



**CLARA FRANKE  
TEXT ON PRACTICE**



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## 1. Introduction

A brief description of my practice may encompass; multidisciplinary artist and designer currently creating lens based work, costumes and functional art such as clothing and pottery.

The lens based work brings together the elements of clothing, activism and feminist-image-making.

After being born in 1998 in suburban Hamburg I later lived & studied in several places that have had an influence on my practice. These places being Albuquerque, Groningen, Berlin, Barcelona and now Rotterdam, where I am pursuing a master in Lens Based Media Design.



During my bachelor's degree in Design I studied Illustration, Graphic Design and Product Design, while continuously creating photography and graduating with a clothing collection.

As it might be clear by now, I have been frequently including new mediums to my practice. Yet, one will always find an overlapping signature, an aesthetic marked by a textural softness in an organic, muted color palette. Next to my own practice I create graphic design and lens based work for the companies Sekko Soziale and FairVenture, both focussing on social and environmental issues and work as a costume designer for the play Narrow Spaces at Grand Theatre Groningen.

## 2. Feminist-image-making

Recently I have been working on the short film "Amber", which will be presented in the Eye Museum in April. The film summarizes the ethics and aesthetics of most of my lens based work.

Amber portrays the (physically) intimate friendship between Amber and I as a symbol for female connection. It also depicts her connection to nature/knowledge on plants, specifically herbs.

A recent film that has been of inspiration to me has been "Close" by Lukas Dhont, also showing the fine line between romantic intimacy and intimacy in friendships.

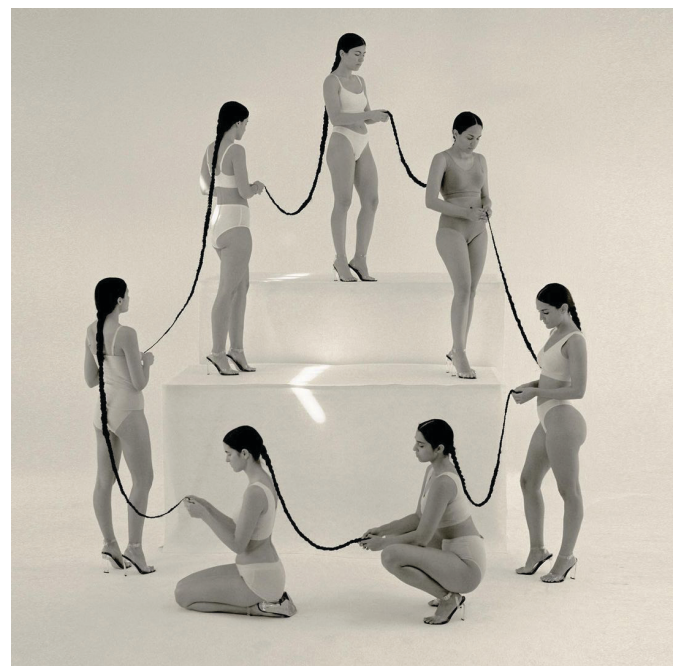
"Amber" is addressing eating disorders and the connection I have found in this friendship, when sharing both of our experiences with such in our teenage years.

I can relate our disorders to a strong sense of comparison between, especially young, women. This marks my general mental health background and feminist groundwork of my processes.

In my work I strive to create an empowering setting for myself and the women I portray in which the layer of comparison and jealousy moves towards the pure celebration of their beauty. Challenged by the deeply ingrained male gaze in photography, especially editorial fashion photography, I see a great need for female photographers with the approach to empower instead of sexualise.

As does Carlota Guerrero; depicting women as ethereal, strong yet soft, sensual.

Guerrero creates photographs that connect women to become one organism, visuals induced by her first LSD trip. Psychedelics have also become a place of self development and search for connections for me.



Carlota Guerrero





Tinctures I can make from plants



What does it mean to me to be a woman?  
What does it mean in this society to be a woman?



it turns out, a lot of girls and woman  
have been through that.



Both of us were dealing with  
eating disorders when we met.





