

Immersive installation art: an exploration into materials, meaning and design







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Introduction

When I was a child, I once dreamed that I turned into a butterfly. This really unbelievable dream made me slow to adapt to waking up, feeling a bit unfamiliar with the shift from a butterfly perspective to a human perspective. Using this as inspiration, I planned to create a project that would give a sense of the blurring edge between dreams and reality. I felt that the theme of 'dreaming' was an immersive environment, so I planned to create an installation.







So how can we create an **immersive installation** using different media and forms? I have therefore chosen to investigate the work of contemporary artists, Diana Orving and an artist wuo called Lightning & Kinglyface. In this work, I will analyze how the artists develop, present, use material, and learn from their creative ways of making immersive installation.

Diana Orving VS Lightning & Kinglyface

What is installation art?

The term installation art is used to describe large-scale, mixed-media constructions, often designed for a specific place or for a temporary period of time.

What is the importance of immersion in installation art?

Aimimg to heighten the viewer's experience by the addition of sound, smell, and touch. By engaging the viewer's senses, the installation artwork often becomes a whole new environment that viewers can experience.

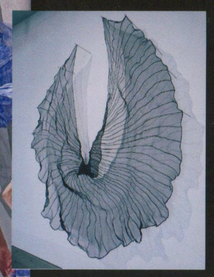




Diana Orving













the photos of myself dancing with fabric. Shoooting in Hangzhou, China.

Överskrida
nde, 2020



Thoughtscape, blue, 2022

Diana Orving is a Swedish clothing designer, textile artist and installation artist.

She lives and works in Stockholm. She has a background as a fashion designer and presented women’ s wear collections at fashion shows and exhibitions in Sweden and internationally 2007-2020.

Most of her works are based on large scale textile sculptures that extend from the floor to the ceiling of a room. Her inspiration comes from choreography, which aims to express mobility and movement. I was intrigued by the way she captured dynamic dance movements and turning them into figure. It is a process of abstraction becoming figurative and I have therefore learnt from the way her inspiration has developed. As the first part of my project, I photographed dance movements that represented my dream phase. Then I also analyzed the lines of the human body to explore how my installation was made.





















After researching, I found that Orving's work falls into three main categories, the first being small, individual pieces that highlight fabric texture and details. She frequently chooses thicker, characteristic-patterned fabrics such as flannel and pleated fabrics. In the end, the result usually looks like a leaf, a nymph, or a tiny ripple.

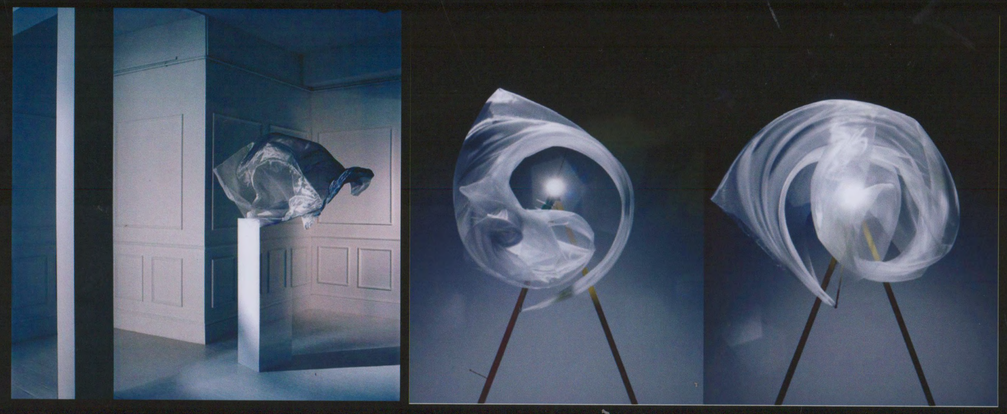
The second type of work, which constitutes the majority of her output, is often seen in major exhibitions. This kind of work uses lighter, more transparent fabrics and wire, which are represented throughout the room. These works are extremely personal to her, with the dynamic feel of large-scale installations and the warm, healing feel of soft fabrics. It is also one of the things I most want to learn and use in my projects.

The third category, on the other hand, represents natural, inherent beauty. Take for example the draped curtains falling from the roof in the third photograph.

Lightning&Kinglyface

Lightning & Kinglyface are London-based artists, including Anglo-Italian Anna Fulmine and Anglo-Iranian Victoria Shahrokh who born a month apart in 1984, grew up in southeast England. At the University for the Creative Arts, Epsom, where they met, their persuasive powers allowed them to develop their shared interests in the handmade and 3-D as part of a Graphic Design BA.

They create a wide range of three-dimensional, sculptural artwork. In studying their work, I noticed how they incorporated media features and the environment. I then also compared the different effects of material and ambient light on the direction of the atmosphere in the making of the work. The three artists (Diana Orving and Lightning & Kinglyface) use different materials and implement their own lines and shapes, which I plan to explore throughout my journey of installation.

