

# time item



Martin Sieweke



Time item //

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**manual for making a bag**

1,4,13,15,16,25,26,27,36





I was thinking of you.  
What kind of bag would you like  
to make? If at all?  
Use the patterns and ingredients  
as a soft proposal.  
This bag we're going to make  
together while you are reading  
might remain imaginary.  
Or not?



# Time item //

## Preparation

### **Tools/Material you need**

A sewing machine, yarn, needles, a ruler, scissors.

One piece of **tarp/leather/heavy** cotton (at least the size of  $A_3$ ), one piece of **colored fabric** (slightly bigger than  $A_4$ ), a longer zipper in the length of an  $A_4$  (referred to as  $Z_1$ ), one shorter zipper for the front pocket (referred to as  $Z_2$ ) and two pieces of webbing (each 50 cm long / 3cm wide) or any other strong material that could serve as a handle.



**Time item** is located around my practice of prolonging, extending and reformulating the use of materials and objects in different ways.

It's a research around a multi-layered relationality, in which the given (read: context/conditions, already existing/familiar materials/objects) influences and contributes as a dispositive.

It's about searching for affectations, altering the use context, exchanging components: to not only consume materials away but to stay and remain close to them.

It's about acknowledging the multiple while reaching for the specific. It's about structuring a process as a relational response.

To follow Erin Manning's thought in her book *The Minor Gesture (Thought in the Act)*, it's about implementing the context and its very specific configuration, which influences processes not yet condensed into a form, as Erin Manning discusses in her book "(...) it begins with the

in-act and embraces the force of the what-else at the heart of all speculative pragmatisms".

(Manning: 2016, P. 15)

In that sense, I am speculating on the pragmatics of different forms of containing, as a source for affective relation with materials.

I am inviting you to think about the materials you could potentially use for a bag. The front and back side could be the size of an A4. You could use the shape of this zine as a pattern. Are there any materials around which could serve you as a source? Consider this invitation to make a bag together as a proposed focus on where the components are being detached from.







For me, making bags was the starting point to consider making/doing but also remaking and altering as a generative way to grow into an understanding and to stay attentive to the resources at hand.

Making in this sense is not tied to a “new” but to shifts and reformulations.

Over the years, my attention was captured gradually by left-over materials from diverse contexts. As a scenographer and costume designer, I acknowledge that producing has two directions.

There is the surface of a decision, but there are also many bits and pieces that are carrying it towards the surface.

Once the process is finished, these left-under materials pose questions about how to proceed. What to do with the remnants?

As echoes of processes they are complex and neutral at the same time. Complex as their shape, colour, weight etc. doesn’t fade anymore into a purpose or use-direction. They are neutral as the material’s specificity is not determined by a purpose anymore. They become communicative and sculptural. My search for an undercurrent premise of using the left-under; the abandoned, the not-quite-yet configurations, led me to question the relation between artistic production and consumption (consumerism). Can there be more space between these two terms?

## Cutting out

**1** Cut two A4 square sheets of a tarp/leather/heavy cotton material.  
Decide which piece will be your front - and which your backside.

**2 Frontside:** On the upper half of the sheet cut a central slit of 1 cm width for the front pocket, 1 cm shorter on both sides than the length of the zipper (Z2)  
p. 13. **Backside:** On the upper half cut two small slits (width of the handle) P. 13. The space between the slits is defining the arch of the handle P.16.

**3** Cut as well 2 x 50 cm (minimum) webbing or any other possible material strong enough for a handle.





I am aware that this practice of using leftover materials, of repairing, of repurposing materials and objects is well practised in economically precarious communities who act upon these principles, not as a choice, but as a tool to survive.

My aim is not to aestheticise.

The thoughts and ideas expressed in this research are an invitation to other artists and craft-peers to rethink our relation to materials.

I invite you to expand our attention towards engagement with materials through questions of what (is already there), where (to buy) and how (could I engage)? Can we consider the impact of our decisions for future use-contexts and possible recycling processes? Can we decide against single use materials?

It's a practice that acknowledges the process and questions the force of an idea, when it rules out alternatives. It proposes to find a polyphonic and playful relation, that requires hanging out with our stuff, letting the strings be loose and finding an enjoyable position for an object and possible ways of containing as part of our engagement.

