

Malmö
Art Academy

2015 - 2016



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Malmö Art Academy
2015–2016

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The 2015/16 school year began with a big party and dinner to celebrate Malmö Art Academy's twentieth anniversary. The event was open to all students, alumni, teachers, and guest lecturers. We were expecting around a hundred and fifty guests, but twice as many showed up. It was a memorable night, during which many old friends were reunited in the light of the full moon.

Critical & Pedagogical Studies took on a new batch of master's students, who have already made their mark by publishing collective writings and organising their own room in the school's annual exhibition. During the year, the CPS students took part in the Steirischer Herbst festival in Graz, Austria, and Cultural Documents in Filignano and Rome, Italy.

Three of our doctoral students—Rosa Barba, Marion von Osten, and Andrea Ray—successfully passed their 50-percent seminars, which means they have reached the halfway point in their doctoral studies. In conjunction with this, the whole doctoral student group presented their work publicly at Inter Arts Center in Malmö.

At the invitation of the Sölvesborg Art Society, the participants of Emily Wardill's BFA class "Some Roses and Their Phantoms" produced an exhibition at the Sölvesborg Art Centre in November, which is something the Art Academy is both happy about and grateful for.

As usual, this school year has been intense, with a series of interesting classes and projects delivered both by the school's own teachers and by guest lecturers such as Ieva Misevičiūtė, Michael Portnoy, and Kirsty Bell. It's especially enjoyable to welcome back previous students such as Anna Bokström, Tiril Hasselknippe, David Nilsson, and Ella Tillema in new roles as teachers and project assistants.

This year's excursion for the first-year MFA students took them to Glasgow and Edinburgh in Scotland under the guidance of teachers Maria Hedlund and Margot Edström.

Lívia Páldi from BAC—Baltic Art Center, Visby, was this year's external participant for the BFA students' examinations, and curator Filipa Oliveira from Fórum Eugénio de Almeida in Évora, Portugal, was the participant for the MFA students'.

The Malmö Art Academy was trusted with producing the exhibition that showcased the 2015 recipients of the Edstrandska Stiftelsens Stipendium. In October, works by Ingrid Furre, Maj Hasager, Gabriella Ioannides, and Anna Ling—who were all educated here—as well as works by second-year MFA students Marie Bonfils, Karin Hald, Kalle Lindmark, and Emelie Sandström were all shown at the school's KHM Gallery. This collaboration is very highly valued by the Art Academy.

We're also very happy that one of our former students, Sandra Mujinga, was one of this year's recipients of the Fredrik Roos Stipendium.

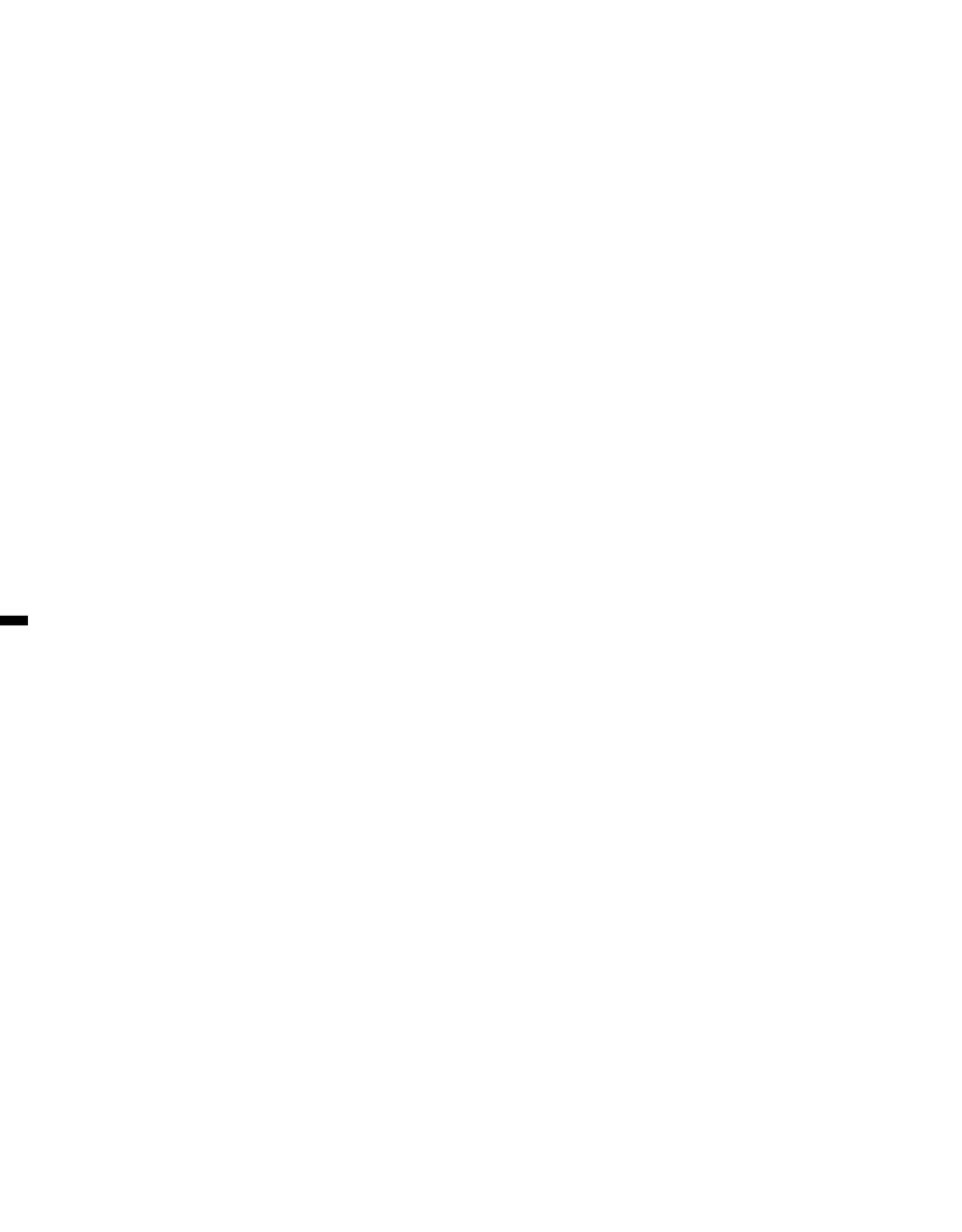
Thanks goes to all of the professors, teachers, students, guest mentors, technicians, librarians, and administrators who make up the Malmö Art Academy, and who all do their part to make it such an unusually vibrant and organic institution. And last but not least—thank you to Marie Thams and Laura Hatfield for editing this *Yearbook*!

—Gertrud Sandqvist
Rector









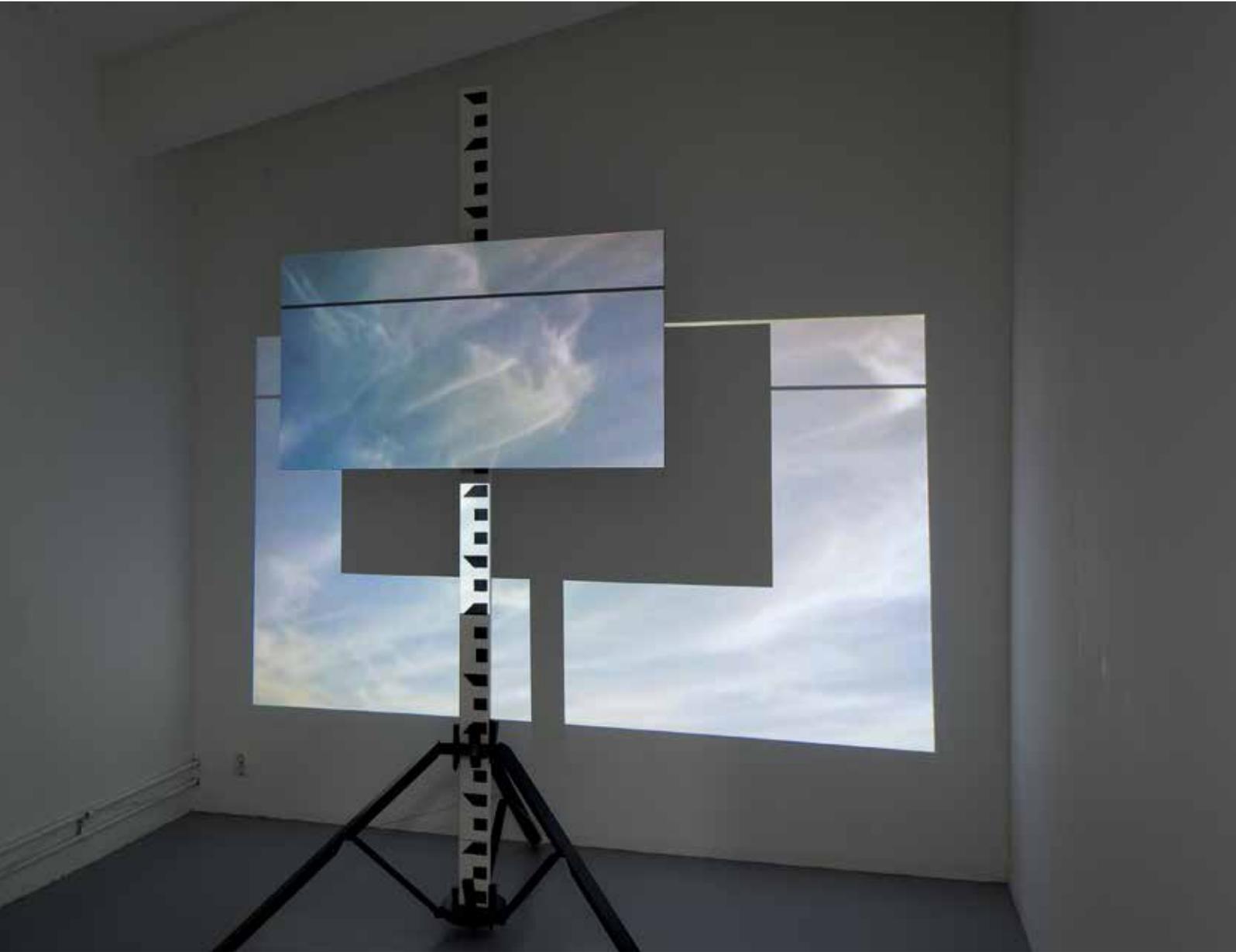




Master of Fine Arts

Year 2

Markus Bråten
Dick Hedlund
Hanni Kamaly
Youngjae Lih
Johan Lundqwist
Henrique Pavão
Marie Raffn
Ana Rebordão
Tomas Sjögren
Daniel Seferian Spies
Wilfred Wagner
Þorgerður Þórhallsdóttir
Johan Österholm



Staff Gauge Type D, 2016. Projection on wooden screen, 04:17 video loop. 204 x 70 x 100 cm. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Markus Bråten



Installation view from *SYSTEM BLOWER*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Markus Bråten

These Days I Only Wake Up a Third of the Way

System Blower¹

Yeah! Dance for us, amigo, you our great con-dancer—as we're sitting in the windowsill, dangling our feet. Tom Clancy² brought his tactical make-believe boots, and Jenny from the block³ got her boats mixed up. Tyler Durden⁴ is frantically punching a cherry pie, and the moon is rosy, ever so rosy. The walls are covered with pink polyester drapery. And in the corner, the jukebox is playing our favourite Britney Spears song backwards. Look now! The clown is spitting on the carpet!⁵

Images interact with each other. They blend, fuse, weave—we can sense them, and we can see them. Through flux they might seduce us, while we imagine them intermingling—creating stories through which we hope to see a bigger picture, and we become immersed, we might even drown. But at the end of the day, when we close our screens and lie down where we sleep, do we escape into slumber?

Couplings

It was summer in Portugal, high temperatures, when I discovered this video online, sitting on my bed. Outside there was blazing sun, inside; fresh, cold air. Inside my computer, there was virtual sunshine, as I surfed on the Internet, *curing boredom*.

Here, on my screen, a man is riding a horse. They are galloping across a field, to and fro, in circles and in figures of eight, in the blazing sun. Around the edges of the field there are plants and vegetation, functioning to separate this field from neighbouring fields. We find ourselves in a valley; mountains and hills are visible all around. On one side, halfway up the hillside, we see a road, carved into the landscape, semi-dense with traffic. Next to the road are utility poles, at intervals, supporting power lines. Now, some interesting things are to be noticed here. For instance, the quality of the image: it's low resolution and it's shaky and "laggy" during the slow-motion bits, which indicates the camera might be a device that is handheld and records with a low frame rate. And we look at the movements of the rider, which seem to be skilled and in control of the horse, leading us to believe that this video exists to document the horse, and this person's mastery over it. From the sunburnt landscape, a landscape seemingly familiar with the sun, we might deduce that this is one of many warm days in this location.

But wait. It's the '90s, and you're watching TV. You're watching a TV series—*Dallas* (1978–91),⁶ for example, or any other, doesn't matter, as long as it's in a language you don't fully comprehend.⁷ But here you are, with the subtitles on, like you would. But they seem to be off-kilter somehow. Something is not right. Look at this. First it's not apparent, maybe it takes some time for you to notice, but that doesn't matter, what matters is that you see it: there's something wrong with them—the subtitles don't match the show you're watching.

As far as being a visual disturbance, I think most of us can agree that having subtitles in the image doesn't bother us. The text merges with the image, it becomes a part of it, since we assume that the text is translating the dialogue in the moving image—into a language that is understandable, making it so that it fits with what we see, instantly.

We believe what they translate, because we are used to believing in it. And we are expecting these things to be said, because of the context: the reading of the lips, timing, or body language. For us, it has so often given experiences where we can say, "Yes, I'm quite sure I understood most of the dialogue," and it made for an understandable experience.

Most of the recent video works by Ed Atkins are made through interaction with computer software, and they seem to, in short, deal with the body in relation to virtual space. These bodies, and all the other elements we are introduced to in his pieces, especially in *Warm, Warm, Warm Spring Mouths* (2013), seem to be, both metaphorically and literally, trapped inside a dream—a space where elements and impulses are floating by. Excerpts of songs are never fully sung, sentences never fully formed. And with the voice inside the screen, captions morph back and forth from being connected to the narrator, to being reactionary, to being about something totally different. In *Even Pricks* (2013), we try to read captions that belong to a different audience, as they are written in another language.

These two pieces utilise, as mentioned, some pretty curious methods of subtitling. Curious in the way that they seem to relate somehow to what we are seeing, on our screen, during our so much beloved American TV show. In both cases, in *Dallas* and in Ed Atkins's video works, we witness a synergy between text and image, whereby the captions have

made themselves known—where the subtitle, previously passive, is suddenly willing to negotiate with the image. In *Dallas* though, one could say that one develops a disinterest towards the image. Because now, the subtitles demand our attention. But something else this might evoke is an unplugging, as our attention is no longer on the image, but rather with both the image and the text. Maybe it's something like a flattening or neutralisation of the moving image. Its potency is weakened somehow, because now it has to fight with another storyline, the one we imagine through reading the captions.

I never saw *Dallas*. I'm from another generation. What I do remember though, from my childhood, is when we used to have an antenna attached to the TV, supplying us with all the TV channels in accordance with the television subscription contract. And once or twice it happened to me, this thing where the captions just sort of left the show they were assigned to and rambled their way into whatever I was watching.

But I digress. Here, on my screen, a man is riding a horse. Now, still inside the comfort of my bedroom, I added something to this moving image; a system that counts the steps of the horse, increasing each time the horse touches the ground with all four legs. Every gallop. Oh boy.

And as I did this, eagerly applying a number to each step, I allowed for mistakes to happen. Sixty-four is repeated twice, one hundred is replaced by ten, and ninety is repeated eight times, before it freezes on the screen and the video loops again.

It seems that we are interested in all kinds of things that have something particular in common. Maybe we are on a quest for things like: the stock exchange, oil prices, how many kilometres are in a marathon, ten divided by eight, etc. Numbers that by themselves seek to quantify, or mean something—and something else yet again when put next to other numbers. Systems of numbers exist all around, as do systems without numbers. Logistics are all around us, as well as inherent in us, in the form of movement, in cells, yes, even the very structure of our being.

We like logistics. But systems fail, break, and collapse in due time. Even virtual systems. As in the economy that we have become so familiar with: we transfer money from one account to the other, but we no longer witness the transactions of coins or bills. The economic crisis was partly caused by people getting comfortable with “throwing around figures” on screens, “juggling numbers,” hollow digits changing hands. Systems on top of systems. Mortgages on top of mortgages. And so it went.

“Less abstractly, sabotage also means putting vinegar on the loom, doubt in the smile, glass in the motor, milk in the bearings, shit on the spikes, sand in the soup, and worms in the code. Being too thorough and too careless, tightening just a hair too much and

too little, having seriously, oh my God, no idea how this could have happened—and having no one able to prove it otherwise.”⁸

Having No One Able to Prove It Otherwise

I was in Spain in a forest somewhere this one time, and you know those swarms of mosquitoes that fly around during spring? I saw one of those. We were walking up a hillside in the forest, rocks and roots in our water-worn path. I remember I stubbed my toe on one of those rocks or roots, I'm not quite sure which one it was. Anyway, it was about midday, I think, and sunny too, not too warm though; it was early winter in this place, and we were at high altitude, me and my friends. Well, I saw one of those swarms of mosquitoes there on that path, and it was pulsating, you know, like swarms do. Moving up and down and disrupting and reforming when hit by puffs of wind, like a flock of birds hunting for bugs, or mackerel escaping a dolphin, or, you know.

Later in my apartment—online, you could say: I mean, I was watching a TV series on my computer so at least I was some sort of “plugged in.” It was about four in the morning, and in those early hours, I experienced an aberration. High gear. A kind of distress.

Looking at my screen, I unplugged from immersion, like those times when in the cinema you suddenly “wake up” and see that you're surrounded by people. I “woke up,” still in distress, and a person in my screen said, “Mosquitoes have forty-seven teeth,” and the other person responded, “How do they fit into such a tiny mouth?”

How Do They Fit into Such a Tiny Mouth?!

The artistic crisis is a strange sort of amnesia. It's something like the sensation of attempting to remember what summer feels like, in the midst of winter.

Before the amnesia, in the middle of the process, I might feel that things fall into place with ease. But during the artistic crisis, I censor ideas, repeatedly—it's like a writer's block; I don't allow myself to see how exciting ideas can be. I lose confidence in them. Why is this?

Partly I think it's because I don't quite comprehend why in the first place—why things work before I understand why, and why it makes sense to do things while I'm doing them. The logic seems blind in that sense. The method to reach the point where things start happening, and the feeling of success, is not possible to determine, since it's not possible to pin down. It's different every time. Lawrence Weiner says some things about logic and communication. For him, art is about communication, and as artists we find ourselves playing around with a logic that is past the point of our intellection. Our struggle is therefore to reconfigure our logic in order to communicate these things with others.⁹

Now, I can't say there is any truth to the process of making art, any recipe of how things come

about; I don't believe it's that simple. But looking at the things I'm currently thinking about, there is a point to what he's saying. Actually, I think communication is one of my major concerns. Not just when it comes to the shaping of the work, in its ability to convey whatever it is that I wish for it to convey, but also when you look at the work, it's about communication. I wish to exorcise the virtual, and by doing so, the work will also somehow represent different degrees of quantifying communication.

And quantification is the key to my wish to exorcise the virtual. Through measuring and quantifying moving images, I can create a space, or spaces, where a revolution seems to be in effect. In between the revolution, and its opposite, that which does not demand the revolution—satisfaction—we might be able to spot a flicker of derangement, because even the act of arguing is derangement in its own way. The attempted revolution, the argument, the derangement that follows is there to illustrate a logic derailed, derailed like the logic of the psychosis; irregular, but not idiotic, irregularly intelligent. Irregularly introverted. The space or the universe in which the revolution seems to take place is therefore a psychosis illustrated. But not fully so. It is a place of horror without the jump scare, a place of constant adrenaline; dynamic, but seemingly without a climax. It's the Hollywood movie non-linear.

Hollywood Movie Non-linear

If we cover our eyes when watching a Hollywood horror movie, we might deduce a scenario, an image of what we gather is happening on the screen. Might this be as a precaution, in order to protect ourselves from this potential danger? It's as if we react to this situation like we were in the flesh, so to speak, involved in a threatening situation resembling the one in the movie. Even though we know, or should know, that when we uncover our eyes again, what we are seeing cannot cause us any actual harm, because the moving image cannot protrude beyond the screen. The soundtrack provides us with an artificial sense of situational involvement that the moving image, by itself, might not provide.

Now, if we were to look at our screen with our ears covered instead, we might deduce that the images we see constitute a different kind of noise—through shifts in colour, light, content, the contrasts of the shot, the composition of the image, etc. Noise that presents us with scenarios as equally as well as the soundtrack does, but differently, because what we see now is that scenario materialised.

The soundtrack has an energy that for us might seem obvious, because we are familiar with determining the different moods in sounds. In the Hollywood horror movie, it helps us empathise with what we see; it's an important tool to convince us that we, as well as the protagonists in the movie, are in danger.

The last time I listened to music while I was creating things, I did so because I wanted it to operate as a

mental slingshot. Listening to music helped me relax into the idea of "letting the paper rip," because I don't always know what I want with things, and music is such an easy tool to kick-start or verify certain moods or tensions.

If in the final stages of the work there are still visible residues of the music left, I don't mind that. Actually, I think that inherent in repetition, rhythm, or noise, there's a sort of mechanism, like with the soundtrack of a movie, that can be utilised as a persuasive tool, to help the artwork along on its path towards meaning.

On Its Path towards Meaning

I couldn't locate it online, so I'm not sure if the phobia for a rendezvous between two spaceships has been given a name yet (but it might, in the future). I'm not talking about a meeting between two spaceships from Earth. No, I'm thinking about that moment, as in Arthur C. Clarke's 1973 novel *Rendezvous with Rama*,¹⁰ where there is this intense uncertainty before opening the hatch of the alien spaceship. What should you expect when you poke your head in there, to look at what's inside? Imagine that.

But I guess I'm not only afraid of that moment, I'm also amused—by the fact that I assume that the aliens' vessel of choice would even have a hatch. As if it's a given. Would it even be a vessel?

*"[In] the Highlander TV series ... Duncan awakens a 2000-year-old Egyptian mummy whose first words are, 'Does Rome still rule the world?' In English."*¹¹

In 1990 these two people, Elihu Katz and Tamar Liebes, wrote a paper on *Dallas*, attempting to document its impact on non-English speakers. In their sociological study, called "Interacting with 'Dallas': Cross Cultural Readings of American TV,"¹² they try to think about the impact the assumed American culture exported through this TV series has had on other cultures and how it is understood overseas. Today this might seem like a strange thing to consider, because in the virtual online world there seems to be an ease of intermingling, through which information about cultures is easily exchanged. Although language can be a limiting factor, there are ways to get around it. But before this, cinema, with its passive pedagogical powers, was an easy way to get seemingly closer to the other. Although in cinema we are only looking at the *depiction* of culture—but still, its powers remain the same.

Its Powers Remain the Same

In the film *Network* (1976),¹³ UBS, a television channel, is trying to survive financially after the loss of a popular news anchor. To stay afloat, it utilises methods whereby the audience essentially becomes a part of the show, in the sense that the future program gets altered according to popular demand. To achieve this, the employees become immersed in the virtual uni-



SYSTEM BLOWER, 2016. Video installation. Dimensions variable. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Markus Bråten



SYSTEM BLOWER, 2016. 32" LCD monitor, wooden tripod, 01:17 min. video loop. Installation detail, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Markus Bråten

verse of television as they become less and less tied to social norms and regulations, losing touch with the society that exists outside the studio. The team of researchers, PR people, and other employees are those who push the illusion of this virtual universe, by creating ideas for the audience, attracting them to the world inside the TV monitor while simultaneously being themselves immersed into the world they've created.

In the movie *Strange Days* (1995), the protagonist is a virtual reality pusher, a drug dealer, dealing in fantasies. Although here the immersion is taken one step further with the added total sensorial experience. All the senses come included with the fantasy on offer, and they are all recorded by real people, then later stolen or sold, like we would really do with drugs or porn. The idea is that through the film's elevated version of VR, we can enter someone else's body and experience all the sensations this entails. We feel the skin texture, the strangeness of carrying more weight, or less weight, different hair, different features. We get to be a man or a woman. This is basically the same principle as walking through some kind of portal, isn't it? Because in some sense, you go through the VR glasses and through to the other side to enter someone else's world. I mean it's perverse somehow, isn't it? Like a voyeur. But it's also a journey. I mean, we exit on the other side of the portal, and we are somewhere else. And we have gone through the virtual and entered through the other side, back to the world we came from.

But not quite! Let's add another function to this device. Say that you are beamed inside this person, the next step would be to control it, the body, its movements and all. You start picking up things, looking at things that weren't yours before, but are now, because you have transferred. You lie in their bed, you sleep, you even sleep in their body. You do it all. But what then, if you forget that you changed bodies? It's highly unlikely, but follow me here, because I think I might be on to something.

So you enter someone's else's body, and you see things differently, don't you? Because everything is relative to your body. Your height might be different. Are you a man, or a woman, does that matter to you? It might. Things have changed. And you have stepped out of—I mean, you have even stepped out of the virtual world somehow, haven't you? And back again into the material world, or whatever we call it. Reality. Yeah, you have stepped back into reality.

But we all know this is not how things work, our interactions with the machine, whatever shape and design, has not until now allowed us this sort of insight—a physical-body to virtual-body transcendence. Now, is this a sort of *Übermensch*?¹⁴ Because this body is no longer constricted by worldliness, but by engineering. Or is this then the *Übermensch* of cyberpunk, a cyborg human, which is no longer associated with the fleshy body—because in that case the body itself might not be relevant anymore, only its in-

teractions with a physical non-fiction, in a seemingly scientific, although fictitious, way.

David Cronenberg's *eXistenZ* (1999)¹⁵ introduces us to the extension of cinema: video games. In this film's universe, the video game as a virtual interactive world is the ideal. As with the VR glasses, reality is recreated, although the systems inherent in this world seem to release a sort of hallucinatory gas, where the virtual acts as a sort of schizophrenic separation from identity and will. Here, our bodies are the centre of the horror. In this video game, technology as mimesis mimics the organs and the flesh of the body, as if we are not yet fully cyborg, while simultaneously being totally unaware of the strangeness of our extended body parts. Inevitably, we become less and less aware of our own interactions with the game, as the virtual becomes confused with the real.

Whatever, or whomever, we are introduced to in whatever story—we see whatever thing, whatever car, dog, person, whatever—and we observe that there's always something next to it that cannot get the same descriptive attention. It stays in the corner of the eye. Out of focus. But shouldn't we go over there and ask: What are you doing today? What's your story?

And whoever we might see there, and get to observe, maybe they'll tell us a story about their aunt or something. Something other than what was shown before. And maybe the whole city gets infected, except for this neighbouring dog, tree, car, person, etc.

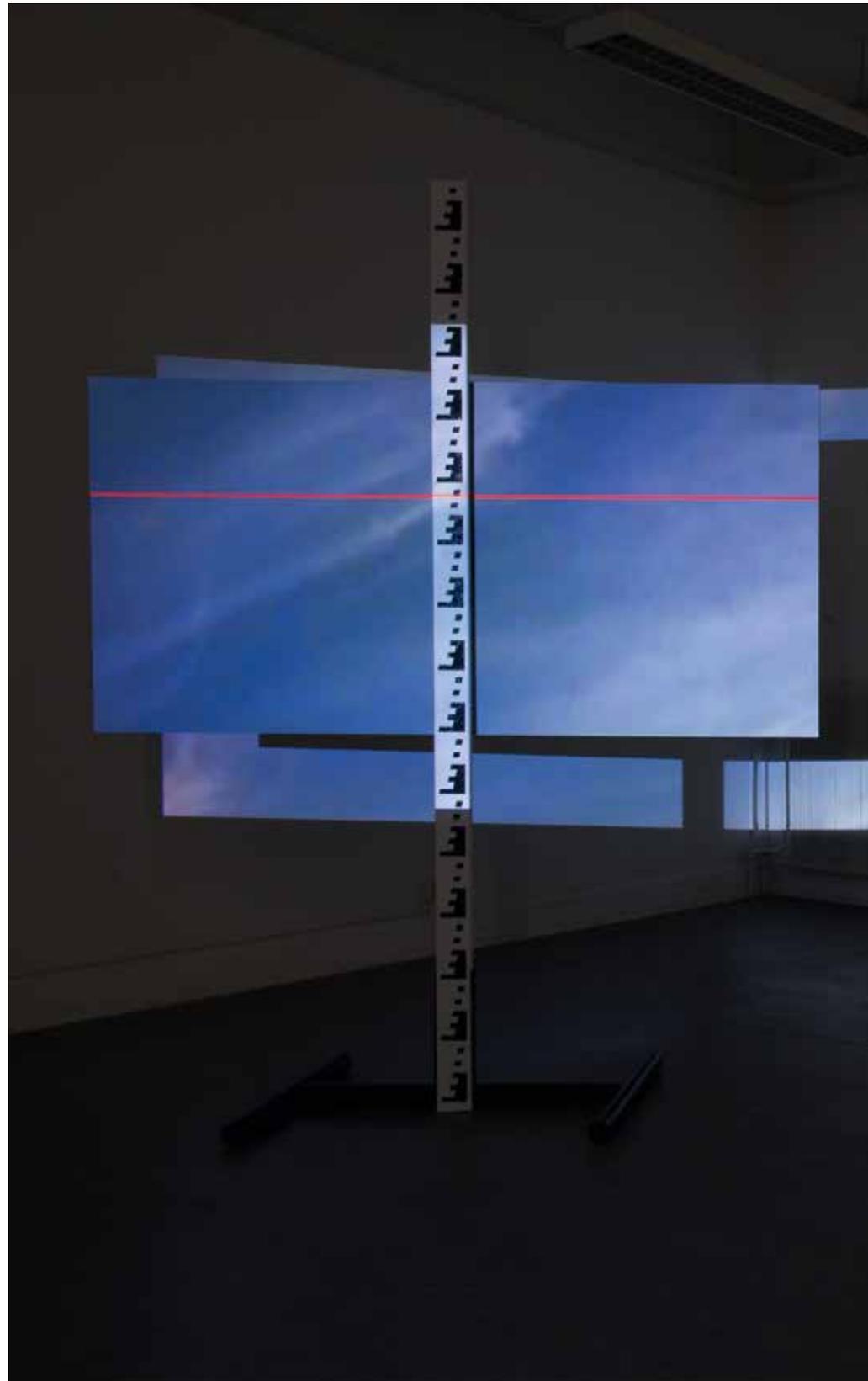
But now, the city is a planet, and the few people still alive are huddling together to try and survive. And they hear rumours of an oasis somewhere on the planet, and they go looking for—no, this is not *Waterworld* (1995).¹⁶ Instead they go hunting for animals, dogs, cats, whatever might be left, but no, there are none, because all the animals became extinct ages ago, and now they have no food, and in the future humans have outgrown the planet, that's just how it is.

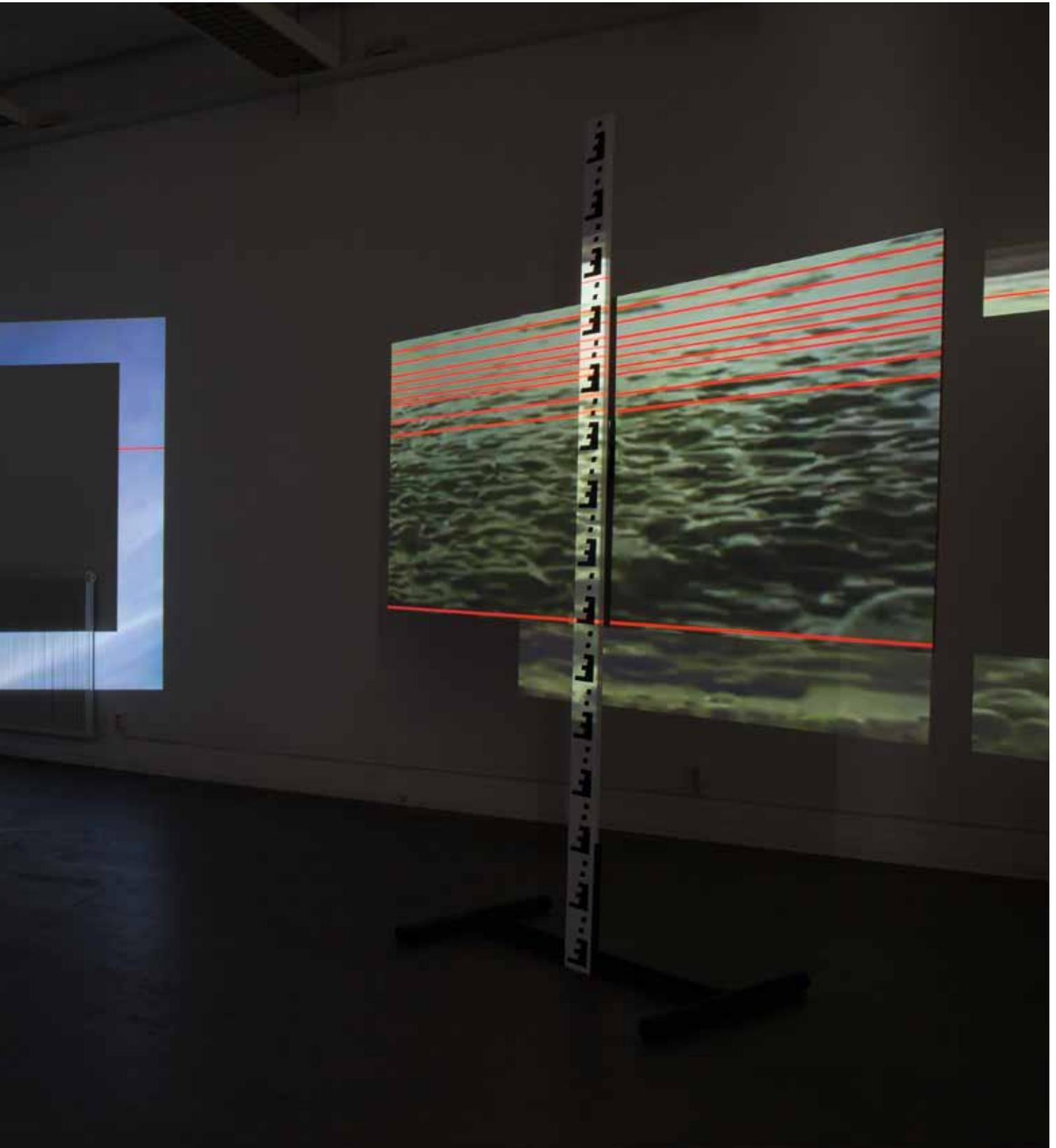
But alas, this paradox must remain unresolved, for the eye is limited by its field of view, and its rotation in the eye socket, and to the head's rotation, etc. And a camera is like the eye. The eye is forever the limitation. Deduction seems to me the only way of breaking the boundaries of seeing. As memory and imagination must take over, to give relief to curiosity.

Memory and Imagination Must Take Over, to Give Relief to Curiosity

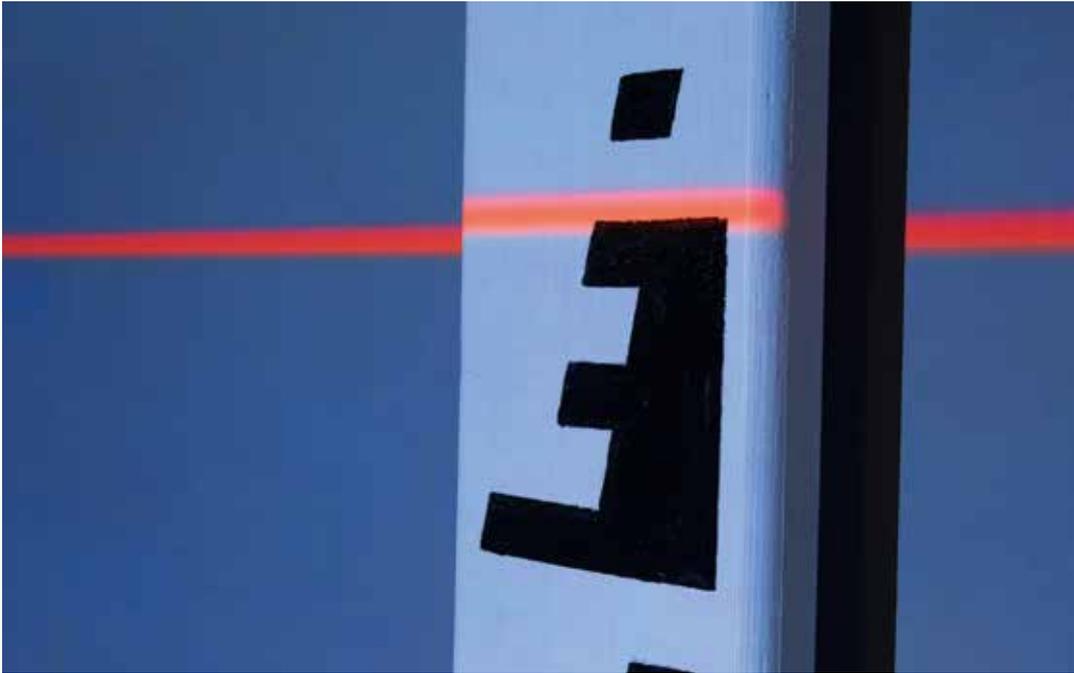
I saw Meron Gribetz online the other day.¹⁷ He's one of those Silicon Valley technology pushers, and he was presenting one of his contraptions: a helmet, sort of like a hockey helmet, where that protective glass in front of your eyes works like holographic glasses, and if you move your arms around, you can move the objects that are visible in the glass. Kind of like Google Glass mixed with virtual reality glasses.

And it hit me—gadgets don't surprise me anymore. Most of them have already been invented by





Staff Gauge Type E (1 and 2), 2016. Video installation. Dimensions variable. Installation view, Annual exhibition, Malmö Art Academy, Malmö, 2016. Markus Bråten



Staff Gauge Type E (1), 2016. Detail. Video installation. Dimensions variable. Markus Bråten

fiction writers and philosophers before; now is just the point where technology is catching up. I mean, there's one thing, though, that can still surprise me, and that is the design, the layout of the thing. In fact, I think the layout of any machine invented by sci-fi is the only thing that science fiction writers cannot hope to refine. Systems operated by figures in sci-fi are supposed to look like intuitive systems, but in fact, although they might seem to be, they need to become refined, and to be incorporated fully, to work seamlessly as an ally with the human anatomy. They demand to be materialised to become fully functional. So in the stories of fiction, ease of use is an illusion. What we see might actually be a highly impractical device. That's the reason any object in sci-fi can never become any more than a conceptual object, or a prototype, or at least an early experiment. All the objects in the sci-fi universe seem to be shells, or constructed images—they are flimsy things, and they can easily be broken by history.

Broken by History

*"The poor image tends towards abstraction: it is a visual idea in its very becoming."*¹⁸

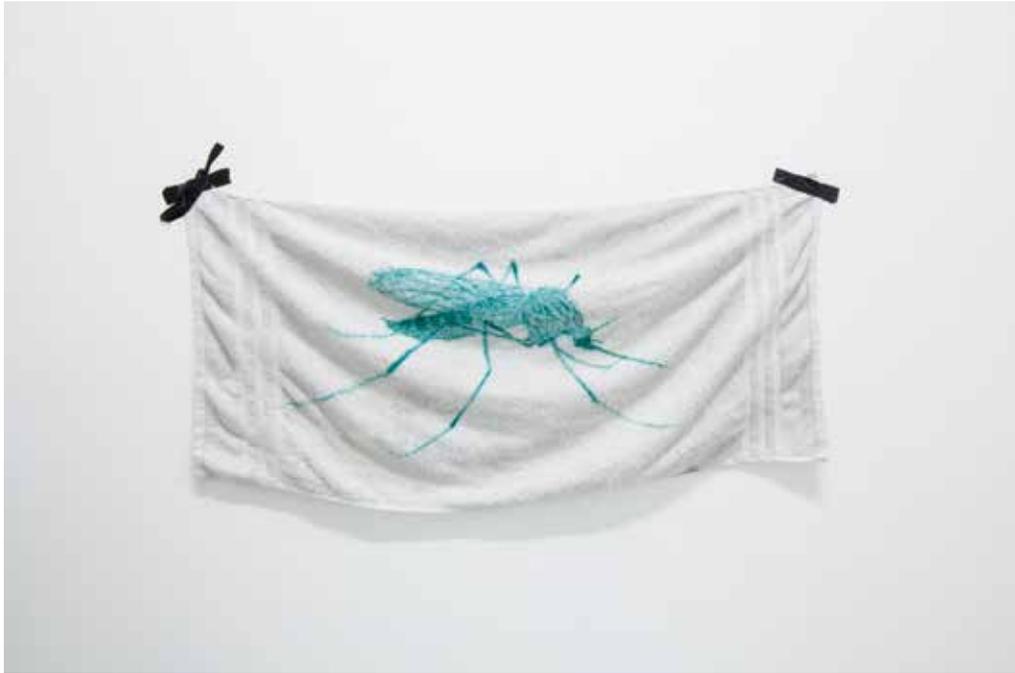
In her essay "In Defense of the Poor Image," Hito Steyerl describes the type of image that we see so often at one point or another, in circulation on the Internet. The poor image goes through filters, it is "uploaded, downloaded, shared, reformatted, and re-edited."

In it we can see the loss of information, as well as an accumulation of it, through the misconceptions that arise from its decomposition.

Mon Roe¹⁹ is one of those fleeting online shadows that whisper about destruction and apocalypse. He believes in a virtual universe in the more literal sense. Well, that's not completely true.

He believes in a conspiracy involving a holographic world. He relies upon the poor image that, through the accumulation of noise and distortions, is now able to uncover clues, all pointing towards the silent conquer of our planet—of everything material being transformed into the holographic image of itself. Shells of things and animals and everything. Through the camera the crow is a different kind of animal; through the camera a car is transformed into a virtual monster. Airplanes are virtual monsters, monsters that are not static, but moving around us. It is all happening in front of our eyes, yet we cannot see it.

Ed Atkins, during an artist talk at London's Contemporary Art Society in 2015,²⁰ mentioned that the first high-definition footage broke down the illusions contained in the low-definition image, because the image suddenly became too real. The crispness of HD imagery certainly premeditates a sort of Marmite predicament to me, where immersion relies more upon the choreography of the camera and upon which way the contents of the frame are organised, because



Forty-Seven, 2016. Ink pen on towel. 90 x 45 cm. Markus Bråten



I See Everything Through a Full Glass, 2015. Glass and print on photographic paper. 170 x 120 x 130 cm. Installation view from Mostra Art Fair, Lisbon, 2015. Markus Bråten

everything can be seen. It can certainly—and this is what I am wary of—become too clear.

I became interested in Mon Roe not because he is unique—he's not the only doomsday prophet out there. It's the same old story, and these doomsday speakers are easily made redundant by their sort of obvious psychotic ramblings. No, it's his method that gets me, how he provides the proof that the world will go under. Because in his arguments, he describes data in images that, for the rest of us, just seem grainy. Images that have lost information, not gained it. What he does is to go out and film things around him. He then projects this on a screen, which he in turn films. The close-ups, the zoom, the grainy images that result from this, the pixels on the television screen, the flicker of the LCD, are all key players in his conviction about the virtual apocalypse, where things are not what they seem to be.

In 2015 as part of an art fair in Lisbon I made a video installation, called *I See Everything Through a Full Glass* (2015), that was a way to talk about Mon Roe's universe of images dissolving all material and creating this sort of intangible reality. At the time I was reading a book by Clarice Lispector called *The Passion According to G.H.* (1964), which is, in short, about a person experiencing an encounter with Julia Kristeva's notion of the abject,²¹ a state of mind where one's fears are translated into a sort of unconscious language, inevitably leading to a psychosis, or at least a psychotic experience.

Now, there is one chapter²² in particular in this book in which Lispector illustrates a point where one, during this journey into the psychosis, exists equally in the rational and the irrational. In between the before and the after, where one might be aware of one's surroundings as material and non-material at the same time.

"I am now going to tell you how I entered the inexpressive that was always my blind and secret search. How I entered whatever exists between the number one and the number two, how I saw the line of mystery and fire, and which is surreptitious line. A note exists between two notes of music, between two facts exists a fact, between two grains of sand no matter how close together there exists an interval of space, a sense that exists between senses—in the interstices of primordial matter is the line of mystery and fire that is the breathing of the world, and the continual breathing of the world is what we hear and call silence.

It wasn't by using any of my attributes as an instrument that I was reaching the smooth mysterious fire of whatever is plasma—it was precisely removing from myself all my attributes, and going only with my living entrails. To have reached that point, I was abandoning my human organization—to enter that monstrous thing that is my living neutrality."²³

As with dreams, one might be aware that one is dreaming, one might remember the real texture of things, but at the same time, everything has a potential instability, a potential animation.

I See Everything Through a Full Glass includes one of Mon Roe's more articulate videos, describing what he believes to be a flaw in one of the holographic projections: a crow circling, contrasted against the clear blue sky, above what seems to be a small patch of forest, filmed outside what I presume is his suburban home somewhere in the US. On top of this, I added a 3D animation of an animated, rotating mask, functioning as an optical illusion. Merged with the image of the crow, it participates in the monologue, as an illusion, the mask's nonchalance exaggerated through its involvement with the video by being set in contact with the isolated universe where Mon Roe is alone, trying to reach out to the masses. The piece was shown in the cellar of a building that previously housed the offices of a postal service and a discontinued Christian radio channel. From the garage next door, which held the abandoned ruins of a mechanic workshop, one could hear the aggressive rumble from the power generator supplying its electricity to the building during its interim function as host to an art fair. On the yellowed walls of the room, originating from the projector, then through a prism of glass shards, the projection split and duplicated along its width. Off-centre in relation to the projector beam I placed a sculpture comprising two pieces of glass leaning on each other, and between the two were suspended two screen grabs from Mon Roe's archive, printed on photographic paper.

Blown

Images interact with each other. They blend, fuse, weave—we can sense them, and we can see them. Through flux they might seduce us, while we imagine them intermingling—creating stories through which we hope to see a bigger picture, and we become immersed, we might even drown. But at the end of the day, when we close our screens and lie down where we sleep, do we escape into slumber?

1 Death Grips, "System Blower," *The Money Store*, Epic Records, 2012. I borrowed Death Grips' title "System Blower"
 for my MFA graduation show at KHM Gallery, January 29, 2016. In addition to describing the failure in a sound
 system in its metamorphosed state, I also see it as something much more than that: it is a sort of mechanism
 that has the intention of revolution, as it intends to blow up a system or expose systems. See further description
 of this concept in the "How Do They Fit into Such a Tiny Mouth?!" section, paragraphs 4–5.

2 "Thomas Ruggles Clancy, Jr. (1947–2013) was an American novelist and video game designer best known for his
 technically detailed espionage and military science storylines set during and after the Cold War." "Tom Clancy,"
Wikipedia, last modified May 6, 2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Clancy.

3 Jennifer Lopez, "Jenny from the Block," *This Is Me ... Then*, Epic Records, 2002.

4 Tyler Durden is a character from *Fight Club* (1996), written by Chuck Palahniuk. He is played by Brad Pitt in
 David Fincher's film adaptation (1999). Tyler Durden "works night jobs where he sabotages companies and harms
 clients. He also steals left-over drained human fat from liposuction clinics to supplement his income through soap
 making and to create the ingredients for bomb manufacturing, which will be put to work later with his fight club.
 He is the co-founder of Fight Club, as it was his idea to instigate the fight that led to it. He later launches Project
 Mayhem, from which he and the members commit various attacks on consumerism." "*Fight Club* (novel): Tyler
 Durden," *Wikipedia*, last modified May 11, 2016, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fight_Club_\(novel\)#Tyler_Durden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fight_Club_(novel)#Tyler_Durden).

5 It has to be mentioned here that the constellation of characters in this paragraph is hinting towards a not so
 dissimilar uncanny image as that of the Red Room of the Black Lodge in David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* (1990–91); see,
 in particular, episode three of season one. But there's more to it than this. The function of these figures in the
 constellation is to create the idea of intertextuality inside the virtual universe that consists of the flux of information
 found through visual media. Also, I need to add that my alteration of the room introduces in its nature the possibility
 of connecting the aforementioned pop-cultural references in a way that makes more sense when thought of as a
 video installation.

6 *Dallas*, television show, directed by David Jacobs (US: Lorimar Television, 1978–91).

7 It needs to be noted here that I chose the example of *Dallas* consciously, as it had a large impact on Swedish
 audiences during its run on television from the late '70s to the early '90s. Anecdotes of audiences being baffled by
 the elaborate use of swear words, the considerable alcohol consumption, and its dramatic depiction of capitalism
 caused headlines in the newspapers. But because it is considered one of the first internationally renowned soap
 operas is not my only reason for choosing *Dallas*. It represents a mimesis of capitalism, a mimesis of family structure,
 and with the audience's involvement in its storyline, the fandom that thereafter evolved. In its general influence
 on people, and thereby its immersive nature, it created a sort of virtual universe, a closed, self-contained, full circle.

8 Evan Calder Williams, "Manual Overdrive," *New Enquiry*, March 21, 2016, [http://thenewinquiry.com/essays/
 manual-overdrive/](http://thenewinquiry.com/essays/manual-overdrive/).

9 Lawrence Weiner, "The Means to Answer Questions," interview by Jesper Bundgaard, YouTube video, 12:29,
 posted by Louisiana Channel, March 17, 2014, <https://youtu.be/AscU8wKzbbE>.

10 Arthur C. Clarke, *Rendezvous with Rama* (London: Gollancz, 1973).

11 Christina H. "The 5 Stupidest Ways Movies Deal with Foreign Languages," *Cracked*, August 26, 2010, [http://www.
 cracked.com/article_18721_the-5-stupidest-ways-movies-deal-with-foreign-languages_p2.html](http://www.cracked.com/article_18721_the-5-stupidest-ways-movies-deal-with-foreign-languages_p2.html).

12 Elihu Katz and Tamar Liebes, "Interacting with 'Dallas': Cross Cultural Readings of American TV," *Canadian
 Journal of Communication* 15, no. 1 (1990): 45–66, http://repository.upenn.edu/asc_papers/159.

13 *Network*, feature film, directed by Sidney Lumet (US: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1976).

14 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Slik talte Zarathustra [Thus Spoke Zarathustra]* (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1999), 3.

15 *eXistenZ*, feature film, directed by David Cronenberg (US: Alliance Atlantis Communications, 1999).

16 *Waterworld*, feature film, directed by Kevin Reynolds (US: Universal Pictures, 1995).

17 Meron Gribetz, "A Glimpse of the Future through an Augmented Reality Headset," YouTube video, 10:54, posted
 by TED, April 11, 2016, <https://youtu.be/H9ZOqQzjukY>.

18 Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image," *e-flux journal* (November 2009): [http://www.e-flux.com/journal/
 in-defense-of-the-poor-image/](http://www.e-flux.com/journal/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/).

19 Mon Roe is an alias, a YouTube username, and other than the assumption that he is a male of American descent,
 I have not gone to any lengths to gain more personal information about him. Even though he is a key player in my
 project mentioned later in the text (*I See Everything Through a Full Glass*, 2015), I never found further research
 to be of any relevance. As he represents a sphere where opinions can be harvested and exploited for further
 investigations such as in the aforementioned project, further research about this person would be destructive to
 the intentions of the project.

20 Ed Atkins, "Artist Talk: Ed Atkins," Contemporary Art Society, London, YouTube video, 1:13:47, posted by this
 is tomorrow, May 11, 2015, <https://youtu.be/15b8C59qcng>.

21 Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

22 Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H* (London: Penguin Group, 2014), 99–105.

23 *Ibid.*, 99.





Installation view from *Pareidolia*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Dick Hedlund



Cortex, 2016. Detail. Muslin fabric, wooden frame. Dick Hedlund

Terrain Vague

“Lord, it’s been a while since anyone’s walked or driven here. The pavement’s all cracked, grass has grown through the crevices, but here at least it’s still our human grass. On the sidewalk to the left, the black brambles begin, and from this we see how well the Zone sets itself apart: the black thicket along the road looks almost mowed. No, these aliens must have been decent guys. They left a hell of a mess, of course, but at least they put clear bounds on their crap. Even the burning fuzz doesn’t make it over to our side, though you’d think the wind would carry it around all four directions.”

—Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, *Roadside Picnic*¹

By the time we became separated from the rest of the group, the temperature had dropped to a wintry chill. But the sharp October light still illuminated our surroundings, bathing this decaying urban wasteland in a surreal soft golden light. We were wandering through thick thickets of anonymous grey monsters—concrete palaces once built by Nikita Khrushchev to house the proletarians of the future, which now shelter the discarded bodies of our current neoliberal reality. The totalitarian state that gave rise to this sweeping urban landscape was certainly brutal, but no more so than the regime that replaced it, showing utter indifference to the “liberated” people on this crumbling urban edge.

We had gotten lost a few times already—had to double back, climb over fences, crawl under barriers, evade the attention of guard dogs, and cut across the toxic festering swamps, which now dot the terrain between the crumbling edifices. Shards of broken glass crackled and squealed beneath the soles of our mud-caked shoes as we walked the tight spaces between wilting industrial skeletons, the only clues of their former function now lying strewn beneath our feet. We were lost, utterly and totally lost, but being lost here was also part of the plan. After all, to be lost is to give in to the possibilities of the *terrain vague*.

Terrain Vague and Memories of the Present

Ignasi de Solà-Morales wrote an essay in 1995 in which he sketched out *terrain vague* as a concept within the field of architecture and urbanism, but also extended it into the realms of philosophy and art. The term becomes a tool through which one can investigate the urban fringes, disconnected from the normal structures of the city.²

Terrain vague, the French expression de Solà-Morales gave to this urban concept, has a more ambiguous meaning than its English translation, and it is hard to phrase it in a single English word. The

proposition of “*terrain*” offers a wider berth than that of the English word “land,” evoking a sense of possibilities beyond those offered by land, as *terrain* has less defined restrictions of what it entails.³ The French “*vague*” shares its roots with that of the Latin and Germanic word stems, and the German word “*woge*” (wave) relates to “movement instability, and oscillation,” and for de Solà-Morales, the word also relates to the English word “vague”: indeterminate, imprecise, blurred.⁴ Although one could also associate the term “*vague*” with uncertainty, suspicion, and the uncanny, de Solà-Morales explains that “this absence of limit precisely contains the expectations of mobility, vagrant, roving, free time, liberty.” There is an enthusiasm for these spaces, says de Solà-Morales: “If in ecology we find the struggle to preserve the unpolluted spaces of a nature mythicized as the unattainable mother, contemporary art seems to fight for the preservation of these other spaces in the interior of the city.”⁵

We are drawn to the fringes because they reflect our strangeness in front of the world, in front of the city, before ourselves, and although we move through this discarded space together, side by side, each perceives his or her own reality, reading the landscape through a unique lens of personal experience and fragmented memories. The mind never operates in a singular direction; rather, layers of associations instantaneously fill our field of view. Henri Bergson makes the connection between what’s in front of us and what we carry with us. It is not that there is a piece missing, visually, but rather that we colour what we see with our own experiences. When confronted by this, trying to recollect a specific memory can be futile: “Perception is never a mere contact of the mind with the object present; it is impregnated with memory-images, which complete it as they interpret it.”⁶

The French anthropologist Marc Augé writes about non-places as spaces without enough social and historical significance to hold value. Augé argues that places such as airports, malls, and hotel rooms, while important in a societal function, are anonymous and easy to forget, and therefore lack significance as anthropological space.⁷

I would argue there's a difference between Augé's non-places and the *terrain vague*. As non-places are a part of the body of society and thus hold a function, they therefore lack the possibility of having a *vague* aspect. Augé makes a distinction between place and non-place, determining that a place is something that's never erased, whereas a non-space is never completed. Non-spaces are "like palimpsests, on which the scrambled game of identity is ceaselessly rewritten."⁸ The urban field I and the group of people I was with stood in falls into neither category, since it is a leftover space, in between a place (Tallinn's historical city centre) and a non-place (a shopping mall and a highway). Through de Solà-Morales, one could argue that the *terrain vague* has the possibility of transcending into *becoming*.

Wordless Knowledge

How can we come to terms with the near infinite amount of information that hurtles towards us, and make the distinction between that which is important and that which is simply spam? Is it still possible to remove ourselves from the world, to carve out a separate space of creativity in which we can inhabit and work free from external disturbances, such as the abstract painter Agnes Martin did? Is it still possible to perform a voluntary exodus from our unremitting hyperreality, or are we already too absorbed by the matrix, our organic sensory systems irreversibly intertwined with digital veins of information to allow for any kind of escape?

To step into Agnes Martin's visual world is like entering another mental plane. The rigid structure of her canvases is calming. Transcending beyond physical representation, they whisper about a search for internal knowledge, although her work is wordless. A world of lines and space becomes a room for meditation, beautiful and aesthetically inviting. Nature is ever-present, but as a representation of innocence rather than a totem of perfection. According to Martin, "our minds respond to things beyond this world. Take beauty: it's a very mysterious thing, isn't it? I think it's a response in our minds to perfection. It's too bad, people not realizing that their minds expand beyond this world."⁹

Martin's pieces often have descriptive titles that evoke mental imagery, yet she claims the purpose of these titles is not simply to represent a scene. The titles are instruments intended to produce a response. In a 1989 interview, she spoke about the work *Grey Geese Descending* and what the title does to the work. The "geese" are not big birds in the sky, but rather Martin's abstract emotions of bearing

witness.¹⁰ Martin looks beyond what is reality, what is everyday life, but through a process of reflecting upon what is happening in front of her, she is in effect watching herself. The canvases become in a sense an ordered refuge, a space of pure meaning, rather than the representation of an object.

Martin has said her canvases are just lines,¹¹ yet they still evoke a transcendent response from the viewer. She speaks about the beauty of a rose, how a rose is beautiful, yet when it dies, beauty does not die with it, since beauty is an impression of the mind.¹² Martin, along with many of her contemporaries, was influenced by Buddhism and the esoteric teachings of the Theosophical Society, seeking knowledge through divination, meditation, and a mish-mash of world religions and modern science. Martin found her own path to spirituality through learning how not to think. In an interview with Chuck Smith in 1997, she said, "There's so many people that don't know what they want, and I think that in this world that's the only thing you have to know: exactly what you want most. Now I paint with my back to the world. It took me twenty years to paint completely non-objective, not about this world."¹³

As some of the abstract expressionists of the time questioned the possibility of esoteric qualities and planes of otherness, astrophysicist Stephen Hawking and his peers were advancing the scientific theory that the universe was birthed by way of a huge ball of fire about eighteen billion years ago. One can picture this great void in the monochromatic fields of Barnett Newman, and his "zip" across them as the representation of the birth of the universe. The brimming energy of the infinite void.

Newman's large colour field paintings hold certain esoteric qualities, and titles such as *Day One* (1951–52), *Onement* (1948), and later *The Stations of the Cross* (1958–66) all talk about the notion of the universal and the homogeneous.¹⁴ Physicist Leonard Shlain acknowledges the universal aspect of Newman's work, stating:

Newman's large color field paintings resemble nothing so much as a readout of the basic elements of the universe—the atoms. Newman considered himself an "icon maker" and his introduction of an art style that resembles the atom's spectroscopic light signature emphasized the wave (field) over the particle. While explicitly not saying so, at some level, he understood that static space, a chief artistic concept from Hellenism till the twentieth century, was no longer vital, and that the elastic tension of the field concept would have to be integrated into Western thought.¹⁵

It is somewhere between rigid self-imposed restrictions and the search for a different consciousness that I find the relationship between my work and that of Martin and Newman, as well as their *modi operandi*. Although my practice stems from painting and draw-

ing, it is not limited to it, often delving into transcendent states in order to search for certain connections beyond my perceived reality. However, confronted with my situation—or rather the situation of my generation, that of almost a melding collective consciousness through social media and streams of information at the tip of our fingertips—I would be remiss if I did not include myself in actual society as well; so I look not just inwards, but also scout my surroundings. Martin wanted to reach perfection,¹⁶ but was also acutely aware of her failings, and content with this notion.¹⁷ Newman was convinced that the first man was an artist, and that man first made a totemic idol as the first tool; rather than out of necessity, the first act was out of self-expression.¹⁸ I am not interested in perfection, neither in my own work nor in anybody else's. But the possibility of creating an object that could become a space for meditation, whatever shape or construct, is tantalising and something to strive towards.

Tools of Engagement: Walking Thinking Walking

Stepping off the sidewalk and into the undergrowth, my coat became covered in spores from reeds growing in great numbers. In a vast field between a commercial complex and the highway towards Narva, we crossed into a ramshackle recreational area, something caught between a primitive park and an anonymous highway rest area. There was a pool of water, fenced off with woven weeds and branches of birch. Chairs made of found wood, bricks stacked on top of each other to resemble tables. A place shunned by most, but cared for and maintained by the few who ventured out into it.

With great effort, we climbed onto the roof of an old bunker by stacking crates and other debris on top of each other. The winding worm of sixty or so people came together beautifully in the light of the sunset, with the highway off-ramp droning in the background and a view of the big living complexes towering all the way back to the city centre that we had left behind that very morning. Below us was the scattered plastic casing of copper wire; I remember thinking the ground was strewn around the rubbish and plastic cable casings, not the other way around. There was no body, only the remnants of actions. No object, but rather the shadows and fragmented memories of what had happened, here in this place where things were disassembled.

Inverted Pillars

The Limhamn quarry just outside of Malmö is a huge industrial ruin. When planning for a workshop to be held there, I recall thinking about this big scar in the landscape as an inverted pillar on which society rests. The material from the quarry was used to undertake the biggest ever social housing project in Sweden, leaving behind this vast area of non-space. Through discussions, my research, and the experience of being down in the hole, the quarry changed. The metaphysical aspects of the quarry create a visually striking image, and make it a place of almost sacral propor-

tions. This feeling is usually reserved for places of the holy and sacred, for churches and mosques. Instead, here the notion of sacred became nature reclaiming its place, how it is always growing around us, and not even the harsh environment of quarried limestone can stop the bushes and flowers from persistently grabbing on to whatever little nutrients they can find.

Today the quarry is a protected nature reserve, and while there have been some outlandish suggestions on the subject of usability of the enormous pit (for a new Disneyland, to create a golf course), it is safe from development, at least for now. My workshop here set out to investigate how the quarry relates to the environments and society it once gave birth to. Through individual artistic projects we aimed to collectively create knowledge on how to reconcile with a place of this magnitude. My own spontaneous works in the space of the quarry became almost drawings in the landscape—nay, scribbles in the margin, engulfed by the vastness. The works' temporality and unplanned nature became more important as conveyers of ideas, materialised, yet not fully substantiated.

The logic of my mind makes the connections. A memory is never static, nor is it alone. Like when one becomes conscious of an idea that can't be singled out, yet every time it's revisited, it's polished to a sheen, like mountains ground down to pebbles, swirling around in a glass bowl. The quarry is tightly connected in my mind with the four or so humid summer days when our small group briefly occupied this abandoned space, camping out in the dusty post-industrial residue of the recent past among the fossilised memories of a vanquished tropical sea. The machine-sculpted walls of this vast urban mould are reminiscent of the annual rings of trees—each metre a different version of earth, striated layers recalling the metamorphosis of the planet.

Looming Conclusions

As we passed the power plant on a service road alongside the highway on-ramp, a black shape on an almost equally dark field startled us. It was a black horse in an unlit field. Maybe the horse sensed us way before we knew of it. No security fence and all of a sudden a shift in reality. With a body of strength and muscle, blood and tendon, of deep instincts, it was not scared by our presence, merely conscious and observing. Despite all the digital flickering that erupted when trying to capture the horse's image, almost total darkness is all that stuck. I saw two horses all of a sudden, overlaying each other. The horse looked nothing like the horse of video artist Anri Sala, but confronted with the animal, I wondered if it had the capacity to contemplate its own death. In Sala's *Time after Time* (2003), a horse is trapped along the median of a highway; it's mangy and thin, with its ribs showing. We, the spectators, watch from a safe distance. It keeps its right hind leg up, as if it were about to take one more step but got caught in a headlight and forever forgot what it was doing. I read it as how our society



Mylobdomancy, 2016. Tin. Dimensions variable. Dick Hedlund



Installation view from *Pareidolia*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Dick Hedlund

is unable to cater to the ones in need, how economical progress is rewarded and leaves little room for those who either can't or won't play the game. Here was my doppelgänger, the victim of a ruthless contemporary society, in the remnants of a former communist state, alongside the highway that goes all the way to Moscow. Sala's doomed creature merged with my dark horse for a moment, and the highway added to the mirage of intertwined images. What was its reason for staying when it could obviously leave? I had a strange revelation that we might not be that different, that people tend to stay in a familiar place even if it is a hell, because at least it is a hell we know.

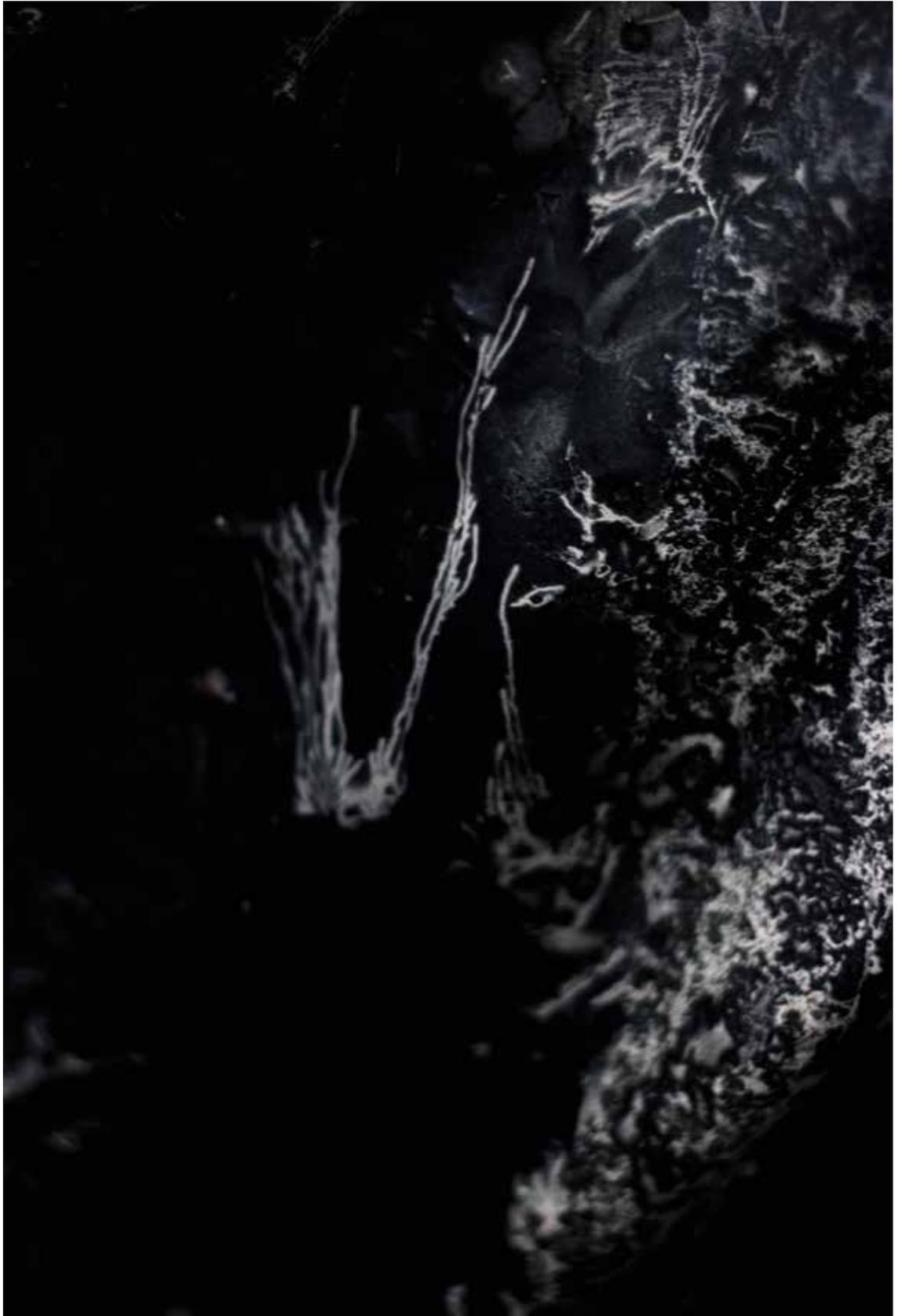
The horse lingers still, and though the journey as a whole was filled with notable experiences, the meeting with the horse stands out. What now also haunts me is the action—or rather, reaction—of averting or shielding myself by placing a distance between an object and myself. The action of documenting our lives one could almost call human; mankind has made a mark as long as she has walked the earth. We tell the rest of the world what we experienced, and

invite the next generation to see what we saw. Today it has been made so easy for us, and that urge or reflex to capture a moment that already has passed is hauntingly present. As I snapped away, I immediately felt foolish, for the screen was completely black, except for the digital noise, as if the scene had not let itself be immortalised. It's like trying to describe an event of importance to a group of friends, and halfway through you realise that the facts don't carry weight in the present, so you excuse yourself and go "Ah, you had to be there." But maybe those four or five digital images of my dark horse are the perfect representation for what I saw, or rather what I saw through my own body of reference. A mental projection onto a situation, giving life to a whole new metaphysical space of reference.

Anthropologist Michael Taussig questions the meaning of a drawing he made in a notebook in Medellín, Colombia, a depiction of a couple taking refuge in a tunnel entrance along a freeway. One of the characters sews the other into a nylon bag. Beneath the drawing, he wrote: "I swear I saw this."¹⁹



Pareidolia, 2016. Detail. 70 x 50 cm. Dick Hedlund



Untitled, 2016. Digital caption. Dick Hedlund

This statement claims authority, claims to convey a moment of reality. But the act of swearing could also mean to curse or to will something forward. Taussig hypothesises that maybe the drawing has become a totem of the scene, something a photograph never could capture, imbuing the image with magic power.²⁰ When we take a photograph, we capture something that represents an object's reality, rather than catching the essence, the subjective content. I hid behind the luminescent screen to capture the moment, and therefore didn't fully experience the heart of the scene in front of us.

I began exploring the notion of the *terrain vague* as the "zone" between perceived reality and the notion of a collective spiritual makeup of mankind in my artistic practice. Gathered memories and experiences manifested themselves as bodies of heaviness. I now feel a sudden caution and fragility when looking at objects in my studio, as the weave of the fabric now becomes the solidifying factor. Textile becomes the glue becomes the backbone. The subtle traces in the textile translate into fissures and indentures in concrete. Solid shapes broken by an unseen force.

Through the labour of production leading up to my master's exhibition, *Pareidolia*, the experiences gathered from the walk became important. Standing over the buckets of concrete, mixing, sweating, I thought about how our minds are not linear, not calcified. Our neurons zip through the grey mass that is our brain matter like cracks in the pavement. Making new connections every instant.

The horses loom over my shoulder; I see them in my peripheral view, yet they are not there. The making and breaking of the wooden moulds to shape my sculptures reminds me of the big void of the limestone quarry, not far from my studio. How my sculptures also become the negative form, the form removed from the mould.

I believe that my works become a representation of these experiences, yet I am struck with a feeling of unease. I'm the one suffering from pareidolia, lost in my own *terrain vague*, drawing conclusions that might not exist. So did I see two horses on that field? Revisiting that late afternoon now only makes me draw additional conclusions, fragmented memories that can never be fully represented. Rather, I have to give in to the openness, the uncertainty, and the oscillations.



Running nowhere, 2016. Concrete, fabric, steel. 110 x 86 x 30 cm. Dick Hedlund

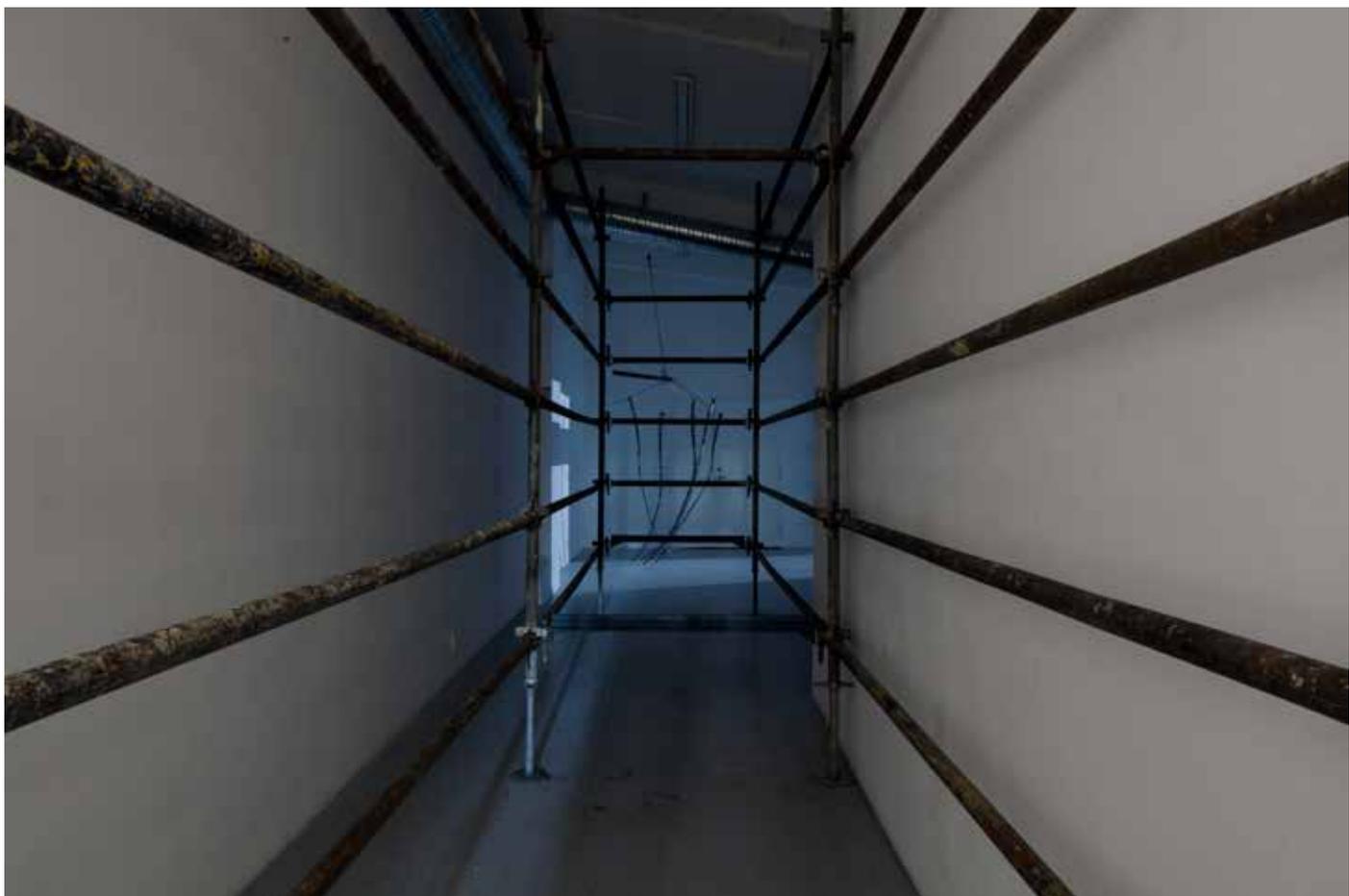


Installation view from *Pareidolia*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Dick Hedlund

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- 2 Ignaci Rubio de Solà-Morales, “Terrain Vague,” in *Anyplace*, ed. Cynthia C Davidson (New York: Anyone, 1995), 119–20.
- 3 Ibid., 120
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- 6 Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1911).
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- 9 Agnes Martin, “Perfection Is in the Mind: An Interview with Agnes Martin,” interview by Joan Simon, 4, <https://users.wfu.edu/~laugh/painting2/martin.pdf>.
- 10 Agnes Martin, “Oral History Interview” (transcript), May 15, 1989, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 12, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-agnes-martin-13296>.
- 11 Martin, “Perfection Is in the Mind,” 5.
- 12 Agnes Martin, “Beauty Is the Mystery of Life,” <http://www.austincc.edu/noel/writings/Beauty%20Is%20the%20Mystery%20of%20Life.pdf>.
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- 14 Leonard Shlain, *Art & Physics: Parallel Visions in Space, Time, and Light* (New York: Morrow, 1991), 250–51.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Martin, “Oral History Interview,” 12.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Barnett Newman, “The First Man Was an Artist,” *Tiger’s Eye*, October 1947.
- 19 Michael T. Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This: Drawings in Fieldwork Notebooks, Namely My Own* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 66–67.
- 20 Ibid.

Freddie Gray, 2015. Steel, iron. Dimensions variable. Installation view from *Every Name in History is I*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Hanni Kamaly

Opposite page: *TURNT*, 2015. Steel, life-jacket, plastic. 184 x 130 x 54 cm. Hanni Kamaly







Freddie Gray, 2015. Steel, iron. Dimensions variable. Hanni Kamaly

BEAST MODE

“A BIRD OF PREY IS CLINGING TO MY SOUL
ITS CLAWS HAVE RIPPED INTO MY HEART
ITS BEAK HAS DRIVEN ITSELF INTO MY CHEST AND
THE BEATING OF ITS WINGS HAVE DARKENED MY SANITY.”

—Edvard Munch¹

August 9, 2014, in Ferguson, Missouri, in the suburbs of St. Louis. Several packs of cigarillos had been stolen in the convenience store Ferguson Market & Liquor at approximately 11:53 am. The police were notified, and shortly thereafter a policeman named Darren Wilson arrived at the scene. He encountered eighteen-year-old Michael Brown and his friend Dorian Johnson, whom Wilson suspected were the perpetrators of the crime. An altercation happened, but the details are unclear, and reports from eyewitnesses were considered unreliable as the stories changed during the investigation and they did not corroborate the forensic report. At 12:02 pm, nine minutes after the reported theft, Wilson fired twelve shots, of which at least six hit Brown. The last shot hit the apex of his head. At the time of the shooting, Brown was facing Wilson. Some witnesses reported that Brown had raised his hands, with his palms facing Wilson, at shoulder height, as if to surrender.²

The descriptions in Wilson’s testimony portray Brown as someone who had incredible power and strength, a grunting beast who could run through bullets. Brown as a “super-human,” with supernatural powers, capable of extraordinary things outside of what could be deemed to be humanly possible.

*“He looked up at me and had the most intense aggressive face. The only way I can describe it, it looked like a demon, that’s how angry he looked.”*³

Who is Brown in the eyes of Wilson? An “it.” Not someone, but *something*, subhuman or superhuman, inherently evil though magical, a demon. The description continues the lineage of a trope and a stereotypical image of black Americans as the “Super-Duper Magical Negro,”⁴ a character used in storytelling that’s set up as a prop in the plot of the protagonist. The term was popularised by Spike Lee⁵ and has been applied to characters such as John Coffey in *The Green Mile*.⁶ Coffey is a big, childlike, and muscular black man who is innocent of his conviction for the rape and murder of two white girls. With his magical powers, he resurrects the dead mouse Mr. Jingles, heals the prison

warden’s bladder infection, and removes the brain tumour of the main character’s wife. Despite the white narrator’s certainty of his innocence, Coffey is executed. He is willing to sacrifice himself, saying, “I’m tired of all the pain I feel and hear in the world everyday. There’s too much of it. It’s like pieces of glass in my head all the time.” It was the pain of others he felt and was able to heal, not his own. Unlike Coffey, the case of Brown is not so clear-cut. His story has yet to become a Hollywood movie where he is painted as innocent, as a saintly black man and noble savage.⁷ But the effect of the Magical Negro is nevertheless identifiable, entailing a character with little to no agency, no background history, a *supernatural* being, seemingly appearing from nowhere.

The Magical Negro is a form of superhumanisation, that is, “the attribution of supernatural, extrasensory, and magical mental and physical qualities to humans.”⁸ A 2014 article titled “A Superhumanization Bias in Whites’ Perceptions of Blacks” provides evidence of this process. The case study was based on systemic empirical investigation divided into several trials. One of these trials demonstrated how white test subjects associated black people with words like “paranormal,” “wizard,” and “supernatural,” rather than “human” words including “individual,” “civilian person,” and “citizen.” In another, the test subjects were shown pictures of black and white people, and then asked questions such as who “has supernatural strength that makes them capable of lifting up a tank?” and who “is more likely to have superhuman skin that is thick enough that it can withstand the pain of burning hot coals?”⁹ In the last part of the study, which is perhaps the most revealing of the consequences of superhumanisation, the participants were shown two photos, one of a black man named John and one of a white man named Jeff. They were asked to write down how it would feel to meet these two people. They had to indicate which person—John or Jeff—would be capable of superhuman actions (such as mind control and physical strength), and which would be more capable of everyday tasks such as walking a dog and having “the ability to pick out a ripe avocado at the

grocery store.”¹⁰ Lastly, the participants of the trial heard seven different situations in which John or Jeff was injured and in pain, including being hurt in a car crash, having wisdom teeth removed, and suffering a dislocated shoulder. They were then required to answer the question “which of these people do you think requires more pain medication to reduce the pain they have experienced?” According to the participants, the black person, John, required significantly less pain medication than the white person, Jeff, proving a racial bias that leads to perceiving black people as less sensitive to pain and thus less vulnerable. In every test, black people were considered more superhuman than their white counterparts, especially in terms of physicality—like Coffey in *The Green Mile*: remarkably big and strong, towering over the prison guards who looked at him in awe. He is an otherworldly character and so he is dehumanised “as nonhuman, not through animalization or mechanization, but through [depiction] as superhuman.”¹¹

Through the same perception, Michael Brown became a superhuman being capable of running through bullets with supernatural strength and less likely to feel the pain of the shots. Like a fantastical creature, he would stand despite the deadly shots. An invulnerable superhuman with skin thick enough to make pain barely perceptible. This denial of vulnerability leads to disregard for black bodies, which turns discrimination and violence against black people into justified acts.

A: “And when I grabbed him the only way I can describe it is I felt like a five-year-old holding onto Hulk Hogan.”

Q: “Holding onto what?”

A: “A Hulk Hogan, that’s just how big he felt and how small I felt just from grasping his arm.”¹²

The wrestler Hulk Hogan, took his name from the Marvel Comics character the Incredible Hulk. The character is the split personality of Bruce Banner, a lanky and sensitive physicist who becomes the dark-green, bestly humanoid when he is angry. Brown became that creature, a Hulk—grunting, big, and powerful—in the eyes of Darren Wilson. He became the angry beast, a comic book figure, turned into a fantastical character in blockbuster movies with CGI effects. The angrier the Incredible Hulk gets, the stronger he becomes.

“At this point it looked like he was almost bulking up to run through the shots, like it was making him mad that I’m shooting at him. And the face that he had was looking straight through me, like I wasn’t even there, I wasn’t even anything in his way.”¹³

This dehumanising method of superhumanisation is prevalent in today’s societies. According to decolonialist philosopher Frantz Fanon, “The collective unconscious is not dependent on cerebral heredity; it is the

result of what I shall call the *unreflected* imposition of a culture.”¹⁴ Through the collective unconscious, this oppression happens systematically, in political and social spheres. It hides within images and perceptions of the Other.

The characteristic that the Other subject lacks is what we perceive as *being real*. The savage is an otherworldly creature, a brute with supernatural strength and animalistic power. It stands in opposition to the civilised white man, a separation between nature and culture: “Man becomes Man in opposition to Nature. The Negro represents the Natural Man in its *wildness and indocility*.”¹⁵

The separation prevails. Out from wild nature spring strange and troubling life forms that need to be “handled” and “tamed.” The exploration and conquests into unknown territories—named “New Worlds”—was seen as a great civilising project to “manifest destiny” through the efforts of the more culturally-evolved peoples of the world. Even without these great geographical endeavours, the separation prevails. Oppression in today’s societies is based on the same dehumanisation methods of considering others as lacking certain human characteristics, specifically the capacity for rational thought and conscious experience.¹⁶ Without these, one is not considered human, but instead a character. Just like Michael Brown—the fixed image of a Hulk-like figure, irrationally running through bullets. King Kong, from the jungle.