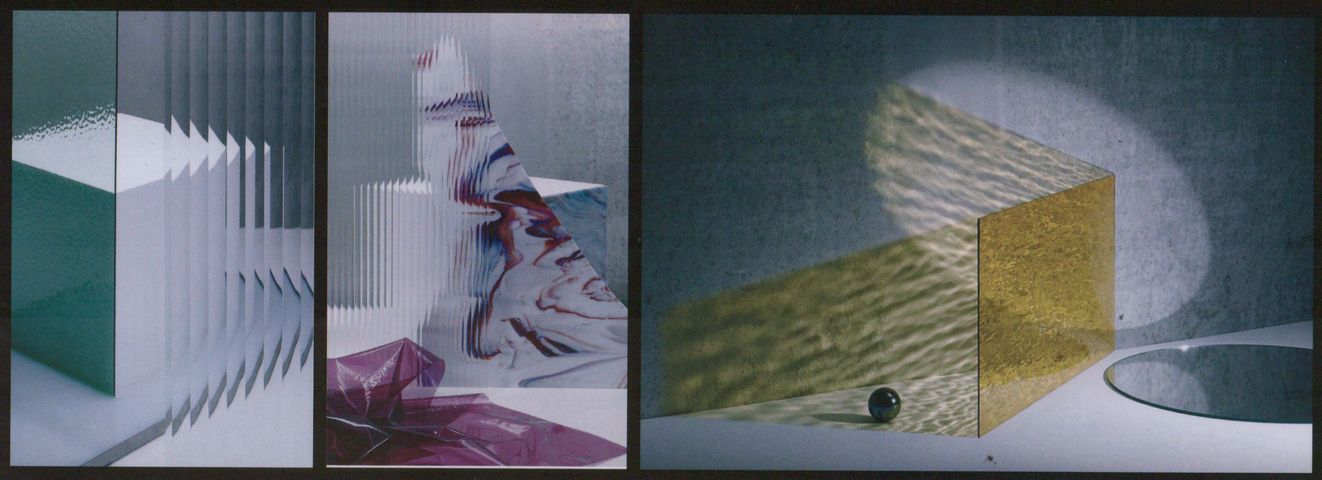


A Tiny Space 2014



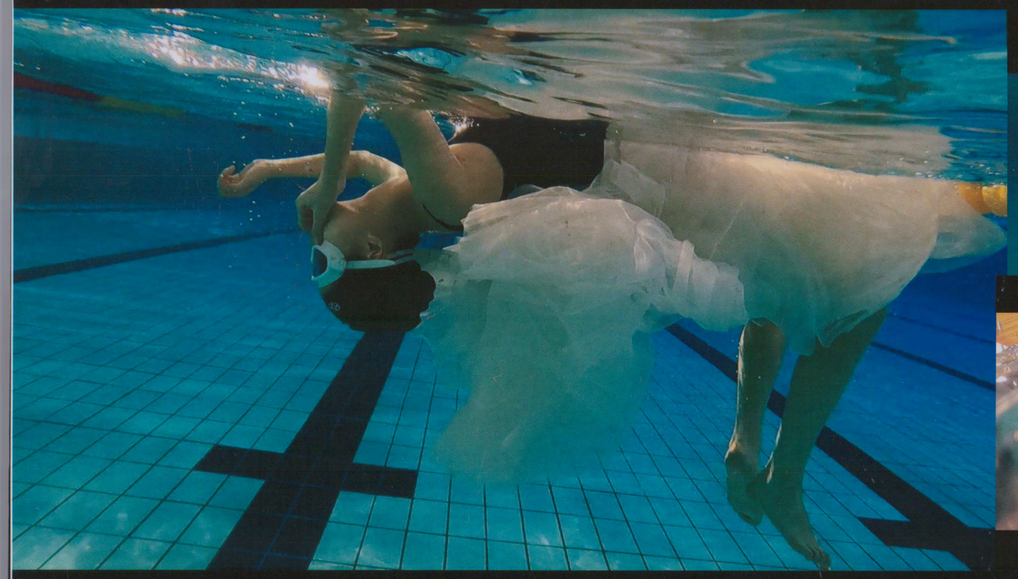


Penelopaid, 2013



Babinet’ s Playground 2015







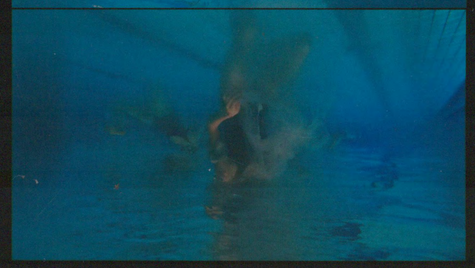
Out of Lightning&Kinglyface's work, I have chosen my three favorites (on the previous page) and conducted the first research for the photo shoot by studying their features.

Lightning & Kinglyface prefer translucent media to reflect light and shadow. This is whether it be plastic, fabric, or acrylic panels, where light is used for rendering mood or atmosphere.