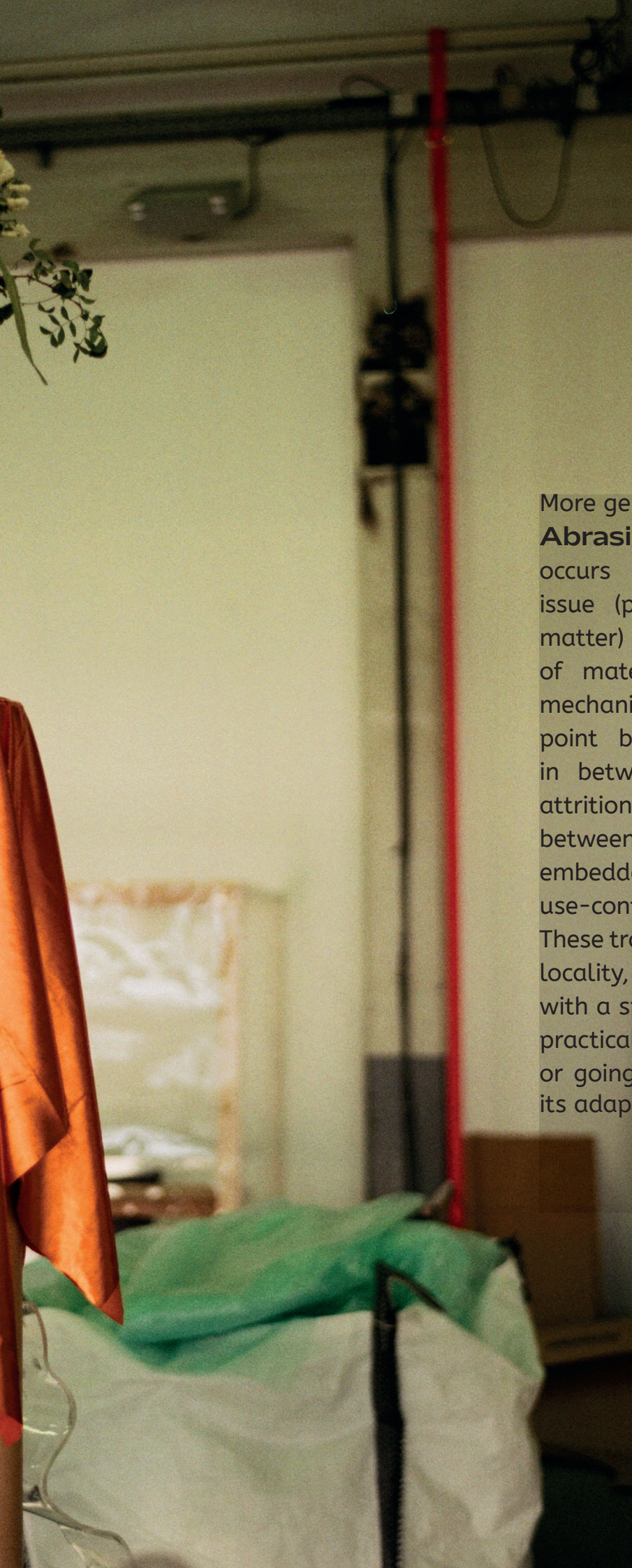




Abrasion as  
traces of  
usage //  
Frontside  
pocket &  
attaching  
handles







More generally speaking:

**Abrasion** is a process that occurs as an environmental issue (particulate matter / fine matter) that can lead to a fatigue of material and can off-center mechanics. Abrasion has a tipping point but also many gradients in between. Traces of abrasion/attrition are reflecting the relation between surfaces and their (social) embeddedness within multiple use-contexts.