Imagining people as creatures and animals is a process often seen in relation to race and ethnicity, but it is also used in descriptions of immigrants and criminals. The animal is subhuman, wild and untamed, even when it is, at times, exterminated or “extracted” from its “true nature.” This history in visual culture includes depictions of humans as apes, with bestial appetites, and of humans as filthy vermin that contaminate and corrupt. Creatures who “lack culture, self-restraint, moral sensibility, and cognitive capacity.”¹⁷ One of the most prevalent of these images is that of people of African descent being portrayed as apes or monkeys. This image can be traced to the Darwinian idea of human evolution; that is, the theory of the human race as being descended from apes, and the evolution of certain traits over time, making the human race superior. A theory that has laid the basis of biological science as we know it.

The Descent of Man by Charles Darwin was published in 1871, during a time when interests in biological science were quickly growing—science that would later defend racist practices such as eugenics, a belief that through science there is a possibility of improving a certain race, which led to racial segregation, forced sterilisation, restrictions on marriage, policies on “racial hygiene,” and genocide. One of Darwin’s supporters was the German scientist Karl Vogt, who, through his biological studies, claimed the “Negro” brain more closely resembled the brain of apes than that of the white man. In his *Lectures of Man: His Place in Creation, and in the History of Earth*, he

states: “we may boldly assert that the whole race has, neither in the past nor in the present, performed anything tending to the progress of humanity or worthy of preservation.”¹⁸ Vogt claimed similarities between the Negro and the ape were apparent through biological examinations of, for instance, the cranium. Vogt’s *Lectures of Man* was published by the Anthropological Society of London in 1864, in an era of increased interest in explorations of “unknown territories.” This atmosphere supported the desire to study and investigate the anthropological differences between “civilised society” and “natives.” Darwin completed most of his studies on such explorations into the “unknown” areas of the globe. He was onboard the second voyage of the *HMS Beagle*, which travelled from England to different territories of South America in the 1830s. It notably visited the indigenous village of Tierra del Fuego, home to a population of people that would later become extinct. The Fuegians were severely decreased through smallpox and measles brought by European settlers, and later they were completely exterminated through a genocide perpetrated by the farmers who had settled in the area. Darwin explicitly mentions extinction as a part of his theory of the survival of the fittest, as if foretelling the fate of the Fuegians, writing: “At some future period, not very distant as measures by centuries, the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate, and replace, the savage races throughout the world”¹⁹

Darwinism still influences the perceptions we have of others, as evidenced in a psychological study published in 2015, the main focus of which was belief in evolutionary progress.²⁰ A group of people in the United States were asked to rate Canadians, Chinese people, Americans, Arabs, Muslims, and Europeans on scale from 0 to 100 on the evolutionary scale. The scale was presented alongside the usual image of the ascent: an ape first, then more evolved and upright, and so on, with the modern human at the end. Those groups that scored the lowest were Arabs and Muslims, which is directly connected to how dehumanisation was used to justify torture and drone strikes in the ongoing American-led wars in the Middle East. A part of this study was conducted before and after the Boston Marathon bombing of 2013, following which blatant dehumanisation was even more apparent, with the test subjects more likely than before the event to condone retaliation by violence towards perpetrators they viewed as less evolved.

What was the experience of the soldiers and prison guards in Abu Ghraib when they held a naked prisoner on a leash and smiled, thumbs up, to a camera? In their vengeful acts, they needed to dehumanise the prisoners to justify the abuse—rationalising a denial of all human rights by making them non-human. By engaging in inhuman treatment to justify their motive as part of the war on terror, the soldiers committed evil acts in order to declare that they themselves were not evil. Their actions reasoned to be altruistic—a just cause and an just act in the name

of saving humanity. They had to “overcome evil with greater good.”²¹ Or, as explained by Philip Zimbardo, the creator of the Stanford Prison Experiment, “It’s all about power, dominance and mastery. And that was the same thing we found in Abu Ghraib prison. But also—so the way that power evolves is, the prisoners have to be ultimately dehumanized. You have to think of them as not your kind, not your kin, as—ultimately, you end up thinking of them as animals.”²²

It is through declassification—the demotion from human to non-human—that man can become the master of other men. Through the debasement of other human beings, the same man can claim his superiority. The value is reinstated through the divide it creates. It is not only that man becomes animal, and thus he is dehumanised, but that humanity has to be stripped away and in the act of stripping, the human becomes a non-human, a living being with no semblance to the civilised, the other, as a non-entity.

The cover of the 2008 April edition of *Vogue* featured the African American basketball star LeBron James alongside the German-Brazilian fashion model Gisele Bündchen. The image was quickly criticised for being based on images that depict an apelike beast carrying a passed-out woman, such as a US propaganda poster from WWI captioned “Destroy This Mad Brute—ENLIST” (echoing the famous quote from *Heart of Darkness*: “Exterminate all the brutes”²³). The image of the giant gorilla beast clutching a woman in a dress resembles, also, the iconic film *King Kong*,²⁴ in which the giant gorilla “monster” grabs a woman as he climbs the Empire State Building, to later be shot down and killed by military airplanes

The original *King Kong* manuscript was written by Edgar Wallace, an author of many crime and thriller stories. In 1907, Wallace travelled to the Congo Free State to report on the atrocities committed by King Leopold II. After his trip, he wrote twenty-eight novels about the fictional District Commissioner Sanders of Colonial Nigeria. These novels were later criticised for enforcing colonial ideals and racism. George Orwell, a reader of his novels, described Wallace’s writings thusly: “The tone of the stories makes it quite clear that Wallace’s admiration for the police is pure bully-worship.”²⁵

The 1933 film *King Kong* was directed by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Shoedsack, who had previously made documentary and fictional ethnographic films. Together they made *Grass* (1925), an ethnographic documentary filmed in Iran about the Bakhtiari people, and *Chang: A Drama of the Wilderness* (1927), which was filmed in Cambodia, where Cooper and Shoedsack spent several months filming the country’s animals and peoples in their natural environment, like anthropologists. In *Chang*, they combined the footage with scenes that were entirely staged, making it an “ethnographic fiction.”

A similar plot can be found in *King Kong*, in which a movie crew wants to make a film with the



Peter, 2015. HD video, 05:19 min. loop. Installation view from *Every Name in History is I*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Hanni Kamaly

beautiful blonde Ann Darrow on the exotic Skull Island. Here they encounter the giant gorilla-like beast. They capture Kong and take him back to New York to showcase him as the Eighth Wonder of the World. When they first arrive on the Pacific Island where Kong resides and which they are using as their film location, the movie crew acts in a way similar to anthropologists. This is exemplified in the words of Denham, the director of the movie they intend to make: “I tell you there’s something on that island that no white man has ever seen. ... If it’s there, you bet I’ll photograph it.”²⁶

The filmmaker and anthropologist considered the forerunner of ethnographic fiction, Jean Rouch, was inspired by anthropology and surrealism, two disciplines that share an overlapping field of interest. The connections between the two practices can be seen in *Documents*, a magazine edited by Georges Bataille. Under the slogan “*Archeologie, Beaux-Arts, Ethnographie*,” *Documents* explored a variety of topics and combined academic texts with photographs of ethnographic objects and art. It broke down the hierarchy

of low and high culture to “shake what is called reality by means of nonadapted hallucinations so as to alter the value hierarchies of the real.”²⁷

In 1907, Pablo Picasso, inspired by Henri Rousseau, wandered in the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro among objects from African countries and other cultural artefacts. The influence of this experience can clearly be seen in his paintings. As he later explained:

When I became interested, forty years ago, in Negro art and I made what they refer to as the Negro Period in my painting, it was because at that time I was against what was called beauty in the museums. At that time, for most people a Negro mask was an ethnographic object. When I went for the first time, at [André] Derain’s urging, to the Trocadéro museum, the smell and dampness and rot there stuck in my throat. It depressed me so much I wanted to get out fast, but I stayed and studied. Men had made those masks and other objects for a sacred purpose, a magic purpose,

as a kind of mediation between themselves and the unknown hostile forces that surrounded them, in order to overcome their fear and horror by giving it form and an image.²⁸

Picasso, in turn, inspired the contemporary artist Camille Henrot, especially her paintings *My Anaconda Don't* (2015) and *He Keep Telling Me It's Real* (2015). The imagery of these works comes from the music video for Nicki Minaj's "Anaconda," in which Minaj reappropriates the animalistic and hypersexualised black persona. She follows a tradition of inscribing new meaning to the dehumanised stereotype within black culture, by fuelling the image with empowerment and making the white gaze conscious of its construction of identities.²⁹ In Minaj's video, utilising these tropes can be considered the reclaiming of black female sexuality, whereas Henrot's images can be read critically in a colonial and racial perspective, as Henrot is a white French artist. In an interview with the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, Henrot explained her position: "How do you make a film when you're an outsider and always will be? Your fantasy will be integrated, no matter what. You can try to avoid it, but it will always be there."³⁰ A fantasy that is not necessarily utopic or human.

Claude Lévi-Strauss has described anthropology as "the science of culture as seen from the outside."³¹ Formalised as an academic discipline in the late nineteenth century, anthropology is a movement led by Western intellectuals and writers that resulted in the formation of academic and scientific institutions, and a belief in the attainment of "objective truth." Early anthropologists wished to immerse themselves in an altogether different culture, usually in particular a culture untouched by civilisation and industrial progress. Subjects of ethnic groups and cultural and spiritual objects were given equal footing as "objects of study." Ethnographers even went so far as to take body parts and corpses to study and display in museums, such as Chief Ataï of the French colony New Caledonia.

The anthropologist has interpretative authority over the Other, who is not able to see the broader perspective of its ethnicity or to analyse its traditions and social organisation. The native's existence gives authenticity to the anthropological objective. Through the position of the outside, the anthropologist attains an overhead view of the native, a position in which the native can't place itself. The Other is silenced, with an assumption that it cannot see the broader perspective of its own ethnicity, unable to understand its own social organisation. The ramifications of these practices are still felt today; as the artist and writer Trinh T. Minh-ha puts it, "Anthropology as a human science is nowadays the foundation of every single discourse pronounced above the native's head."²³

The anthropologist is the blind spot of his own perception. The narrative of anthropological and ethnographical theory has been consistently prob-

lematised.³³ Through my own work, I have intended to question status and subjectivity in the creation of knowledge and so-called objective truth. This is true in particular in my video work *Maman* (2015) of my mother singing in Balochi, the language of the ethnic group to which we belong. The camera points outwards: from her perspective to the external, flipping the ethnographic gaze. The subject is not in focus. A commonplace kitchen is seen, with pictures on the fridge and the spinning of a washing machine in the background. She sings in a language foreign to the spectator, without translation, in a refusal to be the object of study. In the words of Minh-ha:

Violations of boundaries have always led to displacement, for the in-between zones are the shifting ground on which the (doubly) exiled walk. Not You/like You. The Insider's subjectivity (understood as limited affective horizon—the personal) is that very area for which the objective (understood as unbiased limitless horizon—the universal) Outsider cannot claim full authority, but thanks to which he can continue to validate his indispensable role, claiming noow [*sic*] his due through "interpretive" but still totalising scientific knowledge.³⁴

A story I encountered during my research was that of Chief Ataï, from the French colony of New Caledonia in the Pacific Ocean. During the violent suppression of an insurrection by the Kanak people of the islands, the leader—Ataï—was decapitated. His head and right hand, as well as the head of his "sorcerer," were brought back to France and studied by the Anthropological Society in Paris.³⁵ His remains were later displayed in the Museum de l'Homme, an anthropological museum intended to present the natural history of man.

The fictional capture of Kong can be seen in a similar colonial light, especially when the film crew takes Kong from Skull Island to America, to be shown as the Eighth Wonder of the World. That is, the story of the monster has historical counterparts that are very much real. Kong brought to America just as Alexander Dunlop brought Saartjie Baartman from Cape Town to Europe and exhibited her as the "Hottentot Venus," or just as an American businessman took Ota Benga from the Congo Free State to exhibit him alongside apes at the Bronx Zoo.

So-called human zoos, such as the one at the 1931 *Exposition coloniale internationale* in Paris, were intended to present the many human possessions gained through colonisation. Other nations that hosted such attractions were the Netherlands, Belgium, the United Kingdom, the United States, Portugal, and Italy. When Norway celebrated the hundredth anniversary of the national constitution in 1914, an "African village" was constructed in a park in Oslo for the Jubilee Exhibition. The park was "inhabited" by people from Senegal, and was called the "Congo Village."³⁶

Groups of people, placed in a constructed environment and displayed to an audience, like museological objects, possessed by the white man.

“Colonialism equals thing-ification,” writes the poet Aimé Césaire.³⁷

I chew on this sentence. Césaire’s poetry is brutal and full of life. Colonialism thing-ifies; it dehumanises. Subjectivity does not exist for the Thing. The degrading process of dehumanisation strips the subject of its power and compartmentalises the I into the It. In this action, the distinction disappears. Michael Brown as the Hulk, being one object, being It.

In her psychoanalytic study of small children, Melanie Klein writes about the partial object. The part-object can be human body parts, such as the mother’s breast, which the infant relates to as separated from the whole body of the mother. These parts are determined only by their purpose for the child. The philosopher Julia Kristeva explains Klein’s idea thus: “there is not instinctual urge, no anxiety situation, no mental process which does not involve objects, external or internal; in other words, object-relations are the centre of emotional life.”³⁸

The Other outside ourselves becomes an object, and through splitting, the subject can be divided into parts. Partial objects can be discrete body parts such as genitals, but also more amorphous ones

such as the skin. The object-subject that loses its being-of-itself and the depth of its dimension is cut off. The skin becomes the whole being, an object that does not possess a mind.

There is power and fear within the subject of potentially becoming a part-object, a splitting of the distinctive difference, I and It. The removal of subjectivity is based on phobia and, “as an object, it’s caught in the perpetual existential crisis rendering it a non-entity.”³⁹

In *Black Skin White Masks*, Frantz Fanon establishes the concept of the *phobogenic object*.⁴⁰ The phobogenic object is an object that instills fear—but, being genetic, the phobogenic object has no self-determination. This phobia bears no similarity to the actual reality. The phobia is there before the object is present, the object in-itself is only a replacement, symbolising *physical* fear. As Kristeva describes: “Whether it be projected metaphor or hallucination, the phobic object has led us, on the one hand, to the borders of psychosis and, on the other, to the strongly structuring power of symbolicity.”⁴¹ This is true of the image of the beast, Kong, holding on to the beauty and taking her against her will. In the same year as the first film was released, 1933, George Armwood was lynched in the state of Maryland after being accused of assaulting Mary Denston, a seventy-one-year-old white woman. This was a familiar issue in the US at that time, another example being the Scottsboro Boys,



Charlie, 2016. Steel, HD video, 02:42 min. loop Hanni Kamaly

nine black teenagers from Alabama accused of raping two white women in 1931. All but one were given death sentences, despite evidence that contradicted the accusations. This prevalent image of the black male rapist with bestial force was factually unfounded, but it fuelled the many lynchings of innocent black Americans during, before, and after the 1930s.

The lynchings were not a method of protection for the purported victims, but a way of defending white dominance within a patriarchal structure. The story, invented by white men, is about the overwhelming desperate longing black men have to sexually violate the bodies of white women. As the story goes, this desire is not based on longing for sexual pleasure. It instead is an action of revenge, rape as the weapon by which black men, the dominated, reverse their circumstance, and regain power over white men.⁴²

*"You rape our women and you're taking over our country."*⁴³

Our women, objects to possess. In *King Kong*, the blonde beauty, Ann Darrow, needs to be saved from the mad brute, who has taken her in his hands and climbed the phallic tower that is the Empire State Building. The white woman is in danger of a "eugenic threat."⁴⁴ She symbolises the motherland, raped and beaten, her purity is put at risk of becoming impure. The crossing of the border between "us" and the "Other," imagined as rape, threatens the purity of nation and identity. It threatens with an impending dissolution. The woman becomes an object in need of a man who can save her from the savage rapist. The objectified woman as a victim works to disempower the female narrative as well as that of the Other. The perceived threat assumes a male perspective, a white male gaze that supports the racist sentiment.

"It is our God-given right and duty to protect our women. *It's what men do*"⁴⁵—as was said in the aftermath of the attacks in Cologne on New Year's Eve 2016, when several women were assaulted by men of "Arab or North African descent." Fingers were pointed at asylum seekers and illegal immigrants. When US presidential candidate Donald Trump equates illegal immigrants with "rapists,"⁴⁶ the historical contexts of such opinions should not be forgotten. As he has stated in an interview with CNN: "Well if you look at the statistics of people coming, you look at the statistics on rape, on crime, on everything coming in illegally into this country it's mind-boggling!"⁴⁷

Fanon argues that these perceived threats are attacks on the corporeal reality of the black body,⁴⁸ a body dominated by primal and aggressive sexuality. He describes this perception in *Black Skin, White Masks*: "For the majority of Whites the black man represents the (uneducated) sexual instinct. He embodies genital power out of reach of morals and taboos."⁴⁹ And: "The black man is genital."⁵⁰

This same fixation was at the centre of the controversy around Robert Mapplethorpe's *Man*

in *Polyester Suit* (1980). The photograph was part of his retrospective *The Perfect Moment* (1989), an exhibition that became part of an obscenity case filed by the City of Cincinnati. The work, the key piece of the prosecution's case, pictures a black man with his penis hanging out from his zipper. In the image, the genitals are separated from the body as whole. Kobena Mercer, in his critique of Mapplethorpe, states: "black men are confined and defined in their very *being* as sexual and nothing but sexual, hence hypersexual. In pictures like 'Man in a Polyester Suit,' apart from his hands, it is the penis and the penis alone that identifies the model in the picture as a black man."⁵¹

The black man is a sexual organ, a phobogenic object, fuelled by primal force. A sexualised monster, an overgrown child ruled solely by the Id, instinctual and guided by pleasure: "The savage has brutish appetites for violence and sex, is impulsive and prone to criminality, and can tolerate unusual amounts of pain."⁵² These myths, which entwine with society at large and thus come to seem self-explanatory, have severe implications. Racist sentiments and actions do not always come from a political place, but they have such consequences on the lives of people of colour that their daily lives *become* political, whether willingly or unwillingly. The process of racialisation is routinely reinforced in everyday life, in its everyday structures.

Darwin's *Descent of Man* takes part in an argument and a search for objective truths and solid reasons for racial superiority as stemming from scientific fact. Its theories continue to be part of the education of schoolchildren today, presented as rational science in the understanding of man and nature. It continues to be used, despite being a science constructed to assert dominance for the society that thinks of itself as civilised and evolved, allowing it not only to position itself as the "holder" of knowledge, but as a container of universal culture and a sophisticated system of governance. The dominant society owns the evolutionary facts of the *ascent of man* and therefore declares itself to be more developed.

The savage has no laws and the brute is a criminal with no morality. He can kill for *no reason*, so when the crime happens, there is no question of *why*—seemingly automatic, it is in his nature; he kills because he is black. Caught in assumptions, he is criminalised before the act has been committed. This fixates him in a perpetual gaze of immorality and the process fosters negative outcomes, which can be observed in statistical information and psychological studies. In the US, research has shown that black Americans are more likely to be convicted of felonies in comparison to white criminals, despite being prosecuted for the same violations.⁵³ Other studies, focusing on the discriminatory bias of the racial gaze, have shown the visual association: "police officers imbue this physical variation with criminal meaning—that is, the 'more Black' an individual appears, the more criminal that individual is seen to be."⁵⁴



Photo released of Moder Mothanna Magid in connection with news stories related to accusations made against him, November 2016.

In the words of Fanon: “Sin is Negro and virtue is white. All those white men in a group, guns in their hands, cannot be wrong. I am guilty I do not know of what, but I know that I’m no good.”⁵⁵ The oppressed Others internalise the discriminatory bias and, in turn, are confronted with the image that is created of them, becoming alienated in their lack of self-determination. The denial of vulnerability is thus dehumanising. It denies the experience of trauma and historical injustices; psychological pain belongs to whiteness.

History has its moments of amnesia. In the aftermath of the First World War, the Ottoman Empire dissolved and the Allied Forces took over its territories. As a consequence, Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, and Egypt became French and British colonies. The historical entanglements are still there. Colonialism has become neocolonialism, governing from the outside, as well as internal colonialism, governing from the inside. Racism as a ruling device goes beyond the history of imperialism and further than capitalism. These former colonies still feel the impact of history, and the conflicts currently experienced in these places are rooted within the Western world. Aimé Césaire’s words still ring true: “The fact is, colonialism in its formal sense might have been dismantled, the colonial state has not.”⁵⁶ The oppressive structures have moved through history into the contemporary.

Colonial heritage also continues to be present in the images and rhetoric of the West. When Mohamed Merah, the twenty-four-year-old man from Toulouse of Algerian descent, went on a killing spree and murdered seven people, the images of him circulated in the media were of stills from a video found on the Internet by the French TV channel France 2.⁵⁷

The choice of stills is remarkable—most of them were of Merah laughing, the pixelated image of his teeth and facial expression portraying him as the beast. The pictures resemble the one of Moder Mothanna Magid, laughing hysterically, that was published on the front page of Swedish newspapers in November 2015. Magid was suspected of being an ISIS-affiliated terrorist, and a national search for him was undertaken in Sweden; meanwhile, he was living in the small town of Boliden as a registered asylum seeker, with his name on his front door. The charges were dropped and the manhunt was over shortly after he was found. However, the image was already widespread, a terrorist grinning like a laughing monkey, primitive and mischievous.

In the traditional Dutch Christmas parade, participants dress up as *Zwarte Piet*, or Black Peter. They wear blackface, hoop earrings, and Afro wigs while playing instruments and handing out sweets to the parade spectators. The tradition is conspicuously colonial, with Santa travelling by boat to the Netherlands with his small black helper and elephants in crates. *Zwarte Piet* is a Moor, a people who came from Spain to Holland through the North African slave trade. *Zwarte Piet* is a servant of St. Nicholas, of Santa Claus. I filmed this parade in Amsterdam in 2015, and presented it as part of the exhibition *Every Name in History Is I*. The films were projected in such a way that one was completely surrounded by the scene, making it impossible to look away, in order to confront the audience. At times, the participant in blackface would look and smile into the camera—look directly *at* the viewer. The parade continued to march from wall to wall, in a loop. Turning around the idea of barbarism.

The distance between “us” and the “Other” has become diminished in the twenty-first century. When the far-flung colonies were dismantled, resulting in the flow of immigration, migrant workers, and various diasporas into the so-called Western world, it put to the test racial prejudices and images of people from faraway places within the presence of the masses, the We.⁵⁸ The Other moved into the house across the street, the subjects of these ancient cultures became neighbours, through colonial entanglements. This is explored by the early twentieth-century sociologist and writer W.E.B. DuBois, who, in his critique of capitalism, placed the racial/colonial at the centre of civilisation: “Moreover, while the center of the colonial system and its form and pattern is set in the localities which are called definitely colonies; and are owned politically and industrially by imperial countries; we must remember also that in the organized and dominant states there are groups of people who occupy the quasi-colonial status.”⁵⁹ In his speech, he includes as Others the “Negroes” in the United States, as well as South American Indians and labouring classes in Asia and the South Seas, among whom he finds commonalities by applying the colonial in the context of labour, as dominated by capitalism.

Such theories of internal colonial thinking have been critiqued, as they assume a shared oppression. The point has been discussed by sociologist Robert Blauner in his analysis of the similarities and differences between colonialism and immigration in the US: “Though the notion of the colonized minorities points to a similarity of the situation, it should not imply that black, red, yellow and brown Americans are all in the same bag. Colonialization has taken different forms in the histories of the individual groups.”⁶⁰ Through applying a framework to fit all modes of oppression, there is an erasure of historical differences and individual experiences. It can in fact further deepen the divide by lumping all together as a singular, definitive Other.

But when dehumanisation and colonial exploitation are deconstructed, the similarities in their methods are apparent. The structures of their inhuman methods are centred around the same object: *the man*. To understand and dismantle this discrimination, it becomes important to see the commonalities without overlooking individual differences:

The old European empires have been replaced by a new Empire, a hyperpower that wants to rule and mould the world in its own image. Its “war on terror” has become a license to flout every international law and notion of human rights. Racism, both in its blatant and incipient forms, is the foundation of the Fortress Europe—as is so evident in the re-emergence of the extreme right in Germany and Holland, France and Belgium, as well as Scandinavia, and the discourse of refugees, immigrants, asylum seekers and the Muslim population of Europe. *Direct colonial rule may have dis-*

*appeared; but colonialism, its many disguises as cultural, economic, political and knowledge-based oppression, lives on.*⁶¹

My mother came to Norway pregnant with me. She, my father, and my older brother came as refugees, granted asylum through the UN. We were assigned a home in the remote city of Brumunddal, in eastern Norway. As more immigrants were settled, a movement against immigration grew in our city. Windows of houses where immigrants lived were boarded up to avoid attacks.⁶² Less than half a year after we were placed in Brumunddal, a local shop owner from Pakistan was attacked with explosives. A month after the first attack, on April 30, 1988, his shop was burned down. The perpetrators were never caught, and the local police officer stated that the attacks were not motivated by racism, despite the fact that the shop was vandalised and painted with racist slogans prior to the attacks.⁶³

Brumunddal is best known in Norway for the Battle of Brumunddal.⁶⁴ In 1991, Arne Myrdal, the leader and founder the People’s Movement against Immigration (Folkebevegelsen Mot Innvandring, or the FMI) had permission to hold their national meeting in Brumunddal, a place by then known for its racial tensions. The assembly was met with approximately one hundred anarchists and anti-fascists (*blitzere*) from Oslo and nearby areas who came to protest. When Myrdal attempted to give a speech, shielded by twenty police officers, a violent confrontation ensued. A large mob of the skinhead group the Boot Boys, FMI-supporters, and local racists, armed with metal and wooden sticks, gasoline, battery acid, and chains, attacked and chased the protestors. Myrdal was in front, waving a baseball bat at those who opposed him. The police officers who were initially placed in the area to shield Myrdal were forced to intervene on behalf of the protestors by transporting them away from the scene en masse.

In 1999, Arve Beheim Karlsen drowned after an altercation with two boys from his local community. They ran after him, yelling, “Kill him! Kill the negro!” Karlsen was born in India, and he and his sister were adopted by a Norwegian family. He was eighteen years old at the time of his death.⁶⁵

In 2001, Benjamin Labaran Hermansen was stabbed and killed by three neo-Nazis in Oslo. His father was from Ghana, his mother from Norway.⁶⁶ He was sixteen and born the same year as my brother.

Disoriented, incapable of confronting the Other, the white man, had no scruples about imprisoning me, I transported myself that particular day far, very far, from my self and gave myself up as an object. What did this mean to me? Peeling, stripping my skin, causing a hemorrhage that left congealed black blood all over my body. Yet this reconsideration of myself, this thematization, was

not my idea. I wanted to quite simply to be a man among men. I would like to enter our world young and sleek, a world we could build together.⁶⁷

For a long time, I tried to disengage from my brown-being. I wanted a neutral position that was not given to me. I wanted to perform, work, engage without it having to be related to the colour of my skin; but, through the white gaze, it was impossible. *"I was told to stay within bound, to go back to where I belonged."*⁶⁸

When you are born within a society where you are outside of the norm, you become acutely aware of your own body. Of your body in relation to the white body, of your body as dirty compared to the pure cleanliness of the white body. Therefore the marginalised subject becomes acutely conscious of his or her own existence, presence, and part in the social sphere, as a physical being, as an object that differs and becomes the manifestation of the Other.

The racial body becomes aware of the racial context of its being; the same is not expected of the white body.⁶⁹ When Darren Wilson killed Michael Brown, he was not aware of his own body, but only the presence of Brown, the beast.

A racist interpretation transforms these dark and strange creatures into the Other—the colonised, the native, the immigrant—beings that are more often than not depicted with fear, disgust, and abjection. They are beasts, monsters, and aliens, as if they come from science-fiction films and horror stories. Cinematic monsters like Kong, or like the immigrant insects in the 1954 "creature feature" *Them!*⁷⁰ These representations disclose a repression, and this is the reason mediums such as film, and particularly science-fiction film, can be "regarded as sites of unconscious meanings—unconscious because repressed. Therefore inexpressible in direct form."⁷¹

I saw the 2014 Hiroshi Sugimoto exhibition *Aujourd'hui le monde est mort [Lost Human Genetic Archive]* in this same light. Sugimoto juxtaposed collections of objects, both archaeological and cultural, with his own photographs and fictional stories about the end of civilisation, the extinction of human beings. The rooms at the Palais de Tokyo were lit only by natural light, which came from a broken window on the roof (during later hours, visitors were handed a flashlight). The placement of the works led the spectator on a journey through handwritten notes and original artifacts and fossils. The atmosphere had a slight tinge of fear. The metallic walls, made from distressed roofing material, guided you through the show. On top of a totemic pole, placed on the topmost step of a stone staircase that you could not climb, was a figurine. Looking at this, in the dark, with a flashlight, searching and exploring the territories of a space that had been transformed into "beautiful ruins."

"Beautiful ruins" is also a fitting description for Huma Bhabha's sculptures, made of found materials that are assembled into human figures. They look like ancient monuments, but instead of being made of

stone, they are chicken wire and styrofoam. Bhabha uses science fiction as a reference point in the making of her work, and her sculptures would not be out of place in Noah Purifoy's garden of assembled sculptures of metal and found objects in the Mojave Desert, where he created "a sort of trailer park museum constructed by aliens to show what life on earth might've been like years after humans went extinct."⁷²

I find solace among the aliens, the beasts, and the savage creatures. It is not the ones from a privileged position that define them, but those dependent on them to constitute their own definition of humanity. Jean-Paul Sartre writes: "the only way the European could make himself man was by fabricating slaves and monsters."⁷³ Here, "European" is interchangeable with the white man, the oppressor, imperialism, and the West.

*"The Other's look makes me beyond my being in this world and puts me in the midst of the world which is at once this world and beyond this world. What sort of relation can I enter into with this being which I am and which shame reveals to me?"*⁷⁴

I seek to understand and question existence, not through perceived knowledge, but through the body and its presence. These ideas and figures have been a part of my practice, but in such a way that I did not consider its lineage within my own being. I was confronted with my position. It is through my own corporeal existence that you perceive my subjecthood, and sometimes perhaps not. But it is through this body that I experience.

It is someone else's time to become implicated and acutely aware—"And above all, my body, as well as my soul, beware of assuming the sterile attitude of a spectator, for life is not a spectacle, a sea of miseries is not a proscenium, a man screaming is not a dancing bear."⁷⁵ And through my material, the hard metal, I think of the mechanisations that make *man*: "Colonial idiocy will be purified in the welder's blue flame."⁷⁶

The nation state is upheld by borders; so, when I place my work, the sculptures and the scaffolds, it borders you out. Like gates, fences, checkpoints, cattle pathways. The confrontation can be intimidating. The savage will make you aware of who you are in the existential crisis arising from the meeting of the alien, the Other. The spectator becomes aware of their own body, in front of a constructed other-body that engulfs and overpowers. Without the power of the abject and the threat of dissolution, these borders of existence cannot be questioned. I want the viewer to feel unease, an *anxiety of incompleteness*, confronted by atrocity and, through its horror, a reflection of oneself.

"The body, especially the minoritized body, can simultaneously be the mirror and the instrument of those abstractions we fear most. ... So, the body of the historically produced minority combines the seductions of

the familiar and the reductions of the abstract in social life, allowing fears of the global to be embodied within it and, when specific situations become overcharged with anxiety, for that body to be annihilated."⁷⁷

The title of my graduation exhibition, *Every Name in History Is I*, was taken from a text by Jalal Toufic,⁷⁸ who himself took it from Friedrich Nietzsche. With it, I questioned subjecthood within history, and obliterated the border of "we/they" by making the border visible.

When the artist Ludvig Eikaas had his small epiphany that turned him into one of Norway's first abstract painters, he painted the word "*Jeg*" (I). The controversial painting had the word upon lines, like in a school notebook. When we leave the description, the portrayal, and the image of the outside world, we are confronted with our own subjecthood.

These investigations of existence lay the foundation of my practice. What does it mean to be living, what do we consider to be a subject? What makes this existence both attractive and repulsive? Superhumanisation does not allow for pure superiority; it dehumanises by denying the vulnerability of the

human. It creates an object that is both phobic and otherworldly. I work with the subject within the structure of the body and its presence. As you enter the exhibition space, the work activates your awareness. For art should, more than anything, be sensed—phenomenological perspective is the core of subjecthood. Not that it exists in a vacuum. It exists in negation to reality, its historicity, its facts and its fictions.

Like Michael Brown, perceived as a beast, a Hulk, humongous and enraged. Trapped in a deadly perception. It hangs tortured, like Freddie Gray,⁷⁹ with his spine 80 percent severed at the neck. The sculpture is the same beast that creates fear within you, but it is also vulnerable and fragile. The alienated minority has become large, supersized. The phobia is created, not through reality itself, but through a perception of reality.

My sculptures are the giant and terrifying creatures that we don't expect to evoke human gestures. The lynched hand, the lowered head, the foot that steps forward, the trembling of the body. The sensation of having an insect crawling on you. As it creeps, you shudder.

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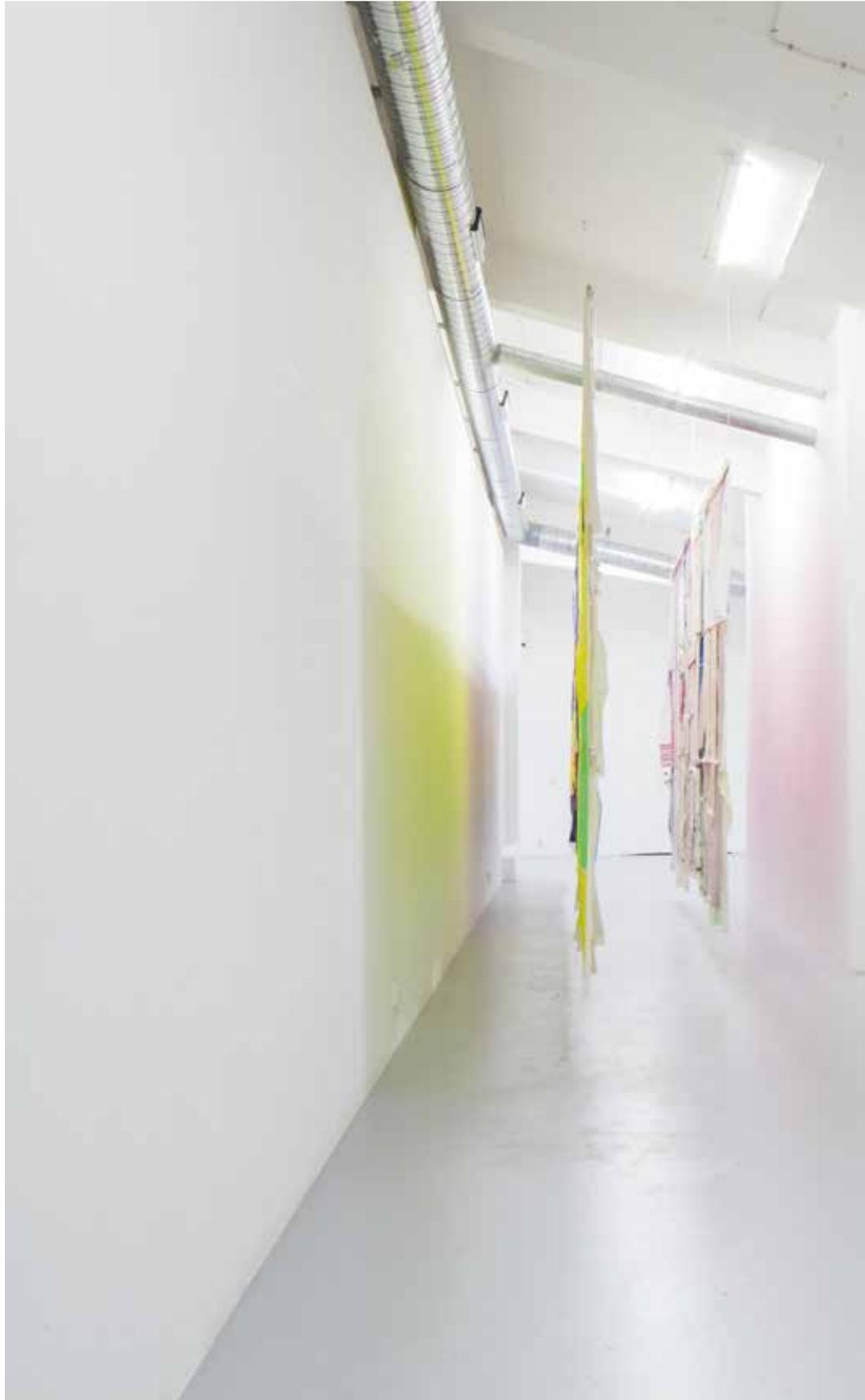
BIKO, 2015. Detail. Steel, bronze. 236 x 162 x 110 cm. Hanni Kamaly

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- 76 Suzanne Césaire, quoted in Robin D.G. Kelley, preface to *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 16.
- 77 Arjun Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers* (Duke: University Press, 2006), 47.
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- 79 On April 12, 2015, the twenty-five-year-old African American man Freddie Carlos Gray, Jr. was arrested by the Baltimore Police Department. During transport, with Gray at one point shackled in leg irons, the police stopped four times (once to go to the grocery store). When the police van arrived at the West District Police Station, Gray was unconscious, with three fractured vertebrae, injuries to his voice box, and his spine 80 percent severed at his neck. Gray died a week after his arrest from spinal cord injury.

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Installation view from *Recursion and Memory*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö Art Academy, 2016. Youngjae Lih



Four Ducks, 2016. Silver gelatin prints. 18x24 cm each. Youngjae Lih

Recursion and Memory

“Time is what keeps everything from happening at once.”
—John Archibald Wheeler¹

When I saw them for the first time, the two old individuals were staring at each other for quite a while. Half an hour passed and P and J had not said anything, but stayed in silence, just looking into each other’s face very focused, fascinated with one another. This strange encounter between them happened because of the peculiar ability that each had. P could remember everything. For him, every moment in the past and the sensations experienced at the time were as vivid and real as the here and now. He could remember all the exact details and the exact time when he performed a specific activity. He could easily remember what time in the morning he woke up last Monday, how the weather was when he opened the curtains last month, how much coffee he had put into the coffee-pot, or the specific amount of water he had boiled either that same morning or five years ago. He could also remember all the words on the newspaper that he read while drinking coffee, as well as all the objects that were on the table. Often, people came to see him and asked him to recall many numbers or sentences to test his memory, and he never made any mistakes. If P was the person with an exceptional memory, J was his antithesis. He didn’t have any memories except from his very early childhood. His capacity to remember was limited to only a few seconds. His perception was reduced to very small fragments of unknown origin. He had always been terrified, because he found himself surrounded by strangers in strange places at all times. He could recollect neither his family nor his acquaintances, and he couldn’t have a normal conversation with people, since he’d forget when he was talking. It was not surprising, then, that as a result of his “memory shortage” J had a permanently puzzled and naive look on his face.

Their encounter, however, was not as simple as the silence between them. Of course, J continued to be socially awkward. He was confused, wondering why he was there and if he had ever met P before. However, he eventually stopped wondering about that. Because, again, he discovered that the person in front of him was frightened, and J started thinking seriously about the identity of this stranger and why he was there. As soon as P saw J, he automatically recalled all the people he had met in the past, as well as all

the conversations with them and all the impressions he had had. There was a big contrast between P and J and their reactions to each other. On the one hand, P was able to capture each movement of J, however small: he noticed the slightest change and related it to the corresponding memories in his mind. He could even perceive minute expressions on J’s face, and the light that shaped them. On the other, he was also confused by J, who stared at him for a long time. Still, it wasn’t that easy for P to place J in his memory. For P, J wasn’t just one individual, but rather the experience of a huge group of people formed by different individuals and their distinctive features.

Although this story might seem like pure fiction, people like P and J really do exist in real life. The Russian psychologist Alexander Romanovich Luria had a patient with hyperthymesia—the ability to remember absolutely everything—known as the “mnemonist” Solomon Shereshevsky.² The neurologist Oliver Sacks had a patient with anterograde amnesia, Jimmy G., known as the “Lost Mariner” because he lost his ability to form new memories after a sailing accident.³

Time seems to play a key role in this memory game. How does time flow affect and how is it perceived by those who have a severe memory disorder? According to the special theory of relativity presented by Albert Einstein in 1905, “time delay” is a phenomenon that can be experienced by a person who travels relatively faster than another. This theory suggests that time is relative, in opposition to a concept of absolute space and time. For instance, let’s imagine that here is a person sitting on a chair and there is another one who keeps moving around quickly. After some time has passed, they meet each other again. For the person who was moving, the clock went slower than for the one who was sitting still. When applying the theory of relativity to these patients’ cases, it appears J had neither past nor future. It is, instead, as if he was just stuck in the moment. In other words, his perception is that he cannot remember anything except the present moment, and he might find that time goes faster for no reason. In real life, Jimmy G. couldn’t recognise his brother, who visited him after a twenty-year absence. He insisted that his brother was

not a middle-aged person who looked like his father, but a much younger man who had just entered university. On the contrary, for Solomon Shereshevsky, the person who could memorise everything, time would be something that went very slowly. He had become a sort of axis, as time existed for him as a very condensed memory mass. Memories were assembled in a thin layer and had to be arranged chronologically, but at the same time this was hindered by continuous inputs of new information. So, he had trouble establishing structures to link the information he perceived from the outside with the abstract context of memory. As time went on, he lost his ability to recognise and relate words properly; for example, he confused a word that he had just heard with one that he had heard a long time ago. He spent the last years of his life in a psychiatric hospital.

The origin of the word “memory” comes either from the thirteenth-century Latin word “*memoria*,” which means “memory, remembrance, faculty of remembering,” or from the Anglo-French word “*memorie*,” which means “recollection (of someone or something); awareness, consciousness.” Thus, memory is the human ability to store specific experiences of the past, which become part of a person’s framework of understanding. This is done “consciously,” so almost all of our knowledge is based on memory that is placed in a specific time in the past. And, even more interestingly, the knowledge that we perceive consciously is also based on memory. So, how can humans perceive the information from the outside as such, then memorise it, and finally store it in their brains? First we need to see how human sensations are elaborated, so then we can be sure of how much information we can perceive.

In 1942, Selig Hecht, Simon Shlaer, and Maurice Henri Pirenne of Columbia University devised an experiment to figure out the degree of response that people had to minimal visual energy in a dark space. They installed a light source in such a way that it fell onto the participants’ retinas, where the rods and cones used for sight are concentrated. The participants were first adapted to the dark space for half an hour; then, the participants were asked to react to the signal of a flickering light that lasted one millisecond. When the number of photons emitted decreased to a certain point, the scientists were able to figure out the minimum amount of visual energy needed for sight as well as the ability of the participants to identify the emitted photons individually. As a result, unless the signal was more frequent, a minimum of nine photons scattered across the retina could be perceived. If we consider that the average retina contains 350 optic rods, the results imply that these nerve cells can react to even a single photon. But when the intensity of the light was reduced to just a single photon, the participants weren’t able to react any longer. This means that, actually, the noise that is filtered as part of the visual process does not take place in the optical nerves but in the brain, which has major

restrictions when it comes to identifying visual stimuli. In general, we have always assumed that visual stimuli come in consistently, but there are variations in responses to them that are caused by the specific characteristics of an organism. Finally, the results of the experiment show that the critical point relates to how much of these fluctuating stimuli are perceived by the brain. And this physical variability determines the variations between the stimuli and the response.⁴

The human visual sensory organ is sensitive enough to detect a single photon, but this doesn’t mean that we can memorise that amount of information. In its traditional sense or definition, memory has always been interpreted as a “storage space” for our thoughts and experiences. Thus, it is not really surprising that we often focus on the aspect of quantity when we want to represent memory: that is, the amount of things we are able to remember or memorise. This idea of memory as a skill was also found in the mnemonic technique of the ancient Greeks. It was conceived 2,500 years ago by Simonides of Ceos, and it is known as the “memory palace.” This device had such relevance that it was included as a subject in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, written in 82–86 BCE.

This, along with the use of imagination, became the central praxis of memory. We just had to visualise an imaginary palace that we could virtually visit and in which we’d arrange images at specific places. Still, mastering this technique required both a detailed and a focused visual ability to be able to build the layers of memory, which requires putting artificially visualised objects in different spots in the imagined palace. In Rome, senators were not allowed to have notes when delivering a speech, so having a trained memory was necessary. This mnemonic tradition continued throughout the Middle Ages in Europe. Monks and theologians often used this technique for remembering passages from the Bible or related books. Since paper was so valuable and printing was still quite rudimentary, having good memory skills was an essential condition for any cultivated person. Memory was treated as a tangible object that was represented by past experience. This concept of memory was also developed around a narrative structure originally borrowed from literary or theatrical visual traditions that created imagined places. According to this Greek context, memory means something that is embodied and organised around images from lived experience, which can be associated with and used as a referent any time. Therefore, it is not surprising that this definition of memory was accepted in the philosophical tradition of empiricism, putting emphasis on knowledge acquired by direct and sensory experience. This goes back to Aristotle and was later adopted by Thomas Aquinas. Indeed, recent research on memory shows there is a strong correlation between spatial memory and the possibility of developing Alzheimer’s disease. Researchers conducted an experiment with a group of people who had the APOE4 gene, which occurs in people with Alzheimer’s three times more

often than in people without. To conduct their experiment, the researchers put a certain object in different places in a virtual maze, which required the use of the participants' spatial memory to locate. The results showed that the people in the APOE4 group had less activity in grid cells of the entorhinal cortex, an area of the brain that controls our perception of space. Instead, the hippocampus—the memory centre, which is located near the entorhinal cortex—was activated. The APOE4 group also proved to have different tactics than the control group for trying to find their way in the virtual maze, so scientists concluded that determined behaviour patterns in our use of spatial memory can help to predict memory disorders such as Alzheimer's.⁵

The problem of this perspective that sees memory as a storage space for images from the past is that it becomes very vague. The image produced in our minds during the perception process and the corresponding *idea* of the image produced in the imagination both relate to a specific image that corresponds to an object.

The empiricist John Locke simply described memory as the “storehouse” of the mind,⁶ and David Hume, another empiricist philosopher, also inherited this notion of memory from the Greeks. Building on this, Hume classified the representation of memory into two different categories: that of the idea and that of the impression. “Vivacity” was the main criterion he used to classify impressions that were different from others. Although he didn't classify them strictly by “idea image” and “memory image,” he remarked that memory images are stronger than “imagination images,” but are weaker than “impression images.” Bertrand Russell, who also came from an empirical background, made a clear distinction between images from the imagination and images from memory. He described imagination images and memory images as the same, but in the case of the memory images, he identified that their contents relate specifically to feelings or beliefs in the past.⁷ This approach that distinguishes represented images according to different types of mental status became the foundation for studying the mind in contemporary philosophy and psychology from a general point of view.

According to Hume, though, what we experience is only the representation of an idea, so what we are truly able to perceive, then, are the representations of our ideas. Empiricism thus grew to become quite sceptical about the physical world. Thomas Reid, an opponent of Hume, aggressively attacked this representational theory of memory. He pointed out that the same reasons empiricism became sceptical about the physical world meant it ended up being sceptical about the past. That is, if we assume that the act of remembering is a conscious act, then our concept of the past should also be based on the idea that it is reproduced at the present moment. Thus, for Reid, memory is how we remember the past in the present time. Finally, following his argument, it is also true that what

we can recall is only the present sensation, so there is no reason that we can be sure about the past, which should be the same as we remember it. What, then, does memory mean for Reid? According to him:

Memory is what gives us immediate knowledge of things past. The senses inform us about things only as they exist in the present moment, and if this information were not preserved by memory it would vanish instantly, leaving us as ignorant as if it had never been. ...

...
Memory implies a conception of past time and a belief that some time has passed; for it is impossible that a man should now clearly remember *x* without believing that some stretch of time, large or small, has passed between the time when *x* happened and now; and I think it is impossible to show how we could acquire a notion of duration if we had no memory.⁸

In Reid's view, memory has a direct correlation with the past. To him, memory means the direct knowledge of the past. Therefore, he disagreed with the opinion that the person who remembers something is remembering the memory of the present. Rather, the one who is remembering should not be in the present but in the past instead. He insists on the idea that our memory has a specific duration at the midpoint from past to present, and this is infinitely continuous. Reid continues:

It is essential to anything that is remembered that it be something that is past, and we can't think of something as past without thinking of some duration, large or small, between it and the present. So as soon as we remember something we must have both a notion of and a belief in duration ... Duration, having only one dimension, has fewer modifications; but these are clearly understood, and their relations admit of measure, proportion, and demonstrative reasoning. ... Duration and extension [which equals geometrical dimension] are not discrete but continuous quantity. Their parts are perfectly alike but divisible without end.⁹

But, is it time that we perceive? Do we really perceive time as a continuous and simultaneous system? If not, how can we say that time is continuous outside of all consciousness? Isn't there a limit to the human ability to perceive time?

According to a recent experiment on the human auditory sensory organ, humans can detect a 0.1% difference of frequency in audible bandwidth (20–20,000 Hz).¹⁰ That means the difference between 13,000 Hz (0.07692 milliseconds per cycle) and 13,020 Hz (0.07680 milliseconds per cycle), or 0.00012 milliseconds. This amount of time is the same it would take to travel thirty-five metres at the speed of light. This



The Flues, 2015. Slide projectors, table, microcontroller, lamp. Dimensions variable (150 x 225 cm). Installation view from *Recursion and Memory*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Youngjae Lih

shows the limitations of the human sensory system, as we saw in the previously described experiment on vision; however, it also implies that all the information we perceive is discrete signals from tiny fragments. Moreover, even though we are able to sense a very small amount of time, how can we perceive these tiny fragments as part of a continuous flow of time? How can I be sure that my visual perception of the world is not continuous? For instance, it seems that technically we cannot sense an object that moves or changes rapidly within thirty-five metres at the speed of light for 0.00012 milliseconds. Would pictures taken by a camera show the same moment that I have experienced in the past? Should I admit that I am surrounded by very subtle signals that even my brain cannot recognise, but know that it is nevertheless undeniable that the visual information that surrounds me continuously enters my nervous system? Actually, it does so in discrete chunks. But why don't I perceive these stimuli as scattered pieces of information? Why is it a common belief that time exists continuously? When describing his "Intelligent Machinery," otherwise known as a Turing machine, Alan Turing explained that it consisted of:

an unlimited memory capacity obtained in the form of an infinite tape marked out into squares, on each of which a symbol could be printed. At any moment there is one symbol in the machine; it is called the scanned symbol. The machine can alter the scanned symbol, and its behavior is in part determined by that symbol, but the symbols on the tape elsewhere do not affect the behavior of the machine. However, the tape can be moved back and forth through the machine, this being one of the elementary operations of the machine. Any symbol on the tape may therefore eventually have an innings.¹¹

As this quote reveals, it appears to be essential to construct a linear conception of time to be able to perceive a continuous framework that is part of different moments, although this linear structure is acknowledged at different intervals of time. On the matter of how we relate our experiences with continuously changing time, D.H. Mellor provides an example that uses the hour and second hands from a clock to illustrate the concept of temporal order. The hour hand suggests that there is a relationship that is established between two different positions, but we are not able to sense the movement. Instead, we can see the second hand. That means that we continuously see the second hand's regular position. Therefore, the fact that we can perceive x influences our perception of y . In other words, we perceive two different images, but they don't need to be matched exactly chronologically, as their causal relationship remains the same. The chronological order that we perceive consists of a corresponding temporal sequence. Thus, Mellor insists on the idea that the temporal sequences of an event are expressed in our brain at arbitrary times.

The common point of view establishes that analogy seeks the functional similarities or the inner relevance from a complex phenomenon between two or more objects that look different. Comparison in causal relationships is actually part of an analogical process; thus we construct the outside world through analogy based on the information samples from our memory. Consequently, we perceive the world continuously. Instead of posing the question of "What is it?," we should ask, "What would it be?," as this allows us to distinguish things continuously. But let's go back to the question "What would it be?" This is a question that relates to time to solve the continuous perception problem of causal relationships. However, we can also approach the question in a more meaningful way. Actually, this is the precise question that we ask when we process abstract information. Conversely, the continuous perception of time suggests that we use this rational ability for abstraction. Humans use memory as an ingredient to make analogies and construct an abstract language.

In the summer of 2012, I was with R in the Thar Desert in India. He is a tanned, muscular Indian man who does not look like a person in his fifties. R is uneducated; he didn't even finish elementary school, and his main job these days is taking foreign tourists to the desert on one- or two-day camping excursions. When I met him, he was staying in the village because it was off-season, and in the Thar Desert the temperature can go up to fifty degrees during the summer. But it provided a good opportunity for me to suggest to him a real trip from one place to another, and not to the usual camping site, so he accepted my proposition. The next day, we headed west to a city called Jaisalmer, crossing the desert with his camels for a period of ten days. We often took breaks to avoid the hottest times of day and to give the camels a rest. One day, I saw a small rabbit jumping out from a bush. Guided by my curiosity, I tried to approach the rabbit, but these wild rabbits from the desert are unbelievably fast and the desert rose up as a never-ending arid place, so finally I gave up chasing the rabbit. R also noticed the rabbit after packing up everything. He said that it was perfect, as we were running out of food, so we needed to hunt something for dinner. I could see R's chest through his unbuttoned fake Armani shirt when he picked up a stone and threw it. Strangely, the stone flew to the right even though the rabbit was to his left. Frightened by R's big gesture, the rabbit made a quick escape. The stone drew a curved line. It made a big circle and traced an arch while the stone's shadow drew a straight line on the flat surface—they beautifully but also geometrically made a point of contact, and the rabbit and the stone met on their paths at same time. We had rabbit for dinner.

"Experiment" became a keyword in the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century. Mathematics was the central tool in the formulation of the hypotheses

of philosophers René Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. They considered mathematics as the core of the natural sciences and believed that scientific result was a proof derived from the analogy of the “first principles,” or an axiomatic system. However, using only mathematics was not enough to develop a modern science. This fundamental approach to science would soon undergo a big change, led by Isaac Newton. He was a genius of experiment design. At a time when many competing theories were trying to develop their own mathematical reasoning, he realised the necessity of having a practical test to judge which one of these theories was right. He didn’t just suggest this methodological necessity, but he also planned the experiments. Newton’s main strength was his ability to visualise the inherent importance of scientific experimentation. The experiment was not only a way to prove but also to construct a theory. That is why his new approach was called “experimental philosophy.” In this sense, Newton’s experimental methodology was positioned in fundamental and significant contrast with the Scholastic philosophy of Descartes.

Although Newton’s science was at the forefront of the eighteenth-century trend, it didn’t lead in only one direction. Indeed, Newton had influence on two distinct schools of thought. Some scientists were influenced by the *Principia*, which is a very mathematical and precise mechanical work, while other experiments were affected by optical science, including Newton’s concepts of contemplation as the main experience and imagination of “power.” When I recall my experience as an engineer, I recognise that my perception of the natural world changed considerably over time. When I was a junior engineer, I used to get stuck looking for the exact method and trying to find the best theory. But as time passed, I was able to deal with more complex systems as I became more aware of the wide range of possibilities, not only at a theoretical level but also in limited situations. Rather than just seeing the superficial functional calculation of a mathematical law, such as Ohm’s law or linear Laplace transform, it is more important to see the natural phenomenon as a spontaneous stream of energy. So far, my experiences have made me realise that it is more important to feel instinctive uncomfortableness than to know the exact calculation. Both mechanical force and speed exist as physical forms, but electrical forces and speed (current and voltage) exist as abstract forms. Multiples of force and speed equal power; multiples of voltage and current become electrical power. These physical and electrical powers are only perceptual differences of physical quantity. Newton’s *lex secunda*, $F = ma$, explains that force equals the multiplication of mass and acceleration, but it also has a connotation of a causal relationship, as when the force, F , is the reason applied to an object that has a mass, m , with its response giving a as a result.

Newton’s science is not only important in terms of its methodological contribution, but also for its construction of a universal image of science. Before

Newton, all the pseudoknowledge about the natural world had been segregated and was not accepted as part of society or culture. These scattered threads of knowledge came together to become a specific field, as a science that had a singular perception and praxis under the notion of Newton’s science. Besides being useful for science’s own field, it also became a good model for other fields as well. It is ironic that Newton, who was the last alchemist, started modern science.

As in science, experimenting is also important in the arts. The painter and photographer László Moholy-Nagy insisted that without experiments, there are no discoveries, and without discoveries, there is no regeneration. While he compared science and art in terms of methodological differences, he said that art was part of an extended sensual experience within a non-verbal domain. Thus, art has a great number of components that cannot be verbalised, but only approached intuitively. For example, Moholy-Nagy describes product design as being a contact point between intuition and science—in other words, form and function. This analysis provides more information effectively and stimulates new techniques in the unconscious transubstantiation of such information. Also it can remove repetitive elements and produce inner security for new solutions.¹² Therefore, it is not really strange that the work of the Bauhaus, where Moholy-Nagy worked, has two different sides. On the one hand, the Bauhaus represents functional and simplified modernism, but on the other hand, it implies the experiential forms that are constructed by accumulated experiments and specific details. Either way, what can I say when I look at the Bauhaus works? They are just a few straight lines, an incomprehensible arrangement, but in the end, well-composed figures with limited colours. Here, my sensibilities are enriched.

This abstract language builds what we would call the “sixth sense.” Besides, this abstract process that categorises and acknowledges essential information as part of a procedure of analogy encourages what we could call an “intentional forgetting.” The abstraction process is tangled with the memory process. The intuition constructed by the abstraction process is an essential part of human perception. Thus, although intuition is one of the most fundamental and primitive senses, it is also one of our most sophisticated abilities, as it has developed separate from physical sensation.

In the process of learning how to play an instrument, the learning curve known as “post-practice improvement”¹³ illustrates how we construct knowledge. When I learned how to play the piano, I used to play the same score over and over again. Then, when I made a mistake, I could correct it in only a few days, regardless of how well I remembered the piece or how many times I had repeated it. My piano teacher used to make a big mark with a red pen on the spot I made a mistake. Despite this, I would immediately make the same mistake again. My eyes would read

the score as I played, and soon I would come across the big red circle. My ears remembered the sound that my teacher had just played, and I expected to play in the same way she did. And my mind also remembered that I made a mistake more than twenty times on the same spot. I touched the wrong key. Then I became really frustrated, so I stopped practising. After a few days, I played again and, surprisingly, I did it perfectly. But I could no longer remember how many times I made the mistake, or my teacher's demonstration, or where the red spot was.

Even during the memorisation process, we forget many things. Only things that are not forgotten remain in the consciousness and exist as continuous memory. Forgotten information becomes a sort of index abstracted from our unconscious, and we can recover consciously most of the information that is forgotten by remembering the fact that we forgot something. Forgetting seems to be a part of the memorising process. This intentional forgetting works as a sort of filter or frame to refine the information, so that some is stored as memory in our consciousness and

the other is stored unconsciously once it is forgotten. This means we have intentionally selected the information, and this exists through our consciousness but the unconscious is where it goes after being dismissed. The repetitive information from an analogical process focuses only on similarities and accumulated intentions.

Before the nineteenth century, people had only limited resources for gathering information. But nowadays we have access to loads of information, and people focus on developing the skills for managing the increasing amount of data. We are continuously exposed to outside stimuli, so we become more passive towards these. Indeed, the trend shows that everybody knows more but understands less. What we need is to focus more on the abstract part of memory as a communication skill between consciousness and the unconscious, rather than the visual part of memory. One patient of Alexander Romanovich Luria, a soldier named Lev Zasetsky, was wounded in the head at the Battle of Smolensk in 1943. Once he recovered he found himself in a frightening world:



Left: *The Flues*, 2015. Slide projectors, table, microcontroller, lamp. Dimensions variable (150 x 225 cm). Youngjae Lih

Right: *The Flues*, 2016. Detail. Ink on fabrics. Dimensions variable (1440 x 240 cm). Youngjae Lih



The Flues, 2015–16. Silver gelatin prints. 145 x 108 cm. Youngjae Lih

During the night I suddenly woke up and felt a kind of pressure in my stomach. Something was stirring in my stomach but it wasn't that I had to urinate—it was something else. But what? I just couldn't work it out. Meanwhile the pressure in my stomach was getting stronger every minute. Suddenly I realised I had to go to the toilet but couldn't work out how. I knew what organ got rid of urine, but this pressure was on a different orifice, except that I'd forgotten what it was for. ... Often I even forget where my forearm or buttocks are and have to think what these two words refer to. I know what the word shoulder means and that the word forearm is closely related to it. But I always forget where my forearm is located. Is it near my neck or my hands?¹⁴

Zasetsky couldn't read or memorise his own written text. All he could do was write notes when he recalled his thoughts from his memory. It was a terribly painful and enduring process. Usually, he couldn't recollect or write anything, and, when he could, it was only a few sentences each time. However, he was very patient and strong-willed and would write down more than three thousand notes over twenty years. The reason he was obsessed with this process was because he wanted to reconstruct and arrange his lost memories. Dr. Luria predicted the possibility of his success was extremely low. Certainly this was right, when looking at the different parts of his

brain, as they were severely damaged. But his life wasn't like his damaged brain. Although his memories from his consciousness had not actually left him, he used his forgotten memories to communicate with himself in an abstract way. And through the stories he reconstructed, Zasetsky was able to reunderstand and recompose the meaning of his life. This proves that memory is active and not passive. It is based in the past, but is possible to build a future by linking consciousness and the unconscious. In this sense, it is ironic that the man mentioned at the beginning of this essay who could remember everything ended up not recognising reality any more, and the person who had lost all of his memory was able to reconstruct his own life.

*"Remembrance is neither what happened nor what did not happen but, rather, their potentialization, their becoming possible once again."*¹⁵

Any kind of machine involves a physical and a chemical composition, regardless of its mechanism. Mankind has significantly improved the precision and flexibility of tools, evolving from the very primitive gadgets of centuries ago to microcomputer technology in recent years. Yet, just as Henri Bergson and David Chalmers predicted,¹⁶ even if some day humans have been completely analysed physically and chemically, it still won't be possible to identically clone them. Against reductionism, they argue that the tools of neu-



Meteor project II: Things in the air, Perseid, 87.5Mhz, 2016. Computer, sound card, eight speakers. Dimensions variable. 8-channel sound installation from Recursion and Memory, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Youngjae Lih

rosience cannot provide a full account of conscious experience, although they have much to offer. It is true that in both neuroscience and psychology scientists have progressed consistently at a theoretical level. But, unfortunately, what this research has proven is more about the physical and the chemical functions of the brain rather than its mental mechanism. It doesn't show how the objective physical processes and the subjective mental processes can interact with each other. This is because consciousness as an object of observation, and as an observer, is connected.

Coincidentally, the theory that outlines the importance of the relationship between the observer and the object of observation can be found in modern quantum physics. According to Erwin Schrödinger's well-known thought experiment about a cat in a box, an object doesn't exist until an observer observes it. That means that object and observer exist as a pair. Wouldn't this be a clue to prove the manifestation of human consciousness? I find that there is a coherent relationship between the premise of quan-

tum physics that states that the observer exists with its object of observation and the structural coupling in neuroscience that provides for the basis of human cognition. Structural coupling establishes that there is a history of recurrent interactions that lead to the structural correspondence between two systems. To return to the observer's problem, we could then assume that humans' continuous consciousness is artificial, since it perceives the outside world continuously. To the question "Does the universe exist if we're not looking?," physicist John Wheeler answers that because no observers or substances have been found yet, the cosmos is made of "huge clouds of uncertainty," and that as such an event is "a vast arena containing realms where the past is not yet the past."

In 2007, an experiment was conducted that showed that the interaction between the observer and the object observed could be influenced by time. Scientists set the experiment so they could take a picture of photons as they went through a miniscule slit, to figure out if they appeared as particles or waves.



Print More Newspapers, 2015. 16mm film projector, turntable, speaker. 08:24 min. Installation view from *Recursion and Memory*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Youngjae Lih



Upside Down, 2015–16. Silver gelatin prints. 50,8x61 cm each. Youngjae Lih

Theoretically, the image of the photon could randomly be either. The particles had to “decide” what to do when they had to diverge. It turns out that what the *observer* decided at that point is what determined how the particle would behave when it diverged.¹⁷ This means that the past is created in the present. If that is true, does it mean that the present is created in the future? Past, present, and future are entangled, as Spinoza said in the seventeenth century. I find that the empirical argument about time and the argument

of the observer and the object observed in quantum physics are the same. Our memories don’t come from the outside world; rather, they come from the inside, and from our own consciousness in the future.

In the end, I listen to Bach. If I have learnt anything from him, it would be focus. This reminds me that when I see a tree, or when I can feel myself observing the tree, I am conscious myself that I am observing my consciousness, this practice is futile.

- 1 John Archibald Wheeler, quoted in *Biographical Encyclopedia of Scientists*, 3rd ed. (Boca Raton, FL: Market House Books, 2009), 796. Wheeler was an American theoretical physicist. This quote has variously been attributed to Wheeler, Woody Allen, Albert Einstein, and anonymous.
- 2 Alexander Romanovich Luria, *The Mind of a Mnemonist: A Little Book about a Vast Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).
- 3 Oliver Sacks, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1985).
- 4 Selig Hecht, Simon Shlaer, and Maurice Henri Pirenne, “Energy, Quanta, and Vision,” *Journal of General Physiology* 25, no. 6 (July 1942).
- 5 L. Kunz et al., “Reduced Grid-cell-like Representations in Adults at Genetic Risk for Alzheimer’s Disease,” *Science*, no. 6259 (October 2011), 430–33, DOI: 10.1126/science.aac8128.
- 6 John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 370.
- 7 Bertrand Russell, *The Analysis of Mind* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1918), 186.
- 8 Thomas Reid, “Essay III. Of Memory,” in *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 305.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 137.
- 10 U.S. Army Aeromedical Research Laboratory (USAARL), “Auditory Perception and Cognitive Performance,” in *Helmet-Mounted Displays: Sensation, Perception and Cognitive Issues* (Fort Rucker, AL: U.S. Army Aeromedical Research Laboratory, 2009), 391.
- 11 A.M. Turing, “Intelligent Machinery (manuscript)” (1948), Turing Archive, http://www.alanturing.net/intelligent_machinery/, 3.
- 12 László Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion* (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1947).
- 13 Chuan C. Chang, *Fundamentals of Piano Practice*, 3rd ed. (Tampa: BookSurge Publishing, 2016), 53.
- 14 Lev Zaslavsky, quoted in A.R. Luria, *The Man with a Shattered World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 43–45.
- 15 Giorgio Agamben and Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 267.
- 16 David Chalmers, “The Puzzle of Conscious Experience,” *Scientific American*, no. 273 (1995), 92.
- 17 Stephen Morgan, “Scientists Show Future Events Decide What Happens in the Past,” *Digital Journal*, June 3, 2015, <http://www.digitaljournal.com/science/experiment-shows-future-events-decide-what-happens-in-the-past/article/434829>.

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Carriers, 2016. Mixed materials. Dimensions variable. Installation view from *Drifting Diplomats*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Johan Lundqwist



Not to be Shown / Not to be Thrown (18 sqrt), 2016. Mixed materials. Dimensions variable.
Installation view from *The Archive—Documents, Objects and Desires*, Inter Arts Center, Malmö, 2016. Johan Lundqwist



Past Tense (wrapped wisps), 2015. Shredded paintings, straps, lace. 120 x 40 x 40 cm. Johan Lundqwist

Drifters and Shifters: Departures and Arrivals of the Misc.

“On the line from my eyes to the horizon, the foreground forever hides all the other planes, and if on either side I think I see things staggered at intervals, it is because they do not completely hide each other. Thus I see each thing outside the others, according to a width measured differently. We are always on the hither side of depth, or beyond it.”

—Maurice Merleau-Ponty¹

Where Does the One End and the Other Begin?

Knippeln, summer 2015. I walk along one of the two shores that make up a large part of this remarkable island, which is a mixture of sheep pasture and disused military area. It lies in Gothenburg’s inner archipelago, only a few hundred metres west of Älvsborg Fortress. The shorelines are shaped like two C’s that meet back to back. One shore faces the harbour at Arendalshamnen in Hisingen, and the other towards the inlet and the Hunnebådan rock—the gateway to the city that, viewed historically, has been its natural dividing line and outpost. It is an exposed little island, which, because of its shape and position, collects up some of what drifts to and from Gothenburg. At one time, the East Indiaman *Göteborg* sank off the island, just a few hundred metres short of completing its journey. The shorelines are still washed over with porcelain from that time, which is why I go to the shore there and look down, trying to distinguish between the blue-painted Chinese porcelain and the indigenous stuff.

But what catches my interest is not the remnants from the Far East, fragments in transit, which in themselves are enough to trigger my hands to catch my interest. For, along with that, what I will soon find seems to be too firmly tied to something specific, and too laden with history and bound up with a single context. What prompts this zeal is some large, brightly coloured lumps that seem to have just arrived, and which are lying and crawling by the water’s edge. They have slowly, over time, been moulded by the waves. Toxic smelling, out of place, they have been shaped by their journey. The travels of a flowing landscape painting have ceased. The drifting paints are captured without further thought, carried along, out of their already extracted context, destined without purpose. Gradually they take themselves over the threshold, into the studio, where they get to rest, to find their own place.

Mobile objects have this possibility: to be moved from one static place to another. They have the capacity to switch milieus, and then to adapt themselves and to come into being once again. These

passages occur across thresholds, which separate different surroundings. Which make different demands depending on place, position, context, and spatial qualities, as well as other expectations, values, charges, and conceptions.

The studio is the place through which things need to pass. They come in over the threshold in the form of thoughts, materials, and objects, so as to be recast through various processes in order to find their place, or not (there are non-places and other in-between places, too). After that—and this is perhaps the most interesting bit—they will leave the studio again, as finished works. Across the threshold and into yet another new context, to meet the viewer’s gaze in these “silent” spaces. It is a risky passage that occurs here, and it is hard to control and, above all, hard to predict.

In “The Function of the Studio,” Daniel Buren writes about the hazardous passage from the studio (where he considered the work to be in place) to the gallery or museum, where placelessness isolates and reifies it.² This applies regardless of whether this is a matter of drift paints from a shore, which are brought into the studio, or pictures downloaded from the Internet, saved in my digital bank, and which in many cases (far from all) take on physical form, while (even fewer) find their way out to face the public. It then becomes relevant also to talk about boundaries—where things have their beginning and end (if that is the case)—in relation to the passages that occur across these borders and the framework within which we navigate.

Receiver, Destroyer, Restorer, Transmitter. My Loci of Generation.

These passages into the studio behave similarly and function in a relatively simple way. This inflow requires wandering around, in which a sharp but broad gaze, in coordination with eager hands, gathers things up and takes them inside with it, without preconditions and yet having been carefully selected. “My eye, tuning towards the imaginary, will go to any wavelengths for its sight,” writes Stan Brakhage,³ and I

can relate to his unconditional gathering of materials and the conviction that there is potential everywhere. Potential is an arbitrary concept in this context, but it is evidently the idea of it that plays the decisive role in the moment I conclude something has to go in. Although this can change over time. Perhaps potential is more a matter of unforeseen reactions from a new place and the ability of a thing to change character, and, as a consequence, my decision along with it.

What comes with me from my wanderings in the landscape—what changes places, gets space, and takes up space in my workplace—is thrown into a self-referential circulation, in which the newly arrived has to coexist with what is already there: a spin-off of process, creative residues, art-in-potency, para-creations, footnotes to departed works. Objects, images, old works, failures, attempts are taken in hand (because of their arbitrary potential) until they have become (or not) material among all the others once again. Up to that moment (if ever) they are present, influencing, and are categorised under: “not to be shown not to be thrown”—my own Salon des Refusés, my appendix of promises. It is a muddled timeline that runs through my studioscape and a cramped setting to spend time in.

Things seek their place; they go through processes such as: dividing into parts, putting together, repairing. They are reworked, moved around like constellations in a linguistic game, in which circumstances like time are present. Values transform, words become objects, objects become sentences, swapping places like anagrams. They take on new roles; put together like assemblages, they become new components. Through multiplication of objects a division occurs of the number of parts, peeling, cleaning up.

Mobile objects that can be used in other space, stationary places with other preconditions.

Sometimes, I play with the idea that I have “Renoir’s residues” at hand.⁴ Their abandoned, leftover fragments stay in the studio and, over time, take on the expression of something other than what they are. This depends on them losing contact with their origins, at the same time as they form new ties with what is there in their surroundings: the studio as a holder-together, recreator, reinterpreter, and time capsule. This reused material, or readymades,⁵ just like everything else that is brought into the studio, takes on a status that is disconnected from its origins, with all the values a material entails.

Departing

Having circulated and, through quiet diplomacy, found their place in the studio and gradually become an artwork, intended to be left behind, for exposure in other spaces, a paradoxical situation arises, which Buren (this applies to all studio-based art) describes as follows: “when the work is in place, it does not take place (for the public), while it takes place (for the public) only when not in place.”⁶ Here, he is referring to the exhibition space.

In his book *Studio and Cube*, Brian O’Doherty points to a number of disparities between “the Studio (the agent of creation)” and “the white Cube (the agent of transformation).”⁷ Whereas Buren has the studio as “the *unique space* of production” and the museum as “the *unique space* of exposition.” Obviously, it is more complicated than that, including for me. For example, this is how some of the production in the installation phase occurs in mutual agreement with the exhibition space. But I think it is interesting to have this as a starting point for understanding, and for thinking about the movement of various artworks between spaces and the different conditions in these spaces. But also various objects’ places and non-places, and their influence on each other and on the viewer, the body and gaze.

In the studio there is a security, a context, in which the things in it support and create an understanding of—and bridge the gap between—each other, which gives them legitimacy in a way: a context. At the same time, the works found there are extremely insecure, unstable. They can continue to change, to be exchanged. They vibrate with uncertainty and suffer from a lack of independence. As long as they are there, they are in the zone of a risk of potential change and alteration. Time is fleeting. O’Doherty puts it well: “Time is reversed, revised, discarded, used up. It is always subjective, that is, elastic, stretching, falling into pools of reflection, tumbling in urgent waterfalls.”⁸

These leaps back and forth ultimately cause things to hook onto each other, to find their place. Temporally forever. O’Doherty links together the studio, the artwork, and the gallery, and says of temporal distinctions: “They [artworks]—and the studio itself—exist under the sign of process, which in turn defines the nature of studio time, very different from the even, white present tense of the gallery.”⁹ He goes even further, and says, “the space gives the illusion that time is standing still.”¹⁰

When a work migrates to the exhibition space it is presumably insecure, exposed to inspection and unforeseen events. For this is the mobile artwork’s constant compromise: in the exhibition space it is simultaneously in place and in a place that is not its own. But with a clearer status, definite and settled, it meets the gazes of the surrounding world. The exhibition space is inevitably laden with its own history and the visitors’ expectations and previous knowledge, but it is still more forgiving and affirmative when faced with the work, when it is no longer specifically a matter of the work’s history. The ostensibly neutral place isolates and the viewer’s gaze stabilizes. Bodies’ movements and minds’ thoughts activating.

The Place

is a place of birth, in place, to place, in the first place, hiding place, to take place, in place of, place of delivery, out of place, dis-place, no place (utopia).



Keeper, 2016. Wood, linen, hide glue, silk screen, spray paint. 520 x 188 x 112 cm. Johan Lundqwist

This Place/Displace/Displays

In Gedi Sibony's installations, as in his assemblages and impoverished objects, the component parts are set out largely unaltered. After that, they are challenged via their interaction with counteracting materials or gestures, including those that are suggested by the architecture of the space itself. For me, it is important to take up space with what is in place, which actually has another place, but which is now placed, replaced, displaced, and also misplaced. That last implies a removal. This can be tangible—something is physically taken away and the tracks left behind are still there—and can be seen through absence. Or the removal can be about all the inherent placings that we have built into the object, which I try to draw out by treating the constituents like any material whatsoever.

I need to be alert when installing a work and to be responsive to the surroundings. The component parts give me a chance to experiment before an exhibition, right up until the very last second. Taking place with something that is displaced requires a responsiveness to the specific architecture of the space, just as I need to be sensitive to materials and objects in the studio.

The studio is messy and full, which reveals the work's origins and context, while the exhibition space is clean and empty and brings the work to a head, without an automatic linkage to its "natural environment." Things come into being, are vitalised by the milieu in which they reside, and so the architecture that surrounds the creative process is an important factor. In the studio, this phenomenon where things enter into each other and emerge out of each other is a natural part of the working process. The outcome and the approach are understood best in their place of inception, that is, when we see the context with its constituents, methods, surroundings, etc. In the exhibition situation things are taken out of their context (chain of thought), out of their time and order. But, at the same time, the work comes about in the instant it meets the viewer. There is something paradoxical in this, which I find exciting, when it balances and vibrates across the uncertainty in the various contexts, both being part of the working process. It is interesting in an exhibition context to try to recreate or comment on a timeline, agreeing with the process, without necessarily being precise. In the installation phase you can bring out the work's whole identity, which so naturally connects to the origin, when it coils around in the studio, with its objects and thoughts layered on top of one another, in what we might call a collage of compressed tenses.¹¹ The display becomes a proxy and a bridge not just for the process in but also for the journey to and from the studio, along with the in-between space that arises. This idea takes me to Robert Smithson and the non-site: the logical three-dimensional image that is abstract, but that nevertheless represents an actual place. This got me thinking of the display of the displaced, which is an encounter between the out-

side viewer and the object that has travelled and is in place, and yet somewhere else, simultaneously and in company with the viewer's thoughts.

Painting, or rather picture-making in my case, has multiple ways in and sidetracks, pathways of association with neither beginning nor end. I encounter materials, materials encounter me. Materials encounter each other through me and through each other. Stories are interwoven and split apart.

Continuity and quantity are the watchwords and important methods in my practice. With a flowing working process, there is an open dialogue with everything that has crossed the threshold into the studio. At the same time as the composition of the image, its limits—its place, gaze, aesthetic, framework, and corporeality—are taken into account. Each little part plays an equal role, in which the one gets caught up in the other, and perhaps back again, and finally creates a whole. Time is temporary, and yet the opposite.

Painting (but also everything that affects being and producing, but which is most crystallised and direct in this medium) is for me a matter of a continual ongoing labour that takes its starting point in the past, and which advances in a perpetual present. This means being right in the middle of what has been and what will be: carrying history's burden in every choice of colour and executed action, at the same time as it is beginning from the beginning, with millions of untaken decisions ahead of you. It is a direct action that extends over time. A painting or image is a frozen state of compressed time. In order to be able to navigate at all requires frameworks and methods.

An active taking of distance from painting has become a way for me to continue to relate to things associatively, and is a natural step into my thoughts about painting and its place (spatial, mobile, temporal, "placial") in the space and the relationship with the viewer and their scope. It is also and more literally about material, tools, and methods. I thrive on great distance, partly because I feel I am free to wander between media, which means that I can lift some of the visual formulation processes out of the studio. To some extent because this makes it easier for me to create complete wholes out of a close collaboration with details. "Combines" is an expression that refers to the collisions and coincidences between material and form, at the same time as it contributes to ideas about displacement, along with expansions of the temporal, spatial, and placial kind.

I use tools, methods, and materials that certainly still have their physical qualities, but which either extend or shorten the process connecting head and hand. In that way I lose some control while renewing and transforming the control that I still have. The extension of the body that so many have talked about (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Rosalind Krauss, and, in principle, all painters in history) has for me been extended ever further and entailed possibilities

that have forced me to be responsive in my handling of the material and the processes at hand. A way of keeping myself open. Another example of backing off a bit from painting is my two blogs, which were continually updated, each of them growing and expanding over the course of a year.¹² One with a new work on a daily basis, and the other with new works every week. Both play with the construction of form and process using different tempos, but with the same method for making the most of physical and digital detritus.

Work—a continuum of product. Ongoing process in the shape of all whats, wheres, and whens. *Place*—makes a difference between here and there. A specific spot in space, which is an anagram of *scape* = position with-in or without. Which inevitably leads us to landscape

again ... Anagrammatically, what constitutes two landscapes in a row (landscape landscape) is: *space place and lands*, which is also part of the obvious description of one landscape. There is also a relationship between place and gaze, or site and sight, to consider when talking about landscape.

Dissection using semantic or other associative games is a recurrent approach for understanding and discovering opportunities for linking distinct things together, whether it be inside or outside or involves working in ideas, with objects, places, or time.

Outside

The complexity of the work in the studio, which I have tried to describe above, is reflected in the landscape outside—in the city. It is built up, pulled down, joined together.



Carriers, 2016. Mixed materials. Dimensions variable. Installation view from *Drifting Diplomats*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Johan Lundqwist

The constituent parts are both solitary and dependent on each other. A coherent whole teems forth in constant incompleteness, and many ideas are agreed about the space in this specific place with its countless, more or less clear boundaries, in-between spaces, and flat, spatial surfaces. Compressed tenses, times, and layers that cut through or bump up against one another. When some new building project is halted due to the uncovering of finds of historical value, and the building site is then turned into an excavation site, a peculiar transformation of aims occurs. But above all, a gap arises that cuts through more than layers of earth, piping, and artefacts, since it also slices through a then-now-later—a place and a non-place—so as to thereafter bind them together. I return to my own world of demolition and rebuilding and wonder if perhaps the reverse is the case in my practice? That the studio is an excavation site and the exhibition space a building site.

We could say that I function as a town planner among my own things, with decisions happening in accordance with an overview and control of the details and also in relation to previous decisions. At the same time, those things have lives and desires of their own, with non-decisions playing a major role in controlling the course of events. This also applies to the very greatest extent to the city, where planning and non-planning, decisions made many years ago, are set against new ideals and new needs, which cover, destroy, overlap, and separate each other, transforming previous functions. Henri Lefebvre talks about space and contradictory space, about producing space, as it is done in the city and the contradictoriness of urbanness. With skyscrapers and railroads that break up old needs, which are replaced by new ones or coexist in new spaces, places, and approaches in a dysfunctional mixture.

In *Malmö: Världens Svenskaste Stad* (Malmö: the world's most Swedish city),¹³ the journalist Per Svensson writes about the flat Malmö in relation to the hillier Stockholm. A general overview and broad prospect create nostalgia, and along with it difficulties in renewing things at the small scale. Malmö does not have this; instead, a spirit of enterprise prevails, which comes out through less visible concern (more ugly buildings and peculiar architectonic encounters). If you are close to a building, you are not bothered so much about how it looks; it is all the more disturbing to see something ugly from a distance, since it is then possible to embrace and understand it in relation to the whole (which has led to the downfall of many building plans in Stockholm). You see how something influences something else, which you can do extremely rarely in Malmö. The whole creates powerful notions of identity, while a close look permits more fluctuations, imbalances, collisions, and contrasts. Living in Malmö for five years has affected me in the sense that my working methods and relationship with material and mass have taken a similar direction to that of the city.

The components become a whole, processes become intertwined, give rise to each other, comment on and relate to each other, at the same time as they lack a certain concern for each other. The fragment and the whole are like a mobile symbiosis. Being surrounded by a wild mulch of objects that eat and are eaten by each other in a violent, yet diplomatic act. My studioscape, exhibitionscape, and cityscape resemble one another. The boundaries between them mark a continuation. These places are apart from each other and require wandering, passages, which also bind them together. In his book on the baroque, Gilles Deleuze contends:

Painting exceeds its frame and is realized in polychrome marble sculpture; and sculpture goes beyond itself by being achieved in architecture; and, in turn, architecture discovers a frame in the façade. But the frame itself becomes detached from the inside, and establishes relations with the surroundings so as to realise architecture in city planning. From one end of the chain to the other, the painter has become an urban designer.¹⁴

Deleuze's ideas about extension and displacement resonate with me in that it all actually hangs together. Scapes are inside and outside yourself, and hence inside and outside each other. A liminological vacuum, which in turn drives me forwards, inwards, backwards, outwards. Partly so as to find boundaries and span points, and partly for the hooks to catch on and make possible what comes next.

Lefebvre writes about a building's facade being constantly directed towards the observer,¹⁵ however they approach it. Not giving a facade or a side precedence over either one thing or another. I then think of R.H. Quaytman's revelation: "The stance of the painting is the profile,"¹⁶ which can refer to the viewer's movement past a painting, painting as objects that you pass by, as something that you not only look at from in front, but also from the side, with your peripheral vision and in context with other paintings, images, and objects, as well as spaces, buildings, cities.