So for the first step of research, my friend and I dived underwater into the school swimming pool. This was to simulate the blurred, dreamy memory of turning into a butterfly in my dream. The translucency, reflection, and refraction of water made it a natural material for an artistic experiment. This made the whole set of photographs appear like a dream. Together with the non-fixed shape of the organza dress (butterfly wings) in the water, this creates an intuitive interaction between light and material.







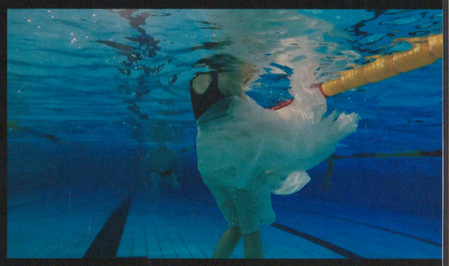
















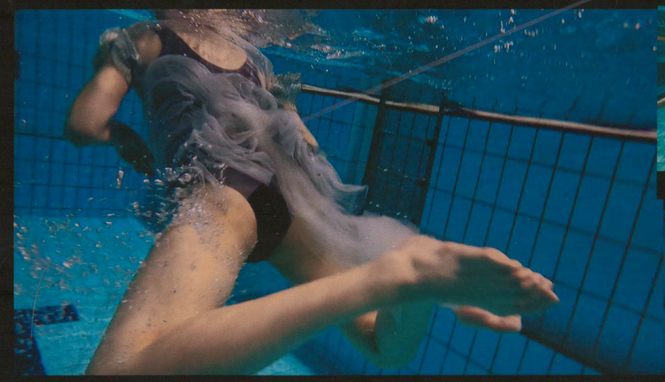






Choreography in organza








Fabric, light, and texture exploration continued as I took more photographs.

To study the sense of dynamism in Diana Orving's work, I went to the riverside and wrapped myself in translucent organza to simulate the process of my dreaming: the confusion in a butterfly cocoon, the exploration of the cocoon boundaries, the realization that I am a butterfly, and finally the transformation into a butterfly. I visualize this process by lying down, touching, and dancing. To express the boundary between dream and reality, and self-awareness exploration.

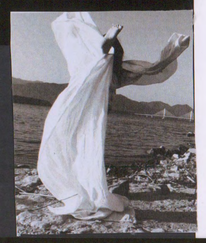
During the underwater shoot, I captured a group of images that reflect the twist and turns of the fabric. I also found images that reflect the skin detail against the Organza dress. I also found the fabric's dynamic while swimming to be very captivating.



I have selected a few representative photographs because their dynamic lines are more clearly defined. It is easier to assist in the next step of line and shape extraction.

In this photo, I held the fabric up high. I wanted to convey a soft and positive feeling, so I used white watercolor to lighten the highlights so they didn't stand out. The shadows were deepened with a small number of overlays. Finally, the heavy colors and relatively fixed shapes were used to accentuate the darker corners of the visuals, making the image less flimsy overall.

I chose this one for refinement because it has a clear visual center. This refers to the articulation of the area where the foot kicks up and the fabric is being driven. For the rest, I used light watercolors to outline. I think the moment's dynamism is very valuable. It will help a lot with the extended, dynamic beauty of the installation I am about to make.





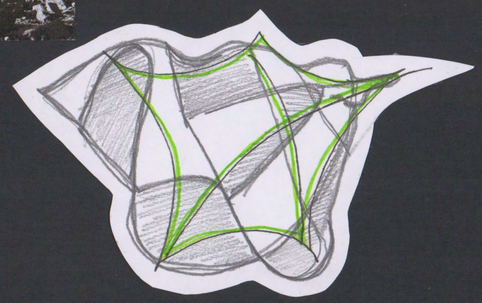
I chose this photograph because, like some of the photographs taken underwater, the mechanism of contact between skin and fabric is what I wanted in an installation. In addition, the dynamic lines and blocks in this photograph were so clear that I simplified the concrete, complex image into more abstract geometric shapes. I extracted representative lines for the next development stage.

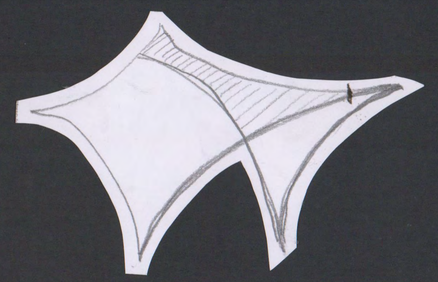












What I have learned from both artists is that pure art installation is a gradual reduction from figurative motifs to abstraction. If I want my results to remind people of elements such as dance, butterflies, and dreams. Then it is essential to include them in the inspiration and development process, even if they are not as easily recognizable.

