

The Third Face

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Abstract

The theory of the three faces is utilized in my artistic research as a framework to reflect upon and analyze four bodily oil paintings in different materials and sizes. The third face is who we are and our true reflection, which only our soul is aware of.

These works have been produced for the final Graduation Masters exhibition at Kjøpmannsgata Ung Kunst, Nils Aas and Galleri KiT in Trondheim, Norway, in 2022. My research addresses factors that increase the potential for relational interaction and discussion between the viewer and the painting through examples of perspective, movement, and the symbolic thought behind the motifs. I examine, reflect upon, and discuss how the three faces that we all possess can be combined into practice and thought and generate new forms of knowledge production.

The writing is divided into chapters consisting of the inner and outer bodies, the mental and physical choices in material and size, and an expression between flesh-toned colors and motifs, and how each of these relates to one another and can impact the observation of art.

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1. Intro: What is *The Third Face*?

The Japanese say you have three faces. The first face, you show to the world. The second face, you show to your close friends and your family. The third face, you never show anyone. (Unknown proverb¹)

What do we hide underneath the surface? Who are we deep inside?

I remember the time when I came across the Japanese proverb relating to our three faces in 2014, a time in my life when everything got turned upside down in a second, and I tried to keep up with the rest of the world even though my world stopped. When a close person gets sick, the fear of losing that person becomes your every day, every minute. And this wears on you and your mind, as you don't want the rest of the world to see this. You put on another face, a face with smiles and laughter. It is a defense against facing the world you're in and not letting anyone get under your skin and actually see the real you. I think everyone can recognize themselves in this experience. We have all, at one point, looked in the mirror with a rendered smile and corrected ourselves into someone who doesn't show our true selves at that moment in time. The philosophy of the three faces has produced in me an awareness that we all have experienced this and cemented a base that has circulated in both theme and expression within my practice. The third face is who we are, our true reflection. It's only ourselves that are aware of this face. Every thought and action of this face is the inner truth. Everything we do, our thoughts, and how we behave is known by the third face. A face of yourself that only you will ever see.

The Third Face focuses on the inner person and the troubles that we hide. My aim is to attempt to touch both the mental and physical states of the viewer, reflecting my experiences into and projecting them outwards through naked and distorted bodies that challenge the viewer through size and material choices. These body images open up moments for different possibilities of viewing, utilizing figurative and contrasting surrealistic approaches. This process results in something recognizable but foreign at the same time. With works that can raise questions that only the observer can answer, the set of questions, dependent on the time in life and the past, will change depending on who is looking at it. It creates a connection between the viewer and the piece, with the viewer as the main character, and that completes the artwork. How, I ask, is it possible to touch both the mental and physical state of the viewer? Or is it possible at all? Then we need to know what and how to make these desired connections.

¹ Different Shades. (2015). [Blog]. Retrieved from <https://seekerofthesouls.wordpress.com/tag/japanese-proverb/>

2. The Inner Body

We all have a way of seeing and we all have different experiences and knowledge that change the way we perceive the world or an artwork. But what if an artwork can direct the viewer's attention in such a way that they take the work further thought their own experiences and lives?

As in the phrase, "*A picture is worth a thousand words*," an image can demonstrate an idea and emotions more instant than text. It gives the viewer a way to perceive the essence of the story without a word.² Communicating without words is something I'm exploring, since, I feel in a lot of circumstances, there is no specific word or way to explain what it is that I'm looking for. It's a mindset that might be different from person to person but is an expression that is not foreign to the viewer.

"...Contingency occurs when an image contains an element of impossibility or uncertainty because an audience needs to cope with unfamiliarity by attempting to force the image to make sense. Imagination builds from contingency when an audience speculates about the image with "an uneven regard for what is actually shown" ³

I aim to raise questions how things appear in our experience, or how we experience things through meanings and objects. How this may have an impact on our personal understanding.⁴ A shade of blue might, in your eyes, be a memory of the stuffed animal you had as a child, but for another, it could bring back memories of the color of the nurse's uniform when you were in the hospital during a time of sickness.