### 3. From Fantasy to Ecofeminism

I have been coming back to the visual of wings since my childhood. From reading fantasy books (The Dragonrider series by Cornelia Funke, The NeverEnding Story by Michael Ende or Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll) to creating props and costumes for my own shoots.

An inspiration in lens based work in this direction has been Tim Walker.

Still now I enjoy embracing fantasy and a child-like-naive vision of the Anthropocene; embracing escapist behavior into worlds of creatures and spirits.

I also draw inspiration from classical mythology and its symbolisms and depiction of women as in the paintings "The Gorgon and the heroes" by Sartorio or Botticelli's "Primavera".

This is where the idea of ecofeminism comes into the vision. What Donna Haraway describes as "the diverse earth-wide tentacular powers and forces collected things with names like Naga, Gaia, Tangaroa, Terra, Haniyasu-hime, Spider Woman, Pachamama(...) and many, many more.", describes a personification of nature as a female, goddess-like existence.

Creating visuals depicting women in a divine manner, as for example with wings, and in relationship with nature is emphasizing the empowerment of both.

The ecofeminist approach generally argues that both women and nature have been dominated and degraded by patriarchy and capitalism. Ecofeminism seeks for a holistic and compassionate relationship between humans and the environment (all critters), imagining sustainable and equitable ways of coexistence.



La Gorgone e gli eroi





#### 4. Experimentation with Natural Materials; Creating Functional Art

I do not support the idea of shaming the individual for the climate crisis but I see an essential role in the movement towards re-thinking consumerist behaviors and inspiring us to move back towards lower consumption and slow productions.

I myself practiced such in general research and try outs of natural materials like clay, alpaca wool, up-cycled fabrics, eco latex and more: the transformation of natural products.

One of the companies inspiring me most is Paloma Wool, a clothing company, started by Paloma Lanna in Barcelona. Paloma Wool works with local producers around their base in Barcelona and frequently collaborates with artists on small scale produced collections.



Paloma Wool SS 23



My graduation project; the creation of a sustainable clothing collection, was made from second hand and self made materials. I added a magazine; reflecting on editorial fashion photography and how an emotional bond to a garment can be seen as a sustainability strategy.

This collection led to my work as a costume designer, giving me the chance to extend my sewing experience even further.

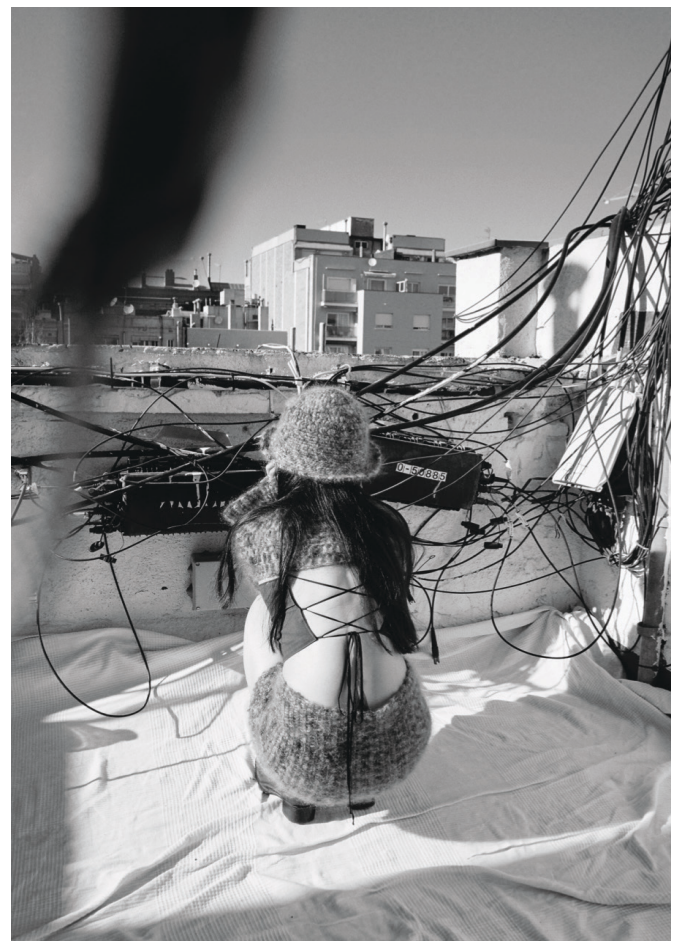
Next to the magazine and clothing pieces I have created a fashion film and a 10 minute one shot process video as well as photography prints.