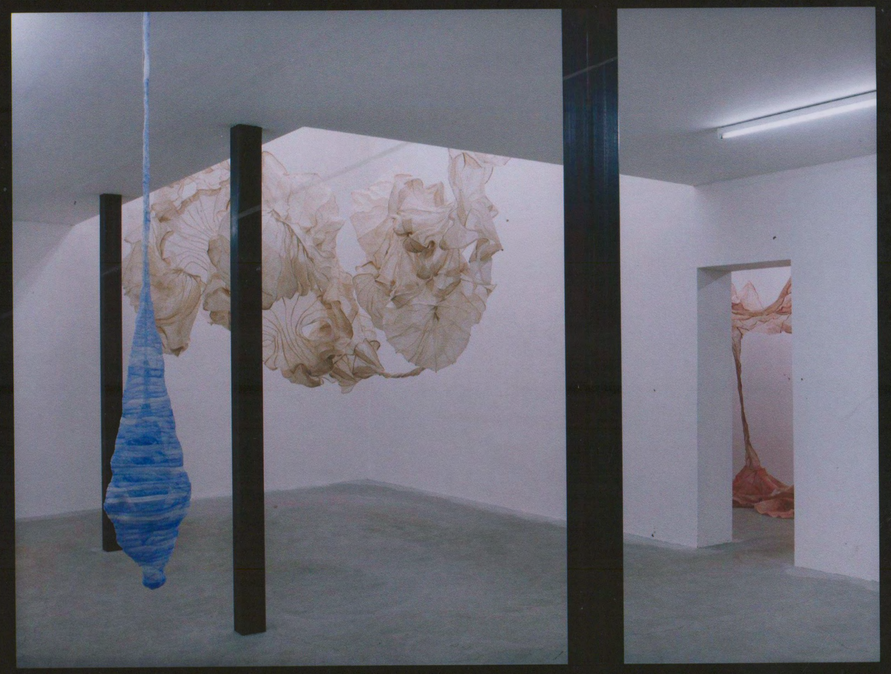
Paintings of AO1 photos in sketch
Annotation discussing photo choice

Shape Experiment



Comparative Study
Diana vs. Lightning&Kinglyface

Presentation and Display





I have started my analysis by looking at the work of Diana Orving. In terms of presentation, Orving prefers a hanging approach. This allows the fabric to be displayed unsupported in the space, leaving the space below the fabric white, and creating a clear visual center. Her inspiration comes specifically from the dynamics of the human body in dance. She says about her work, "My large textile sculptures are all intrinsically fluid and bear stamps of mobility and movement. I view them as choreography where I have set the terms and limitations of shape, movement and dynamics." To simulate complex body movements such as interweaving, adhesion, and spinning, she uses wire to shape the work, creating more turns and twists and bringing a sense of hand-made texture.

Accordingly, I prefer large, monolithic outputs rather than individual, delicate pieces. This is more likely to create continuous layering and an atmosphere, giving a deep visual impact. After getting to know Diana Orving better, I plan to use wire and fabric shaping with its mechanism. This will reflect the tension of people's limbs in motion and the beauty of extended lines.