Symbolism has been a big part of art and the painter's way of communicating, as in the still life with vanitas.⁵ Here, the different elements in the work stand for different parts of being human and our mortality. By putting a skull in the image, we all connect the element to death, the fact that we are all going to die one day. Having this complexity of symbolism and symbols in the work enables it to be read in a certain way and through a certain mindset. To find the world in between a neutral world where there is room for the viewer to see other alternative realities through metaphorical symbols and settings.

² This is a very common expression in the West and is used widely in popular culture.

³ Deuel, C (2017) *The relationship between viewer and fine art*, page 4.

⁴ Smith, D. (2018). Phenomenology (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy/Summer 2018 Edition) page 2.

⁵ Esaak, Shelley. (2020, August 27). *Vanitas Painting*. Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/vanitas-painting-definition-183179>

2.1. The Motif: The fleshy body

I see the body as a tool for expressing ideas in my work: reaching out to the viewer with something they are familiar with. Bare skin symbolizes who we are, *our true self*, and is manifested by the consistent use of nude, flesh-like colors in the paintings. Since this is also a process of understanding myself through my own artistic production, I explore the body as mirrored by my own, with my own skin, form and shape.⁶ I don't necessarily see it as the specific person or myself or a model, but rather an instrument and a being that shows something recognizable and, at the same time, something transformed. I see the body as a symbol of life and living, with its ups and downs, the uncertainty we live in, and the knowledge that we have all been born, and that one day we will die. The presence of skin lends a sense of vulnerability to the works, but it also serves as a reflection on the self. It reveals who we truly are, the outside of the inside of the human. The skin is also the organ that protects us from the outer world. It is the barrier between ourselves and others.

“...Skin is a responsive, tactic boundary between self and other, and the inside and outside of the individual. Vital to survival, skin is a geography where two can meet...”⁷

The pinkish and fleshy skin tone palette in the works is a way to abstract the skin, to bring it into the imagination while still being recognizable through its base tones. To transfer the image from the real, corporeal body to the theoretical mind. The color gives the work a possibility to play with an abstraction of the body. The result is somewhere between imagination and reality, as a symbol of skin. I remove ‘human imperfections’ such as body hair, cellulite, birthmarks, and scars, making the body into something recognizable. As with a digital retouching filter, I remove the specific person that the image is based upon. The works are about what is beneath the skin rather than the skin itself, the world in which the idea and thought about what’s underneath the skin may come through stronger. If the works had been hyper-realistic with all the “right” colors and details, the result would be a portrait of the model. I want the body to be used as a tool and not a single individual.

Thoughts of fleshy bodies and skin inevitably conjure the works of Jenny Saville.⁸ She made an imprint on me and my practice with her fleshy paintings. With the rawness of the true self, the female naked body lies between subject and object, a body that is disintegrated.

As she said in an interview for the Independent in 1994: *“It’s flesh, and the paint itself is the body, but the theory behind each one is essential, as important as the painting. I’m not trying to teach, just make people discuss.”*⁹ Her works, for example *Reverse* (2002-03), have influenced my palette and the use human skin and flesh as a tool and symbols. The idea of bringing up a theme, something raw, has had a significant impact on my practice because of Jenny Saville’s works. In my own works, the focus has been on the body, creating an uncanny feeling by adding parts that are not natural but rather part of an aesthetic expression. Something that cannot be defined at first glance affects something else: our memory and subconscious. I want to add and remove details and parts, to make it into a new world akin to how Jenny Saville uses the human body as an instrument to show the truth of being human, or as I see it, *The Third Face*.

⁶ Or I use models that are similar to me in body and skin tones.

⁷ Ronnberg, A (2010) *The book of Symbols, Reflections on archetypal images*, page 338.