This all was presented alongside each other together with raw materials and a spinning wheel on which I performed wool spinning during the exhibition, analyzing the mesmerizing effect creation can have in a society that is as disconnected as ever from creation of daily life objects.

My graduation year marked a generally stronger focus on crafts such as clothing making (sewing, spinning wool, crocheting) and pottery, which I learned in Barcelona. Pottery has been my meditation and connector to natural materials, while creating organically shaped objects that can generate a calmness in peoples homes.













## 5. Home spaces and Their Artifacts

The process of changing homes, the general privilege of having a home and the meaning of every artifact inside one's home have been recurring ideas in my practice. I created the short film "Ostblock", on my Omas travels through, what then was, Eastern Germany and the USSR. This was inspired by a collection of dia photographs I found in my grandmother's basement as well as the photo albums she had created. The documentary short film alternately shows my grandmother in her home telling about her journey and a selection of the dia-photographs. The stories told give examples to the division between East and West Europe during that time, from the experience of one living in West Germany.

I also created two photo books that relate to the idea of homes. One of which has been self published in 2021. The book "The ORKZ" documents 50+ people and their rooms/homes in a squatted hospital community, where I lived with a total of 250 others between 2019-2022.

The book gave me the excuse of the camera to step into people's personal spaces and start a conversation based on the artifacts they surround themselves with, using photography as a tool to start intimate conversations, one of my comfort zones.

The second photobook (2023, unpublished) documents my time in Berlin in 2021, which combines my friend Maxis poetry with my own photography. The book serves as an analysis of what Berlin is becoming and who we felt we were becoming through living there. The analog photography shows: winter city shots, portraits of those I met and surrounded myself with and photos from protests against the housing crisis that became very present during my time in the city. A city that was known for the freedoms it would offer but that is now victim to gentrification, closing down most communities and creative spaces.

Having an activist mindset to the housing crisis in several of the places I lived in, I would like to visualize more alternative ways, sustainable ways that humans can coexist in domestic spaces. The work of Rutger Bregman "Utopia for Realists", has given me trust to keep not focussing on negative news, but see what can be changed and what social and governmental initiatives CAN change.



Marc, Gijs, Joris

Since: 2016  
Age: 33



## 6. Outlook

Being able to create clothing (costume design) for photoshoots (lens based work) as well as props (pottery, wings, ect.) and build a visual identity in presentation (graphic design) is an approach I would like to build on. Worldbuilding so to say.

This could be realized in the setting of a multidisciplinary exhibition; combining models of wings, photography and film, printed and/or projected and natural material experiments. My background as a contemporary dancer also leads me to the idea of performance. This could be through live creation, as I have done in my Bachelor examination and exhibition or in a dance focussed performance that shows the sense of intimacy that I want to promote.

I wish to invite others into my escapist dream world, where all can exist and factual thinking gets replaced by facilitating fantasy and deep emotional listening to each other and nature.



## 7. Text References

Carlota Guerrero (2021) Tengo un Dragón Dentro del Corazón, Prestel

Cornelia Funke(1997) Drachenreiter, Dresler

Michael Ende(1979) Die unendliche Geschichte, Thienemann

Lewis Carroll (1865) Alice in Wonderland, Macmillan

Rutger Bregman( 2014) Utopia for Realists, Correspondent

Donna Haraway(2015) Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene,

Chthulucene: Making Kin, Environmental Humanities

Lukas Dhont (2022) Close, Lumière

Tim Walker (2022) Wonderful Things, Kunsthal

Giulio Aristide Sartorio, La Gorgone e gli eroi, 1897

Sandro Botticelli, Primavera, 1480, 202 cm × 314 cm, Tempera on Panel

Paloma Wool