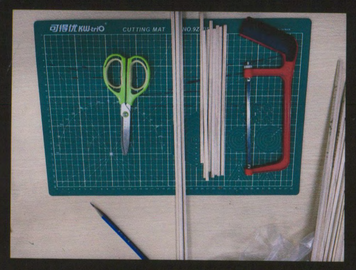


Penelopaid, 2013

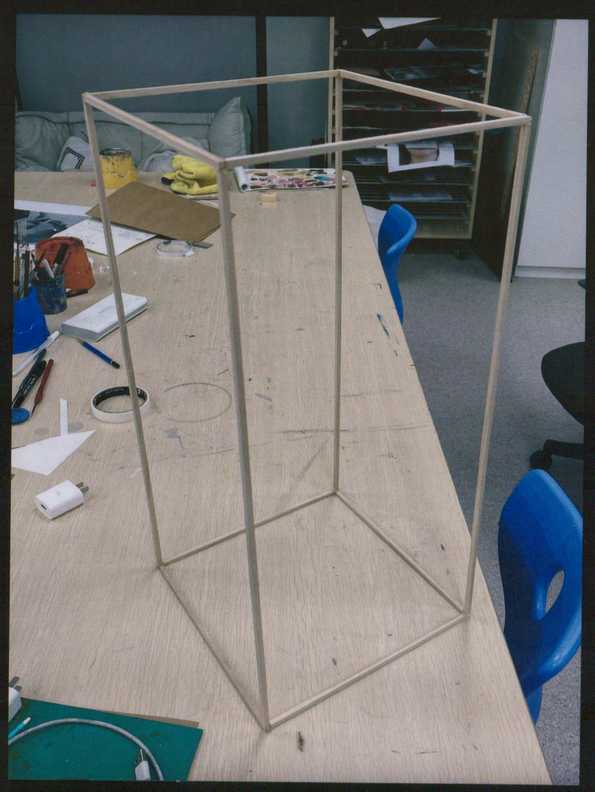


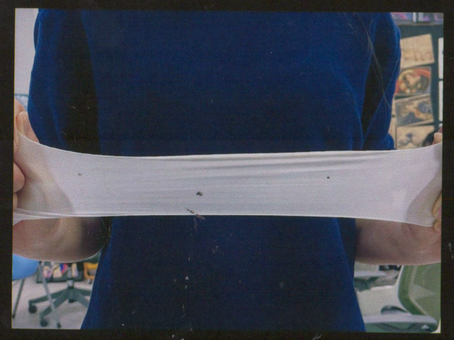
In contrast to Orving, the overall visual utility, constructed by t he setting of the light against the scene rather than specific shapes, are what give Lightning & Kinglyface's work its immersion. I chose to focus on one of their installation works entitled Penelopaid, named after Marwithin the installationgaret Atwood's novella. The name's meaning is a reference to the stalling tactics Penelope (the novella character) used for her marriage. She uses her father-in-law's funeral shroud as an excuse to avoid suitors. This is a reference to the effort people have made to hide the lies we tell in marriage and in life.

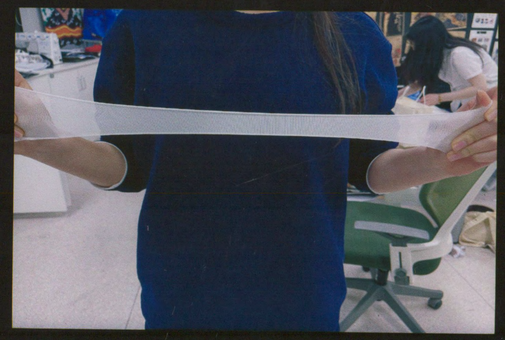
I found that the stretched fabrics in this Pnelopaid work filled almost the entire room. The dense, off-white arrangement is more airtight than Orving's work and shapes the cold, stifling, icy environment even more. I felt that a dense arrangement and a specific space helped focus on mood and atmosphere. So I used Procreate to create a draft of the installation in a limited space. However, I felt that this attempt was too complex, lengthy, and lacked visual focus. I planned to build a space for my setting out of wooden strips and incorporate it as part of my installation. To test the effect first, I made a scaled-down model. On the right is my model-making process.

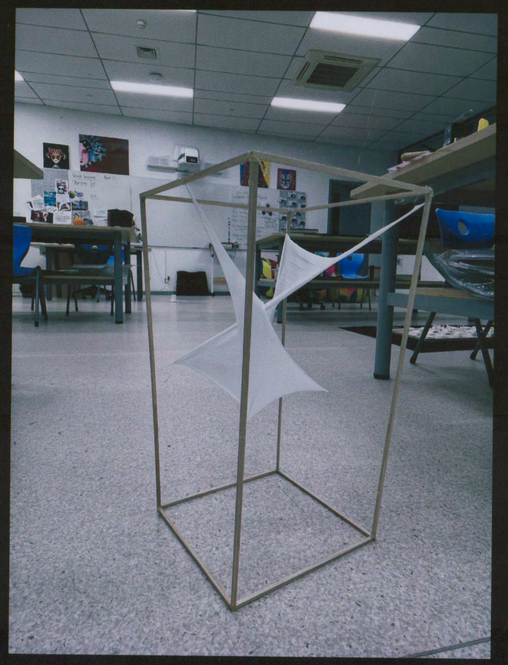






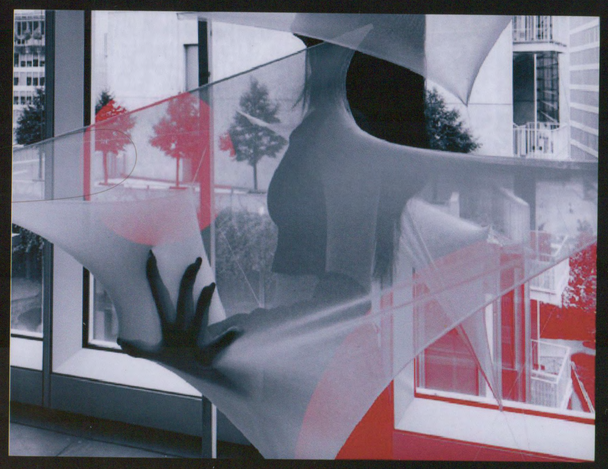










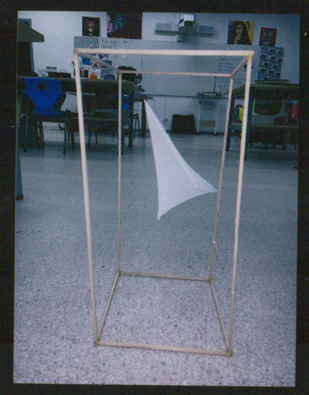


In terms of the artist's approach, Lightning & Kinglyface are inspired by human skin, resulting in smooth curves. This is why they use a stretchy polyester fabric as opposed to Orving's soft and sheer organza, which I think makes the images more simple, direct and powerful.