⁸ The art story. (2018). *Jenny Saville Biography, Life & Quotes*. [Retrieved 29 March 2022] <https://www.theartstory.org/artist/saville-jenny/life-and-legacy/>

⁹ Davies, H for the Independent (1994) *Interview: This is Jenny, and this is her plan...* part 25.

Figure 1:
Reverse (2002-03),
Jenny Saville.
Oil painting on
canvas
213 x 244 cm



Figure 2:
Gordian Knot (2021),
Madeleine Heyman
Oil painting on
canvas
200 x 200 cm

2.2. Eye-tracking

As one of my personal artistic methods when working I pose the questions: What does a viewer want to see? What would drive their focus to specific areas of the canvas?

In 2020, I performed a study to track the eyes of the viewers in front of a screen for 20 seconds using the program Gazerecorder,¹⁰ that created data analyzing the movement of the viewer's attention/directed gaze around the presented artwork.

It showed what areas of the work were more interesting for the eye and what compositional areas attracted the eyes of the viewers. From this, I reflected on the data and applied it to my painting, attempting to direct the gaze of the viewer even more, to see how I could influence a more personal connection between the viewer and my work. I was trying to understand the way a person looks at the work and build the composition from there. The study with eye-tracking was performed with a large-scale oil painting *Uten title* (2021), which gave me information about how and where people look at the painting. By conducting this research, I can determine which parts of my work draw the most attention, as well as which parts become the focus and over a timeline of events. By using eye-tracking, I have a tool I intend to use in future works, to learn to better choreograph the eyes.

The results from the eye-tracking show that the gaze is driven first to the hands. By presenting heatmaps (see figure on next page) of where the gaze has been the most, I have gotten information about where the viewers are first focusing their attention and for how long.

Is this because we all know what they should look like? Is it because hands can express a feeling? Or is it something the audience recognizes as human in the work of limbs? Or because there are no faces in this work where the viewer searches for expression in the body?

The hands are a part of our senses, a way to see when you don't have sight. They are a part of our bodies that makes us understand the world around us. The need for understanding puts us at ease in our minds, filling the urge to understand something. But hands can also show emotions as do our faces.

A tight fist shows anger, while a finger tapping the table is a sign of stress or nervousness. If there is a painting without a clear face, the eyes are drawn towards the hands since this is a way to understand and read the human in the image. And since the work doesn't have faces, but the body and flesh without a personal trait, we search for where we can read something about the person.

¹⁰ "Eye-tracking is a sensor technology that makes it possible for a computer or other device to know where a person is looking. An eye tracker can detect the presence, attention, and focus of the user. It allows for unique insights into human behavior and facilitates natural user interfaces in a broad range of devices." (Gazerecorder.com FAQ. <https://gazerecorder.com/>)

Figure 3:

Uten title (2021)