I see painting as a body, with many sides and limbs that carry on outside their frames, and which can be approached in various ways. In which the profile carries the picture and makes it possible for bodies to meet.

Carriers of images are found wherever there are pictures. Which give support to, and new readings of, the image. A carrier of images refers to what holds the picture up, but also to what provides the ideas. The display then becomes a natural term to work around, with its power to steer narratives through its formation. The viewers' expectations, which are rooted in their own authority, are both an inviting and an imperative mediator of information.

But so as not to get ahead of events, let me dissect the whole concept of a carrier of images.

You have a paper or an emulsion or a canvas, which in turn is held in place by a stretcher—then perhaps a frame, and thereafter a wall, a room, a building—a time, a space, and a place. A carrier of images could be a frame, stand, scaffold, table, shelf, podium, nail, glue, wall, floor, space, buildings, time, whatever. It could also be something else. The building blocks can be other than those mentioned above, and the conditions can also look different; but they always in some way border on the picture and make it accessible to the viewer. Just as the picture's surface carries colours, illusions of depth, and truths, the carrier signals a desire to be read and interpreted from outside its intrinsic function and relationship with what it carries. The carrier comments on the picture and makes the viewer aware of their gaze, body, movements, and consciousness.

“Display” constitutes a large part of the concept of a carrier of images. The concept of display, in the sense of exhibition, originates in the 1680s, but the term dates back to the late fourteenth century and derives from the Old French “*desploïr*,” which means unfold, unfasten, spread out, cause to be seen. “Play” and “ply” (layer) have the same root word. The word “apply” can thus be interpreted as the opposite of “display,” but presumably it is more a matter of an interplay between them. Showing something in a special way means both taking something away and adding something. You take something out of its context, away from its origins or truth, if you will. And you then “apply” a framework, another context and another dignity and truth, a steering of the way of looking at and relating to a work. The fact is that a display can be both visible and hidden, where the latter stems from a more subtle way of steering with, for example, walls, orderings, titles, space, and architecture as means of representation.

A display, for me, is primarily about accessibility for and movement by the viewer, who activates the work. This then activates the viewer's mind and memory, as well as an awareness of the space in which both participants are situated.

The shelf as form and concept is a central theme in my work. But first, something about the history of the bookshelf: In its beginnings it had, if possible, greater significance than the books. Around that time, approximately the first century BCE, all writing was collected into scrolls, and you could show off your collection via the exquisite handiwork of the shelf. The scrolls were hard to get at, since you only had sequential access, unlike the codex, which allowed random access—ease of reference—and which gradually began to be made around the year zero. There then came a transition phase, in which scrolls and codices coexisted. People thought this looked ugly, so they began hiding their collections. The shelves were fitted with doors and placed in rooms in the shadows. Or they were stored in chests and other containers, which no doubt made them easier to move, but harder to access.

For a long time, people stored books in every imaginable way, apart from upright with their spines facing outwards. Sometimes, a descriptive image might be painted on the fore-edge, or page end, of a closed book. A nobleman just north of Venice by the name of Odorico Pillone commissioned Titian's nephew, Cesare Vecellio, to paint the fore-edges of his books with scenes befitting their content.¹⁷ The profile thus came to stand for what is inside, in other words, the stance, the foundation, and facade. The profile has the same purpose as the frame, which is a provisional structure that makes something else possible, and is seen in many forms: displays, furniture, architecture, and so on. Etymologically, “frame” is closely related to “shelf” or “rack.” A construction that is embedded with many different meanings and purposes. The shelf is a shelter and a shell, a body and a landscape, a container of knowledge, a placeholder for thoughts, storage for past and future, a carrier of images, a show off, and a hideout. It is a bridge over thresholds—a construction for passages and moments of methods. In my work, the shelf functions as a framework, as a collector, and as an agent of display. I can use it to investigate the interplay between the carrier and the carried, that which stands, that which reclines, the resting and the tense, the visible and the hidden. The shelf, with its capacity for collecting and its fixed, yet variable properties, allows me to experiment with looser fragments, and in that way to make visible the process, to make use of (non-)decision-making as a narrative device. It is a framework and display that helps to transmit ideas, memories, images, objects, and their processes from their place in the studio out into the exhibition space.

There is a play with the hidden and the shown, raising the simple but relevant question of: Who is supposed to see this? Uplifting things by handling them casually, like they are not to meant to be seen or lack value, and yet obviously placing them there to be displayed as valuable things. Transparency and coverings are equally present. Generous by giving you many sides at once, because none of them are fully visible.

The modularity of both the shelf and my works increases their ability to function in a mobile manner. These properties are important in relation to a narrative that derives so much from mobility and placement.

On/No Side/Site

Quaytman's epiphany and Deleuze's view of the expansion of a painting in relation to and as an extension of space, as I mentioned previously, also got me to see that the motion picture is present in my thoughts about how the process, execution, and display will look. Just as I think that a film's job is not just to present pictures but also to envelop them within a world, I also want to transpose these ideals to a mobile viewer instead. The reiteration of memory is present in relation to my three-dimensional stills—the spectator becomes a participant and decides how to wheel the reel.

Accessibility should be readable both sequentially and at random and also be seen as a coherent function and as individual proposals. The viewer should be able to follow things with their gaze, body, and thoughts, at the same time as being able to make leaps, go close to, or take things in at a distance. The viewer edits scenes in which the eye and mind cut and paste. Via the viewer my assemblages of moments can serve as montages. In the exhibition context, with the viewer's movements in mind, we can view the space and its contents as an arcade, as a passage and a universe that describes the world outside, about which Walter Benjamin writes in *The Arcades Project*. In a similar way, I can view my own exhibition as a world that you pass, and in which your movements and gaze flâneur around, directed, but without having a specific goal. In this *die Passage* (German for "arcade"), the entrance and exit are undefined and accessible from multiple directions. It should be an inviting and, at the same time, an imposing place. Inviting in the sense that there is a desire on my part to break down hierarchies, between objects and between viewer and object, and a desire to make the process visible, to introduce a transparency with regard to decisions and desires. Imposing so that the viewer is steered by the positioning of the artwork, its accessibility and obstinacy. The numerous details and the movement around the whole thing demand attention, effort, and time. In each thing there is memory and a design. Narratives of their origins and genesis run all over the place. A visual thinking that you can survey from above, but not come to land on. By steering the gaze, I hope I can question the way we look.

Reminders of the context, the process, the place, and the way a work is presented—the type of display used—are the premises that I have at my disposal for guiding the viewer's experience and reading, and to increase their feeling of self-determination and positioning. They are the tools that I can use and play with, while the viewer's memory, experience, feelings, and way of thinking are their own. But that does not stop me musing over these personal entry routes that people presumably have when they view my work, and I have to say that I try to confront the recipient with thinking about the carrying of images—the compression and combination of tenses—in relation to their own body, gaze, and absorption into space.

In reading Benjamin's vast, never-to-be-finished collection of texts (gathered material in the form of quotes and thoughts), I felt I had found a companion in the idea of creating a world to enter, where thinking, reading, wandering are remade constructions, which all are built on fragments. Pieces consisting of objects you come across, experiences sucked out of the gaze of the passer-by, which are put together in an ongoing hunt for the other. The merger is of the colliding kind, creating gaps and breaks of thoughts, and subsequently becoming glued and chained in the eyes and minds of the spectator and me, and our will to make sense of it all.

Atside

Maurice Merleau-Ponty talks about space as being what steers the viewer and the painter back to themselves. He explains: "I do not see [space] according to its exterior envelope; I live it from the inside; I am immersed in it. After all, the world is all around me, not in front of me."¹⁸ The body is both born out of space and functions as the core around which all space expands. Its boundaries, which are everywhere on all levels, are so crucial, but never entirely easy to see or to be sure of. Where does the one end and the other begin? This question can be asked about places, mass, space, and time, and can to some extent be answered by our bodies, our vision, and our minds.

The boundary can be a barrier to get over, under, past—a continuation. It can be something you bounce off of, are embraced by, fall over, or are mirrored in. It can be clearly visible or hard to decipher or, every so often, both alternatives can be present: the clear, but diffuse nature of boundaries. In his essay "Horizonlessness," the curator and philosopher Michael Newman writes that limits mark an ending or, more correctly, a non-continuation, whereas "the boundary by contrast, is always constituted in relation to a beyond."¹⁹ Without boundaries there are no continuations. The philosopher Edward S. Casey describes this in terms of two extremes.²⁰ First there is the "Salient Edge," which is a perceptually obvious, determined termination (window frame, contours), and on the opposite side we have the "Subtle Edge," which is something more uncertain. Is there a continuation or is it a termination? It can be folds in clothing or the waves that brought me the drift paint. There is uncertainty about the beginning and the end, where it starts and stops. We are mostly in between these extremes. They are clear, but not too far apart. There is a fading, because without fading towards the horizon there would be no depth.

Edges are spatial, temporal, placial, and we always exist on one side or the other. Buildings, paintings, books—their edges are the profile, which in turn is the stance, but also the facade, frame, reverse side, outside, inside. Tenses are compressed, the past gives us the future, and the present is then; places go to other places, objects merge or are picked apart.

Without-Within

With this in my baggage, I find myself in the studio again and see four walls and four corners—different sorts of solutions and blockages, drawings of boundaries and continuations. I see that the component parts of the space (which constitute my material) can be readymades, but also unreadymades, readymades (which have not left the studio), and even alreadyuseds (which have already been used outside the studio). It is a process of unearthing, so that time is a factor in which everything moves between its four corners and changes character; the physical transformation and transposition is another factor. In these mutual encounters new works arise, vanish, and are resurrected.



Carriers, 2016. Mixed materials. Dimensions variable. Installation detail from *Drifting Diplomats*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Johan Lundqwist

In “Edges and the In-Between,”²¹ Casey writes about how we navigate between the edges, referring to the limits of a painting surface, and contends that the frame (the edges) gives an energy that is spatial, temporal, and placial. He goes on to maintain that Piet Mondrian’s bands of colour, which the artist himself said led into infinite space, could be better formulated as reaching into a place of indefinite extent. There are thus several purposes of boundaries, all of which are something we can relate to. Daniel Buren talks about the studio as the *first* frame, but I would say that it is *a* frame (albeit a key one for me) among others. That is, my processes are too rhizomatic to permit a ranking in order of preference. The drawing of boundaries is, however, important, especially if, like me, you are extremely fuzzy in the contours. I actually have no natural stopping point. I function under the continuation of ramification. The only framework I have in the work is the studio, and within these walls nothing is definite, whether it be tempo, focus, or allocation of time and mass.

Beyond

I contemplate *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818) by Caspar David Friedrich. I wonder how it is possible that the horizon with its spirit of the future, and the mountains with their inbuilt nostalgia, and the sky with its timelessness can be reconciled in one and the same picture. There is also the dust that conceals and reveals, dissolves horizons and mountains, and fuses heaven and earth, while in the middle and yet outside stands the wanderer with the world and time in front of his back.²² Under the sky, out of the frame, over the threshold, into the studio.

I also think of Gustave Courbet and his *The Artist’s Studio* (1854–55)²³ when I stand there in the middle of my own studio, like the wanderer in the midst of time. Perpetually between what has been and what will be. Methods of constant continuity and the studio as a continuum and a contour. Inside, outside, then, and now. Courbet had a strong political agenda and a clear position when he painted into his work seven years of the life around him. People who had

influence over him or his day. It is an assertion of identity and a battle waged for the artist's freedom. The symbols surround him where he sits and paints, remembering the landscape of his childhood from his current position, inside the painting that he portrays from the outside. A positioning and clarification of his place, in front of, behind, inside, and outside, but also in the middle. In the midst of time, space, and role. Painting is "the continuation of everything about which still not enough has been said."²⁴ I want to go

there, too—and will make a contribution, with detours through a series of different approaches, which require patience, restlessness, and a bit of associative ability. An accumulation occurring through the landscape, the studio, and the exhibition space. It is ongoing, slightly paranoid. I connect and disconnect, tear apart and mend. Things swell and get swallowed. This is all narrowed down by the ramification that takes place continuously. Hook on, hook off, no hooks. Resting by doing.



De—parted, 2016. Oil on canvas. Dimensions variable. Johan Lundquist

There is within me a strong urge to investigate what we humans have in common: our concept of time, our perception, our bodies, our boundaries, our extensions and continuations. This effort has become even greater now that I can witness my beloved child's clear steps in these areas. At the same time as my own place has been shifted and extended, even less can be concentrated in my being and my perception.

My position may have been transposed and duplicated, but I am still there in the middle—surrounded by everything, alongside the drifting diplomats on their quest for an embassy to hang onto. The facades will always be turned towards me, and I to them, as I wander over thresholds, through time and landscapes—simply pretending to pilot or to be piloted in a never-ending cycle.

- 1 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader—Philosophy and Painting*, ed. Galen A. Johnson, trans. Michael B. Smith (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 133.
- 2 Daniel Buren, "The Function of the Studio," *October*, no. 10 (Autumn 1979): 51–58.
- 3 Stan Brakhage, "Metaphors on Vision," *Film Culture*, no. 30 (Fall 1963): 7.
- 4 "Renoir's residues" are the pieces of paintings that Pierre-Auguste Renoir cut off if the intended buyer could not pay enough. Whether or not this is true, history does not say.
- 5 Joshua Simon, "Neo-Materialism, Part Two: The Unreadymade," *e-flux journal*, no. 23 (March 2011): <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/neo-materialism-part-two-the-unreadymade/>.
- 6 Buren, "The Function of the Studio," 53–54.
- 7 Brian O'Doherty, *Studio and Cube: On the Relationship between Where Art Is Made and Where Art Is Displayed* (New York: A Buell Center/FORuM Project, 2008), 5.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 18
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 18.
- 12 *Nahoj Daily* (2013) and *Nahoj Weekly* (2015), available at <http://nahojdaily.tumblr.com/> and <http://nahojweekly.tumblr.com/>.
- 13 Per Svensson, *Malmö: Världens Svenskaste Stad: En Oauktoriserad Biografi* (Stockholm: Weyler, 2011).
- 14 Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 141.
- 15 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 125.
- 16 R.H. Quaytman, interview by Steel Stillman, *Art in America*, June 1, 2010, <http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazine/rh-quaytman/>.
- 17 Francesca Mari, "Shelf-Conscious," *Paris Review*, December 27, 2012, <http://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2012/12/27/shelf-conscious/>.
- 18 Merleau-Ponty, *Eye and Mind*, 309
- 19 Michael Newman, "Horizonlessness," in *Terra Incognita*, exhibition catalogue (Bremen: Neues Museum Weserburg; Heidelberg: Edition Braus, 1998), 41.
- 20 Edward S. Casey, "Edge(s) of Landscape: A Study in Limnology," in *The Place of Landscape: Concepts, Contexts, Studies*, ed. Jeff Malpas (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 91–108.
- 21 Edward S. Casey, "Edges and the In-Between," *PhaenEx: Journal of Existential and Phenomenological Theory and Culture* 3, no. 2 (2008): 3.
- 22 If we overlook the high-flown ideals and romanticisation of masculine perfection, there is in the painting a gaze that cuts through boundaries such as time and space. Partly as a viewer, partly for the man in the picture, but also for Friedrich, who possibly looked longingly over the sea, through an invisible but noticeable boundary (indeed even today), the native land he considered himself to belong to.
- 23 The work's full title is *The Painter's Studio: A real allegory summing up seven years of my artistic and moral life*.
- 24 Terry R. Myers, "What Has Already Been Said about Painting Is Still Not Enough," in *Painting*, ed. Terry R. Myers, Documents of Contemporary Art (London: Whitechapel; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 19.

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Almodôvar Mirror-Site, 2016. Double 35 mm slide projection, sound, text. Dimensions variable. Henrique Pavão



Almodóvar Mirror-Site, 2016. Double 35 mm slide projection, sound, text. Dimensions variable. Installation view from *Fallen Between Cracks*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Henrique Pavão

Fallen Between Cracks

Even a Rusty Pipe Without a Function Has a Twin Brother

“The mirror itself is not subject to duration, because it is an ongoing abstraction that is always available and timeless. The reflections on the other hand are fleeting instances that evade measure. Space is the remains, or corpse, of time. It has dimensions. ‘Objects’ are ‘sham space’, the excrement of thought and language. Once you start seeing objects in a positive or negative way you are on the road to derangement.”

—Robert Smithson¹

Certainly you have found yourself in the backseat being driven through a repetitive landscape. Did you ever try to change it by drawing or writing on top of it? I want you to stay in this seat, look through the window, and read the words on the humid glass.

*“From Overton, NV follow Mormon Mesa Road to the top of the mesa eastward. As you come to the top of the mesa, you will pass a cattle guard. Continue east across the mesa for 2.7 miles. Do not leave the mesa. Just before you come to a second cattle guard at the east edge of the mesa, there will be a less-traveled road/path that extends along the rim of the mesa. Turn left onto this rim trail and follow it north 1.3 miles.”*²

The *Double Negative* is an earthwork conceived by Michael Heizer and has existed in a remote area of the Nevada desert since 1969.

This intervention is almost invisible, though it has a lot of presence. It consists of two duplicated slots, each forty feet deep and a hundred feet long, excavated into the tops of two mesas. Situated right in front of each other, these elevations are divided by a negative space, a deep ravine in which one cannot stand.

By occupying one of the slots and looking across this negative space, we can form a picture of the space in which we stand, resulting in an absolute perception of the site.

Last August I was in a rush between Algarve and Lisbon. My “in-betweenness” didn’t really allow any thoughts, but while pressing the trigger of the gas nozzle, I had the strange feeling of being in the same place not so long ago—though something was wrong with the placement of things. It seemed everything was flipped.

In front of me vivid colours invaded the kiosk’s mechanical framing, hiding its ugliness. Behind, weekenders and truck drivers stretched and

scratched their balls while resting their vehicles. I was surrounded by starved machinery, whose food liquidised on behalf of mad anxiety.

I turned my head towards the highway, and through the rush-hour rain of headlights I noticed the same vivid colours. I could also see the facade of the metallic covering above my head, and the number of gas pumps was the same.

What I was experiencing made me suspect the existence of a mirror site, but such qualities could never be proved without having access to both at the same time. I was in a need of another person, a mirrored me that could confirm those similarities.

If one sees a mirror as an ongoing abstraction and a reflection as a glance of this abstraction, what would happen if the mirror became the reflection itself? What would happen between two mirrors placed exactly opposite each other?

If my suspicion was right, my location allowed me not only a full understanding of my spatial position, but also the feeling of time control. I was travelling backwards in a place where present and past faced and repelled each other. The image of my location was on the site I had been at three days ago on my way to the south, and the place I stood would be the place reflecting my image on my next trip.

Located in a place of “inversions without end upon other men’s journeys,”³ roadside stations are considered by most people to be “junkspaces” or “non-places.” According to the architect Rem Koolhaas, “junkspace makes you uncertain where you are, obscures where you go, undoes where you were”⁴ and it “cannot be remembered.”⁵ I think these places are in fact stripped of any meanings, carrying a single function: the ironic goal of linking meanings. Still, they can be remembered. I see junkspace as a temporary condition; it only exists when we are in its presence. In other words, junkspace is an “unlingering” position.

The location of one's body is irrelevant; it melts with the site, becoming part of it. The desire of reaching the known blurs the idea of perception, and real time is temporarily put aside. But once one leaves it, the body splits from the site and junkspace vanishes. The arrival to the known will give meaning to the place one went through to get there. In other words, I only see Koolhaas's idea of junkspace as being possible if one never gets out of it. Let's have as an example: Robert Maitland, a fictitious character from J.G. Ballard's 1974 novel *Concrete Island*.

After a dramatic accident that makes his car break through the metal barriers of a highway, Maitland finds himself in between motorways, viaducts, and headlights. He is put through many trials as he brings his injured body up above the embankments, and then comes to realize there is no way to communicate with the tangible world. He lies on an island, invisible to the rush-hour drivers, blinded and possessed by their destinations. Despite their blindness, this moment will have a meaning when they arrive to their homes, offices, and hotels. The same would never happen for Maitland.

*"The island was sealed off from the world around it by the high embankments on two sides and the wire mesh fence on its third."*⁶

During my research journey, I felt like Robert Maitland. My hunt implied travelling nowhere, and remaining in the junkspace.

Two hundred and forty kilometres of asphalt make up the A2, the second most used highway in Portugal. Every forty kilometres there are two service stations sited directly opposite each other, with the exception of the first, which is unpaired.

To succeed in our hunt, we needed to find a pair of stations with the exact same qualities.

Lisboa
 Seixal
 Palmela–Palmela
 Acláçer do Sal–Alcáçer do Sal
 A2 Grândola–Grândola
 Aljustrel–Aljustrel
 Almodôvar–Almodôvar
 Algarve



Almodôvar Mirror-Site, 2016. Double 35 mm slide projection, sound, text. Dimensions variable. Installation view from *Fallen Between Cracks*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Henrique Pavão

We started our enantiomorphic journey from Lisbon. I was left alone at the west-side station. My mission was to catalogue the physical qualities of every present object, communicating them to my east-side stand-in.

We were divided by six lanes of intense car traffic. A place where human presence is only allowed inside vehicles.

Even though we were separated by a thirty-minute ride, we were still able to say “hi” to each other by lifting our arms.

Palmela was the first pair analyzed, located at kilometre 31. This one was in fact not so ugly. Its pale orange structure wrapped around a glass-encased cafeteria, which I read would be demolished and replaced, probably by a standardised colourful building more faithful to its function.

The same structure was confirmed on the east side. The gas pumps also had exactly the same qualities, and even the parking lot had room for the same number of cars to rest. However, the carwash garage proved to exist only on my side—and difference meant departure.

Similarities were also missing at the next four roadside stations. What I assumed to be reflected revealed itself to be defected.

*“You can only see the differences between the objects when they are close together, because they are sometimes very subtle.”*⁷

All phone calls had been recorded; a catalogue of similarities and differences was the soundtrack for our journey to the last option. The horizon was constantly being crossed by our wheels, leaving hopeless tracks on the wet pavement. The clock revealed we were in junkspace for almost ten hours—perceived as forty.

With my head submersed in this galactic mode of time perception, ancient myths started to invade my senses, driving me into a state of pessimistic delirium. As I looked in the rear-view mirror, I saw Robert Smithson as my reflection reading *The Gods of Mexico* in the backseat. He read aloud the chapter about the journey of Quetzalcoatl,⁸ the morning star of Venus, towards Tlapallan, where he would find the sun and resurrect his image. Smithson was particularly interested in the episode of Uceutlatitlan, referenced in his ninth mirror displacement in the Yucatan.⁹ Quetzalcoatl rested near a tree, looked to his obsidian mirror, and said, “Now I become aged,” and “suddenly he seized stones from the path and threw them against the unlucky tree. For many years thereafter the stones remained encrusted in the ancient tree.”¹⁰ According to Smithson, “if one wished to be ingenious enough to erase time one requires mirrors, not rocks.”¹¹ Smithson told me about Quetzalcoatl’s journey as a failed search for an enantiomorph half, a “mirror looking for its reflection but never quite finding it.”¹²

Smithson and Quetzal crossed my path, as evil magicians in the old times, but I was lucid enough to refuse their *teometl*.¹³ If I believed in Aztec gods, I

would have turned around and given up, but I had to find the other half of my Quetzalcoatl.

As the last of the in-betweeners, located on kilometre 187, Almodôvar’s service station was, for that reason, the least appealing stop for the drivers—by this time, most of the creatures were so melted with the junkspace that they didn’t even consider stopping. After all, they only had a couple of spins left in their tyres to reach their wonders. We started our examination of the empty service station around 7 pm.

A small house a couple of metres before the gas station, whose function remains unknown, was the first added to the catalogue; the only apparent difference was a crack on the wall of the west facade, something that we agreed was irrelevant—the weight of time in a timeless location will not affect reflections. Gas pumps, kiosk, gigantic green brushes in the carwash garage, the garage itself, cafeteria, picnic area, flags, poles, benches, sculptures (if they can be considered such), parking lines, car parks, metallic coverings, playgrounds, fire hydrants, trashcans, grass, blue, red, yellow, traffic signs, showers, and neon signs. All was submitted to a meticulous dissection, and the same qualities were evidenced everywhere.

From Lisbon, take Av. Da Liberdade, at the roundabout take the second exit onto R. Joaquim António de Aguiar heading to A2/A5-Cascais, continue onto Av. Eng Duarte Pacheco, take the exit toward Setúbal/Almada, merge onto IP7, continue on to A2/IP7, stay on the left at the fork to continue on A2/E1, follow signs for Algarve/Alcácer, take the exit, and the destination will be on your left.

These are the directions to find Almodôvar’s mirror site, a place where even a rusty pipe without a function has a twin, a random piece of wire mesh covers the exact same windows, and the storks are cautious enough to make nests on the same electricity poles.

When pointing out such phenomena, one becomes aware of a tradition, the same Dan Graham fell into when he made the photo essay *Homes for America* (1966–67) or as when the French invented their ordered and geometrical gardens, later distorted by the English with their anti-formal ones. The artist Cyprien Gaillard made a similar intervention with other impetuses in his early works, where we could see the French gardens being invaded and partially ruined by big clouds made by expired fire extinguishers.¹⁴ Alongside this series of interventions, Gaillard presented a small book in which documents of early earthworks were placed side by side with images of burned garbage cans and other acts of vandalism. He believes that “the closest we could get to a *Spiral Jetty* or a *Double Negative* is by acts of vandalism in the landscape.”¹⁵

I am interested by Gaillard’s idea of creating a manual for a contemporary way of making land art; still, I disagree with charging vandalism with





Romantic Ruins and Ruins In Reverse, 2016. Asphalt, plaster. Dimensions variable. Installation view from *Fallen Between Cracks*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Henrique Pavão

such a role. One doesn't need to burn a garbage can or break a park bench to change the landscape. Sometimes underlining the repetitive aspects of what seems a boring landscape is as distortive and interventionist as creating a line by walking or pouring tonnes of asphalt into a Roman quarry.

*"It was a dark night and there were no lights or shoulder markers, lines, railings or anything at all except the dark pavement moving through the landscape of the flats, rimmed by hills in the distance, but punctuated by stacks, towers, fumes and colored lights."*¹⁶

The return was tough and the night was dark. Although a meaning had been given to a pair of charmless service stations, nothing was reached and we didn't get out of the junkspace. It was like travelling on

an unfinished highway: there was no destination, just a departure that became the destination itself.

As we approached the reversed end, the rain hit the car's metallic plates, drumming above our heads and washing the windows clean. The landscape is not repetitive anymore; you can get out of the car.

I have never experienced the *Spiral Jetty* (1970), but somehow I felt close to it. I returned to Lisbon in the same way I would return to the spiral's tail.

*"We have found a strange footprint on the shores of the unknown. We have devised profound theories, one after another, to account for its origin. At last, we have succeeded in constructing the creature that made the footprint."*¹⁷



Romantic Ruins and Ruins In Reverse, 2016. Asphalt, plaster. Dimensions variable. Installation view from *Fallen Between Cracks*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Henrique Pavão

Boats in Bottles

“At other times, at other angles, it also has the look of a tank or the carcass of an animal or an exoskeleton left by an errant creature now extinct. Whichever way, it is at odds to its function, forgotten by its generation and abandoned by its time.”

—Tacita Dean¹⁸

It hides there, waiting for its death. Its threshold defines a gap between two old and humid platforms, reflecting each other in a tranquil choreography—an effortless dance conducted by the erratic water’s course, or the breath of a somnambulant state.

The only part above sea is its injured nose, and it moves slowly, like a shark hunting for its night meal. Its restless spine vanishes into darkness, feeding small white barnacles surrounded by seaweed, scratches, and other signs of its unknown world.

I stood next to it, in a waltz with the wooden platforms, dissecting the corpse with my camera in an archaeological search for a history repelled by obsidian waters.

It could have once been the stage of a fraudulent voyage, or the house of a lost sailor, like Donald Crowhurst,¹⁹ who vanished into the grey mass of the ocean, leaving adrift his misbegotten boat. Is he dead or alive? Well, the artist Tacita Dean provides us with an incessant search for the man and his unsolved story in a series of films and texts. She speculates the sailor “jumped overboard just a few hundred miles away from the coast of Britain.”²⁰ In the film *Disappearance at Sea* (1996), one can see only a gap of light in darkness, a point between land and sea, and a tireless spinning over the same blue line that is never crossed by anyone in a lucid state of mind. The sailor was never found. On the other hand, his boat, the *Teignmouth Electron*, rests silently on the sands of Cayman Brac, protected and forgotten like a boat in a bottle.

Driven by this mystery, Dean examined the remnant with the eyes of a detective and the tools of an archaeologist. Hidden in one of the deteriorated compartments she found a sealed package of boatman’s flares. They were later stored in a film can and brought back to England, completing their cycle. Dean thought they would be safe in the National Maritime Museum; instead, they were regarded as a threat and destroyed by a bomb squad.

Her personal involvement in such unsolved archival situations delivers the illusion of a solution, even though they always remain incomplete.

The *Teignmouth Electron*, as many other remnants in her work, “functioned as a possible portal between an unfinished past and a reopened future.”²¹ It is a relic that, although very promising at the time of its execution, lies neglected, and its story remains unspoken because the past always stays silent, and never wants to be disturbed.

Like Tacita Dean, my encounter with the remnant woke up a lost story, one that echoes eternally in my mind, like the sound of a key ring falling down a never-ending shaft.

It was a small apartment that was turned into a lonesome boat, a box protected and blended by demolition wood.

A circle of light hit the staircase, piercing a window located too high for one to see more than a path of different skies projected on each step.

I used to sleep in a very small room cramped to the top with wooden shelves full of books, piles of drawings, and other memories of our journey. Not much space surrounded the objects. I imagine it was hard for them to breathe.

The centre of the boat was the living room due to the light, framed by a massive window making a very pure connection with an outside world. These six glass plates, delineated by green metallic contours, worked as a big clock, which showed me, year after year, that the land was coming. Every time I looked at it, there was a small part of the ocean being materialised, like icebergs trying to hit my ship.

After fourteen years this day arrived. An army of frozen rocks lit the dark ocean and kicked through the glass of my big window with its reflections. On that day I had to leave. The exit door was crossed in a different way. By that time I felt I was leaving something behind, something I would never experience again.

My ship was gone, drowned in an ocean lit by the ice of the future.

Three years after the boat capsized, I went back there to revive an unfinished past.

My big window had no light coming through, except the one reflected by the icebergs that made us leave. Those which remained frozen right before the hit, leaving a five metre gap, occupied by compressed, depressed air and a few drunken birds.

There was no contact with an outside world; the boathouse was surrounded by huge ice forms reflecting our own image, the image of a dear past, isolating us from any kind of aspirations. But what is the past if one cannot have a future? Then it becomes the present, and will remain like that forever.

With the absence of objects the space became heavier, and it seemed like the materials had found the right environment for deterioration.

Rottenness started to pop out from the now paled wood plates of the wall; the breath of emptiness swallowed their veins, like a stroke in an old junkie’s heart.

I couldn’t sleep that night; my wakeful dreams were illustrated by sadness and disappointment. The next morning, I crossed the exit door, but this time leaving nothing behind, just bringing in my backpack, despair, and regret.

*Burying things always makes us cherish them more. To dig them out could be a really dangerous move.*²²

The silence inside the plywood walls of my studio gave me permission to write without obstacles. Now the words started to fill up the gap, becoming objects crossing my path. I think it is time to break a hole and let them flow inside the room. I see my studio as a monument to what's gone, almost like a mausoleum.

If I look around, I have nothing but traces or remnants of works whose existences have vanished. Photographs, maquettes, drawings, and writings fill the walls, as if honouring their living period.

My installation *Transform the Space Using the Space* (2013) was conceived to live in the attic of an old building in the centre of Lisbon, in an area that was entirely rebuilt in 1755 after an unmerciful earthquake. Every cardboard layer corresponded to a fraction of time and space of that specific room. I spent more than a year collecting the material and it took a summer to build. The piece lived in there for three weeks. The moment of deinstallation was a moment of destruction; every single layer of space and time was given back to the place it was found. A shower of cardboard landed on the warm stones of the street, through the window of the place where the work was born and took its last breath.

I used to use site-specificity as camouflage, making references to works such as Robert Barry's or the troubled episode faced by Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* (1981),²³ but, frankly, many theories have been elaborated around this idea, and I've lost track of its meaning. I could only say that I used site-specificity as an excuse for destruction.

Simon Starling's *Autoxylopyrocycloboros* (2006) is yet another work that involved a remnant and a recovering. Starling brought up a small boat that had been sunk in Scotland's Loch Long. The wooden cadaver was restored and upgraded with a steam-power stack. Its resurrection was completed by a self-destructive trip, with Starling returning its burned fragments with "dignity"²⁴ to the bottom of the lake. It was a cyclical journey, where progression implied destruction. One could now start a discussion about how every moving process leads to destruction. Robert Smithson once said, during a discussion with Dennis Oppenheim and Michael Heizer, that his work is "already destroyed. It's a slow process of destruction. The world is slowly destroying itself. The catastrophe comes suddenly, but slowly."²⁵ The slow movement of a pebble over two million years was enough action for him. I am moreover attracted by the idea of accelerating these processes. In this sense, *Autoxylopyrocycloboros* is an allusion to my artistic process, and I suspect Walter Benjamin would have seen me as a destructive character.

"The destructive character sees nothing permanent. But for this very reason he sees ways everywhere. Where others encounter walls or mountains, there, too,

*he sees a way. But because he sees a way everywhere, he always stands at a crossroads. No moment can know what the next will bring. What exists he reduces to rubble—not for the sake of the rubble, but for that of the way leading through it."*²⁶

I am interested in creating things that are meant to be destroyed, so I can appreciate every moment of conceiving, be proud to see them standing, and miss them after they fall. It is this nostalgia that makes the work awake—we always care more for what we cannot access; lost moments and objects are unquestionably more powerful. Their absence draws a path leading to an emptiness that needs to be filled. It is a mode of travel where clean footprints are left behind by the irreversibility of one's steps, driven by the need of recovering.

The collapsing of a work means the rising of the next one, forcing me to move in between them. They are not transportable; the mobility of the artist exists on behalf of the one of the works.

As I walk through the ruins of my past, I see a future being built out of the same mental cinders. It strikes me how much we can destroy and build just by travelling. This liminal act is where creation takes place. It is alongside this travel that interment comes into play; it is also when seeds are thrown through the window of a car and left alone on a fertile ground for something to grow. On the other hand, one should be wary when applying mobility to artworks—it can be a dangerous act. Excessive nomadism can turn artworks into common objects. I doubt if one moves around a sculpture, without ever losing its presence, that successive failed recreations wouldn't end in disappointment.

Documents are, according to this train of thought, a safer and fairer way of transportation. To document is to put boats in bottles. The work stays inside, inaccessible as a frozen glance of what once lived. It is its absence that counts.

Photography, as a documentary approach, is simultaneously a kick and a hug to nostalgia. It is not a way of recovering presence, but a reminder of an absence. My relation with the camera when shooting a work is not different from the one I have when photographing a site. For this reason there is a tendency to document objects or sites with the same irreversible, non-functional, and ephemeral qualities. To find these qualities one sometimes has to tear down walls, break through ceilings, or even blow out windows. Such objects are normally concealed from our conventional patterns of existence, where they rest unprotected and exposed to emptiness. There, there is always a fraction being consumed by the absence of men's hands, because the hands of man delay space's intentions upon objects, postponing their natural deterioration.

On the outskirts of Malmö I found a forgotten structure drowned in a massive inverted cupola. A building whose functionality allowed for the construction of its adjacent architecture. The luxury



Unfinished Past, 2016. HD video, sound. 09:53 min. Installation view from *Fallen Between Cracks*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Henrique Pavão

condominiums are perpetually doomed to face onto a quarry with one hundred and eighty-eight hackers, whose negativity functions as a reminder of their very foundations.

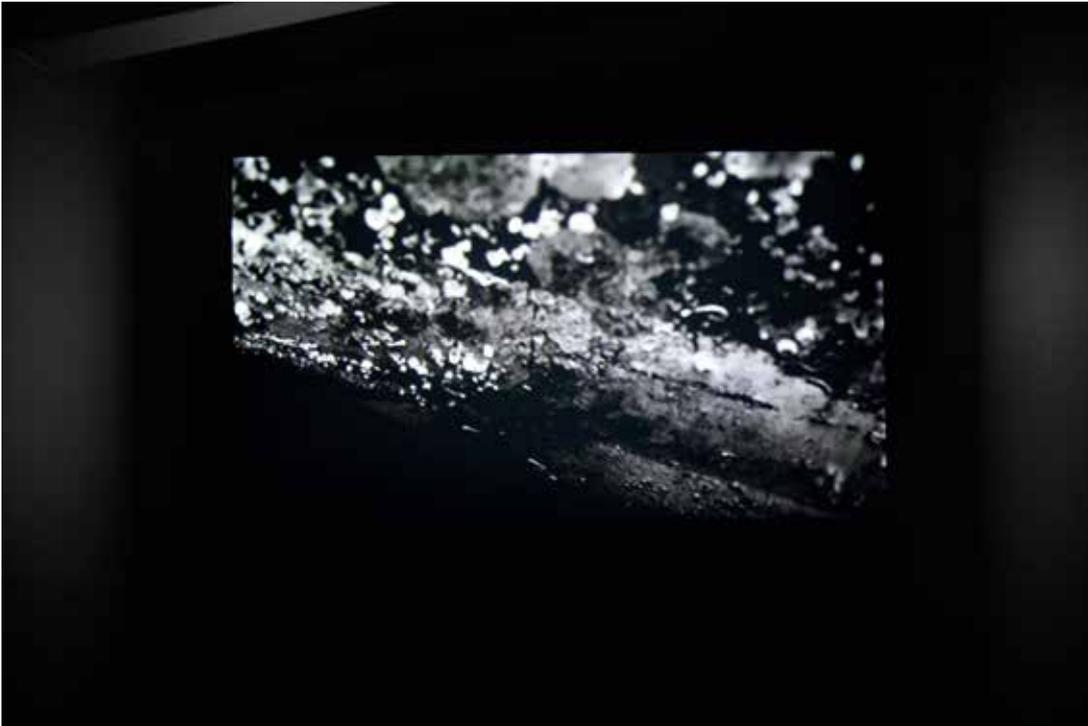
The forgotten building had been, over the course of its decay, stripped of its functionalities, existing only as a way to link the top of the quarry to the bottom. The mode of access to this space was at first not visible. Its materials had rotted in a specific way so as to continue on their sleepy path without being disturbed. The only entrance was through a thick door that is slightly bent on its bottom, leaving enough of a gap to crawl through and reach a deep corridor. An oversized kaleidoscope where everything was out of place. Objects faced and repelled each other on an immensity of angles, creating a sort of permanent vertigo that was emphasised by a gridded view of a dusty dungeon under my feet.

The way light pierced the ripped walls twisted the notion of inside and outside. It was like being in one of those Gordon Matta-Clark interventions, where perception implied a careful choreography. On the same walls, crooked ladders pointed out a plenitude of directions, distorting my knowledge of real time.

As I cross a rusty bridge, I hear the noise of a constant dripping, like a countdown to complete the last level of a very hard video game. Rocks bluster through the steep canyon. Every step I take unshackles incandescent voices demanding that I go away, while thin strips of sun try to stop my progression like machine gun shots. I cannot find out where I am, only where I have been; the only certainty is that I am vulnerable and ruled by a place that was not designed for men's existence.

The dripping noise is louder, the moaning sculpture produces chaotic and painful sound waves, objects start to fall, leaving sparkling scars on the steel walls. The weight of space becomes unbearable and the whole structure starts to collapse. A rain of rust covers my senses, I lose my footing, the metallic grid becomes wider and wider. A steel quake releases a dusty dark-brown cloud that engulfs the corridor, embedding me in darkness. The dripping noise is silent, and for 3.77 seconds, my body is falling between cracks.

Para a Madalena, uma ausência que nunca será preenchida.



Unfinished Past, 2016. HD video, sound. 09:53 min. Installation view from *Fallen Between Cracks*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Henrique Pavão

- 1 Robert Smithson, "Incidents of Mirror-Travel in the Yucatan," in *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, ed. Nancy Holt (New York: New York University Press, 1979), 96. Originally published in Artforum, September 1969.
- 2 "Double Negative (artwork)," *Wikipedia*, last modified October 31, 2015, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Double_Negative_\(artwork\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Double_Negative_(artwork)).
- 3 Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian or the Evening Redness in the West* (London: Picador, 1989), 121.
- 4 Rem Koolhaas, "Junkspace," *October*, no. 100 (2002): 182.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 177.
- 6 J.G. Ballard, *Concrete Island* (London: Fourth State, 2011), 13.
- 7 Hilla Becher, quoted in James Lingwood, "The Weight of Time," in Bernd Becher, Hilla Becher, and Robert Smithson, *Field Trips* (Porto: Museu Serralves, 2002), 73.
- 8 Among the Aztecs, the feathered serpent Quetzalcoatl carried the meaning of the "most precious twin," since *Quetzal* was loosely used as a term for precious and beautiful things, and *coatl* means twin
- 9 See Smithson, "Incidents of Mirror-Travel in the Yucatan."
- 10 C.A. Burland, "The Mystery of Quetzalcoatl," in *The Gods of Mexico* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1967), 158.
- 11 Smithson, "Incidents of Mirror-Travel in the Yucatan," 103.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 102.
- 13 *Teomtl* is the white wine made from maguey sap that was given to Quetzalcoatl in order to trouble his journey. The same black medicine, offered by Tezcatlipoca, was also what distorted his perception and made him leave Tollan.
- 14 Cyprien Gaillard, *Real Remnants of Fictive Wars*, 2010.
- 15 Cyprien Gaillard, interview by Hans Ulrich Obrist, Vimeo video, 55:00, posted by Based in Berlin, July 18, 2011, <https://vimeo.com/26595859/>.
- 16 Tony Smith, "Conversations with Samuel Wagstraff Jr.," in *Theories And Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*, ed. Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 149.
- 17 Robert Smithson, "The Spiral Jetty," in *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, 113.
- 18 Tacita Dean, "Teignmouth Electron," in *Tacita Dean: Selected Writings, 1992–2011* (Vienna: Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig; Göttingen: Steidl, 2011), 38.
- 19 Donald Crowhurst disappeared at sea in 1964 while competing in the Sunday Times Golden Globe Race. It was later found out that he never left the Atlantic. Crowhurst broke off radio contact and manipulated his log entries, humbugging the race officials that positioned him in the lead. Misplaced in time, overwhelmed in space, and ashamed of his falsity, Crowhurst abandoned his boat.
- 20 Tacita Dean, "Once Upon a Different Sort of Time: The Story of Donald Crowhurst," in *Tacita Dean*, 18.
- 21 Hal Foster, "Archival," in *Bad New Days: Art, Criticism, Emergency* (London: Verso, 2015), 46.
- 22 Transcript from my work *Unfinished Past*, 2016, HD video, 9:23 min.
- 23 Robert Barry said in a 1969 interview that each of his wire installations was "made to suit the place in which it was installed. They cannot be moved without being destroyed." The same idea was intensified by Richard Serra fifteen years later, in a letter to the director of the Art-in-Architecture Program about his 120-foot COR-TEN steel sculpture Tilted Arc (1981), designed for the Federal Plaza in New York City: "It is a site-specific work and as such not to be relocated. To remove the work is to destroy the work."
- 24 The word "dignity" was used because it was the name of the boat, the only trace of its past, and a way to compliment such artistic greatness.
- 25 Robert Smithson, "Discussions with Heizer, Oppenheim, Smithson," in *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, 177.
- 26 Walter Benjamin, "The Destructive Character," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 2, part 2, 1931–1934, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 541–43.

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Launch between rows, 2016. Tape and HD video and synced foley sound from *Bash to bash balestra* (fencing match filmed in the gallery's corridor, the width of which measures exactly the same as that of a fencing piste). 02:42 min. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Marie Raffn



Bash to bash balestra, 2016. HD foley sound video on monitors: knitting needles and the artist performing the feet of each fencer. 02:42 min. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Marie Raffn

*Seemingly so contained
 like it's leaking but
 lacking a crack
 octave
 put a purl in it
 and another
 little less
 parry
 contre
 sixte sticka stick a stack
 bash to bash balestra
 launch
 between rows
 AND WATCH IT RIP*

For a long time, I went to bed early. But not the other day. And when I finally fell asleep, it was to Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. When I woke up, I realised I had dreamed that I had restructured his paragraphs on language-games. I had translated his book into a phonetic script so that the book's typography was also changed. At the end of the dream, the book was leafed through, and each page was illuminated by sunlight and subsequently developed, in much the same manner as an analogue photograph that comes forth inside a darkroom. In one way or another, it came to be called ['pʌzl],¹ or something of that order, supposedly derived from the word "puzzle." That's how I remember it, in any case.

In Georges Perec's novel *Life: A User's Manual*, each one of the ninety-nine chapters makes up a small piece

of a large jigsaw puzzle.² In the novel, however, there is actually a different game going on, a game that fashions the basis for the book's structure and that operates as a model of the world, namely, the game of chess. The plot unfolds inside a Parisian apartment complex, where the building's facade is a kind of chessboard and the knight "jumps" from room to room. In the novel, we zoom in on the characters' stories and relationships, and on everyday bagatelles—with an abnormal richness of detail, within a cobweb of tales. "Every piece the puzzler picks up, and picks up again, and studies and strokes, every combination he tries, and tries a second time, every blunder and every insight, each hope and each discouragement have all been designed, calculated, and decided by the other,"³ writes Perec in the novel's preamble. Within the structure of this intimate relationship between the jigsaw

puzzle's creator (the author) and its "moulder" (the reader), the author asks the reader to discover the hidden structures in the novel and to put the plot together. Can't the same process come to manifest itself in exhibitions, where each work corresponds to a piece that the artist lays out before the viewer?

0-1

It has been said that fencing is a game of thinking, a kind of chess with the body. Both the fencer and the chess player have to be able to think strategically in any situation, to read their opponent and to plan out their strategy accordingly. However, in contrast to the chess player, the fencer needs to have reflexes like a squirrel. In fencing, you've got to be both defensive and offensive, by turns. Otherwise, you haven't got a chance, for every single attack can be defended by a parry.⁴ As fencing expert G.V. Hett explains: "Today the fencer knows that there are no secret strokes: there is no attack that cannot be parried and no parry that cannot be evaded. ... the secret stroke has been scorned as a fantasy of ignorance on par with the touchstone of the alchemists."⁵ Fencing has a whole lot to do with fooling one's opponent and is about smoothness rather than speed.⁶ It has to do with testing the opponent's reactions to slight thrusts, beats, and feints, and has to do with waiting to attack until the opponent is off balance.⁷ It has to do with causing one's opponent to stray out from the piste (playing area) by lunging forward and finding just the right moment to spear the partner in the chest. It's easy enough to be on defence: you can do that for quite some time. What's difficult is making an attack. If you dare to go all out, then you've also got to be prepared to run the risk of losing, only to brush the dust off yourself and try all over again.

Fencing is an ultra-succinct, high-voltage tale running through signs of life and death, with a few lightning quick, simple actions that always wind up in a point of no return: "a dialogue of split-second reflexes."⁸ Somewhere between dance and improvised theatre. At times, a Strindbergian death dance, but mostly a controlled play in the form of wordless communication.

1-1

The fencer takes hold of the sword in much the same way that you extend your hand when you greet a stranger. The weapon is held, as a basic point of departure, in the *en garde* position,⁹ in which the fencer stands fully guarded, so that they cannot be hit, in a pose that looks like an "X": turned to the side with respect to the opponent; flexed at the knee; some distance between the feet, held in perpendicular position to each other; relaxed shoulders; right upper arm held in against the body; forearm parallel to the floor; and the metal gadget on the *épée*'s hilt held in towards the wrist. A straight line from the elbow, running through the forearm and through the fist's grasp around the

sword's hilt, issuing all the way out to the tip of the sword. Left arm held in the back, ready to be extended upon any lunge,¹⁰ with the consequence that the pass becomes extra energy-filled, in an ascending line leading from the left to the right hand. Something growing linearly. "A certain mathematical precision is necessary in the timing of hits," says Hett.¹¹ *En garde? Prêt? Allez!*

Are the fencers fighting over *the question's paradox*? When you ask a question, you open up to a matter but at the same time you limit the possibility of talking about anything else. It's a little like there's a pendulum, a situation of tension in the fencers' relation: an alternating dependence and independence, as ebb and flow, where distance is a prerequisite for interconnectedness.

Does fencing mime the artist's way of playing with the work before it becomes entrusted to the viewer, who, for their part, is fighting to put some of the pieces together?

2-1

The Quivering Line—Navigating through Subtle Channels

Much like the jigsaw puzzle, the skull is put together from several different parts, and just like the contour of a piece from a jigsaw puzzle, it is a *line* that causes the skull to fall into place. The small undulating line that runs through the skull, the vessel of consciousness, and that gathers the skull's constituent parts: a line known as the suture.

The suture line looks something like a delicate embroidery, a visualisation of an unknown heart rate or remote radio waves that carry a cryptic message. "Suture" is also the designation for the act of surgical stitching, as well as for the thread that binds the lips or edges of a wound together. However, "suture" does not only refer to this textural near-sightedness: in the field of geology, this same term refers to a collision between two tectonic plates. The skull's coronal suture might very well resemble something from an uncontrollable seismograph, a meandering river seen from an airplane, or GPS registration of the walker's route on a map.

In this way, there are certain similarities between a skull and a globe of the planet Earth, and there are certain analogies that can be drawn between the skull's construction and geographic boundaries on the one side, and between the individual's interior and their surroundings on the other. It's merely a question of scale: from the smallest to the largest, and back again.

Michel de Certeau was a French cultural sociologist and philosopher who tried to understand everyday life rather than ignoring it. Among other things, de Certeau puts into question how the pedestrian's movement in the city can be represented. He makes an attempt to draw representations of movement through, for example, an analysis of the "script" that the wanderer leaves behind.

De Certeau is of the opinion that human beings' movement seen from a bird's-eye perspective is only one possible representation of the city, and is accordingly erroneous in its approach. It is insufficient and inadequate to try and create an understanding of movements through a route, a pattern, drawn onto a map, a representation only from above. De Certeau insists that there must be more, and that there must be something else, in order to understand human movement and to understand everyday practice. On the course of a walk through the city, people suck impressions into themselves, impressions that, for example, a GPS device registering the very same route cannot. In the section "Walkers in the City" in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau presents the problem associated with the linguistic representation of movement through the city's streets:

It is true that the operations of walking on can be traced on city maps in such a way as to transcribe their paths (here well-trodden, there very faint) and trajectories (going this way and not that). But these thick or thin curves only refer, like words, to the absence of that has passed by. Surveys of routes miss what was: the act itself of passing by.¹²

G.V. Hett, in his book on fencing, expresses the belief that the best supplement for the physical training of fencers is to do a lot of walking, since legwork is essential to fencing.¹³

De Certeau's point about the individual's movement manifests on the fencing piste, which the fencers perceive through the netted masks of their helmets. Is this subjectivity's filter? Could we imagine that this netted mesh is a metaphor for the artistic process, where the artist is continually adjusting the horizontal and vertical lines within the imaginary network? An elastic view of perception.

3-1

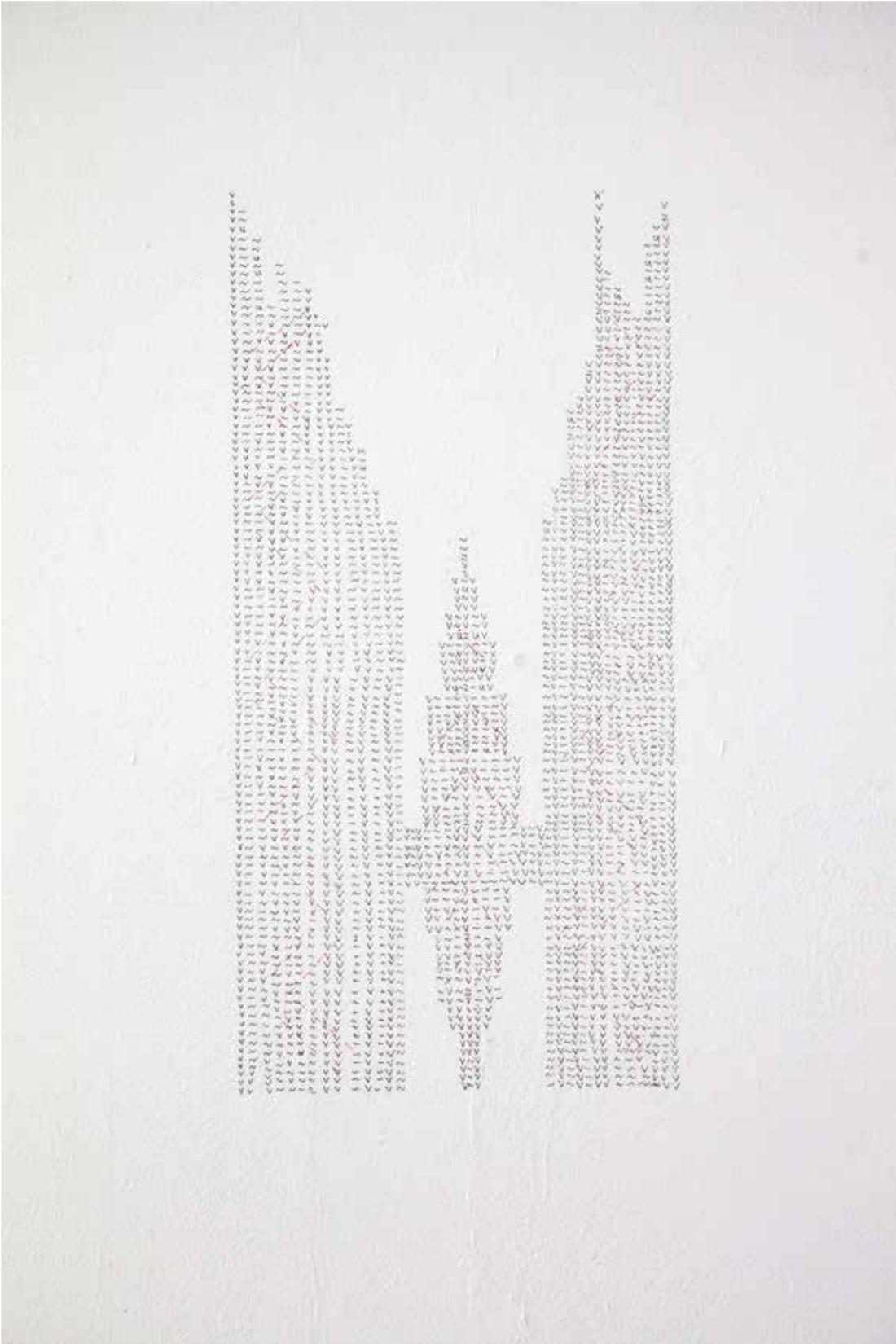
In his novel, Perec uses the chessboard as the model for space. But ordinarily, one uses a map as model, as a tool for moving one's way around the city.

Outside, all the walkers are wearing shoes as they stroll around the city, each one walking in their own pattern, making invisible line drawings. From passage to passage in their external spaces: the path. From association to association in their interior spaces: the suture. Sensing lines. A boy falls over his shoelaces, which he immediately ties while squatting: a construction of one long string, which is braided together and then winds up in two, only to be joined together, at last, into one—in a loop. A compact narrative in a closed circuit. The boy goes astray, and before he even knows it, his detour discloses a loop—seen from above:

∞ 8



Launch between rows, 2016. Still from HD video and synced foley sound from *Bash to bash balestra* (fencing match filmed in the gallery's corridor, the width of which measures exactly the same as that of a fencing piste). 02:42 min. Marie Raffn



Put a purl in it. Bei alle Mustern zwischenreihen (Alte Muster aus dem alpenländischen Raum), 2016. Detail. Knitted parries wall drawings used as scores for the sculptures and sound piece. Red and black ink. Marie Raffin

Is an infinity sign a recumbent figure of eight? Or is an eight an upright infinity symbol? The boy walks around the loop, in a circle, so that the sign is constantly changing in importance, in sync with his movement. So it is: “Numbers serve two purposes. First, their use is practical. They comprise the tools we use to count and measure. Second, they are the means by which many people have attempted to understand the mysterious and the unexplainable.”¹⁴

In Rainer Maria Rilke’s short essay “Ur-Geräusch” (“Primal Sound”),¹⁵ he imagines himself being able to play the sound of the skull’s coronal suture with a phonograph needle. In such an event, the pickup would offer a convincing representation of the writing hand, in a predominantly mechanical way. But what sound would you hear if you played the skull? How would feelings, sensations, and the internal-side sound? A melodious humming?

I do not know how it would sound if you could play back the sound of the earth’s many parts, but I know how it is to navigate through tortuous terrain. If the skull is the brain’s receptacle, then what kind of receptacle is the planet? What is happening there, right under our feet?

Precisely like a fingerprint or somebody’s handwriting, the skull’s suture is unique to every single body, each of which has its own secret signature, its own language, in engraved symbols, and its own primordial sound. A semiotic instinct deep within the human body’s most intimate private space.

If we imagine the suture as a clue told by the body itself, does this entail that all (vertebrate) animals are also inscribing themselves in the world and making sense within it? Alternative articulation via foreign alphabets in the impassable interior. In the *Philosophical Investigations* of Wittgenstein, he writes, moreover, about the animal’s inability to speak:

25. It is sometimes said that animals do not talk because they lack the mental capacity. And this means: “they do not think, and that is why they do not talk.” But—they simply do not talk. Or to put it better: they do not use language—if **we except the most primitive forms of language.**—Commanding, questioning, recounting, chatting, are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing.¹⁶

The spider weaves a web and builds a construction much larger than itself, which can hold merely a fraction of all that it contains. Isn’t this little spider also a linguistic subject within the interwoven textuality that the world is made of, where bodies are a part of the world rather than *in* the world? Although the spider does not have a skull with a suture, it does have one, in a way, from its silk fibres, which it uses to make the web; silk fibres used to make surgical threads for sewing wounds together are, as has been mentioned, actually called sutures.¹⁷ The spider’s are

silk threads with greater ultimate tensile strength than steel. That is to say, the notion of *suture* includes both points of intersection and joinings, and both fractures and junctures of healing.

Everything’s Core

The skull’s suture does not belong to our space- and time-limited consciousness. However, inside the skull, at the next layer, we find the brain itself, the most complex structure that we know in the universe, where everything that is human is gathered together.

In Karl Ove Knausgård’s article “The Terrible Beauty of Brain Surgery,” he follows brain surgeon Henry Marsh’s operations in Albania. Marsh’s work is a combination of seeing and feeling. Hasn’t everybody imagined how the world might look from somebody else’s perspective? Being in somebody else’s brain. Knausgård describes his first “insight” into another person’s brain, as a miniature model of a fantastic landscape, in an extraordinarily tactile way. He likens the experience to being transported to another world, to another part of the universe. About another operation, he reports:

I had looked into a room, unlike any other, and when I lifted my gaze, that room was inside Hasanaj’s brain, who lay staring straight ahead under the drape in the larger room, filled with doctors and nurses and machines and equipment, and beyond that room there was an even larger blue sky. All those rooms were gathered in my own brain, which looked exactly like Hasanaj’s, a wet, gleaming, walnut-like lump, composed of 100 billion brain cells so tiny and so myriad they could only be compared to the stars of a galaxy. ... How could it contain these images of the world? How could thoughts arise within this hunk of flesh?¹⁸

How do these images and thoughts come to be expressed in language? One of Wittgenstein’s looming philosophical questions is precisely the issue of how people are capable of communicating ideas to one another. Wittgenstein points out that thinking is characterised by language and language-games: whenever a thought is created, internal sentences are formed. The language-game lies hidden behind the words, the meanings of which arise through their usage within language. Words make it possible for us to create images in our minds (and vice versa), which we can then exchange for each other, although each person’s perception is, of course, coloured by a whole lot of individualised and cultural premises. Language is accordingly a kind of tool that we can make use of for different games, for patterns of intentions.

Sometimes, when I’m “operating” with materials, I feel a little bit like a surgeon: cutting up, examining, restructuring, forming, “sewing” back together again. Small interventions and gestures. Am I parrying off

an attack? Destroying, so as to build up. Work is something like a muscle: you've got to keep it in shape. But if you skip the days of repose, which allow for recovery, and if you don't step back and get a bit of distance from it, work can cease to be important. Is my wielding of materials a link within a larger mindset?

One of many games that the artist plays: on the first day, the studio is an operating chamber; on the second, it's an orchestra pit, and the works are instruments, the tempo and volume of which I can control with my conductor's baton. A little louder in the strings and a pause for the bass drum. The conductor's baton can easily be mistaken for the percussionist's drumstick. When the percussionist initially counts in—one, two, three, four—and strikes the drumsticks against each other, it emits the same sound as if he had struck two wooden knitting needles against each other. It's as if the two objects had the same phonetic script, a hidden script, corresponding to two words that sound exactly the same. Similarly, there is a funny correlation between an épée and a knitting needle, by virtue of the fact that the sound of the fencers' crossing swords and the sound of the metal knitting needles being struck against each other is, by and large, one and the same. Knit one, purl two, and a fencer's mask on three.

On the third day, the studio is a little bit like a garden: plants that need to be transplanted, flowers that have to be watered, and vegetables that must be picked on time. An oblong, thin, withered leaf calls to mind the violin's rosined horsehair strings. Here, it is full of cacti that do best in dry climates and may not be overwatered. I pour the last drop from the watering can into a tub, with a layer of plaster over it. Put a sentence in the water and wait for the whole work to blossom forth.

I place restrictions on myself, as in a fencing match, because it is impossible to deal with everything at one and the same time. But within the limits, I have freedom of movement. In Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, there is a section that can be read as a way of understanding the artistic process:

83. Doesn't the analogy between language and games throw light here? We can easily imagine people amusing themselves in a field by playing with a ball so as to start various existing games, but playing many without finishing them and in between throwing the ball aimlessly into the air, chasing one another with the ball and bombarding one another for a joke and so on. And now someone says: The whole time they are playing a ball-game and following definite rules at every throw.

And is there not also the case where we play and—make up the rules as we go along? And there is even one where we alter them—as we go along.¹⁹

There are pieces of tape on the studio's four walls. Some of the pieces of tape are holding papers in place, while others hold nothing other than themselves—to the wall, the architecture, like loricariidae inside an aquarium. One page, with a conch shell, is taped to a piece of graph paper, on which a Fibonacci spiral has been sketched and glued to a printout of a cluster of galaxies.

Hammer hard against the windowpane, in order to see how the splinters form a cobweb pattern: pieces in a jigsaw puzzle. Some of them tumble down and are carried, with melting snow, into the street grating. How are we ever going to find the last piece? Microscopic, and far beneath our feet.

3-2

The Dance with the Pen

The épée is like a long pen without ink. When you write with a pen on a piece of paper, it's the small movements in the finger joints that create the letters. And these same minimal movements are what's needed in fencing when you have to parry off an attack. The upper body is divided into four fields, defined by a horizontal and a vertical axis, where the eight basic parries are distributed, two by two. It's a matter of a few millimetres that determines whether or not the parry will be accomplished. The hand is hidden behind the bell guard, the cup-shaped metal part of the sword that protects the hand. If one begins to fence as a child, then it's not uncommon that one learns to internalise the movement by taping a pen onto one's sword, with which one then tries to write one's name on a piece of paper attached to the wall.²⁰ The fencer's "script" is executed by the hand but is borne by the legwork, which is choreographed in specific steps: the anterior foot moves back and forth, on heel/toe, while the rear foot moves back and forth on toe/heel. Just as it is an essential prerequisite for building a house that one has a foundation, it is impossible to build up a good position when the feet are positioned incorrectly.²¹ This applies, properly speaking, to all forms of construction.

There is a hair-fine line that runs between doing too little and doing just enough. What we have here is a case of extreme minimalism: small movements with enormous consequences. If the fencer is parrying correctly, they can perform *riposte*.²² However, if the fencer's movement in the parry is just a bit too wide, then this works to the advantage of the opponent, who sees a line opening up and goes for it as quickly as possible. The extended arm, which slays. The race has been run. Fencing revolves around doing very little, but doing so with great precision, deep concentration, and a lack of temperament, in total balance. While being at the right place at the right time.

"Writing is not language, but merely a way of recording language by means of visible marks. ... a language is the same no matter what system of writing may be



Like it's leaking but lacking a crack, 2016. Detail. Cast plastic. Marie Raffn

Sticka stick a stack: "Land Salzburg", 2016. 03:40 min. sound shower loop. Knitting pattern used as a score for the sound piece. Marie Raffn

used to record it, just as a person is the same no matter how you take his picture," the linguist Leonard Bloomfield emphasises.²³

When one, as a child, is supposed to learn to write the letters of the alphabet, one has to fill the page up and down with each of the letters, until the movement finally sits firmly in one's hand:

aaaaa
aaaaa
aaaaa

Similarly, attacks can also be learned by repetition through the body. You've got to repeat the attack position in order to know it, at long last. By heart. Outstretched arm before: *Marché. Touché*.²⁴ The sword's blade curves slightly upwards.

3-3

Stacks of handwritten papers are lying like lakes in the studio landscape. Maybe it will soon be time to go through them and undertake a little overview. Books are stacked on top of each other, and alongside them a large mind map fills the end wall, the artist's overview, like a lush tree that grows and spreads out with various couplings, quivering lines: a sketched-out hand is surrounded by a pen, a conductor's baton, a drumstick, a tube of paint, a sword, and a knitting needle. Beside the hand, it says: "Hold our pen and then try to hold it in a different way," which is the first sentence in *The Invisible World II*.²⁵ Are the reflections brought forth in this text simply branches from one of the tree's trunks? Thread for fabric. Fabric for works. Figments of the imagination. At the end of



Like it's leaking but lacking a crack, 2016. Installation consisting of vapour barrier, wire, plastic, plaster, pigment, marker, tape. Marie Raffn
brought roughth oughthr ughthro ghthrou hthroug through, 2016 HD video 01:46 min. loop. Wood, silicone, glue, tape, book cover sheet,
 mini projector, mirror. Marie Raffn
The Invisible World vol. I + vol. II, 2013, 2015. Ongoing novel, printed replicas, 152 pages each. 22 x 3 x 28 cm. Marie Raffn



Like it's leaking but lacking a crack, 2016. Detail. Cast plastic and casting mould. Marie Raffn

one branch, a toothpick fencer has been sketched out. From this figure issues yet another branch, where it says: “> <kung fu and calligraphy → abstract expressionism, Willem de Kooning, Cy Twombly and others.” At the end of another branch, we can read: “As if my body enveloped my own paper”—a sentence uttered by Hélène Cixous, in an interview that bears the title “As if I were writing on the inside of myself.” The mind map’s countless strokes incite me to throw a line back to de Certeau and his ruminations on the pedestrian’s routes, his ruminations on what is inadequate and insufficient about looking only at maps that have been made from a bird’s-eye perspective. It’s not enough to have only an overview: you’ve also got to move down into something and navigate your way around in it—and follow some of your ideas all the way to their ends.

I change the ball of wool. I patch up the holes in the elbow. I try, generally, to avoid “rambling” too much. I read a little of a book. But it turns out, most of all, merely to be a good piece of yarn.

“Jean-Paul Sartre and many other writers have said reading is writing, by which I understand that as readers we are always piecing together meaning and, in a sense, writing our own texts by weaving the threads and associations of previous readings and experiences,” writes Moyra Davey in her essay “The Problem of Reading.”²⁶ I expand a little further on the book I had previously put away and start to flip through its pages, starting from the back. “Through the use of the hand to turn the book’s pages, the memory of the words is integrated within a spatial dimension,” says historian Rasmus Fleischer.²⁷ Seeing the picture in front of me: the reader, whose gaze is turned towards the book, which—together with the reader—shares a secret that everybody else does not know, but is actually subordinate: the book is surface and sound.

Knitting, not with the knitting needle, but with the pen that fills the wall with the knitted pattern’s template’s symbols as parryings.

All people interpret a manual in their own way. Although we are both working from the same recipe, your dish might become somewhat saltier, and even though we are working from the same knitting pattern, your sock might come to be slightly longer. The knitted pattern’s templates are there, as a matter of fact, to make something two-dimensional three-dimensional (a knitted cardigan). Some of the symbols in the template are alphabetical letters, which are employed for the purposes of being translated into geometric shapes:

V → ∇

The vapour barrier used in construction: it has been placed inside all the outer walls to prevent moisture from penetrating into the edifice. It’s a kind of concealed circumference, inside of which we surround

ourselves every single day. Sculptors can make use of this vapour barrier in the casting mould so that the plaster will release the mould more easily. It’s like a transparent carpet, with the potential to accommodate all of the world’s conceivable forms. In the operation with the vapour-barrier material, I mark out a letter with a magic marker, cut into the middle of its surface, and bend the edges up. These are then fastened with a small bent piece of wire, so that the edges are just barely turned upwards, thus making it possible to cast inside the form; while the molten plastic is drying, small wrinkles turn up in the vapour barrier and make imprints in the plastic. In their containers, the moulds fit hand in glove, just like so many other things: the route in the streets, the fencers on the piste, the suture in the skull, the cells in the brain.²⁸ It’s only that due consideration is not being paid to all of the mould’s containers.

What is it that the string is trying to tie a ribbon around? Concrete poetical experiments, of a kind, transpiring in rooms?

Spatial representation depicted two-dimensionally on a surface is particularly evident in Pablo Picasso’s paintings, in which we see the object from several angles at once. This is the same thing that Gertrude Stein accomplishes, only with words instead of colours. Literary cubism. When she reads aloud, it’s like being inside a musical space, where she uses her tongue as language’s brush.²⁹ Stein writes almost as if she were painting. One word. And then another. And one more. As if she had a brush and a palette full of colours: a brush and a brush and a brush and a colour and a colour and a colour. Like an impressionist, who dabs a bit of red on the canvas, followed by a bit of blue, and, at last, a touch of yellow. Before she knows it, she has a shimmering violet passage. A rose is a rose is a rose not a pipe.

Behind the Bell Guard

Metal against metal. The fencers write out their own language through improvisation on the piste, as if it were a piece of paper: a delimited space with the potential for something to happen. As if the fencers were trying to penetrate their way into each other’s interior through signs, but the writing disappears before it is registered. The fencer leads his épée in zigzag and circular movements, slicing the air into chunks. She operates with the immaterial, with invisible lines. Displacing imaginary spaces through internal tensions and energy exchanges, so that the signs are translated, transformed, and come to arise from themselves. The fencers do not fill the piste with superfluousnesses—only with whatever makes sense in their narrative or helps them towards their goal. I am standing inside interminable patches of air, inside a strained void, a constant buzzing. A subtle trembling makes it difficult to remain at a standstill. Gestures³⁰ turn towards me; I am forced to step backwards. Have difficulty deciphering your codes, since most of them are transformed even before they arise. The codes

that remain are effective on the wrong doors. When something jerks forward, something else has to recoil. Vacillations, falling slowly out of tempo, in a brutal tango. You aim at my shoulder; I die for a second: 3–4. My collarbone is riddled with bruises. Getting lost in remembrance’s labyrinths. I parry contre sixte,

making a small circular motion with the wrist, moving clockwise from full to half. The minimal script triumphs again, 4–4, in my favour. *Rumpé*,³² *marché*, *riposte*. My signs are potential.

5–4

- 1 Phonetic notation for the word “puzzle,” according to the *Oxford Learner’s Dictionary*.
- 2 Georges Perec was a part of Oulipo (Ouvroir de littérature potentielle), a workshop for potential literature, which was composed of a group of individuals who were dedicated to exploring the use of mathematical structures for the purposes of generating literature.
- 3 Georges Perec, *Life: A User’s Manual*, trans. David Bellos (Boston: David R. Godine, 1987).
- 4 In everyday language, a parry is also an (evasive) answer to a verbal assault.
- 5 G.V. Hett, “Are There Any Secret Strokes in Fencing?,” in *Fencing, Games and Recreations* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, 1939), 104.
- 6 Hett, *Fencing*, 42.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 107.
- 8 Joyce Carol Oates, *On Boxing* (New York: Dolphin/Doubleday, 1987), 11.
- 9 The initial position for attack and defence.
- 10 A lunge is made towards an opponent, where the rear leg is fully extended and the anterior leg is virtually squatting.
- 11 Hett, *Fencing*, 14.
- 12 Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City,” in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 97.
- 13 Hett, *Fencing*, 119.
- 14 Priya Hemenway, “Pythagoras and the Mystery of Numbers,” in *The Secret Code: The Mysterious Formula that Rules Art, Nature, and Science* (Cologne: Evergreen, 2008), 29.
- 15 Rainer Maria Rilke, “Ur-Geräusch (1919),” in *Ur-lyd*, trans. Karsten Sand Iversen (Copenhagen: Forlaget Virkelig Bestiarium, 2013).
- 16 Ludwig Wittgenstein, “Aphorism 21–30,” in *Philosophical Investigations*, 1953, <http://www.voidspace.org.uk/psychology/wittgenstein/three.shtml>. Emphasis in the original.
- 17 Maj Bach Madsen, “Edderkoppesilke starter et kapløb blandt forskere,” *Videnskab*, October 19, 2010, <http://videnskab.dk/teknologi/edderkoppesilke-starter-et-kaplob-blandt-forskere>.
- 18 Karl Ove Knausgård, “The Terrible Beauty of Brain Surgery,” *New York Times*, December 30, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/03/magazine/karl-ove-knausgaard-on-the-terrible-beauty-of-brain-surgery.html>.
- 19 Ludwig Wittgenstein, “Aphorism 81–88,” in *Philosophical Investigations*, 1953, <http://users.rcn.com/rathbone/lw81-88c.htm>.
- 20 The passages about fencing are written from my own experiences with fencing and are based on conversations with my fencing trainer.
- 21 Hett, *Fencing*, 38.
- 22 In fencing, the *riposte* (French for “retort”) is an offensive action executed with the intent of striking one’s opponent, made by the fencer who has just parried an attack. In everyday language, a riposte is synonymous with a verbal retort and is used to describe a quick and witty reply to an argument or an insult.
- 23 Leonard Bloomfield, “The Use of Language,” in *Language* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1935), 21.
- 24 One step forward.
- 25 This is the second volume of an ongoing novel project (which I wrote about for my bachelor degree essay), for which my own route and the sequence of pages from homeless books that I find along my path serve to dictate the book’s plot. See my essay in *Malmö Art Academy Yearbook 2013–2014* (Malmö: Malmö Art Academy, 2014), 201–02.
- 26 Moyra Davey, *The Problem of Reading* (Los Angeles: Documents Books, 2003), 15.
- 27 Rasmus Fleischer, *Boken & Biblioteket* (Halmstad: Ink Bokförlag, 2011), 18.
- 28 These are but a few examples. In my bachelor degree essay, I presented a thought experiment where a process of zooming out transpired—from alphabetical letters to papers to worlds within universes—instead of zooming in on things, as I am doing here: from physical space to brain cells. See my essay in *Malmö Art Academy Yearbook 2013–2014*, 197.
- 29 Gertrude Stein, “Gertrude Stein Reads ‘If I Had Told Him: A Completed Portrait of Picasso,’” YouTube video, 3:38, posted by awetblackbough, July 25, 2010, <https://youtu.be/FJEIAGULmPQ>.
- 30 In everyday Danish, a *fast* (gesture) is, moreover, a gestural arm or hand movement that one makes in order to express or emphasise something. The Danish word *fast* stems from the Low German *vacht*, with “fencing” having been derived from *vechten*, “to fence.”
- 31 *Contre six* is one of the eight basic parries. The objective is to ward off an attack from an opponent in such a way that the attack moves past your body’s right side while, at the same time, you set up an opening for yourself to make a counterattack, with the result that you can execute *riposte*.
- 32 One step back.



Like it's leaking but lacking a crack, 2016. Detail. Stacked casting moulds. Marie Raffn

Further References

This essay is constituted from interweavings of various reflections from a great many texts, podcasts, and exhibitions.

A considerable handful of the essay's references are taken from titles that I have chanced to encounter while I was putting books back in their places at Copenhagen's Hovedbibliotek (Central Library, on Krystalgade) for jobs where I was assigned to do just this. Or the references have been borrowed from podcasts and audiobooks that I have been listening to while I was busy moving around between the bookshelves.

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(my loves,)

Love Stories? We all heard about it. Many of us felt it and achieved an inevitable transformation. Some of us understood the frightening process of death and rebirth for Life, traced by the “we.”

3

I, a trace

I abandon myself.

“Nausea, distaste, horror: these are the signs of a radical revulsion (or expulsion) which serves to situate the ‘I,’ or more accurately to create a first, fragile sense of ‘I’ in a space where before there was only emptiness. The abject does not fill the void of the ‘pre-subject,’ it simply throws up a fragile boundary wall around it. In this sense the abject (the ‘object’ of revulsion) is more a process than a ‘thing.’ Stressing the fact that the abject is not per se linked to dirt or putrefaction, Kristeva insists that it can be represented by any kind of transgressive, ambiguous or intermediary state.”

—Toril Moi¹

“The time of abjection is double: a time of oblivion and thunder, of veiled infinity and the moment when revelation burst forth.”

—Julia Kristeva²

“One does not know it, one does not desire it, one joys in it (on en jouit). Violently and painfully. A passion.”

—Julia Kristeva³

The *I* artist and the *I* woman exist in separate spaces—I lived a very hard and dangerous journey in order to understand this. Since I often found myself on the edge of boundaries that I did not recognise, I could not identify my homes—the woman-home and the artist-home. I lived in both and the passage between the two was, and is, constant. Therefore, I could not protect my body and emotions. Sometimes I looked at myself as alien to all sources of life; I was abject. Thus merging into anorexia was an answer; not trusting in my ability to love was another. Over the last few months, while I was living a deep *process of becoming*, the borders between the spaces of the two I became more confused. Despite that, or because of that, I felt the need to define a new position for myself—that came by writing, reading, viewing, and receiving love.

I know that a clear separation between both *I* spaces will not be possible all the time, especially because I sense so much with my body and I feed myself from both of my homes. But the lucidity achieved in the *process of becoming* is not removable from my being; that will help me to trace a path and to come back to where I belong: woman-home or artist-home.

Psychoanalytical texts were sources for achieving a clear state of mind and spirit. I felt particularly driven by the sense of the sublime, and of abjection, found in Julia Kristeva’s writings. I live her texts with all my being—it is a deep bodily experience and, at the same time, an out-of-body experience—these complementarities are *clairvoyant*. By reading her, I realised how I was absorbing the world and how I was translating it as a strange form of love—most of the time a destructive and sacrificial love. As an artist, I often feel I am delivering deformed and unpredictable bodies—the worst of me. In my dreams and through my senses, I see and I feel a being-to-come, something separated from me, but also born within me.

Following Kristeva’s line of thought, I can say that the abject is a poisoned gift, transmitted so that the “*I*” finds “in that sublime alienation, a forfeited existence.”⁴ The “*I*” is an ambiguous ground since it is separated from another body, but not detached from its threat. Abjection is a conjunction of affects, signs, and drives, so it preserves the memory of that separation—which is necessary for the being *to be*.

The abject is not representable, since it is part of a process of symbolisation generated by the thoughts, intuitions, and affects of a person. Symbolisation is an insertion into a new language; it is a new existence brought forth by narcissistic states, abjection, and sublimation. It is a new word and body, only made possible through emptiness and love. This kind of consciousness cannot be achieved by a representation of truth that is alienated from the “*I*.” The “*I*” produces its own truth.

“To be sure: such a practice of truth cannot be carried out with impunity. Since the signifier is the (sole)

truth, it is the body and vice versa. In this economy, there are no images or semblances (any more than in Eucharist): each element is neither real, nor symbolic, nor imaginary, but true. Thus the truth of the signifier, namely its separability, otherness, death, can be seen to be exerted on the flesh itself—as on words. The mutilation of the hands of a female painter is perhaps no more or less painful than the displacement of the language she writes or draws.

—Julia Kristeva⁵

I find Christian imagery fascinating. The martyrs, the Virgin Annunciation and Sorrows, and all the contradictions and dualities of this iconography are striking to me. I contemplate it often, so in my work I cannot avoid addressing the religious. I filter the truth those images represent, bringing it to the here and now in a subversive way. Therefore, I translate the religious word using a mundane voice, free from conventional restrictions, since I do not believe in God. I do, however, believe. Believing is part of my creative process, and when I disbelieve I easily get into an endless spiral of fear and mistrust—which only stops when my woman-home rescues me. I believe in a truth that is a body—impossible to control with fictional mechanisms—and I operate through intuition.

My images are mostly generated in dreams, and I give them form every time I sense their truth. I use video as a medium to crystallise them; I use my body as an instrument to repeat them. I repeat until the image acquires its form, what I sense as perfection. Oftentimes I do not need to repeat. In this mode of making, I become a body of memory. Not necessarily an empathetic one. It is an abandoned one. Although I work with video, I have the eye of a painter who knows how to place colours, lighting, and figures on a surface. It comes naturally, and it was inherited from old masters such as Caravaggio, Giovanni Bellini, and Johannes Vermeer.

I still see myself as a painter. I love the slowness of painting and I use it, in a mimetic way, to deal with the speed of image technology. I do not, however, compete with it. By using the video format I believe I can pressure, prolong, and parody some contemporary pathologies. My performances are visual; I see my actions within a frame.

My videos are an oeuvre with a domestic contour. Most of the time, the viewer is invading a private space where he or she does not belong. It is a poisoned invitation to see a woman by herself, for herself, and letting go of herself through performed acts. It is a figure expressing a certain truth within a certain lie. I do not see myself in those women, and I feel that this loss of identity permits me to survive the reality of the images, and also to get into time. When I step out of it, I do not understand what it is I am seeing, although I know it is there. My images are ahead of me and they contain something-to-come. The work sets up an enigma, a sense of trauma that is not necessarily personal.

Francesca Woodman's photographs seem to be dealing with the same search for a young woman's identity. She often appears as a ghost that haunts the ruins of a house—and not the other way around. I see a body being lost in a space that can no longer protect it, but that can, however, hide it and mirror it. She-home: a crumbling position.

“But that word ‘fear’—a fluid haze, an elusive clamminess—no sooner has it cropped up than it shades off like a mirage and permeates all words of the language with nonexistence, with a hallucinatory, ghostly glimmer. Thus, fear having been bracketed, discourse will seem tenable only if it ceaselessly confront that otherness, a burden both repellent and repelled, a deep well of memory that is unapproachable and intimate: the object.”

—Julia Kristeva⁶

Jeanne Dielman, the eponymous character of Chantal Akerman's film *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975), provides us, through small gestures, the premonition of something. We know that it will happen, but when will we see it? This constant tension throughout the film makes us forget the extreme slowness and banality of its scenes and events. Something bigger is entering the home, disrupting the linearity of it. Safety and linear time are nothing more than an illusion. Home is not a safe place anymore. A stranger is arriving and will transform things. Love is not present in this film, which reinforces the idea that, when family ties are alive, the symptoms of this strange presence are felt, and it is possible to avoid tragedy—one kept on a symbolic field. Dealing with the symptoms is a chaotic process, and this confusion leads people to become entangled with an idea of danger—since danger is not visible, until it happens it is nothing more than a hint, a fear, or a premonition. Dislocation, parting, and openness can be the answers to achieving recognition and dealing with the idea of violence. Later, the premonition will connect people to each other, by embracing the change brought by the stranger.

Ulay and Marina Abramović's performances from the 1970s were very influential on me. I am moved by their destructiveness and constructiveness based on a deep feeling of trust. Man and woman living the tension of living. Complementarity is a keyword. I am a woman and an artist because I love and I believe I am loved. I do because I trust in the disruptive power of love. It is love that brings us consciousness—which partly comes from healing what has been destroyed. The rigidity and collapse of the other brings a vision of borders—and that helps the “I” to be within the other. In the performances of Ulay and Abramović, I've always felt that the female body is the first aggregator element in a field of difference between man and woman; there is a mutual respect and comprehension of these differences. Abramović's control of her own body gives her a real power, not just a symbolic one.