Therefore, I experimented with two materials in modeling my work. The first fabric is an opaque, smooth ice-silk fabric, while the second is a more pliable and less dense knit fabric. By shaping the two fabrics in my wooden frame, I compared their looks. (Their different stretching levels are in the top left corner).

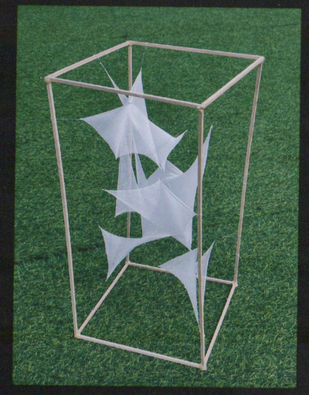
After experimenting with the knitted fabric, the back piece could also be seen. This gave the whole installation more layers. So I chose the knitted one. And after completing the final project later on, the fact that people could interact through the more stretchy knitted fabric and that the contact between the limbs and the fabric fitted the visual concept made me feel that I had made the right decision. (P6)

MAKING PROCESS









Material choice and technique

Orving uses a light fabric, organza, whose transparency allows ambient light to penetrate the work, making it lighter, airier, and softer. In addition, the fabric's irregularity enhances the installations movement as the wind blows through. As a support material, the wire directs the eye of the viewer and draws attention to the extension of the work. I think this highlights the continuity and fluidity of the lines throughout the piece as if they had grown in the room thousands of years ago. She uses pressed pleated fabrics to emphasize the clear veins and textures of fabrics. The use of this technique allows Orving's work to evoke a link between people and nature; in her work, I see large branches, cocoons, water currents, tree textures, and flowing emotions, creating unique compositions, and is something she returns to repeatedly.

I did two attempts at this; the first involved reducing the number of dancing lines to give the shapes a softer appearance. I accomplished this by following Diana Orving's sculpture of a big plant. However, after creating the sketch, I thought the design lacked the plant's gentle, organic look.



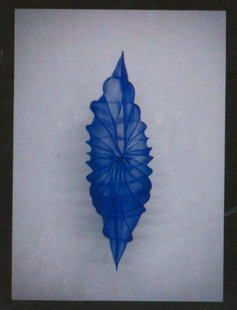


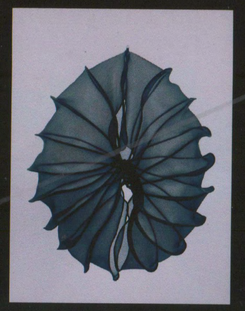




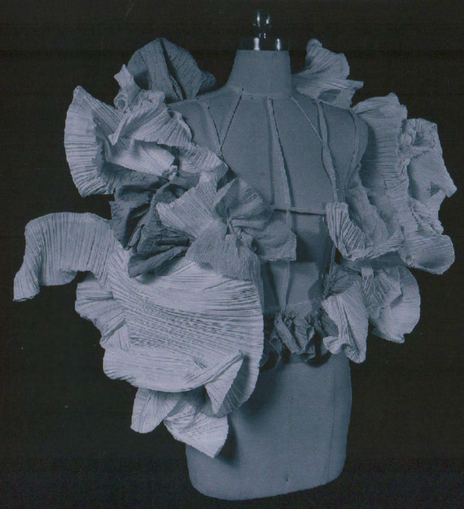


However, I felt that the visual effect was achieved but the sense of atmosphere I wanted to explore was lost. I abandoned this project and chose the model made on the previous page for the next stage of development.





My second idea was to create a wearable installation. I made a corset-like structure based on dance dynamics and lines, shaped with wire and Issey Miyake fabric. The installation is flexible due to the soft wire, so its shape can be changed by movements from the external world.





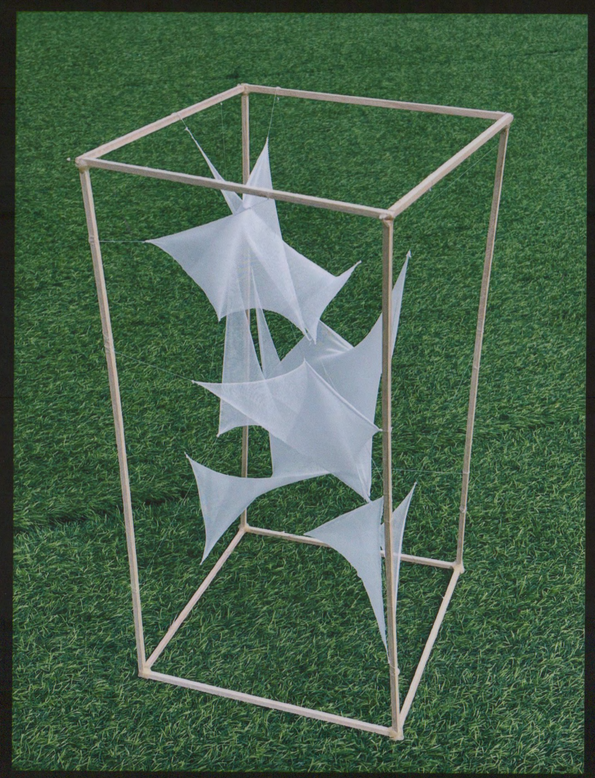




The curves in Diana Orving's work bring a feeling of Romantic intimacy, while Lighting & Kinglyface's is more contemporary and minimalist.