Oil painting on canvas

Madeleine Heyman

290x255 cm



Image 1: 0 seconds

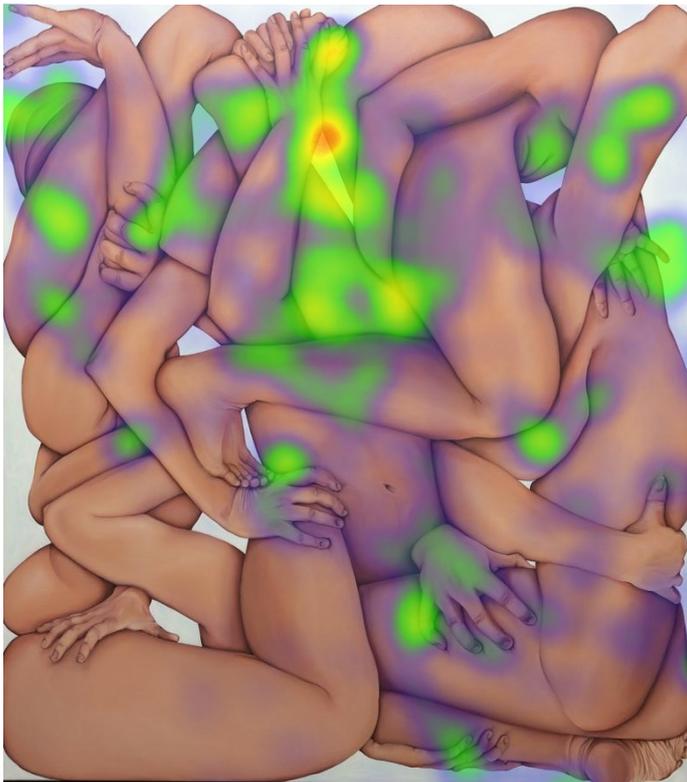


Image 2: 5 seconds

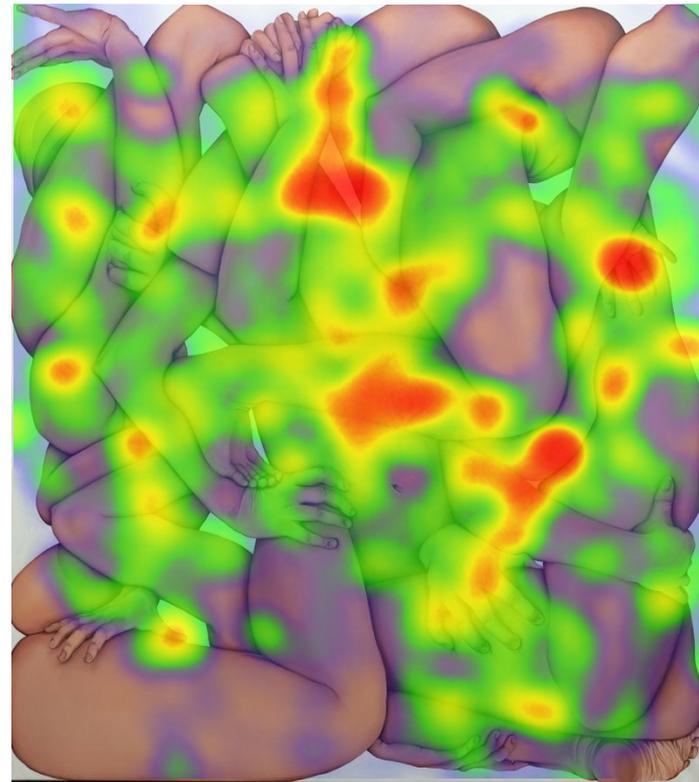


Image 3: 20 seconds

Study of *Uten title* (2021):

Three images with the heatmap, the focus point, where the most focus has been and has not been. Done with 21 test persons, both artist and non-artist, in the age between 5 to 81 years old.

Image 1: The artwork, the image they see in the program/on the screen.

Image 2: 5 seconds into the eye-tracking, here shows where the first gaze is focused.

Image 3: 20 seconds into the eye-tracking, where red is the most viewed and green is a glance.

3. The Outer Body

The average visitor in a gallery stays for around 15 to 30 seconds¹¹ to see a painting, and then they move to the next one. How do you catch the visitor's interest and make them stay and absorb the work for a longer time? What factors can make them stay longer, except the motifs and symbols, and how is that achievable?

After gaining data on what draws the eyes, I want to learn what factors can affect the time the viewer takes to observe the work through the construction of the paintings. I want the viewer to physically move and not just stand still and view the work, to keep their interest a little longer; to compel them to move around the work to fully appreciate it.

*“...the visual experience of movement can be due to three factors: Physical movement, optical movement, perceptual movement (add kinesthetic factor) produce the sensation of motion all by themselves under certain conditions, e.g., by vertigo...”*¹²

In my work, I try to turn the paintings into something different. It can be through the motif itself, the addition of something unrecognizable to a recognizable motif or the use of different materials and sizes than in traditional painting. I'm looking for something that stands out from the rest, a twist within the work.

