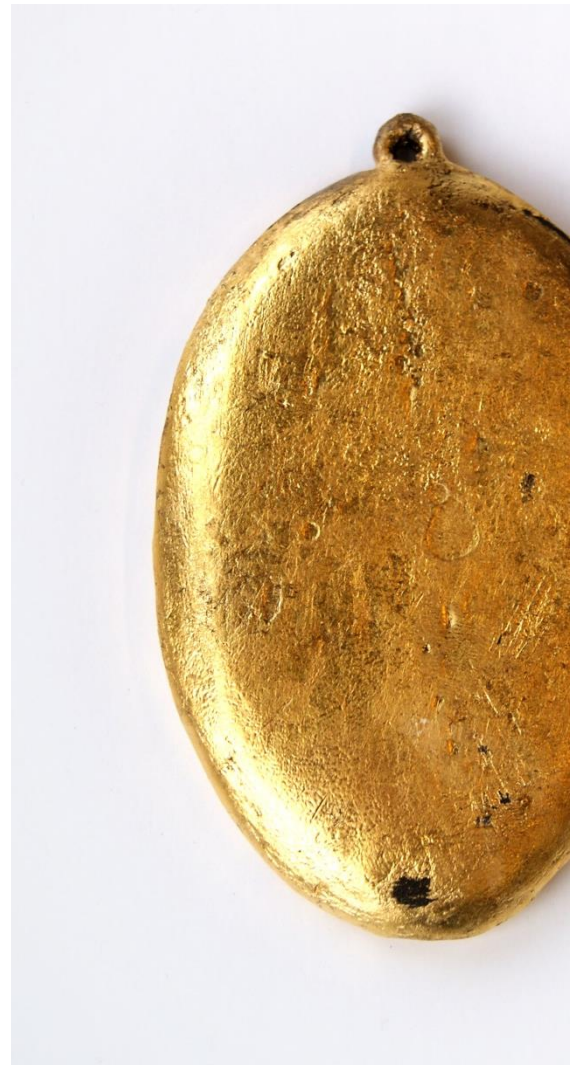
**Layers.**

Exclusion.

Petrifying.

These keywords refer to the feelings being evoked in situations where you don't speak your minds. That is how I work. I have to have an emotional ground, searching for an emotional expression in my work. Emotions are abstract. The difficulties in working with a project that has such an abstract approach is to find a clear, yet open way of communicating. How can I use the materials that I have at hands to evoke something that is not clearly defined? Something that is subjective and changeable. And how can I do it the risk of falling into clichés and being too nostalgic? Materiality is important for me. In a project like this it is a slow search for the right material, material expression and treatment. The actual work can't be done until I find "that thing" in the material. It can be a surface, a transparency, a way it feels to touch. Sadly it is a time consuming approach, where I keep blocking myself. But I see this struggle as an inevitable

part in working with emotionally loaded themes since I process aspects of the theme at the same time as I make the work. In the initial face I often have a quite straightforward and pragmatic approach in choosing materials. Direct references to their origin, their texture or materiality (soft, permanent, moldable, and so on) are of equal importance as their symbolical and social value. But as the work proceeds this straightforwardness is being replaced by the unexpected



qualities that are being found on the way. That is what I search for, and that is why it keeps engaging me, since I am not sure what I'm searching for, I only know when I see it. And then we have the symbols... The most prominent symbol in my work is the locket. The locket that in its original form has an inside and an outside, that can contain secrets. For me the strongest aspects of the locket is that it hides something, and it shows off that it is hiding something in plain sight. It also has a strong reference to a person, or a portrait of a person. Of course it has many more references, as I discussed in the essay, but for me, right now, those are the most prominent ones. I don't make actual lockets. If I would I feel like the focus would be on what the locket contains and not on what

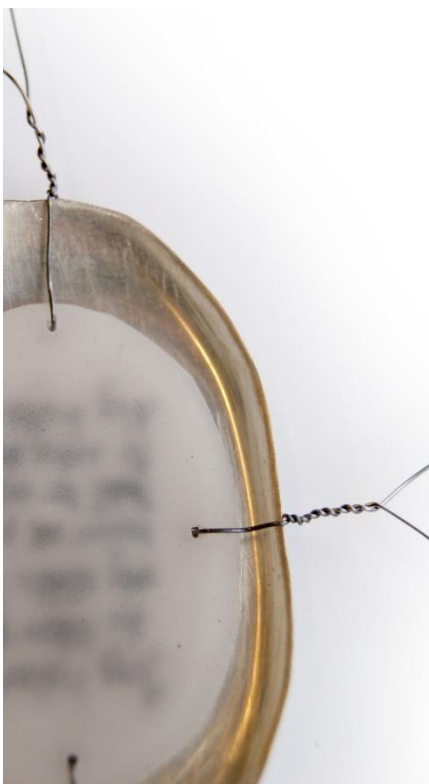
Things are starting to take a shape. Materials that have been there from the beginning return, others have found their place during the way. It all has been reduced to a thought around secrets, around isolation, violation and restraint. And frustration. Something heavy, excluding and then all of these layers. Layers that hide and layers that smoothen. Layers that come off, that aren't consistent, that change. All of those things that are not shown, that keeps on not being shown and becomes suffocating.

the locket might stand for. By making the locket into a brooch, or just using the shape

of the locket, I try to encourage an interest in the storytelling aspects of the piece of jewellery. I try to see my work as a whole, as individual pieces that enters the same subject from different points. That they all speak of the same thing, but different aspects of it. There are different tools within jewellery that can be used to tell a story: the material, the symbols, the connotations and

the placement and interaction with the body. The aim is to make them work together in a way that evokes an emotional response in the wearer as well as in the viewer. A piece of jewellery communicates in different ways in that sense. Between the piece of jewellery and the wearer there is an intimate, physical communication that is based on the senses. Physical aspects such as weight, surfaces that are in contact with the skin, size, but also the memories and personal stories connected to the piece create a reading of the piece that is truly personal. The aesthetic features of the piece are more directed to a viewer. But somehow they must correlate with each other. They must all take part in telling the same story.

In this project I have tried to capture emotions that might be evoked whilst restraining yourself, holding back impulses and not speaking your mind. When the public person takes over the private person. With a poetic aesthetical language, that is still containing an element of awkwardness, I try to capture this dualistic unease.





There is a tenderness, an intimacy...  
...but an awkward one.

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Stockholm, March 2014

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