Words and gestures can change the order of things. The choreography of Pina Bausch thrives off of interdependency; it is a constant creation of new bodies that are themselves language. They are strong, fragile, and undefined. Man and woman move thanks to each other's traces. They are bound by joy and grief—which is not merciful, but is inevitable. The dancers are aesthetic corpses; it is their beauty that reaches the viewer, not empathy. I can see sorrow, hate, and love, but that is not what connects me to the absurdity. I mainly see cadavers—lost objects that one needs to mourn deeply, sadly, joyfully, beautifully, in order to trace, and to be traced by them. This is how I process mourning—this is the motion that disturbs and establishes my *I*.

Life as togetherness: falling in the other's hands, being rejected and being discovered by the same hands. No one knows what the real feelings during falling are—it is an affected movement—but falling is the only possibility of growing and being reborn. To achieve another state of humanity, one needs to fall. In order to rise as a new being, one needs the other's hands—strong and steady. Life is then an interdependent state of oscillating weakness and strength, of in and out. The relations are inverted, disturbed, and prolonged. In Bausch's works, the domestic and the spectacular are not in confrontation; they mingle in order to create an absurd place to perform the private and the public spheres. The same can be said of the choreography of Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker and Alexander Ekman. The uncanny emerges. Facing it, I tremble and I laugh.

I, as a woman-artist, trust in what my homes bring to me. I fall in both territories. That is what stabilises my emotions and fears after receiving the strangers and moulding to them. I try to elucidate the danger. Perhaps this is to be contemporary—to be the refugee and find refuge in inhospitable spaces. Perhaps that is what opens people to a larger sphere (beyond private and public) and to the future—which is to say, to the infinite unknown. Free circulation. Passing to new areas and phases is, nevertheless, painful. It destroys the familiar.

In my videos, I only allow the sounds and voices of adjacent spaces to get in. I usually work alone when I film. I like to be isolated and to have no presences around me. This mode of making is quite close to Cindy Sherman's. She also needs a space of her own when searching for the form of her body-image. In the same way, I believe I am able to let go of visual language as a new dialectic. But to do so, I must be innocent and generous, someone free to merge into the chaos that receiving and producing a new language always brings. As I mentioned before, this state is achieved by abandoning my identity, and being very economical with gestures, signs, and objects within the image. Its efficacy relies on timing and visual simplicity—that is what brings forth hidden complexities, or obscure areas of the self. Perhaps I am presenting a narcissistic emptiness; the space of separation and

rejection, an ephemeral state of destruction, superficiality, and humour absolutely necessary for a being to emerge. A site.

A sense of the burlesque permeates my mode of thinking. That is what helps me to deal with the danger within my images. In his book *The Tears of Eros*, Georges Bataille describes how laughter is close to crying. Experiencing the violence of death makes us grieve—crying and destructive behaviour are often the response. However, to fulfil one's consciousness of death, laughing must be added to the experience. Levity disrupts the being and its position. Mourning demands that one step outside of oneself in order to become another self. My works often induce laughter.

“Only in humor is an answer given to the ultimate question of human life. The only way to respond to the possibility of overcoming horror is in a rush of the blood. Each time, the response takes the form of a sudden leap into humor, and it means nothing but just this leap into humor.”

—Georges Bataille⁷

Feeding myself with images is a constant need. I do not differentiate between the image inputs because I am open to everything—I can easily jump from online lectures of great thinkers to cheesy television shows or Walt Disney movies. I am not ashamed of that; maybe because I am not a theorist, but a feeler instead.

In relation to my images, it is common for me to live with them for long periods of time, since my inner eye saves them and sometimes even develops them. I never rely too much on the video-editing process, so the actions within my works are performative and, although they are occasionally repeated, they are not choreographed. Despite that, I know sometimes a sense of staged and almost ritualistic space emerges in my videos; this can be adjusted in the works' installation. When I decide to create private spaces where the viewer sits down comfortably to receive the images, I am saying something. I am also saying something when I decide to present the videos on a screen or as a projection. The installation is a big part of the argument. It is my way of reaching the viewer and transmitting my symptoms to him or her.

“The symptom: a language that gives up, a structure within the body, a non-assimilable alien, a monster, a tumor, a cancer that the listening devices of the unconscious do not hear, for its strayed subject is huddled outside the paths of desire. Sublimation, on the contrary, is nothing else than the possibility of naming the pre-nominal, the pre-objectal, which are in fact only a trans-nominal, a trans-objectal. In the symptom, the object permeates me, I become object. Through sublimation, I keep it under control. The object is edged with the sublime. It is not the same moment on the journey, but the same subject and speech bring them into being.”

—Julia Kristeva⁸

I am an artist because *I* am not. I open my chest and I expose it to infections. In other words, I live the suffering and turn it into language. It is, however, impossible for me to fight the fever the infections bring. I cannot do it with my mind, so I let my body do its job and it takes time. The temperature creates emotional and physical oscillations, and this state can last a long time. Meanwhile, art takes form. It is very hard to survive these moments as a woman. It was always the love of my woman-home that healed my heart and made my mind understand. Centring myself around what I love will always be the way to survive. The *process of becoming* brings me the ability to fashion myself into the strong and steady pillar of a balanced family-work structure. I can also be the shelter for what I love without diminishing my sorrows. Even when my home is in ruins, I can find shelter in memories, fantasies, and hopes. The place is in me and I can rebuild it.

Fearing the new will stop the process of insertion into a symbolic logic. As I said, I address fear when I formulate questions about destruction in the sphere of belief. In my work, permanent interrogations arise, not as a method but as a perpetual construction of a psyche. A mode where lucidity emerges from madness, and where consciousness is developed through transferences of love and is settled by sublimation.

*“The ‘sublime’ object dissolves in the raptures of a bottomless memory. It is such a memory, which, from stopping point to stopping point, remembrance to remembrance, love to love, transfers that object to the refulgent point of the dazzlement in which I stray in order to be. As soon as I perceive it, as soon as I name it, the sublime triggers—it has always already triggered—a spree of perceptions and words that expands memory boundlessly. I then forget the point of departure and find myself removed to a secondary universe, set off from the one where ‘I am—delight and loss. Not at all short of but always with and through perception and words, the sublime is a something added that expands us, overstrains us, and causes us to be both here, as dejects, and there, as others and sparkling. A divergence, an impossible bounding. Everything missed, joy—fascination.”*⁹

—Julia Kristeva

1–3

I read Roland Barthes’s book *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments* after finishing this essay, and I immediately decided to incorporate it into my text. I identify with it and I think it intersects with my writing—my love stories. What struck me most about his book is its gentle and ungendered language. Another thing was the position of the writer as both analyst and analysand. I get the feeling of reading someone who knows how to suffer and deal with inner transformations that rely on the other; of someone who knows how to

position himself in the world and “in” the other. This book is in itself a transference of love—something that enables the reader to produce his or her own truth and achieve his or her own consciousness. This clear state of mind is only achievable through love, but the path to this stage of lucidity is a path of affects (passion, anguish, loss).

Barthes starts his book by mentioning that a site is needed for a transformation to occur; this is what he calls “affirmation.” Affirmation is a place of a certain certainty: a sort of intuition. It encompasses a state of becoming something unknown to you. It is a blind search for the unknown you, and you can only create this space (and move in it) because you are looking for an unknown other (that you love).

A Lover’s Discourse is structured by “figures”—images and sites—that appear in a flow of language, since these are words proffered by someone. The body that carries the words is a “statue”: a beginning or an end of a movement. It is a state of waiting (making me question what the movement is, and making me realise that we can never grasp it, since it is mysterious, just as the end and the beginning are). So we may say that the figure is like a seed (this is a transference of love, and also amorous feelings). We can never know, however, if the seed will grow in the other. It is also important to say that “languages” are different from one another, and we share a limited ground of “common language.” The lover gives its substance (body/words) to the other (who might adapt to it or not) in a transference of love; the two together mould themselves in order to feed a “we”—a territory with new symbolic meanings. It is necessary to empty oneself in order to receive the other.

The figures are placed in alphabetic order, so the structure of this book is open and does not aim to create a meaning, or linearity. In this sense, there is a balance between chance and logic. If the book’s structure relied only on not giving space to chance, it would create logic; however, you need some chance to create a “monster”—which comes from your own affirmation (you do not know if what you are becoming will be good or evil: you are a non-body figure (monster); this body is partly you and partly the other; somehow you lose gender). In this “philosophy of love,” you are traced by the other, you are in a constant quest for the other that you will never know, but this can be a gentle quest, it can be harmonious from the moment you understand how to maintain love free from ruin.

A lover’s discourse must start from mutilated sentences, and these only come out in a flow of language that leaves you with the anxiety. (Anxiety becomes a figure since it grows in you—it is a waiting, suspended state of not knowing. You are affected by a language that is also affected in itself [this is the transference].) If you are indifferent to this affected language, it means you are not loving and open to the other; since you are not moved by it, you are not willing to change with this other.

I merged into the adventure of an amorous love story. I wrote a book with very scenic and visual words—from a history and a monologue. Facts and fears. Release the hands. Jump.

“2. The crisis of engulfment can come from a wound, but also from a fusion: we die together from loving each other: an open death, by dilution into the ether, a closed death of the shared grave. / Engulfment is a moment of hypnosis. A suggestion functions, which commands me to swoon without killing myself. Whence, perhaps, the gentleness of the abyss: I have no responsibility here, the act (of dying) is not up to me: I entrust myself, I transmit myself (to whom? to God, to Nature, to everything, except to the other).”

—Roland Barthes¹⁰

“... the loved being must enter into the melancholy of his own collapse. And concurrently with my own mourning. I must anticipate and assume this melancholy on the part of the other, from which I shall suffer, for I love the other still. / The true act of mourning is not to suffer from the loss of the loved object; it is to discern one day, on the skin of the relationship, a certain tiny stain, appearing there as the symptom of a certain death: for the first time I am doing harm to the one I love, involuntarily, of course, but without panic.”

—Roland Barthes¹¹

2

I understood: I was writing the Book, but, after all, it was the Book who wrote me.

I must confess that I was writing without knowing what I was writing or why I was writing. It was a physical need, a fever, to put on paper the symptoms of my body and spirit. Now I know I was tracing a path into the darkness, and I know I could only do it because I was receiving the love from the man next to me. Without that protection, I would become paralysed.

The first part of the book called itself *Affects*, and now that I look back, I understand my affected state—a total incomprehension of facts and feelings while they grew. My characters (the young women) were aliens and zombies—an effect of solitude, maybe, of being unrooted or empty. They were bleeding from their hearts, becoming insensible to their own and to other people’s sorrows. Their pain became chronic, a daily thing that passed unnoticed. They were puppets of their own theatre—where the body, the affects, and love were mocked.

When I started to write, I also started to eat regularly. I rebuilt my fragile body, but stayed adrift, without empathy and without menstruation. And in the fight between love and cowardice, the fear of my own heart was still winning—the one that did not know its own limits, the one that I feared capable of abandoning a child with no mercy, or of betraying a husband without feeling guilty. My being was in a process of transformation, *I* in the middle of becoming-a-woman. My incapacity to love revealed itself, in this state, as a superficial cover capable of protecting my interior. Although late, this revelation arrived in time to purify my memories and rescue my feelings from misery.

As I said, I did not understand the process while it was occurring, because I was hearing authoritarian and oppositional voices coming from dark areas of my being. The world was reduced to the surface; to lines and skin. Defence mechanisms were triggered. Consciousness of Death—Eroticism. Destructive Fantasies; passing wills. Fetishes. My body as an object. I seemed so sure of myself, when, in reality, I was so attached to solitude, to food, and to ghosts. This would even give me the impression that a boundary between me and him, or between me and home, never existed. It seemed that complicity and love were illusions of the past.

I did not know how to separate the I-artist from the I-woman, and in that confusion, I oscillated between avoiding and falling into my love’s love. I realised that this blindness was forcing me to look inside; then I searched for the place where my affects became insensible and I found a cancer growing in my guts and an infected heart. I was squeezing the pus, while a miracle was foreshadowed in the Book. I entered the darkness of light then, without fearing the abyss—because deep inside I knew he was waiting for me and I had a home that I could go back to, I knew there were no obstacles or an end in sight; the end and death were already in me. I still could not see us (he and I), but the Book was announcing “we.”





A place in my heart accepted the end. The writing foreshadowed the deep suicide, the killing, and then the encounter with the void happened. The fear of writing too, but I kept going. My book was nothing more than an extension of my senses, and my videos were an extension of a gaze—an offer of physical and temporal movement. Exposing my interior provided the strength to awaken obscure areas of the one who felt my language—it generated fear, distrust, disbelief—but how to explain that my destructive gift was a strong transference of love? It was transformative. The future and life demanded it; I love you, therefore I form myself and I give you my substance to be formed, and if we love each other, we transform ourselves.

The second part of the Book called itself *Miracles*. I entered into *Miracles* when hate and pain were shaped and confronted. The hate ended up collapsing and disbelief took over. First the horrible and unbearable guilt overtook me—I did not understand why I was killing my love. I lived this guilt as a somnambulist. Every night I was taken by nightmares in which friends and unknown people violated me. I was lying down over the dead and I could not touch them. I was hoping that *he* and *I*, in that dark place, could touch each other and incorporate the “we” that exists between us. I was starting to understand that, without death, we would become sterilised. Living the loss was needed. He stopped seeing me, and “we.”

And so I caressed his abandonment, its inevitable death; with innocence and joy, because I was no longer alone, I was seeing him next to me, over the cold stone of the tomb; sharing my mourning. That is when I knew that his love for me was deep and true. Suddenly we switched bodies: stable and rational me, uncertain and confused he. How hard it is to lose identity; it makes you want to go back, rummage through the memories, regress. But this labour is inevitable and pushes us into the world. We close our eyes then; will I see myself in my old body when I open it, or will I be forever a deformed body constituted by parts of you and me? I opened my eyes: yes, in front of me there was a “we,” but what about him?

I saw a new man at home. I saw another “he” in the kitchen, washing the white pot with the two-year-old dishwasher detergent, and I knew I was loving, and that our death was Life—it was the impossible encounter, the profound touch in the guts of our Beings. We were a new territory to be explored, without the need of conquering or possession, we were the beach, the countryside, and the sea that belong to everyone. Then I felt a deformed and luminescent mass incubate in my centre. It hurt while growing. It hurt because it was transforming me into something unknown; it could be beautiful or not; it hurt because it was still a sketch, a wall ready to become free.

The pain collapsed in this sublime experience. I gained two new eyes, without colour or matter, miraculous because now I was not seeing only death. I could finally see Life. Inside of me there was a child, a free life. How can I say what it is to

1

traces of a private book

Part I, Affects:

She initiates the Process.

A young woman receives the Death.

A young woman receives the invisible.

“02

Man: What’s the matter with you?

Woman: I feel invisible.

Man: You know, maybe that cannot be sorted out with only bread.”

“21

The baker was thinking of visibility, something that could be seen but not touched.

The baker was told that the solution is not only bread. She doubts believing it. *People say many things*, she thought sceptically. The dough was fermenting in a bowl covered with worn-out rags.

The baker worries about her project: *It needs me and I’m fading away, stopping being me, wishing to be someone else—visible and projected, wrapped in white. Opaque white, shining, spiral that comes from my inner centre to the world. I love them and they don’t know it.* The dough has risen.

My project needs flour, white with puffy particles so then I can spray the world. So then I can throw it in the sea and mould it.

The baker questioned herself about her project: *Why does it need me and flour? The water is transparent and I’m diaphanous matter, which I try to erase. People say that this can’t be resolved with only bread, and I’m starting to believe it.* There is more beyond the mould.

In the end, the baker has concluded that visibility is important, the white is important, and believing is important.—Yes, I’m going to blow the flour and wish to be white and opaque, she said.

*

—You’re so white and beautiful,—Am I?,—Yes, you are,—I’ve always wanted to be white and beautiful, do you see me like that? Do you?!

*

—You know, I think you should use your body to express yourself, you’re so delicate and graceful,—Would that be enough? ... I mean ... to be graceful is not enough, the flesh must be rendered visible.

*

The baker closed the oven. The bread smokes.”

feel the unconditional love and strength of an I-mother? Only by loving, and I loved you and I love you, simply loving. You are the man of I-woman because you loved me and, somehow, you knew you had to abandon me to the world, making me embrace the world, renouncing myself to its creator.

This way, the word “father” stopped being a heavy weight on my spirit, since my mourning expanded to my own father. I killed this part of my blood, because only by making an orphan of this part of me could I become a mother.

The third part of the book is unwritten. It is to be lived. I asked: “*what to do with the hopes?*” and I gave freedom to the words to obtain their own answers.

I (re)presented myself expelling the last breath of my soul. But my works gained a new breath: artist-woman-mother. Here I am, on the scaffold.

(I, a trace)

“23

Love and *a hut*, I think. For the first time I understand this saying.

*

“My darling,

Last night I dreamed of you. I dreamed of your skin. When I opened my eyes I noticed they were wet with tears. Then I remembered the slight sway of the sea and our bodies abandoned to the beat of the waves.

Yours,
Darling”

*

—But who needs a hut?, she asked.”

Part 2, Miracles:

She initiates the End.

A young woman loses her hope.

A young woman loses her youth.

“I

The End

The artist woke up. She was reading until she fell into a light sleep, nevertheless repairing—one of those provided by a good lunch. The silence of the countryside was isolating the house and was letting the peace reign. So the astonishment of the artist when she woke up is understandable; everything was altered, her feelings were revolving. *It’s over?*, she thought, frightened.

Next to her, placed strategically on the sofa, was her laptop. The screen showed a white page, to be started, that was simply called Document 1.

The fear took her over, and with it some feelings of helplessness and distrust. She wanted to carry on with her book, she thought it was not ready. *How can it be? You cannot finish just like that.* But the book was telling her, very calmly, that it did not need her anymore. *Yes I am ready*, it said coldly, *leave me alone.*

The artist cowered on the corner of the sofa, covered with a blanket, hearing the cat’s breathing and the voice of the book that belonged to her. She did not move. *It’s not a dream; he left me.*

The void has sound.”

Part 3, Hopes:

She grew up.

A woman walks alone.

A woman walks experienced.





- 1 Toril Moi, "Freud and Love: Treatment and Its Discontents," in Julia Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 238–39.
- 2 Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 9.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Julia Kristeva, "The True Real," in *The Kristeva Reader*, 236.
- 6 Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 6.
- 7 Georges Bataille, *The Tears of Eros* (San Francisco: City Light Book, 1989), 129.
- 8 Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 11.
- 9 Ibid., 12.
- 10 Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* (London: Vintage, 2002), 10–11.
- 11 Ibid., 108.

Readings

Buck, Pearl S., *The Mother*
 Dostoyevsky, Fyodor, *The Brothers Karamazov*
 Munro, Alice, *The Love of a Good Woman*
 Queiroz, Eça de, *The City and the Mountains*
 Lagerlöf, Selma, *Gösta Berling's Saga*
 Lispector, Clarice, *The Passion According to G.H.*
 Lispector, Clarice, *A Descoberta do Mundo (Chronicles)*
 Lispector, Clarice, *Family Ties*
 Saramago, José, *Baltasar and Blimunda*
 Saramago, José, *All the Names*
 Saramago, José, *The Double*
 Saramago, José, *Essay on Blindness*
 Tabucchi, Antonio, *Pereira Maintains*
 Woolf, Virginia, *Orlando*



Ave, 2016. Video, music, chiffon fabric, rose, glass, steel chain. 25:00 min video and music loop. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Tomas Sjögren





Ave, 2016. Detail. Video, music, chiffon fabric, rose, glass, steel chain. 25:00 min video and music loop. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Tomas Sjögren

Beyond the Veil of Tears

“It’s very tempting to become an angel, but there’s a thin line between being an angel and not being at all. Many young artists are tempted by dematerialization; it’s the angel’s leap. They don’t want to die, they want to *be dead*, that is, to be deprived in a certain way of the bother of having a body, the bother of feeling tired, of being disturbed by the people around.”¹

—Paul Virilio

Dove

Noah sent out a dove to find land. It came back without success. He waited for seven more days and then sent out the dove again, and it returned that very same evening with a freshly picked olive leaf in its beak. Now Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth. He then released the dove one more time, but this time it didn’t return. It is said the dove didn’t have to, since it had found its new home on land. But what if the dove never landed? What if it is still up there, in the polluted skies? When I arrived outside the gallery on the seventh day of my exhibition *Ave* (2016), I found a dead dove next to the entrance. A gust of wind turned the dove’s body around and its eyes looked right at me. The digital dove in *Ave* is a dove without a physical form that has been eternalised away from a bodily form made of flesh. It has become an immortal avatar. Its lifespan has, with the help of electricity, become a never-ending video loop where the same landscape and water are being perceived over and over again. But what happens with the dove’s symbolic value when it has been reborn into “ones and zeros”? Has this dove been deprived of its holiness, and thus received the same status as a street pigeon—not of more value than a rat? Or does this new form actually bring it even closer to its sign as the Holy Spirit? That divine white dove that God, according to the Gospel of Luke, appeared as when Jesus was baptised: “and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove” (Luke 3:22). These extreme poles that the dove commutes between in mythology, symbolism, and status make it into a rewarding but also risky character to work with. Its meaning is constantly shifting direction. But the dove is only

one part of *Ave*, and I understand now, while writing this essay, that my work is very much about motion of various kinds. This motion is strongly related to emotion and dematerialisation, which in this essay I will try to investigate mainly with the help of the book *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, by the French philosopher Paul Virilio. A book that has perhaps more sociopolitical force today than it had when it came out in 1980. Virilio’s theories could be read as a virulent attack upon the direction our smartphoning, texting, twittering, Facebook-addicted societies are headed, but I myself am not ready to without further ado agree with all his doomsday prophesies. I’ve picked out certain parts of his argumentation, and in this essay I’d like to shed some new light on them, in relation to my own work. For me the “angel’s leap” isn’t necessarily something negative, and, in my opinion, to work as an artist in ways of dematerialisation and embracing modern technology can also be a subversive act. It is all about how one positions oneself, or how one disappears and recurs. As a game avatar you can die, and one second later respawn at a different location. Lately I’ve found myself respawned in a place of tones and rhythm. I’ve begun to feel alienated and tired of the art world, and have instead approached music. I’ve decided that if I’m going to continue on this path—to continue to work with art—I have to become more fluid. More like liquid; pouring out into all the new directions I feel and not letting old ideas control me. This essay is structured as a kind of dissection of my latest work, *Ave*, which was presented as a video and music installation at KHM Gallery in 2016, but I will occasionally dive into some older works that relate to similar questions.



Ave, 2016. Video, music, chiffon fabric, rose, glass, steel chain. 25:00 min video and music loop. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Tomas Sjögren

Drone

The forms and abilities our world carries seems to be related to what kind of body or tool allows us to perceive them. Virilio writes: “all you can see is the instant of the glance, isn’t it only the imposture of the immediate, the untimely hijacking of a convoy of objective elements, among which operates the ‘shooting’ of vision?”² What he refers to here is the violent act of seeing, how the eye focuses and weeds out all the perceived information except the “prey” it has interest for. In this sense, the drone becomes the technologically extended eye in the hunt of sight. We primarily recognise this phenomenon from military purposes, where the drone with its bird’s-eye view takes on a role as supervisor of the earth’s surface and certain individuals. The question is what kind of overview this perspective actually generates, and what actually happens when we in this manner distance and anonymise our vision

of the world. Just like the bird Jonathan Livingston Seagull, who betrayed his assigned life as seagull and instead chose to fly higher than all the other seagulls, the drone in *Ave* has abandoned its mission as supervisor from above. It has left the skies behind and instead approaches the ground to contemplate Earth’s matter up close, to feel the autumn leaves gusting up from the whirl of its rotor blades. And like an inverted Icarus it will as soon as it touches the ground meet its fate. But maybe, during the few minutes before this happens, it just wants to see what no drone’s eye was meant to see. A coniferous spruce, the glittering frost on the rocks, its own reflection in the shiny ice. The drone’s mechanical movement through nature changes nature itself, which now appears artificial and almost computer generated to a human eye. Its way of frictionless movement through space is similar to the aesthetics of first-person shooter video games.

When I have played these, and through the controller occupied various types of virtual bodies, I have noticed that the only visible parts of most of these bodies are hands. The function of these hands is almost exclusively to hold a weapon. If one is to look down, and thus try to discover the rest of one's "body," there will be nothing there except the ground under one's own vision. No feet, no legs, no torso—just hands. This vision and these hands thus seem to exist on their own, free-floating in the air while the rest of one's body—ghastly enough—is missing. The drone is in the same state. Because of how its body has been constructed and how its eye is placed, it can never witness its own components other than through a reflection—except, of course, if they have been ripped off and placed in its field of vision. The drone's body is not organic in the same fashion as ours, of flesh and blood. Thus it doesn't relate to the laws of physics in the same way. It shoots through the air like an arrow, like a blade that cuts through butter; its propellers chop up our three-dimensional space. The drone in *Ave* is dedicated to non-linear movement; that is, movement for the sake of movement. It pays visits to its closest surroundings, and it is programmed to return to its starting point once the battery runs low. With the help of GPS coordinates, it remembers that place. And as battery death approaches, it insistently goes back there to deplete its last percent of power at this very position before its motor stops and it falls to the ground. Because of this the drone in *Ave* never succeeds in flying very far, since its homesickness always seems stronger than the will to discover and register large swaths of new territory.

Touch

The fine pieces of grey chiffon that hang in the exhibition, reaching from the ceiling to the floor and from wall to wall, split the room into two sections. But they are also transparent, and thus allow a glimpse of the beyond. They are see-through, as are the hands present in two of the videos behind the fabric, as if the landscape around them has pierced right through. As if the body was the world. The skin is the limit of the body, but to think like that is a limitation in itself, since affects from our surroundings constantly pour into us. Defending ourselves from this bombardment is hopeless. The world cuts its way right through our skin and I wonder, is there actually any border? We watch our hands and discover that they exist in the world, a mess of matter, and we are everything and nothing simultaneously. We approach the water's edge or a thicket of fern where butterflies are born and ascend from the soil, we think we are anonymous bystanders with autonomous vision, but suddenly two hands appear in our field of sight and we are forced to relate to a body into which everything incessantly streams. But what are the origins of this body? I come to think of the TV series *Battlestar Galactica* (2004–09), which takes place in a world where mankind's technological advancement has resulted in machines, called Cylons,

that have developed their own consciousness and bodies so similar to humans that it's impossible to tell the difference. For the small number of humans that the series revolves around, the ones who haven't yet been extinguished by the Cylons' revenge, religious ritual has become increasingly important. Maybe they use it as a way to keep their "humanity" and to establish a barrier as protection from the instrumental nihilism ascribed to the machines. In a scene from the third episode of the second season, several human soldiers that were killed by Cylons on the planet Kobol are buried. "Lords of Kobol, take these brave men into your arms. Take the spirits of our fallen friends so that they may share in the everlasting life that awaits us all beyond the veil of tears. So say we all," says the character Crashdown in a prayer over his dead friends' graves. This place beyond the tears and sorrow's veil is solely reserved for the "real" humans. It is a place along the lines of an eternal heaven among the gods, located far away from the terror of the machines. But the question regarding what a "real" human actually is is perhaps the most fundamental one of the series. What makes us believe that the border between human body and machine couldn't be completely wiped out? If the machines also had bodies to touch and be touched with, and to perceive feelings to the same extent we do, who are they to be denied the paradise beyond the veil of tears?

Motion

Present in the word "emotion" is the word "motion." Touch is as temporal and subject to perish as movement, as ever changing and transient as the life of a rose that has had its stem cut off. You could call *Ave* a video installation, but that would also be misleading. For me, the video material was not the fundamental component of the installation; the audio and the chiffon fabric were just as important. They were crucial for the piece to work at all. Something that I set out to challenge was the hegemony of vision, the idea that sight, for some reason, is the essential and most "true" sense for processing and taking in the world's impressions. Virilio describes how the original ability to see has been disrupted and distorted by technology's accelerating speed:

The cinematic motor has accustomed us to finding the mystery of movement in this transitory world natural, to no longer wonder how acceleration of amorous gesture can suddenly become murderous, how the Pavan dance of a falling or propelled body can become fatal. At the same time this vulgarized violence of movement, revealed by the distortion of vision, shows us its inconsistency; the violence of speed dominates the technical world but remains nevertheless, as in the time of the Sphinx, the basic enigma.³

Virilio addresses the fact that because technology has remained a mystery to mankind, it has resulted in a

situation where we have been seduced so severely by it that we may have become incapable of conceiving its effect on our existence. The kinetic motor's entrance, the moving image, have in the long run corrupted our experience of the world and ensnared us in a trance of speed. It has made us numb before movement's temporal transiency and immanent violence. But what if technology could somehow enable even more refined forms of movement for mankind, motions that we earlier could only dream of? What if the mystery of technology is connected to other enigmas concerning our existence, to questions we always pondered but never found answers to? In a two-channel video installation from 2014 called *Deserted*, I similarly proceeded from these ideas of movement and technological mystery. I let my old Super 8 camera obtain a consciousness of its own, and I also gave it the ability to fly. The loose narrative of the piece insinuates a desert trip with a fatal outcome, not far from the one in the movie *Gerry* (2002) by Gus Van Sant, where two friends with the same name get lost in a desert. At this time I had just read Carlos Castaneda's books about the shaman Don Juan and his views on the act of *seeing* and his understanding of multidimensional spirit worlds. With *Deserted*, I wanted to approach similar questions about seeing and what could happen to perception in a desert landscape that is so "empty" and monotone in relation to impressions and alterations. I was interested in questions regarding the body, and what happens to our senses once dehydration strikes and how hallucinogenic plants visually alter our surroundings. This took the form of attempting different operations in my video material, and these operations were initiated by making use of several types of errors in the rendering of the material. In a central scene of the installation, the viewer is confronted with a human skeleton laying in the sand, and beside it a Super 8 camera. The next moment the camera becomes alive and starts moving; it levitates in front of our eyes, engaged in a slow rotation. Parallel to this event is a sequence that was or is being filmed by the camera itself. It is unclear if this material is being recorded simultaneous with the camera's rotation or if it is dated fragments of memories that offer clues as to why this person died. Either way: this camera might be regarded as a sort of technological extension of the dead person's life and destiny, which, with the help of the mechanical motor's movement, is eternalised. As if its spirit had been picked up by the actual technological mystery and thus begun its final sightseeing expedition in the world before its immanent motion departs into infinity.

Rose

The rose in *Ave*, whose stem has been chopped by a sharp razor blade, is slowly withering away, sheltered in its shell of a glass dome but still forced to meet its cheerless fate. Projected on the wall is its shadow surrounded by the glass's mesmerising reflection, which resembles water in motion. But this water is only an image, a show to witness from a distance, and the rose

eventually dries into its death and becomes frozen in time, hanging in chains of steel armour. The only motion that remains for the rose is the slow static rotation it has been trapped in, propelled by an electric motor in the ceiling that has been wired to a wall socket. Unlike the rose in the Disney movie *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), which gently loses its petals in a fateful countdown to lost or won love, the rose in *Ave* has no obvious purpose. Abandoned to technology's mechanical and monotonous dance, its life burns out over a night without water, while its digital and electronic surrounding continues its eternal loop. As a symbol the rose has a quite empty and banal implication, and this part of the installation has inexorably a kind of kitschy and frank presence. But this rose should not be read only as a classic symbol of love but also as a reminder of the emotion's growing dispersal in technology's accelerating advancement—a reminder that the fate of the rose is also our own. That the lack of water, which in astrology represents the world of emotion, leads to our disappearance from this world. A world that through technology has been completely put in a place of accelerating motion and where speed has become our prime life delusion.

Water

In the video sequences placed on the floor behind the fabric, the dove flies over never-ending water without ever reaching land. Above this water levitates a vision and two extended human hands, which occasionally seem to be grasping for the dove. But is this dove really, like Noah's dove, looking for land, or is eternal water and eternal motion the actual final destination? Is it located far away from technology's presence, or has it, because of its technological genesis, reached this place above the water's surface? Has the mechanical engine saved the dove from a world of ageing and death and allowed us humans to fly by its side forever young like Peter Pan over the ocean's vastness? Hito Steyerl's video essay *Liquidity Inc.* (2014) begins with a slowly appearing view of an ocean and Bruce Lee's voice saying: "You must be shapeless, formless, like water. When you pour water in a cup, it becomes the cup. When you pour water in a bottle, it becomes the bottle. When you pour water in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Water can drip and it can crash. Become like water, my friend." The film continues to show similarities between water and martial arts, how fighters need to transform into water to become liquid and thereby enter a state of constant movement to defeat their opponents. Steyerl means that this transformation for an individual can become a subversive political strategy and thus allow a position of invisibility in the information age's obsession with transparency. In *Liquidity Inc.* water becomes almost like a character with its own voice, saying: "I run through your veins. Your eyes. Your touchscreens and portfolios. I am gushing through your heart, plumbing, and wires. I am liquidity incorporated." We are made of water; maybe it's something we have forgotten as a result of



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information's blinding light? My interpretation is that Steyerl makes an attempt to sound out the remaining freedom of action that political individuals and subjects have in the face of the inextricable interlacing of digital streams of information, economic interests, and social and cultural distortions. In the video installation *Factory of the Sun* (2015), Steyerl leads us in a similar manner to the very core of the debates of our digital present. It is not without a certain bitter irony that Steyerl weighs up the utopian potential of the Internet against its "deadly transparency." In this video work it is light, instead of water, that becomes the lodestar. *Factory of the Sun* slips into the form of a computer game, so as to draw on the narrative structure of popular entertainment and establish a more favourable position from which to do battle. As a result, everything in this game is based on the immateriality of light as a medium of information, physical bodies, and values. It is through dancing that the young pro-

tagonists in the film embrace this immateriality and use it as a strategy in the fight against their enemies for the supremacy of information. I think that the game as a platform for formulating strategies of embracing immateriality is very effective. This strategic use of light, liquidity, and motion is very applicable to first-person shooter online games, where one needs to master all of these elements to win. In this fatal dance of death, one has to float like water through 3D-generated battle arenas quicker than the enemy. Preferably at the speed of light even, if one were able to manoeuvre that fast. Speed thus becomes something desirable and very crucial. The accelerating velocity can, however, cause an increased risk of disorientation, since one's attention as player ultimately can't match the heightened pace of impressions on the screen. A machine would therefore be the ultimate fighter in this sense, since its "consciousness" is not troubled by bodily and psychological fatigue in the same manner.





Ave, 2016. Video, music, chiffon fabric, rose, glass, steel chain. 25:00 min video and music loop. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Tomas Sjögren

Sad Rap

"I'm trying to access that interesting space in rap where there is shame in shedding a tear. I'm saying it might be OK to cry," said Prada Mane in an interview about his music.⁴ He doesn't seem to be alone in his attempt to access that place, however. After hip-hop began its sort of emotional and introspective trip as a result of Kanye West's 2008 album *808s & Heartbreak*, Internet spaces such as SoundCloud and YouTube have been completely overrun by autotune-drowned beats that might loosely be called "sad rap." The music of this Internet-based scene consistently revolves around emotions connected to ideas about technology and consumption. "It's a summertime anthem for a suburban generation stuck scrolling through Twitter on miserably long, empty days, paradoxically taking the opportunity of sunny weather to spend their time in pristine air-conditioned rooms shopping for another life," writes blogger T Swift, in relation to the track "spellbound" by Swedish rapper Bladee, where the lyrics go: "Money got me spellbound, hit the mall in the sunshine."⁵ T Swift moves on to the track "ebay": "it pays testimony to the same experience on a digital plane; the tape meanders listlessly between the 'real' and the 'unreal', through screens and windows, making little distinction between the two and constantly searching for contact and meaning."⁶ I think T Swift here points out perhaps the most central themes of this specific wave of rap music. It takes its position in a feeling of alienation and disintegration that has its foundation in capitalism's technological journey toward *nothing*, that, as Virilo describes it, "would make of the derangement of the senses a permanent stage, conscious life becoming an oscillating trip whose only absolute poles would be birth and death; and all this would mean, of course, the end of religions and philosophies."⁷ Bladee's lyrics often reflect this nihilistic disorientation and meaninglessness in a capitalist world, where consumption of branded clothing and technological products have become synonymous with depression and death wishes, but at the same time are the only possibility of keeping up one's will to live. The lyrics "before I get my wrist cut, hope I don't miss much" from the song "kiss of death" tells something about the bodily death that always lingers around the next corner, only to be postponed out of the fear of missing out on something. As if there were a kind of hope in the sorrow inherent in the senses' constant failure to embrace *everything*. Or, as Bladee sings on the track "subaru": "Wanna be legend, so I live with depression."

Autotune Angel

Music has become the absolutely most central part of my artistic practice. If I can't make music, I can't make video. There is a sincerity in music that I appreciate, because it doesn't take any detours, and it lies in direct contact with one's emotions. To make music is for me to be located beyond myself; it is a kind of out-of-body experience. When I make music I experi-

ence a sort of dislocation of time and space, and also find that my identity and self-concept has changed. As if I, for an instant, become all that I ever wanted to be—whatever that is. It is no doubt something connected to dreams, a dreamlike state that is very fateful. The sounds are not only song and rhythm, they are something larger than life and death and everything at the same time. It is a mystery. My view on the voice's place in my music has changed since I started using the plugin Auto-Tune; while composing the music for *Ave*, I regarded my voice more as a musical instrument than something to express certain messages and words with. How the voice sounded became more important than what it said. I see autotune as a technological tool that not only allows anyone to sing in tune, but also as an instrument that enables distortion of one's voice and furthermore of one's character. Autotune is a vehicle that has the ability to transcend the borders of one's body and identity and thus begin new auditory movements. With the help of this plugin, one's voice obtains certain "perfection" in the sense that false notes are forced to correction. The side effect of this is the well-known robotic and metallic character the voice acquires. A machine traps the voice, and under the influence of this power it obtains new values but also reaches out to new worlds. As part of a previous installation from 2015, I arranged three scenes of a falling man who, seemingly by his own free will, jumped from different ledges. These three scenes were just like the dove in *Ave*: recorded from a video game. I named this piece *If u wanna be bird* and juxtaposed it with a music video for one of my songs. I appeared in this music video myself, and through the means of a "badly" applied chroma key to certain key areas, I emphasised that my presence had now become digital. That my body had been caught in a world of pixels and multiple layers of doves, flowers, and cell phones. But present in the music video is also the falling man's movement toward the ground, as well as the room where I recorded myself. And this room can clearly be recognised as the room where the work was presented. Consequently there is a circular movement in the installation between the music video, the falling man, and the room where the spectator is located. This installation, just as *Ave* does, asks questions about what kinds of abilities bodies obtain once they are no longer made of flesh and blood. What happens to our bodies once they have been translated into this new nature of "immaterial materials" that seem so distant from us but still so present? The music video and the falling man are loops that go around and around, repeating themselves in the exact same way every time. They happen in the present and yet they have already happened, in the sense that they consist of past events that were recorded. The falling man occurs in sequences that I gave a certain length, and they can be repeated infinitely. But once upon a time, I actually manoeuvred him in real time, and this happened only once, like every second of our lives. The feeling of controlling such game avatars lies very close



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to actually becoming them, and I wonder how closely we will approach them in the future. Maybe we will completely evaporate into them so that there won't remain any difference between "real" and "unreal," in a place where our old world no longer can be distinguished from our new one, and where we have all turned into autotune angels.

Apatheia

I regard the soundtrack in *Ave* as both a machine and a mystery, and maybe these are actually the same thing. Virilio contends that the mystery of the technical machine today has been discovered anew: "We are currently rediscovering the mystery of the technical motor, we apprehend it less now as an object of consumption susceptible of being desired or rejected than as a strange processional accompaniment, outside of history, scarcely even geographic, a play of representations of the Self close to a dreamlike false day."⁸ So, despite technology's constant presence in our lives these days, we have never been able to understand it. It still appears as very mysterious and in many ways unexplainable, like something other than us, despite it being of our own creation. And closer and closer it moves back toward our bodies, in a seduction that resembles love, where we are led astray and our original human form is on the brink of disintegration. The music in *Ave* is the main motor of the whole exhibition, a relation between tones and beats in constant alteration, there to catch the auditory attention of the visitors and to reduce the power of other senses, to diminish the ubiquitous presence of sight's hegemony. Therefore, the music shouldn't be thought of as an ordinary "movie soundtrack," because in this case the audio came first, and I, at least, regard it as the very centre. That is, the soundtrack isn't there to strengthen the visual material; on the contrary, I regard the video sequences as an extension of the music, not so far off from the principle of a music video. The voice and the other sounds exist in themselves; they came to this world through a bodily movement but still linger, because of some unexplainable reason. It has a resemblance to Uyulala's voice in the classic fantasy book

The Neverending Story (1979), a voice that is detached from a bodily entity and slowly fades away. This voice is the only remaining piece of an oracle that guides the hero, Atreyu, in his attempt to save the world. Atreyu asks Uyulala: "Have you no body, is that what you mean? Or is it only that you can't be seen?," and the oracle answers: "Yes and no and neither one. I do not appear in the brightness of the sun, as you appear, for my body is but sound that one can hear but never see, and this voice you're hearing now is all there is to me." Atreyu continues to ask her how he is supposed to save the Childlike Empress from her deadly disease, but despite time running short, the oracle persistently subjects him to different tests and riddles before suddenly fading away completely after proclaiming: "That is for you alone to decide. I've told you what was in my heart. So this is when our ways divide, when you and I must part."⁹ The answer to what Atreyu has to do to stop this *nothing* from devouring the world is, according to Uyulala, already lingering inside him, and the act that is necessary to make it visible is perhaps only a bodily or sensuous movement. It is not clear why Uyulala refuses to give Atreyu any explicit answers, but perhaps the reason is that direct and plain information would somehow be hollow in meaning, as if it consisted of a kind of empty light that cannot help Atreyu but only shatter his perception, and thus fatally lead him away from the answers he seeks. In our own world this empty light is, according to Virilio, closely bound to technology, nailed to our computers and touchscreens, and "of the mirage of information precipitated on the computer screen—what is given is exactly the information but not the sensation; it is *apatheia*, this scientific impassibility which makes it so that the more informed man is the more the desert of the world expands around him."¹⁰ Perhaps the bodily shape that can be glimpsed in *Ave* is, in contemplating its own transparent and computerised hands, this stream of information, a disintegrated human that, now fragmented and distorted, can remember the matter it once consisted of and was surrounded by. A cyborg angel that seeks the answers that failed to arrive in the stream of information.

1 Paul Virilio, *Paul Virilio Live: Selected Interviews*, ed. John Armitage (London: SAGE Publications, 2001), 137.

2 Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, trans. Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotexte, 1991), 37.

3 *Ibid.*, 100.

4 Prada Mane, quoted in Paul Lester, "Original Angst—Why the Stars of Sad Rap Aren't Afraid to Cry," *Guardian*, March 5, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/mar/05/original-angst-why-the-stars-of-sad-rap-arent-afraid-to-cry>.

5 T Swift, "Bladee, *old swedish hardcore punk Mix*," *aqnb*, July 9, 2014, <http://www.aqnb.com/2014/07/09/bladee-old-swedish-hardcore-punk-mix/>.

6 *Ibid.*

7 Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, 105–06.

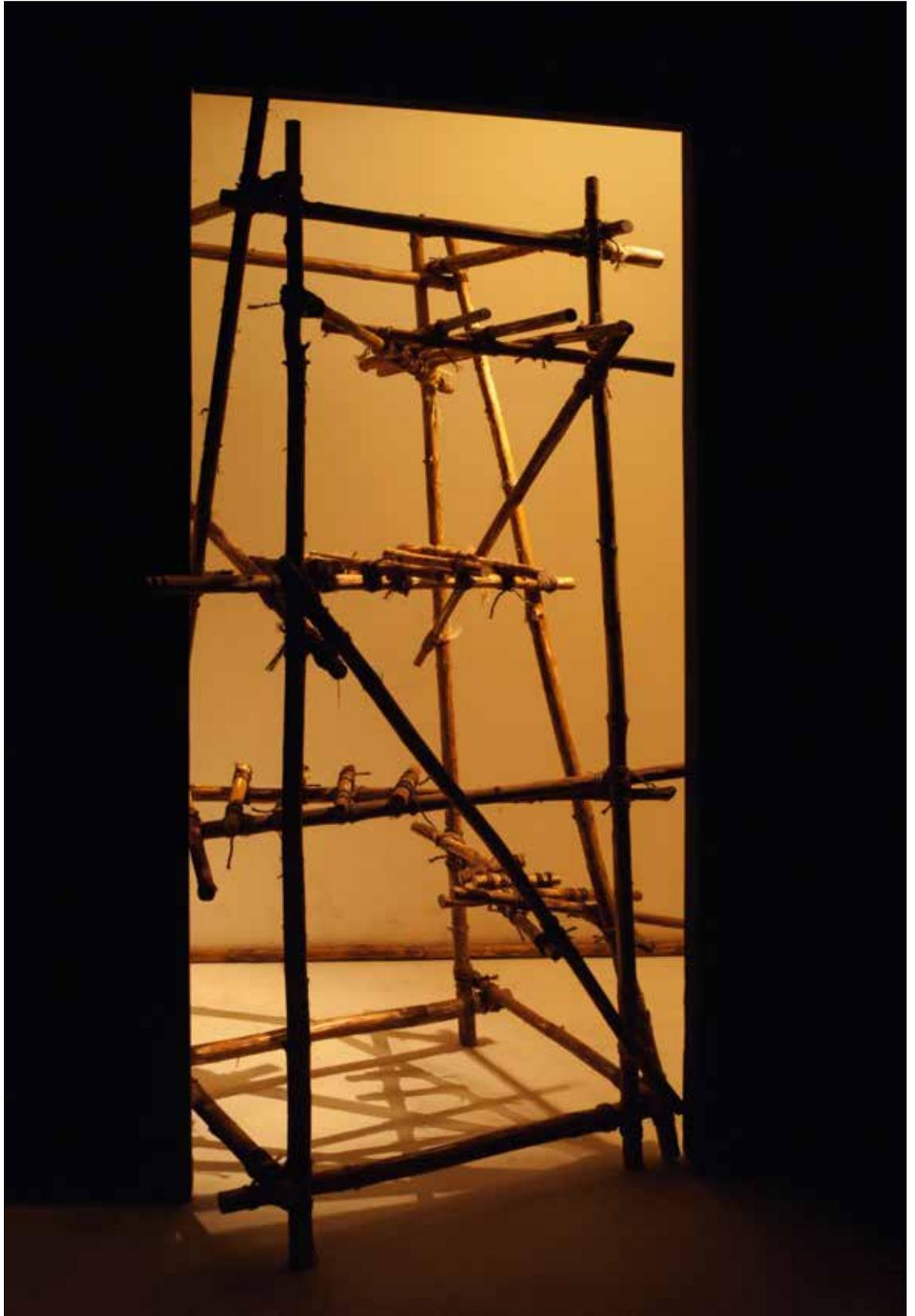
8 *Ibid.*, 107.

9 Michael Ende, *The Neverending Story*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 45–48.

10 Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, 46.



Cords & Crossings, 2016. Detail. Wood, chalk paint, fabric, coffee filters, strings. Dimensions variable. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Daniel Seferian Spies



Cords & Crossings, 2016. Detail. Wood, strings, nails. Dimensions variable. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Daniel Seferian Spies



Cords & Crossings, 2016. Wood, chalk paint, fabric, coffee filters, strings. Dimensions variable. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Daniel Seferian Spies

Tropes of an Excursion

“Indiscretion as an excess of communication with others, misunderstanding as a lack of communication also with others, forgetfulness as a lack of communication with oneself, nostalgia as an excess of communication also with oneself.”

—Claude Lévi-Strauss¹

On Monday, November 2, 2015, I stepped out of Bole International Airport and onto the streets of Addis Ababa, capital of Ethiopia. It had been on a Sunday, here, the very same date eighty-five years ago, that a noble Ras Tafari had been coronated as Negusa Nagast, king of kings and lord of lords.² This was Emperor Haile Selassie I, who would turn out to be the last monarch in the lineage of King Solomon and in the history of Abyssinia.

I have had a long lasting fascination with this Conquering Lion of Judah and the amalgam of stories pertaining to his personage. Lij Tafari Makonnen, the son of a governor and warlord, would end up as one of Africa’s most renowned leaders—founding the African Union and making Ethiopia a member of the League of Nations, the first country of the continent to become one. He was, to some, a rightful ruler, regarded even as a messianic redeemer, while in the eyes of others, he was a brass-bound dictator and a tyrant.³

So comprehensive, and full of contradictions, are the stories and reputation of this emperor that one is likely to lose one’s breath long before ever getting to the bottom of it. Nevertheless, it was indeed one of the numerous tales about Emperor Haile Selassie that had brought me to Addis Ababa: the story of the Arba Lijoch, or of the king and the forty orphans. It is an account that, despite its fantastical suggestions, with similarities to everything from *The Prince and the Pauper* to *A Thousand and One Nights*, must be credited largely to the historical side of the truth.

As it goes, it was 1924 when Tafari, preceding his enthronement, decided to pay visits to Europe and the Middle East—to vouch for his sovereignty and establish coveted relations.⁴ Tafari soon reached Jerusalem, and entering through the Zion Gate, he found himself facing the Armenian church of Saint Jacob. He had only just entered the city’s Armenian Quarter when a tune “with their tubas, cornets, woodwinds, drums, and other instruments” was struck, and “walking on his knees Haile Selassie gradually approached

a welcoming party of Armenians who he greeted with tears and kisses.”⁵ Learning that the musicians were forty orphans, most of them around the age of thirteen, Tafari immediately arranged for their adoption, and thus eventually the children all returned with the emperor to his court.⁶

It is a story so good that it hardly could be true, as they say. My journey to Ethiopia, however, would prove itself to be less of an attempt to verify this episode of history or to confirm or discover its *truth*. It became rather, one might say, something of a *pilgrimage*—a quest to establish a visual and material connection with the story, to give it a shape, a figure. “To talk of myths as states is to talk of myths as moments of complete immersion,” I remember reading in the press release for an exhibition by Alexander Tovborg, entitled *The Myth Is a State*. It continued: “a moment of living or rather of embodying the myth. It is a process, an active participation. A question of being.”⁷ This is a statement to which I am inclined to apply, insofar as embodying could imply the giving of shape, a gesticulation of figures. And that state may suggest a tabulation of the chronological order—an “unfolding of the discourse,” as Jean-François Lyotard would say, in order to “open itself up to grazing.”⁸

“I’m a bad liar; I don’t know what to say backstage.”⁹

Ever since my childhood, the sound of fading applause tends to stir within me a sense of excited apprehension. An evocation that, I believe, stems from some of my earliest memories—recollections of, once the lights had gone out and the audience had left, being taken by the hand and led behind the scenes of my father’s marionette theatre.

It was an utterly ambiguous experience, presenting itself at once as both a devastating disillusion and a magical revelation. A dreamlike feeling of being, in a mythological state, brought like another Enoch to the backstage of the world itself.¹⁰ To behold the moon and the sun, shoulder to shoulder, shining

in a duet of coloured paper. Cotton clouds dangling beneath rivers of foil and snow-capped mountains resting on top of castles. Yet, most remarkable of all, were the wooden bodies, hanging, held up—and descending—suspended by the very strings that had just moments ago animated and moved them through their world. To me, hardly any instance can manifest more clearly the unfolding of a discourse.

It had been with the same sense of excited apprehension that I exited Bole Airport. “To see is to forget the name of the thing one sees,” Paul Valéry is claimed to have said,¹¹ as such prescribing a loss of language that would affect me throughout my pilgrimage.

During my time in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia’s “New Flower,” I would in the company of my dear friends and guides, Tewodros and Solomon, visit as many places as possible pertaining to the story of the king and the forty orphans. One such place was the former royal stables, now utilised by the national army. They proved to be an engrossingly ramshackle setup, which, with their ranks of bony horses, might as well have been a slaughterhouse. “MUSCLES ARE SLAVES OF THE BRAIN MUSCLES DO NOT LEARN,” read faded writing on the wall.

Another site was the former Volkswagen compound, established by one of the late forty orphans as the first car trader in the country. Now, however, the business had been sold to Adika, a brand-new taxi company. As such, besides a few old photographs of an unmistakably Armenian gentleman, all traces of this orphan appeared to have gone. That is, of course, besides the numerous old VWs found around Addis Ababa—most of which looked to be as exhausted as the horses in their stalls.

And then of course there was the Gannata Le’ul palace, the Paradise of Princes. The emperor’s old residence, with its beautiful garden and springs, now functions as a university compound. Meanwhile, most of the palace itself has been turned into a perplexing combination of a historical and ethnological museum, housing in its centre the Library of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies. On the first floor, however, the king of king’s personal dwelling remains conserved. Here I found myself wandering through the emperor’s chambers, not unlike drifting around backstage. The majestic costumes, ceremonial equipment, and dormant objects—props awaiting the replay of history—relayed a story of imperial glory, but also of a violent coup d’état, as was revealed once I entered the royal bathroom, where both tourists and local students were busy shooting selfies in the bullet-hole-riddled mirror.

It was not unlike being backstage, yet an aspect of the experience was far from similar—since here, at Gannata Le’ul, I was part of an *audience*. Spectators gazed at a backdrop, indifferently waiting for a show that never would begin.

Sociologist and writer Erving Goffman, in his *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, talks

of a place that is neither backstage nor front stage. Rather it is a place he calls the “offstage” or the “outside,” where “individuals witness a show that was not meant for them,” and thus they easily end up at once both confused and disillusioned.¹² This was a state that I indeed experienced that day in the emperor’s court, operationalised by a lucid illusion. A mirage for a pilgrim of permanent passings to behold, of a kingly shadow cast behind the curtain and of forty orphans, suspended as mute gestures on the wall.

*“I have lost the thread of my discourse.
This is it it makes no difference if we find it
If we found it”¹³*

There is an unmistakable beauty to be found in the offstage, in the outside, but it is a beauty that is also a brutality. For by the entranceway an echoing silence lingers—an effect of the abrupt unfolding, of the violent tearing apart—that will put any discourse into a frenzy. While perception can enjoy a simultaneous confusion and dissolution, it seems that knowledge in the end cannot. This silence is connatural to the outside, and therefore “ratifies the birth certificate of the problem of knowledge,” as Lyotard tells us, for it “forces one to desire truth as the interiorization (completed signification) of (the object’s) exteriority.”¹⁴ Thus, this “silence is the opposite of discourse, ... but silence is the very condition of discourse since it is also on the side of the things of which one must speak, that one must express. There can be no discourse without this opacity in trying to undo and restore this inexhaustible thickness.”¹⁵

This interiorisation of exteriority, the encroachment upon the outside, where language sieves the figures as a *mise en scène* of the offstage, is hence an inevitable quest commissioned by knowledge. Knowledge, however, as any other authority, has its own agents and tricks. Goffman, in his theatrical analogies, talks of different “discrepant” operating between the stages. One such discrepant is the “go-between,” or mediator. Somewhat like a double agent, this go-between “may function as a means by which each side is given a slanted version of the other that is calculated to make a closer relationship between the two sides possible.”¹⁶ It is an operation that may lend discourse access to the figure, not via the brash authority of knowledge but by the *authentic* attention of passion.

“It seems that artistic engagement with an ‘other’ is pernicious, except when it is not.”¹⁷

That is not to say that the authentic is a free agent, however. For it has undoubtedly been largely negativised, if not become entirely taboo, within a postmodern and post-structural realm. Yet nevertheless does the auto-, the inherent self, remain hard to completely dismiss, not least of which when it comes to facing the other. In this confrontation, the self of the authentic

seems to be preferred above that of the authoritarian, of discourse via knowledge.

Thus one can read how art critic and historian Hal Foster cherishes the artistic “archival impulse” for its partiality towards “unfulfilled beginnings or incomplete projects—in art and in history alike,” where an artistic program is “concerned less with absolute origins than with obscure traces,” bothered little by “representational totality and institutional integrity.”¹⁸ This represents an artistic movement that Foster suggests is, citing Thomas Hirschhorn, “a species of passionate pedagogy in which the lessons on offer concern love as much as knowledge.”¹⁹

On the other hand, however, one can read about the “artist as ethnographer.” This is another term coined by Foster, which describes a pseudo-ethnological approach where “values like authenticity, originality, and singularity, [that have been] banished under critical taboo from postmodernist art, return as properties of the site.” Further, and apparently contrary to the quasi-archival, the *quasi-anthropological* artist “may regard these ‘properties’ as just that—as sited values to develop.” This creates a speculative dominance by which “the institution may displace the work that it otherwise advances: the show becomes the spectacle where cultural capital collects.”²⁰

It seems then, that the encroachment on the outside, the self’s approach towards the other, and the discursive undoing and restoring—inevitable as they may be—balance on a very thin edge between passionate pedagogy and institutional knowledge, between *authentic desire* and *authoritarian appropriation*.

*“It should be noticed that this transition does not take place, as the realist explanation would have it, from reality to metaphor, but, in quite the opposite manner.”*²¹

In Ethiopia, the story goes that Judas hung himself from a coffee tree, and from the bloody ground beneath him grew forth plants of tobacco. While sitting at one of Addis Ababa’s many cafés, enjoying at large a combination of exactly that hangman’s botanics, thoughts of unfulfilled beginnings and values to develop kept spinning in my head—passionate pilgrim or desirous disciple?

Whether due to heatstroke or the excessive consumption of coffee and cigarettes, a state of aberration eventually caught me. The mountain eagles, that otherwise so majestically roam the Abyssinian heights, suddenly appeared to me as impatient scavengers. “The vultures will first peck out your eyes



Cords & Crossings, 2016. Wood, chalk paint, fabric, coffee filters, strings, profile spotlight. Dimensions variable. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Daniel Seferian Spies

and then tear out your livers,” I could have sworn to have heard Hemingway mutter from behind me.²² My thoughts went back to Tovborg’s exhibition and his paintings that repeatedly depict Prometheus. Gaston Bachelard, in his *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, talks of a Prometheus complex. Somewhat like the Oedipus complex, albeit stripped of the sexual component, the Prometheus complex is described by Bachelard as “all those tendencies which impel us *to know* as much as our fathers, more than our fathers, as much as our teachers, more than our teachers.”²³ “Roduntur variis prudentum pectora curis, Qui coeli affectant scire demumque vices”²⁴ read the last lines on an emblem from 1610, also depicting Prometheus, losing his heart to the vulture’s talons.²⁵

Had it not been for a flock of ibises, seemingly laughing at me and my aberrated state of mind, I fear that I would still sit there today, continuing to be gnawed at by those endless concerns. Luckily, those long-beaked waterfowl, which I so fittingly have found to be attributed to the arbitrating Toth,²⁶ had gathered at a nearby construction site. As they sat there chattering on a eucalyptus scaffold erected next to what I came to learn was a factory in the making, commissioned by a company manufacturing metal for construction, I was seized by a strange sensation. I became perplexed by this tower of wood, twisting and turning by its cords and crossings. But why? For this was far from the first wooden scaffold that I had seen in Addis Ababa; in fact, these structures appear throughout the city much like the bird nests that cover its acacia trees.

“As an ancient tree of knowledge, growing in a concrete jungle,” I have found scribbled in my notebook, “this wooden structure is solely planted to bear the fruit of its own fall. Upholding a technological change which will render, not only itself, but the very future of its kind, completely and utterly useless.”²⁷ A few hopeless lines rendered among sporadic stains of coffee, telling of little else but the spurious anagogies to which a pilgrim may cling when facing the thicket of silence.

*“When we shift our consideration from the front or back region to the outside we tend also to shift our point of reference from one performance to another.”*²⁸

A lot of water, some home-cooked injeras, and the soothing caress of the late-evening air was all it took for my aberration to disappear. The scaffold, that silent figure, however—this perforated depth did not leave my mind; it had opened up a world, become a symbol.

It had become a symbol, as Lyotard writes, that gave “rise to thought, but not before lending itself to ‘sight.’ And the surprising thing is not so much that it gives rise to thought.” No—“the mystery is that the symbol remains to be ‘seen,’ that it remains steadfastly within the sensory, that there remains a world that is a store of ‘sights,’ or an interworld that is a store of ‘visions,’ and that every form of discourse ex-

hausts itself before exhausting it.”²⁹ And so it is that I continued to return, after every daily excursion, to this spot where I had first been seized. Here I would sit, at Natnael’s café, to rest my legs and work on my intake—of splendid coffee and savoury banana cake, but most of all of that eucalyptus scaffold. Natnael’s plastic chairs, to his apparent but unspoken bemusement, turned into a front row where I would come and see my silent show.

For several late afternoons I would feel it my private privilege to observe the light rays crawling, like the sacred hamadryas baboons ascending through the woods, as the sun went down behind the city on the mountain. It was not until one Tuesday, when scheduled errands had been abruptly cancelled and I arrived early to Natnael’s, that my sense of privacy suffered a shock. This time, up there in the scaffolding, among the ibis and the mountain eagles, a bunch of bodies were resting. With tired limbs dangling from the poles, these hard-working people had left their duties for a moment, to come out from the building site and seek relief from their duties.

*“Just occasionally some member of the theatre staff, wandering into the empty building in, say, the afternoon, would look thoughtfully up into the almost invisible remote heights.”*³⁰

To become an unintended spectator, beholding these people resting in their backstage, seemed to be a sudden and unmediated encroachment. An erecting of an offstage, as it were, and an invasion of an outside—witnessing a show that was not meant to be seen. As such, the shock was not due to my own privacy being broken, but by my breaking the privacy of others.

It could be argued that the manifestation of an outsideness does not automatically implement, or legitimise, an otherness, as Foster seems eager to point out.³¹ The otherness and self-othering that the critic disputes, however, would appear to be of the sort of authoritarian knowledge and institutional displacement that we have already learned to fear.

There might be, though, another kind of othering that is less aggravating to the proponents of a passionate pedagogy—a kind of othering that one might call “defamiliarisation.” The literary theorist Gerald Prince, in his *Narrative as Theme*, describes defamiliarisation thusly: “As the Russian Formalists showed, defamiliarization—making strange and thus artistically potent—often depends on detailing what is taken for granted, focusing on the specifics of our ordinary engagement in the world, and going below the accepted minimum level of functional relevance.”³²

Now, this might very well be just another case of authoritarian collecting, or perhaps of authentic attention—though, too, it may be an entirely different approach. Another means by which the discourse can gain access to the figure. A camouflaged undoing and redoing of the silence, by which knowledge can fold up the tabulation and reimplement a chronologi-

cal order. The discourse at work, not as direct narrative, but in the guise of a negation; as a *disnarrative*.

The notion of narrative has, after all, long since been exposed as an agent of knowledge, displacing numerous other terms, not least since the 1960s, as Prince explains: “One will say ‘narrative’ instead of ‘explanation’ or ‘argumentation’; one will prefer ‘narrative’ rather than ‘ideology’; one will substitute ‘narrative’ for ‘fiction,’ ‘art,’ ‘message.’ Similarly, the notion of narrative is repeatedly called upon to characterize a multitude of intellectual enterprises and scientific fields: history, of course, but also philosophy, anthropology, and the natural sciences.”³³

*“Silence, yes, but what silence! For it is all very fine to keep silence, but one has also to consider the kind of silence one keeps.”*³⁴

Accordingly, one might imagine how the discourse is able to gain access to the figure by means of the disnarrative. It does not storm in with the blaring trumpets of authoritarian knowledge, and neither with the tremorous voice of authentic passion. No, it enters rather with a whisper, furtively sidling, picking up small bits and pieces—pieces so discreet and unrepresentational that even the silence itself might have forgotten all about them, as they lie lost in all of its thickness.

A black line, almost invisible against the dark coulisse. A rusty nail, buried in wood and worn-out strings. Pieces for the discourse to scavenge, to undo, redo, and arrange. A source derived “from representing what is widely considered unrepresentable and from making narratively interesting what is commonly viewed as lacking in interest.”³⁵ While the discourse may be of the conviction that the sole purpose of disnarrative is to harvest from the figure without having to confront the inexhaustible silence, and we might as well let it believe it to be so, we should nevertheless in all quietness call its bluff. For the discourse, one could at least argue, has its own preference and penchant for discretion. This could be “why one will be able to detect the presence of figures in discourse according to the model of the insertion of gestural operations, based in a continuous space, in a field that otherwise tolerates transformation only between discrete elements.”³⁶ There is a sort of unarticulated agreement between the discourse and the figure—made up of mute and subtle gestures exchanged within the deep thicket of silence. In the words of Lyotard, “this is how contact is made, the thing of which we speak introduced in what we are saying—introduced not intelligently but sensorially—thanks to the sensory’s inexhaustible resource ...; sensory reality transforming itself into both stage and seating area, reproducing itself as constituted, mirror-like, by the play of text and figure on it: anamorphosis.”³⁷

*“If the devil truly rests in the detail, then one must doubt the attention of the big passionate eye.”*³⁸

So this is how contact is made, or at least, how it can be made. Not through the brash force of institutional authority or with the desirous attention of a pedagogical passion, but through *laterality*, by that certain encroachment—that is, not a sly sneaking, like the thief in the night, but rather a gentle sidling, like the pauper plucking weeds from the king’s garden.

Knowing this, I would henceforth return to Natnael’s café, not to take a seat in the front row or to peek behind the curtains, but to discreetly find my place on a plastic chair. To see my scaffold, to sense my figure, neither on the front stage nor in the backstage, but in the offstage. In the outside, where I would light a cigarette in silence and gesture to Natnael for another cup of coffee.

About the coffee, it must said, it is a temptation that is hard to decline, here where *bunna* has its roots, in the highlands of the Queen of Sheba, where there are always beans of some recent harvest, roasted over fuming fires and boiled within the beauty of a earthenware pot. Indeed, and for the mere price of ten Ethiopian birr per cup, it is not only an offer that is difficult to pass up but also a potentially pernicious one. Desirous disciples have lost their heads and hearts to less than this, and for only thirty pieces of silver even the greatest of stories can change their course.

My Ethiopian journey was a pilgrim’s wish for connection, visual and material. As for the material, two things had been on the top of my list: raw coffee beans and fresh Abyssinian clay—two things that presented themselves in abundance but which Ethiopia simply did not let go of, at least not before they had been roasted and burned by tongues of fire. This outcome was the result of a piece of protective legislature based on historical, economical, and ideological reasons—reasons so sensible and well founded that one could all but let it go with admiration and a smile.

Regarding the visual, I wonder if this protocol is not just as sensible: the figure does not simply give itself up to discourse, and even the most insignificant of symbols won’t be fully signified by language. Yet, just as a pauper who is hungry enough to eat nettles, so too does the discourse take what it can get, despite the scorch.

Near the entrance an echoing silence lingers:

What cannot be tamed is art as silence. The position of art is a refutation of the position of discourse. The position of art indicates a function of the figure, which is not signified—a function around and even in the figure. This position indicates that the symbol’s transcendence is the figure, that is, a spatial manifestation that linguistic space cannot incorporate without being shaken, an exteriority it cannot interiorize as signification. Art stands in alterity as plasticity and desire, a curved expanse against invariability and reason, diacritical space. Art covets the figure, and “beauty” is figural, unbound, rhythmic.³⁹

Once back in the studio I would find myself shuffling to the rhythm of silence, shrouded in those very manifestations that language cannot fully signify—remaining objects and remembered events—the figures that my Ethiopian excursion had bestowed me. A hoof-shaped cane that I had bought from an old shepherd, or his slender silhouette as we had departed in the sunset. Thus staying in my studio, buried in a world of sights, surrounded by an interworld of visions, the line between inside and outside seemed to escalate in its blur.

This blur involves a number of questions, questions that would later become the matter of my graduation exhibition, *Cords & Crossings*. How does one engage with an outside, can one really meet an exterior face to face? And if it happens, this vis-à-vis encounter, then what is one able, if not to say allowed, to bring back inside and further to adopt and avail?

To see is to forget the name of the thing one sees, Valéry is claimed to have said. I might suggest however, that to really see is rather to forget oneself. This I may well postulate, based on personal experiences of such face-to-face engagements, yet, when

it eventually arrives at the discourse, it appears that it inevitably follows with an establishment of a self. For where is there a language without a speaker, and a communication without the other and oneself? The positioning of this self, and of the other, hence seems to be at the root of these questions—the fundament of the issue, buried deep in the underlying blur.

What is it that makes an art critic like Foster cherish an archival impulse, while condemning the artist as ethnographer? I for one share the critic's affection for what is purportedly an archival tendency in art, and find myself deeply inspired by works like Thomas Hirschhorn's monuments, altars, and kiosks. These works are devoted to various artists, philosophers, and thinkers, though with an obscure consistency, ranging from Emil Nolde to Georges Bataille. Works that despite their names manifest themselves as proudly profane homages, monuments erected in cardboard and plywood and unceremoniously presented to the public, in the outside. What I do not share with the critic, however, is the clear distinction between these works, be they archival or works that assume an anthropological aspect.



Cords & Crossings, 2016. Detail. Wood, chalk paint, fabric, newspaper, incense resin. Dimensions variable. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Daniel Seferian Spies



Cords & Crossings, 2016. Detail. Wood, strings, nails. Dimensions variable. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Daniel Seferian Spies

To me, there is no clear division between, for instance, Hirschhorn's *Spinoza Library* (2009) and the art installation *The Market from Here* (1997) by Abdel Hernández and Fernando Calzadilla. The first work, a "monument" built as part of Hirschhorn's *The Bijlmer Spinoza-Festival* in a multicultural area of Amsterdam. The second, an ethnographically inspired art installation of a Venezuelan marketplace, set up in the courtyard of the anthropology department at Rice University in Houston.

What especially fascinates and inspires me about both these works is exactly the questions concerning the positioning of the self and an other. By building a monument to Baruch Spinoza in an area of Amsterdam known for its high concentration of immigrant inhabitants, the borders between inside and

an outside seem stirred. For does Spinoza, himself an immigrant, somehow belong in this place, on the inside? And where did Hirschhorn position himself, as an artist and initiator from the outside? When asked, the artist replied:

I, myself, was the "foreigner" in their neighbourhood. My project, my will to do it, my everyday battle to keep it standing was the "foreignness". It was neither the aesthetic nor the production of my work that created "foreignness" but only the fact of decision to do it. This "foreignness" or "strangeness" allowed me to be in equal contact with the Other. As the artist I was the stranger. Being the artist, I must always accept to be the foreigner.⁴⁰



Cords & Crossings, 2016. Wood, chalk paint, fabric, newspaper, incense resin, Ethiopian flat bread box, Ethiopian wooden pillow, cane. Dimensions variable. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Daniel Seferian Spies

To me, Hernández and Calzadilla's work evokes many questions that are all but the same. By setting up a Venezuelan marketplace in the anthropology department of a university, the definition and distinction between inside and outside appears to be tossed and turned. Had the ethnographic institution, this traditional "outsider authority," suddenly become an inside for a foreign marketplace to expose? Is this one such case of "cultural collecting," and, if so, what is the culture and who does the collecting? About his thoughts and the process of creating *The Market from Here*, Calzadilla writes:

Although it was clear that this was an artistic endeavor, the fact that we were presenting it within the context of the *Artists In Trance* event at the Department of Anthropology of Rice University also made clear that it was a re-visiting of the debates about ethnographic method. ... What we looked for in the relation informant/ethnographer was a subject that could relate to alterity without essentializing it. This subject is the subject of the threshold, the boundary, the liminal subject that can journey between subjects and objects, between sameness and difference; is the subject capable of inhabiting the betweenness of images and contexts?⁴¹

A liminal subject that can journey between subjects and objects, between sameness and difference. Is the subject capable of inhabiting the betweenness of images and contexts? It is precisely this question that captivates and inspires me, in both Hirschhorn's and Hernández and Calzadilla's works. It is with this question in mind that I share a rich inspiration with Foster, of what would be the archival tendencies in art. Yet it is indeed this very question that also keeps me so fascinated with artists about whom I wonder whether or not they belong to the ethnographical approach. I think here of artists such as Nikolaus Lang, Joseph Beuys, and Mark Dion, artists whose work undoubtedly deals with anthropological aspects. I think as well, of course, of artists like Susan Hiller and Emil Westman Hertz, who entered the art world from an anthropological background.

Ultimately, it is this very question—whether the subject is capable of inhabiting the betweenness of images and contexts—that feeds a sense of anthropological anxiety when speaking of art. Meanwhile, however, it is this very question of betweenness that feeds me with personal inspiration, that drives and motivates my art and my work.



Cords & Crossings, 2016. Detail. Profile spotlight. Dimensions variable. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016.
Daniel Seferian Spies



Cords & Crossings, 2016. Detail. Wood, chalk paint, fabric, strings. Dimensions variable. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Daniel Seferian Spies

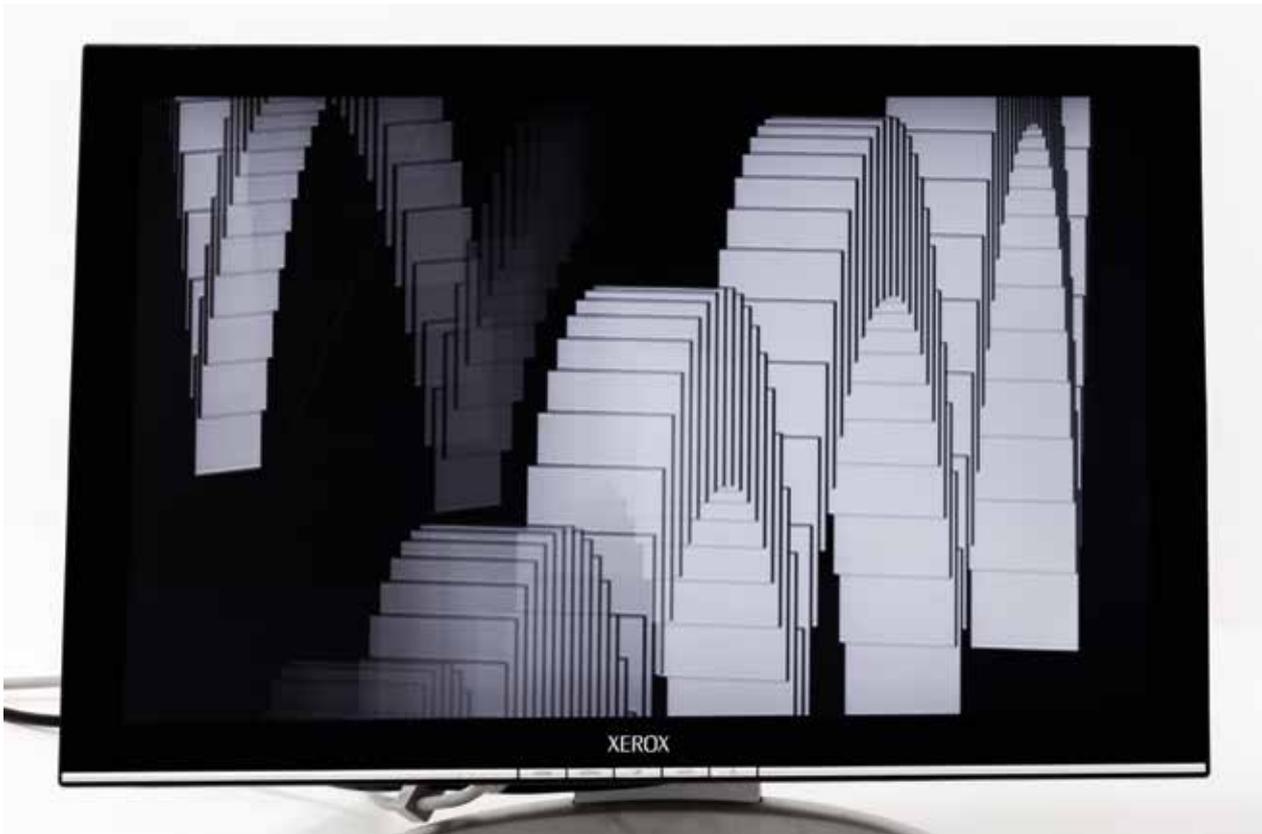
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 5 Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia*, 104–30.
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 12 Uta Hagen.
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 15 mysteries of the cosmos. See *The Book of Enoch*, trans. R.H. Charles (New York: Dover Publications, 2007).
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 29 Gaston Bachelard, *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* (Boston: Beacon, 1968), 37.
 30 Ernest Hemingway, to American journalists in Ethiopia, 1935, quoted in Donald R. Katz, "Ethiopia After the
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 33 "The breasts of wise men who seek to know the conditions of heaven and the gods are gnawed by divers cares."
 34 Andrea Alciati: Emblemata, Plantins Officin 1610, Emblem 103.
 35 Carlo Ginzburg, *Spor—Om Historie og Historisk metode* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 1999), 31.
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 37 Toth is associated with the ibis and the baboon and is known as "he whose words has established the Two Lands."
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 45 Ibid., 16.
 46 Samuel Beckett, *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* (New York: Grove/Atlantic, 2009), 302.
 47 Prince, *Narrative as Theme*, 29.
 48 Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, 17.
 49 Ibid., 69.
 50 My personal notes, November 2015, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
 51 Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, 7.
 52 Thomas Hirschhorn, "The Headless Artist," interview by Ross Birrell, *Art & Research* 3, no. 1 (Winter 2009/10):
 53 <http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v3n1/hirschhorn2.html>.
 54 Fernando Calzadilla, "The Market from Here: Scenography as Ethnography," in *Contemporary Art and Anthropology*,
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As Naturalized as Air, As Common as Dirt

“Opposite his chair was a stereovision tank disguised as an aquarium; he switched it on, guppies and tetras gave way to the face of the well-known Winchell Augustus Greaves.”

—Robert A. Heinlein¹

I—Counting Sheep through the Looking Glass

Strands of light play across the screen, emanating from a blackness only relieved by dust. Timely as a solar eclipse, it has suspended my view and retired into a limbo stasis, where oblique graphic constellations are followed by the assertion that it is 10:32 am. The origin and identification of my workstation is pronounced in due time, as the equilibrium of the screen is constantly in its wake, as faithful as an egg timer, somewhere dutifully counting numerals in reverse to once again initiate the visual surrogate. *Press any key*, and the screen is jolted from its lazy slumber and resumes its presentation of the given interface only to fall back into its wondrous emulation of inertia, as one has been hesitantly studying the keyboard for five complete minutes. What I apparently lack in imagination will ultimately be provided for me.

Present by virtue of our absence or inactivity, the screensaver is the languid wallpaper that veils our work, replacing it with a luminous dreamscape of pipes or fish, of icons or clocks. Though their design has been refashioned over the course of three decades, the illusion of infinitude and tranquility that seems to redeem work in its serial endlessness is still intrinsic to our culture. The graphic reverie of these devices somehow “promises that we are more connected to the serendipity of butterflies rather than capitalist society.”² That said, rather than being daydreams of grassier fields, they seem to promote the “recurring dream,” which is at essence a nightmare due to its haunting repetition and predictability. If this is my motherboard’s subconscious, it must be, by the analytical standards of dreamdictionary.org, a reflection or reminder of something unresolved.

The Windows screensaver 3D Pipes assumes, for example, the shape of a subterranean infrastructure that incessantly proliferates, only to disintegrate and start over. As if an allegory of the cave, technological complexity here becomes analogue with plumbing, or at least the forming of connections, a network. The otherwise opaque operations of our computers are typically rendered as phenomena we never witness. By granting machines the (simulated) ability to dream, do we project our own deepest fears and desires? Can we assume they dream of guppies and tetras?

Given that screensavers were initially developed in the 1980s to prevent the cathode ray tubes of monitors from burning and leaving an imprint, a so-called *ghost image*, on the screen, it is a fact that today’s LCD screens do not face such a threat (quite the opposite, in fact: screensavers save hardly any energy). Still, the notion of screensavers as an aid to deterioration is fundamental to how we understand them. Hardly the most technically complex aspect of modern-day computing, the screensaver remains significant since it somehow addresses our relationship to the automated workings of digital devices. Arguably, screensavers have exceeded their practical use and become anachronisms that embody how we expect our devices to act. Through their preservative illusion they are more like us, their users. A colleague of mine recently mentioned how soothing he finds the simulated water that trickles down his iPhone screen when not in use. I too, as a kid, exalted in watching my father’s computer withdraw into light speed on its way through a 16-bit galaxy, chunky solar systems whizzing past me, at ease in my make-believe cockpit.



Untitled (yellow), 2016. Tinted glass, frosted film, HD video, 14:32 min. loop. Wilfred Wagner



Untitled (Cyan) & Untitled (Magenta), 2016. Tinted glass, frosted film, HD video, 14:32 min. loop. Installation view from *As Naturalized as Air, As Common as Dirt*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Wilfred Wagner

Aside from being representations of a comfortable comatose, screensavers are subject to both personalisation and unification. On the one hand, we have the option of choosing from a palette of generic ornamentation, or leaving our name restlessly pacing to and fro, as a way of signifying our personal computer. We might let the computer pick images from random folders, creating a montage of JPEG files that slide in and out. On the other hand, the screensaver can allow for a uniform look throughout an office, a school, or a worksite. Together with ball-point pens, envelopes, and stamps, screensavers often rejoice in the emblematic reiteration of the institution to which they belong. Sporting an icon or logo, they perform a constitutive power through homogenisation and sheer omnipresence.

“Frames, windows, doors, airport gates and other thresholds are those transparent devices that achieve more the less they do. ... The more a dioptric device erases the traces of its functioning (in actually delivering the thing represented beyond), the more it succeeds

*in its functional mandate; yet this very achievement undercuts the ultimate goal: the more intuitive a device becomes, the more it risks falling out of media altogether, becoming as naturalized as air or as common as dirt.”*³

The screensaver provides an analogue for what the architect Rem Koolhaas calls “junkspace”: “it [junkspace] is flamboyant yet unmemorable, like a screensaver; its refusal to freeze ensures instant amnesia.”⁴ It is a body double of space, an ornamental structure that, like a treadmill, assumes continuity but really offers none. Like the breathing light that emanates from our idle laptops, screensavers are the respiratory supplement and substitute that accommodates and inhabits a world without us.

Silent as a prosthetic hand, the screensaver is an arbitrary cinema intended for an empty theatre with rows of vacant seats. A shadow play without an audience, through the looking glass, such that, basic to representation, it is contrary to the world where we exist. A twilight zone.



*“The basically tautological character of the spectacle flows from the simple fact that its means are simultaneously its ends. It is the sun which never sets over the empire of modern passivity. It covers the entire surface of the world and bathes endlessly in its own glory.”*⁵

Ascending and descending, the paraffin wax solution safe behind glass is a retained oddity that grants me stimulation and relief as it incessantly erupts a seemingly fiery-hot, magma-like substance, suspended in constant gravitational indecision. Almost like a mute specimen, we can observe it through the refracted light the conical glass container offers. As if an extra-terrestrial sample in formaldehyde, preserved for ages to come, it is infinitely manageable and available for our study or scrutiny. In the pretence of molten rock, it is not still but as animated as a fountain. A likely contestant for the memory theatre of a *cabinet of curiosities* (or, more likely, of an *attic of kitsch*), the lava lamp is a tireless dancer that negotiates its status within a microcosm of relics. Initially marketed as an office novelty, a decorative executive’s toy, the lava lamp was made to accompany the fountain-pen stand and the Newton’s cradle.⁶ Meant to relieve stress and restore attention, it shares some of the same preservative attributes of the screensaver. As desktop accessories, they are both mesmeric support structures of ambience and ambiguity. (Note: the lava lamp’s inventor, Edward Craven Walker, patented his idea as “Display Device” in 1965.)

Could the inaudible snore of these devices be a promise of something grander and undetermined? In the warm deflected light of their transient dose, one is reminded that power napping is integral to multi-tasking, and we are never very far from that which really demands our attention. Their distractive feature is closely followed by a defusing ability, a kind of diluting filter, that obfuscates like the frosted glass one finds in office environments or tinted car windows. Aside from demarcating public and private realms, polyester window film often has sublimating properties when it comes to sliding glass doors or bus stops and so on. A trite decoration, often oval or rectangular shapes in succession, is in this case a device implemented to avert the breaking of noses in passing. How are we to read the non-specific signs dedicated to diversion? Often linear, they also seem to strongly suggest transit and motion through their inarguable likeness to racing stripes. Introduced in the Le Mans races of the 1950s, racing stripes were “a symbolic echo of the chassis colours” used to help spectators tell the cars apart.⁷ Maybe this brings us back to the outset of the discussion of screensavers as a *symbolic echo* of distinction.