¹¹ Cascone, S (2019) *The Average Person Spends 27 Seconds Looking at a Work of Art. Now, 166 Museums Are Joining Forces to Ask You to Slow Down*, page 1.

J. Paul Getty Museum Education Staff (n.d) *Thirty-Second Look—Getty Center*, page 1.

Kaplan, I (2017) *How Long Do You Need to Look at a Work of Art to Get It?* page 1.

¹² Arnheim, R (1954) *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye*, page 379.

3.1. Size

Coming into a room where you see a massive (bigger than the average human or bigger than me) painting hanging draws your eyes to it directly.

You look at it from a distance, and after that moment, you take some steps closer to look at the details. How can I influence a shift in the movement of the viewer? How do I change the two viewpoints into three or more?

Size in art matters because of its power to affect the way the audience responds. How do the works affect our inner senses and our emotions through their scale? Not just bodily feelings, but also emotional states?

“...An otherwise unremarkable object blown up and oversized plays with our visual senses, compelling us to linger longer and examine all its angles –something we wouldn’t be able to do if the object were its natural size...”¹³

Being able to affect the viewer physically using only scale is an important factor in my work. What you see from a distance change when you get closer. The illusion changes depending on the viewer's placement in the room. This prompted a secondary reflection: what is a way to encourage the viewer by the inner force of recognition to move physically with a bigger work?



Figure 4:
Uten title (2021)
Oil painting on canvas
Madeleine Heyman
290x255 cm

¹³ Artdex, (n.d) *Does size in art matter? - The overwhelming power of size and scale*, page 2.

3.2 Mirrors

Objects and materials that we might take for granted are something we all have and use every day. The mirror reflects the possibility or impossibility of our visual representation of ourselves as living creatures, our existence as changing. However, it also raises fundamental questions about who we are (*the third face*), how we perceive the world, and how we comprehend our existence.¹⁴

When we take a quick look in the mirror, we reaffirm our sense of ourselves. This helps us adjust if needed, for example when we are looking at ourselves in the mirror while crying and smiling. The mirror, as a material in the works, gives them a deeper connection to the viewer because the first visual aspect of the work is their reflection, a trail to connect with themselves and be faced with their third face.

... From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there. Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am....”¹⁵

My explorations with mirrors within the work *(Un)Revealed* (2020) have revealed a way to manipulate the mirror by removing the actual mirror/reflective material so that only clear glass remains. This craft has given me the possibility to work with a new dimension in the mirror, to trick the eye of the viewer. This new technique took over a year to develop and explore, since the technique of removing mirror from glass surfaces is not easy to access and not something I’ve seen anyone else working with.



Figure 5:
You are still here (2013)
Sandblasted mirrored
glass and metal fixtures
Mona Hatoum
38 x 29,2 x 0,5 cm

¹⁴ Malagón-Kurka, M. (2019), *The Art Object as Mirror or Screen: Reflections on Perception, Temporality, and Empathy in Scar Muñoz's Work*, page 762.

¹⁵ Foucault, M. (1967). *Of other spaces - Heterotopias*. Translated from *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* no. 5 (1984) (5th ed.) page 4.

Through my observations while exhibiting this work, I have noted that the mirror engages the viewer to stay and inspect the work for a longer period of time. The two-point view becomes four here when they walk to see the work from both sides.

As in the work of Mona Hatoum,¹⁶ *You are still here* (2013), a mirror piece where the viewer's presence makes the work - that you are still here. Otherwise, you would not be present in the reflection where the same words are carved into its surface. This starts a connective thought process within the viewer; it touches their subconscious and personal life.



Figure 6:
(Un)revealed (2020)
Madeleine Heyman
Oil painting on mirror
118 x 117 cm



¹⁶ *Who is Mona Hatoum?* (2022). Retrieved 9 March 2022, from <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/mona-hatoum-2365/who-is-mona-hatoum>

3.3 Illusions: Anamorphic image

I wanted to try something new in my works, a new method of moving the viewer. But I wanted to do it through the traditional painting format, to make the work both recognizable in one spot and unrecognizable in another. But how can this be possible?