These traces are pointing towards a locality, where surfaces are in touch with a specific repetitive pattern, a practical weight, a certain harmony or goingness between a need and its adaptive configurations.





wear



below this line  
the object



## above this limit the object becomes raw matter

This graph\* shows how an object is shaped and altered by its use. The horizontal blue line is usage and goes from not used to well used. The vertical blue line represents the traces of wear in relation to usage. The thin line between the graph represents the use lineage of an object. It starts in the corner as a “new” object (not used, no traces of wear) and is altered over time by its usage. At some point the traces are so dominant that the intended functionality of the object fades out. If the gap between the functionality (handling) and its alteration through usage continues, the object eventually collapses into “raw matter”.

above this limit  
the objects don't function as originally intended

Graph from: ROTOR: usus/usures État des lieux/ How things stand (2010)

is almost new



usages



Walking down the stairs as a singular act.  
Walking within a use-direction, within a purpose on a surface which will remember your steps; that you were in a hurry, the other day you were very tired, maybe tomorrow you stay at home. The stairs to your apartment are waiting for you to record, to report, to be brushed by wet shoes, which are just sliding step by step upwards, using only the first third of the foot and as it is raining a lot, and the seasons are resting in place, you wear the same shoes and the sound of ztsch | ztsch | ztsch will change to sch | sch | sch as you shuffle upwards, going up will become easier, the former resistance of your shoe sole and the stair step will find its echo within the traces of wear.

...I left the house to visit park L28 in Brussels.  
I took my bowling ball with me in case the marble run was not occupied. As I passed by Rue Destin number 5, a house in the beginning of the street, I observed the entrance area. The traces of usage around the door were suggesting that people would place their first step on the very corner of the stairs, that they would approach the door from both sides. I see scratches from keys around the lock, keys to enter other doors, to start an engine, to open a lock. This key for this door will cause similar traces elsewhere, I thought.



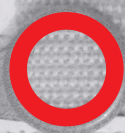


*„Columns. White. Stone. Abrasive and worn.  
She is entering now. Between the two white columns. White and stone. Abrasive to the touch. Abrasive.  
Worn. With the right hand she pulls the two doors, brass bars that open towards hwer.“  
(Hak Kyung Cha: 1882)*



backside

additional seam



frontside



I mainly work with already used materials (by myself or others).

Any bag I make never looks new. Always pretentiously worn.

In the manufacturing process of clothes some items are made to look worn. Is this a strategy to hide hyper consumerism? Worn clothes as camouflage? What is the fakeness of these traces?

Every stitch on our clothes is made by a sewing machine. There is no sewing machine stitch without human labour. There is no autopilot.

I began to apply abrasion/attrition as an observational term in relation to the bags I made. Over time traces of usage are inscribed in the surfaces. It provided a better understanding as to which parts of the bags are more exposed and which surfaces might need an extra support layer. Traces of wear are reporting a continuous and/or former being in relation.







## Frontside pocket & Attaching both handles

**4** Choose a length for the handles. How do you imagine carrying this bag? Use a pin to make a mark ( p. 16).

**Frontside:** place zipper (Z2) in the slit. Insert the handles from the outside to the inside. Make sure the handles are going 2-3 cm inside

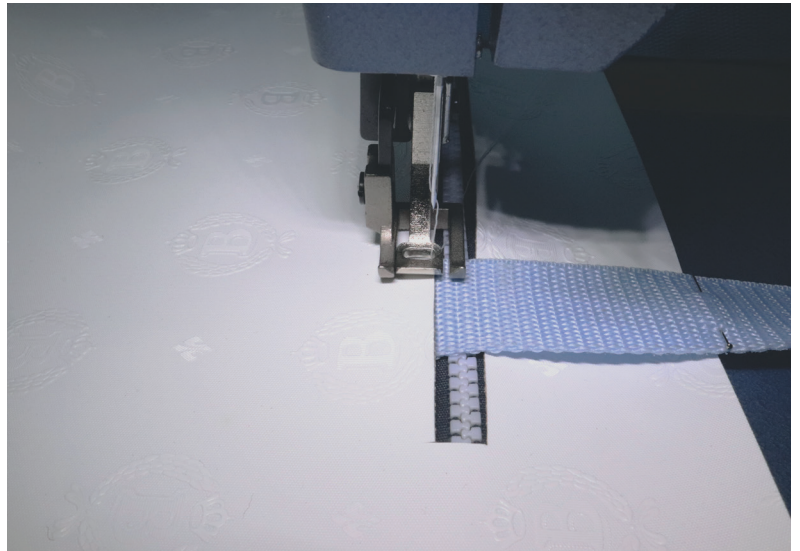
**Backside:** Insert the handles from the outside, make sure the handles are going 2-3 cm inside. Find the order of the different layers for the frontside on (p 25/26).