At the very bottom of the desktop’s hierarchy we find the paperweight. Hardly any other object is as tranquil and self-diminishing. It has no particular shape, because it can have any shape, be anything, as long as it will keep documents or letters from being swept away by a sudden draft. Reduced to its matter,

the paperweight is often an appropriated object whose initial purpose has been forcefully postponed.

II—Copious Bodies

The impression of one realm onto another fundamentally changes the conditions of representation. At a birthday party of a close friend, many years ago, the cake—to my adolescent amazement—had reprographic frosting. It was a picture of our class of ’94, in full colour, safe for consumption. Terminal as an ice sculpture, it was bound for certain decomposition. It had the same temporary existence as a self-destructing message to Agent 007. It didn’t self-incinerate though—it was evenly cut and divided into fair shares and distributed among sugar-gobbling kids. Looking back, were we, in our pubescent bodies, partaking in a kind of commemoration of non-permanence and mutation? Was the world we knew repeated back to us as a *trompe l’oeil*? I assume I wasn’t stricken by the photograph’s sheer resemblance per se, but rather its *1:1-ness*, its occupation of a familiar domain.

Whether it be the doubling and proliferation of our cells or the angular strokes of an inkjet printer, copying is a natural part of being human. As a multiple, the copy is fundamentally transformative, either by the deterioration of the original or by the very extent to which it reaches. A monk copying sacred passages stroke by stroke “is gradually initiated into the divine mysteries and miraculously enlightened.”⁸ Mimesis in this sense has a positive connotation for Thomas Aquinas (the imitation of Christ) as being a spiritual practice, a way of participating in the celestial and the holy. Transcription is a kind of copying as re-enactment, an approximation of the very actions that produced the original: “copying as a political act of appropriation, taking all-in-all, is also an eschatological program ‘to double our witness, and wait.’”⁹ We produce facsimiles to certify and insure originals, and in doing so they pay testimony by comprehending and managing a past.

For the bookwork *Day* (2003), the artist and writer Kenneth Goldsmith copied an entire *New York Times* newspaper, letter by letter, page by page. He explains: “Every place where there was an alphanumeric word or letter, I retyped it: advertising, movie timetables, the numbers of a license plate on a car ad, the classifieds, and so forth. The stock quotes alone ran for more than two hundred pages.”¹⁰ With a strict set of rules, his objective was to be as *faithful* to the content as possible by being as uncreative as possible, and by so doing allowing for other kinds of paratextual dilemmas: to what degree should one *stay true* to the margins, typefaces, etc. As a dialectical movement from content to context, Goldsmith’s appropriation of the *New York Times* is basically an ethical process of reformatting, which seeks to question the very nature of authorship and the construction of literature. In his essay “Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in the Digital Age,” Goldsmith argues that the casual non-linearity of web surfing is similar to the structure





Clean Brother's Tokens, 2016. 32 pages, risographic print. 20 x 26 cm. Edition of 100. Wilfred Wagner

of Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*. With its myriad cross-references, fragmented entries, and dead ends, Benjamin's work can be considered the first modern hypertextual work.

Photocopying, as we are all familiar with, is in contrast to transcription, an appropriation platonically to its substance. It takes without homage and renders an entirety with a sudden and indiscriminate hand, exempt of smudges and errors. Like the dark side of the moon, in this process the subject is turned away from us, face down on the flatbed glass. In line with Goldsmith's synthesis of fragmented immensity, Kajsa Dahlberg's *A Room of One's Own/A Thousand Libraries* (2006), comprising countless annotations in public library copies of Virginia Woolf's novel, are scanned and brought together as one to form a collective intimacy of reading. In Cory Arcangel's magazine *The Source* (2013–15), he published the (to many) illegible command source codes he employs in his work, which is often based on modifications of pre-existing computer software. In many ways he has democratised the anatomy of his work, giving it away, but at the same time he manages to convey the underlying workings of his process as concrete poetry.

*"The more there were, the fewer there are."*¹¹

Preceding the advent of movable type that came with Johannes Gutenberg's Renaissance, the woodcut *Biblia Pauperum* (Bible of the poor) was widely distributed among common folks, but due to its cheap, ephemeral quality and its ordinariness, the bible was naturally disregarded by the learned and seen as unfit for preservation. Nonetheless, today they are more rare and thus valuable than the bound parchment bibles held in esteem by the learned. Whether a book is printed in a small or large run, something interesting is at play when dealing with the number of editions. In a letter to John Wilcock in 1966, Ed Ruscha recounts how it was "a terrible mistake" to number the first edition of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1963). Counterproductive to his intention to produce "just another book" that would circulate freely, the numbering instead led to it quickly becoming an object of scarcity and desire.¹²

Little is known of the obscure deity Copia. In ancient Rome, Copia was associated with abundance, plenty, and multitude. A sibling of the goddess Ops, she represented not only resources specifically but the management of them. Signifying distribution and the means to act, her name was engraved on the arches of storehouses. Copia also had a military meaning, as "a body of men," as units of disposal. Long before the age of mechanical reproduction or today's access paradigm, the different meanings of Copia were manifest in various practical elements of the act of copying. As Marcus Boon explains: "According to Jacques Derrida mimesis will in every case be a matter of economy. Every copy, every act of exchange, presupposes the establishing of

an equivalence between a and b, the assumption that they are like or equal to each other in some way. There are different kinds of economies, all of which manage or appropriate mimetic energies."¹³ In the practice of rhetoric, *copia verborum* (an abundance of words) was also associated with imitation as fundamental in acquiring a faculty—a storehouse, so to speak—of words at one's disposal. In between mimesis and Copia, we arrive at two different understandings: one of copying as being a mindless act of repetition, and the other as a repetitive activity, with the potential for variation and learning.

*"Both art education and alphabetization have in common the dual and often contradictory mission of facilitating individual and collective cultural affirmation and expression on the one hand, and of being necessary tools to cement and expand forms of consumption on the other."*¹⁴

It is a commonly held belief that we learn through imitation, that through reproducing other people's ideas, we obtain good citizenship prior to competence as individual, expressive subjects. (It might explain why ignorance is thought to primarily lie in the inability to read, rather than the inability to write.) Further, concludes Marshall McLuhan: "The printed copy separated poetry from song, prose from oratory, and popular from educated speech."¹⁵ The uniformity and repeatability of the typographic extension of man introduced a new perspective of time and space as something continuous and measurable. The segmentation and fragmentation of movable type became essential to a fixed and private point of view that challenged the corporate organisation of the Middle Ages. The book was the first "teaching machine" and commodity, which put an end to the regime of oral disputation; what was before knowledge passed *down*, by the approximated variation of (trans-)scriptures, was now passed *on* with the equalised consistency of typography.

*"Copying transforms the One into the Many."*¹⁶

In my view, the natural fascination with the printed copy lies in its potential for quantification. The vanishing twin of the original seldom comes alone, and the very copiousness of identical multiples must be the most magical and potent aspect of mass production. Anthropologist Margaret Mead once described the astonishment of Pacific Islanders when presented with not one but several books of the same edition. Perfect similarity—the principle of the "extension by homogenization," as McLuhan calls it—is key to understanding the organisation of Western power.

Orderly sequenced side-by-side: a book's signatures, or pages, as a body of men, are distributed efficiently on 23 x 35-inch sheets, with a fine demarcation marked at each margin. Rank and file and graceful in its efficient division of faces, the imposition devises the accomplishment of an entirety. Unprocessed,

the book is at its foetal stage, barren and vulnerable. Fresh off the press, it has yet to attain its singular identity as a product that turns page by page in numeral succession. For now, the paginated signatures rely on an arithmetic order that doesn't invite a chronological reading, at most a survey or inspection. Far from being montage, this systematic arrangement evades linear articulation, being that it is a cartographic economy. The signatures' "16-up" imposition is an equalised fragmentation; short of a narrative hierarchy, their disrupted coherence will eventually be reconciled as they continue forth into post-production. That said, the incorrect collation or imposition of pages also allows for alternative sequences in reading.

In a literal sense, the act of imposing also means to consecrate or declare something sacred. Tongue-in-cheek, the printed paper, in this instance, is ordained with a purpose, ascribed a devout calling by virtue of its analogical representation and sequence. If imprint, as such, bears kinship to memory, it is arguably impregnated with a retentive agency. Readily storing and readily expediting.

"As a photograph lodged in paper ... the digital image is lodged in a circulatory system of desire and exchange, which itself relies on a very specific economic regime."¹⁷

Copy shops are commonplace in any modern-day society; they are the intermediary organ that assists the vital exchange of personal documents, leaflets, brochures, etc.

Impartial to the manifestation of subjects, they are a support structure that aids a flux of content and visual material. But a humble servant, these places have a distinct visual economy. Often, one will find an array of sample works—in one case, the shopkeeper's trip to Tibet is a reference for hue and saturation on semigloss 200 gsm paper; or, in another instance, a menu card will serve as example of the automatic crease function of a professional finisher module. The sample, as such, presents itself as an object in correspondence to a material specificity and process, lesser than actually being a subject by representation. Often haphazardly displayed in the shop, they fall into the same mess of staplers and orphaned USB sticks, of pins and rulers. In my experience of running a publication studio and print shop for the past two years, I have come to appreciate this amalgamation of excess content; there is something homeless about residue pages and leftover wedding invitations scattering the floor. Here, electricity bills join Pantone colour charts, and a Christmas card complements a poster for a long-past event; all these things are melancholically quiet in a choreography set to the distant hum



Placeholder, 2016. Vinyl, aluminum, inkjet print. 135 x 275 cm. Wilfred Wagner

of idle machines. Are they ephemeral memories of a process, or rather a relation? When I founded KLD Repro in 2014 together with artist Kristian B. Johansson, our main concerns initially revolved around political notions about cooperative labour, archiving, and publishing. However, we soon realised that in the acquisition of technical expertise, not to mention the very practical aspects of publishing, there was a whole performative discourse of printing.

Like Herman Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener*, a latent disobedience seems intrinsic to the practice of digital copying and printing. That is, its operation (as task, *print job*, etc.) is somewhat autonomously inexplicable, above all redress or demand, due to the opacity of its workings. Every time we print, we are requesting something, and headaches ensue when we are met with an error code. The perturbing paper jam essentially a *prefer-not-to*. Is it any accident that the user of a networked printer is referred to as the client? When I log into my fiery control panel, I can work as either operator, administrator, or guest. But little does it affect the scope of my abilities within this tool, so who wants to know? Whether it is troubleshooting the same old dead machine for six months or exporting or compressing files, there always seems to be a shifting disposition of roles. If printing is a negotiation, is it ultimately performative? In articulating these performative aspects as disobedient, it is difficult not to relate them to the long history of subversive self-publishing and bootlegging. For a long time a means for bypassing censorship, this particular disobedience is also reflected in its often ad hoc and improvised modalities of production and distribution. One example might be the infamous "bone records," which were disused X-ray photographs, with their material resemblance to flexi discs, onto which forbidden Western music was imprinted with a homemade record-cutting lathe and then smuggled into the USSR. What I find interesting about these kinds of clandestine books and records is how they challenge the idea of knowledge as property, how they are physical manifestations of political thought. The scope of their impact relies on circulation, that is, reaching, if not creating, new communities. In a performative sense, to publish is to call a public into being.

Never before has the publishing and availability of content been as free, immediate, and far reaching—but when Amazon erased George Orwell's *1984* from customers' Kindle devices in 2009, it showed that we as consumers are really just *users*, and with that comes the shift from owning content to simply leasing it. Our contracts thus seem as mutable as the content we "own." Are we becoming accustomed to a new way of understanding what it actually means to possess something?

*"The inherent static nature of print has always been the justification of declaring it obsolete, but it seems that it is this very immutability of paper that is its advantage."*¹⁸

Despite the recurring threat of paper eventually becoming entirely supplanted by the so-called digitisation of everything, it seems to be holding back. In our post-digital era, the dichotomy of print versus digital is suspended and has instead become a dialogue of finite and infinite dimensions. The PDF is a format that can be copied and shared infinitely, but it will always be a *version*. Neither a standard by itself nor a medium by itself, it always relates back to a physical origin. So declares the book designer James Langdon: "there can be no binary relation between the message and the support, since both remain mutable—the content can be re-edited after its initial distribution, and the support becomes obsolete and subject to reformatting."¹⁹ Intermediary carriers, such as DVDs, CDs, and so on, always reproduce through the same screen or the same stereo. In contrast, the printed page is the very display itself—it aims to be solid like the world it describes. Its digital brethren the e-reader, however, "has no such spatial extension. It's flat, it stops at its margins, and if it gets any thinner than the Amazon Voyage, it risks disappearing into the same limbo to which it has dispatched all those inconveniently heavy volumes, those loose baggy suitcases into which all the uproar of life and all the noisy vigour of language are packed."²⁰

As the pulp derivative of a tree, paper's essential relation to the world is decay. In my experience of working in the semi-legal profession of flyposting (the posting of commercial bills in public places), I have become familiar with the adhesion of posters to walls and stands, but more particularly, with an economy of placement. Precise and angular succession when posting is key, but paramount in this business is being seen, and the continuous claim of walls and stands. The minute an advert poster expires, the facade it covers becomes free for the taking by other contenders in the same profession. Flyposting's unwritten, but many, codes of conduct are important in sustaining the division of places, and any rogue posting provokes retaliation by overlapping or simply tearing off. This unruly nature, this jungle law, is a means to an end, since the constant rivalry is what actually sustains the status quo. The organisation and distribution of media is, in this scenario, a very practical and territorial occupation, which to a certain extent is completely detached from the message it delivers; rather, it succeeds by its multiplicity and presence. Weathered and paled by time, hues differ and corners rip as the relevance of the advert's message fades. Layer upon layer, the past months, and sometimes years, are stuck together by a diaphanous wheat-based substance. They aren't replaced but overriden, effaced by the next subject, the former holding up the new. I mention this because, particular to this occupation, there is a routine of transposing and distribution.

Similarly, my practice revolves around the negotiation and routines of signs and the visual forms that make up environments. I'm interested in

the performative temporality of print and the poetic attributes of mediums themselves. Ideally, these works are thought of as the dead ends of the agreements that initially surrounded them. I am interested in equalizing the hierarchy of subjects, and in doing so articulating the work as an interdependent *entirety*, made up of and defined by constraints. Like

the collation of pages, I wish to assemble gestures into a discordant coherence. In line with my long running interest in the vernacular, and sometimes the banal, I find that it is through a kind of diluting process that the ulterior presents itself, and reveals that what we thought was thin as air was in fact as palpable and intrusive as dust.

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- 4 Rem Koolhaas, "Junkspace," *October*, no. 100 (2002): 177.
- 5 Guy Debord, verse 13, *The Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black & Red, 1983).
- 6 A Newton's cradle is a pendulum with several suspended metal balls, which demonstrates the conservation and momentum of kinetic energy.
- 7 "Racing Stripe," *Wikipedia*, last modified March 17, 2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racing_stripe.
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The Sorrow and the Star, 2016. Plaster, concrete, bronze, wood, 4 x 16 mm film (transferred to digital) looped, 3 x HD video looped. Dimensions variable. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, Þorgerður Þórhallsdóttir



The Sorrow and the Star, 2016. Detail. Plaster, concrete, bronze, wood, 4 x 16 mm film (transferred to digital) looped, 3 x HD video looped. Dimensions variable. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Þorgerður Þórhallsdóttir

Like a lighthouse, I think

“To allow a thing to enter in its strangeness, light from the soul has to be put in to each look, and the exterior light mixed with the interior light. An invisible aura forms around beings that are looked at well. Seeing before vision, seeing to see and see, before the eyes’ narrative—this is not sorcery. It is the science of the other!”
—Hélène Cixous¹

The unstill life

I pour out to you. Slow-ly. Learn slowness and ugliness at the school of Clarice Lispector, “the two great lessons of living.”² Slowness, we need to let things come to us, life, death, things, slow time.³ To really see we must first unsee—it is hard to be astonished by that which we have seen. It is much harder to be astonished by an egg than by a mountain. An egg is so close.⁴ Seeing is an acknowledgement of memory, of already having seen something. Having seen a thing a few times, we start to know it. We see the thing, we know it, but we do not really see it anymore. That’s why we cannot say anything about it.

Find paths and make ways in order to see. Matter fills the floor and leans against the walls. The flurry of lights seems limitless. Lights spin around giving life to the inanimate sculptures and structures, which wait patiently for the spotlight to hit them. Light becomes a substance in the tactility of the projection, when it beams onto plaster, then concrete, then wood or the floor, each time a new world in the nuance of the rays. Light becomes weight in light of weightlessness, lightweight, “what is the weight of light?”⁵ The wood is fleshy pink, the plaster off-white, the concrete a light grey. The tipping point inherent in material. In-between spaces play on dimensionality, on perception of depth. Images start to form out of shadows. A city skyline comes to mind. A forest or a ruin casts shadows of the remnants of a city skyline, perhaps an aftermath of a civilisation, a faint memory of something that once was and came crumbling down. I think of the shadows in Trisha Baga’s video installations, the stories they tell, the space they create, the worlds in her work. I see her shadows as a panorama, a still life—essential in her work. Giorgio Morandi’s dream-like paintings of his beloved objects are never far from my mind. I feel that his colour scheme has influenced what colours I use, his pinks, his light blues and off-whites, the texture of light in his paintings.

*“Perception is not first a perception of things, but a perception of elements (water, air ...), of rays of the world, of things which are dimensions, which are worlds, I slip on these ‘elements’ and here I am in the world, I slip from the ‘subjective’ to Being.”*⁶

The body feels sensations and moves in a space, performs movement. The present seems to be in this very movement, since there can only be one set of movements and sensations at a time.⁷ “Situated between the matter which influences it and that on which it has influence, my body is a centre of action, the place where the impressions received choose intelligently the path they will follow to transform themselves into movements accomplished,” says Henri Bergson.⁸ He explains that our body is in the centre of the material world, and because our system of movements and sensations cannot be in two places at a time, this system is exclusive for “every moment of duration.”⁹

In my exhibition *The Sorrow and the Star* (2016), the awareness of your movements and sensations, the most physical sense of being present, is heightened by the tension in the structures. You have to slowly make your way around the seemingly fragile installation and in turn create spaces by casting shadows that disappear as soon as they are made and new shadows come into place. Bergson says, “every perception is already memory.”¹⁰

Block out the natural light, otherwise we won’t see the light from the projectors. The sun is stronger than synthetic light—it kills video projections. Illuminate the room with buzzing electrical currents. The corporeality of light, the tactility of light when it hits an object, it flows through a prism into your hands. Light as a medium, light as texture, neither metaphorical nor metaphysical. Light in old black-and-white films; white, black, and every shade of grey imaginable. The grey that becomes almost silver when projected onto pink. Every time I leave the space I turn on the neon lights and turn off the

projectors one by one. The feeling is similar to when they turn on the light after a film has ended at the movie theatre. The neon lights create absolutely no shadows, a shadowless room—a dreamless sleep.

Icelandic conceptual artist Hreinn Friðfinnsson spins gold from light and time. They are his materials in the work *For Light, Shadow and Dust* (1994–2013), which consists only of eleven glass shelves to which gold leaf has been applied. The shelves make shadows under and over, depending on the light in the room, and over time each shelf collects subtle traces of dust, creating a fantastic and contrasting meeting with the gold. While my own approach to light lies in the realm where I explore the meeting point between two contradictory media, film and sculpture, Friðfinnsson's subtle approach to immateriality fascinates and inspires me.

Standing in the middle of my exhibition, I encounter a need in myself to create meaning or figuration out of the abstraction, out of the world I see before me, a need to narrativise, to make sense of it, exploring the limits of subjective sensory perception and my own subconscious. It is as if I have no memory

of the past months; I am only here right now. I almost feel like this world has always been here, just waiting for the spotlight. The material came before me. I haven't created these things, just changed the form and enabled another phase in the process.

"We may now be in a position to think about the origin of form and structure, not as something imposed from the outside on an inert matter, not as a hierarchical command from above as in an assembly line, but as something that may come from within the materials, a form that we tease out of those materials as we allow them to have their say in the structures we create."¹¹

During the making of *The Sorrow and the Star*, I let myself be led by the materials I was using; they took control of their own destiny and let me form and shape them and understand their essence. I wrestled with the 16 mm film, I held it in my hands, I protected it from light in order to use it to capture another light. I filmed a silver thing, a balloon full of air that cruised on an independent plane. It was the shape of a circle or a zero, at once both its end and its beginning, a



The Sorrow and the Star, 2016. Plaster, concrete, bronze, wood, 4 x 16 mm film (transferred to digital) looped, 3 x HD video looped. Dimensions variable. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Þorgerður Þórhallsdóttir

line drawn around the void. In my show, the 16 mm film encountered its own fleeting immateriality in the flickering lights that bounced from sculpture to structure. 16 mm film, transferred to digital, is both material and immaterial. Meeting sculpture, the attempt to give matter a form.

“She felt like vomiting something that was not matter but luminous. Star with a thousand pointed rays.”¹²

Here but not here, like the reflection of an object in a moving mirror

When you recall or conjure up a memory, you are no longer in the present but, by remembering, have placed yourself in the past: “First, the past in general, but then in a certain region of the past—a work of adjustment, something like the focusing of a camera.”¹³ I have often found myself to exist in two places at once, here but not here, deep in my own memories, in another time where everything is beautiful and I have never lost anyone I love. I regard the exploration of memory, both my own and collective memories, to be another important part of my artistic practice.

Henri Bergson compares the relation between memory and perception to an object reflected in a mirror and the actual object in front of the mirror. The object has possibilities; it can be touched and can interact with us, whereas the reflection is virtual: the reflected image simulates the object but does not possess the capabilities of doing what the object can do. The fluidity of the present moment is found between the past, which has just passed, and the future, which has not yet come. “Every moment of our life presents two aspects,” he explains, “it is actual and virtual, perception on the one side and memory on the other.”¹⁴ Our perception is reflected as a memory in the moving mirror, the virtual existence.¹⁵

“I see again my schoolroom in Vyra, the blue roses of the wallpaper, the open window. Its reflection fills the oval mirror above the leather couch where my uncle sits, gloating over a tattered book. A sense of security, of well being, of summer warmth pervades my memory. That robust reality makes a ghost of the present. The mirror brims with brightness; a bumblebee has entered the room and bumps against the ceiling.”



The Sorrow and the Star, 2016. Plaster, concrete, bronze, wood, 4 x 16 mm film (transferred to digital) looped, 3 x HD video looped. Dimensions variable. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Þorgerður Þórhallsdóttir

*Everything is as it should be, nothing will ever change, nobody will ever die.*¹⁶

This memory of Vladimir Nabokov's from his childhood in Russia is a sublimely static place, untouched by mortality and change, which is the faculty of memory itself. The paragraph has the feeling of a piercingly naive desire of longing for a time or feeling you don't want to let go. This is exactly the feeling I wanted to convey in my work *Everything is as it should be, nothing will ever change, nobody will ever die* (2014).

The camera is directed at the piano. My grandfather turns on the camera. He sits at the piano and starts playing. I know he performed this concert on March 16, 1989, four days after I was born, so I think this is a practice tape he made sometime before that. I let the film be exactly how it was shot: 35 mm in a quite low resolution. I added an audio recording, namely the one of the March 16 performance recorded by the radio, the National Broadcasting Service in Iceland, with the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra. My grandmother had never seen this tape before; in fact, no one had.

At the end of the concert, we hear the two worlds come into unison. We see my grandfather stand up and turn off the camera, but at the same time as we see the white-noise static, we hear the joyous clapping and experience the euphoric end of the concert. The radio commentator describes what is happening on the stage; the pianist bows in every direction: towards President Vigdís Finnbogadóttir in the first row, to the audience, and to the musicians behind him. He is applauded greatly, and now the orchestra all rise in honour of him and of Ludwig van Beethoven.

In Anri Sala's monumental piece *Ravel Ravel Unravel* at the 2013 Venice Biennale, two pianists play Maurice Ravel's *Piano Concerto for the Left Hand in D Major* accompanied by the French National Orchestra. The videos are shown on two screens, one above the other but slightly displaced—Sala has shot the pianists' hands up close, the left hand playing, the right hand resting. These recordings are played simultaneously and jump in and out of sync, as in my own work; the pianists naturally do not play at exactly the same speed, so the music we hear is irregular, dissonant, a changing constant. Both Sala's work and my own sometimes lack harmony, and there is a bitter-sweet slippage in the sound.

Sala, who has worked between Paris and Berlin his whole adult life, was selected to represent France in the German Pavilion. In order to unravel France and Germany's complex history and relationship, Sala chose to work with Ravel's *Concerto*, a piece of music also riddled with Franco-German history, composed between World Wars I and II. Visiting this pavilion in 2013 was extremely powerful and mind altering. I find the sound, the way Sala has put the two recordings of the concert together, utterly captivating.

In my piece *Everything is as it should be*, there is a visual intimacy with the performer. I wanted

to create a new context for the rehearsal at home and the public performance with the symphony. I set out to preserve this memory, which, before I found the tape, was only my grandfather's. The radio station had preserved the recording with the symphony on an 18 mm audio tape in their national library, available to everyone.

Through the music, through the documentation, through memory, through the memories of my family, through the collective memory of everyone who was there on March 16, 1989, at the concert he played, I felt this reverberating, resonating sound of divinity, on the verge between immortality and mortality.

Between the sky and earth

"To die" in Icelandic is "*að gefa upp andann*." However, the literal translation is "to give up the spirit/breath." The phrase illustrates the spirit leaving the body, the sense of being ready to let the spirit go, to cease to be earthly, to have no more breaths. I was with my grandmother at her last moment. When I was there, I actually felt as though I was seeing the moment when the spirit left her body. I felt it happened even before she took her last breath. I saw the skin change colour and saw the moment the spirit departed. Afterwards, I almost didn't know what I had seen, but for the first time had witnessed clearly life and death in one second.

A passage from *Heimsljós* (World light) by Iceland's most beloved writer, Halldór Laxness, comes to mind as a consolation or hope, a rope to latch onto in times of pain. The protagonist poet Ólafur Káráson Ljósvíkingur thinks about the space between the land and the air, where he feels that sky and earth finally understand one another—"Where the glacier meets the sky, the land ceases to be earthly and earth becomes part of the sky, there are no more sorrows and therefore happiness isn't necessary, there alone beauty reigns, above all demands."¹⁷

In *Heimsljós* the spiritual manifests itself to Ólafur and he calls it "the powerful resonance of divinity."¹⁸ Ólafur feels that his body has become a trembling voice in an all-powerful chorus of glory, and his soul floats out of his body, becoming one with a higher power, above words, above all sensation; the body is full of light above lights. He feels so small against this feeling that the desire to become one with the highest force of power takes over.¹⁹

Similarly in the poem "Sorgen och stjärnan" (The sorrow and the star) by Gunnar Ekelöf, the power of the star, of light, a power greater than himself, conquers the sorrows within him, and he will not to rest until "*hon blivit sol för mig*" (she [the star] has become the sun for me).²⁰

Ólafur comes across a farm close to the glacier where he meets a young girl who is bedridden. She cannot move and spends all her time looking into a tiny mirror that's positioned by her bed in such a way that she can see the reflection of the glacier while she lies there. Ólafur says that the beauty of the sky

is her meaning of life.²¹ Due to the nature of her body's disabilities, the way her body is, the girl lives in the virtual existence of the reflection. She experiences the beauty of nature not in actuality, but in the reflection in the mirror.

Being this body, a body of flesh, feeling the heartbeat breathing into the pit of the stomach, knowing there is breath and life at least right now. In the full weight of consciousness, nothing is less than now.

"A Girl Is Being Killed."²²

*"Sinking into your own night, being in touch with what comes out of my body as with the sea, accepting the anguish of submersion. Being of a body with the river all the way to the rapids rather than with the boat, exposing yourself to this danger—this is a feminine pleasure. Sea you return to the sea, and rhythm to rhythm."*²³

*"Let a body finally venture out of its shelter, expose itself in meaning beneath a veil of words. WORD FLESH."*²⁴

And the flesh was female.

*"And the word became flesh, she lived among us and we saw her glory, glory that the daughter has from the mother, full of grace and truth."*²⁵

Writer and artist Óttar M. Norðfjörð has rewritten the Gospel of John, called in Icelandic *Jóhannesarguð-spjall*, and in this rewriting, God and Jesus are female. When I read this—Christ as the daughter and God as the mother—I truly feel how language, how the perception of language, shapes thinking. I think how different history would have been for the parts of the world dominated by Christianity if it had been a woman on the cross, a woman crucified with her breasts bare. She is the heroine; Jesus Christ is a woman, God in human form, a materialised spirit, the martyr and the sufferer.

*"One after another they went up to her and said: "Hail, Queen of the Jews!" and slapped her in the face."*²⁶

Julia Kristeva calls the martyrdom of Christ a "masculine pain" that a woman can never know, even though she desires to.²⁷ In Christianity, femininity is restricted to the maternal.²⁸ Christ is human *through* his mother, yet his mother is separated from being human "by her freedom of sin," for she is "pure."²⁹ Feminist theorist Rosi Braidotti states that the mother as life-giver is an "abject figure," "essential and therefore sacred, feared, totemic."³⁰

In Clarice Lispector's novel *The Passion According to G.H.*, the deconstruction of "Woman" takes place in the realm of the maternal. Lispector wrote it after the experience of an abortion, and, according to Braidotti, the plot can be read as a purging of the organic matter that had been growing inside her. G.H.

is confronted with her self, her own being of organic matter, and confronted with connecting again with her own materiality. There is an apparent encounter "with the maternal as an abject" site, which Braidotti calls the inevitable "site of female identity."³¹ Neither G.H. nor the abject cockroach is the true subject of the novel, but instead it is the juncture between individual consciousness and reality. The cockroach, squished to death by G.H. the day before the novel opens, is fascinating and repulsive, a mysterious creature, as old as time, and G.H. is strangely drawn to its white oozing mucus matter. Braidotti calls the cockroach "life" manifested "in its materiality."³² The materialisation of the spiritual and emotional in Lispector's writing is something I find relentlessly inspiring.

"Life is just for me, and I don't understand what I'm saying. And so I adore it," G.H. proclaims at the end of the novel.³³ To adore the other is the best approach. To see the other, give the other light. For Hélène Cixous, feminine writing tries to show a loving loyalty to the other. Feminine writing is not about opposition; it allows the other "to come into being" without writing by staying true to the essence of the other.³⁴ The portrayal of the unclean body, the unclean "other," goes hand in hand with a "politics of exclusion," whereby anything other than the ruling power threatens to contaminate the "clean norm."³⁵ A liaison with the "impure" would entail a *respect for materiality*, which, for Lispector and Cixous, is indivisible from a respect for diversity. Abigail Bray, in her monograph on Cixous, writes: "To think through abjection, and our fear of the impure, is to think against disembodied phallogocentric metaphysics which supports undemocratic exclusions."³⁶ If the reigning binary of Western metaphysics is the Cartesian mind/body split, then a way of conquering the violence said divide creates is to pave the way more reactively to the body.³⁷ As explained by Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, the dualisms paramount to "(post)modern thinking" must be constantly re-evaluated, with an emphasis on morphology of change because matter (materiality and processes of materialisation) has been very much overlooked by dualist thinking. They further state that the "emancipation of mat(t)er is also by nature a feminist project."³⁸

One of the more memorable artworks I have encountered is the video installation *Turbulent* (1998) by Shirin Neshat. On one wall of the installation, a male singer sings a passionate love song in front of an audience of men. He faces away from them; his cultural privilege allows him the freedom that he will be accepted in whatever position he chooses to take. He is a man surrounded by men. On the opposite wall, a woman waits silently while the man sings his song. She cannot sing in public, for she must abide by the rules of her state; therefore, she stands in an empty auditorium. She has no other choice; her society has imposed it upon her. When the man is finished, something truly powerful happens. A wordless song pierces



Hollow Sorrow, 2016. Installation. Wood, 2 x HD video looped. Dimensions variable. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Þorgerður Þórhallsdóttir



The Sorrow and the Star, 2016. Detail. Plaster, concrete, bronze, wood, 4 x 16 mm film (transferred to digital) looped, 3 x HD video looped. Dimensions variable. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Þorgerður Þórhallsdóttir

through your ears, an intensely primal and emotional music resonates through the room, and the camera circles around to the woman. Her song is mesmerising. The man's performance is socially accepted and realistic, while the woman's is outlawed, existing in a dreamscape or figment of the imagination, in a place beyond rules.

She, the heart of the canon

I frown and furrow my forehead. Wrinkle it. Put all the weight into my eyebrows. Below, the surface anger rises. Bitter, with the faintest aftertaste of soap. I am foaming at the mouth. Western women inherit the canonical Western tradition, thus internalising a male worldview in which their body is the "negative other of culture."³⁹ It is a continuing expansion, a "canon"-ball waiting to be fired. It's near impossible not to develop a preoccupation with a body that socially renders you inferior. Political philosopher Iris Marion Young claims that a woman in a patriarchal society "must live a contradiction: as human she is a free subject who participates in transcendence, but her situation as a woman denies her that subjectivity and transcendence."⁴⁰ She studies philosophy about the human condition, about thinking, about being, only to realise *they are not writing about her*. She is this body, "lacking, insufficient, flawed, as well as fetishized, commodified, loved and sexually desired—a devastating set of contradictions."⁴¹ The body of a woman signifies everything in life that is unfathomable, erratic, and ambivalent.⁴²

*"Sensitive—intuitive—dreamy, etc."*⁴³

Et cetera, et cetera ... Onto long pieces of pink, white, red, and blue wood two videos beam; old dance films as well a large, abstract form, a silver disc. In this piece, *Hollow Sorrow* (2016), women are singing and dancing onstage while men watch from the audience. Here the women's song has been silenced and, in an endless trance, a loop, they continue dancing and singing, never released from their "classical representation." The only sound in the room is the faint whirring of the video projectors. The silver disc slowly loses its momentum, falls from the wall, revealing its hollowness, gradually becoming smaller in the soft glow. The wood breaks up the films, distorts the images, which become structural and material; the shadows create space. The wood aids the transformation of light into substance and the projector light almost hugs the wood.

*"Touch which allows turning back to oneself, in the dwelling of an intimate light. But which also goes to encounter the other, illuminated-illuminating, overflowing one's own world in order to taste another brightness."*⁴⁴

Hélène Cixous calls out to all women that the past must not rule the future. She says that women have to write *through* their bodies, put themselves into the

text, and, through their writing, put themselves into the world, into history.⁴⁵ Trinh T. Minh-ha writes that it is always hard for a woman to find acknowledgement for her writing, but especially if she does not conform to a stereotypical "real woman," such as women of colour, those with physical and mental disabilities, and other minorities.⁴⁶ Writing for all women everywhere is power. They take back their power, their voice, their freedom! Feminine writing challenges the flaws in Western metaphysics. Minh-ha asserts: "*She writes*, finally not to express, nor so much to materialize an idea or a feeling, *as to possess and dispossess herself of the power of writing*. Bliss."⁴⁷

I am you are they are

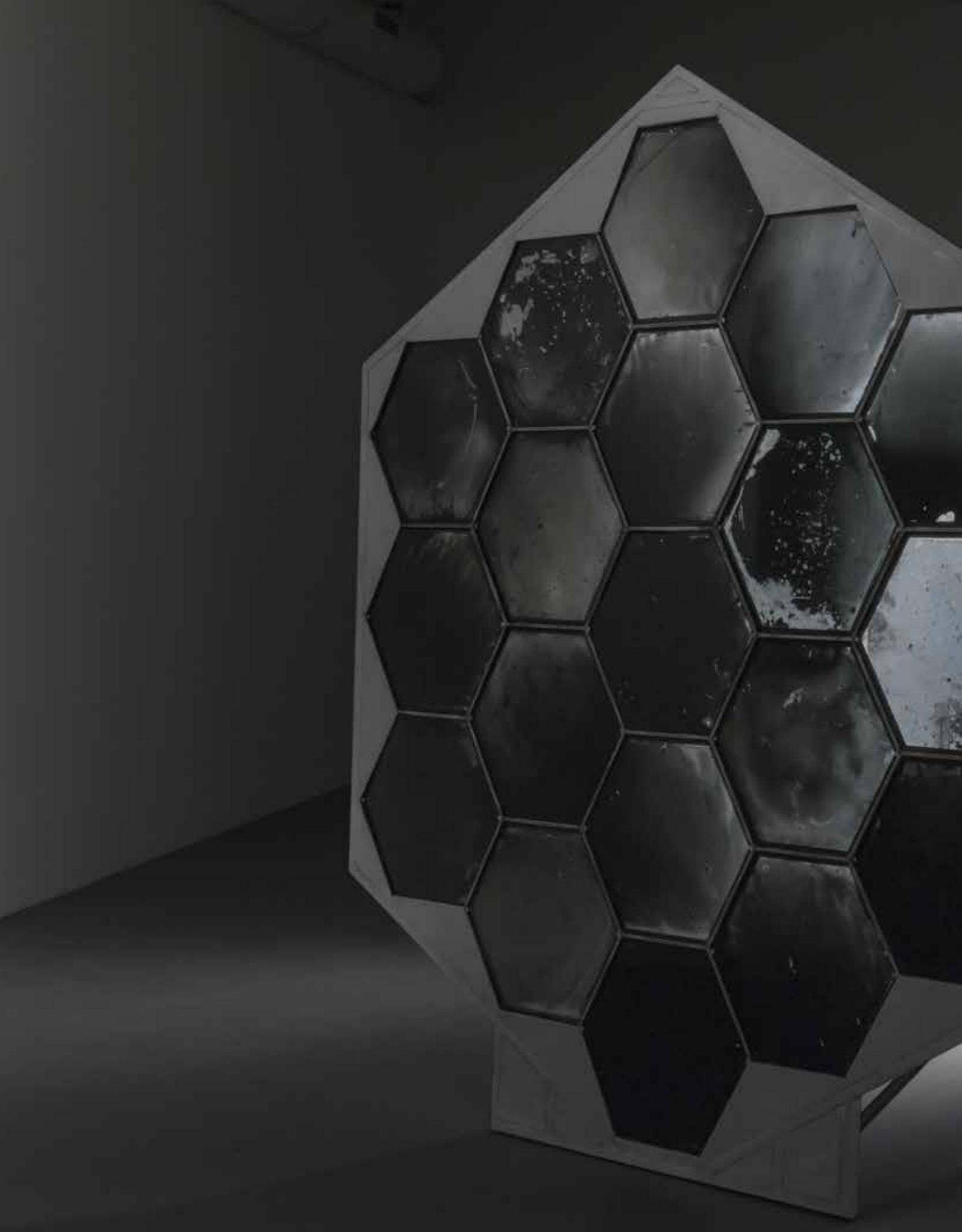
By the river the air smells sweet and pungent. Figs have fallen from the trees, and their scent fills the surrounding sweet humid air. The earth is searing hot. The leaves of the old ivy that wraps around the terracotta wall glisten in the sunlight. A few flies have gotten stuck in the hot sugary figs; they fight to become free. Watery mist over the mountains, a sea-green forest in the distance, I am led forward by piercingly bright sunlight, the source of life itself. Raindrops promise relief and the sweet smell of sugar rises even more strongly. This was the world as it was most beautiful.

There are places in my memory I visit often, pure moments of being, of happiness. I can almost feel how I felt then, back in a place where I can't imagine anything ever changing or anyone ever dying. The times in my life when I have felt most alive are moments when I forget everything and am not consciously aware of the present moment, a state of pure flow. When I am aware of life, but not aware of being aware.

*"Existence is not only an abstract destiny inscribed in town hall registers; it is future and carnal richness. Having a body no longer seems like a shameful failing. ... Flesh is no longer filth: it is joy and beauty. Merged with sky and heath, the girl is this vague breath that stirs up and kindles the universe, and she is every sprig of heather; an individual rooted in the soil and infinite consciousness, she is both spirit and life; her presence is imperious and triumphant like that of the earth itself."*⁴⁸

I have turned on the neon lights for the last time. We return the space to its former state. The windows are no longer blocked and sunlight pours in. The material waits to be transported out. Everything safely resting, bubble-wrapped for the journey back. The light that had previously flooded the space exists as a file on a USB stick now, taking up 3 GB of space that cannot be touched. In the emptiness of the room, adoration resonates. A premise for light that will be once again dark.

- 1 H  l  ne Cixous, "Clarice Lispector: The Approach," in *Coming to Writing and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 66.
- 2 Ibid., 60–61.
- 3 Ibid., 62.
- 4 Ibid., 68.
- 5 Clarice Lispector, *The Hour of the Star*, trans. Giovanni Pontiero (Manchester: Carcanet, 1986), 86.
- 6 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 218.
- 7 Henri Bergson, "Matter and Memory," in *Key Writings*, ed. Keith Ansell Pearson and John Mullarkey (New York: Continuum, 2002), 127.
- 8 Ibid., 128.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid., 130–31.
- 11 Manuel DeLanda, "Material Complexity," in *Digital Tectonics*, ed. Neil Leach, David Turnbull, and Chris Williams (Chichester: Wiley-Academy, 2004), <http://sites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic1412058.files/Week%2011/DeLandaPDF.pdf>.
- 12 Lispector, *The Hour of the Star*, 84.
- 13 Bergson, "Matter and Memory," 124–25.
- 14 Bergson, "Memory of the Present and False Recognition," in *Key Writings*, 147.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1966), 76–77.
- 17 "Par sem j  kulinn ber vi  loft h  ttir landi  ad vera jar neskt, en j r in f er hlutdeild i himninum,  ar b a ekki framar neinar sorgir og  ess vegna er gle in ekki nau synleg,  ar r ikir fegur in ein, ofar hverri kr fu." Halld r Laxness, *Heimslj s II* (Reykjav k: Helgafell, 1967), 139. My translation from the Icelandic.
- 18 "Kraftbirtingarhlj mur gu d msins." Halld r Laxness, *Heimslj s I* (Reykjav k: Helgafell, 1967), 16. My translation from the Icelandic.
- 19 Ibid., 15–16.
- 20 Gunnar Ekel f, "Sorgen och Sj rman," 1936, Ekelut, http://www.ekelut.dk/ekeloifiana/e3601_2.html. My translation from the Swedish.
- 21 Ibid., 141.
- 22 Ibid., 8.
- 23 Cixous, "Coming to Writing," in *Coming to Writing and Other Essays*, 57.
- 24 Julia Kristeva, "Stabat mater," trans. Arthur Goldhammer, in "The Female Body in Western Culture: Semiotic Perspectives," special issue, *Poetics Today* 6, no. 1–2 (1985): 134.
- 25 "Og or i  var  hold, h n bj  me  oss, full n  ar og sannleika og vi  s um d yr  hennar, d yr  sem d ttirin ein   fr  m durinni."  ttar M. Nor fj r , *J hannesargu spjall* (Reykjav k: Vaka Helgafell, 2014), 3. My translation from the Icelandic.
- 26 "Peir gengu hver af  drum fyrir hana og s g u: 'S l  u, drottning Gy inga,' og sl gu hana i andlit ." Ibid., 35.
- 27 Kristeva, "Stabat mater," 144.
- 28 Ibid., 133–34.
- 29 Ibid., 134.
- 30 Rosi Braidotti, "Of Bugs and Women: Irigaray and Deleuze on the Becoming-Woman," in *Engaging with Irigaray*, ed. Carolyn Burke, Naomi Schor, and Margaret Whitford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 128.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.*, trans. Idra Novey (London: Penguin Classics, 2014), 189.
- 34 Abigail Bray, *H  l  ne Cixous: Writing and Sexual Difference* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 59.
- 35 Ibid., 127.
- 36 Ibid., 128.
- 37 Ibid., 127–28.
- 38 Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, "The Transversality of New Materialism," in *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies* (Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities, 2012), 93.
- 39 Leslie Heywood, "When Descartes Met the Fitness Babe," in *Feminist Interpretations of Ren  Descartes*, ed. Susan Bordo (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 273.
- 40 Iris Marion Young, "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment Motility and Spatiality," *Human Studies* 3, no. 2 (April 1980): 141, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20008753>.
- 41 Heywood, "When Descartes Met the Fitness Babe," 274.
- 42 Kim Chernin, *The Obsession: Reflections on the Tyranny of Slenderness* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), 147.
- 43 H  l  ne Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," in *The Continental Ethics Reader*, ed. Matthew Calarco and Peter Atterton (New York: Routledge, 2003), 278.
- 44 Luce Irigaray, *The Way of Love*, trans. Heidi Bostic and Stephen Pluh cek (London: A&C Black, 2004), 74.
- 45 Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," 276.
- 46 Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 9.
- 47 Ibid., 18.
- 48 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. C. Borde and S. Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 2010), 376–77.





Silver Transmutation, 2016. Disused greenhouse glass coated with silver gelatin emulsion and exposed to the light of the full moon, metal, lamp. 320 x 196 x 360 cm. Installation view from *Peculiar Motions at Dusk*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Johan Österholm



Abandoned flowerbed by Lake Como, Italy, photographed in moonlight. 2014. Johan Österholm

Objects in the Rear-View Mirror

“Do you, O Thales, who cannot see what is under your feet, think that you shall understand what is in heaven?”¹
—Diogenes, on how Thales fell into a ditch stargazing

“To go in the dark with a light is to know the light.
To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight,
and find that the dark, too, blooms and sings,
and is traveled by dark feet and dark wings.”²
—Wendell Berry

Looking Upwards

A common perception is that darkness “falls,” much like rain or snow, when it actually rises from the east as the earth turns its back to the sun. The darkening one can see gathering at the eastern horizon at dusk, like an approaching thunderstorm, is in fact the earth’s shadow approaching as we rotate into it. Darkness washes and floods over land and sea, covering cities and hamlets, deep forests and groves, rivers and oceans with the blanket we call night. Nighttime is thus the time when we’re caught in that shadow, “a shadow that extends into space like a cone ... a hundred times taller than it is wide, its vertex 860,000 miles above the earth.”³

For millennia the darkness of night was complete, challenged only by the occasional fire, the stars, and, of course, our closest celestial body, the moon—all of which have been central in human mythology since the dawn of man. Humankind’s involvement with the night sky has been crucial both for practical incentives—such as navigation and time-keeping—but also a gradual awakening to the spatio-temporal dimensions of the universe. Had we never seen the stars, nor the sun nor the heavens, none of the words that we have spoken about the universe would ever have been uttered. As science author Timothy Ferris puts it when paraphrasing Plato: “The sight of day and night, the months and revolutions of the years, have created number, and have given us a conception of time, and the power of enquiring about the nature of the universe; and from this source we have derived philosophy.”⁴ The night sky is central in the development of human imagination, and at the heart of that lies the moon, the pale sun of the night. It has been used as a screen for aspirations and desire throughout the ages—but even though we may think we can ensnare it with a lasso, like James Stewart in Frank Capra’s *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946)—and bring

it under our control, it continues to elude our grasp. It is simultaneously far away and nearby, a paradox that we as a species have studied since we first looked upwards. And when we study it, we also study aspects of ourselves in the sense that it encourages us to think about the universe, of what might be out there in the great expanse.⁵

For this essay I would like to map a short history of humankind’s relation to the night sky, particularly to the moon, and expand on how its motions and light have influenced thinkers and artists during different ages. I will give an account of my own *modus operandi* and how I as a thinking subject position myself in a larger artistic and intellectual discourse concerning nocturnal light and its application to photographic procedures and processes. To do this I will first need to go back in time to follow some of the trajectories and developments of the pre- and early photographic processes that evolved into the medium we know today. I will attempt to show how the development of my artistic practice is rooted in the experiments and developments that occurred during the formation of modernity, and how these processes are still viable today. I’m particularly interested in the experiments and ideas that led to the invention of the photographic medium, its influence on architecture, and its interchangeable use as a scientific instrument and as means for artistic expression.

Humankind’s earliest calendars were developed from the recurrent natural movements of the sun, moon, and stars, and historians say that the lunar cycle was instrumental in mankind’s development of the concept of time.⁶ Being the two brightest objects in the sky, the sun and the moon have been used as juxtaposed symbols for at least as long as human culture has been recorded—and most definitely much longer than that. In that sense there have been countless



Polaroid Lunagram, 2014. Polaroid contact print from glass slide, exposed by moonlight. 10,8 x 8,5 cm. Johan Österholm

culturally specific suns and moons, as different people and different cultures have each assigned their own myths and symbols to the celestial objects. What many of these suns and moons bear in common is that their relationship is a violent one, whereby if we follow their journey over the course of the day and night we can see one as the death of the other.⁷

Being the one celestial body in our sky that transitions from one phase to another in a recurring interval, the moon is, according to the poet William Butler Yeats, “the most changeable of symbols, and not just because it is the symbol of change.”⁸ In many early cultures the moon was a symbol for both transience and rebirth, which has been passed down to us in language when we refer to it as being “new,” “young,” or “old” as it shifts phases. It’s through these shifts that the processes of time itself were visualised.⁹ Even the Latin term “*calendare*” refers to the process by which, in the early period, priests in Rome as well as Nigeria determined when a new moon had been seen. *Calendare* translates to “to call out, to announce,” and is thus a memento of the time in Rome when an official went around the streets announcing to the inhabitants that the new moon had been sighted and that therefore a new month had begun.¹⁰ In the Islamic world, the calendar was even more closely tied to the moon since it followed—and follows—the lunar year

of 354 days, with the appearance of the lunar crescent marking the beginning of each month.¹¹ But with the advent of watches and universal timekeeping, this close link between the time unit of a month and the waxing and waning of the moon seems to have been marginalised in the public imagination. In the words of sociologist Norbert Elias:

Apart from experts, few people now take note of the fact that our year is related to movements of the sun and our month to movements of the moon. ... In this as in other respects humans live more firmly integrated than ever into their self-created universe of symbols. Step by step, in the course of millennial development, the once-troubling calendar problem has been more or less solved. And as calendars no longer give very much trouble people dismiss from their memory the past which they still gave trouble. They are not very much interested in the stages of the development in the course of which their ancestors step by step found a solution to the troubling problem. Yet human beings must fail to understand themselves and the possibility of their open future if they fail to integrate into their fund of knowledge that of the development leading from the past to the present.¹²



Left and right: *Moon Plate*, 2014–15. Detail. Attempting to distill the essence of the silver rays of the moon by gathering its light each month when it is at the height of its luminosity. Disused greenhouse glass, silver gelatin emulsion, light of the full moon. Johan Österholm

My way of working during the past two years has been closely tied to the lunar phases: preparing material and researching locations during the waxing phase, working intensely in the field during the height of the full moon, and then developing and caring for the most recent photographic exposures as the lunar disc wanes. I've found this *modus operandi*—a *lunar oulipo*,¹³ if you will—has brought an intensity to my practice, since the time constraints mean that I've had to follow up on thought experiments rather quickly. My aim has been to at least try them out, to make practical use of an idea, whereas without the constraints I might have easily rejected them by the mere act of overthinking. There's a fine line of balance at play here, where on the one hand an idea has to be actively pondered upon, and on the other too thorough an examination risks a state of paralysis by making the potential work impossibly large and thereby futile to act upon. I've used said constraints to allow my works to grow step by step over time, shifting shape and blending together along the way in a manner similar to the moon's changing face.

The brightness of the moon varies considerably, and its luminosity, measured in lux, is influenced by several factors, the moon phase being just one of them. During the night of a full moon, the luminance is some twenty-five times greater than at the time of the quarter moon, and two hundred fifty times greater than on a clear, moonless night. Comparatively, the sun is said to be about four hundred thousand times brighter than full moonlight. Another factor that has influence is the distance between the earth, moon, and sun—since the terrestrial and lunar orbits are elliptical, that is to say not perfect circles. The thickness and make-up of the atmosphere also changes the luminosity, since there is a loss of light as it passes through the different layers of air. In dry, clean air, the atmosphere has relatively little impact, whereas moist or dusty air lessens the intensity of moonlight. For atmospheric reasons the height of the moon relative to the horizon also has influence on its intensity, as does earthlight—*clair de terre*—the reflection of a reflection; moonlight reflected from the surface of the earth back onto the moon, perceptible especially some days before and after the new moon, when the outline of the lunar disc is clearly visible, although only a crescent is directly illuminated by the sun.¹⁴

I'm drawn to moonlight since it in some ways is a thing of the past. There is, according to the International Dark-Sky Association, a rapid decrease in places on earth where one can experience a fully dark night—a night that in common language would be called *pitch black*.¹⁵ All across the globe, the celestial light from the moon and the few planets and stars still visible compete with a vast number of street lamps, lit billboards, and other sources of illumination. For us humans, the difference between daytime and nighttime is shrinking due to the increasing magnitude of artificial illumination.¹⁶ This is a comparatively recent phenomenon, since it wasn't until the end of the

seventeenth century that European cities started having some form of rudimentary public lighting. The electric lighting that present-day societies more or less take for granted only came into use toward the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁷ Today, if one lives in a large city or metropolitan area, it takes considerable time and effort to be able to experience darkness of the sort that thousands of generations before us lived with. Some even say that what we're experiencing is the beginning of the "End of Night," that the natural night sky—a universal heritage—is becoming extinct. Paul Bogard, author of *The End of Night: Searching for Natural Darkness in an Age of Artificial Light*, argues that the level of darkness that for most of human history was common has become unreal in the modern Western world, where the collective glow of the earth's cities and streets clearly details borders between land and water when seen from space. Some of this light does good—it guides us, gives us a sense of security, and might add to the beauty of our nightscape—but most of it is waste in the form of light pollution. In fact, says Bogard, the light we see in photos from space or from airplane windows is light that is allowed to shine into the sky, where it illuminates nothing of what it was meant to. There's energy being wasted, but more importantly there's ecological damage being done to the health of the natural world, where every living creature suffers from the loss of darkness.¹⁸

There's a distinction between ecological light pollution and its astronomical counterpart. Whereas the first concerns the world's increasingly light nights and their impact on suddenly changed nocturnal patterns and habits that have evolved over millions of years, the latter deals with the just as sudden loss of our visual link to the universe. The brighter the surrounding area here on earth is, the smaller the universe appears, since night sky turns to black. There's a contradiction at work here, best summarised by the astronomer Tyler Nordgren: "Four hundred years ago, everyone in Florence could see the stars, but only Galileo had a telescope. Now everyone has a telescope but no one can see the stars."¹⁹ Light pollution is the reason why the great majority of us here on earth live under night skies where we can count the number of stars to a mere few dozen, whereas an otherwise clear night would open up to thousands of stars visible to the naked eye. The shadow that the earth rotates into each night is in a sense steadily getting lighter across the world, to the point that UNESCO has declared: "An unpolluted night sky that allows the enjoyment and contemplation of the firmament should be considered an inalienable right of humankind equivalent to all other environmental, social, and cultural rights."²⁰

My series *Polaroid Lunagrams*—which consists of contact prints of old magic lantern slides made on Polaroid pack film using moonlight—followed me for more than a year, from early 2014 till the spring of 2015. The work was made by exposing glass slides made by my paternal great-grandfather,

containing pictures of the moon phases of the 1920s and '30s, using the light of the present-day full moon. For each lunar outing I packed warm and sought out the darkest places I could find in the area that I happened to visit during the height of the lunar cycle. This looking for darkness isn't merely a practical excursion, it is also a personal ritual that aims to put me in a place where I can celebrate the moon's crossing—a crossing that I feel often gets overwhelmed by the artificial lights of our cities. I go to lengths to notice the moon, to cherish it, allowing it to act as a celestial compass for me. I often found my dark safe haven along the coast (the open sea seems to inhale light), in rural fields, and in groves near a national park where public light is either forbidden, shielded, or kept to a minimum. Upon entering the dark I'm at first hesitant, held back by a deep-rooted fear. I tell myself that for thousands of years travelling in moonlight was considered to be the safest option for nighttime navigation.²¹ It's a weak mantra at best, but its assurance calms me down somewhat. So far in my nocturnal excursions I have never encountered a threat, and I've only been approached a couple of times; there seems to be a tacit agreement between those awake at such hours, in such darkness, that one keeps his or her distance—people and animal alike—out of reach of human sight and sound.

One summer moon I found myself working among abandoned greenhouses on the steep hillsides of Lake Como in Northern Italy. I was in Como for an artist research laboratory and had for the past few nights struggled with heavy cloud cover and the strong upward-pointing light emitted from the luxury villas around the lake. The series of neglected greenhouses located in a forest clearing on the hillside provided a sanctuary of warm darkness. While exposing my Polaroids in the nocturnal light, I came to realise that all around me were other materials that mimicked this very same gathering of light that I was occupied with. I was surrounded by smashed flowerbeds and greenhouses with glass panes broken by past winter gales. Suddenly the greenhouse, itself a light-harnessing structure, transformed. Viewed in moonlight, the rustic glass panes and sharp shards reflected a soft glimmer that seemed to be emitted from its inside. This inner glow swelled to the edges with alchemical potential—a potential to capture the essence of moonlight in a manner no normal photograph could.

Notes in the Dark Chamber

Much as the calendar, the camera obscura has a history that dates back thousands of years. During most of recorded human history it has been known that when light passes through a small hole into a dark, enclosed interior, an inverted image will appear on the wall opposite the hole. Thinkers have long noted this phenomenon and have speculated how it might or might not be functioning in a manner that's comparable to human vision, later correlating it to the workings of human thought.²² As art theorist Jonathan Crary

has demonstrated in regards to the camera obscura, optical instruments should be understood primarily not as technological tools but as a cultural system that redefines the status of the perceiving subject in relation to the world in a new, unforeseen way. The camera obscura was never, according to Crary, simply an inert and neutral piece of equipment; rather, it was “embedded in a much larger and denser organization of knowledge and of the observing subject.”²³ He continues:

Historically speaking, we must recognize how for nearly two hundred years, from the late 1500s to the end of the 1700s, the structural and optical principles of the camera obscura coalesced into a dominant paradigm though which was described the status and possibilities of an observer. ... During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the camera obscura was without question the most widely used model for explaining human vision, and for representing the relation of a perceiver and the position of a knowing subject to an external world.

... For over two hundred years it subsisted as a philosophical metaphor, a model in the science of physical optics, *and* was also a technical apparatus used in a large range of cultural activities.²⁴

What's crucial here is that the camera obscura “performs an operation of individuation,” since its process by necessity defines an observer as an isolated, enclosed, and autonomous body within its dark confines. As Crary notes, this induces a strong element of aske-sis—a withdrawal from the world in order “to regulate and purify one's relation” to the abundance of content of the world outside of the chamber.²⁵ The camera obscura thus becomes a site that is simultaneously used for observation of empirical phenomena as well as reflective introspection and self-observation. In Isaac Newton's famous *Opticks* (1704), in which he uses inductive reasoning to examine reflections, refractions, inflections, and colours of light, the camera obscura is the de facto site where his knowledge is made possible.²⁶ Newton's contemporary John Locke writes in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) about the camera obscura:

External and internal sensations are the only passages that I can find of knowledge to the understanding. These alone, as far as I can discover, are the windows by which light is let into this *dark room*. For, methinks, the understanding is not much unlike a closet wholly shut from light, with only some little opening left ... to let in external visible resemblances, or some idea of things without; would the pictures coming into such a dark room but stay there and lie so orderly as to be found upon occasion it would very much resemble the understanding of a man.²⁷

In using the dark chamber as a metaphor for human thought, Locke in effect proposes a way of “visualizing spatially the operations of the intellect.”²⁸ And as Crary has pointed out, there are other spatial connotations that are operating simultaneously, namely the fact that when one spoke of being “in camera” in seventeenth-century England, it literally meant to be “within the chambers of a judge or person of title.”²⁹ The observer positioned within the camera obscura thus also, in theory, has a juridical role, whereby he or she is able to modify the seemingly neutral reception function of the apparatus. Locke introduces self-legislation and subjective authority to the observer, which leaves it up to the subject within the apparatus to police the passing of information between the phenomena of the exterior world and its interior representation. Anything that disrupts or causes disorder can be excluded, and in that sense “reflective introspection overlaps with a regime of self-discipline,” the latter often visualised as an inner eye. This subjective eye reviews both ill-formed as well as clear and distinct ideas, and is completely separate from the apparatus that has allowed them to enter the darkened space.³⁰ Expanding on Locke’s model of the camera obscura, Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz brought into question the apparatus itself. Leibniz did not see it as a passive receiving device through which information was passed forward without alteration to the discerning observer. Rather, he endowed the camera obscura with an inherent capacity to structure the ideas and phenomena it receives: it could, for example, be employed to avoid looking directly into the sun while still seeking to gain knowledge of it or of the light it propagated.³¹ The apparatus, seen as an optical system, was for Leibniz defined by its functional relation to a cone of vision.³² Philosopher Michel Serres consequently summarises Leibniz’s mathematical concept:

The science of conic sections shows that there exists a single point from which an apparent disorder can be organized into a harmony. ... For a given plurality, for a given disorder there only exists one point around which everything can be placed in order; this point exists and it is unique.³³

While I haven’t used the camera obscura in my work per se, my relation to it comes from juxtaposing this light-based cone of vision and knowledge with the cone of shadow that constitutes our nights. The darkness of the night functions as my camera obscura, my dark chamber, where the moon takes the places of the small circular hole in the wall. My time for introspection thus comes when I’m positioned not in the flood of light but in the flood of *night*, illuminated only just so by diffuse moonlight. This is where I can let my mind wander unhindered, where I can disavow the communication devices that otherwise constantly give and demand updates. Not wanting the glare of the telephone screen to disrupt my nocturnal exposures—*do not disturb my circles*—I instead slowly adjust my

eyes to the luminosity of moonlight. As darkness envelops me and limits my sight to what’s just in front of me, other senses are heightened. If I’m lucky—and not too cold—a soothing feeling of clarity might come over me. I then bring out one of my several black notebooks, its yellowish paper contrasting against the black ink of my pen, allowing me to see just enough to make notes of the thoughts that pass through my mind like the occasional shooting star overhead. I like to think that this is the moon influencing me, leading me further and further down a “lunatic trail.” There’s nothing sinister or maleficent about it; one could rather say that there’s an exchange of inspiration, by which I use the moon as a screen to project aspirations and desires onto—much like the countless men and women before me—only to have them bounced back somewhat altered. The alterations can be minuscule, maybe a mere impulse to get up and change locations, but sometimes two synapses collide that open up possibilities hitherto unseen. Once, after scrambling to shelter to hide from a heavy downpour, I made notes with pun-like references between monsoon/moonsoon—a hopeful wish for the weather to clear up. In that sense my notebooks become places of refuge for thoughts that otherwise would have been unsaid and then forgotten, to paraphrase Bas Jan Ader. If the conditions are right, and I’m allowed to follow the lunar-thought-paths to wherever they might lead, at the end there lies something that can best be described as a veritable mental rabbit hole to euphorically tumble down. Much like in *Alice in Wonderland*, they open up another world.

The notes—sometimes mere scribbles—that I take during my lunar outings come from these impulses, and they often have the function of being seeds for thought. Further thought. A majority of the scribbles come to nothing, but as they accumulate over many lunar cycles, a rare few sometimes grow sprouts, and occasionally these sprouts bloom with astonishing haste. At other times they spend years in the nurturing soil of the notebooks before a bud might finally break the surface. If one puts aside the speed of growth, what the nighttime scribbles have in common is that they are notes made in a state that resembles what the Swiss author Robert Walser has called “sluggardizing.” The term, first presented in a short story titled “Berlin and the Artist” from 1910, relates to the frantic speed and intellectual furor of the capital city that leaves the artist little rest and no choice but to pay attention:

Berlin never rests, and this is glorious. Each dawning day brings with it a new, agreeably disagreeable attack on complacency, and this does the general sense of indolence good. An artist possesses, much like a child, an inborn propensity for beautiful, noble sluggardizing. Well, this slug-a-beddishness, this kingdom, is constantly being buffeted by fresh storm-winds of inspiration. The refined, silent creature is suddenly

blustered full of something coarse, loud and unrefined. There is an incessant blurring together of various things, and this is good, this is Berlin, and Berlin is outstanding.³⁴

If one exchanges the city of Berlin in Walser's story with that of the contemporary digital information landscape, then the concept of sluggardizing becomes a useful tool for thinking about artistic processes in the present day, a whole century after the term's introduction. The British artist Tacita Dean has interpreted it as "the ability to work while appearing to be doing nothing, most often when lying down."³⁵ Dean speaks of this state as one of the most important for artists, one that is a close relative to daydreaming but also has ties to the surrealist idea of objective chance championed by André Breton. It is a mental state of serendipitous "brain idleness" that is very difficult to achieve, a state of chance encounters between thoughts and associations that give birth to new trains of thought driven by the subconscious. It brings forth associations and ideas that one most likely wouldn't have been able to actively summon. Most importantly, it is a state that Dean sees as being threatened with disappearance; that we as a species are losing our ability to daydream, since every idle moment can be filled by fiddling with a mobile phone.³⁶ The mind is kept active, but it is an activity that has quite strict boundaries, defined by whatever topic might be trending online on a particular day. Without too much hyperbole, one doesn't merely *wait* for the bus anymore, one *scrolls*. But waiting is a time of boredom, a boredom and quiet despair that at times seems to know no end—I am reminded of entries made in a notebook of mine while waiting in the terrible corridors of Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Caen, my sister going through another dose of radiotherapy in the room next to me—but it is also a time when one's mind can be left to wander. I have found myself being able to reach this mental state of idleness—or at least the territory that constitutes its borderlands—while working in the extended dark room of the night, one that doesn't consist of light-isolating walls and ceiling but of sand dunes and beech trees clad in silver light, with the celestial dome overhead.

Heightened Sensibility

Almost two centuries before my moonlight exposures by Lake Como, William Henry Fox Talbot spent his honeymoon by the same shores in the autumn of 1833. Talbot, a polymath in the true sense, who at the age of thirty-three had already published four books and twenty-seven scholarly articles on a wide range of subjects spanning fields like mathematics, chemistry, astronomy, botany, and art history, spent part of his visit sketching by the mountain-lined lake, with one eye pressed close to a camera lucida. A simple draughtsman's aid "consisting of an adjustable metal arm fastened at one end to the artist's sketchbook or drawing board and supporting a glass prism at the

other," it allowed the young man to see a refracted image of the Italian landscape superimposed "as if by magic" on the pages of his sketchbook. For a skilled draughtsman it was but a simple task to trace the outline of the village, the lake, and the distant mountains with his or her pencil. But Talbot was not satisfied, "for when the eye was removed from the prism—in which all looked beautiful—I found that the faithless pencil had only left traces on the paper melancholy to behold."³⁷ Art historian Malcolm Daniel writes:

Talbot's frustration that day with the camera lucida led him to recollect his experiences ten years earlier with another drafting aid, the camera obscura—a small wooden box with a lens at one end that projected the scene before it onto a piece of frosted glass at the back, where the artist could trace the outlines on thin paper. The camera obscura, too, had left Talbot with unsatisfactory results, but it was not his own feeble drawings that he remembered after a decade. Rather he recalled with pleasure "the inimitable beauty of the pictures of nature's painting which the glass lens of the Camera throws upon the paper in its focus—fairy pictures, creations of a moment, and destined as rapidly to fade away." These thoughts in turn prompted Talbot to muse "how charming it would be if it were possible to cause these natural images to imprint themselves durably, and remain fixed upon the paper." "And why should it not be possible?" he asked himself. Talbot jotted down thoughts about experiments he could conduct at home to see if Nature, through the action of light on material substances, might be brought to draw her own picture.³⁸

The following year, back in the English countryside outside of London, Talbot started experimenting with the idea that had occurred to him on the shores of Lake Como. He soon found that by coating a sheet of fine writing paper with salt and a solution of silver nitrate, the paper would darken in the sun, and that adding a second coating of salt impeded further darkening or fading. In this way Talbot was able to make very precise tracings of botanical specimens. He pressed a leaf or a plant on top of sensitised paper and covered it with a sheet of glass, which was then exposed to the sun; the areas of the paper not covered by the plant would darken, while the parts where the plant blocked the light remained white. Talbot had thus discovered how to fix an image onto paper, albeit a rudimentary and only partially stabilised one. He called this discovery "the art of photogenic drawing," and began to slowly improve his chemistry over the next few years. It wasn't until 1839 though, when news broke of Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre's invention that recorded camera images onto metal plates—known as the daguerreotype—that Talbot started to devote himself fully to developing and promoting his own process.³⁹ Notably, whereas Talbot initially

used his photographic technique to outline plants, Daguerre was early on urged by French Academy member Dominique François Arago “to make photographic maps of our satellite,” the moon. Arago appreciated that photography would not only be more efficient and accurate than drawing by hand, but that it could also produce images of astral bodies inscribed by their own light.⁴⁰

The work that I started in Como is related to Talbot’s and Daguerre’s experiments in the sense that they too attempted to gather elusive light and through it draw the outlines of matter. For me, the actual glass of the greenhouse became the protagonist of many of the works made during the following year. Like Talbot I returned in my mind to the fertile shore and hillsides of Lake Como, but whereas Talbot developed a heliographic mode of image making through photograms, I instead focused on the light of the night, much more obscure. For my work *Moon Gatherers* (2014–), I transported some of the glimmering greenhouse shards back up north to Scandinavia and prepared them with a light-sensitive silver gelatin emulsion and placed them in the manner that Talbot used botanical specimens, placing the now light sensitive but to the eye opaque shards on top of a photographic paper, exposing them by moonlight. The results are images in which the light of the moon has seeped through the opaque emulsion and written the inside of the glass on the underlying paper—performing something that can be likened to an X-ray in the process.

A Glass Ceiling: Photographic Architecture

As the photographic medium developed during its first decades, the low sensitivity of the nitrate solutions used demanded a lot of light for a proper exposure. With the increasing popularity of the new medium, photography started having a direct influence on architecture. As the Belgian artist Ives Maes has noted, “every photographer that took himself seriously had his own laboratory,” and because of the precarious nature of the early photosensitive material, domestic houses were architecturally adjusted or altered to fit small darkrooms and laboratories. When designing new buildings, architects from the mid-nineteenth century onwards would often include a darkroom in their drawings. The darkroom could later be recognised from the outside from the red-glazed windows.⁴¹

Another crucial influence came with the invention of the photographic portrait studio. Initially the exposure time that the process of both the daguerrotype and Talbot’s calotype required caused problems when it came to moving subjects, even if the subject moved ever so slightly. This was solved by constructing rooms clad with windows, making daylight abundant—a reversed darkroom of sorts, where an ingenious lighting systems reflected and focused the sunlight on the sitter, reducing the amount of time needed for proper exposure. It didn’t take long after the first portrait studio opened in London in March 1841 for a boom in the construction of specially built glasshouses situated in gardens and on rooftops around the city. As Maes has shown, glasshouses appeared in



Structure for Moon Plates and Moon Shards, 2014–15. Disused greenhouse glass, silver gelatin emulsion, light of the full moon, wooden structure. 200 x 190 x 70 cm. Installation view from *The Camera's Blind Spot III: LA CAMERA. On the Materiality of Photography*, Palazzo De' Toschi, Bologna, 2016. Johan Österholm

photographers' practices almost instantaneously after portrait photography was made feasible, since they allowed for the best possible lighting situation.⁴² This early influence of photography on architecture reached a climax of sorts with the Great Exhibition in London in 1851—the first in a series of exhibitions that would later be known as the World's Fair—for which the temporary exhibition hall the Crystal Palace was constructed in Hyde Park. The construction used cast iron and glass and covered a huge area, measuring 563 metres long, 139 metres wide, and 33 metres at maximum height. Maes writes: "An endless complexity of columns carried the eye upward in one unbroken vertical line from the ground to the roof. They served to support 273,100 superficial meters of glass, weighing over 400 tons, covering the iron anatomy with a deceptive airy lightness." Its modular design allowed parts to be manufactured in different areas of the British Isles and then shipped to London, where teams of workmen bolted, welded, and slotted the building together in a mere seventeen weeks. Being temporal in nature—the Crystal Palace would have to be dismantled after the Great Exhibition had finished—it was made with the camera in mind. Its translucency made it ideal as a photographic studio, and the resulting photographs served as imperial propaganda aimed to showcase the technological superiority of the British Empire.⁴³

Glass had already been essential for the photographic medium from the onset, as it was necessary in the production of the lenses for the camera, but it wasn't long before the technological development of the medium also incorporated glass as a sensitised part of the process. Soon glass plates were coated with wet collodion emulsion, which created glass-based negatives. These negatives were significantly more sensitive to light than previous emulsions and they allowed for image reproduction through contact printing.⁴⁴ At the same time, glass was a valuable material, sometimes leading photographers to scrape their plates clean to start over. Writer and historian Rebecca Solnit discusses this in relation to the Civil War in the United States, where many of the negatives of the violent conflict were recycled directly into greenhouse plates without being scraped, "their images of the harvest of death gradually fading away to let more and more light in on the orchids or cucumbers beneath."⁴⁵ This evocative image was planted in my mind a decade prior to my moonlight excursions in the abandoned greenhouses in Como, but somehow the shimmering pieces of glass brought the latent image forward. So I gathered the shards and meticulously wrapped them for safekeeping on the journey back up north. The glass, overlooked for what appeared to have been many seasons, became precious again.

Orbital Points

An artist that has had great influence on my way of working is the aforementioned Tacita Dean, who led the artistic research laboratory that summer in Como.

Given the confines of this essay, I will focus on one of her early works, *A Bag of Air* from 1995. The 16 mm film depicts Dean rising in a hot-air balloon to gather the alchemical substance of dew. But in her writing on the film, Dean describes how the original intention was to gather fresh spring clouds to turn their substance "with invisible meaning into something physical and tangible" by alchemical transmutation.⁴⁶ She had chosen a region in France known for its morning mist, Lans en Vercors, but realised at dawn on the day of the scheduled shoot that no balloon would go up in the unreliable spring air if there's any sign of cloud in the sky. As Dean sought out valleys in the area to locate misty weather conditions ahead of sunrise, "it became obvious that it was going to be a beautiful, clear day. In fact the clearest day that anyone could remember. ... So we rose on a beautiful morning, up high above the mountains, and caught fresh, clear air." Serendipity had altered the work, for when Dean researched the clear, upper sky, she found that it was the mythical stuff of ether. The 16 mm film shows aerial shots of a mountainous forest landscape and bags being filled with air. Dean's voiceover narrates:

If you rise at dawn in a clear sky, and during the month of March, they say you can catch a bag of air so intoxicated with the essence of spring that when it is distilled and prepared, it will produce an oil of gold, remedy enough to heal all ailments. And as you rise at dawn to the upper ether, and lean out to catch the bag of air, they say that you are trapping the ascending dew on its voyage from Earth to Heaven. And if you repeat this process each clear dawn for a thousand mornings, you will gather enough essence to fill a sealed flask and begin your manufacture. And in your flask will be a delicacy of substance that is both celestial and terrestrial. And if you separate the distillate from the residue each time and over many months, and until you reunite them at the end of your manufacture, they say you will have transformed your bag of air into a golden elixir, a preparation of etheric medicine capable of treating all disharmonies in the body and the soul.⁴⁸

Another seminal artwork in my own library of go-to references is the conceptual artist Jason Dodge's *Darkness falls on Wolkowyja 74, 38–613 Polańczyk*, Poland, from 2005. Dodge has an acquaintance who spends her summer months looking after a house in southern Poland while the owner is away on holiday, and for this work he commissioned her to remove all sources of light from the house. Nothing was to be forgotten—neither fluorescent bulbs, nor illuminated switches, nor pilot lights, nor refrigerator light—even night lights and matches were collected from drawers and cabinets. The work is presented as a colourful and quite dusty jumble of light sources dumped on the gallery or museum floor, appearing at first glance as leftovers from a demolished house, but upon closer

inspection revealing an assemblage to which great care has been given.⁴⁹ This way of assembling objects and the accompanying title that, as in the majority of Dodge's works, functions as a sort of story opening that is to be completed in some way or other, is what lures me in.⁵⁰ By encountering the jumble on the floor and entering through the semantic door of the title, I'm transported outside of the gallery space. At once I envision a distant darkness that has permanently set on a faraway house at the edge of a forest. The lightbulbs and matches are given a relic-like aura—they are no longer mere everyday objects but instead are granted the sort of magical quality they had when first invented. The light giver thus becomes, through a small semantic shift, that which grants darkness. This, for me, is the poetic core of the work, where the everyday object is given magical qualities through a very specific reading of it. It sharpens my perception, since it reminds me of what I haven't been seeing—it points to something that I have overlooked. This way of using objects and texts to build narratives that continue to grow in the audience's minds—Dodge refers to these conceptual resonances as “lightness”—is a sort of conceptual beacon for me;⁵¹ I might not be there yet, but it is the point that I'm navigating towards.

My work *Structure for Moon Plates and Moon Shards* (2015) came out of the process of turning the glass shards of the Como greenhouses into alchemical moon shards. When working with these shards over a series of lunar cycles in the autumn of 2014, I came to realise that there was another work waiting to be made—a work on a larger scale, with full-sized plates. Seeing as the summer season had drawn to a close, I skimmed through websites that listed disused greenhouse materials for sale. I found what I needed at a farm in the countryside a few dozen kilometres outside of Lund, and soon my studio housed some one hundred plates in various sizes and states of decline. Not knowing what form the resulting work would take, I started preparing the plates by washing one side and applying the silver gelatin emulsion on it. The plates were then dried and stored in light-proof boxes that doubled as transport crates. Each full moon I brought the boxes to the countryside, by either transport bike or car, and left them outside to gather the light of the full moon. I patiently waited next to them, at times setting up a tent and falling asleep exhausted just before dawn, before putting the plates back in their protective boxes again. Months passed and my studio filled up with stacks of materialised moonlight leaning against the walls. The notes I made during the nights out in the field took on a sketch-like form where architectural figures, scribbles in themselves, appeared. These figures grew into a black wooden structure of a greenhouse corner, a cross-section that was tall enough for me to stand inside, but also open on one side to allow for a sense of continuation. Thus the resulting work extends beyond the physical limitations of the structure itself, and in turn references the shared ancestry of photography and architecture.

Measuring the Imperceptible

In January 1839, Talbot countered Daguerre's claim to being the inventor of photography by exhibiting some of his photogenic drawings at the Royal Institution in London, where his photomicrographs of plant stems caused a sensation within the scientific community. Fast forward to the early twenty-first century, and some of the very same prints were shown in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, where, as photography historian Kelley Wilder has noted, the driving forces behind the exhibition weren't scientific politics but instead an increasingly enthusiastic “modern appreciation of the look of scientific photographs that revealed to us invisible worlds, motions and objects.”⁵² Scientific photography developed out of the ability to give form to the intangible—the ways the medium could “lend form to things that were not normally visible to the human eye,” giving them the appearance of something permanent and solid. The early scientific experiments with photographic processes that were able to freeze motions mid-air, depicting the surface of the sun, faraway nebulae, and the bones inside a human hand, proposed a radically different view of the world in that they revealed what lies beyond human vision.⁵³

The camera obscura and the early photographic processes that came out of it were considered to operate in a manner equivalent to vision by imitating the functioning of the human eye. The mechanical eye of the camera was seen as providing “images,” much as the human eye provided “views,” and the lens of the camera and its internal receptive surface had apparent similarities with the spherical shape of the human eye and its receptive retina.⁵⁴ As I have attempted to describe, there is, historically speaking, a strong focus on the analogy between the camera obscura and human vision and thought. But with the evolution of the photographic medium and its use within an increasingly wide array of sciences, a gradual shift occurred that led away from the field of vision and optics. Photography theorist Michel Frizot has argued that this shift occurred in the 1880s with the appearance of the gelatin silver bromide process, much more sensitive than what came before and capable of exposure speeds down to one hundredth of a second. To manage this “non-human time,” a special mechanism had to be developed: the mechanical shutter. Together these two inventions uprooted photography from the visual system inherent in the camera obscura and planted it instead in the middle of the world of physics.⁵⁵ There were both technical and conceptual reasons for this replanting. On the technical side there were crucial differences between the eye's retina and the camera's light-sensitive negative, first and foremost the different ways they read and process light through their sensitive and receptive surfaces. The photographic surface is industrially made and homogenous, whereas the retina is organic and heterogenous, meaning that all points on the photographic surface have the same properties, while the visual

faculties of the eye are reduced to the central fovea (which control the directional and converging nature of the gaze). Even more crucially, the action of light is global, synchronous, and immediate over the whole photographic surface, and the effects of it are cumulative: light adds up, meaning that a long exposure with a camera reveals details in a moonlit landscape that are impossible for the eye to discern.⁵⁶ Another way of putting it would be that the optical image projected in a camera obscura is a *light image* changing in real time, whereas the photographic event itself is the recording of said image on a surface over a period of time by bringing about material changes in the surface. There thus remains a record of the event, a record of stored data that can be used to produce a visual image.⁵⁷

The cumulative aspect presents another departure from the earlier visual system. As Frizot has argued, there was also a fracture in how time was perceived. The time of vision is, according to Frizot, human time, which is to say that it is “sensational in nature, impossible to measure, evaluative without involving standardization or method, and belongs only to the domain of the free will.” The time of photography, on the other hand, “is the time of physics ... the time of clocks, or universal time; it concerns measure—the time of photography is metrical ... it *must* be measured to obtain a photograph.”⁵⁸ As a result photography has the ability to extend from the infinitely small to the infinitely large, dividing and layering time beyond the limited interval of human time—an interval that for centuries has been defined by the hour and the minute, a timescale that in its turn refers to the motion of the sun and the length of the day.⁵⁹ Depending on the magnitude of light and the sensitivity of the photographic material used, by the 1880s it was possible to photograph at speeds ranging from a fraction of a second to many minutes, and this opened up new fields of use for the medium.

Towards the late nineteenth and early twentieth century these much reduced exposure times allowed for the camera to photograph the motions of animals and humans alike. In 1878 Eadweard Muybridge famously photographed a horse and horseman at full gallop, seizing them in one five-hundredth of a second by using multiple cameras. He revealed for the first time “man’s shortest flight in space—a journey so short it had previously remained imperceptible,” where four legs converged under the horse’s body, hoofs nearly touching each other in a shadowy flight.⁶⁰ Four years later, in 1882, the French physiologist Étienne-Jules Marey surpassed this one five-hundredth of a second limit with a single-lens photograph, and at the end of the First World War in 1918, the last assistant to Marey, Lucien Bull, was able to photograph fifty thousand images in one second.⁶¹ In her analysis of the history of the short timescale of a tenth of a second, Jimena Canales has shown that the development of these techniques to freeze movement and time came about in a time period when there was

an increased focus on timescales that measured in the smallest fractions of a second. Understanding and controlling these minuscule periods through the development of science and technology was considered essential to the survival of the modern project—in virtually all parts of the machine that drove modernity forward one can find references to the tenth of a second. Thus, even though modern communications such as the telegraph brought about a great increase in the interchange of methods and ideas between nations, Thomas Edison’s chief laboratory engineer noted there was transmission delays throughout the system that made him conclude: “We all live on a tenth of a second world.”⁶² Within psychology the importance of this short timescale was instead linked to reaction time—the time elapsing between stimulus and movement—or the speed of thought that was frequently measured to be between one- and three-tenths of a second. Increasing the speed of reaction was seen as a way of increasing survival in the modern world: “If a playing child suddenly runs across the track of the electric railway, a difference of a *tenth of a second* in the reaction-time may decide his [or her] fate,” one Harvard scholar wrote.⁶³ Controlling and improving the speed of reaction could thus lead to a way of pre-empting death itself.