I have been searching to find a way to make paintings with illusions, which has led to an interest in anamorphic¹⁶ images, as seen in the work *The Ambassadors* (1533), by Hans Holbein the Younger¹⁷. It fascinates me that a painting that is soon to be 500 years old has this technique. It is, for me, very complicated and shows that these ideas about how to see and move around art have existed for a long period. It is a method of playing with the viewer and choreographing their placement in the room using a painted technique. This is a way to unfold the movement of the viewer and to urge them to walk into a three-step view instead of two.



Figure 7:
The Ambassadors (1533)
Oil painting on canvas
Hans Holbein the Younger
207 x 210cm



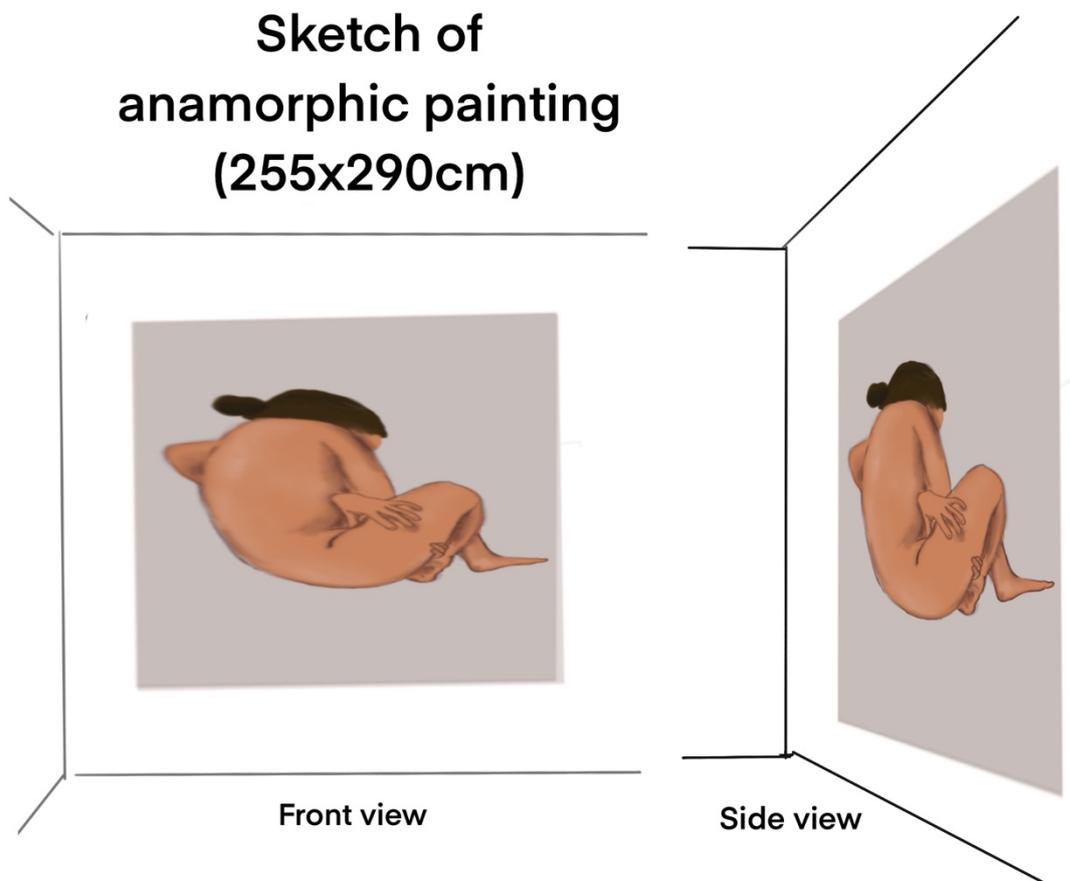
¹⁷ Cartwright, M. (2020). *Hans Holbein the Younger*. [Retrieved 11 February 2022]
https://www.worldhistory.org/Hans_Holbein_the_Younger/