To depict real-life situations through installation, Lightning & Kinglyface use simple methods like single twists and interlaces to hold up the huge fabric throughout the room, the sharp corners being more oppressive than Orving' s curved lines. I think this might relate to the novella and how emotions can feel sharp. The internal struggle in lying is also transformed by the language of the installation and applied to swirling, spiky shapes. To create atmosphere, the ambient lighting in the gallery is more shadowy to enhance the dynamic shapes of the installation. It reminds me of a dense forest where tree leaves and branches stretch out into the darkness in all directions. This kind of light filters through the translucent white fabric, emphasizing the pale colour and textural tightness of the fabric. I think the heaviness of the fabric creates a negative atmosphere in the viewer's subconscious (even if the fabric is light), which I think echoes the narratives in the novella.



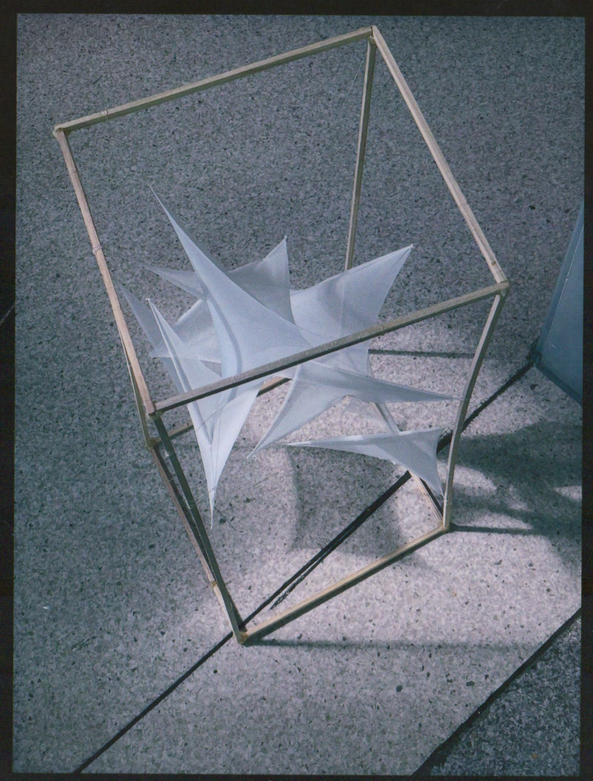


same form in different lights

So ultimately, I found that the combination of the models' shadows in specific sunlight in the room worked best. It conveys a light, dreamy yet natural atmosphere. It's like turning into a butterfly in a dream world.

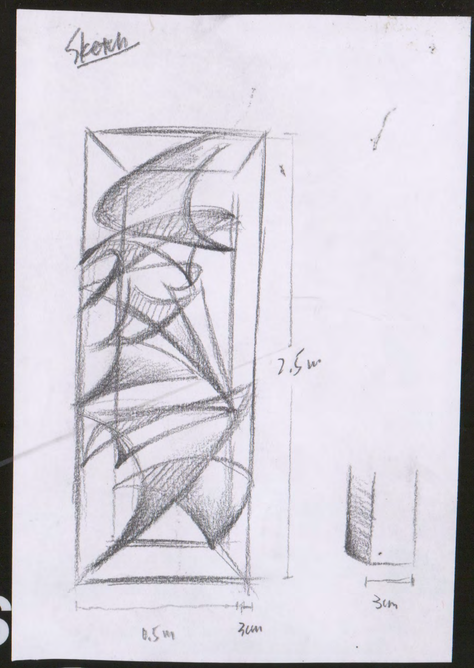
To explore the effect of light on the atmosphere, I recorded how the same work looked under different lights. I feel that the model in a shaded environment has a stronger contrast and does not match the hazy and romantic atmosphere of the dream world. And full sunlight makes the model too flat and lacking in layers. This detracted from the mystery of the dream world's boundaries.





To sum up the work of both artists, on the one hand, there are clear parallels between the two artists' work. They both work on large-scale installations and are inspired by the human body. Both use fabric to mimic the shapes and movements in nature and of the human body. However, on the other hand, in terms of immersion, I believe that both artists are trying to create in their installations something that cannot be seen in the real world, rather they are expressing a feeling through dynamic shape and design. While Orving’ s work is inspired by nature and emotion, it is not immediately recognizable as a concrete dance movement or a natural object; correspondingly, we do not identify any concrete body shapes or human skin in the work of Penelopiad, but rather the combination of light, fabric, and form, which I have experimented and applied.

When examining the differences between the two artists, Orving's work is a record of creating a sense of immersion through the rendering of soft shape, light, line and fabrics, evoking the are relationship to nature. Lightning & Kinglyface 's work is more realistic and critical, with sharper and clearer lines, and a heavier style relating to a metaphorical story.