Reaction time was also central to the field of astronomy, where in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the standardisation and comparability of celestial measurements became crucial for arriving at absolute universal measurements. Astronomers thus focused on a different aspect of reaction time, namely that of personal equation. It had been discovered that different individuals differed in their timing of star transits, and worryingly it seemed these differences were individual and had a tendency to oscillate between one to a few tenths of a second.⁶⁴ This small error had large consequences when the specific astronomical readings were used to determine the time and longitude for map making. If the readings were a few tenths of a second off, they resulted in discrepancies of nearly half a kilometre.⁶⁵ But if these small errors proved to cause discrepancies of hundreds of metres here on Earth, one has to remember that the magnitude of error increases with the distance it tries to measure, and that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries astronomers around the world were trying to establish an accurate measurement for the distance of the universe. On that scale personal equation led to enormous discrepancies, and there were examples where scientists dismissed assistants for persistently recording the passage of the stars more than half a second later than his or her superior.⁶⁶

Out of the astronomical events of the nineteenth century, it was the 1874 and 1882 transits of Venus in front of the sun that became the main challenge for the field of astronomical science. As Canales writes: “The event was exceptional because of its rarity: transits of Venus across the sun occur only approximately twice every hundred years.” The challenge

consisted in timing the precise moment of the apparent contact between Venus and the sun, but the efforts so far had been plagued by the lingering discrepancies caused by differences in the order of a few tenths of a second of human reaction time. Measuring the moment of contact from two precisely defined places on Earth—a world apart—would give scientists a chance to close a century of debate surrounding the most important constant of celestial mechanics: the solar parallax. A reliable figure for the solar parallax would allow astronomers a chance to determine the distance from the earth to the sun, set the dimensions of the solar system, and, using Newton's law, deduce the masses of the planets. If astronomers missed their opportunity during the 1874 and 1882 transits, as they had during the transits of 1761 and 1769, they would have to wait until the year 2004 to get an accurate measurement.⁶⁸

The transit of Venus is an event that has received a lot of public attention in our time, in great part because the 2012 transit was the last chance to see the small planet pass in front of the enormous sun in our lifetime; the next transit won't occur until 2117. In his complex film *Black Drop* (2012), the British artist Simon Starling triangulates the technological developments that were made in the nineteenth century to try to counter the problem of personal equation with the history of the colonial outposts of Hawaii and Tahiti, where the 1874 measurements were made. As the final part of the cinematic equation he brings the very medium of film itself into the triangle. Many of the developments for the 1874 and 1882 transits were pre-cinematic tools that later developed into celluloid motion picture film. One central point that brings together the transits of the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries is that they were both caught on film technology—Starling used 35 mm film stock—and that it is highly unlikely that it will be possible to use that fast-disappearing technology for the 2117 transit. In that sense, Starling says, the transits of 1874 and 2012 form parentheses around the rather short history of pre-digital film technology.⁶⁹

Pomological Revelations

Simon Starling's work together with that of the Portuguese artist duo João Maria Gusmão and Pedro Paiva form part of the conceptual soil from which my MFA degree exhibition at KHM Gallery took its starting point. Gusmão and Paiva are known for their films, photographs, and camera obscura installations, as well as their sculptures, through which they present physics experiments, natural processes, and everyday or historical episodes.⁷⁰ Their films are often shot in slow motion on 16 mm colour film, and although their multitude of philosophical and artistic references makes it hard to focus on just a few, those that reoccur often are the photographic experiments of Muybridge and Marey from the late nineteenth century. In *Donkey* (2011), for example, the horse used in Muybridge's 1878 study of animal locomotion has been replaced

by a lame donkey who's keen on running only in one direction: towards home. It's as if we no longer have to explain the magical trick of imperceptible flight.⁷¹ Gusmão and Paiva are founders of the International Society of Abissology, a speculative pseudo-scientific study of the abyss, the negative space that offers a chance to escape the presumed natural order of things. Yet it is a science that eludes an exhaustive definition.⁷² As some have noted, the works of the duo inhabit a certain speculative mechanism, "where the work is never a didactic transposition, but rather an investigation, a hypothesis that the viewer is invited to identify; or, if we prefer, it may be the aesthetic spell of a world populated by characters performing tests out of a slapstick comedy, trapped in the endless demonstration of arcane theories."⁷³ What draws me to Gusmão and Paiva's practice is this tongue-in-cheek oscillation between myth and science. In their writing the two propose a counterpoint to the empirical paradigm of Karl Popper, where the claim to truth of any scientific theory depends on its refutability. Within Popper's paradigm a verifiable proposition is true until proven otherwise, but what's also implied is that the force of the scientific argument and its ability to make sense of the world are limited to empirical facts for which one can find an explanation. Abissology's counterpoint is a theory of exception that seeks "among the most unreasonable arguments" for that which has not been seen and is only seldom thought about; it is a theory of the improbable.⁷⁴ It combines the innocence of a child with the acumen of a philosopher, and it's not for nothing that the duo has been likened to the armchair mystics from a story by Jorge Luis Borges—examining the most mundane details in search for the hidden key to the universe.⁷⁵

It is through improbable reasoning that I set it upon myself to traverse large distances of time to reach a very specific moment in history: the fraction of a second it took for an apple to fall in Isaac Newton's orchard on an autumn day in 1666. The story tells us that Newton had returned to his childhood home of Woolsthorpe Manor in Lincolnshire after the plague had shut down Cambridge in 1665, and that one day, as the afternoon descended into dusk and the moon appeared as a pale disc above the trees, he was startled by the sight of an apple dropping to the ground. "Does the moon also fall?" he asked himself, as he returned to the worktable, and made a mental note for what would later become the law of universal gravitation, the starting point for the Scientific Revolution.⁷⁶

Much has been written about this event, and schoolchildren around the world are still being told the fable of Newton having a "eureka moment" after slumbering in the garden and being woken by an apple falling on his head. I call this particular version of the story a fable since it didn't enter into popular narrative until nearly a century after Newton had passed away. As literary historian Julia L. Epstein has shown, the falling apple has many different legends associated with it, the most famous one of Newton's

time being Voltaire's portrait of the scientist in his *Lettres philosophiques* (1733) and *Éléments de la philosophie de Newton* (1738). It is to Voltaire that the famous story of Newton's discovery of gravity under an apple tree is usually attributed.⁷⁷ Through Voltaire's writings one meets a Newton that is represented as an intermediary between humans and spiritual power, a man that changed what we know about and how we perceive the material world. Epstein argues that Newton's apple had a mission for Voltaire in the sense that it allowed him to appropriate the legend of the apple tree and invest it with the power of Christian tradition, that is, the power associated with the legend of Eve plucking an apple from the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden.⁷⁸ But whereas Eve in doing so performed the original sin, Newton in Voltaire's eyes did not rob his orchard of anything—he was merely “struck” during contemplation. Newton's interest is in the force that propels the apple to earth, and he seeks to locate and understand that force—not to gain it instantly by taking a bite from the forbidden fruit. The apple in the orchard of Woolsthorpe Manor, Epstein argues, is also an apple of knowledge in the sense that

it illuminates a divine law that regulates the system of the world, and in that context Newton—the foremost Scientist of his age—represents the furthest limits to which human knowledge of the natural world can be pushed.⁷⁹

Although I find the myths surrounding Newton's apple interesting, I tried to enter the story from a non-anthropological perspective. Like the glass shards from the flowerbeds of Como, I wanted my main protagonist to be non-human—I wanted to focus on the apple itself. German-American poet Rosmarie Waldrop helped in this shift towards the pomological: “For Newton, the apple has the perplexing habit of falling. In another frame of reference, Newton is buffeted up toward the apple at rest.”⁸⁰

As I started researching the story of the apple, the first thing I did was to question the pre-conceived vision I had of it, a vision most definitely rooted in the version of the story told to me as a child. This apple was almost impossibly red, looking more like a polished beeswax model than a natural apple that grows on trees. My quest in finding the actual apple variety that spurred Newton's research led me



Installation view from *Peculiar Motions at Dusk*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Foreground: *Enlightened Bloom (Stalk) & Enlightened Bloom*, 2016. The Beauty of Kent (Newton's Apple), silver gelatin emulsion, photographic negative with the light from the star Beta Centauri. Cherry and walnut framed archival prints. 128 x 103 cm. Background: *The Attraction of the Ground (Motion Study)*, 2016. 01:00 min. video loop, Plexiglas. 75 x 50 cm. Johan Österholm



Left: *Luminous Bud (Stalk)*, 2016. The Beauty of Kent (Newton's Apple), silver gelatin emulsion, photographic negative with the light from the star Mira A. Oak framed archival print. 78 x 68 cm. Installation view from *Peculiar Motions at Dusk*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Johan Österholm



Right: *Luminous Bud*, 2016. The Beauty of Kent (Newton's Apple), silver gelatin emulsion, photographic negative with the light from the star Mira A. Oak framed archival print. 78 x 68 cm. Installation view from *Peculiar Motions at Dusk*, MFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Johan Österholm

to the Botanical Garden at Lund University, which, by chance, looks after a commemorative Beauty of Kent apple tree—the very same variety that grew in Newton's family orchard. I was generously given some twenty apples in all stages of development, from bud to ripened windfall.

Dusk progressed into night at Woolsthorpe Manor that autumn day in 1666, and as Newton went to bed, possibly contemplating the peculiar motions he had perceived a few hours earlier, the stars came out overhead. They were—unbeknownst to Newton—bodies of hot plasma. Mostly made up of hydrogen and helium, a star is held together by mutual gravity, a gravity that compresses it inward in much the same way the apple strives for the centre of the earth. But as a star gets smaller, its gravitational friction causes its core to heat up, starting hydrogen fusion that radiates the excess energy outwards in the form of photons. As these photons leave the surface of the stars they are free to traverse the vacuum of seemingly endless space. Unless they encounter something, like the eyes of mammals and insects or any matter, they will continue travelling in a straight line for millions, billions, or even trillions of years. Thus what is seen in the stars above is ancient light—light with an age attached to it, much like the annual growth rings of trees. At these great distances time commands a significance equal to that of space—as the light from a distant star or galaxy reaches us, we see the galaxy as it was long ago. The galaxies in the Coma Cluster, for instance, appear to us as they looked some seven hundred million years ago, when the first jellyfish

were just appearing on Earth. This phenomenon, called “lookback time” by astronomers, means that telescopes probe not only out into space, but also back into the past.⁸¹

Thus at the very same time as the apple fell to the ground in Lincolnshire, photons of light started travelling towards our solar system from the stars Mira A and Beta Centauri. Three hundred and fifty years later, the starlight reached Earth and was collected and fixed on a distant relative of the now-rare variety of apple that Newton first saw becoming a momentary celestial body. This luminous imprint, wherein the aging photons after centuries of traversing empty space leave a mark on the heightened photosensitive surface of the apple, forms what philosopher Henri Van Lier defines as a photographic event.⁸² As Van Lier has written, “the indices of any photograph echo their cause ... but at the same time its characteristic distance removes me from it: it is not some thing that has touched the film but only photons that have touched this thing and the film, thereby only remotely and very abstractly linking both.” Van Lier argues that all photographs produce a tension between “what is near and what is distant, between the present and the past.”⁸³

One of the intentions with my works *Enlightened Bloom* and *Luminous Bud* (both diptychs from 2016) is to create a photographic event that predates the invention of the photographic medium itself. I call it a photographic event both because of the aged photons involved—photons many hundreds of light years old—but also since the event it refers

to was photographic in its timescale; it took a mere fraction of a second to plant the seed for the Scientific Revolution, a revolution we're still experiencing today. To do this I wanted an organic material that has ancestral links to the original fruit: a present-day apple that has gone through generations upon generations of passing through the phases of budding and ripening by its own cumulative gathering of light for photosynthesis. By adding a silver gelatin emulsion to the flesh of the apple I only heighten this very same sensibility and allow it to gather light from stars other than our sun. By gathering distant starlight that has only just reached Earth after travelling for three hundred and fifty light-years, I've attempted to let the apple travel in time, linking the apple to the drop in the orchard of Woolsthorpe Manor. This mode of travel is not new—in fact, H.G. Wells visualised the process of time travel in *The Time Machine* (1895) as one in which the traveller is pounded by light, his eyes being hit by a photonic wind as his vehicle and the world around him speeds up. For Wells, the traveller is partially immobile, still in his laboratory, while everything around him is set in motion: first the sun rapidly accelerates

in its trajectory, and then “night follow[s] day like the flapping of a black wing.” The rapid motion increases until day and night merge into a greyness that fills the entire world, where finally “the jerking sun [becomes] a streak of fire, a brilliant arch, in space; the moon a fainter fluctuating band,” and one can “see nothing of the stars.” Yet the time traveller remains in the same spatial point that he departed from, slipping through time at such a high velocity that his physical body “[slips] like a vapour through the interstices of intervening substances.”⁸⁴ In this way Wells's time traveller divides space and time and suggests that moving into time does not equal travelling in space. I would like to propose that by inserting my sensitised Beauty of Kent apples into the photonic wind of starlight, I am in fact allowing them to travel backwards into time. As they harness enough light for an image to appear on their flesh, they are at once here and not here, their physical entities remaining in the present day while simultaneously bridging the gap of time. They are again celestial bodies, granted permanent flight in the cosmos.

- 1 Mentioned in João Maria Gusmão and Pedro Pavia, *João Maria Gusmão + Pedro Paiva—Teoria Extraterrestre* (Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2014), 68.
- 2 Wendell Berry, *The Selected Poems of Wendell Berry* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 1999), 68.
- 3 Paul Bogard, *The End of Night: Searching for Natural Darkness in an Age of Artificial Light* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2013), 4–5.
- 4 Timothy Ferris, *Coming of Age in the Milky Way* (New York: HarperCollins Perennial, 2003), 19–21.
- 5 Bernd Brunner, introduction to *Moon: A Brief History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), vii–viii.
- 6 Norbert Elias, *Time: An Essay* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 193–95.
- 7 Brunner, *Moon*, 25–27.
- 8 Ibid., 29.
- 9 See Elias, *Time*, 193–95, and Brunner, *Moon*, 29.
- 10 Elias, *Time*, 193–95.
- 11 Brunner, *Moon*, 44.
- 12 Elias, *Time*, 197–98.
- 13 Oulipo is short for Ouvroir de littérature potentielle, which is “a loose gathering of French-speaking writers and mathematicians who seek to create works using constrained writing techniques.” See “Oulipo,” *Wikipedia*, last modified March 26, 2016, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oulipo>.
- 14 Brunner, *Moon*, 67–72.
- 15 See “Light Pollution,” International Dark-Sky Association, <http://darksky.org/light-pollution/>.
- 16 Brunner, *Moon*, 74–75.
- 17 Bogard, *The End of Night*, 8–10.
- 18 Ibid., 7–8.
- 19 Ibid., 209.
- 20 Ibid., 203.
- 21 Ibid., 8.
- 22 Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 27.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid., 27–28.
- 25 Ibid., 37–38.
- 26 Ibid., 39–40.
- 27 John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, quoted in Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, 41–42.
- 28 Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, 42.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid., 42–43.
- 31 Ibid., 51, 139.
- 32 Ibid., 51.
- 33 Michel Serres, *Le système de Leibniz et ses modèles mathématiques*, quoted in Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, 51.

- 34 Robert Walser, *Berlin Stories*, trans. Susan Bernofsky (New York: New York Review of Books, 2012), 62.
 35 Tacita Dean, “Comoggardising: The Benefits of Creative Indolence” (paper presented at XXCSAV Artist Research
 Laboratory, Fondazione Antonio Ratti, Como, Italy, June 30–July 23, 2014).
 36 Ibid.
 37 Malcolm Daniel, “William Henry Fox Talbot (1800–1877) and the Invention of Photography,” Heilbrunn Timeline of
 Art History, October 2004, Metropolitan Museum of Art, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/tlbt/hd_tlbt.htm.
 38 Ibid.
 39 Ibid.
 40 Corey Keller, *Brought to Light: Photography and the Invisible, 1840–1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008),
 24.
 41 Ives Maes, “The Architecture of Photography” (unpublished PhD, Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Ghent, Belgium,
 2016), 6–7.
 42 Ibid., 6.
 43 Ibid., 3–9.
 44 Ibid., 8.
 45 Rebecca Solnit, *River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West* (New York: Penguin, 2003),
 36.
 46 Tacita Dean, “Selected Writings, 1992–2011,” in *Seven Books Grey* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2011), 12.
 47 Ibid., 13.
 48 Voiceover from *A Bag of Air*, transcribed in Dean, “Selected Writings,” 14.
 49 Catrin Loch, “Newly Arranging the Universe,” in *Jason Dodge—I Woke Up. There Was a Note in My Pocket*
Explaining What Had Happened., ed. Friederike Schönhuth (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2010), 56–57.
 50 Friederike Schönhuth, “Through Space and Time—An Introduction,” in *Jason Dodge*, 11.
 51 Josie Thaddeus-Johns, “Jason Dodge: Conceiving Absences Which Reveal Presences,” *Sleek*, December 26, 2013,
<http://www.sleek-mag.com/2013/12/26/jason-dodge/>.
 52 Kelley Wilder, “Showing Science Photography,” in *Revelations: Experiments in Photography*, ed. Ben Burbridge
 (London: MACK, 2015), 79. What constitutes a science photograph isn’t easy to define, since it’s a genre that spans
 the whole history of the medium and includes many different processes as well as a multitude of subject matters from
 different fields of science. Thus science photographs may appear “in a bewildering array of forms,” spanning work
 done using the salted paper prints and daguerrotypes in the first half of the nineteenth century up until the digital
 inkjet prints of today. The specific “science” also spans many fields, from anthropology, astronomy, auras, particle
 physics, geology, geography, medicine, and so on. Giving a general account of the genre is also complicated by the fact
 that during the later part of the twentieth century advertising photographs started to mimic scientific photographs
 to the point that science photographs were even used in advertising.
 53 Greg Hobson, “Foreword,” in *Revelations: Experiments in Photography*, 7–8.
 54 Michel Frizot, “Sculpture, between Visual Perception and Photography,” in *Lens-Based Sculpture*, ed. Bogomir
 Ecker et al. (Cologne: Walther König, 2014), 58.
 55 Ibid., 59–60.
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Bachelor of Fine Arts

Year 3

Axel Burendahl

Daniel Fleur

Martine Flor

William Glass exchange student

Thomas Hostrup

Jonna Hägg

Agnes Lovisa Jonasson

Rasmus Ramö Streith

Joakim Sandqvist

Trine Struwe Hansen

Simon Söder



Utan Destination, 2016. Tape, various labels, chopstick casing, wax, post-its, etc. Dimensions variable. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Axel Burendahl

Here and Now—Then and There —*If and in Case*

“Housekeeping Observation

Under all this dirt
the floor is really very clean.”

—Lydia Davis¹

I don't know where my works begin or end. At certain moments, something stands out and catches my attention, and it seems worth pursuing. As I see it, giving myself up to this is a critical attitude, because giving yourself up is, in the first place, to make yourself aware of the exclusion involved in doing so. An exclusion of a whole: yourself and your everyday relationship to your environment, for another whole: the work. Giving yourself up to the work can be understood as the subject moving away from itself, only to eventually end up inside itself. In this movement, the subject's own ideas can rise to the surface, and thus be made visible. The work becomes more discernible from the projections that emanate from the individual who is performing the investigation.

The materials have some kind of meaning, and it feels as though they ought to be able to tell us something, but once they're examined, they go mute. Then, one is left with the space between materials and people, and the web that is produced between these points. Situations that make up each individual's everyday experience, in which materials turn into symbols: bearers of meaning and value.

Two of my childhood experiences remain with me to this day. One of them was the realisation that I would never see what anybody else sees, that is, that I would never grasp the fullness of the other's understanding of something. The other was the ability

to let go of myself for a while. It happened on my way home from school. During a lesson, we'd been taught that the universe is infinite. On my way home, I was suddenly in a place where the only relationship I had to Earth was projected through the pictures I'd seen of it. The pictures revealed themselves to me the same way that a memory does. Visually, I was in a dark place, with no landmarks to use to locate myself. I was quite confused, it felt like I was trying to turn around, but I couldn't; it didn't mean anything. The whole mechanism that makes you turn around to see what's behind you had been taken out of the equation. Something else was doing the experiencing and the interpreting. The word that best describes how I felt is “dissolved,” and the fear that came over me was immense.

The first experience that I mentioned (not being able to see what anybody else can see) didn't frighten me, it made me sad; a distance grew, and from it, doubts regarding my own experience sprouted. One thing led to a clarification of the boundaries of my body, while the other led to a place beyond, or this side of, these same boundaries.

Rag

The difference between various objects and directions, the ways things are connected to one another, syntax, how syntax is altered by paradigm shifts. In Mike Kelley's work *Lumpenprole and Ageistprop* (1991),² only the

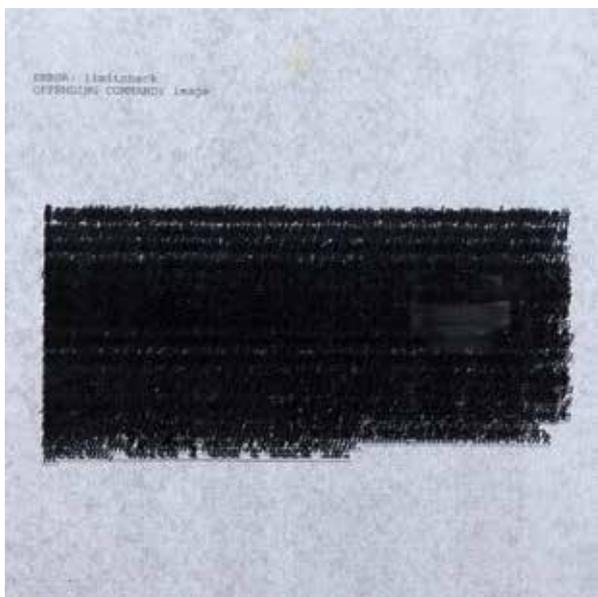
formless exists; form cannot be exhorted, forming to arise is impossible. An ocean of separate yet coalesced identities all reduced to a single point, at the breaking point, both in the defined and in the defining. At the other end, where all is difference, this impossibility rears its ugly head in the fact that uniqueness itself is a coalescence of identities, where the difference is no longer what separates them but what binds them together. It's a single shape, revolving around its own axis, inverting itself while essentially retaining the same polarity, and never actually revealing anything unknown. What exists here is perhaps a sense of security in the fact that it will recur, and that there will be another opportunity to relocate what disappeared from the corner of your eye. But in most cases, the thing that will appear is the one that disappeared from the other corner of your eye. Left to arbitrariness, or rather to randomness.

The Plate and the Circle

On my way to the restaurant, I stopped to buy some correction fluid. I needed to make some edits to a text. This text was weighing heavily on me; it was supposed to be finished before too long, and I wasn't quite sure what I should write about. So, a break for lunch would be a welcome diversion. I'd decided to go to an Indian restaurant. (The decor in this restaurant has always reminded me of Eva Hesse's *Hang Up* (1966)³: no uniform, representative image space;



"Watching me watching me watch them watch me Watching me watching me watch them watch me Watching me watching me watch them watch me Watching me watching me watch them watch me", 2016. Detail. Pillowcases, yarn, thread, printed fabric. 50–70 x 31–52 cm. Axel Burendahl



Right: *Murmur*, 2015–16. Detail. Paper, ink, bumble bee, pollen. 42 x 33 cm. Axel Burendahl



Murmur, 2015–16. Diptych. Left: Paper, ink, bumble bee, pollen. 42 x 33 cm. Right: Ladybug, film, pins. 31 x 23 cm. Axel Burendahl

everything you see is on its way out of the frame and into the room; the frame has ceased to be a separator and has acquired a new meaning.) I ordered menu item number one, which was chicken tikka masala on this particular day. I tried to sense the scent of the masala, but couldn't. It was mixed up with all of the other scents, from menu items two, three, and four. After paying, and turning to head over to my table, the woman behind the counter asked me if I wanted some salad. I thanked her, and approached the table where the salad was, and looked down at the table, about to pick up some cutlery and a plate. I saw the cutlery, but they

seemed to be out of plates. I turned around, and asked for a plate; she told me that they were right there on the table. I turned around again, and looked down at the table. There weren't any plates there. She looked at the table, invitingly, and told me that they *were* there. I couldn't see any plates for the life of me. Even if I had magical powers, I wouldn't have been able to produce a plate to put my salad on. When I turned my head once more, to face the woman behind the counter, I stopped as I noticed something appearing in the corner of my eye: an oval silver platter lying there on the table, next to the cutlery.

In Eva Löfdahl's exhibition *Objects of Circulation*,⁴ a couple of objects are lying on the floor some distance into the first room; they're white and spherical, and as far as you can tell from here, they're arranged in a circle. An iron pipe has been attached to one of the walls, and to this first pipe another, this one square. From these, a number of bars, which originate from entirely different means of production, protrude. The iron pipes were mass-produced, but these look to have been made from bronze. They've been inserted through the square pipe, crosswise, and if I were to compare them to an object, I'd say that they bear a certain resem-



Left: "Watching me watching me watch them watch me Watching me watching me watch them watch me Watching me watching me watch them watch me", 2016. Pillowcases, yarn, thread, printed fabric. 50–70 x 31–52 cm. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Axel Burendahl

blance to an antenna. The bronze parts look like they were cast in one piece; it appears as if there's something pulsating under the patina. The spherical objects continue into the next room, along the first imagined circle, only to disappear into a wall. In this room, one encounters a wide pedestal along the right wall, on top of which are a number of objects, with approximately the same dimensions as A4 paper. The height of one of these objects is probably equivalent to about five hundred sheets of paper. They're layered; from a distance, they look like a cross-section of a soil sample. On top, they have what can only be described as symbols—on one of them, you can make out leaves reaching up from beneath the various layers; on another, there are what look like prehistoric symbols, a circle divided along the middle, each half with wavy lines extending from the middle to the edges. On the way out of the gallery, the spherical objects pick up the pace again; now, you follow the circle and the spheres the other way. They were cast in plaster, and you can see objects protrude from below here as well: coins and sea-shells surface, only to disappear into the wall of the first room.

Inscription of Artefacts into the Space between Us

The artefact exists in the borderlands of what we might consider private, public, and common, where identity can be made clear and become a point where forces from previous generations and their wishes can take effect, in symbols and in objects. What one might imagine as the inscription of an object, as a bearer of past events, or blank and anonymous, with poorly defined boundaries. But what is it that causes these objects to be charged with value, forces, bearers of identity, causes of identity, and many other things? Are everyday objects inscribed in this way, or does it only apply to religious and public objects?

Private objects accumulate some degree of sentimental value, something inherited, whether it be a watch, or a necklace, or whatever. It's a connection to past events, and sometimes to past generations, and the traces it carries provide the opportunity for interpretation and reinterpretation of artefacts. How does this happen with more public objects, places, or events? Because events can be objects to some degree, as well; events that give rise to a particular kind of inscription. A memory, a story that somebody tells you. Most of the time, they become objects of thought. The material object is displaced, as is the event; the details are forgotten, and become something we experience as an artefact in our memories. The more private ones don't expose themselves; they hold secrets in the eyes of whatever surrounds them. Not in the sense that they mustn't be uttered, but in the sense that *nobody is asking about them*. In this way, the private object gives rise to a secret, and becomes a secret even to the person who carries it. When it hasn't been uttered for a long time, the secret is reinforced, and the bearer becomes more and more certain that it's a secret, something that exists within a particular space, still not in the sense that it mustn't be uttered, but in the sense that it becomes ever more private. Eventually, it may be that only the bearer will know what the secret is, or perhaps even she will forget it.

The bearing of these things gives rise to a relation to the world around you. It exists, and alters your encounters with other people. Sometimes this change never even occurs, while in other cases it's completely insignificant, and in yet others more significant, perhaps even being mentioned outright. When you speak of the object, this alters both the inscription and the object itself, in part because another consciousness has experienced the inscription, and in part because the bearer's understanding of it has changed; each time it's men-

tioned, the perception of it is warped, if only slightly. Other everyday objects hold no secrets at all; they just permit themselves to be present, anonymous, and neutral. Perhaps the public object is the more anonymous one? As the more private ones are nonexistent, to some degree, while the public ones exist in many different contexts and minds, the private ones can only assign themselves to single instances; they lose a portion of their intimacy once they've been uttered. The public ones exist in a larger number of minds, which causes their state to be more diffuse: they exist through their contours, not as bearers, and if they can be considered bearers at all, it's in a much more general sense than others. Many public artefacts resemble one another—the contours of one could almost be those of another. They become specific in private events, where the object is introduced into one's own memory and given contours, but this does not change the contours of any other object. It simply remains available to others, and the person who has a private relationship to the object creates a new one shaped by himself, which is no longer the public one. After all, the public only arises in relation to other minds, never in private instances. This can cause the public artefacts to be almost completely erased in some cases, and make them disappear, because few people are aware of them in their public capacities.

The private artefact arising from the public one can exist in a greater sphere than the private one, but it never becomes fully public; it can occur in a sphere where this relationship to the object becomes dominant, in a larger sphere than the private one. This means that they might not belong to the class of public objects in the same way that a bridge or a tree might. But the particular bridge, and the meaning it is charged with, has moved from the public to the private, and then on to the group that reinterprets it, to give rise to a

new artefact. After a long time, this too can become a public one. It's been inscribed in relation to a shared awareness in which this interpretation has become dominant among the defining masses. However, forgotten interpretations can be sought; they might reappear, resuscitated from the torpor of oblivion.

The Bumblebee and the Paper, the Ladybug and the Negative

What brought them all together was how the bumblebee and the paper encountered one another in such a way that their context caused a similar encounter between a ladybug and a negative later on, on several levels.

The meaning of the paper—what made it relevant to me—lay in its illegibility, the point where the writing collapsed into traces. I had printed the same text onto the sheet a hundred times, and the writing had become almost completely illegible. The problem I faced now was how to present it. After a number of attempts, none of them satisfactory, I abandoned the project.

When the bumblebee entered my studio, I was still convinced that the paper was an abandoned project. Not that the bumblebee made me think of it, or that some relationship had been established between them; that's just how it was. If somebody had asked me about the paper, I might have told her about the project, but I would have gone on to tell her that I had abandoned it. The first relation was produced when I saw the bumblebee walking around on the paper, but in this context, the paper didn't represent my abandoned work, it was just a sheet of paper, among several others, lying on the windowsill. The only thing that struck me at the time was that the bumblebee wasn't flying; insects that are able to fly and sting are usually frantic to make their way back outside. The usual buzzing and little thuds against the window were entirely absent. It was walking around on a sheet of paper on the windowsill. I left the room, and returned a brief while later. Now, the bumblebee had stopped walking, and was lying still on its side. Female bumblebees carry

pollen baskets on their hind legs, where pollen is gathered to be spread among and pollinate remote plants. There were some marks on the sheet of paper that hadn't been there before. They must have been made when the bumblebee fell over, and the contents of the pollen basket were tipped out. This was where the final relation between the paper and the bumblebee was created. The displacement that I had been striving for, from legible text to tracks, had been performed anew. The bumblebee thudding against a window, walking on a sheet of paper, or stinging somebody, was no more.

Again, One More Time

I'm usually walking around with the idea that my thoughts, my work, and my relationships are all on the verge of becoming clear, and making sense. The thought that follows tends to be: "No, enough of this back and forth. It's time I just did what I need to do." However, what this will involve, or how I am to do it, remains most unclear. After some



Utan Destination, 2016. Detail. Tape, various labels, chopstick casing, wax, post-its, etc. Dimensions variable. Axel Burendahl

time, these thoughts seem to become irrelevant; they mostly feel like an invisible pattern I can't escape through reasoning. I need to reject the entire pattern! However, when I make a move, in any direction, it's as though it has simply led me back to where I started. It brings forth a languor, and passivity takes over. If I turn around, what I just saw will be gone, forgotten, without a trace. I have to go all the way around to see what I saw again.

In his text "Unteachable and Unlearnable: The Ignorance of Artists,"³ writer and artist Andrew Warstat explores how the artist relates to his own work. He makes use of Franz Kafka's short story "The Burrow," in which we follow a narrator who has constructed a burrow for himself. He feels that the burrow is as it should be: a construction with no overt weaknesses, although any construction, no matter how cunningly constructed, will always have some weakness or other. Or perhaps the cunning itself is what causes the weaknesses — what seems safe might actually bring terror. He built the burrow to evade a threat: his enemy. Who the enemy is, or from where he is likely to attack, is not made clear. But he keeps coming closer. In one section, the narrator explains how he feels about some of the older parts of the burrow, the first parts that he built:

It is always with a certain solemnity that I approach the exit again. During my spells of home life I avoid it, steer clear even of the outer windings of the corridor that leads to it; besides, it is no easy job to wander about out there, for I have contrived there a whole little maze of passages; it was there that I began my burrow, at a time when I had no hope of ever completing it according to my plans; I began, half in play, at that corner, and so my first joy in labor found riotous satisfaction there in a labyrinthine burrow which at the time seemed to me the crown of all burrows, but which I judge today, perhaps with more justice, to be too much of an idle tour de force, not really worthy of the rest of the burrow, and though perhaps theoretically brilliant—here is my main entrance, I said in those days, ironically addressing my invisible enemies and seeing them all already caught and stifled in the outer labyrinth—is in reality a flimsy piece of jugglery that would hardly withstand a serious attack or the struggles of an enemy fighting for his life. Should I reconstruct this part of my burrow? I keep on postponing the decision, and the labyrinth will probably remain as it is.

He continues, and tries to understand how his burrow might be experienced from the outside, what its weaknesses and strengths are, and what it actually is in the first place. The reasoning continues, and the last thought the reader is left with is this:

So long as I still knew nothing about it, it simply cannot have heard me, for at that time I kept very quiet, nothing could be more quiet than my return to the burrow; afterwards, when I dug the experimental trenches, perhaps it could have heard me, though my style of digging makes very little noise; but if it had heard me I must have noticed some sign of it, the beast must at least have stopped its work every now and then to listen. But all remained unchanged.⁶

My experience of working with art resembles the burrower's back-and-forth process in relation to his burrow. And the last sentence, "But all remained unchanged," is where the muteness appears. I might have worked on a piece, and walked around it, thought about it, turned it inside out, and interpreted it in every which way, but in the end, it remains unchanged. Everything I want it to be, and actually consider it to be, is crumbled to bits by an insecurity I simply can't shake. If I change the piece, something new will elude me. I, who made the piece, will always be oblivious to some part of it. This insecurity is both a source of anxiety and a source of strength, in the sense that there will always be more to explore, but also a fear of missing something.

1 Lydia Davis, "House Keeping Observation," in *Can't and Won't* (Penguin ebook, 2014), 91.

2 Mike Kelley, *Lumpenprole and Ageistprop*, 1991, *Lumpenprole*: yarn, found objects, 609,6 x 914,4 cm, *Ageistprop*: synthetic polymer on paper, 213,4 x 153 cm, Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna.

3 Eva Hesse, *Hang Up*, 1966, acrylic on cloth over wood, acrylic on cord over steel tube, 182,9 x 213,4 x 198,1 cm, Art Institute of Chicago.

4 This exhibition was held at Galleri Nordenhake, Stockholm, February 16–March 28, 2013.

5 Andrew Warstat, "Unteachable and Unlearnable: The Ignorance of Artists," in *On Not Knowing: How Artists Think*, ed. Elizabeth Fisher and Rebecca Fortnum (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2013), 42–53.

6 Franz Kafka, "The Burrow," in *The Complete Stories* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 209, 226.



Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö. 2016. Daniel Fleur



Med växter, 2016. Oil on canvas. 75 x 100 cm. Daniel Fleur

The Sleeping Artist

Natural and artificial colour. Growth and disintegration. The paintings produce a sense of drama, between angry red and more docile cyan. In “On the Spiritual in Art,” Wassily Kandinsky claims that red “evokes feelings of power, energy, striving, determination, joy, triumph (pure) etc.” Cyan is almost exactly in between blue and green. Kandinsky has the following to say about blue: “Blue unfolds in its lowest depths the elements of tranquility.” And later on, in a footnote: “Unlike green—which, as we shall see later, conveys earthly, self-satisfied repose—but rather solemn, super-terrestrial absorption.” Mixing blue in with the green makes it “serious and, so to speak, pensive.” Both green and blue seem indifferent in their lighter shades.¹

The paintings in my studio work with and against the decorative aspect they are charged with. It’s the same with digital images, which are made up of pixels. Grid-like, mechanical, and repetitive. I remember when I was a child, about eight years old, and my grandmother came to visit us. We would sit and do handicrafts together, just the two of us. Running stitches and cross-stitches. Sometimes, I’d get bored of it, and switch to painting instead. Now, many years later, it’s as though the two have been brought together. Translated into painting, a digital image has an almost textile, embroidery-like character.

The subject, which is dissolved and deformed to some degree, becomes secondary, while the background of aesthetics and philosophy that serves as the foundation for the electronic image becomes the primary element. The pixels represent a technological limitation, a confrontation

with the virtual and bureaucratic order that unites all images in a homogeneous and continuous electronic unity.

While my vantage point was originally focused on questions concerning the meaning of painting—what it can be used for, its temporal aspects, its relations to various source materials, and so on—these questions have become rephrased as time has gone by, sort of like a game of Chinese whispers. It begins with a sentence that the participants pass on to one another by whispering. Once the sentence reaches the final participant, it has been rephrased along the way, since the whispers aren’t always accurately received.

Some time back, I heard a conversation between two children. Whatever the younger of the two said, the slightly older child would respond: “I know.” If the younger one had learned at day care that certain snakes can grow frighteningly long, the older one simply responded, “I know,” and then proceeded to tell a story about snakes so large that the younger child’s snakes seemed like worms in comparison.

In the long run, that kind of situation will take a lot of the fun out of telling your stories. And it ought to be even less appealing to be the one who already knows everything, who no longer experiences wonder and surprise. People who never say “No way!” or “You don’t say!” have probably stopped growing. In all likelihood, the older child didn’t know everything he claimed to know. The behaviour is rather an attempt to control the situation, and maintain some kind of age-based hierarchy.

Most people would probably prefer to belong to the same category as the younger of the two, and I’m no exception in this regard. I’d like to have that attitude to learning, and to painting. To be able to stay wide-eyed before it. The alternative can easily seem to be a somewhat unsympathetic attitude. But learning doesn’t have to remove your capacity to experience wonder.

So what is all this then? A spectacle? Who’s asking, and who’s answering? Perhaps the painting and myself keep trading places, adopting the characters of the two children in turn as we act out this dialogue. What if the painting has become the answer to questions that nobody has asked? I’m more interested in having the painting ask questions and produce ideas than I am in having it generate answers.

“De Kooning: *If you open your eyes with your brain, and you know a lot about painting, then the optical illusion isn’t an optical illusion. That’s the way you see it.* Rosenberg: *The way you see something doesn’t mean necessarily that that’s the way it is. That business of putting a stick in water so that it looks as if it’s broken ...* De Kooning: *Well it is. That’s the way you see it.*

Rosenberg: *What do you mean, it is broken? If you pull it out of the water it’s not broken.*

De Kooning: *I know. But it’s broken while it’s in the water.*

Rosenberg: *The break is an illusion ...*

De Kooning: *That’s what I’m saying. All painting is an illusion.”*²

Andreas Eriksson has made bronze casts of the birds that have flown into the windows of his studio. The birds don’t see the sheet of glass—all they



Left: *Dracaena*, 2016. Oil on canvas. 21 x 33 cm. Daniel Fleur



Right: *Dracaena Grisaille*, 2016. Oil on canvas. 49 x 75 cm. Daniel Fleur

see is the reflection of the surrounding landscape.³ The canvas is sometimes likened to a window. During the Renaissance, when oil painting was first introduced, the painted surface seemed like a window, through which the viewer could observe a landscape or room. And here I am, sitting in my studio in front of a bunch of canvases, trying to convince myself to finish these projects.

In the above excerpt, Willem de Kooning and Harold Rosenberg are speaking about the conditions for viewing a painting. They liken it to the way a stick is broken if you push it through the surface of water. It becomes a reflection of the stick. But we know that the stick penetrates the water. In order to view a painting, you have to push this aspect of consciousness to the side and regard it as a broken stick in order to enter the image and truly see it.

What I realised when I was embroidering as a child was that those images had their own conditions; they had their own realities. I've

had a harder time transferring and accepting these conditions in painting.

I often ask myself what I should do to take things to the next stage. It's something I think about a lot. I'm looking for that shift where something goes from being one thing in a certain phase, to becoming something else in another phase. Sometimes I'm even foolish enough to believe that this is something I can control, and plan for. I try to think it all through ahead of time.

But one of the characteristics of the process of painting is its unpredictable nature: the things you can't help or plan for, which appear as the work progresses. In some cases, the unpredictable element can be the key aspect of a painting that makes it interesting, but in other cases, it's just a sidetrack. The unpredictable helps you keep your mind open to what you're doing. And still, my process is to a great degree an attempt to control it. In technical manuals, it's referred to as deliberately applied

layer painting. Just as a digital image is constructed according to a particular system, my work seeks some kind of system or other.

I recently read about an underpainting technique using grisaille that is supposed to improve your paintings. I wonder what might happen if the underpainting was done first in earthy tones, and then in shades of grey. While I think about this, I move my paintings around the studio, to rearrange them, connect different subjects to each other, and vary the sizes. I'm restlessly looking for reasons to make new paintings. I paint certain subjects several times. Perhaps what I'm afraid of is the emptiness of having nothing to paint. The more I read about painting, and the history of painting, the slower I work in the studio.

I've written "Afterthought comes after" on some pieces of paper, and positioned them around the studio to remind myself. Otherwise, I'll forget.

I still forget.

At the Wien Museum Karlsplatz, there is a painting from 1841 called *The Sleeping Artist*, by Josef Danhauser. This painting is a portrait of an artist sleeping in his studio. While he's been sleeping, two children have snuck into the studio to continue his painting, which is on an easel. It's said that Danhauser so longed for his painting to take a new and unexpected turn that he began to leave the door to his studio unlocked overnight, in the hope that his children or dog would enter it and add to his paintings when he wasn't there. This way, he'd be able to enter his studio the next day to find his work changed from the day before, and this would give him some kind of new direction to follow.

There is an active quest for change, and then there is also another kind of change in your work that happens as you rest.

In a conversation I had with a friend about rest and its role in creative processes, he claimed that the word "passive" is related to the word "pass." This means that one of the implications of passivity would be that you're available to be hit. As long as you're actively doing things—that is, producing and giving off signals—you're unreceptive to the things that come towards you. Instead of giving you new insights, they pass you by.

This might seem obvious, but I think it only seems that way. Being passive from time to time can mean experiencing your participation, choosing a path, or veering off in an unexpected direction. This kind of information is always knocking at your door, but it's hard to notice it if you're not at home when it does.

When I'm in contact with the work I do in the studio, the studio

work controls things. But if I don't work for a few days, I begin to imagine things regarding the works, and come up with plans. I fantasise, and think, "Imagine if it could look like that," or "It would be amazing if I could do such and such." These thoughts come unconsciously. And I have to work my way away from them. Because these plans never match what actually happens in the studio later on. However, I think that what my friend was getting at has to do with all of the creative things that happen when you set things aside, let go, and stop trying. Just for a while. Somehow, the task you take a break from begins to solve itself. I think that's the secret of rest: it has a power you can't always access by trying hard.

Sometimes, setting your own agenda aside and having the courage to allow yourself to be open for a



Anaglyf I & II, 2016. Oil on canvas. 50 x 50 cm, 123 x 137 cm. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Daniel Fleur

while means adjusting yourself to what you want to achieve, what you came to do. The terms *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa* come from Aristotle and Plato. In ancient Greece, they used *vita contemplativa* to describe the life of a philosopher or thinker. This referred to time spent neither asleep nor in activity: waking time spent in an intentional state of receptiveness to the more subdued signals in life. The ancient philosophers argued that life consists of three parts: one is *vita activa*—the active life, as in work or action; the second part is sleep; and the third is *vita contemplativa*.

In her book *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt abandons the concept of thinking as a state of withdrawal from active life to instead introduce a point of view in which we become involved in active life, politics in particular. Arendt indicates how the views of these two attitudes have changed. From the ancient philosophers up to and including Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx, *vita contemplativa* was prioritised, while *vita activa* was regarded as an inescapable necessity. Arendt refers to Marx, who claimed that an increased efficiency of production would result in shorter working hours, and that people would have time and energy left over for cultural and political activities, instead of just working hard all the time. That's not how things have turned out. As a result of work becoming an end in itself, humankind is now expected to work as much as possible. Even though productivity has improved, the gains of this have not mainly been used to shorten working hours. Human beings use their spare time, and their growing economic resources, to consume more instead.⁴

*"If you're a painter, you're a painter. It really is a particular relationship you have to the process, the material, the way you organize information—the way you organize the world. It is the way you see, and express feelings through the way you see."*⁵

A painter I often return to is mid-century artist Giorgio Morandi. It's usually my reflexive reaction whenever I'm having a difficult time in the studio. His paintings have a lasting quality to them that isn't impacted by any change. He had the ability to animate the objects he painted, or, rather, it feels as though he was able to experience them as beings. He elevated what we know as *nature morte* to a height where superficially dead bottles or vases come to life.

If you were to view Morandi's work in a cursory fashion, without paying deeper attention, it would be easy to lump him in with still life and landscape painters. Or perhaps you'd call him a "bottle painter" and think no more of it. And although this is what he actually did, that label wouldn't do him justice. It would be too simple to claim that his concept involved turning them into icons. I rather think of them as simple volumes, in the shapes of jars, vases, and bottles, that represent a reality and reveal great wealth. The variation isn't produced by the object so much as by how the object is observed. It's as though he didn't permit his imagination to be involved in the choice of subjects to paint. Paul Cézanne once said, "I don't do anything I don't see, and whatever I paint exists."⁶ This applies equally to Morandi.

The first time I came across the work of Morandi was during dOCUMENTA (13) in Kassel in 2012. I was attending a painting school then, and I had learned the importance of practising painting skills by doing studies of models, still lifes, and so on. Long lines of people were waiting to get into the main building at Friedrichsplatz, traditionally considered the hub of the exhibition. The long wait raised expectations. It was crowded outside as well as inside. The loud hubbub and the heightened pace of this overcrowded place was contrasted most effectively by Morandi's work, which served as a counterpart to all that. First, I arrived

at some display cases: philosophical writings, poetry, and art history. In another, the vases. Then six paintings, tastefully hung in a line. I moved on rather quickly, and proceeded to spend an intense week experiencing one thing after another. I didn't think of Morandi anymore during that trip. He didn't reappear in my mind until a few weeks later, in my studio, when I was having a hard time achieving what I wanted. I was frustrated. I kept repainting the same subject over and over, and getting different results each time. I realised that it didn't have anything to do with the subject: the problem was with me. The vulnerability of this situation made me very uncomfortable. The images of his work that I saw on Google really moved me. Even though I was sitting in front of a screen, I was more receptive to the paintings than I had been in Kassel. Morandi had turned the bareness that had so scared me into a strength.

Sometimes, I wonder if the impression these paintings made on me would have been different if I had seen more of them when I was there. If I'd been able to stop and look. People talk a lot about living in the present. Sometimes, it can even seem that nothing else is worth much of anything at all. I think this can be a bit stressful, and a little one-dimensional. Living through past experiences can be a good thing, too. In good memories. The here and now is valuable, of course, but it has its own set of limitations.

*"The only interest the visible world awakens in me concerns space, light, color, and form."*⁷

I realise that Giorgio Morandi spent a lot of time exploring the obvious. But isn't the obvious usually something important that we tend to forget and take for granted? The obvious tends to be based on old, tested and true knowledge that can easily be overlooked if you're too busy looking to take the next step and make progress. What if good painting

describes something you know deep down, but haven't considered? Perhaps there isn't much to be said that's new as such, and perhaps our shared mission is to keep track of the things that we already know.

I think painting is all about observing. You can always find something new. But if I investigate my findings closely, I'm struck by the fact that I see more or less the same things each time I paint. Perhaps that's the whole point? Making new discoveries in what you took to be familiar territory? Reinvention resides in the old, and in the commonplace.

Perhaps the great shift will never occur, and perhaps, instead, small shifts are constantly occurring. Little decisions, a conversation with somebody, impulses, pictures I've seen, taking my work in a new direction.

A family is on a trip. Probably several trips, otherwise it's hard to make sense of the photographs. It's the '60s, or maybe the '70s. They seem to be proud that they're able to document this trip they're taking together. The holiday, and the pictures, are status symbols. They develop their holiday snaps and have slides made. Time

passes. The pictures end up in a second-hand shop, perhaps after somebody cleared out an estate. Time passes. C-O finds the pictures, and buys them. He sorts them in his studio. We look at them. C-O thinks I should paint one of them. I do. The painting would have been better if I'd painted the sky before I painted the trees, but it's too late for that now. In that case, I'd have to paint a new one.

- 1 Wassily Kandinsky, "On the Spiritual in Art," in *Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art*, ed. Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo (New York: Da Capo, 1994), 182, 183, 187.
- 2 Willem de Kooning and Harold Rosenberg, quoted in *De Kooning: A Retrospective*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2011), 22.
- 3 Magnus af Petersens, *Andreas Eriksson: Nordic Pavilion 54th Venice Biennale*, (Berlin: Sternberg, 2011), 138.
- 4 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
- 5 Eric Fischl, "Dive Deep: Eric Fischl and the Process of Painting," YouTube video, 16:05, posted by Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA), August 2, 2012, <https://youtu.be/MWpYD4LWpVc>.
- 6 Paul Cézanne, quoted in Gottfried Boehm, "Giorgio Morandi's Artistic Concept," in *Giorgio Morandi: Paintings, Watercolors, Drawings, Etchings*, ed. Ernst-Gerhard Guse and Franz A. Morat (Munich: Prestel, 2008), 13.
- 7 Giorgio Morandi, quoted in Boehm, *Ibid.*, 15.



Almateriality, 2016. Detail. Polyester resin. Dimensions variable. BFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Martine Flor

Martine Flor

Almamateriality

“I am afraid of so much matter—the matter vibrates with attention, vibrates with process, vibrates with inherent present time. Whatever exists beats in strong waves against the unbreakable grain that I am.”
—Clarice Lispector¹

I enter my studio. I see six books placed at random across the desk, a few compendiums scattered about (with strips of text all highlighted in yellow), a coffee mug, the computer. A chair directs my gaze down towards the floor; I now see various plastic objects lying about, some by themselves, some on top of one another, all in different forms (four medium-sized, organically shaped polyester objects, a few vacuum bags in transparent PVC, a few black sleeping bags, of which three are coated in a layer of polyester resin, the others only kept together by their own synthetic skin). I focus on the objects on the floor. I'm attracted to them and I attract them. They appear to me to be a kind of collection, an assemblage of singularities; they strike me as beautiful. I let my hand glide slowly over them as my fingers gently caress their vibrating, undulating surfaces: soft and sticky at the same time, dry and moist, dead and alive—I inhale this *strange combination of delight and disturbance*² and then close the door. The day begins.

*I'm searching, I'm searching, I'm trying to understand.*³ Language, however, will never be able to fully understand the mysteries of the material world, for how can a structure whose fundamental principle is universality grasp the essence of objects that in their nature are singular? I approach the objects on the floor with awe. I try to observe them and look at them so thoroughly that they appear to me as newly born, as *strange strangers*.⁴ I try to look at them anew again and again until they visually no longer give meaning, like a word repeated so many times that it finally seems unfamiliar. I continue to look at and caress the objects, which now seem like intimate *things*,⁵ and it is as though I am continually surprised by what I see and feel. I recall a scene from *Playtime* by Jacques Tati. Monsieur Hulot, the main protagonist, finds himself in a minimally decorated waiting room in a Kafkaesque office building. The chairs in the room are of expensive black leather, perfectly stretched across rigorously cut square

pillows. They seem oddly inhuman compared with Monsieur Hulot's whimsical actions, as though they are not meant for his use, not made for a human so restlessly alive. It's as though he must learn anew how to sit on the chairs, as though he, in this alienating habitat, has become a child experiencing the world for the first time. He touches one of the chairs and seems bewildered by its response. It seems as though the chair is not acting as Monsieur Hulot expected, as the pillow bends and squeaks in a decidedly unchairlike fashion. Then another man walks into the waiting room, all strictly and primly dressed in a suit, displaying a body language so mechanical that he seems to be part of the interior. Monsieur Hulot sits down on one of the chairs, which seems to emit a fatigued sigh, and then the other man does the same and his chair seems to respond—it's suddenly as if the chairs are more human than the two characters awkwardly positioned on top of them. I bend down towards one of my



polyester-coated sleeping bags, and I become Monsieur Hulot.

The polyester coating shines and crackles like desiccated mucus on dry skin. Material, *mater*, mother. *Alma-material*. Motherhood, primal and fertile, life nourishing, that which gives life to everything but that inevitably is also the origin of death. The objects that I so meticulously and deliberately select, that speak to me, that I can accept for myself as *material*, all have an inherent paradox in their being. On the one hand, I am seduced by the plastic objects' glossy and sensual surfaces and shapes, like those of a luxury car or a tranquil puddle after summer rain. On the other hand, my thoughts are drawn towards the sterile, the wrapped, the cheap, mass-produced, and low quality, towards an accelerating technology industry whose goal is always faster,

better, stronger, whose goal is inhumane. An intrinsic part of them is also the troubling certainty that they are inorganic, non-biodegradable, that harmful toxins seep out from their seemingly peaceful bodies; they lie there like oblivious representations of the unsettling downsides of consumer society, of anthropogenic climate change, of the white man's colonisation of natural resources (it is said that there will be more plastic than fish in the sea by 2050).⁶ They are in an ambiguous, intermediate stage, manifesting *what I permanently thrust aside in order to live*.⁷ I let my hand slowly stroke the vacuum bag's transparent PVC, and I realise that it will probably survive me—in my encounter with it, I face my own mortality.

The time for transformation has come. I feel an urge to deconstruct

the thing that lies in front of me, strip it of all its unnecessary, innate, and superfluous layers, shape it, knead it, tear it apart—help it transform, be born again, transcend. I pick up one of the polyester-coated sleeping bags. It evolves into a dance of affective forces, and with each and every movement I transfer my entire being into it, and in return it gives me its genealogy, its tactility and body, its haptic qualities, and all its other materiality and objective being in this world. I must be alert to its movements, its rhythm and responses, and be completely focused and in contact with my intuition so as not to go too far, too quickly, knock the interaction off-kilter or lose its trust. Out grow the bag's white, cottony innards, and it feels animal-like. Its synthetic, serpentine skin breaks open like a dry sore—a kind of primal connection



Alma-materiality, 2016. Mixed materials. Dimensions variable. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Martine Flor



Almamateriality, 2016. Detail. Polyester resin. Dimensions variable. BFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Martine Flor



to the conversion, the transformation; the metamorphosis itself rises up within me, a *jouissance*⁸ that can only arise from killing and giving birth at the same time. The dance is over, and it is as though I am filled by both a satisfying exhaustion and an alienating emptiness. It all makes me momentarily dizzy and confused: What did I just do? What was it transformed into? The thing lies there in front of me, not fully an object, no longer the Other, but not completely a subject. My corporeal objects—did I turn them into sculpture-corpuses? My carefully chosen, vibrating objects—did I turn them into resurrected fossils?

A raindrop!
(Oh no, wait—a trillion of them, all hammering on my studio window.)

I look towards the window; I assume that this is my habitat. Again I recall Monsieur Hulot and his constant roaming around in a world that did not belong to him, and my plastic-covered things suddenly seem like the meek remains of a distant, post-apocalyptic future, their glossiness like frozen liquid after an encounter with volcanic ash or radioactive waste, like fossilised remains a thousand years from now (“the end of the world has already occurred”).⁹ The

rain continues to hammer down, and the drops no longer seem like drops—it is as though they want to break the pane, break into *this* room, vaporise everything, penetrate one’s skin. It is as though the borders between inside and outside, chaos and order, nature and culture, past and future are all erased in the opaque haze of this belligerent rain. These raindrops demand total and utter destruction, and I realise that the habitat I am in is *alive*.

I leave my studio.

*Jeg ser, jeg ser ...
Jeg er vist kommet på en feil klode!
Her er så underligt ...*¹⁰



Alamateriality, 2016. Mixed materials. Dimensions variable. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Martine Flor

- 1 Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.* (London: Penguin, 2014), 144.
 2 Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), xi.
 3 Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.*, 3.
 4 Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 123–24.
 5 “In this assemblage, *object* appeared as *things*, that is as vivid entities not entirely reducible to the context in which (human) subjects set them, never entirely exhausted by their semiotics.” Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 5. Emphasis in the original.
 6 Graeme Wearden, “More Plastic than Fish in the Sea by 2050, Says Ellen MacArthur,” *Guardian*, January 19, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/jan/19/more-plastic-than-fish-in-the-sea-by-2050-warns-ellen-macarthur>.
 7 Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 3.
 8 *Ibid.*, 9.
 9 Morton, 7.
 10 “I look around, I look around ... / I seem to have come to the wrong planet! / Things here are so strange ...” Sigbjørn Obstfelder, “Jeg ser,” in *Dikte*, vol. 1 (Bergen: John Grieg, 1893), <http://www.dokpro.uio.no/perl/litteratur/oratxtprod.cgi?tabell=obstfelder&id=soi007&frames=Nei>.

Further references

“Plastic is the very idea of its infinite transformation ... and it is this, in fact, which makes it a miraculous substance: a miracle is always a sudden transformation of nature.”

—Roland Barthes¹

From the host of artists, thinkers, writers, and filmmakers who have greatly influenced both me and my artistic practice, I have here selected a few who have directly kindled my interest in transforming and deconstructing *living* material and in exploring the role and potential of art when encountering such material.

Even though I read Roland Barthes’s essay “Plastic” long after my own fascination with plastic began, I now consider it to be a key reference. In this text, Barthes reflects on plastic as the alchemical substance of our times and as a material with miraculous qualities that has enabled humans, for the first time ever, to imitate nature and materially surpass it. I would also like to cite Jorge Luis Borges’s “The Book of Sand” and Franz Kafka’s “The Cares of a Family Man,” two short stories that deal with “unimaginable” objects that nonetheless have a being and existence within the narratives. These stories shed light on the role of art as a site where the unimaginable (i.e., things that exist either outside or before language) is indeed possible, where experiences of the world that can seem irrational, illogical, odd, or alien, as though from another planet, can be given shape.

Paracelsus and Jane Bennett are two thinkers who lived several centuries apart, but who both made interesting observations on the material world as something living, flowing, vibrating, as something with its own agenda.

Among those artists who display a similar sense of fascination and exploration, I would like to mention Robert Smithson and his understanding of inner and outer landscapes; Eva Hesse and her uniquely material language; and finally Kitty Krauss, Olga Balema, and Nina Canell as more contemporary artists who represent a type of sculpture that addresses entropy, objects, and “vital” materials.

1 Roland Barthes, “Plastic,” in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 97–99.



SHINERS

And then i hear this like thud with a crack, a meaty crack, like steak and skull crushing, then everyones screaming and i look over and there he is with pencils sticking up through his head, blood spurting, apparently he stuck a pencil up each nostril and slammed his head on the table.

Seth:
I don't believe you, who was he?

Charlotte:
What was good though was everyone passed the exam because of it. Err Chris something, Chris Burr, i used to play football with him. He was super hyper.

We land on the two people again and cut to next scene.

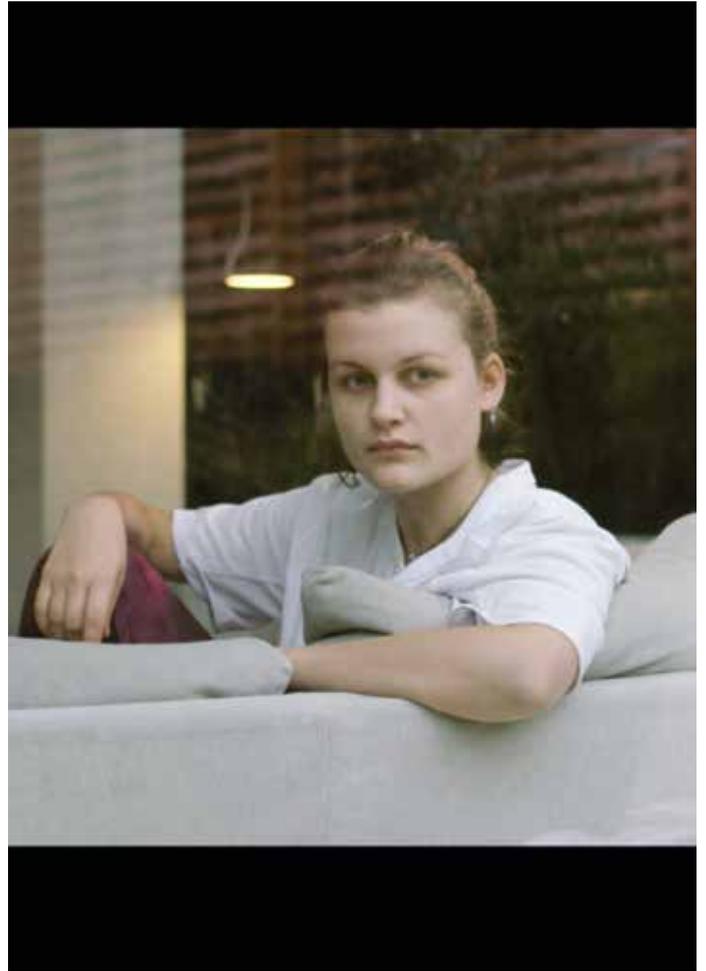
EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD. DAY (dusk).

We hear Charlotte's monologue in a V.O.

Charlotte. (V.O)
He was amazing though, he committed all his time to football. Football and the bible. He told me once that his emotions were so roller coaster and chattering that he didn't know how to behave. But in football, football seemed to make something concrete. It made it all Breathable. A game of simple peace, peace that may last no longer than a short evening. A short evening where his mind was made up of different words; words like pints, food, air, road, weather, and feelings too broad and wide to make sense off. And that jesus would of made a great defender.

Shiners, 2015. Script extract. William Glass

Shiners (2016) a three-minute narrative, focuses on urban myths and half-remembered second-hand stories. These stories are used as a way to explore notions of memory, distraction, commitment, time passing, and impasses. The film is tightly constructed and uses cinematic languages to build up a narrative that you never quite get a grip on.





and now eternity, 2016. Metal, painted wooden plates, fans. Dimensions variable. Thomas Hostrup

Thomas Hostrup

Testing Testing (test test)

“God have mercy on you swine”—some of the very last casual remarks uttered by Raoul Duke (Hunter S. Thompson) in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, hollered out to a few Vietnam veterans as he runs out from Denver International Airport, and the madness starts all over again as the book comes to its close. Here the protagonist virtually acknowledges an immortality, since he is a fictional character and represents the death of the American dream, while the soldiers are real people, who are going to perish and who exist within the context of the time frame that this book was written.

It is this interpretation of the closing of this book that will round off many of the topics that are going to be included in what I want to achieve and in what I want to be working with in my practice.

I would like to live in the now. That’s why I make art. That’s why I choose to make art that both situates itself within the present day and gives rise to a destabilisation between the present, the future, and memories. With this trinity of times—of past, present and future—everything exists at one and the same moment. However, should I want to create a disturbance related to time, I cannot live only in the now. For this reason, I need to take *all* aspects of time into consideration when producing a work that is supposed to bring forth a now: a condition situated in between a moment and an eternity.

Remembering is an important part of how you measure time in relation to how you perceive yourself. But sometimes it turns into a dissociative experience, for it is rare to feel willing to see yourself in an unfavourable light. These kinds of very unpleasant memories are repressed, since you always want to be the hero/main character and never the monster/villain.

The now will always be a paradox, or rather a very fleeting condition, because in the very moment that you catch yourself living in a “now,” it will already be a memory. Furthermore, the contemporary time is a hotchpotch of constantly changing relationships between past and future, between phases and titles: suddenly, you’re not “unemployed” but “between jobs.” You’re always caught in one phase that is followed by another, and this process is never finished.

The future is, then, what you’re always aspiring toward, something that you’re looking ahead toward and where you attain what you’ve been looking for. A horizon that you’ve got to reach, only in order to figure out what to do next.

These are conditions that accordingly have a bearing on how an object regards, in the same way as a person, its own self-awareness; the perception of objects can be regarded with the same kind of gaze. According to Andrew Brenner, building on the thought of Thomas Aquinas, an object can be regarded, in the A-theory, as moving through time, ageing naturally,

while in the B-theory, an object continues to retain the very same perceptual value, notwithstanding its age.¹

However, these conditions are always highly embossed by a categorisation, by a common language that finds its expression in sequences and periods, which have become so heavy-handed that you sometimes forget that they are merely a mediation of something as complex as a whole life. If these conditions were recreated for somebody else, this would take a whole lifetime, as Jorge Luis Borges mentions in a most astute way, albeit in language—with its rules, its syllables, and its nuances.² Then you’ve got to remember that it’s only between people that our language exists and makes sense: that language only exists within a context. And that it’s up to each individual to interpret the value of language. There is a common consensus about language that exists; otherwise, it would not function. But the value of a language has changed form countless times. Let’s consider *text*, where language, over the course of time, has been of a very personal character, and connected to this, handwriting, and the fact that at this point in time, almost everything is being written with fixed fonts, which can be reproduced ad infinitum. Consequently, what we have before us, as we move from handcraft to mass production, is very much like what Kenneth Goldsmith has been writing about,³ where ownership and originality are determined



according to what context the text is placed in. This can create room for absurdity and/or recontextualise what a text has been appropriated for.

In this scenario, the banality or cliché, a recognisable clause or object, can transcend its own recognisability by setting itself in a new context. Like a breath-stealing grip (in my case), inasmuch as it nullifies the binary difference between banality and originality.

You can thus draw a parallel between art and text, since both are mediatory entities between people, or languages.

By virtue of the fact that there is a link in communication, concerning its language, sculpture, painting, text, etc., there is a possibility of understanding something outside or simply inside the context. This can be a misunderstanding, or an exaggeration, potentially due to cultural differences and potentially determined by contemporary times or by expectations of the recipients: it can then be called “camp.”⁴ This can, in turn, entail an understanding of an artwork in a different context than the one it was originally assigned to: the aim of being entertaining, or amusing, or tragic. However, being in possession of such a quality of being *both* fatalistic and humouristic is something to aspire toward, because it’s not merely “either/or” but is “both/and.” You could regard this in the manner of a person falling down from a tree. Now, if you transpose this to a work of art, is that funny or tragic? Well, it can be both, as in Bas Jan Ader’s artwork *Broken fall (organic)* (1971). It’s funny in the moment, but it’s tragic inasmuch as it represents the totality of the artist’s life. Two sides of the same coin, it’s *both* aspects, which constitutes a dualism, and within this, the one cannot exist without the other; this is also known as a parallelism, as set out by Baruch Spinoza.⁵

For my own part, when it comes to what I’m looking for, in my inner struggle to gain some understanding

about time and some understanding of myself, camp can provide space for a human angle. An angle that opens up to humour and seriousness, as in *Spiral Jetty* (1970) by Robert Smithson. Where there is a sequence of time that issues from associations to hunting and to escapes, a sequence of time that moves out toward an unveiling of meaninglessness and finalisation. However, it is the unveiling that renders it morbid or humorous.

The Way Things Go (1987) by Peter Fischli and David Weiss is an excellent example to mention here, because it appropriates everyday objects and sets them into a sequence (using a Rube Goldberg machine), but unlike what we see in Smithson’s work, the sequence of time here is a cycle, which can actually be seen as a video installation. But its humour is such that the work perseveres, insistently, like a butterfly effect: the action has consequences. Therefore, time is an eternally moving image, as Plato would say.⁶ So whatever happens, time will always move forward. In contrast to this, to behold *Spiral Jetty* is to behold an artwork that is experienced as the Sisyphus myth,⁷ when we consider that the artwork somehow yearns to be an action with a beginning and an end that will be repeated.

Both of these works draw on time, where the one is a domino effect of actions and the other is a simple act. But both of them lean up against existential reflections on what action is. On the one hand, Friedrich Nietzsche would say that it’s what one chooses oneself that is liberating,⁸ while on the other hand, Arthur Schopenhauer would argue that it’s meaningless. I am choosing now, personally, to adhere to Nietzsche on this point.

Art can thus only be understood in the context that an artwork is set into. And therefore, the artwork can only reflect human perceptions of the world, human thoughts and human conditions. Many artworks

accordingly arrive with a confrontation concerning what is possible to perceive through the human perspective, or a confrontation concerning what discreetly takes place without anyone noticing or which takes place without lending itself to be intercepted, in any way, by the sense faculties we possess.

But in the same line of thinking as Nietzsche, this is not postulated as a depressive, pessimistic way of thinking. It is rather in praise of human frailties. It is not a definitive truth but rather a matter of spotting a potential for what *can* be rather than what *will* be.

Terrible, obscure, and pleasurable conditions are some of the key points that Edmund Burke uses to describe the sublime, in which veneration for God enters into the mix.⁹ However, this stance of awe does not encompass the viewer in the artwork, inasmuch as it talks down to the viewer in such a way that the viewer will never attain an understanding of the creation of the work.

The creation of the work can accordingly be understood, within the modern context, as *conceptualism*. That you not only show one angle but show *all* the angles: not one truth but many. That a relation of openness and free access to a work of art constitutes the essential components in the understanding of the work. But all of this is so very meaningless without consciousness. Consciousness has, then, to be perceived in several ways: the first is, of course, the context of the work or exhibition, in relation to oneself and the work or exhibition. That is to say, the physical context. The other is, of course, the intention of the artist, which can then be seen through both the title and the text.

This being the case, an awareness of time, context, and subjectivity can thus render the understanding of a single artwork multitudinous, although it’s seldom that you see an

artwork alone. It will almost always be in connection with an exhibition, or in connection with a larger project, where you typically experience an artwork standing together with many others, and hopefully curated with an eye toward creating a larger context, an aggregate image. This can bring about an almost sublime effect, allowing you to see the possibilities in the whole exhibition, as in Pierre Huyghe's *The Host and the Cloud* (2011), which transpired over the course of several festival days, where the same exhibition space crossed over time, in many interesting ways. These include Halloween, a pagan festival, the first of the feasts; Valentine's Day, which honours a Christian saint's death; and at last, Labour Day, commemorating the international struggle of the labour movement, which is a more recent and more ideological "holiday." Huyghe moved synchronously through time during the exhibition, both chronologically according to history and in a chronological cycle according to the calendar. Here, one can cite Brenner again, with the outdated of historical time and the value-related view of time, where time accordingly becomes the binding force among the different artworks and gives rise to a *Gesamtkunstwerk*.¹⁰ For in addition to the calendar-related progression of time, Huyghe's work also involves the presentation of performance art pieces that are based on events that have happened in the course of time, in the periods of the holidays the exhibition incorporates. And the overall picture that is formed is, then, an almost sublime experience, and not one of awe-inspired veneration but one of understanding, something akin to staring at the mechanism inside a watch and understanding each and every ratchet wheel's role.

A human totality through time and consciousness that pays homage to diversity through a constant contemplation of context. Where the

individual is complex and the whole is simple, where time is synchronous and diachronic, where context is dualistic and consciousness is forever searching for new interpretations of whatever it beholds. Where a cliché is used to swear allegiance and to emphasise a point imprinted on a block of cement, as being an object that has always been there, with the words "so help me ...", where the last word has been cut away and in its place stands an explanation of what else there could be and of what effect this might bring about. Where cement bears the chronological age and the worn-out words bear the multitudinous value of what he wants and what he swears to, in an echo resounding through time and out into the depths of time.

Søren Thilo works with the idea of survival, through climate, terror, and the notion of humanity's physical and social survival, with the very aptly named work *Survivalism* (2009). My work *so help me* (2016) bears similarities to *Survivalism* in that it is an immovable object with words carved into it, but with a text on paper added. Both Thilo's work and my own are incredibly heavy objects. The idea is that both *so help me* and *Survivalism* have to age and also that their meanings have to become increasingly firmer. But with *so help me* there is also an acknowledgement of the past as well as the future within its platitude, which has its origins in the past but which is still being used at the present time. And the paper leans up against this plasticity in such a way that the cliché can be recontextualised, in the moment of the beholder's gaze, and in a changing world. So instead of a harsh picture of reality describing how tough the times we face are, what you're able to see, instead, is the diversity of what is going to come, and you can try to form a picture of what tomorrow will bring, as we look out toward the infinite depth, which is the future.

The depth is a dark and gloomy place, a place where you look in and come to think that it cannot be any more depressing than this. That all hope is gone, and the darkness takes over more and more, changing form in the depth—but slowly, a light begins to illuminate and, little by little, starts to spread. A building you can see into, a workplace with large windows, nowhere to hide. Condemned to never being able to find serenity. Like Sisyphus, the process is going to repeat itself, day in and day out. But when time pushes its way forward and you start to head home, the light finds the way. Slowly, after dusk, you'll find life and hope. The reason for continuing this process, one's own life.

And like Sisyphus, who is doomed to haul a stone up a hill every day, only to have to perform the deed all over again the next day, and also like *Spiral Jetty*, the essential action has to do with achieving a goal, with the intention of finishing, only to experience the meaninglessness of the action, and nonetheless take it from the top once again. You travel from one point to another: it may be up a hill. The resistance is manageable when there is enough interest in finding out what lies over the next hill. This is the plot of *And then it was all over* (2016) or, to put it another way, this is what happens specifically within the cinematic narrative, because the clip both starts and closes with the sentence "and then it was all over." The sentence is a conclusion but also provides the impetus for a continuation, or a beginning. Both *And then it was all over* and *Spiral Jetty* are like *No Exit*, Jean-Paul Sartre's 1944 existentialist play. There is an enclosed world, where the outcome will always be the same; even though the framework itself is not frightening or overwhelming, it is the repetition that transforms the surroundings into a veritable hell or limbo. And in relation to Smithson's artwork, it's merely the basic action that he completes,



And then it was all over, 2016. Video. 03:00 min. loop. Thomas Hostrup

assiduously, only to figure out, eventually, that you cannot get any further. In this way, the other work, *And then it was all over*, bleeds over into its very existence: the film's title actually tears down the fourth wall, by virtue of being an end and a beginning, but also by virtue of the fact that the film is meant to be a loop, a direct glimpse into a personal hell that doesn't finish until the exhibition does, or until you give up.

Eternity and the present moment are two sides of the same coin, where a stand constantly advertises eternity and the present moment with the words "AND" and "NOW," where they are in perpetual motion. However the stand is only in a position to make this announcement through the agency of outside forces. NOW accordingly becomes the present moment,

a moment where time stands still, for *this* is the moment: the now. And AND becomes the universe's eternal expansion. Ergo, there is a sequence, a beginning and an end, which has been pared down to minimal proportions. But this movement or sequence is only possible when two ventilator fans ignite this process from the beginning.

As in Fischli/Weiss's *The Way Things Go*, there is a mechanical element as well as the appropriation of an everyday object. But there is also a cause and effect, insofar as its domino effect of causality restarts its sequence all over again, ad infinitum. But here, the domino effect is not a collection of everyday objects that come to influence one another in a lengthy sequence, but instead two contextual words that, in a linguistic context, are used to bind other

words together, two words that are ordinarily employed to tell us about a temporal placement of other words. It becomes a registration and a physical manifestation of all present moments: a negative watch, as it were.

But time is, in itself, an intangible concept. For everything is in constant motion—from our own bodies to the earth, which is rotating around its own axis; to the earth that is revolving around the sun; and to our solar system, which is orbiting around the galaxy's midpoint. A discreet and unstoppable force of nature that surrounds everything that we know. As in Christian Marclay's *The Clock* (2010), time is discreet: it takes time to happen, whenever or wherever something occurs. Cinema offers a sterling example of how time discreetly and almost without attention hurries along, for when you walk inside the

theatre to see a movie, you start out by sitting down and dedicating yourself to experiencing something favourable. For the most part, you remain physically inactive, but you allow the plot in the film to unfold. You are entertained and possibly amused by something that has occurred, in some past time. What you watch on TV or in a movie theatre has, for the most part, been filmed and edited beforehand. But what about watching something active and physical? What about watching a string that has been hung up between two points, moving along at a snail's pace? Where you cannot

see the progression but simply know it is happening. Like watching paint dry on two white boxes, covered with sheets that conceal how much time has elapsed since you first noticed this process was happening and how much time has passed since it was created and the present. There are two points, X and Y, but you cannot know for sure which one is X and which one is Y. The relationship between time and effect has been bent beyond recognition. It all happens so slowly and obscurely.

So what you are looking at is *value* in the age of physical obsolescence. Or is the value a contextual message

that you want to look at? Is it only a TV on a pedestal that is showing what is right behind the TV? It is both, and that's what I want to open up, so that things, at their base, can be banal and can, at the same time, open up an interesting discussion between people. They are presumably monumental, depressing, and call to mind one's own mortality. But at the same time, one's life is short. And you've got to get the most out of it that you can, for artworks will never be perfect but rather merely one more step in a direction that you've chosen.

1 Andrew Brenner, "Aquinas on Eternity, Tense, and Temporal Becoming," *Florida Philosophical Review* X, no. 1 (Summer 2010): http://philosophy.cah.ucf.edu/fpr/files/10_1/brenner.pdf.

2 "So complex is reality, and so fragmentary and simplified is history, that an omniscient observer could write an indefinite, almost infinite, number of biographies of a man, each emphasising different facts; we would have to read many of them before we realized that the protagonist was the same man." Jorge Luis Borges, "On William Beckford's Vathek" (1943), <http://www.tertius.ltd.uk/tertius.html>.

3 Kenneth Goldsmith, *Against Expression: An Anthology of Conceptual Writing* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2011).

4 Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp," *Partisan Review* 31, no. 4 (Fall 1964): 515–30.

5 Spinoza discusses causal parallelism in his *Ethics* (1674).

6 "Wherefore he resolved to have a moving image of eternity, and when he set in order the heaven, he made this image eternal but moving according to number, while eternity itself rests in unity; and this image we call time." Plato, *Timaeus* (360 BCE), trans. Benjmain Jowett, <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/timaeus.html>.

7 Homer discusses the myth of Sisyphus in Book VI of *The Iliad* (c. 1260–1180 BCE).

8 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human* (1876).

9 Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757).

10 *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or the "total work of art," is an idea used and advanced by, among others, composer Richard Wagner.

There Is More to the Picture Than Meets the Eye¹

Perhaps you can imagine that you have your very own magical flying carpet to sit down on; you can be lifted up to just the right height and start to float away as though through a long tunnel, a tunnel where you can see the light from your inner world at the other end. And you can almost feel the breeze through your hair, and all your troubles, all your tensions simply fly away. You feel lighter, freer, and, in order to enable you to reach all the way to your destination, I can count to twenty in the meantime.²

I lie tucked up and wrapped up in blankets in a soft Sacco beanbag chair, lit tea lights surround me, and a few metres from me sits a man in a green velvet armchair. He talks to me calmly and rhythmically in harmony with a sound playing subtly in the background.

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen. Twenty.³

Slowly, the beanbag chair lifts itself off the ground and begins to hover.

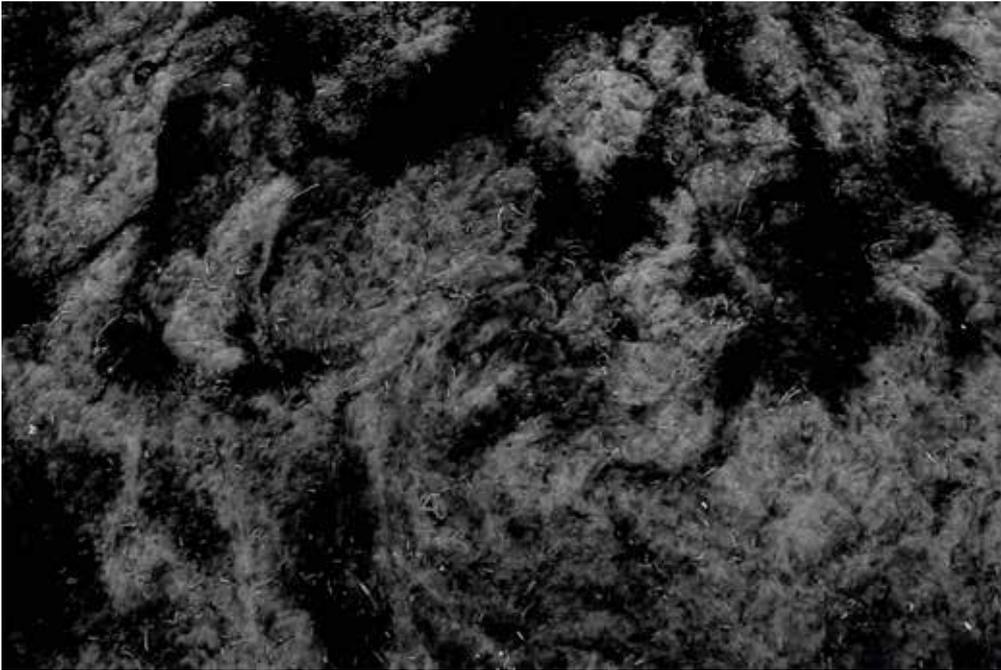
Lying down in the floating chair, I see things from a distance; the earth is stretched out below me. Floating above my thoughts and my body, where there are no shadows in which to hide. Looking down on oneself, down onto the world, down onto the people and one's own thoughts, that is like seeing the world from the outside, from up high, and from the inside, all at the same time. An experience of slow movements and shimmering light as if in a dream, to be conscious of one's unconscious. From the shimmer of light to black darkness, from the one to the other on a magical flying carpet.

What I see is a sign of something else that I cannot see, and it is what I don't see that actually exists and that manifests itself in what I do see.

All forms of life in nature seem to be connected, or rather tangled up in a complex net. One has to free oneself from ideas about hierarchies and rigid categories, and realise that there are no clear boundaries and no centre either. At the same time, this

extensive perspective brings with it a radical intimacy, an insight about our coexistence with all forms of life, whether they have awareness or not. It also opens up the possibility of including beings of all possible kinds, and the possibility of discovering that the boundary between interior and exterior, or between different life forms, is not sharp.

This makes me unsure of what counts as real. *The Uncanny* is about terror related to insecurity. A sense of the uncanny can be evoked when something familiar suddenly appears unfamiliar or, conversely, when something alien and terrifying morphs into something familiar. According to Sigmund Freud, this can be described as a variation on terror that can be derived from what should have remained hidden or secret but that has emerged, the repressed unconscious that returns in an uncanny form.⁴ The uncanny can also be seen as an effect of increased knowledge: the more carefully we scrutinise our surroundings, the more strange and uncertain they appear.⁵



Cladophora Glomerata, 2015. HD video. 07:30 min. Jonna Hägg

Cladophora Glomerata (2015) is a video work wherein I scrutinise my surroundings until they appear a strange place where I don't really know if it's my brain or the world that I see and in which I travel. It's one of the works that have inspired the design of my latest video works. They have come into being through my search for systems of living energy within the various elements. I have wanted to understand how the elements move in different "rooms" and are embodied, how they together create a structure. In this way I try with my camera to get to the essence of the perfection of nature, which in some cases is driven to unreality. When I walk around in a forest,

meadow, or town, I see my surroundings as individual units. On and on, so many different species of tree in varying sizes, this and that house, street, meadow flower, bush. My gaze lingers on details.

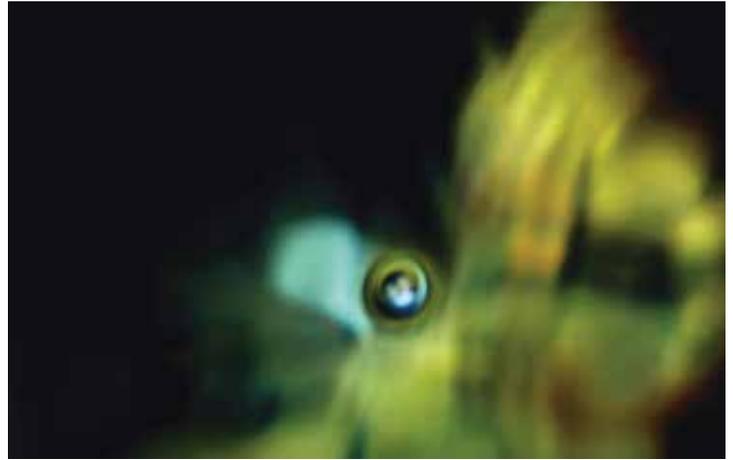
All these things exist on land. But the sea! The sea is something completely different. The sea is one. The sea knows no boundaries or respect. The sea appears a frightening, boundless unity, because we are incapable of measuring it with our senses.

Do we know less about the brain, this grey physical substance and its composition, than we know about the entire universe? The invisible ability of the planets to travel through

something that seems like nothing. Where does reality take place? What is reality like? Does the brain have a direct connection to something that is not itself, to the universe, to other layers of reality? In Rachel Rose's latest video, *Everything and More* (2015), she deals with outer space and the human relationship to it. The video shows how it might feel to travel beyond the boundaries of the earth, the emptiness of it all. The combination of science, religion, and material-based special effects in Rose's works inspire me. I realise that the infinite cosmos can only be understood through the limited capacities of the human mind and body.