4. Conclusion

4.1. The final works

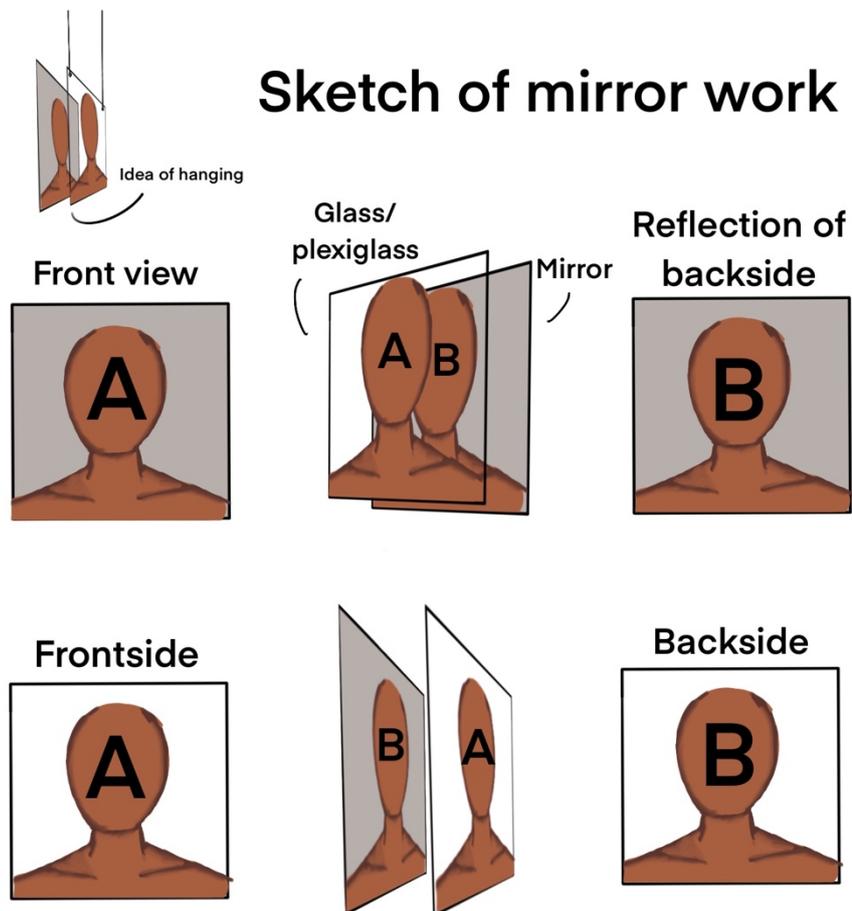
The urge to create something new is always there, but I feel that this time has allowed me to focus on the methods I have learned to handle and opened more ideas. Exhibiting these in three different exhibition spaces, I thought that it would be a good possibility to show the different expressions and stages of research done during this time and within the project. In the works, I'm always eager to try and learn something new, to develop and work out a new approach and experience for both the viewer and myself.

At Galleri KiT, there will be a large-scale oil painting (255x290cm). Instead of focusing solely on the size and taking a two-pronged approach, I emphasize a third point. The plan is to work with a motif that is an anamorphic work. A work where, when you stand at the normal viewing point, you kind of see the image, but not correctly. By adding the anamorphic image, the third point will be where you see the image clearly in a certain spot in the exhibition space.



At Kjøpmannsgata Ung Kunst will be a smaller scale¹⁸ mirror work inspired by the first mirror work *(Un)Revealed*, where within the mirrors lies a hidden painting, as well as Mona Hatoum's work "You are still here." To work with mirrors, the everyday object, is something I really think is interesting. To transform something so basic into a vessel to show the third face of the person portrayed has taken an important role in the evolution of my practice.