**5** When you stitch around the zipper you will then also attach the handle for the backside. Be careful to stitch the handle and zipper together on the lower part. Do not stitch on top of the handle (the upper side of the zipper) P. 16.

**6** Attach the handles for the backside. Do an extra seam on top of the handle next to the slit. Stitch a square on the ends of the handles (which are now on the inside (p. 13,16)



stitch only the handle  
together with the  
zipper on the left  
side - lift the handle on  
the right side




mark a good length  
for the handles  
on both sides

stitch a square on the ends  
of the handles from the inside







# Repair & Contamination of the broken part // Main pocket

As a methodology, abrasion/attrition gave a different perspective towards repairing and altering the use-direction.

I recently changed the zipper in my shoes. I used a zipper that I extracted a while ago from a bag I found on the streets in Berlin. These shoes and this zipper are now in a new\* and seasonal abrasive relation...

Seasonal repetitions, shifting between inside and outside are holding a promise to open these stitches to replace the zipper once again in some years

\* new only refers here to the relation of these two surfaces, it does not serve as a description/indication for the condition. What if the adjective new gets off-centered from its descriptive link towards a condition, but is primarily dedicated and associated with relationality?

## Attach the zipper for the main Pocket & Inner lining for the front Pocket

**7** Place the longer zipper (Z1) between the front and backside and attach it to the front and backside. Make sure the front and backside are aligned straight.



**IMPORTANT:** For the side of the front pocket take the piece of fabric (inner lining), which is slightly bigger than the sheets of the frontside and put the fabric underneath (between the zipper and frontside) p.26/27.

While attaching the zipper (Z1) you are also attaching the inner lining for the front pocket. The side and bottom of the inner lining will be closed by the stitching that comes in the next step.





Repairing is not restoring. Repair as potential and perspective acknowledges use-relations and use-directions. It's an attentive being with; a balancing notion, a tipping point, a turning towards the use surface, a dedication of attention within a moment of ongoing orientation.

The object to repair can also function as a source. Repair becomes an invention which alters the use-directions in such a way that the previous use surface gets softened and can take a pause.

This affective value is personal and/or socially recognised, and will never be appropriated by any market economy. Repair is anti-capitalist and has the potential to manifest as a perspective, a perspective that can be learned.

Practising repair is to overcome the frustration of brokenness and taking initiative yourself or with others. It leads to a mindset that could impact how we interact with materials and resources, to undo certain logics of sleekness and smoothness to accept interruptions.

Our immediate surroundings need to be reconsidered as a context of potential inconvenience, of personal choices and space to take action beside and outside consumerism.

*„The value then attributed to this object, which consist of more or less successful or conflicting hybridization, is simultaneously an aesthetic jugdment, a social practice, a historical fact and an interpersonal tie - everything, precisely, which constitues is incaculable, for literally priceless, immaterial value, as its symbolism cannot be converted into money, goods or transactions.“  
(Atar: 2020, P. 44)*



As an observational term  
**the contamination of the broken part** describes how a broken window on a facade influences the perception of the whole house. It is about separating the components from a category. A broken zipper is not a broken bag. Detaching is unlearning to see and perceive our material surrounding as packages.\*

The emphasis on detaching directs the focus towards gestures of care, since there is a difference between detaching and destroying. Detaching follows the proposed lines, it tries to understand these layers, which are transforming from a volume into a 2 dimensional shape. It is about opening the stitches rather than cutting alongside. It is also a revealing gesture, of seeing traces underneath the surface as a direct link to human labor.