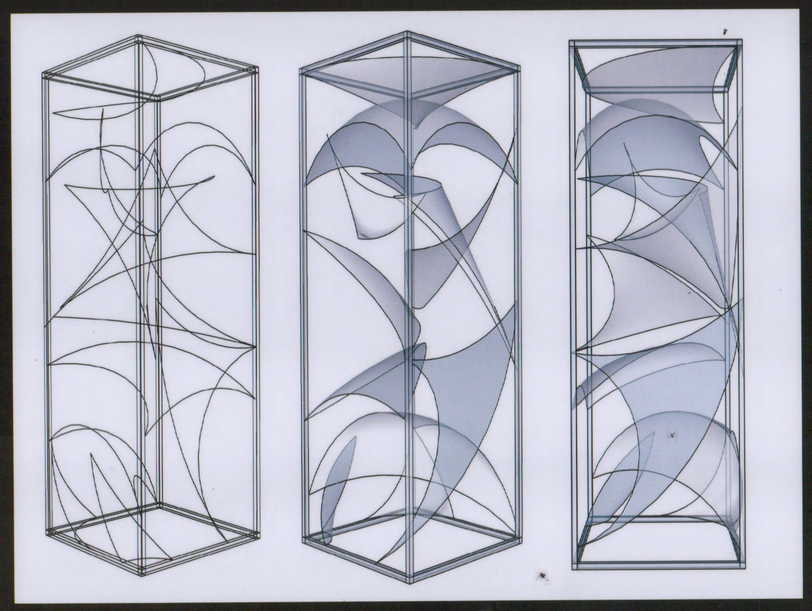
MAKING PROCESS





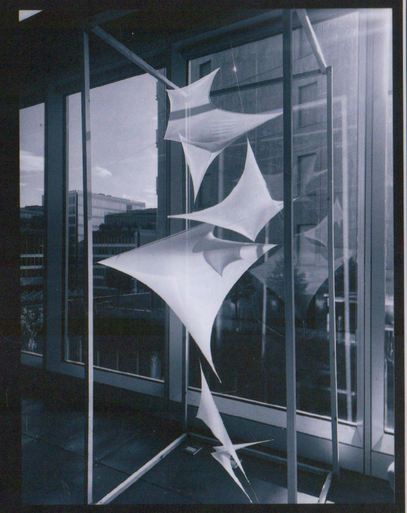












FINAL WORK:
DREAMING A BUTTERFLY







Material choice and technique

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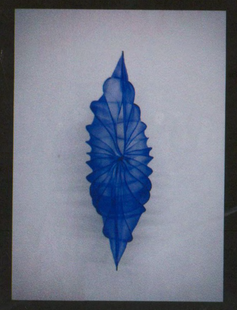


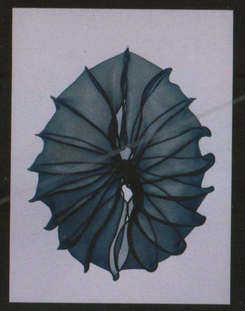




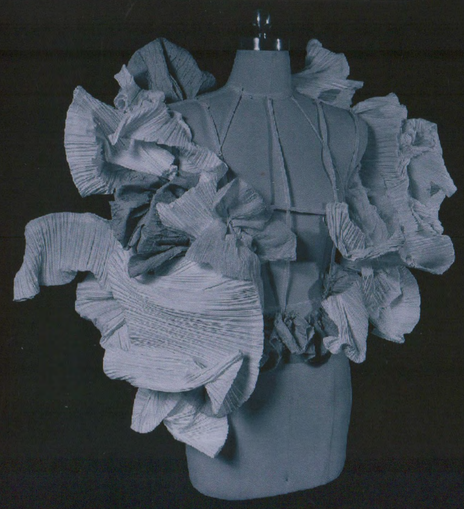


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Conclusion

My investigation into the shaping of atmosphere in installation art explores two artists. They all construct an ideal environment, a utopia, by expressing a sense of utility. They do this by temporarily withdrawing the audience from reality so as to immerse themselves in it, and arousing people's thinking. Sensory immersion and participatory immersion are the major components of this immersive experience. Lightening&Kinglyface uses participatory immersion in comparison to Diana Orving's sensory immersion.

After studying the works of the two artists, what I have learned from my investigation is that different atmospheres can be produced using a combination of several elements. Even if you want to create the same figure, any change in material, technique, and lighting can cause completely different effects, which are difficult to control. Because there is no fixed formula for applying, I did a lot of experiments to learn and subsequently create my own work.

I think it is essential for artists to create an immersive atmosphere when making large-scale installations as it is an important way to stimulate the viewer's thoughts. I intend to continue exploring the impact of different materials on the atmosphere of an installation in my future work. And I believe in the future decades, with the development of materials and technology, there will be new possibilities for the expression of atmosphere in large-scale installations.







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