Cignoter, 2015. HD video. 24 hours, no sound. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Jonna Hägg



Left: *Guise*, 2015. HD video. 04:54 min. loop. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Jonna Hägg

Right: *Guise*, 2015. HD video. 04:54 min. loop. Jonna Hägg

*“But it was impossible to see too much. The less there was to see, the harder he looked, the more he saw. This was the point. To see what’s here, finally to look and to know you’re looking, to feel time passing, to be alive to what is happening in the smallest registers of motion.”*⁶

An altered state of mind; a hypnotic state is when one hovers between waking and sleeping, one dreams or does not sleep, but one is very aware, but in a different way than the “awake” consciousness. This hypnotic state is an important part of my creative process, like an attempt to reach a point where an image is divided up into a feeling and where events without storytelling or logical

form take place. Sometimes it requires increased attention to be able to see what happens in front of one’s eyes; it requires concentration and time in order to really be able to see what one is looking at. I am fascinated by this in particular, by the depth one can reach in the subdued movement, all the details one can see, the depths of phenomena that are so easy to miss in superficial habitual looking.

*“Only the camera can show us the optical unconscious, as it is only through psychoanalysis that we learn of the compulsive unconscious.”*⁷

Douglas Gordon’s *24 Hour Psycho* (1993) is a slowed-down version of Alfred

Hitchcock’s film *Psycho* (1960). Gordon has taken repetition, time, memory, participation, double-dealing, darkness, and light to their utmost limits. The tension in the film is taken to a level that approaches the absurd; every frame is shown for about two seconds and this continues for twenty-four hours. Gordon’s work is difficult to experience in its entirety, and much of the work’s power therefore lies in the very idea of time that it conjures up. A prolonged viewing time challenges the viewer’s endurance while at the same time bringing about a form of “mental stimulus.” In *Clignoter* (2016), I have prolonged the time from twelve minutes to twenty-four hours, each



Clignoter, 2015. HD video. 24 hours, no sound. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Jonna Hägg

frame being shown for four seconds instead of twenty-five frames per second. My intention can be described as a crystallisation of an event and an attempt at capturing its duration. Time is important for reaching a hypnotic feeling in the video work: new frames are brought before my vision and a new rhythm is created through repetition. In repetition something singular arises that cannot be repeated; the details show that nothing is exactly the same.

In the Flame of a Lamp All Natural Forces Are Active⁸

In Sugimoto Hiroshi's work *In the Praise of Shadow* (1998), based on Gerhard Richter's paintings of burning candles,

various candles have been photographed while burning down from top to bottom in front of the camera's lens. What is shown is the light of a candle. In the photographs one can clearly see how different the shapes are during the various nights the candles have been burning. Capturing the light and the movements that cannot be seen with the naked eye, movements that are too quick for the human eye; it is precisely fire that has such movement. Étienne-Jules Marey did not wish to capture what the eye could already see; rather, his cinematic inventions were attempts to analyse movements in real time.⁹ Like Marey, I have attempted to capture the transition

from still photo to moving image. In my case, I capture a portion of time, which I then prolong and divide up in order to get into the shape and movement of each individual flame. By looking at something long enough, what I see disappears from my consciousness and something new becomes visible. The images themselves are at the centre, rather than a sequence of events. The title of my work, *Clignoter*, comes from French and means "to flicker," an onomatopoeic word denoting the sound of a candle flame, *cli gno ter*. Like the word, *Clignoter* the video captures precisely the moment when the flickering occurs, a moment in between two moments: light and movement



Untitled (In Search of), 2015. HD video. 02:53 min. loop. Jonna Hägg

that form random images before my vision. Human backs, bare legs, black silhouettes, three people, and a kiss. The shapes are to me real in their unreality. Is someone's presence revealed, in the form of ectoplasm?¹⁰ Am I the only one who can see them? It feels as if the images want to tell me something. When I carefully study the shapes, I find it difficult to express what I actually see, and to see the difference between various visions. I have lacked a language for the act of observing, but have found inspiration in the thoughts formulated by Roland Barthes in the book *Camera Lucida*, reflections on what a person fixes on

or "sees" in a photograph. That is, how inconsequential details may awaken emotions that are difficult to understand and questions that concern perception, existence, presence, and time limits, to mention just a few things. The punctum is something that shoots out from the picture, something that hits you. What you can put a name to cannot really hit you; it is the detail that takes over, that intrudes, kindles an interest, argues Barthes.¹¹ What fascinates Barthes is something that is typical of the photograph, but even more so of moving images: contingency. No matter how prepared, repeated, and

arranged the image or filming, the final result is a contingency caught in time, completely unique and impossible to reproduce. What reveals the contingency is precisely a detail in the image. To me, this experience of what is unique can evoke powerful emotions and open the passage into the work.

You know, your unconscious knows so much more than what you consciously know, so you can make your conscious more unconscious and all the power you have. You can make your unconscious more conscious and learn how to use what you need to use in order to really get further, to really reach your goal.¹²

"I wonder: if I peer at the darkness with a magnifying glass, will I see more than darkness? The glass doesn't expose the darkness, it only reveals more of it. And if I look at light with a magnifying glass, with a shock I will only see more light. I saw but I am as blind as before because I saw an incomprehensible triangle."¹³

With an inner eye I know without having seen; the camera becomes an extension of both my eye and the movements of my body. The film camera emphasises obscured details that exist around me and enlarges the objects that are there: "That which no human eye is capable of capturing, any pencil, brush, feather of fixing, your camera captures without knowing what it is and fixes it with the scrupulous indifference of a machine."¹⁴ It is like a continuous interaction between the eye and the camera, between focus and periphery. In my video work *Untitled (In Search of)* (2015), the camera acts like the eye that captures obscured details that only become visible when a light illuminates part of the motif. Light attaches itself to a surface within a closed frame, like a kind of penetration into the surface of the film.

It is like the gap between outer and inner, over and under. The interaction between focus and periphery becomes clear, and it becomes obvious that it's a different nature speaking to the camera than the one speaking to the eye.

There is an attraction to what my naked eye cannot see, the things that I see only when I push in and enlarge, rotate, slow down, or speed up time; it is as if all the categorising systems of nature are dislocated. Blurred images, haptic images, they become as if corporeal when senses other than vision are active, such as touch and smell. Like a complex caress. The images have expression, but no shape, and they create repetition and rhythm without symmetry. Laura U. Marks explains haptics as an almost physical encounter between the surface of the screen and the body.¹⁵

I try to understand reality by distancing myself from it. I cannot, and yet I do it. It is the unknown that I carry within myself. Creation is the unknown. Before I start filming, I know nothing about what will take shape. Filming is a state, a trancelike state. And so is the unknown in itself, in my head, in my body. Creating is

not even a reflection, but a kind of ability that exists alongside one's self, parallel to one's self: another persona that appears and that closes up, invisible. Sometimes I risk losing this persona through my own actions. If I knew something about what I will create before actually doing it, I would never do it. Creating is trying to discover what one would create if one created, and that one only knows afterwards. Before, that is the most dangerous question one can ask oneself. But also the most common. Creation comes like the wind; it is naked, it is images, and it passes like nothing else passes life, nothing else, except for that, life itself.

You have the ability to notice and to not notice at all. And right now you can really notice the calm, the power, inside. You can hear my voice remind you of doing the right things in the right way. Remind you of the fact that you know what you need to know. That you can really get all the way there. So, a while after I have counted down from five to one you can open your eyes again and feel alert and clear in your head, and keep all you want of the calm and the power.

*Five. Four. Three. Two. And one.*¹⁶

1. Neil Young, "Hey, Hey, My, My (Out of the Blue)," *Rust Never Sleeps*, Reprise Records, 1979.
2. The text is taken from my video work *En nivå av lugn* (A level of calm) (2013). It is a hypnotic track written especially for me in 2006 by Göran Carlsson, a licensed psychotherapist.
3. Ibid.
4. Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," in *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2003), 123–62.
5. Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 177.
6. Don DeLillo, *Point Omega* (London: Picador, 2010), 5–6.
7. Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, trans. J.A. Underwood (London: Penguin, 2008), 30.
8. Gaston Bachelard, *The Flame of a Candle*, trans. Joni Caldwell (Dallas: Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture), 43. Bachelard is quoting Novalis.
9. Marta Braun, "Animating Images: The Cinematographic Method," in *Picturing Time: The Work of Etienne-Jules Marey (1830–1904)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 150–51.
10. Within parapsychology, "ectoplasm" is used as a hypothetical term for a solid form of bioenergy in connection with psychokinesis, and the idea is, unlike in spiritualism, that it is not the spirits of dead people but the thought images of living people that are materialised.
11. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 38–42.
12. From my work *En nivå av lugn*.
13. Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.* (1964), trans. Idrá Novey (New York: New Directions, 2012), 13.
14. Jacques Aumont, "The Face in Close-up," trans. Ellen Sowcheck, in *The Visual Turn: Classical Film Theory and Art History*, ed. Angela Calle Vacche (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 137.
15. Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 162–63.
16. From my work *En nivå av lugn*.



Kvinna i fönster (curious old lady), 2016. Silver gelatin print. 30 x 40 cm. Agnes Lovisa Jonasson

Familiar but Not Understood

“A lover will cling not only to ‘defects’ in the loved one, not only to a woman’s quirks and failings; facial lines and liver spots, worn clothes and wonky gait will bind him far more durably, far more inexorably than any beauty. One learned that long ago. And why? If the theory is true that feeling does not lodge in the head, that we feel a window, a cloud, a tree not in our brain but in the place where we see them, when we look at the loved one we are likewise outside ourselves. But in this case painfully stretched and tugged. Our feelings churn and swerve like a flock of birds blinded in the woman’s bright presence. And as birds seek shelter in the tree’s leafy hiding places, feelings too take refuge in dark wrinkles, graceless movements, and the secret blemish of the loved body, where they duck down, safe and sound. And no passer-by will guess that it is here, precisely here, in the shortcoming, in the less-than-perfect, that the admirer’s burst of love, swift as an arrow, hits home.”
—Walter Benjamin¹

*

It’s easy to imagine that your skin is a boundary between yourself and the outside world: I end here, and everything else begins there. But our skin is a landscape for fungus, bacteria, and micro-animals. We live in symbiosis with each other. Tiny little creatures live inside our innards, our pores, and our scalps, making us function as we’re supposed to, while our bodies, in turn, are the planets on which they live their lives.²

In his book *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans*,³ Baltic German biologist Jakob von Uexküll writes about the concept of “Umwelt.” The reality we experience, our environment, is our Umwelt, and, similarly, a dog or a tick has its own Umwelt as well. He basically dismisses the classical scientific idea that there is a single, unified world. Giorgio Agamben explains: “The fly, the dragonfly, and the bee that we observe flying next to us on a sunny day do not move in the same world as the one in which we observe them, nor do they share with us—or with each other—the same time and the same space.”⁴

At night, mites crawl out of our eyebrows to mate.

My navel is a deep well inhabited by ancient life forms that have previously only been encountered at the bottom of the ocean.

With my body, I can mimic a mite living in my hair follicles.

*

I’m sitting on a train headed for Malmö, wishing that I wasn’t me. I’d like to be a stone, or maybe a tree—something other than myself. “Pretending to be someone else ...” This sentence keeps repeating in my mind, and I need to do something to relocate the thought outside myself.

I begin by photographing a friend standing outside of our house. Then, I photograph another friend. I no longer know how it happened, but the framework has been established. I’m playing a game.



Ljusrosa gardin (pink curtain), 2016. Silver gelatin print. 30 x 40 cm. Agnes Lovisa Jonasson

I give all of you the same set of rules:

Take a walk outside
 Find an object that you like
 Spend some time with that object
 Take it with you in your mind
 Close your eyes and concentrate; focus all your energy on that object
 You and the object are now one

I take the photographs with my new camera. To learn how to use it, I need to think slowly, and concentrate carefully on each separate step that needs to be carried out. I follow a checklist:

Set up the tripod and camera
 Attach the lens, and set it to the lowest aperture setting
 Make initial focus adjustments using the focus handle
 Adjust the composition while looking through the focusing screen
 Adjust the focus more precisely using the eyepiece
 Use a photometer to get the exposure value
 Close the lens, wind the shutter up, and insert the film holder
 Withdraw the darkslide from the holder
 Release the shutter
 Reinsert the darkslide into the holder
 Remove the film holder



Sten (stone), 2016. Silver gelatin print. 30 x 40 cm. Agnes Lovisa Jonasson

Encounter one: He isn't comfortable in front of the camera. I give him a bottle of whisky as compensation. He becomes a silver birch.

Encounter two: An abandoned car park. He mostly wants to talk about other stuff. During the photography session, he's keen and enthusiastic. He becomes a small piece of asphalt.

Encounter three: A car park. He looks angelic. I fumble with the camera, swearing over the raindrops hitting the lens. He becomes a beige coat worn by an elderly man.

Encounter four: A house dressed in scaffolds. He needed some convincing. Now that he's agreed to play my game, he keeps asking me how long it's going to take. I work very carefully, and let things take longer than usual. He becomes a lift.

Encounter five: Outside Friskis- & Sveltis. I listen to him as he tells me about how he fled from war. He's energetic. I become insecure in my role when he starts giving me his own ideas about how to take the photographs. He becomes a pigeon.

Encounter six: Outside the police station. It's been years since we last met. It's a pleasant meeting. It's cold, and my fingers go numb, but I'm getting more comfortable with the camera. He becomes a curious old woman peering at us through a window.

Encounter seven: Outside a military depot. He's known me my whole life, and he's one of the most complicated people I've ever met. The photography goes smoothly. He becomes a colourful sign advertising ice cream.

Encounter eight: By a green building. His posture is bad; I don't mention it. I use fewer negatives than usual, because I'm confident that they'll come out. He becomes a reflective vest hanging from a decommissioned bus stop.

Encounter nine: On a square. He's fair and demure, like a fawn. He becomes a porcelain mug.

Encounter ten: Behind an art centre. Everything goes well, until I realise I don't have my film holders. I borrow his bicycle, to go home and look for them. They're nowhere to be found, so I cycle back, expecting to have to call it off. He gives me the bag of holders; apparently, I left it under a car. He becomes a spherical table lamp.

Encounter eleven: On an ordinary street. I don't know him, so it's easy. He becomes a light pink curtain.





These encounters form a path that I walk along. My hands learn how to set the camera up quicker each time. The work begins to do itself. I no longer know why I'm doing it. All I care about now is looking for where to plant my foot to take my next step.

*

I try to transform my models into the objects they've chosen, by guiding them through autosuggestion. I so badly want them to metamorphose. The thing I'm forgetting is that they've already been transformed, just by standing in front of my camera.

Roland Barthes stands in front of the camera, and tells us: "I feel myself observed by the lens, everything changes: I constitute myself in the process of 'posing', I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image. This transformation is an active one: I feel that the photograph creates my body or mortifies it."⁵

The images that appear in the tanks of photographic developer are evidence that something actually happened. Their living bodies have left traces in silver. The shapes resemble the people I've met, but it's not them I'm seeing anymore—I stretch my neck and peer critically into the tank—they're compositions of lines and light now.

*

"What I've always liked about photography is that it's such a direct way of showing what's on my mind. I see something. I show it to you."⁶

In my approach to photography, I tend to think in series. A new photograph is an entry point to a new collection. Thomas Ruff has said that he regards a good photograph as a statement that needs to be tested several times before he's satisfied,⁷ and I identify with that.

Hilla and Bernd Becher took photographs of hundreds of industrial facilities, all from the same perspective, all in the same lighting, and all in black and white. Then, they hung them in groups of similar objects. In repetition, the fine details that set the structures apart, and make them unique, are accentuated. Bernd Becher had a personal relationship to the buildings and structures they photographed, because he'd spent his childhood in the Ruhr district.

Inspired by the Bechers' systematic approach to photography, I've begun building a collection of pictures of tree supports. I took a photo of one, and then I began to notice them everywhere when I was moving around the town. I stopped to see how they were designed, what materials they were made of, and whether the ties had left any marks on the tree trunks. I couldn't help identifying with the trees, which were so tightly constricted in this way. They were stuck in a structure that both restrained them and supported them.

"After we see an object several times, we begin to recognize it. The object is in front of us and we know about it, but we do not see it—hence we cannot say anything significant about it. Art removes objects from the automatism of perception in several ways."⁸

*

"There does not exist a forest as an objectively fixed environment: there exists a forest-for-the-park-ranger, a forest-for-the-hunter, a forest-for-the-botanist, a forest-for-the-wayfarer, a forest-for-the-nature-lover, a forest-for-the-carpenter, and finally a fable forest in which Little Red Riding Hood loses her way."⁹

I think back to seeing cleared woodlands through car windows. Like scabs in the landscape. Sweden is covered in forests that are constantly being planted and cut down. Many

of my friends spent an underpaid summer planting pine trees in their teens—it's kind of a rite of passage in Jämtland. Almost every tree is in a place where a human once decided it should be. The small areas of untouched wood have also been submitted to the will of some person or other. Maybe somebody has put up a sign of the various plants you can expect to see if you enter the forest, or tied colourful plastic ribbons around the tree trunks to mark out hiking trails.

Malmö doesn't have much of anything even resembling a forest. One day, I visit the seemingly endless Christmas tree farm in South Zealand. Here, my inner control freak harmonises with the lines of uniform pine trees.

Paradise is no savage jungle; it's a symmetrical garden full of utilitarian plants, all arranged in geometric groups—headache cures in one section, fruit trees in another. In any case, that's what paradise looks like in the reconstructed sixteenth-century garden outside of Tycho Brahe's observatory on the island of Ven. A high fence keeps the chaos out.

When I venture into the great deciduous forest, to spend twenty-four hours there, I'm tingling with excitement. But I end up scrambling up a hunting tower in the woodland night, listening for the rustling of unknown creatures below me. I've been scared almost to death by the hellish bark of a deer buck. I'm a little ashamed as I climb the tower's ladder on shaky legs.

I'm a dreadfully frightened person when I listen in the darkness, trying to imagine what I'm hearing. The imagination is never as strong as it is in fear, never so real: a horrific laugh that turns out to be a bird. There's a myriad of sounds: rustling, snapping, shrieking, splashing. Hearing must be the sense that's closest to the imagination. The hardest to turn off. Somebody said it's the last sense to go before we die.¹⁰

*



Träd och stöd (1–6), 2015–16. 6 Silver gelatin prints. 44 x 61 cm. Agnes Lovisa Jonasson

I'm reminded of a famous quote by Caspar David Friedrich: "I have to morph into a union with the clouds and rocks, in order to be what I am."¹¹ I try turning the sentence around—the landscape becomes what it is once we have shaped it, and remade it into something that our human understanding can grasp, in the psychological sense, but also by transforming it in the material sense. We create a landscape that's organised for purpose and meaning—the Christmas tree farm, the nature reserve, the well-kept front lawn. And this order harmonises our inner strivings with our external ones.

*

I have a special relationship to spruce trees. I once invited a spruce to go to a café. A few months later, I hung a spruce tree by a noose, in the stairwell of the Kalmar Art Museum. Before the exhibition opening, the artists presented the pieces to the museum staff. One of the technicians approached me afterwards, and shyly began to show me some pictures on his old mobile phone. They were all pictures of bicycles, outdoors, in bike racks, leaning against walls, or lying on the ground.

"I think it's a bit like you and the spruce trees," he said. "When I see a bicycle, I stop to look, and sometimes I take pictures of them. I especially like bicycles that are piled up on each

other. Bicycle wheels on top of other bicycle wheels ..." I could tell this was very important to him.

Our interests might be a little unusual, but we're probably completely normal. Even when we're surrounded by the same scenery, with the same individual components, we can interpret our environments in completely different ways. Isn't everything we see a projection of memories, associations, and experiences? The thought of loneliness is brutal, but perhaps, through art, a little tear might open up in our confinement, through which some part of our world view can take shape, and seep out to meet somebody else's.



Vårtbjörk (silver birch), 2016. Silver gelatin print. 30 x 40 cm. Agnes Lovisa Jonasson

- 1 Walter Benjamin, "One-Way Street," in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. J. A. Underwood (London: Penguin Classics, 2009), 54.
- 2 *Vetenskapens Värld*, "Kroppens husdjur," television broadcast, SVT, July 6, 2015.
- 3 Jakob von Uexküll, *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans: With a Theory of Meaning*, trans. Joseph D. O'Neil (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).
- 4 Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 40.
- 5 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 2000), 10.
- 6 Matthew DeBord, "A Thousand Words: Zoe Leonard Talks About Her Recent Work," *Artforum*, January 1999, 101.
- 7 "If something interests me, I start trying it out and researching it. Then once I reach a certain standard that satisfies me, I take not just one photo but several—a whole series. After all, a photo isn't just a photo, it's a statement. And a single photo isn't enough to test the correctness of that statement. I have to check it out in several photos." Thomas Ruff, *Thomas Ruff: 1979 to the Present*, ed. Matthias Winzen (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2003), 108.
- 8 Viktor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 16.
- 9 Agamben, 41.
- 10 My own notes from a night spent in the woods.
- 11 I haven't found the original source of this quote, which is attributed to Caspar David Friedrich, but I've come across it in several places, such as this article from *Mousse* magazine: Zachary Cahill, "Earth without Aura: Notes on the Psychology of Contemporary Landscape," *Mousse*, October 2012, 139.

—*I saw myself standing over there in the doorway, looking at myself. I sat at a table with people around me. They talked and they laughed, several of them drank beer or wine. The motions slowed down; the room transformed into an unmoving image.*

Still

“Make no mistake, the audience has not come here for you. They don’t gather to hear what you have to tell them, to marvel at the clarity of your vision. Like the city, they survive by renewing themselves, knowing that to refuse change is to be forever altered, to decay. To repair the walls of the cathedral, the masons gently lower the crumbling soot-blackened medieval stones to the frozen ground and haul them to an unheated warehouse near the harbour. Here they are remade from freshly-quarried stone—their imperfections and vagueness of shape, the effects of centuries of weathering, frost action, fungal impregnation, negated and the new carvings replace the old blocks in the once-ancient walls. Meanwhile, in the vast concrete darkness of the warehouse, the old blocks are stacked together and the cathedral rises anew.”

—Will Bradley¹

1.

Six tonnes hit the ground and then cheering and the clapping of hands can be heard. David Sjölander is in the Huila province, Angola; it is December 4, 1948.² Next to him now lies the dead elephant. Another gentleman steps up and shakes his hand. The carcass is transported to Gothenburg, where the skin is tanned and prepared. Then a structure is built from wood, iron, and steel mesh and covered with two and a half tonnes of blue clay. The clay is modelled into an anatomical sculpture, which eventually becomes a plaster mould for the hide.

At that time, Sjölander worked as a taxidermist at the Gothenburg Natural History Museum. I stand next to the elephant. It is enormous; it is unreal. Dead but alive or dead and stuffed. I have been in this building once before. We were children on a

field trip. It is odd, but I don’t remember that the elephant stood here then, yet it takes up so much space and is one of the museum’s main attractions. I have a feeling that not much has changed since I was here that time. The Natural History Museum was inaugurated in 1923, and the current exhibition has apparently not been updated since 1970. Information about nature, the natural, the animal, is provided in text and images. And stuffed animals, of course. Little signs are handwritten or typed on an older kind of typewriter. The paper has yellowed in some places, and sometimes I can see thick layers of dust that have collected behind or under the glass panes protecting the exhibition. Scattered documents, everything divided into different sections and species. Like an ancient Google. The animals are frozen in their poses, framed and

lit with spotlights that give the scene more life. I look closer and look for signs of decay. Some of the hides have begun to crack at their seams. Slowly the contents leak out.

I want to ask someone who works here how many visitors they actually get. It is empty. Now it is empty. It suddenly strikes me that there is nothing digital in the exhibition at all. I think of ruins and time capsules, of how this entire building has itself in some way been transformed into a stuffed animal.

An image. It carries a history, a narrative. It is there from the beginning. Framed, flat, or three-dimensional. Moving or still. Drawing has always been a beginning. That was how it began. A drawing can have a more direct origin that quickly can end up on a sheet of paper. If it is made



Foreground: *Untitled*, 2016. Concrete, radiator, enamel paint. 86 x 48 x 11 cm. Background: *On Fire*, 2016. HD video. 12:48 min. loop. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Rasmus Ramö Streith

from looking at or watching reality, a transformation or distortion occurs. Somewhere on the way from the eye and down to the hand.

A drawing can have the quality of never being completely finished. Usually it does not end up on a canvas or even on a real piece of paper. On the back, in the corner, or on top of another image. There is a simplicity that entails mobility. I can almost do it anywhere. It is not large, it is small and quiet. It is private.

The drawing and the writing work as a conversation, a dialogue with myself. Sometimes more as a tool. A way to develop ideas that are allowed to grow and at the same time end up

in front of me. There is always a part of the work and the process that is a challenge. But there is also a part that can be called "habit." Being in one's studio is, in part, being together with one's habits. The other part is breaking and working against them.

A comic book constructs a history using frames and balloons. It is a mixture of image and text. It is like watching a film but at the same time like reading a book. In reality it is neither of these things. The round balloons that are filled with words give the character a voice. Depending on what the text looks like, it can be read in a certain tone of voice. Large,

jagged letters usually mean that someone is shouting, is in distress, or is very angry. The square frames with text usually describe what happens in the picture or what the character is thinking, the character's inner voice. Text and symbols also occur outside the balloons and are placed together with or inside the picture. They function as sound effects. The appearance of the text is usually determined by the character of the sound and enhances the effect of what happens in the picture.

A sketch, an exercise, or a note. Almost like a film script. It remains merely a document with words before it is filmed and becomes a film we can

watch. The text in a film script is usually descriptive and paints the picture the way we see it in the film. Dialogues and narrative voices. Characters that function as nodes, transporters, or real hands for ghosts. Vanished actions, stories, or events that have or have not taken place. What can they say about the world, what different voices do they have? I think about Tacita Dean and her journey to Teignmouth, and how she uses the story of Donald Crowhurst, who vanished in 1969 during the circumnavigation of the world he had embarked upon, in her film (2000) and her book *Teignmouth Electron* (1999).³ During her own investigative journey she deconstructs the story and reassembles it again into a new image. New pieces of the story have been added, and one piece is her own. To listen and imagine being someone else is to see through someone else's eyes.

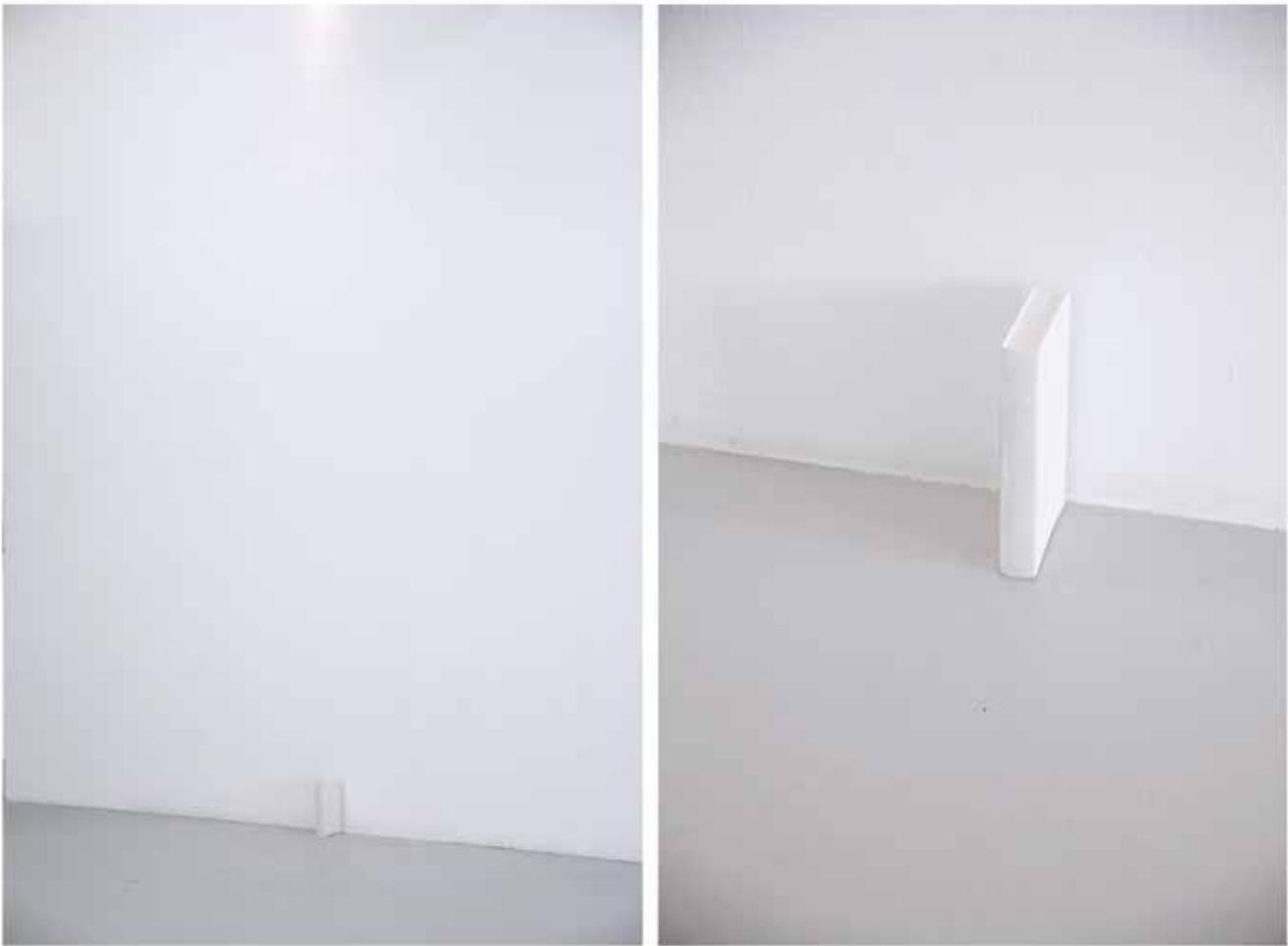
Faces that seem completely abandoned. That stare, blind or blinded. A photograph that sits fading on a shelf. A mute TV left turned on. There is someone who looks while we look, an image within the image. The memory only remembers certain colours, details, and certain shapes. The rest is forgotten. An abstraction of what remains. I think about the police force's photographs from a crime scene. Luc Tuymans's paintings and drawings function as evidence in a murder mystery; they create a network of stories. It is still and charged with a quiet restraint. At the same time it feels as though what we look at will disappear at any moment.⁴

2.
 "HIC OCCULTUS OCCULTO OCCISUS EST" (Here a mysterious one was killed in a mysterious manner).⁵

When you disappear, when you are missing, you are neither dead nor alive. He called himself Ray when he walked into the police station in Berlin. He remembered nothing. Everything was gone except for one thing. After his mother had died in a car crash, he had, together with his father, gone out into the forest and lived there for five years. But now the father was also dead, and for this reason Ray had sought assistance. Most people became interested, but also irritated. How can someone be no one? The police, the media, and the surrounding world found it difficult to accept Ray's story. It was transformed into a mystery of its own and used as a projection screen. Ray was renamed "Forest Boy" and put in a home. He kept quiet, but the search for the truth continued. Different stories and theories were rife in newspapers and on the Internet. The more



On Fire, 2016. HD video. 12:48 min. loop. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Rasmus Ramö Streith



Untitled, 2016. Plaster. 20,5 x 11,25 cm. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Rasmus Ramö Streith

question marks there were, the more information needed to be filled in.

After several months, Forest Boy admitted that the whole thing was a lie. A person from his hometown had recognised him in a picture the police had posted on the Internet. Robin van Helsum, which is his real name, tried to say no by not telling the truth, by not saying anything at all. A passive protest. Not unlike Herman Melville's novel about Bartleby, and his recurring answer to the lawyer, who is also the book's narrator: "Imagine my surprise, nay, my consternation, when without moving from his privacy, Bartleby, in

a singular mild, firm voice, replied, 'I would prefer not to'."⁶

The story about Forest Boy became the point of departure for my project and installation *In a Hole in the Forest Underneath Some Stones* (2014). The title is a quotation; it is Van Helsum's own words when he answered a question from the police concerning where he would have buried his father.⁷ The installation consists of a video loop, a sculpture, and a slide projector. The video shows a location. It could be in a park or in a forest. It is dark in among the bushes and trees, but the centre is illuminated. It could be the place where Van Helsum lived with

his father. We wait for something to happen. The image remains, fades into black, and then returns. The slide projector mixes text and photographs. The overdub consists of three different voices. Van Helsum's pronouncements and my own words are mixed with the theories of the surrounding world about who he might be. Cut into pieces and scattered, the voices together create a dialogue. The pictures were first taken digitally with a mobile phone camera. A camera you always keep in your pocket creates another point of departure, it tells another story. Pictures that are not meant for someone else to see, that look more

like diary entries. Printed on paper and then photographed again with an analogue camera. Finally developed as slides. This process transforms and erases the colours, the time, and the person who took the picture.

Pictures usually interpret reality in one way or another, or are taken from it. Usually we have to limit the picture. Like through a window. What we choose to frame or what we choose to charge the picture with, that's where fiction comes in. A still photo does not have the same ability to create a narrative as do moving pictures. But instead the narrative is more concentrated, has another presence. The frozen moment, what happened before and what happens later. A picture that is charged with anticipation. In the same way, long shots make a moving picture resemble a photograph. Just like repetition, a moving image that is played over and over again. Using loops, I construct an image that rather creates transformation and change instead of repetition.

“Mechanical time is about endless repetition, whereas human time is about transformation and change, with the processes of growth, ageing and death.”⁸

The work with the installation *In a Hole in the Forest Underneath Some Stones* has had two different guises. The first time I wanted to have an effect on the space by building a construction. An environment that activated the visitor in a physical sense. The second time I worked with the space's own parameters. The works were installed in Gallery Sho, in Falköping, Sweden,⁹ which has two storeys. A ground floor and a basement. In order to step down into the basement, you have to bend your body and go down a stone staircase. The walls and the roof have begun to crumble. There, several rows of chairs were placed, and a screen for the projector was constructed from the ceiling tiles in the basement. The slide projector was placed on a stand at the very back. At an appointed time I started the projector and manually

fed each slide into it. There, the duration and the rhythm were decided by me and my presence.

The sculpture was created during this same period. During a trip to the Netherlands (which also turned out to be Van Helsum's native country) I found an object. A restaurant and a café sit in the middle of a park. There, in the back, at the edge of their open-air café, hidden away and used up. A painted board with two round holes cut out of it. If I put my head into one of the holes and let someone else take a picture, I am transformed into an imaginary character. A rather simple trick belonging to another time. I immediately recognise the motif and the characters in the picture. Tarzan embraces Jane with one hand while with the other hand he deftly holds a vine. Large muscles meet soft, round forms. The unknown painter has been sloppy. The upper parts of their bodies are considerably longer than the lower parts. As for the rest, the picture gives a naive and rather



Untitled, 2016. Detail. Concrete, radiator, enamel paint. 86 x 48 x 11 cm. Rasmus Ramø Streith

silly impression. Weather and time have left their marks; the paint has vanished or faded in places. Damp and vermin seem to have eaten up the motif from the inside. In spite of this, I photographed the object from the front, and left the site. Several weeks later when I looked at the picture, I could see something I had not been able to discern as clearly while I was at the site. The two holes where the faces should be had been replaced with the wet vegetation that can be seen behind. Suddenly the object acquired a different feeling and a different meaning. The image was

transferred to a slide. I also decided to recreate the same object in my studio. Using the photograph as a template, I copied the construction, the motif, and the size. I also recreated the wear and the damage. Like a forgery of time.

By looking into the past, both the private and the common past, historical traumas emerge. The artist Robert Gober does not repeat history; he investigates the emotions in it, not just his own but yours as well. There is something direct, but at the same time unclear, about Gober and his handmade sculptures, and even more

his installations, that fascinates me. Objects that we associate with the home. Memories from childhood and fragments of bodies. I cannot stay out of his world, I want to understand it. I cannot understand it fully. Perhaps that is precisely the reason why I return. It is ambiguous and unpleasant. But at the same time there is something specific and carefully placed.

“If you look at it as a story, you have to supply that, what was the crime, what really happened, what’s the relationship between these two men.”¹⁰



Replica, 2014. Digital photograph/slide. 16,26 x 9,14 cm. Rasmus Ramø Streith



Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, Malmö, 2016. Left: *Mattress x2*, 2016. Iron, white sheets, chlorine, white thread, foam rubber. 200 x 200 cm. Right: *Mattress x1*, 2016. Iron, white sheets, chlorine, white thread, foam rubber. 70 x 190 cm. Rasmus Ramø Streith

3. What are we looking at, really? A tiger; it has been given a childish and twisted face. There is something about its eyes—they are set too closely. Its mouth makes the tiger look sad instead of looking dangerous.

Besides myself, there is a man standing there. We are in the room devoted to insects. Thin and tall, with round-rimmed glasses, bald and wearing a dark suit, he looks like someone I have met earlier. But not in real life. He's looking for something.

"Where are the bumblebees?" He reads silently and to himself. But this is difficult because of the poor lighting in the ceiling and because the letters are both small and handwritten.

Corridors and passages. One room after the other. What part am I in now? I didn't even mean to come here. But when I saw the sign in the street

I had to follow the directions. I started walking in the direction the arrow pointed.

It is not the animals that stick in my mind, it is my own reflected image that wanders around among all these glass cages. My body moves through the animals' landscape. I travel across the seas to other countries and collect their hides. There is more to be seen here than what is displayed in the exhibition cases; this place is a map as well.

I miss something, I can't find the dinosaurs, but above all I miss what is there to be read about humans. I find an exhibition case that deals with birth. And one with the eye. A large plastic cross-section of an eye. I move on, the passage becomes darker and turns. I read on a sign, "Diorama Scenes." Here they have devoted more time to things, not just to the stuffed animals but also to the

landscape. Whole scenes have been constructed. A still, a piece of "reality," a frozen moment that captures the animal in motion. Something happens, a scene with an open narrative. My eyes search on, and perhaps somewhere something hides in there behind the high grass. On the wall at the back, the line of a horizon is painted together with a sky. Like a classic landscape painting. The illusion only works if seen from one direction. It is an image I would like to step into, but I can't. There is a glass pane in the way.

The museum closes. I have forgotten about the time. After a while I find the end and the stairs down to the entrance. A lion sits on the banister. Unlike the elephant, I do remember this one. I looked at it for a long time when I was here last, not at the lion's face but at its paw, which rests in a relaxed manner across the banister. The claws jut out several centimetres.

- 1 Will Bradley and Annika Eriksson, *The Last Round of Changes* (Gothenburg: Göteborgs Konsthall, 2008), 7.
- 2 "Göteborgs naturhistoriska museum" [Gothenburg Natural History Museum], *Wikipedia*, last modified August 1, 2015, https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/G%C3%B6teborgs_Naturhistoriska_museum.
- 3 Tacita Dean, *Teignmouth Electron*, 2000, 16 mm colour film with optical sound, 7 min.; Tacita Dean, *Teignmouth Electron* (London: Book Works, 1999).
- 4 Peter Ruyffelaere, ed., *One&By Luc Tuymans* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2013), 172.
- 5 From a monument of Kaspar Hauser erected in 1833 in Ansbach, Bavaria. "Kaspar Hauser," *Wikipedia*, last modified May 18, 2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaspar_Hauser. See also "Kaspar-Hauser-Denkmal," *Statues—Hither & Thither*, <http://www.vanderkrogt.net/statues/object.php?webpage=ST&record=deby263>.
- 6 Herman Melville, *Bartleby the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street* (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House Publishing, 2004), 7.
- 7 Robin van Helsum, quoted in Fiona Govan, "Photograph Released of Berlin 'Forest Boy' Nine Months After He Walked Out of Woods," *Telegraph*, June 12, 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/germany/9327712/Photograph-released-of-Berlin-forest-boy-nine-months-after-he-walked-out-of-woods.html>.
- 8 Stan Douglas, interview by Diana Thater, in *Stan Douglas* (London: Phaidon, 1998), 18.
- 9 Rasmus R. Streith and Louise Waite, *Inte alls bara en bakgrund* [Not at all simply a background], Gallery Sho, Falköping, Sweden, June 7–28, 2014.
- 10 Hal Foster, "The Art of the Missing Part." in *Robert Gober*, ed. Russell Ferguson (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1997), 66.



Camera performing introspection, Canon 5ds, Canon MP-E 65/2,8 1–5x Macro Photo, 2015. Inkjet print. 100 cm in diameter. Joakim Sandqvist

Summer Notes on Winter Impressions

I sat down on a train leaving the town where I grew up, and set off for Stockholm, from where I took a ship to Helsinki, and then continued eastwards by train. On the train that carried me across Russia, I began to read Dostoevsky's travel notes "Winter Notes on Summer Impressions." It covers his first trip by train to Europe, during the summer of 1862, one hundred and fifty years before I made my journey. It struck me that my journey was similar to his, except that I was travelling in the opposite direction, and in wintertime, instead of in the summer.

There was an odd symmetry here; through literature, I was making a journey through both time and space, which was the opposite of my actual movements through physical reality. Experiencing Russia while simultaneously looking back on the Europe of a century and a half ago was a strange sensation. Time seemed neither linear nor cyclical; it was more like a ridged surface, on which one point that's in contact with another would have been some distance away if the surface were a flat plane. I thought of the age in which Dostoevsky made his journey, and of all the time that had passed since then—all the things I'd only ever been able to read about. The world I live in is different to his, but his descriptions of Europe seemed eerily familiar to me. Perhaps it was just a sense of recognition brought about by the psychologically insightful description he gave of the sensation of being alone on a train in a foreign country.
—Personal note,
written in the summer of 2015

Prologue

Because my own entry point into art was mainly through media such as photography and video, I was confronted with what is referred to as conceptual art at an early stage. What really caught my interest was Art as Idea, or rather, as the materialisation of ideas: the way that my thoughts could be turned into a material object in the world, which would then in turn provide me with new knowledge of my idea, and of the world. This is an empirical approach that resembles that of the natural sciences, but differs in the sense that my own studies are not of a world independent of myself, but of a world that I myself have shaped. Whether the same is actually also true of science is a question I will not attempt to answer here. However, I will try to answer the question of whether the notion of conceptual art, and some of its stated core ideas, have any relevance to my own art, as well as attempt to describe the implications of these ideas in more general terms.

Rematerialisation

In 1968, Lucy Lippard and John Chandler published an article in which they describe a dematerialisation that was underway in the visual arts.¹ That same year, they

received a response from Art & Language that points out that almost all of the artworks mentioned in their article are objects, and that they all possess some kind of a material aspect. Art & Language uses physics to describe how matter is actually a particular form of energy, and that the only way in which a dematerialisation could truly occur would be if matter were converted into radiation. This follows from the fact that this is the only form in which energy can exist other than as material. All of this is in accordance with the first law of thermodynamics, which states that energy cannot be created or destroyed. The whole argument builds towards the ironic statement that art that utilises energy in the form of radiation would be something akin to speaking of a formless form. Towards the end of their response, they still suggest that certain artworks are immaterial, but that they are never made immaterial; they start out that way. The artworks in question are those that consist of typed text on paper. This is because aesthetic philosophy has mainly concerned itself with content, and when a work consists of typed paper, you read the art rather than view it. Thus, the material aspect has no significance.²

This constant preoccupation with the immaterial is typical of



Pocket painting November, Malmö Sweden, A.P.C. 98% polyurethane/polyurethane Laver separement/Wash separately, Laver a l'envers/Turn inside out, Made in Macau, 2014.
Paper. 21 x 29,7 cm, box: 22,9 x 32,4 cm. Joakim Sandqvist



Pocket painting December, Malmö Sweden, Acne Ace Raw 32/32 CA39815/RN131738 Made in Albania/Fabrique en Albanie 98% baumwolle/cotton/coton 2% elastan/elastan/elastane, 2013. Paper. 21 x 29,7 cm, box: 22,9 x 32,4 cm. Joakim Sandqvist



Pocket painting October, London England, Essex England, A.P.C. 98% polyurethane/polyurethane, Laver separement/Wash separetely, Laver a l'envers/Turn inside out, Made in Macau, 2015. Paper. 21 x 29,7 cm, box: 22,9 x 32,4 cm. Joakim Sandqvist



Pocket painting October, London England, Essex England, A.P.C. 98% polyurethane/polyurethane, Laver separement/Wash separetely, Laver a l'envers/Turn inside out, Made in Macau, 2015. Paper. 21 x 29,7 cm, box: 22,9 x 32,4 cm. Joakim Sandqvist

many of the early conceptual artists, several of whom were inspired by the philosophy of language and logic. The material structure of the artwork is treated as a regular structure, which communicates a form that is psychological in nature. In this way, the materials can be replaced as long as the rules that regulate the representation are not altered, and so the materials are thought to have no real meaning of their own. This way of regarding representation is similar to that of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, who is considered to be the founder of structuralism. Contemporary linguists tend to accept the observation that the material form of a sign can give rise to its own set of connotations. As early as 1929, Valentin Volosinov published *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, which presented a materialist critique of Saussure's theory of the sign. For Volosinov, a sign is a (particular) material object, which has a meaning that goes beyond its given meaning (particularity): "A sign does not simply exist as a part of a reality—it reflects and refracts another reality."³ It's worth noting that he doesn't introduce any hierarchy that separates the real from the less real. Linguistic discourse has paid more and more attention to the material aspect of the sign ever since Volosinov presented his critique of Saussure, and from the 1970s onwards, this perspective has won general acceptance.⁴ To me, the idea of an immaterial artwork seems almost paradigmatic. In my practice, the material aspect of the artwork is inseparable from the idea. The cognitive encounter with the art object, or with objects in general, is fundamental to my work. This encounter consists of regular linguistic structures that are stretched to a breaking point, at which they reveal themselves as form. To me, what is revealed isn't something entirely psychological; it's real in a material sense as well. I simply do not separate the two in any hierarchical sense.

Art & Language's response to Lippard and Chandler's article is strange because of the way that it incorporates several separate discourses, but I agree with everything it states until the reversal towards the end. The strangest part is that they use an empirical discipline to critique idealism, before implicitly claiming that no such critique is possible.

Within economic discourse, dematerialisation denotes a state in which an economy has reduced its material needs in relation to the performance of various economic functions in society. In this sense, you could say that art did undergo a period of dematerialisation. According to Lippard and Chandler, this was a way for conceptual artists to avoid the market altogether. But the result was rather the production of easily portable art that was well adapted to the conditions of the global art market. Looking back, conceptual artists' intention to escape the market seems rather naive. Their negation of the material aspect of the objects brings about an almost hypercapitalistic idealism, in that the means of production are completely ignored.

Context—Reference— Performativity—Content

"My art is only a unit which is functioning within a larger framework (the concept 'art') and the concept art is a concept which has a particular meaning at a particular time but which exists only as an idea used by living artists and which ultimately exists only as information."

—Joseph Kosuth, in the catalogue for the exhibition *Information* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1970

All is context—the artwork acquires its meaning through the context in which it exists. The time, the site, the institution, the persona of the artist, art history, the place of production, and so on. All of these things are what gives an artwork its meaning. Certain

of these contexts are more robust than others. The time changes quickly, and all that remains is the year that dates the work on the museum label. The site changes whenever the work is relocated and exhibited somewhere else. It's still being exhibited in an art institution, which is part of an art world, but it's not in the same specific institution. The persona of an artist can change over the course of a lifetime, but is definitively altered when the artist dies, as the work will then have been created by a deceased artist. Art history is a reasonably robust context, although it too undergoes constant change. When you discuss where the artwork was produced, you're dealing with an entirely different kind of context, one that is never present when the artwork is presented. Daniel Buren discusses this in his text on the role of the studio. To Buren's mind, something is lost when the artwork is removed from the studio.⁵ The way I see it, however, this removal was always anticipated by and present in the intention of the artist. The place where the creation takes place is an absent context, or a context that is no longer present. Every context becomes absent sooner or later, whether it be the artist who created the work, the time it was created in, the institution that the work is related to, the art world that the artist belonged to, the exhibition history of the work, and so on.

I differentiate between two performative functions of a work of art: the artwork as a performing agent, and the absent performativity of the artist's process. Each of these performative functions has its own context, but are at the same time dependent on one another. The artwork acts as a theatrical figure in the exhibition space, which simultaneously creates its own scenography. In this way, the artwork produces a kind of theatrical context. The artist constructs this kind of context by using references to frame the work within a certain discourse. Viewers can suspend their

disbelief to allow a reading of the work based on the suggested discourse, or they can be critical of the scenographic construction, to see the work within a broader context.

The artwork is also an inscription of performativity in relation to the context of the world that gave rise to it. By this I'm not referring to the studio, like Buren; I'm discussing something more general: the time and place in which the artwork was created. At the same time, the artwork emerges as something singular, the original context of which is unsurvivable, lost to the passage of time.

Any attempt to track down this performativity and context constitutes an interpretation of the piece, but also a creation of it: singularly in part, as a subject, but also objectively, because the interpretation occurs through a historically produced

context, which is also susceptible to being altered through different readings. This doesn't necessarily imply that the artwork is relativised to the point where it could be anything; it's negotiable, but not entirely relative. Something that is hidden always has the potential to be brought to light, and the factual aspects of the artwork cannot be completely disregarded.

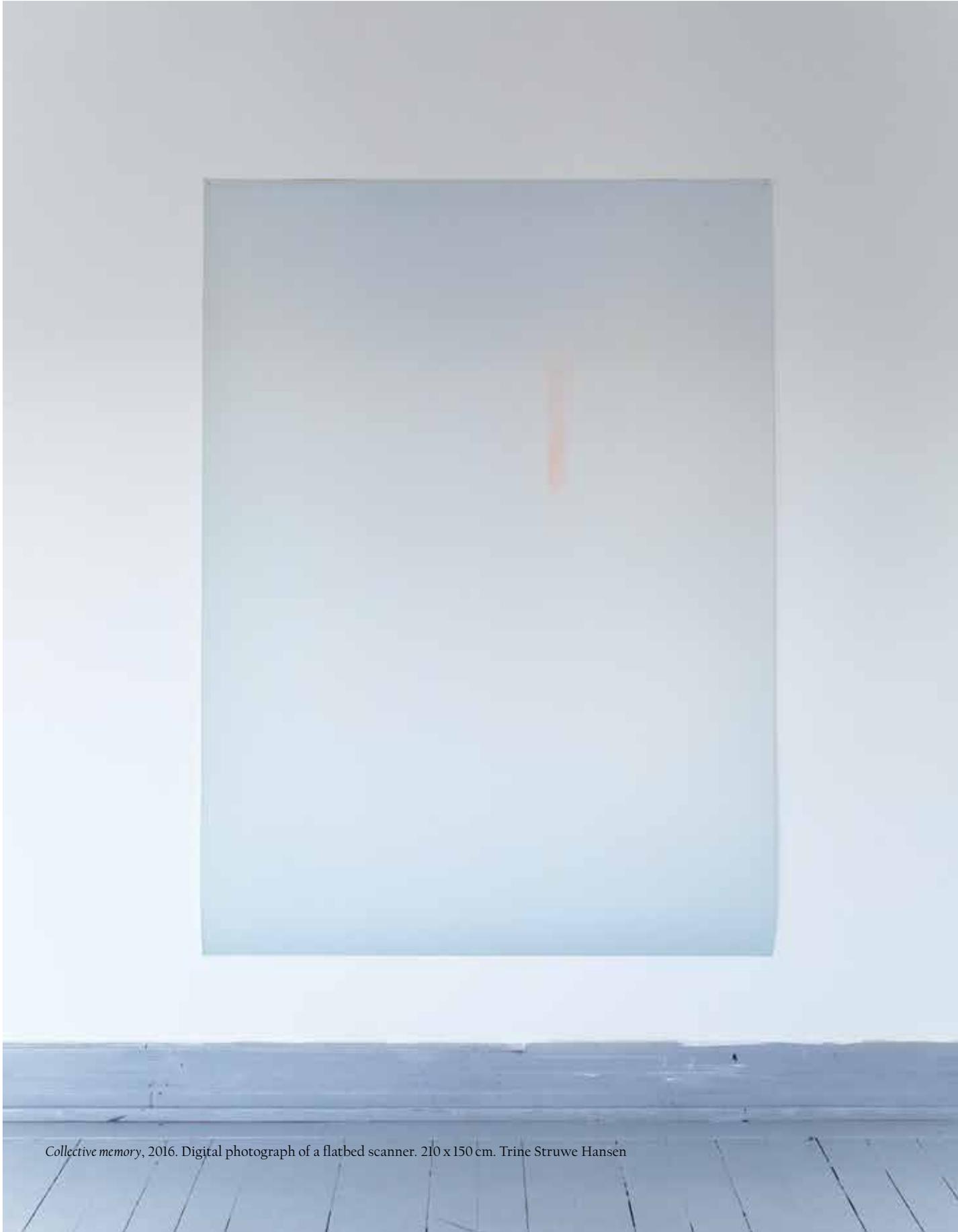
Here, I've reached a point that contradicts the one I set out with: the notion that context is all, as Kosuth suggested. This occurred through a shift from context as something present to inscription. This connection between context and inscription is fundamental to the artwork, and is also present in the artist's process. Something is made, and then studied. In my own process, I oscillate between idea, making, looking, and reacting. I make decisions based on

an understanding of context that could never be complete.

The intention of the artist is never irrelevant anyway; it's a part of the context that is created around the work. In a way, it's essential to the work, in that by definition, the intention that the work be a work of art must be fulfilled in order for it to be art in the first place.

The note I made about my train travel through Russia reminds me of the way I view a work of art. The work acts like a kind of corrugation of a surface, a folding and refolding. Connections are produced between the various parts of the surface that are extended in time. This is caused by external forces, but is an internal process that is reflected in the surface.

- 1 Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art," in *Skriftserien Kairos nummer 11: Konceptkonst*, trans. Kim West (Spindulys: Raster Förlag, 2006).
- 2 Art & Language, "Letter to Lucy R. Lippard and John Chandler Concerning the Article 'The Dematerialization of Art' (1968)," in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*, ed. Peter Selz and Kristine Stiles (London: University of California Press, 1996), 850.
- 3 V.N. Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I.R. Titunik (London: Harvard Press, 1986), 58, 10.
- 4 Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics: The Basics* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 55.
- 5 Daniel Buren, "Ateljéns funktion," in *Skriftserien Kairos nummer 11: Konceptkonst*.



Collective memory, 2016. Digital photograph of a flatbed scanner. 210 x 150 cm. Trine Struwe Hansen



From left: *Blå tid, blått sted* (Marts 2016, Malmö), 2016. Cyanotype and rain on paper. 47 x 35 cm (92 pages). Trine Struwe Hansen
Blå tid, blått sted (November 2015, New York City), 2015. Cyanotype and blue skies on paper. 47 x 35 cm (104 pages). Trine Struwe Hansen
Installation view, Annual exhibition, Malmö Art Academy, 2016. Trine Struwe Hansen

EVERYTHING IS FALLING

LIGHTNESS—WEIGHT (wanting to give something a body)

Lightness exists: air, electricity, dreams, data, speech, sound, thought, temperature, time.

Weight exists: material, matter, body, surface, structure, architecture, texture, things.

In the sixth century before Christ, Parmenides described how the world can be divided into pairs of opposition: light/darkness, warmth/cold, fineness/coarseness, lightness/weight.¹

You can miss the reassuring weight of another body on top of yours: this movement downwards, this pull towards the ground. The thought of having the air pressed out of your lungs and, in this way, becoming a body consisting of less air and more body: a compression of mass.

I know that I have a body and that my body has a weight. Nonetheless, I am afraid of vanishing into thin air. I am afraid that my body will dissolve itself, turn into nothing—the fear of disappearing.

LIGHT
(waves between us)

“Assuming that beauty is the distribution of light in the fashion most congenial to one’s retina, a tear is an acknowledgement of the retina’s, as well as the tear’s, failure to retain beauty. On the whole, love comes with the speed of light; separation, with that of sound.”²

Photo: light
Graphy: drawing/writing

Light can be described as electromagnetic radiation within a certain portion of the electromagnetic spectrum. Light waves: between us, around us—visible, invisible. We bathe in the light, let it wash over our bodies. Tissue absorbing, recording. Our bodies slowly developing under the sun: skin is darkened, hair is bleached.

The eye absorbs light, dilates, constricts, much like the aperture

of a camera. Rays of light pass through the eye: cornea, iris, retina. In this intersection between light and body, the world folds itself out, comes into being: form, colour, movement.

My eyes are blue when I look at myself in the mirror, but I have read somewhere on the Internet that this notion of colour exists in my consciousness alone: it is created by a complex synergy between the eye’s sensory cells and my brain. You do not see colour the same way I do. Accordingly, one might start to question everything.

TACET

()

I am trying to create a space where light can assume definite form, become inscribed within the material, with as minimal an influence from

my hands as possible. I am interested in providing the light with a framework within which it will come to unfold itself, somewhere between the parentheses.

In 1952, John Cage composed a piece of music that consists of three movements of sustained pause, with a total duration of four minutes and thirty-three seconds. The silence, or more correctly, the absence of intentionalised sound, becomes a hypersensitive, charged material, amplifying everything around it. The composition is a frame, an open space of time, where the chance sound can register its presence, as it will.

In a footnote to *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Sigmund Freud reminds us that “dreams are nothing other than a particular form of thinking, made possible by the conditions of sleep.”³

SEDIMENT

(*that which is left behind*)

In sedimentology, distinctions are made between: aeolian sediment (wind deposits), marine sediment (ocean deposits), fluvial sediment (river deposits), lacustrine sediment (lake deposits), glacial sediment (moraine deposits), and chemical sediment (salt deposits).⁴

Sediments can be described as material left behind after transportation. A settling of matter: that which remains after a movement has taken place.

“One’s mind and the earth are in a constant state of erosion, mental rivers wear away abstract banks, brain waves undermine cliffs of thought, ideas decompose into stones of unknowing, and conceptual crystallizations break apart into deposits of gritty reason.”⁵

Everything around me is in motion: the sky is one long, gliding movement across, water vapour condenses and dissolves: rain falls. Oceans expand, coasts recede, cities awaken. Asphalt

breathes: yielding, stretching in the sun. My own body also, always in motion. I turn over in my sleep.

I am interested in the movement that has settled: a foray of incident light embedded in a sensitive material, the body that has left a trail. An exchange of material, a transference. The photograph, the lightdrawing, is proof that the movement has taken place and is simultaneously the movement itself: a mirroring. The movement exists by virtue of the photograph and the photograph exists by virtue of the movement: they cannot be separated from each other.⁶

NEARNESS—DISTANCE

(*empty space*)

I feel more closely connected to other people when it rains. Water conducts electricity and warmth. Energy transfers, moist auras: threads extended between us.

We are lying beside each other. Between two bodies, there is an empty space, which you can try to diminish but which you can never completely remove: between any two points in space, there is always a third point.

“Does this mean that everything is infinitely connected? Or does this mean that nothing ever touches anything else, unless it is the same?”⁷

Nina Canell’s sculptural investigations insist upon an alertness that is conditional on presence: a heightening of the oxygen level in the room or the sensation of a radio frequency that is just out of earshot.⁸ I am searching for this particular type of presence: the attention that can be found here. I am trying, through my work, to develop a form of heightened sensibility towards my surroundings. Repeating the same movement over and over again: insistence, repetition, ritual. At some point in time, this

becomes a form of concentration—an oscillation between two points.

If I place myself on the floor, under the south-facing windowsill of my apartment, my computer picks up the upstairs neighbour’s Wi-Fi. There is a strange intimacy in this: stealthily sharing an Internet connection with someone you have never met.

COLLECTION

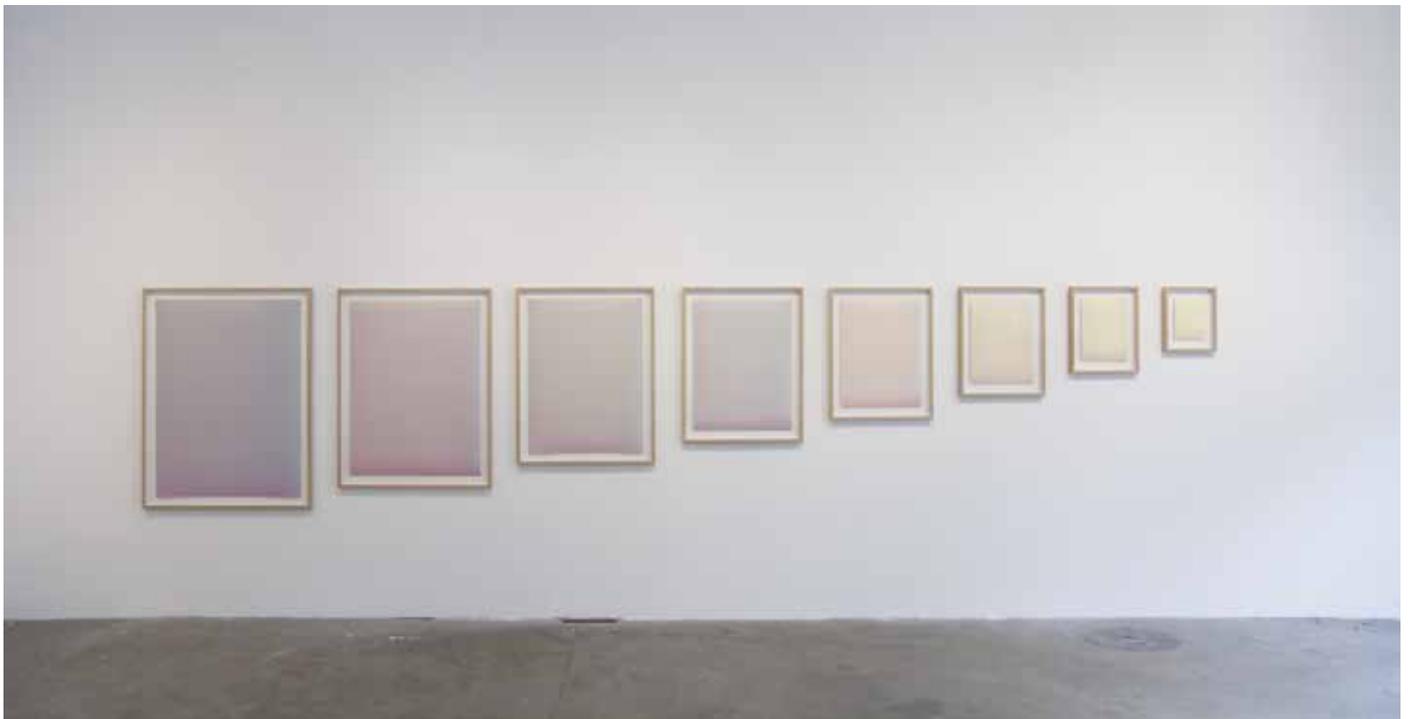
(*blue time, blue place*)

Repetition: every day, over the course of several weeks, I find myself on the roof, far above the city. I am working under the sun and the blue sky. Large sheets of heavy paper, which I have prepared the night before with photosensitive emulsion, are being exposed, turned, exposed again, rinsed, dried. A movement, a rhythm, a kind of ritual. I am registering light and blue skies: I am collecting.

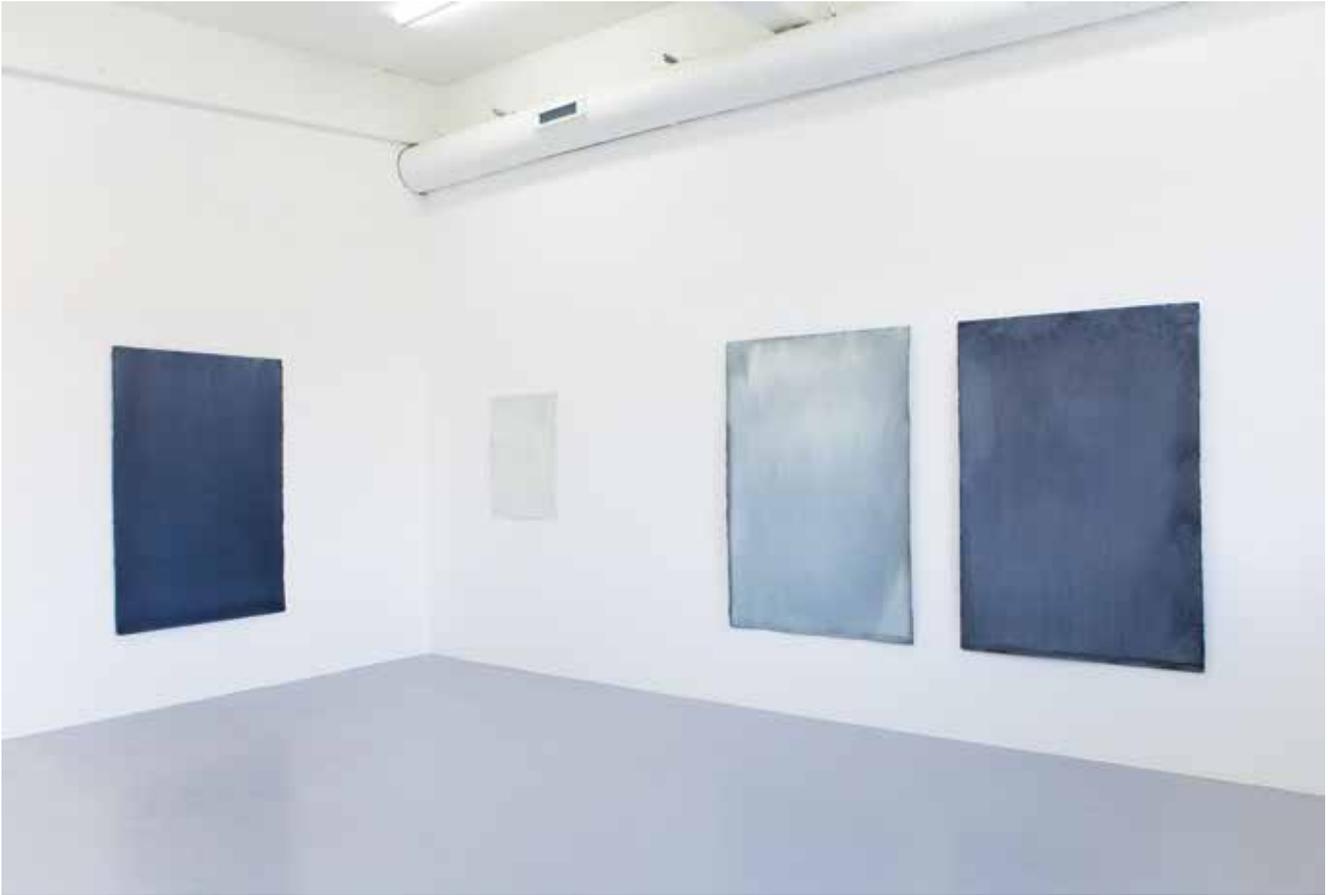
“I’m fascinated by paper: it’s a line and when you turn it, a sheet. And by how when it’s piled up, it becomes a stack, which fills space but is still not a thing. When it gets painted or printed on, it becomes a picture, but when it’s bound together with other pieces on one side, it’s a book.”⁹

The book has a size, a materiality, and a weight. The body assumes a certain posture when reading. The book is opened, leafed through, moved. All that is involved in turning a leaf serves to integrate the hand’s movements. There is a physical memory in this.

Per Kirkeby’s small, square-shaped artist book, *Blå tid*, from 1968, consists of ninety-four cyan blue pages—with the front page and back page only slightly heavier than what one might ordinarily describe as the text body. No title, no language. Colour, tempo, time. Or a lack of time, an indifference to time, which precisely underlines it, makes it noticeable. Like when you descend a flight of stairs, and the steps are



Slowly moving body of light (100%–600%), 2015. Digital enlargements of light sensitive paper. Dimensions variable. Trine Struwe Hansen



02/03/2016, *Malmö (I–III)*, 2016. Cyanotype and rain on paper. 152 x 102 cm. 23/11/2015, *New York*, 2015. Cyanotype and rain on paper. 77 x 57 cm. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM Gallery, 2016. Trine Struwe Hansen



Blå tid, blått sted (detail), 2015. Cyanotype and blue skies on paper. 47 x 35 cm (104 pages). Trine Struwe Hansen

too low or too deep, wrong somehow—how this gives rise to an awareness in your body and you start to move differently.

My own blue photographs, I fold them down the middle. I flatten them, place them under pressure and bind them together at one side, with blue thread. The book comes into being; it is a collection, an attempt at appropriation.¹⁰

Lightdrawings, sky blue recordings. Registrations of blue time at a blue place: twelve days in November, under a changing blue sky, on a strange roof, in a strange city.

BLUE (*celeste*)

Different nuances of blue exist: azure, indigo, Persian, cerulean. Blue sky, blue body, celestial body. Blue marks on the knees, blue fine-meshed nets below the eyes. How the gills of a mushroom turn this brownish blue when you press on them a little too hard. I awake beneath one nuanced shade of blue sky and go to bed beneath another. The blue hours, before morning becomes morning and before night becomes night—a movement of blue across, from east to west, imperceptible shift.

The cyanotype (the blueprint) is an early photographic process that produces a Prussian blue photograph. The photosensitive solution arises when the two chemicals ammonium

iron (III) citrate and potassium ferricyanide are combined. The blue colour is developed in sunlight and fixed in water. The cyanotype becomes bleached by the sun, but regains its colour in the dark—breathing this way, Prussian blue lungs.

The sky is blue because sunlight is scattered by the molecules in the atmosphere and the colour that is scattered the most is the blue colour.

In 1843, Anna Atkins self-published the first photographic reference work: *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions*. Blue, luminous photograms of plant parts, collected, dried. Atkins has been described as one of the first female photographers.

Blue sky becomes blue sea and blue sea becomes blue sky: a constant exchange. Between these two blue, vast spaces, there is the horizon: right in between, dividing and connecting, but nothing in itself.

EVERYTHING IS FALLING (*looking for one's centre of gravity*)

Gravitational force can be described as the boundless and interminable attraction that exists between all objects of mass, regardless of how far away they happen to be positioned from each other. The sun, the moon, and the stars are all pulling on us, and we are pulling on them: constant exchanges of energy between celestial bodies.

Gravitational force is the reason why everything is falling. The earth's force of attraction is greater than the universe's because it is closer to us—our bodies are attached to the earth, the earth is fastened to its own orbital path around the sun, and the moon circles around us all the while. Gravitational force pulls us in towards the centre of the earth—this is how we keep our feet on the ground and this is how the body gets its sense of direction: head up, feet down.

A centre of gravity is the imaginary point of balance inside a body, at which the body's weight appears to be concentrated, and around which the body's mass is equally apportioned. A standing person's centre of gravity lies roughly in the middle of the body, in the vicinity of the navel. A centre of gravity can also be displaced to a point outside of the body itself. For a hat, the centre of gravity lies inside the hollow of the hat: in a void.

I shift my weight from one foot to the other, changing my posture: constant displacements of my centre of gravity. Balancing, liquid core of weight that is moving in and out of my body.

The idea of a centre of gravity that balances somewhere just above, just below, right alongside of—just out of reach. Floating somewhere in front of you, behind you. The idea of a body that anchors its point of departure in a void.

1 Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, trans. Michael Henry Heim (New York: Harper and Row, 2004), 5.

2 Joseph Brodsky, *Watermark* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1992), 109.

3 Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith, "Small Gestures, High Voltage," in *Evaporation Essays* (Berlin: Distanz, 2010), 39.

4 Gyldendals leksikon, s.v. "Afløjring," http://denstoredanske.dk/It_teknik_og_naturvidenskab/Geologi_og_kartografi/Sedimentologi/afløjring.

5 Robert Smithson, "A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects (1968)," in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 100.

6 Roland Barthes, *Det lyse kammer—Bemærkninger om fotografiet*, trans. Karen Nicolajsen (Copenhagen: Forlaget Politisk Revy, 1983), 14.

7 Amalie Smith, *Eyes Touching, Fingers Seeing*, 2015, HD video, 15 min. loop.

8 Nina Canell, *Free-Space Path Loss*, Lunds Konsthall, Lund, November 29, 2014–January 25, 2015.

9 Tove Storch, "Det jeg ikke fik sagt inden månen gik for solen," Notes on Location, <http://www.notesonlocation.dk>.

10 Susan Sontag, *Fotografi*, trans. Ole Vesterholt (Viborg: Fremad, 1985), 12.

“Drill a hole about a mile into the earth and drop a microphone to within a few feet of the bottom. Mount the amplifier in a very large empty room and adjust the volume to make audible any sounds that may come from the cavity.”

—Bruce Nauman¹

There's No Such Thing as an Empty Space

Characters

(All English characters to the mine)

JACK. A young man

MARY. A young woman

MR. BAX. An elderly man with gruff voice and rather a Johnsonian [stilted] manner of speech.

VOICES. A party of Welsh miners who say a few words and are heard singing off.

The Noises required include an explosion, the rush of water, footsteps and the sound of a pick. There must be an echo, to give the effect of the tunnel.

The scene is a gallery in a Welsh coal-mine.

DANGER

Lights out. An announcer tells the audience that the scene is a coal-mine.

MARY. [sharply] Hello! What's happened?

JACK. The lights have gone out!²

This is how the very first play ever written specifically for radio begins. The setting is most appropriate for the medium, as the listeners are limited to hearing, just like the characters in the play. The play is set in a coal mine where the lights have just gone out. A young couple has been separated from a group of visitors. They grope for each other in the dark. Suddenly, we hear a new voice: Bax, the miner.

The coal mine in Richard Hughes's *A Comedy of Danger* (1924), then, is presented to the reader solely through sound: the voices of the characters and the scenery of sounds, which consists of the characteristic noises of an explosion, footsteps, and running water. The coal mine's backdrop is created by the use of an echo filter, which simulates the bare walls of the mine gallery.

I listen to the play in my kitchen. The moment I close my eyes, the scene from the mine appears around me. My kitchen ceases to be my kitchen, and becomes the coal mine. When I open my eyes again, what I'm looking at is my kitchen, but I'm still hearing the coal mine.

The space around me is of particular interest to me. Often, what catches my interest will be the nature of sound within that space. In my practice, I often approach a piece through sound in the initial stages. I use sound as a tool to alter the experience of a space. To me, sounds are like sculptures that redefine the space in which they exist; if the space is empty, the sculpture is whatever fills it. That's the connection I see between sound and sculpture: they both fill up space. Any sound that's projected into a space will always be site-specific, in some way or other. It interacts with its environment. This is a good match for my own practice, in which I seek to react to my immediate surroundings. The execution varies between

sound, sculpture, performance, and photography. But sound has an aspect that sets it apart from sculpture: its effects on space are temporary. It's obviously ephemeral.

The definition of a space has an equally elusive quality. Different kinds of spatiality exist. Where should we draw the line between one particular space and another? What cements a space, and what dissolves it? And where am I in all of this? Space can be understood in different ways. French author Georges Perec's attempt to define space in *Species of Spaces* ranges from the contents of a blank sheet of paper to the entire universe.³ The size of space is thus simultaneously gigantic and practically infinitesimal. But they exist side by side on the page in his book. Robert Smithson describes how the way we view a work of art is affected by its size, and by our distance to it: "Size determines an object, but scale determines art. A crack in the wall if viewed in terms of scale, not size, could be called the Grand Canyon. A room could be made to take on the immensity of the solar system."⁴

When Perec catalogues space, he moves from the small to the large. But on the sheet of paper, the stairwell he describes has the same dimensions as the entire land mass of France. The things he presents are afforded equal significance. When you attempt to measure and catalogue the details of space, you have to set the big picture aside; if you try to grasp the big picture, you'll be excluding the details instead.

David Weiss said the following about the piece *Suddenly This Overview* (1981/2006), one of the many works he created in collaboration with Peter Fischli: "The intention was to accumulate various important and unimportant events in the history of mankind."⁵ The piece consists of unfired clay figurines, which are all given the same amount of space on separate pedestals. Close up, they are individual events, but from a distance, they are "history."

In my work, I try to perceive space without distinguishing between minor details and broad contexts.



Untitled (stress), 2016. Concrete roadblock, beeswax, snail dynamite. 50 x 40 x 100 cm. Simon Söder



*“With a sigh the lifts begin to rise
in high blocks delicate as porcelain.
It will be a hot day out on the asphalt.
The traffic signs have drooping eyelids.”*
—Tomas Tranströmer⁶

The sound begins with activity, with motion. A triggering quake, which causes the surrounding matter to vibrate with the same frequency, while the sound waves spread outwards from point of origin. The waves flow through the air, hitting the membrane inside the ear, which in turn passes the information on to the brain. Sound is created by motion, transmitted by motion, and experienced through motion. This means that if there is sound in a space, the space is in motion. Or rather, it means that I'm experiencing the space as being in motion. It seems to me that I'm perceiving the activities of the space through the hum of the fluorescent lights, the squeaking of the floor, and the ticking of the clock on the wall. The space is animated by the experience of the sound.

By recording this sound, I can examine its physical characteristics more closely. The way that sound is recorded is similar to the way that the human ear registers sound, but it has the technological advantage of allowing the sound to be stored in a memory bank. The sound waves within the space reach a membrane, which records the ensuing motion onto a memory, like a seismograph. To play the sound back, all you need to do is reverse the process.

The simplicity of modifying sound appeals to me. I enjoy the feeling of being able to manipulate it like a piece of clay, and then releasing it once more. I like controlling the material, and the way that something as elusive as sound can be re-engineered to behave differently. The way it can be speeded up or slowed down. Have its pitch raised or lowered. Be cut up into tiny fragments, and then pieced back together. You can play this stored information back into space at any time. However many times you like, without it ever getting stuck inside that space.

*[Voices at a distance, cars passing by,
footsteps, and the rhythmical brush of
the microphone against my jacket]*
VOICE: *Sound is never static; it's constantly
in dialogue with the space that surrounds
it. It's interwoven with the environment
in which it occurs, but it's also separable from
that environment. Pressing “Rec”
and recording in no particular direction is
like scanning the room for any irregularity
that reveals itself.*

The sentences above come from a recording I made on my mobile phone, a brief voice memo that has since been saved in my computer's iTunes library. I often use the voice memo feature on my phone to take notes or make sketches. I record the sounds that occur around me. Then, when I have time, I listen to them, often after I've moved on to another location. The distance from the site makes it more audible. In context, the sounds disappear into the unfolding events and make up no more than a single part of the situation. Sometimes, my notes are actual spoken sentences, but more



Untitled (stress), 2016. Concrete roadblock, beeswax, snail dynamite. 50 x 40 x 100 cm. Simon Söder



often they are more like abstract vocal experiments.

Recording your voice is one thing, but hearing it played back again later is a strange experience. The natural way to hear your own voice is to hear it as it passes through the short distance from your throat, through the bone, and into your ear. The voice never leaves the body. Once it's left my body, my voice becomes something else. The voice in the recordings suddenly feels very private and secretive, as though it were only meant to be heard behind closed doors. That's where the recordings usually remain, too, in a personal archive of voice memo notes.

Susan Philipsz's works are often based on her own voice. The bare voice feels eerily familiar as it echoes from a PA system in a supermarket, or from underneath a bridge. Here's what she has to say about this phenomenon: "Experiencing a lone, disembodied voice in a public setting

can produce a strange experience among an unsuspecting audience, like feeling alone in a crowd."⁷

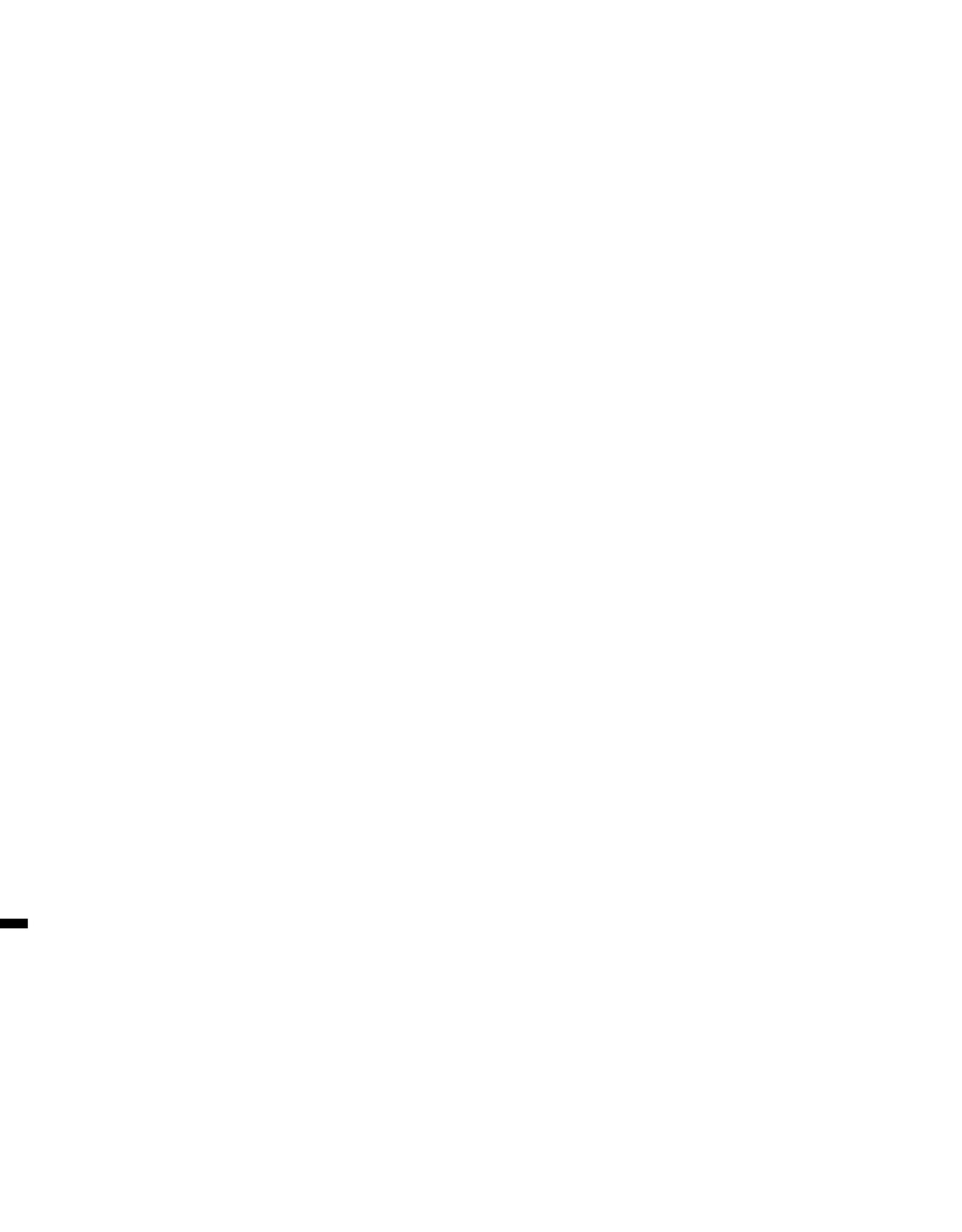
I can identify with Philipsz's relation to sound as an artistic medium. She studied sculpture at first, and then became interested in exploring the way that sculpture relates to sound. My interest in sound and sculpture is quite similar, although my journey took the opposite direction: I started out studying music. My interest in creating art found another path through the visual arts, but my interest in music remains, as does my interest in sound, and in creating sounds that aren't simply music. My music studies also taught me to create through instructions. Through notation. Through the structuring of events in time. The black dots on a sheet of music that dictate how something is to be performed, like commands in a computer. Zeros and ones. Black and white. Binary actions intended to give structure to

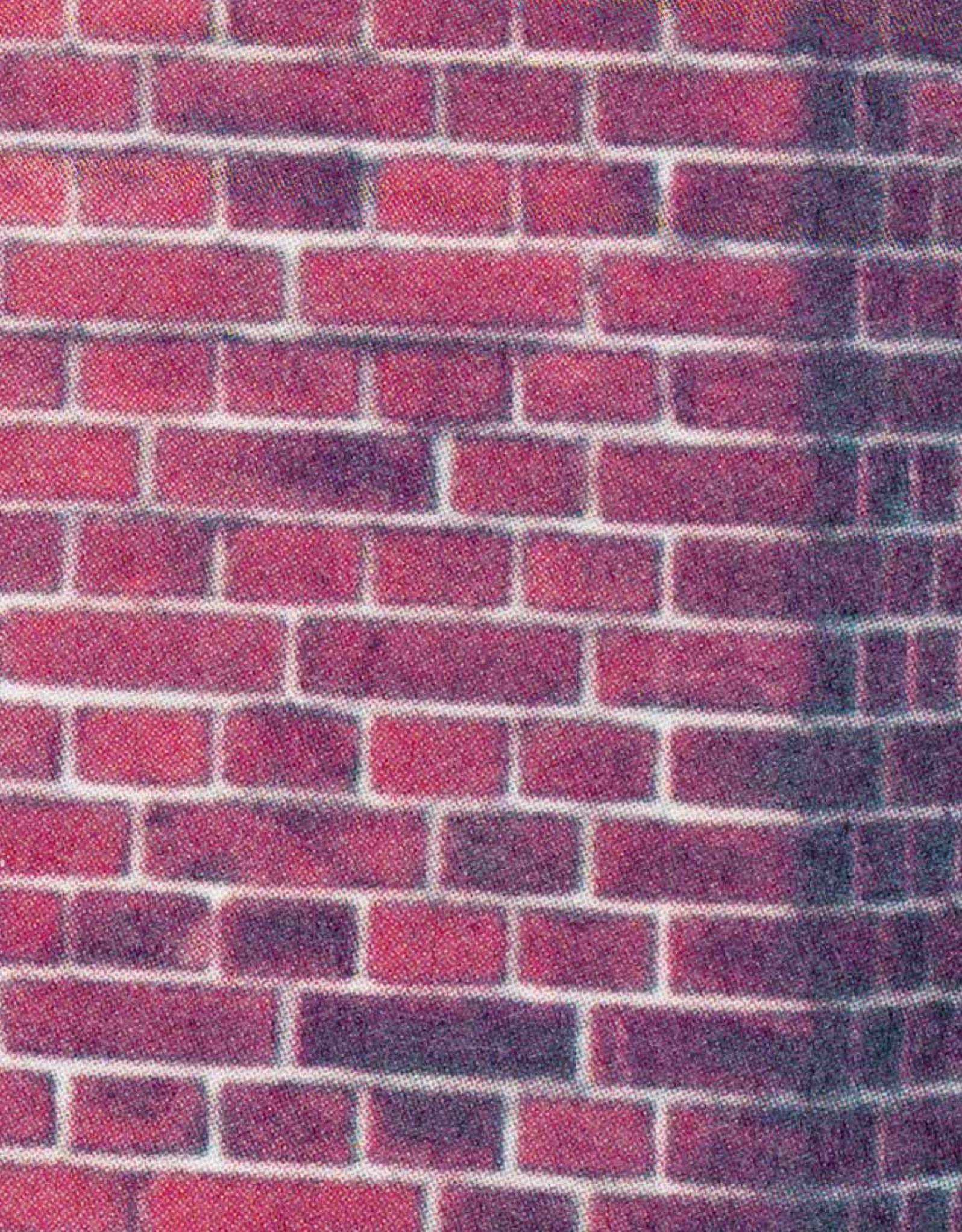
sound. A translation from experience into a written language, and vice versa.