\*one handbag consist of many different materials, which are bound together by a certain functionality, but each component has its own fading, its own logic, it is exposed to a use direction in many different ways, according to a variety of parameters



# Notes on a handbag // Attaching front and backside & Cutting corners



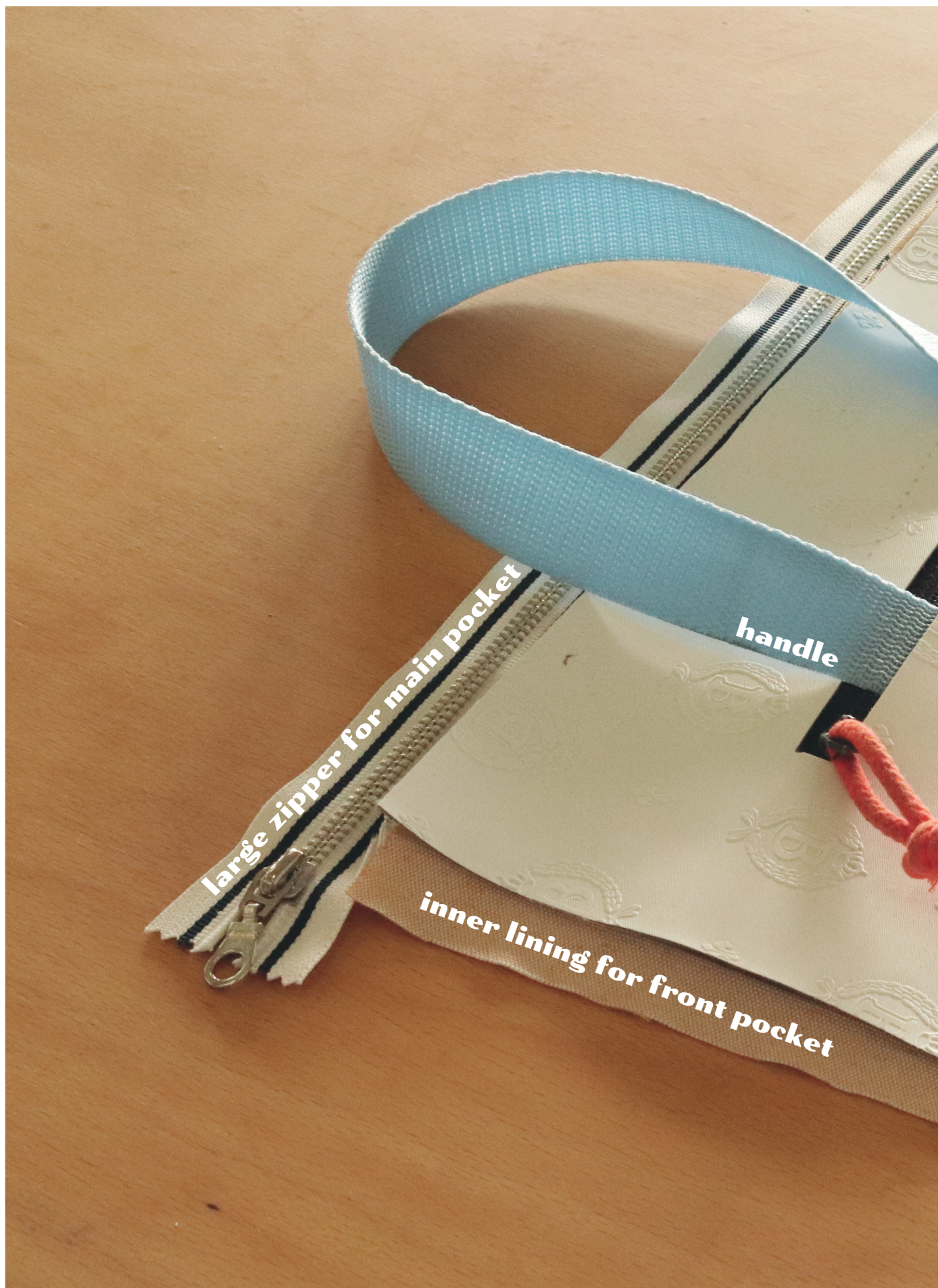
In the process of making a bag, the most crucial part is adding a handle. The linking strategy (how the handle is attached to the outer shell) should be made in a way that the strength of the handle could eventually be applied as a negotiation between a potentiality (to carry) and a volume (the weight).

The weight is transferred vertically from the junctions where the handle is attached to the outer shell, and then to the bottom of the bag. Lifting squeezes the volume into a vertical direction, the sound would be something like hhssfkrrrKKK and stays on the capital K, echoing with every step.













