

Concordia University

ETUDE ONE

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Although meaningful interactions do not need to be frequent, and frequent interactions do not need to be meaningful, the three objects that I find magical and that I would like to explore are ones that I am in copious contact with. Those objects are the bus, a jacket and chewing gum.

A chewing gum's primary purpose is to freshen one's breath. One's mouth develops a unique and particular taste and odor due to previously eaten food, oral hygiene habit, bacterial growth, body temperature, etc. It is considered good etiquette to mask such odor when in presence of others with, most commonly, an aroma that has been socio-historically associated with cleanliness: mint. It is a way to avoid imposing one's own body on others, limit one's presence and hide one's previous doings. Although this usage of the chewing gum is important to me, it is not its most meaningful. To me, chewing gum is a treat, an experience that starts right from the packaging. My favorite gums are the ones that come in plastic trays that could be slid out of the cardboard sleeve. Each piece of gum is aligned to the next in a grid pattern. Rare are the objects that one often carries around so neatly organized. One chooses the sequence in which to consume them and, since their order is maintained in the packaging, one can follow a certain pattern. Such packaging gives the illusion of choice: all options lead nearly to the same reward. Rare are the choices that are so easy. I prefer consuming the gums from left to right and from top to bottom. Mild annoyance arises when I noticed I've disturbed the sequence by taking a gum without paying attention. Once a gum is chosen, the packaging it comes in is satisfying to pop. It gives permission to break something, bust the aluminium seal and crush the plastic, an irreversible action with a distinct and satisfying sound. What you get in reward is a pristine small white square that (probably) nobody has ever touched before. Crushing the gum with your teeth and it bouncing back due to its elasticity is a small game. More involved exercises would be to blow bubbles or to stretch or model it using different parts of the oral cavity. Whilst one part of the mind is occupied with this game, another is enjoying the slightly sweet flavor and cooling effect of the mint, and a third part can better concentrate on the body's main work. The mind is at peace since all of its parts have something to do. Being emotionally involved with the experience of chewing gum does not mean that I have any emotional attachments to the gum itself. If anything, the absence of much value in the physical piece of gum makes it devoid of disadvantages in its ephemerality. The chewing gum does not necessitate emotional investment, maintenance or care. It can be thrown away or swollen without remorse. It is a freeing transient experience that subtly overlays the body's main experiences and that can be repeated at leisure.

Another object that is evocative to me is my jacket. The primary use of a jacket is to keep the body warm and to protect one's upper garments from getting wet when it rains. It is worn for one's own comfort. Since I often get cold, I end up wearing my jacket regularly if the weather asks for it. A secondary use for a jacket would be to support the way one wants to present themselves. One's choice of clothing can be their way to let their outer appearance visually match their inner self or, on the contrary, used as a disguise to let onlookers insinuate how one wants to be perceived. It can be noted that this secondary use does also lead to one's own comfort. Such use can lead one to be emotionally attached to some of their items of clothing. It is what happened to me and my jacket. When worn, my coat acts as a barrier between the space around me and myself. Despite it not being genuine leather, it acts as a second skin. People wearing leather jackets have assumed characteristics and personality traits about them. Whether I have those personality traits or don't is insignificant. The garment has them imbued within it. As a result, I do not need to present a personality. I do not need to show anything from my inner self to my surrounding. I can detach my inner self from my environment. The jacket is thus personified. This personification has begun from the moment the garment was brought into my life. Most times, before one uses an object, one must choose to use it. This decision varies greatly from person to person, from choice to choice. I found my jacket on a heavy discount in an apparel store. I was not looking for one, nor any type of coat in particular, and solely went to the store to waste some time by myself. It was the only one left and it was hidden a corner amongst the other clothes. When I tried it on, I saw that it too big for me. Additionally, the belt permanently attached to it would ring quite loudly when walking. However, it being not quite perfect, it being seemingly unwanted since on discount, it being the only one at that store and me finding it without looking for it made the jacket feel enchanted. The jacket felt alive: flawed, unique, alone and waiting. Purchasing it did not feel like a choice but an encounter. Over time, me and my jacket have molded into each other. The faux leather has been stretched at the shoulders, has creases at the

elbows, a few stains, some pins. Meanwhile I got used to the ringing belt and I fold the cuffs of the overly long sleeves. This mutual adaptation from prolonged interaction reinforced personification and my connection to the object.



The final object that shifts my senses is the public transit bus. The primary use of a bus is to bring a passenger from one destination to another. One travels between different destinations to perform different activities. Since there is a limited amount of buses to serve a population, they are scheduled to arrive to predetermined locations at predetermined times. As a result, taking the bus is a communal activity, i.e. multiple people take the same bus at the same time. Every bus is thus a microcosm with its own rules.

