

The self between two places: Finding connections through digital jewellery

In this piece of work, we introduce two physical-digital jewellery objects that focus on people in transition. Transitions in this context are the changes one experiences in physical, personal and social dimensions in the context of living in two countries at one time. The pieces embody design propositions stemming from explorations into how to support people's emotional being. The research seeks to find ways to empower someone's unsettled and uncertain sense of self. The concepts were co-designed with three women who frequently travel back to their native countries, but who live permanently in the UK and who experience feelings of transition and what we will describe as "being in-between".

Microcosmos is a piece that reveals personal micro photographs at certain points in time. The piece is a hand held piece of jewellery containing tiny microfilm images from places that are significant to the individual from both countries. One can view the layers of microfilm with a magnifying glass and interact with different layers by manually focusing on different elements. The research proposes that the context of the miniature creates a particular kind of space that is separate to our everyday life, creating the opportunity to find a "private time" [1]. An LED light activated by the heat of the palm allows one to peek briefly through the glass in short bursts. The research argues that an intimate object that holds fragments of what is personally important to someone could evoke both longing, but also empowerment through connection to one's personal anchor points.

Together are two brooches, meant for two wearers in two countries. They work as data loggers and record when the pieces are worn simultaneously. The data is stored in the piece and the wearers are able to see the data at given intervals. A jeweller responds to the data with the creation of a piece that changes form in response to the data logged. The Micro-SD cards are physically encapsulated in the new piece signifying the capture of time and its meaning within the relationship. Through the co-creation of a new piece, moments of being apart, the research connects two people in a non-intrusive and indirect way and opens new possibilities of using data within contemporary jewellery practice.

Most of the digital devices that we live with come with a set of expectations such as: What does it do? how long does the battery last? How cutting edge is the technology? By contrast this research offers a focus on atypical personal interactions in order to address a different range of questions and potentially open up our expectations of the digital. The research is seeking to explore the more poetic qualities of interaction that can enrich intimacy with other people, places and ultimately the self, opening the discussion up around how craft practices and digital technologies can suggest poetic and emotionally rich interactions for people.

1. Stewart, S., 1984. On longing: Narratives of the miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir, the collection. Duke University Press