You say...

When I make a container or a bag, I am excited to use it. This excitement reflects on things/objects/materials, which I'm containing.

How to keep materials alive is also a question of how I'm storing them.

Can containment be exciting?

What if containment is no longer a solution but an affectation?



## Attaching front- and backside & Cutting corners

**8** Put the front- and backside on top of each other. The handles and the front pocket should be outside, you are stitching around the outside. By stitching around, you will also close the inner lining for the front pocket. Do a second stitching next to the first one (p. 18).

**9** Now your bag is almost finished! and you can now check if the pockets work. Cut out a square in both corners on the bottom (P. 27), It will help to turn the bag inside out in the next step.



When I first passed by the black rail,  
it reminded me of a giant marble run.  
Planes were scratching white chalky marks in the sky,  
I was the only one at the marble run today, but people are using this bike path  
to reach the bridge, or to take a walk in the park.







I recently got a lunch box from a friend. She asks me if I want to have it. It's leaking, she said.

There was no mechanism for the lid to keep the box closed.

The seal holds the lid yet cannot seal the box.

While in use, the lunch box affects my way of carrying. I consider this object as a **seeping object**. I need to stay attentive. While being on the public transport, knowing that the lunchbox would always be on the very bottom of my bag, I observe the reaction of dogs. Do they sniff in the direction of my bag? And when I lift it, I take a quick look at the spot where the bag was standing...

Could there be other seeping objects?

During winter times, I am filling my aluminum bottle with tea to put in my inner pocket. It's seeping-ness is making me warm, the promise of my winter jacket is to keep the warmth a little longer.

I am on my way home.

I took a little bag with me inside the lunch box containing an apple.

I am in a forest near Stockholm, the tea bottle is half empty and still seeping heat, I forgot the apple. I didn't take anything else with me back home besides a little piece of wood, shaped by the scratching bites of a beaver.

As I arrive I open the seeping box in the kitchen, the apples are a bit mushy as they are falling and falling inside.





In *What's the Use* Sara Ahmed describes how certain objects are attracting or metaphorically holding hands with other objects in a use context. A table surface can be used as a working desk and a paper attracts a pen, or a table surface could also be used as a dining table, and a spoon would more likely match with a fork than scissors.

Ahmed states that in using objects in more than one way, one is emphasizing the relation by giving it a use-direction: „Forness helps reveal the partiality of existence“ (Ahmed: 2019, S. 35). And: „we learn about a form, when a change in function doesn't require a change in form.“ (Ahmed: 2019, P. 34)





## **Proposing into form, proposing out of form** what could that be ?

Practicing this question is related to detaching the “arrival” of materials from the magnetism of an idea, desire or project.

*What could it be* off-centers the project lineage towards a relational response. An answer could be *many* or *nothing* or *not-yet*. The answer is practice. Detaching is as important as attaching. All these possible answers provide a relational storage for otherwise relaxed materials and objects. As an ecology of practices, it continues proposing into form and proposing into differences. It asks for a constant renewal and addresses relationality as a major capacity for storing. It invites to not use materials away but to perceive usage as a relational promise and as a continuous proposition. In order to reach for a component one has to open the link between others. In

order to reach something one has to detach others. In order to reach for the specific, one has to open and acknowledge the multiple. *What could it be* transfers a beginning into a relational statement as a *beginning with*. It is a searching direction, an observational turn, it escapes a linear purchase.

Just storing used materials is a dead end. The Effort should go into reintroducing, redefining and contextualizing.



**What if form follows function  
What if form follows friction  
What if frictions follows form  
What if frictions follows function  
What if functions follows fiction ?**







### **Turn the bag inside out & stitch the corners**

**10** Turn the bag inside out and especially focus on the two corners on the bottom. Now stitch 6 or 7 cm perpendicular to the Bottom Stitching (P. 37). Do it on both sides. It will add volume to the bag.