The work will be a painting on the mirror, but the reflection on the back is a new expression, a new setting that you would not see if you didn't change perspective. The result will be figured out through the process of the work's development, but the main subject will use a mirror as its base, since it touches our inner self and brings in inner thoughts, the third face. Since the specific placement in the gallery is not final, I don't know if it will be possible to see the work from the front first. Which is something I see as important for this work since I want the work to evolve in front of the viewer by their new placement (third point/angle). The positioning of this work is flexible and dependent on the physical design, feeling, aesthetics, and architecture of the exhibition space



A: a neutral feeling
B: a feeling of what's underneath

¹⁸ No bigger than 100x100 cm.

At Nils Aas Kunstverksted, I will exhibit one or two paintings where the eye-tracking study has been performed, with a focus on hands. *Four Walls* is a painting where, if you just look fast, just scan over it, you might miss the detail that changes the work. To break out of a life/frame that keeps you there, that holds you down. In a world where the person might be held down or lifted by someone or something (the third hand).

Another work that will be exhibited is *Pulling Faces*, a self-portrait that shows when you pull off the first or second face. a work that might not leave much for the imagination when my theme and thoughts are clear, but a work that is a statement of my process. The imagery I have used is an almost literal depiction of the conceptual development of the third face.

The viewer's senses will be activated as they see something uncanny and an illusion of something disturbing added to both works.



Figure 8:
Four Walls (2022)
Madeleine Heyman
Oil painting on canvas
173x137cm



Figure 9:
Faces (2022)
Madeleine Heyman
Oil painting on canvas
173x137cm

4.2. Reflections of *The Third Face*

While writing this, I have come to understand that my works have two main focuses: the motif and the materials. By combining these two, they become something more than "just" a painting. I realize that I have a fear of just being seen as a painter who can handle the craft well. But, to me, my practice and expression have a twist within the canon of classical painting. So, I know how and what the first view of the work is going to be, and I know how, through my work, I can move the viewer both physically and mentally. The work and project will have generated a new set of research questions that will influence my future as a painter.

I am eager to make viewers feel something with my works, that might not at some point go through as planned.

The Third Face addresses how we see things, the way we approach situations in life or in artwork. We read it through our memories, reflections, and bodies, being invited to approach the work in new ways. We can reflect more on who we truly are. There is nothing wrong or right with our connection because it is *our* connection. The artwork and the human in front of it.

The artists mentioned in this text have affected my way of working more than I had anticipated. They all employ a classical approach but with something that makes it into something deeper, something that reaches the view of our inner self. The Third Face has made me realize that I don't just look for answers, but that I'm also looking for more questions and a path forward. This motivates me to reach further and will be continued in my artistic practice for a long time to come to face *The Third Face* within the bodily paintings of mine.

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7. Images List

Figure 1:

Saville, J (2002-03) *Reverse* [Painting]. Wordpress:
<https://rebeccalcameron.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/jenny-saville.jpg>



Figure 2:

Heyman, M (2021) *Gordian Knot* [Painting].



Figure 3+4:

Heyman, M (2021) *Uten title* [Painting].



Figure 5:

Hatoum, M (2013). *You are still here* [Painting/sculpture]. Galleria Continua:
<https://www.galleriacontinua.com/exhibitions/a-body-of-work-110>



Figure 6:

Heyman, M (2020) *(Un)Revealed* [Painting].



Figure 7:

Holbein the Younger, H (1533) *The ambassadors* [Painting].

ResearchGate:

https://www.researchgate.net/figure/a-Hans-Holbein-the-Youngers-painting-The-Ambassadors-located-at-the-National-Gallery_fig2_281685742



Figure 8:

Heyman, M (2022) *Four Walls* [Painting].



Figure 9:

Heyman, M (2022) *Pulling faces* [Painting].



All photos by Heyman, M work, is own and taken by Madeleine Heyman.