*My last flight was 5 years ago....*

*My next flight will be in 2 and a 1/2 weeks at 3pm*

*{change clock}*

*I am telling you this one month later as a memory.*

*It is Hannah's old suitcase, her mother was using it before.*

*The left wheel was falling apart.*

*I had to think of my research and of the contamination of the broken part and I decided to repair and use this suitcase for my move to Stockholm.*

*I attached four new wheels, which I screwed into a wooden plate that I installed from the inside on the bottom.*

*The wooden shelf tray comes from a shelf I inherited.*

*I also replaced this surface here, it used to be thin plastic material, covering a hard plastic component. I took a black leather surface, which comes from an old couch I found on the street a couple of years back. The seating area of this couch was entirely destroyed, but not the backside or the armrest. I took these parts off, it was a big surface with traces of scars and veins imprinted on the surface.*

*If I didn't tell you this as if it were a memory, I would have told you that I haven't flown in the last five years, and I was nervous to fly and also nervous if the suitcase will pass the security check and will survive the travel hectics since there are screws in the membrane.*

*The security check was very crowded - we arrived there at 15:30.*

*{changing clock}*

*I was next; I put the suitcase and my phone/keys/computer into the gray box.*

*I went first, my belongings second.*

*Suddenly my suitcase would go back into the scanner, the two gray plastic containers had already passed.*

*I was thinking, what if I would have had a broken arm and I had screws as a support inside my bones, would they then have guessed that this suitcase belongs to me, would they see the scans next to each other?*

*I said „Yes“ this is mine!*

*An third officer joined the discussion and sharply looked in my direction: „We need to take a look inside“*

.....

*Following the officer I carried my suitcase, I was afraid to use its wheels, I thought it could have sounded weird, not how a suitcase is supposed to sound.*

*We entered a room, I got told to put the suitcase on the table, that was standing in the middle of the room.*

*The officer left, I looked around.*

*There was a television hanging on the wall with a TV show about an auction of abandoned suitcases for sale, there was no sound. On the wall on the right side there was a poster with different examples and strategies of passenger smuggling and hiding things in rather casual and daily postures.*

*{pointing towards examples in space}*

*The other side of the room was dominated by a big window, which was a sleek and shiny black surface. Probably people were standing behind it, estimating risks.*

*Looking at the window I could see the tv show in the reflection.*

*I had to wait*

*{say: time was passing by and change clock to 16:03}*

*After 10 min. two officers came.*

*They asked me to open the suitcase and to put everything on the table. After seeing my necessaire, they said „empty every pocket and confirm it with empty”, one of them double checked, if these pockets were empty as I claimed.*

*How does it feel to enter the pockets with rubber gloves? I was wondering.*

*stones, smaller colored wooden objects, small pieces of fabrics, magnets.*

*He also wanted to open the inlay of the suitcase. I was reminded of seeing the traces from the manufacturing process during the repair and wondered: Why don't we look any further?*

*{shift to projection surface, manipulating surface with objects, piano loop, rain drops, a split screen with a manufacturing process of bags in a mass production on the left side and a detaching and repair process of a luxury bag in an atelier of a bag maker}*

*{meanwhile change clock to 16:25}*











This research was developed during a one year post-graduate program at a.pass and has been informed and influenced by many formal and informal exchanges and conversations during lectures, workshops, coffee breaks. Mentors were: Jaime Llopis, Anna Rispoli, Samah Hijawi, Kristien Van den Brande, Goda Palekaite, Vladimir Miller, Sina Seifee, Pia Louwerens, Lilia Mestre.

**Special Thanks to:**

Hannah Krebs, Marko Gutić Mižimakov, Kristien Van den Brande, Mary Szydłowska, Josephine Stamer, Vladimir Miller, Kristof Van Hoorde, Steven Jouwersma, Hans Van Wambeke

**Proof reading:**

May Abnet, Alyssa Gersony, Amy Pickles  
Kristien Van den branden

**Binding:**

in collaboration with Tatsuya Inuikawa

**Graphic design:**

Martin Sieweke

**Foto credit:**

Anna Lugmeier: P. 7/8  
Marko Gutić Mižimakov: P. 39/40  
Michael Sieweke: P. 10

**Copy edit:**

Kristien Van den Brande  
Marko Gutić Mižimakov

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*Gefördert durch die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien im Programm NEUSTART KULTUR, Hilfsprogramm DIS-TANZEN des Dachverband Tanz Deutschland*

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**it's 16:30**