As a percussionist, I often felt rather alienated from the world of music notation. My parts were never written out as beautiful harmonies or melancholic scales. They were limited to rhythm and dynamics. The sheets felt empty. I never really cared much about those little dots while I played anyway, but I still wanted to try to see past them. I wanted to find whatever existed in all that white space around them.

Perhaps that's what I'm still doing: exploring the spaces between the black markings on a sheet of music. As John Cage once said: "There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot."⁸

1 Bruce Nauman, *Please Pay Attention Please: Bruce Nauman's Words* (Boston: MIT Press, 2005), 50.
2 Richard Hughes, *A Comedy of Danger*, in *Plays* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1928), 175.
3 Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces*, rev. ed., ed. and trans. John Sturrock (London: Penguin, 1999).
4 Robert Smithson, "The Spiral Jetty (1972)," in *The Collected Writings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 147.
5 David Weiss, quoted in "Fischli & Weiss: Exhibition Room Guide, Room 3," Tate, 2006, <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/fischli-weiss/fischli-weiss-room-guide-room-1/fischli-weiss>.
6 Tomas Tranströmer, "Crest," in *New Collected Poems*, trans. Robin Fulton (Hexham: Bloodaxe Books, 2011), 102.
7 Susan Philipsz, quoted in "Susan Philipsz: We Shall Be All," Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 2011, <https://mcacheicago.org/Exhibitions/2011/Susan-Philipsz-We-Shall-Be-All>.
8 John Cage, *Silence* (Hanover: University of New England, 1973), 8.







PhD Candidates

Rosa Barba
Matthew Buckingham
Alejandro Cesarco
Marion von Osten
Lea Porsager
Andrea Ray
Imogen Stidworthy



Rosa Barba

A Fictional Library

■ A lexicon is supposed to be an explanation of words that may have an unknown meaning. Most of the ones elected here are quite simple and straightforward, so why include them in such a list? They were chosen because they allow for a way into thinking about my work. Some words that could help understand my practice. In this sense, each of them gains in this context a very distinct definition, which cannot be compared to one found in an ordinary dictionary. It has thus become a fictional lexicon, somewhat anarchic, speculative, and subjective.

Thinking through my installations, I continue my exploration of film and its capacity to be simultaneously an immaterial medium that

carries information and a physical material with sculptural properties. The category of film is expanded and abstracted beyond the literal components of the celluloid strip, the projector through which it passes, and the image projected onto a screen. Each component becomes a starting point for artworks that expand on the idea of film as well as explore its intrinsic attributes. Projectors mutate into new mechanical objects that generate information in real time; they turn on themselves and bend the conventions of cinema to the requirements, possibilities, or limitations of their new forms.

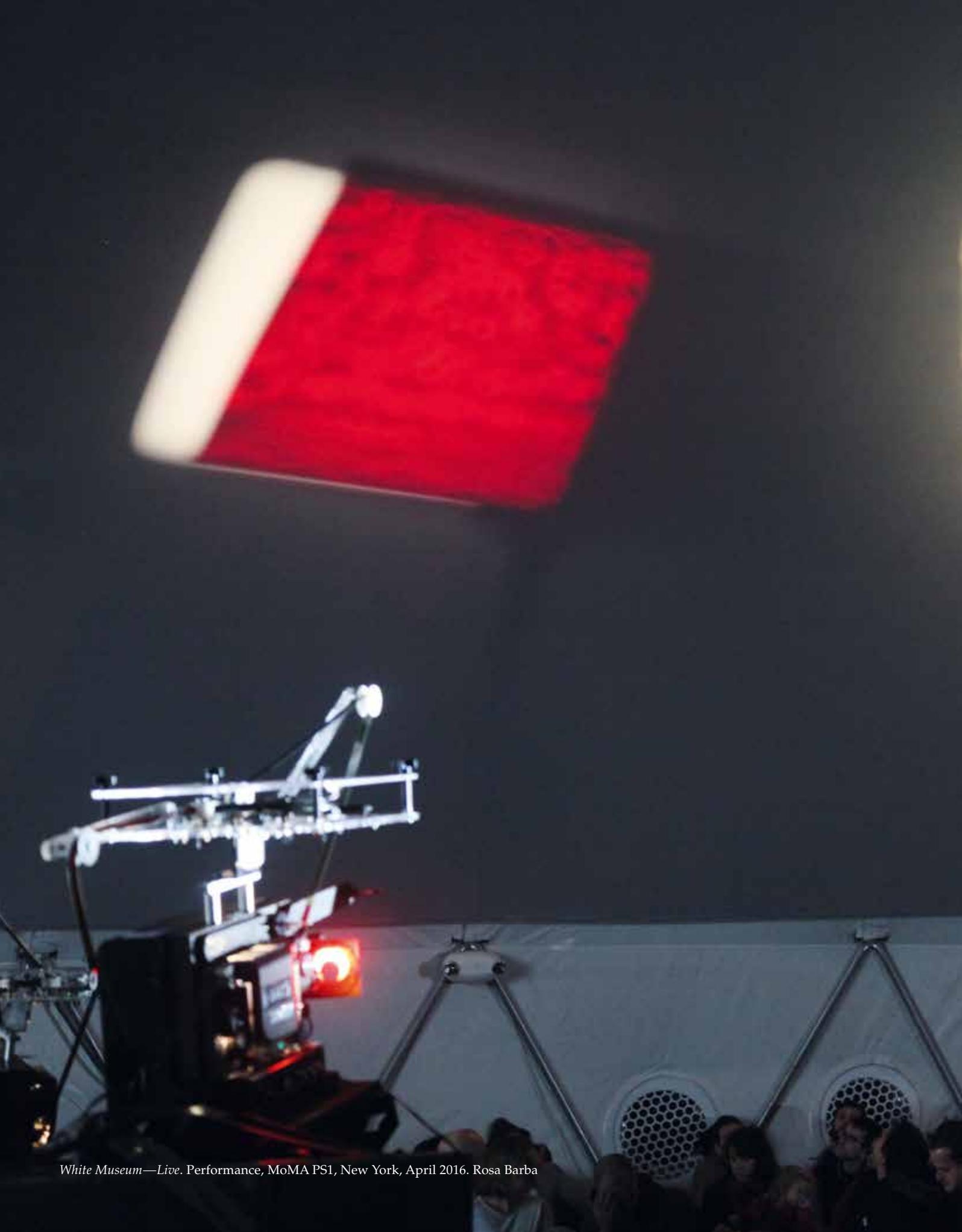
—Rosa Barba on her PhD project,
A Fictional Library

BIO Rosa Barba studied at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne and has, since spring 2013, been a PhD candidate in Fine Arts at the Malmö Art Academy. Barba has had residencies at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam; the Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas; Iaspis, Stockholm; and Artpace, San Antonio, to name a few.

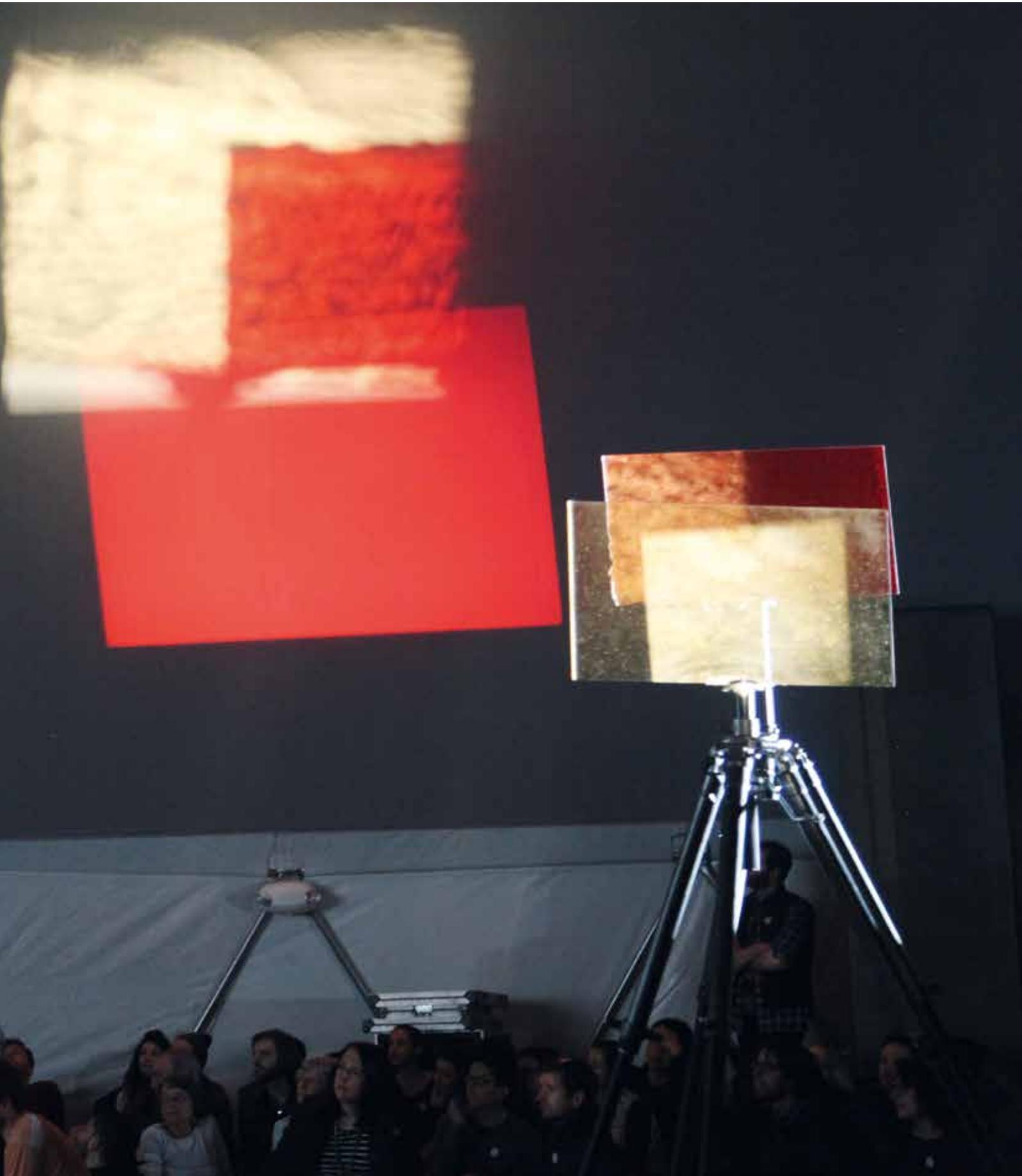
Recent solo shows include EMPAC, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, US, 2015; MIT List Visual Art Center, Cambridge, US, 2015; Albertinum, Dresden, 2015; CAC Vilnius, Lithuania, 2014; Artpace, San Antonio, 2014; Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK, 2013; Bergen Kunsthall, 2013; Cornerhouse, Manchester, 2013; MUSAC, León, Spain, 2013; Jeu de Paume, Paris, 2012; Kunsthaus Zürich, 2012; Marfa Book Co., Marfa, US, 2012; Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, 2012; Fondazione Galleria Civica-Center of Research on Contemporary Art, Trento, and MART Museum, Rovereto, Italy, 2011; Kunstverein Braunschweig, Germany, 2011; Tate Modern, London, 2010; Centre international d'art et du paysage de l'île de Vassivière, France, 2010; and Center for Contemporary Arts, Tel Aviv, 2010.

Recent group shows include 56th Venice Biennale, 2015; Hong Kong Art Centre, 2015; 8th Berlin Biennale, 2014; MASS MoCA, North Adams, US, 2015; Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 2014; Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz, 2014; 19th Biennale of Sydney, 2014; International Biennial of Contemporary Art of Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, 2014; International Triennial of New Media Art Beijing, 2014; La Cinémathèque française, Paris, 2013; WIELS, Brussels, 2013; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, 2010; MAXXI Museum, Rome, 2010; Liverpool Biennial, 2010; 52nd and 53rd Venice Biennale; 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale; Swiss Institute, New York, 2009; and 12th Biennial of Moving Images, Geneva, 2007, among others.

Barba's work is represented in numerous international collections and her work has been published in *Rosa Barba: White Is an Image* (Hatje Cantz, 2011), *Rosa Barba: Time as Perspective* (Hatje Cantz, 2013), *Rosa Barba: In Conversation With* (Mousse Publishing, 2011), and *Rosa Barba: The Color Out of Space* (Dancing Foxes Press, 2016).



White Museum—Live. Performance, MoMA PS1, New York, April 2016. Rosa Barba



There are many “senses” of the past. Orthodox history (the type that nation-states require in their school systems, the type that is said not to have or to need any theory behind it) relies on three defining concepts: 1) anachronism—the sense that the past is different from the present; 2) a concept of evidence with agreed upon rules for deciding what constitutes evidence and what does not; and 3) a concept of causality—the principle that everything has a cause and the proposition that these causes can be revealed if the right evidence is found. This is the logic that drives our dominant form of history, the form that accompanies colonisation and globalisation. By extension, this logic is also the basis for the temporality that everyone in the world now either lives inside or alongside. Science is characterised as the discovery of causation through empirical analysis of evidence. Orthodox history writing tries to move closer to science, adapting its methodology, in order to distance itself from fiction and art. However, science still has no definition of time and there is no access to the past outside of language. Whether or not it legitimates itself through scientific claims, orthodox history transmits knowledge by holding up experience as evidence. But experience is already an interpretation of events that is in need of interpretation itself. What happens if, instead of using evidence to explain, the relation is reversed and explaining evidence becomes the task of writing history? Negotiating with and dealing in facts in this way sweeps aside orthodox history’s false conception of language as direct, referential, and transparent.

History writing is then placed in a productive position somewhere between science and literature close to journalism—a discipline that shares many of the same ethical questions and responsibilities for making truth claims. This position also allows the products of history writing to function more as objects or tools with which to test reality. Without collapsing into relativism, the similarities to novel writing and art making can be made clear and useful.

Henry James left his novel *The Sense of the Past* (London: W. Collins Sons, 1917) unfinished. In 1900 he abandoned his protagonist, a young American historian named Ralph Pendrel, on the doorstep of an inherited eighteenth-century London townhouse and on the verge of a fantastic time-travel voyage in which Pendrel would trade places with one of his own ancestors. James may have given up on the story because of the apparent incongruity with his own writing sensibility, or perhaps because of the potentially unsolvable time-travel puzzle he had created for himself in the narrative. In any event, the unresolved and incomplete state of the work leaves it open as fertile ground for reflecting on the task of the historian and on the transference of one discipline into another. My doctoral project uses the premise of James’s novel to explore the potential for bringing a critical sense of history and historiography into visual art and for using the field of visual art to generate experiences for viewers that must be explained.

BIO Matthew Buckingham studied at the Art Institute of Chicago; received a BA from the University of Iowa and a MFA from Bard College; and attended the Whitney Independent Study Program.

Utilising photography, film, video, audio, writing and drawing, Matthew Buckingham's work questions the role that social memory plays in contemporary life. His projects create physical and social contexts that encourage viewers to question what is most familiar to them. Recent works have investigated the Indigenous past and present in the Hudson River Valley; the “creative destruction” of the city of St. Louis; and the inception of the first English dictionary.

His work has been included in solo and group exhibitions at ARC / Musée d’art moderne de la Ville de Paris; Camden Arts Centre, London; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Hamburger Bahnhof National Gallery, Berlin; Kunst-Werke, Berlin; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitechapel Gallery, London; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. He was a 2003 recipient of the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Fellowship.

■ Alejandro Cesarco's doctoral project proposes to braid together his interests in self-fiction and translation through a number of discrete, cumulative projects leading up to the making of a feature-length film. The film, and the filmic process, will help him to articulate the significance of storytelling both as a fundamental social-ordering structure and as a means of making our experiences intelligible to ourselves. In doing so, Cesarco would like to interrogate the ideological afterlives of stories, how we tell them, and what hold they have upon us in the way we narrate ourselves to ourselves and to each other. In other words, how does the

autobiographical form mediate experience? And, conversely, how is biography a translation of pre-existing narratives? In this sense, autobiography becomes a fictive form, as the narratives we use and that guide us are not only shared, but infused with imaginative ghostly longings. Translation hence becomes the agency through which the binding force of our master narratives is relaxed. It is through this agency that we reconceive the stories that determine us. But how does translation expose the ideological limits of the autobiographical form? And how does translation as topic and methodology function as a metonymy for the creative process itself?

BIO Alejandro Cesarco is a visual artist living and working in New York.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Play*, Tanya Leighton, Berlin, 2015; *Some Other Examples*, Parra Romero, Madrid, 2015; *Prescribe the Symptom*, Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis, 2015; *Loyalties and Betrayals*, Murray Guy, New York, 2015; *Secondary Revision*, Frac Île-de-France/Le Plateau, Paris, 2013; *A Portrait, a Story, and an Ending*, Kunsthalle Zürich, 2013; *Alejandro Cesarco*, mumok, Vienna, 2012; *A Common Ground*, Uruguayan Pavilion, 54th Venice Biennial, 2011; *One without the Other*, Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City, 2011; and *Present Memory*, Tate Modern, London, 2010. Group exhibitions include *Under the Same Sun*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2014; *Tell It to My Heart: Collected by Julie Ault*, Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel, 2013; and *The Imminence of Poetics*, 30th Bienal de São Paulo, 2012.

In 2011, Cesarco was the recipient of the Balaise Art Prize at Art 42 Basel, for his installation *The Streets Were Dark with Something More than Night or The Closer I Get to the End the More I Rewrite the Beginning*. These exhibitions addressed, through different formats and strategies, his recurrent interests in repetition, narrative, and the practices of reading and translating.

Cesarco is Director of the non-profit arts organisation Art Resources Transfer in New York.

Since 2015, Cesarco has been a PhD in Fine Arts candidate at Malmö Art Academy, Lund University.





Untitled (Remembered), 2014. Framed ink-jet print. 61 x 80 cm. Alejandro Cesarco

Marion von Osten

The Colonial Modern and Its Opponents

■ In her PhD project, Marion von Osten reflects different exhibition and research projects from the last five years that have investigated the colonial and postcolonial legacy of the division of applied and non-applied arts. By reflecting on the exhibitions, publications, and intergenerational conversations (as an applied practice and artistic method), she retraces the application of

vernacular practices into colonial knowledge production and counter-projects that aimed to decolonise culture and knowledge, undertaken by artists of the anti-colonial and independence period in Morocco. Following these concrete cases, von Osten's recent reflection on contemporary discourses on neoliberal governance is reshaped, questioned, and twisted.

BIO Marion von Osten is an artist, writer, researcher, and exhibition maker. She is a founding member of the Center for Post-colonial Knowledge and Culture (CPKC) and kleines postfordistisches Drama (kpD) in Berlin as well as of the media collective Labor k3000 Zürich. Since the autumn of 2013, she has been a PhD in Fine Arts candidate at Malmö Art Academy, Lund University. Beyond her artistic practice, von Osten initiates long-term research and collaborative project exhibitions, such as *Viet Nam Discourse Stockholm*, Tensta Konsthall, Stockholm, 2015–16 (with Peter Spillmann); *Aesthetics of Decolonization—The Magazine Souffles 1966–1973*, Institut für Theorie (ith), Zurich, and CPKC, Berlin, 2015–16 (with Serhat Karakayalı); *Model House—Mapping Transcultural Modernisms*, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, 2010–13 (with the research group Model House); *Action! painting/publishing*, Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, Paris, 2011–12; *In the Desert of Modernity—Colonial Planning and After*, Berlin, 2008, and Casablanca, 2009 (with Tom Avermaete and Serhat Karakayalı); *Projekt Migration*, Cologne, 2002–06 (with Aytac Erylmaz, Martin Rapp, Regina Röhmhild, and Kathrin Rhomberg); *TRANSIT MIGRATION*, Zurich and Frankfurt, 2003–05; *Atelier Europa*, Munich, 2004 (with Sören Grammel and kpD); and *Be Creative! The Creative Imperative*, Zurich, 2003 (with Peter Spillmann).

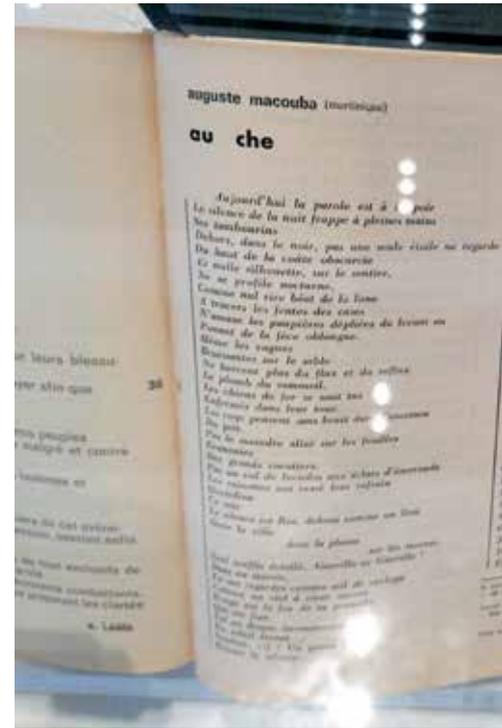
Publications include *Transcultural Modernisms*, edited by Model House Research Collective (Sternberg, 2013); *Das Erziehungsbild. Zur visuellen Kultur des Pädagogischen*, edited with Tom Holert (Schlebrügge.Editor, 2010); *The Colonial Modern: Aesthetics of the Past, Rebellions for the Future*, edited with Tom Avermaete and Serhat Karakayalı (Black Dog, 2010); *Projekt Migration*, edited with Aytac Erylmaz, et al. (Kölnischer Kunstverein, 2005); "Norm der Abweichung," T:G 04, Zurich/Vienna, 2003; *MoneyNations*, edited with Peter Spillmann (Edition Selene, 2003); and *Das Phantom sucht seinen Mörder. Ein Reader zur Kulturalisierung der Ökonomie*, edited with Justin Hoffmann (b books, 1999).



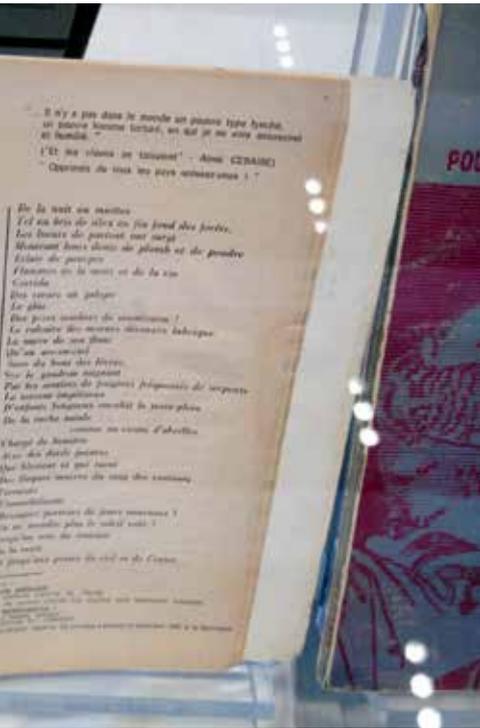
Labour Movement Archive Stockholm—Arbetarrörelsens arkiv, 2015. Digital Mobile Camera (JPG). Marion von Osten



Créteil, 14.7.2015 (On the way to visit Jocelyne and Abdellatif Laâbi), 2015. Digital Mobile Camera (JPG). Marion von Osten



USA out of Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, Greece, Israel etc etc (Demonstrator in Göteborg 1970, photo found at Labour Movement Stockholm, August 2015), 2015. Digital Mobile Camera (JPG), Marion von Osten



Au Che (Exhibition at the 50th Anniversary of the Souffles Magazine, National Library Rabat, April 2016), 2016. Digital Mobile Camera (JPG). Marion von Osten

Actions in the Public Space (Exhibition at the 50th Anniversary of the Souffles Magazine, National Library Rabat, April 2016), 2016. Digital Mobile Camera (JPG). Marion von Osten



Lea Porsager

CUT-SPLICE THOUGHT-FORMS

■ (NUCLEUS)

The crux, or nucleus, of my research will be the philosophical writings in and around the early development of quantum mechanics. I will take advantage of my location—being close to the Niels Bohr Archive—and delve into Bohr's more speculative writings on mind and biology. The concepts and thought-forms belonging to the realm of quantum theory have long been favoured by artistic and spiritual movements. I will focus on how these pioneering ideas—distorted by spiritual allegories and inferences—leapt out of the scientific orbit and created bastard sciences like that of quantum mysticism.

(METHOD)

In my work, matter, irony, experiments (*doings*), and esoteric doctrines will be cut-spliced with scientific theory. Seeking a critical discourse that encompasses dreams, meditations, and delirious suppositions about quantum scientific concepts, I will emphasise how the misunderstandings generated by these unorthodox couplings serve as trailblazers for radical cross-disciplinary visions. My experiments aim to disrupt—not to illustrate—fixed or local notions of truth through a practice of radical openness, to better understand the uncertainty and mercuriality of our *thinking-in-form*. To quote Bohr's closing words from a 1929 essay: "the new situation in physics has so forcibly reminded us of the old truth that we are both onlookers and actors in the great drama of existence."¹ The interpretation will indeed be a literal, frenzied one, and the method that of *weird situated knowledge*.

BIO Lea Porsager was educated at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, where she received her MFA in 2010, and the Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main.

Porsager's recent exhibitions include Göttingen Kunstverein, Germany, 2015; Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, 2015; Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Høvikodden, Norway, 2013; and the Emily Harvey Foundation, New York, 2013.

In 2014, Porsager was awarded the Carl Nielsen and Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen Art Scholarship, and in 2012, she participated in dOCUMENTA (13) with the work *Anatta Experiment*. Porsager was part of the 14th Istanbul Biennial: *SALTWATER: A Theory of Thought Forms* in 2015 as Annie Besant's "medium," recreating watercolours from the book *Thought-Forms* (1905). She became a PhD fellow in Fine Arts at Malmö Art Academy, Lund University, in September 2015.





E(AR)THERIC SLIME ~ PRE-OP, 2016. Installation view, Nils Stærk, Copenhagen. Lea Porsager



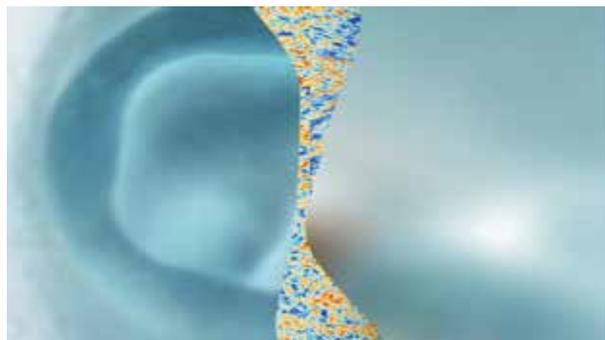
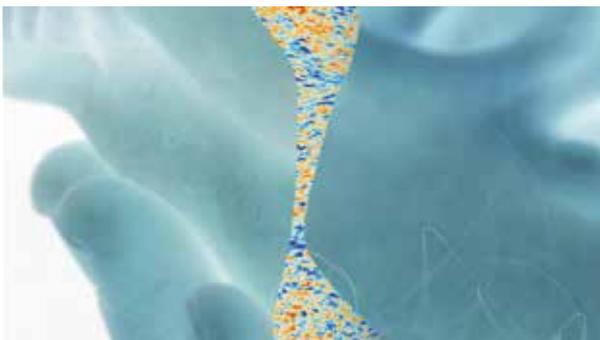
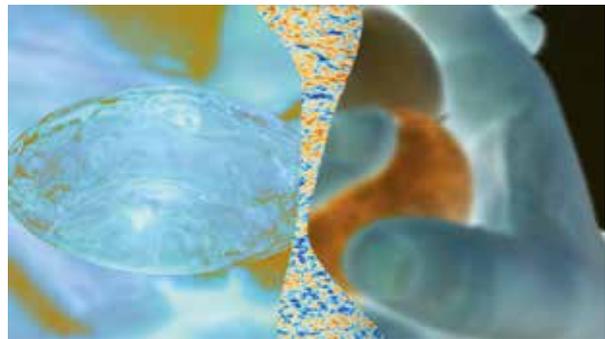
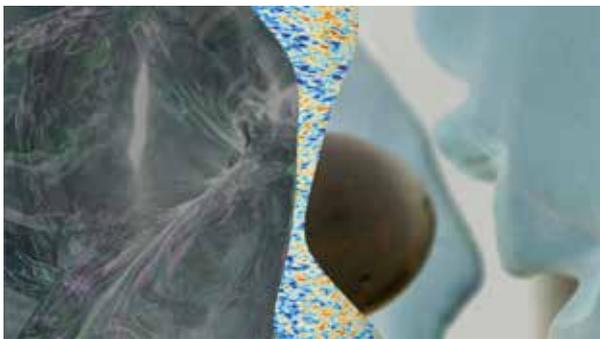
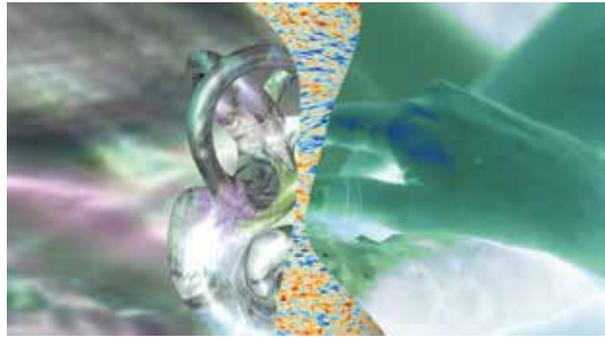
Fifty-six Mattresses ~ Spacetime Foam, 2016. Foam mattresses, watercolours. Each mattress 200 x 60 x 7 cm. Lea Porsager



Organ of Balance (Left Ear Particle I), 2016. Wood, metal paint. 50 x 72 x 53 cm. Lea Porsager



Fifty-six Mattresses ~ Spacetime Foam, 2016. Foam mattresses, watercolours. Each mattress 200 x 60 x 7 cm. Lea Porsager

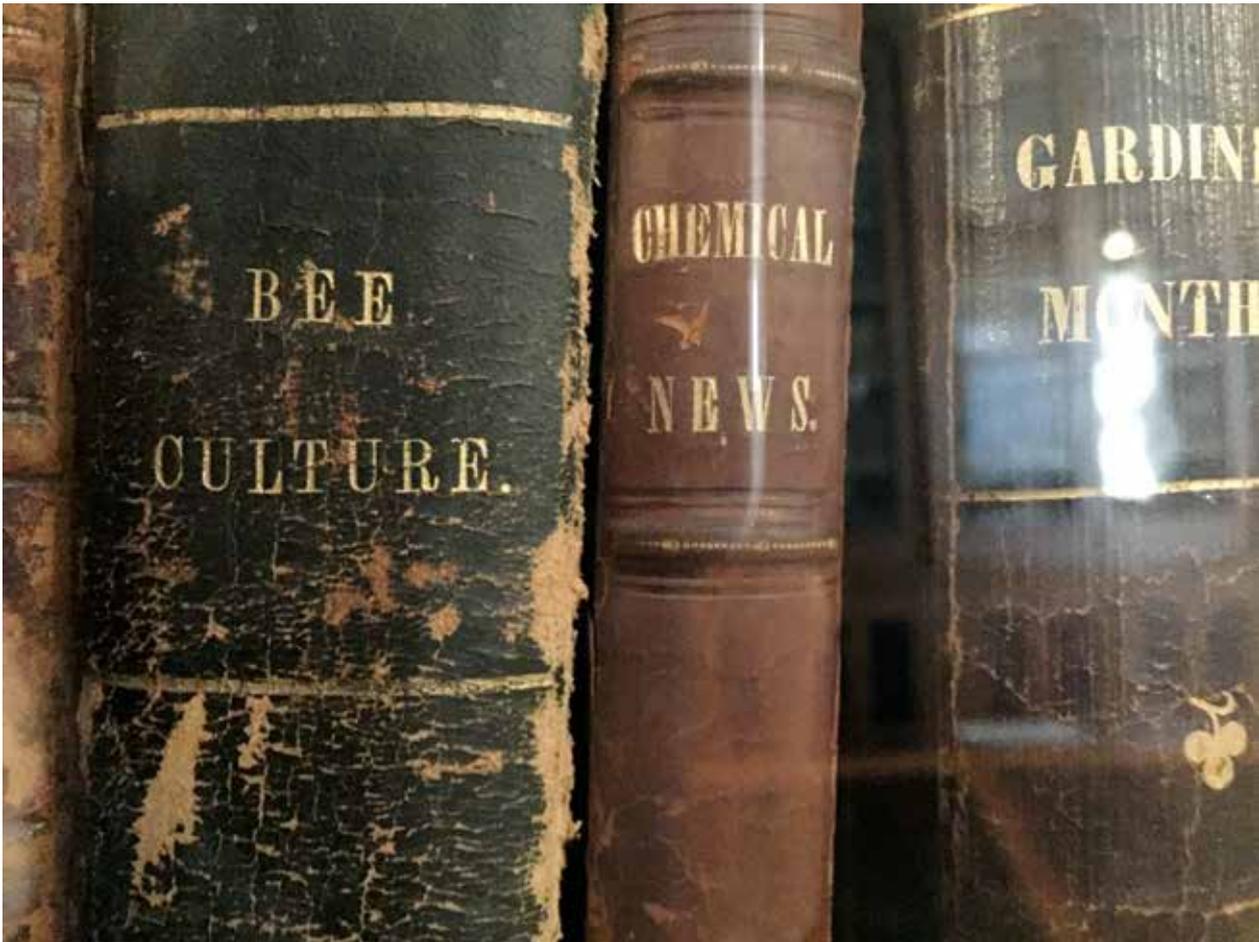


Disrupted E(ar)threal Fantasy (Ova Splash), 2016. Stills from the film/3D animation. Dimensions variable, duration: 13:00 min. Lea Porsager





Twenty-two Ground Protection Mats ~ ET, 2016. Iron. Each mat 300 x 200 x 1,5 cm. Lea Porsager



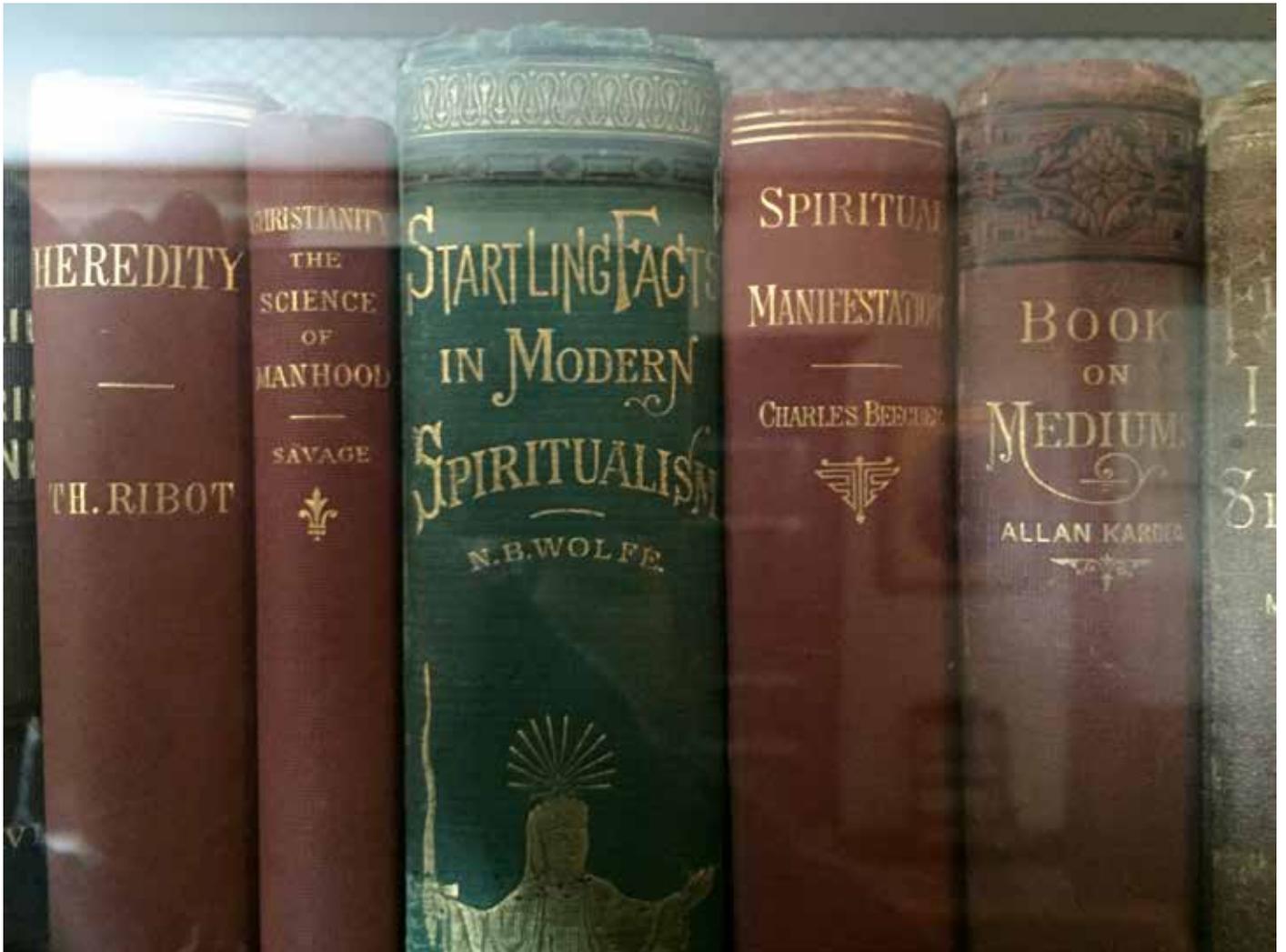
■ Andrea Ray's doctoral project, *A Chronopolitics of Belonging*, focuses on feminist approaches to time, subjectivity, and community in a project concerned with the individual and gender, affinities and friendship, and love and belonging. The project proposes polyamory, expanded affinities, and a caring economy as having the social and political potential to contribute to a disruption and reorganisation of the patriarchal holdovers in a US context. The ideas are organised with a synchronous sense of time in the space of installation—a form that intervenes, counters, and reworks the linear, heteronormative narratives of constraint, omission, and dominance that institutions like marriage still retain.

BIO Andrea Ray has a cross-disciplinary practice that includes installation, writing, photography, projection, architecture, and sound.

Ray's solo exhibitions include those at Wesleyan University's Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery in Connecticut and Open Source Gallery, Suite 106, and Cuchifritos in New York. Group exhibitions include the Sculpture Center, Apex Art, MoMA PS1, Clocktower Gallery, and White Columns in New York; Skissernas Museum and Wanås Foundation in Sweden; as well as venues in Dublin, Brussels, and Turin.

Ray has been awarded an Art Matters grant and a Trans-Canada Fellowship and is a two-time New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship recipient. Residency awards include MoMA PS1, New York; the MacDowell Colony, New Hampshire; Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris; and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, New York. Ray's work has been included in the publications *Artforum*, *BOMB Magazine*, *zingmagazine*, *The New York Times*, and *ARTnews*.

Ray completed the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program, received a MFA from the Cranbrook Academy of Art, and earned a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design. Ray is Assistant Professor at Parsons School of Design at the New School in New York. Ray became a PhD in Fine Arts fellow at the Malmö Art Academy in 2013 and expects to complete studies in 2018.





Left: *Amative Interview Without Crisis* from *Communing with Radicals*, 2016. Production still. Andrea Ray
Right: *Utopian Brickwork* from *Communing with Radicals*, 2016. Production still. Andrea Ray

BIO Imogen Stidworthy's work focuses on the voice as a sculptural material in her investigations into different forms of language and relationship. She works with people who inhabit the borders of language, whose relation to language is affected by conditions such as aphasia or the impact of an overwhelming experience. Often combining the staged and the observed, Stidworthy makes films and installations and uses a wide range of media including sculptural objects, print, and photography.

Recent solo presentations include exhibitions at Imperial War Museum, London, 2015; AKINCI, Amsterdam, and Galerie Raum mit Licht, Vienna, 2013; Matt's Gallery, London, 2011; Kunstpavillon, Innsbruck, and Arnolfini, Bristol, 2010. Major group exhibitions include *This is a Voice* and *States of Mind* at the Wellcome Collection, London, and British Art Show 8 at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, 2016; Kyiv Biennale 2015 and British Art Show 8 at Leeds Art Gallery, 2015; São Paulo Biennial and *Listening*, a Hayward Touring show at SITE in Sheffield, Bluecoat in Liverpool, and Baltic 39 in Newcastle, 2014; Bergen Assembly, 2013; Busan Biennale, 2012; October Salon, Belgrade, 2011; and documenta 12, Kassel, 2007. She curated the group exhibitions BLACKOUT! at ERC, Liverpool, 2013; *In the First Circle* (in collaboration with Paul Domela) at Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona, 2011–12; and *Die Lucky Bush* at MuHKA, Antwerp, 2008. Her work is represented by Matt's Gallery, London, and AKINCI, Amsterdam.

■ What forms of relation develop between people who do not speak the same language? How can one recognise new or unfamiliar forms of relation and of language? And what means can I develop—new sensitivities, approaches, and (artistic) tools, both material and immaterial—to trace such forms? These questions are the framework for my PhD research. They come out of an artistic practice focusing on the voice at the borders of language, for example engaging in dialogue with, or being among, people whose language is affected by a physical or neurological condition, such as aphasia, or by a formative or overwhelming experience, such as the PTSD experienced by war veterans. In 2014 I worked with autistic people who have no practice of language at all. These experiences challenge what we mean by relationship, and raise a question with which it is inextricably entwined: How do we conceive of and experience our selves, as individuals, or more fluidly, as part of a network or merged social space?

Fernand Deligny was a French educator who, between 1967 and 1985, established an experimental network for living with autistic children. Deligny's writing and work, in particular the practice of mapping the movements of the children using pencil on layers of tracing paper, are a key reference for this research. This mapping embodies the oblique yet concentrated attention of the adult towards the child, the intimacy at a distance that is characteristic of Deligny's insistence on respecting the fundamental difference of the children and his refusal to impose the language of

“we who speak” (*nous parlons*) upon those who do not—“those kids there” (*c'est gamins là*). The maps exist as traces of this form of relation: a mode of “living with” (*vivre avec*) between autistic children and non-spectrum adults. Deligny's work is a space of reference from which I am studying other practices of relation and practices of voice, this year. These comparative sites provide insight into contemporary understandings of autism. On another level, they reveal different ways of understanding the very idea of relation, with others whose sense of self and terms of meaning are based on non-linguistic, unfamiliar, and arguably unknowable grounds.

Therapist Phoebe Caldwell works with autistic people using a method known as Intensive Interaction. This focuses wholly on the task of making contact with other people on their own terms. Its means putting (her) language and self to one side: “Attention needs to be totally in other.”¹ She brings intimate attention to the other person in order to tune into his or her behaviour, divining when a seemingly random sound or movement is meaningful and playing those sounds or movements back to the other by echoing or mirroring them. Her voice and body morph as she enters into a purely improvisational game of call and response. Echoing Deligny's refusal to translate or interpret the other, Caldwell accepts the meaningfulness of the sound or gesture not as content but as *contact*—it could be as subtle as a tiny change in the pattern of breathing—and this recognition is all that is needed to respond to “the oneness that comes out of self/other”² and to make contact.

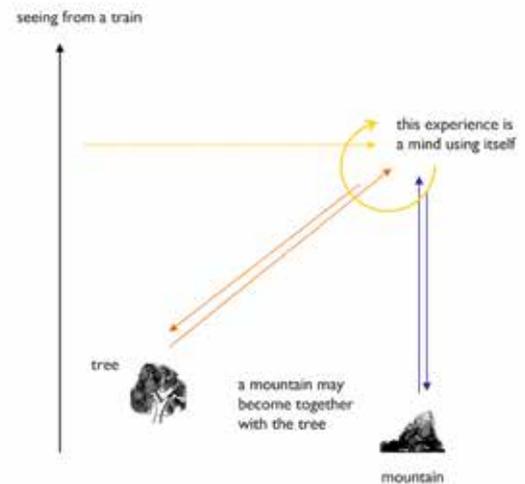
1 Phoebe Caldwell, in e-mail correspondence with the author, February 25, 2016.

2 Ibid.

The Swedish therapist Iris Johansson is autistic. She did not speak until she was twelve years old and learned to write when she was thirty-five. In her book *A Different Childhood*, she describes her experience of preverbal consciousness. She writes about moving between two distinct worlds, of going “Out,” leaving behind the (physically) painful and confusing sensations of her body and mind. Overwhelmed by the stimuli of the “normal world” (our world), she enters the “Real world” (what her father called her “internal world”), where she moves freely, without physical borders, swooping high into the air or down into the earth; an immaterial being yet with a highly material sensitivity. She describes seeing the thoughts of others as brilliant displays of colour and energy patterns, and understanding what they were thinking without them speaking (evoking for us,

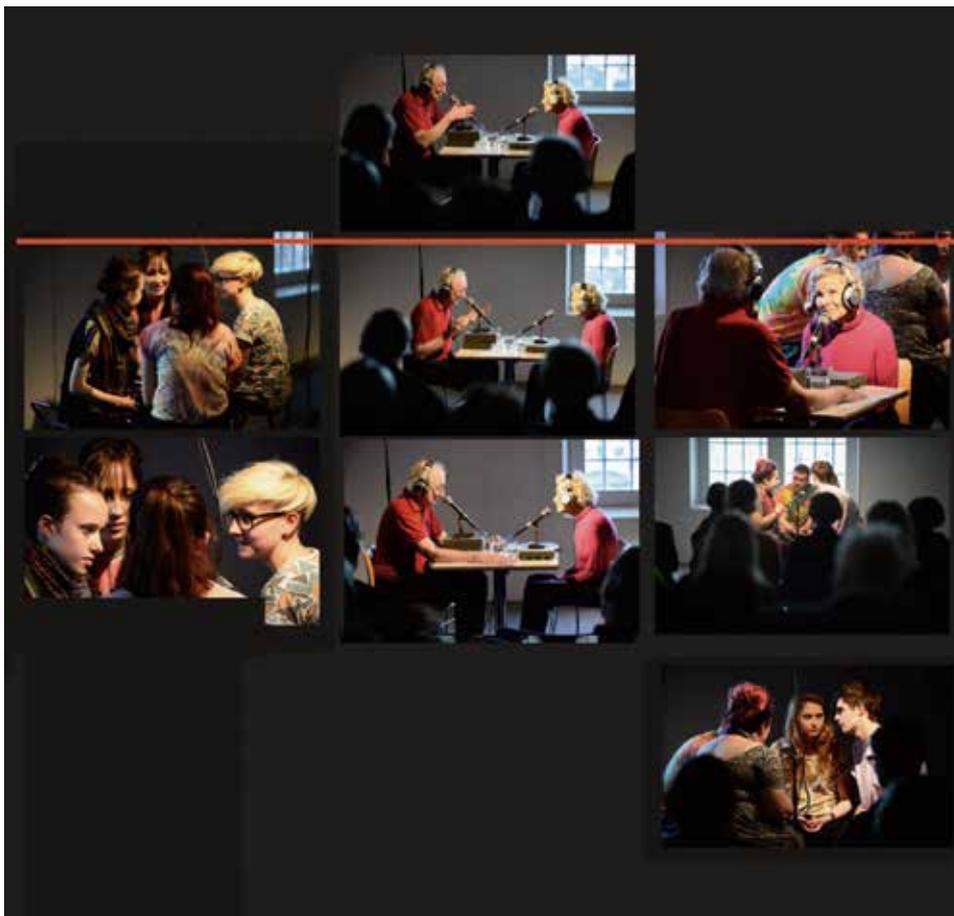
perhaps, the term “psychic”). She explains: “Then I put myself into the state where I could leave the body and go Out in the Real world, which was known to me. There I could observe everything that was happening, hear everything that was said, and understand a bunch of things without having a tantrum or other crazy behavior. Then I could see how it was in reality.”³

These three voices open up a space between languages where new forms of language and of relation are produced, even in the absence of a sense of relationship. The topology of this space is shaped and negotiated by language in the widest sense, including the non-linguistic, the bodily, and the sonic. In these borders of language we stretch and (re)invent the space of relation with each other and with ourselves.



Can there be a purely visual language? This was the focus of a conversation between Tony O'Donnell, who has aphasia, and speech therapist Judith Langley, in the live performance *An Introduction to Bliss for Two Voices with Chorus*, 2014. 25" live performance with sound effects and multi-channel system. Imogen Stidworthy

A binaural voice composition (2016) based on the performance, for headphones, is presented on Concreta magazine online platform, edition no.6. <http://www.editorialconcreta.org/bliss/index-en.html>



An Introduction to Bliss for Two Voices with Chorus, live performance at Tate Liverpool, May 2014. With Tony O'Donnell, a man who has aphasia and has been working with the BLISS for many years, a pictographic for people with communication difficulties. An improvised, live-mixed conversation with Judith Langley, speech therapist, and two chorus groups of male and female voices.

The image displays handwritten notes on a black background, illustrating the BLISS (British Lip Reading Index Sign System) grammar. It features several rows of English sentences, each accompanied by its corresponding BLISS symbols and a diagram showing how the symbols are combined into a single pictograph. The symbols are small icons representing people, hearts, cars, and other concepts, often enclosed in boxes or connected by lines to show their relationship in a sentence.

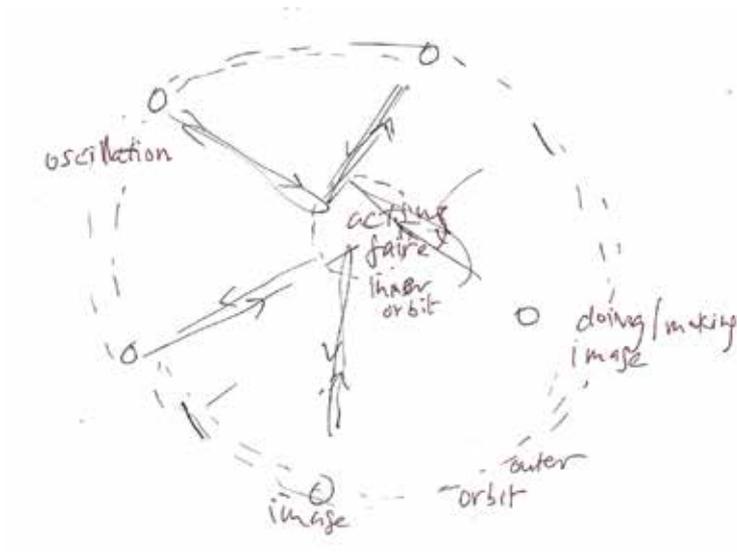
Examples of sentences and their BLISS representations:

- I love the girl.** (Symbol: person, heart, person)
- I drive the girl.** (Symbol: person, car, person)
- I love for driving the girl.** (Symbol: person, heart, car, person)
- I am driving along with the girl as I love.** (Symbol: person, car, person, heart, person)
- The girl helps as driving for me.** (Symbol: person, person, car, person)
- The girl help by paying towards a car.** (Symbol: person, person, car, person)

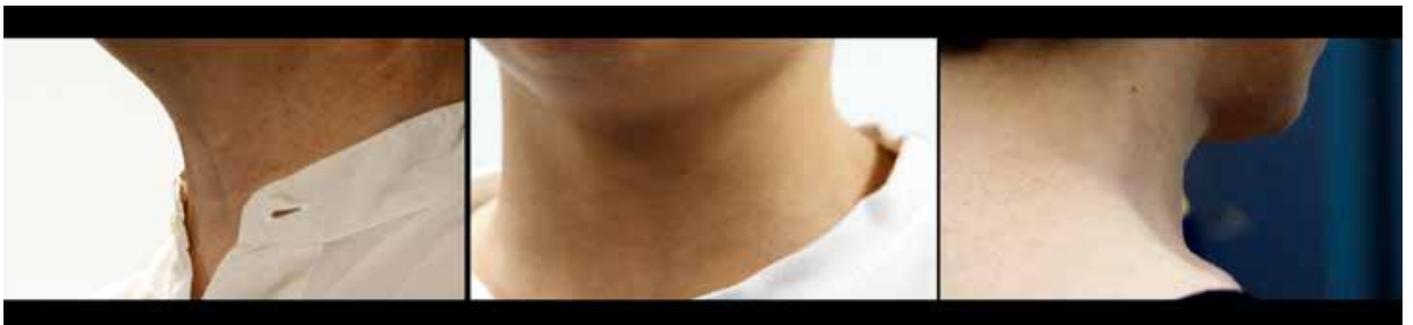
The notes also include various mathematical-like expressions and diagrams showing the combination of symbols, such as $\text{person} + \text{heart}$ and $\text{person} \hat{\text{car}}$, and larger diagrams showing the integration of multiple symbols into a single pictograph.

Notes towards a BLISS grammar, by Tony O'Donnell. BLISS is a pictographic language for people with communication disorders. Tony O'Donnell, who has aphasia, uses BLISS as a tool for communication and has been developing a grammar for BLISS over the last fifteen years.

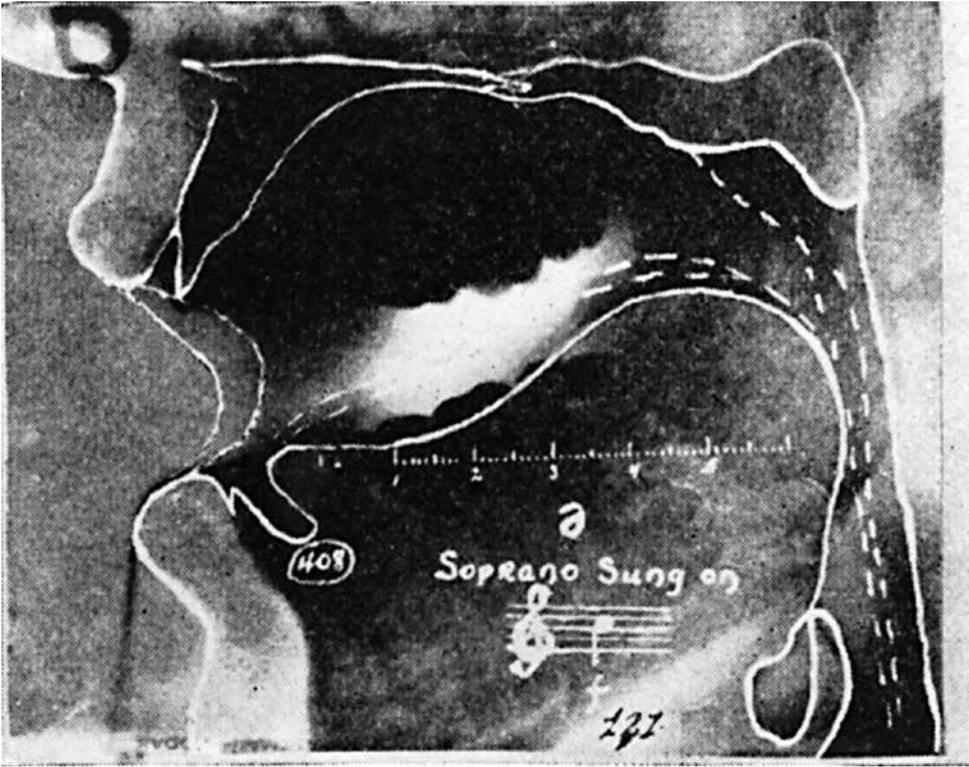




Note: A schematised reading of “Carte Balayer” and sketch for the floor plan for the ambisonic installation *Balayer—A Map of Sweeping*, 2014. Imogen Stidworthy



The three voices which can be merged to simulate the castrato voice: counter tenor, boy treble and female soprano.
Castrato, 2012–16. Stills from the three-channel sound and video installation. Dimensions variable. Imogen Stidworthy



■







Plastic Course

Teacher Senior Lecturer
 P-O Persson

Guest Teacher David Nilsson

■ See course description p. 366



Casting Course:
Bronze/Aluminium/Silicone

Teacher Senior Lecturer
 P-O Persson

Guest Teacher Robert Cassland

■ See course description p. 373

Ceramics Course

Teacher Senior Lecturer

P-O Persson

Guest Teacher Klara Kristalova

■ See course description p. 366





16 mm Film—The Fundamentals

Teachers Professor Joachim Koester,
 Technician Sophie Ljungblom
Guest Teacher Lui Mokrzycki

■ See course description p. 366

Painting Course with Practical Assignment

Teacher Junior Lecturer Viktor Kopp

This painting course began with everyone presenting something that had inspired them or that had in some way affected their work. I presented a lecture by Michel Foucault, "Manet and the Object of Painting" from 1971, in which Foucault, through the close study of a number of paintings, describes how Édouard Manet became a forerunner of not only impressionism but all of modernism by working with the painting as an object. The students presented a number of different things, from medieval Persian miniature paintings to animations about cosmology to texts by Roland Barthes. The practical assignment that followed required that each participant choose someone else's inspiration or starting point, and from this make a work of his or her own. We also visited Viktor Rosdahl in his studio, where we spoke about artistic methods and everyday routines in the studio. Throughout the course we held group discussions on the different questions and thoughts that our works provoked, and we ended with an exhibition of the finished works in the teaching studio.

—Viktor Kopp

■ See course description p. 373



The Archive—Documents, Objects, and Desires

Teachers Professor Matts Leiderstam
and Senior Lecturer Maj Hasager

Project Exhibition

Opening Friday, April 1, 2016, 16:00–18:00
at Inter Arts Center White Room and Annex

Performance Monologues, performed by ieke Trinks
Friday, April 1, 2016, 17:00

Exhibition April 1 and 2, 2016

This project exhibition showed works by Critical & Pedagogical Studies and other MFA students from Malmö Art Academy that were developed in relation to the participants' individual practices and in response to the course "The Archive—Documents, Objects, and Desires," led by Professor Matts Leiderstam and Senior Lecturer Maj Hasager between December 2015 and April 2016.

Participating students: ieke Trinks, Elena Strempek, Mads Juel Johansen, Johan Lundqwist, Karen Bohøj, Max Ockborn, Lucy Smalley, Angel Nuñez Pombo, Kezia Pritchard, Francis Patrick Brady, Youngjae Lih

In his essay "An Archival Impulse" (2004), Hal Foster defines "archival art" as a genre in which "archival artists seek to make historical information, often lost or displaced, physically present. To this end they elaborate on the found image, object, and favor the installation format." As the archive can inhabit a multitude of forms and collections that have been deemed historically relevant for preservation, artists making use of the archive can do so in a variety of forms, and possibilities. The translation and interpretation of material and objects can function as the foundation for an artistic process. In the words of Jan Verwoert, the material is being "certified" due to the selection process, even though there is no scientific validation that takes place. The material, such as texts, sound recordings, images, objects, and so forth, become documents through the very act of being included and categorised in an archive.

During the course "The Archive—Documents, Objects, and Desire," we looked into ways of thinking through the archive and how to approach different archives, as well as research methodologies for an art practice. Furthermore, visiting lecturers such as Jacqueline Hoang Nguyen, Katarina Eismann, Joachim Koester and Karl Magnus Johansson introduced different approaches to thinking through the archive.

See course description pp. 370 and 375



Background: *Performance Monologues*, 2016. Performance. ieke Trinks

Foreground: *Not to be shown/Not to be thrown*, 2016. Mixed materials. Dimensions variable. Johan Lundqwist

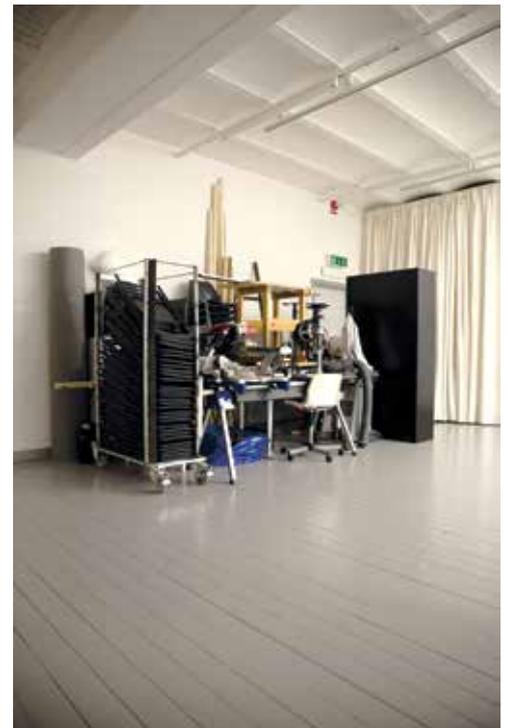
From the exhibition, *The Archive: Documents, Objects, and Desires*, Inter Arts Center, Malmö, 2016



Installation view from *The Archive: Documents, Objects, and Desires*, Inter Arts Center, Malmö, 2016



Left: *In Search of K T M Nilsson*, 2016. Mixed media installation. Dimensions variable. Lucy Smalley
 Right: *Site specific workroom archive*, 2016. Installation. Dimensions variable. Max Ockborn
 From the exhibition, *The Archive: Documents, Objects, and Desires*, Inter Arts Center, Malmö, 2016





Light Setting and Narratives

Teachers Junior Lecturer Margot Edström,
Senior Lecturer Maria Hedlund



See course description p. 367

Afropean Film Seminar

Guest Teachers Alanna Lockward
and Jeannette Ehlers

■ See course description p. 369



Guest presentation by Malcolm Momodou Jallow during the Afropean Film Seminar with Alanna Lockward, Jeannette Ehlers and Simmi Dullay, 2015



Afropean Film Seminar with Alanna Lockward, Jeannette Ehlers and Simmi Dullay, 2015

Critical & Pedagogical Studies went on two study trips in 2015–16. The first was to Graz, Austria, where students took part in workshops and a conference at the Steirischer Herbst Festival. The second trip was to Italy where the group started out in Filignano, investigating art in a rural context through activities organised in collaboration with Deirdre MacKenna's Cultural Documents. This was followed by a visit to Rome for meetings with artists and collectives.



Grazer Murinsel, 2015



Kunsthhaus Graz, 2015

Study Trip to Graz, Austria
Critical & Pedagogical Studies

See course description p. 372

Study Trip to Italy
Critical & Pedagogical Studies

■ See course description p. 376



Hiking through the mountains in Filignano, Italy



Left: Walking tour with the Stalker artist collective in Rome, Italy

Right: Visit to Castello Pandone, National Museum of Molise, in Venafro, Italy

Pedagogy as Medium or Tone
in Artistic and Curatorial Practice
Guest Teacher Felicity Allen

■ See course description p. 376





Students at the Pilvi Takala exhibition at the Centre for Contemporary Arts in Glasgow, April 2016

Annual Schooltrip, MFA1

The annual school trip this year was to Scotland, to see Glasgow International art festival and the British Art Show in Edinburgh. The program also included visits to relevant organisations and institutions, such as Glasgow School of Art, where we met with John Calcutt, MFA Programme Leader, and some of his MFA students; Glasgow Women's Library, where Adele Patrick, Lifelong Learning and Creative Development Manager, gave us a tour and talked about the organisation's community engagement; Glasgow Sculpture Studios, where we attended an introduction and tour by Front of House Assistant Agne Sabaliauskaite; the Centre for Contemporary Arts, where Curator Ainslie Roddick introduced us to her way of thinking and working within an institution;

and Edinburgh College of Art, where we met with Professor Neil Mulholland, who talked about his way of working with teaching and pedagogy.

Neil also kindly invited us to join a lecture on craftsmanship by Richard Sennett, Professor of Sociology at New York University.

Together with students from the University of Glasgow, Glasgow School of Art, and the Ruskin School of Art at the University of Oxford, our students participated in a summit organised by curator Leslie Young and artist Corin Sworn.

At Glasgow School of Art, we attended a lecture-performance by artist and writer Sarah Trip.

—Margot Edström and Maria Hedlund



Left: Installation view from *Open House* exhibition, Malmö Art Academy, 2016

Right: Articles, yearbooks, flyers, T-shirts and Tiril Hasselknippe's poster contribution for the Malmö Art Academy *Open House*



The exterior of Malmö Art Academy with a banner and posters



Students Andreas Franzén and John Alberts making banners for the Malmö Art Academy *Open House*

Save Malmö Art Academy—*Open House*

The school year ended with uncertainty about the future location of the Academy. In June, the Malmö City Council announced that it wanted to use the current building, Mellersta Förstadsskolan, as an elementary school. The Academy's students organised an online petition and open

house so people could see the importance of the facilities and how they have been used by art students over the years. The petition quickly gathered 6,000 signatures and an outpouring of support for the Academy. Though Lund University intends to build a new campus for fine arts in the future, it remains uncertain where the Academy will be housed in the coming years.

Move This! — A Symposium on Choreography and Performance in Relation to Visual Arts

In relation to the exhibition *Objects and Bodies at Rest and in Motion*, at Moderna Museet Malmö from September 26 2015 to February 2, 2016, the museum together with Malmö Art Academy and its Critical and Pedagogical Studies programme organised a half-day symposium on January 27. The symposium, titled Move This!, focused on aspects of performance and choreography in relation to visual art and presented theorists, curators, and artists.

The exhibition *Objects and Bodies at Rest and in Motion* was based on the Moderna Museet's collection, in particular the New York Collection donated to the museum in 1973, and explored the relationship between the human body and objects in a space. It focused on a group of artists who were active in New York during the 1960s and '70s. Among the choreographers and performance artists included in the exhibition were Simone Forti, Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, and Bruce Nauman. They were presented in relation to visual artists such as Donald Judd, Frank Stella, and Carl Andre to highlight the connections between the (minimalist) art object and the body.

We've seen a renewed interest in these topics in recent years, and it is clear choreography has a place not only on dance stages but also in contemporary art institutions. Another recent example of this in the region is the exhibition *William Forsythe—In the Company of Others*, presented at Kunsthall Charlottenborg in Copenhagen from November 2015 until February 2016.

The Move This! symposium aimed to provide an opportunity to consider and discuss, both from a historical and a contemporary perspective, the mutual influence and cross-fertilisation of visual arts, performance-based art, and choreography.

Speakers and performers (in order of appearance)

Magnus af Petersens is Senior Curator and Head of Collection at Moderna Museet Stockholm and Curator at Large at Whitechapel Gallery, London, where he was Chief Curator until recently. At Moderna Museet, af Petersens has curated several solo exhibitions as well as group exhibitions like *Explosion: Painting as Action* (2011) and *Eclipse: Art in a Dark Age* (2008). He was the curator of the Nordic Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2011, and he also curated *Future Histories* with Arseny Zhilyaev and Mark Dion at Tre Oci, Venice, in 2015.

Petersens introduced the exhibition *Objects and Bodies at Rest and in Motion*, as well as the curatorial thoughts behind it.

Luca Frei is an artist who was born in Lugano, Switzerland, and studied in Lugano, Edinburgh, New Haven, and Malmö. He lives and works in Malmö. Alongside solo exhibitions at Kunsthauus Glarus, Bonner Kunstverein, and Lunds Konsthall, he has participated in numerous biennials, including the 31st Biennial of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana; 6th Momentum Biennial, Moss, Norway; 12th International Cairo Biennale; 3rd Prague Biennale; and 9th International Istanbul Biennial. Furthermore he was represented in many group exhibitions at the Kunsthalle Fridericianum in Kassel, Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, Moderna Museet Stockholm, the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, and Kunsthalle Zürich, among others. Recent exhibition displays include Tate Liverpool and Malmö Konsthall.

For *Objects and Bodies at Rest and in Motion*, Frei directed a new version of **Simone Forti's** dance

construction *See-Saw* (1960). At the symposium, Frei introduced his version of *See-Saw* and its relation to the exhibition. Forti's *See-Saw* as well as her *Slant Board* (1961) were performed by dancers Christine Brorsson, Khamlane Halsackda, and Jonna Tideman.

Josefine Wikström is a writer, critic, and lecturer whose research revolves around performance and labour. She is a lecturer at DOCH (Stockholm University of the Arts) and a visiting lecturer at Goldsmiths, University of London. She writes for *MUTE*, *Texte zur Kunst*, *Kunstkritikk*, *Afterall*, *Paletten*, and *Frieze* and is Associate Editor of *Philosophy of Photography*. She is currently undertaking a PhD at the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy, Kingston University, UK, where she investigates the concept of performance within contemporary art from the standpoint of concepts of labour as per Karl Marx, Theodor Adorno, and other thinkers.

Mr. Rice & peanuts (established 2009, Copenhagen, Denmark) are a Malmö-based artistic duo consisting of Sanna Blennow and Robert Logrell. Mr. Rice & peanuts, the stubborn unit, operates in the expanding choreographic field.

Mr. Rice & peanuts occupy themselves with the ability to understand this vague field and to produce choreographic situations that sometimes are danced and often written. Currently, Mr. Rice & peanuts are between part one and two in the trilogy *SOLID IS THE NEW VAGUE*. This trilogy addresses manifestos and choreography from 1965 to today, and will result in a publication, *The Ultimate Manifesto of Vague Assumptions*, forthcoming in 2017. At the symposium they gave the lecture "ELR+PLUS," consisting of words, images, and bodies that circle around Mr. Rice & peanuts's seven-day-long choreographic installation *Event Lady Rainer* (Inkonst, Malmö, 2015), where Yvonne Rainer's "No Manifesto" (1965) dictated the conditions for the process. *ELR+PLUS* invited the viewer to critically participate in Mr. Rice & peanuts's operational logic, straight into the opposition between being and non-being, to the subjects planned to be erased. By the way, what happened to them? About the writing of history, emancipation, and the economy of presence when means of production fail.

Mathias Kryger is based in Copenhagen and works as a freelance curator, artist, and art critic. He recently curated the exhibition *William Forsythe—In the Company of Others* at Kunsthall Charlottenborg (2016). Kryger writes for *Politiken* (the largest Danish daily newspaper) and for the Scandinavian online arts press *Kunstkritikk*. Seeing the work in the exhibition *William Forsythe—In the Company of Others* as preparations for what could be referred to as the molecular revolution (borrowing from the French radical philosopher and psychotherapist Félix Guattari), Kryger examined the institutional frameworks of existence and frantically scrutinised the concept of performance as understood as labour, competition, achievement, administration, execution, pursuance, collectivity, disagreement, and resistance.

For the symposium, Kryger shared his thoughts about *William Forsythe—In the Company of Others*, and also introduced the themes that permeate Forsythe's practice and discussed the constellations of works in the exhibition.

Organisers: Andreas Nilsson and Ana María Bermeo Ujueta (Moderna Museet Malmö) and Maj Hasager and Laura Hatfield (Critical and Pedagogical Studies, Malmö Art Academy)



Christine Brorsson and Jonna Tideman perform Simone Forti's dance construction *Slant Board* (1961) at Moderna Museet, Malmö



Mr. Rice & peanuts perform at Malmö Art Academy

Track Changes: Collective Editorial Processes

Teacher Laura Hatfield
 Guest Teacher Matthew Rana

If writing can be viewed as a multi-modal form of practice, then can it also be considered as a process that is socially situated and collectively authored? This is one of the questions that we asked each other in the Track Changes writing course this year.

In one of our early sessions we looked at the original manuscript of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, which was thought to have been lost following the long poem's initial publication in 1922. With its recovery in 1968 came a number of revelations such as an alternate title and an entire first section that was struck from the poem's final version. Just as startling however, was evidence—in the form of handwritten proofreader's marks and margin notes—of extensive editorial input from both Eliot's first wife, the writer Vivienne Haigh-Wood, and his close friend, the poet and critic Ezra Pound. Although *The Waste Land's* idiosyncratic use of footnotes and intertextual qualities had long puzzled readers, the poem's social dimension—articulated here at the level of interpersonal relationships—had largely been overwritten by narratives of individual genius and originality of expression. It's exactly this dimension, so often relegated to the margins or narrated as biography, that we wanted to foreground in this course by implementing a collective editorial process.

To begin the course, participants were asked to identify a topic central to their practice that they would research and to start a daily writing practice in logbooks. The various notes, fragments, and quotations gathered during this period were

then transcribed and presented for discussion before being developed as drafts, which the group subsequently gave feedback on through annotations and marginalia. In addition to developing the participants' writing, this process engaged them in pedagogical methods, as readers, exercising how best to give and receive written and oral feedback within a classroom setting.

Through extensive group dialogue participants were able to better grasp what was at stake in their papers. Can concerns latent in one's art making gain expression through writing? Is it appropriate to situate oneself within a text, and if so, how? Can critique be understood as being embodied, not necessarily corresponding with a particular form of writing but rather with a lived mode of thinking and questioning? These issues were constantly called into question throughout the course. As the texts evolved, certain topics emerged, including materiality and object agency, the politics of representation, and communication—via the haptic, dialogic, and analytic. There were unexpected overlaps and themes throughout (only some of which are presented here), connecting and contrasting with each other just as our group discussions sometimes did. What follows is a selection of texts produced during the course. They present a cross-section of ideas, approaches, and concerns expressed by the artists involved.

—Laura Hatfield and Matthew Rana

■ See course description on p. 375

Text written during the course Track Changes:
Collective Editorial Processes

Kezia Pritchard MFA1 student
Critical & Pedagogical Studies

A feeling of resistance is nagging me. I need to listen to it.

Do you remember when we talked about how a walk could be an aid to provide focused time for discussion, to find a rhythm and a way to leave the consistency of the studio for a while? I mentioned before that I meet other students for studio walks. It is like a studio talk without the presence of the studio. The meeting comes down to the dialogue. This is significant. I'm drawn to the space *in* that dialogue—the walk simply enhances it. I have realised that the most important aspect of these walks is that we're moving; we could be on a train or a boat, but when you walk together you are rarely disturbed and you can control your pace. Many people ask me what I plan to do with these walks, and I ask myself whether I should be repeating or writing a reflection about them. I consider whether or not I should be recording the walks, the tracks, or the voices as they happen. But in the end I am interested *only* in the meeting that takes place on the walk. The educator Gert Biesta¹ writes about an "*in-between* space" or a "gap" that happens when humans interact with each other. He thinks that meaning isn't in the minds and bodies of the people, but rather *in-between* them.² If I write or record what happens in this space, I feel it would destroy this experience of an exchange, which is often intimate and thoughtful. It doesn't need documentation—it lives in the moment and then it's gone. Perhaps both lives are enriched, perhaps they are not. What can be said is that a space was made between us and it can be made again.

Don't think I'm not in favour of documentation. It isn't about removing all physical trace of an event as the artist Tino Sehgal³ would, because he believes that visual documentation runs the risk of replacing the work.⁴ I feel it's simply about placing importance on what takes place in the moment, and this might mean remembering the experience in a way other than through visual, audio, and written methods. This made me think about a passage in a book I read a few years ago about an Indian folklorist who wanted to collect and preserve songs of the Langa singers in the Rajasthan state of India in the 1950s.⁵ He sent one singer, Lakha, to adult education classes to learn to read and write, as the folklorist thought this would make it easier to collect the songs the singer had stored in his memory. However, the mission failed. On his return, while the rest of the Langa singers were able to remember hundreds of songs, Lakha now depended on his diary to recollect them.

What does interest me about Sehgal's approach is that his work lives on in the memories of those that saw and took part in it. It reminds me of an event by the artist

Francis Alÿs,⁶ in which hundreds of Peruvian students came together to shovel sand from one place to another, displacing a sand dune by only a few centimetres. One of the students who took part in the event talked about how this story will continue to live on through the people who were present on that day.⁷

So you start to see it, this subtle resistance. It comes up when speaking in groups, too. For many, it's not the issue of having their voices recorded, but rather about allowing a space to get things wrong. When we are in an educational setting we understand that we are learning, but a recording device may not. This has led me to think about why we don't take this approach more often. Let people get things wrong. The space is important. Speaking aloud is learning aloud, and it's learning about what's inside too.

Do you remember when we took a course on collaboration? I'd say it was about eight years ago. What I loved about those classes was that everyone was so open—you felt like you could say anything that came to mind. I remember this caused some laughs. Can you recall a particular day when we sat outside during a class and someone started to talk about the awful areas in Rome where you can find only Chinese restaurants? The group was really shocked. I don't think she realised she would cause this kind of a reaction, but I believe she became much more aware of the weight of what she was saying. It made me think about what a contrast those classes were to other educational environments I have experienced. I started to think about how important this was and how this approach holds the possibility of revealing uncritical thinking, which can be caused by habitual thinking or the lack of a diverse social environment.

This made me think about the importance of allowing long durations of time for projects that involve direct interaction with other people. For instance, when artists have the luxury of spending a long time with a community they want to work with, they are better able to acquire a deeper understanding of each other.⁸ There is an ongoing project by curator and art historian France Morin called the Quiet in the Land⁹ that has taken years to realise because she believes it takes time to gain the trust of a community. She is interested in creating projects between artists and communities that, in her words, "strive to activate the 'space between' groups and individuals as a zone of potentiality."¹⁰ I watched a recorded lecture in which she spoke about the influence the Japanese concept of Ma has on her project.¹¹ Ma has been described as an interval, an opening, a gap, and a space that is not only a void but also a vessel to be filled.

Perhaps the thing I am searching for is a potential space or, even, a space of potential. An ideal *space of potential* would constitute the peace and focused dedication that can be found in a sacred space. This would include no recording devices, an understanding of trust among people, and ample time. The space does not necessarily have to be a physical place: it could be the space between people. I am reminded of Biesta and his in-between space again, because he talks about how education happens through participation in a social situation. He would say, “it is this gap itself that educates.”¹²

You say the space *is* the other person. I have thought about this for some time. Can a person *be* a space? Perhaps it is possible: you can project thoughts and be listened to, but, of course, reactions and replies will vary and be unpredictable. It’s like in Ian Wilson’s ongoing *Discussion* piece, in which he sees the act of conversation as an artwork that contains an element of chance.¹³

I have come to realise that I should be less concerned about whether this space could function as an event or a work of art and focus on it more as a pedagogical approach that can trigger processes for thought. Uncovered in Lee Lozano’s notebooks were entries from her *Dialogue Piece* (1969), for which she invited many people to engage in a dialogue with her.¹⁴ They could discuss whatever they wanted with no specific conversational direction.¹⁵ She was determined that the purpose was only to have a dialogue and not to “make a piece,”¹⁶ and she insisted that no recordings or notes were to be made during the dialogues. Having said that, in the later pages of her notebook she does include details of the time and date of the dialogues, including her state of mind at the time and the quality of the content.¹⁷

I am interested in the spaces of dialogue that happen in and around art that, by their nature, tend not to be documented; these are spaces such as the studio visit, social places (communal kitchens of studios, artist residencies, and other social locations where stories about art can appear), and spaces for reflection after the event or the exhibition, as part of what artist Magnus Bårtås refers to as post-construction.¹⁸ These spaces of dialogue are often where art, through storytelling, can take on a life of its own and move outside of the artists’ control.¹⁹

Bårtås has written about how there are many artworks he doesn’t have first-hand experience of, and yet he knows and makes reference to them. He explains that he has often experienced them through images and texts but also through the retelling of experience in conversations and lectures.²⁰ This contradicts Sehgal’s move against documentation by acknowledging that the misunderstandings can be part of a *positive* process. In fact, in many oral cultures there are often misinterpretations, inaccuracies, and embellished truths. Through the medium of storytelling, Bårtås has his own unique experience of these artworks, even if he may have completely misunderstood their intention, which could ultimately reduce their meaning.²¹ I like to think that *new meaning* can be made, precisely, through these misunderstandings.

Quantum physicist David Bohm²² suggests that dialogue itself is a “stream of meaning” that flows through us and between us, affecting everyone involved, and out of this may emerge *new* understanding, which may not have been there at all in the beginning.²³ When I identify these spaces of potential, I find they are the safe havens for trial and error, they are the gaps for misunderstandings, they are the intervals for failure. They are the free zones where new meaning is made.

- 1 Gert Biesta is a professor of education whose “work focuses on the theory and philosophy of education, education policy, and the theory and philosophy of educational and social research.” “Gert Biesta,” Brunel University London, last modified March 10, 2016, <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/people/gert-biesta>.
- 2 Gert Biesta, “‘Mind the Gap!’ Communication and Education Relation,” in *No Education without Relation*, ed. Charles Bingham and Alexander M. Sidorkin (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2010).
- 3 “Sehgal’s works exist ephemerally and are documented only in the viewer’s memory. The artist himself describes his works as ‘constructed situations’. His materials are the human voice, language, movement, and interaction.” “Tino Sehgal,” *Wikipedia*, last modified March 11, 2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tino_Sehgal.
- 4 “The Fine Art of Human Interaction,” *Economist*, July 12, 2012, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/prospero/2012/07/tino-sehgal>.
- 5 Komal Kothari was an Indian folklorist and ethnomusicologist from Jodhpur, Rajasthan. See William Dalrymple, “The Singer of Epics,” in *Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), 95.
- 6 Francis Alÿs, *When Faith Moves Mountains*, 2002, Lima, Peru.
- 7 “The ones who were there will tell the freshmen coming in. That way a memory will be built up of an event that only lasted a day but will live on for who knows how long.” “When Faith Moves Mountains,” video, 15:09, Francis Alÿs’s personal website, <http://www.francisalys.com/when-faith-moves-mountains/>.
- 8 The artist group WochenKlausur organised an unusual meeting on a pleasure boat on Lake Zurich with different groups within Zurich that were often on opposite sides of a huge debate over a drug policy. These groups included politicians, journalists, sex workers, and activists. The aim for this project was for them to talk around a table, away from the prying eyes and ears of the media, in order to have a conversation to try to develop a policy related to the situation of drug-addicted prostitutes who were homeless and in an extreme situation of vulnerability. Over the course of a few weeks, WochenKlausur organised a number of these “floating dialogues.” See Grant H. Kester, introduction to *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (California: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
- 9 The Quiet in the Land is a series of community-based art and education projects in the form of long-term collaborations between artists and communities.
- 10 Pablo Helguera, “Time and Effort,” in *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook* (Mexico City: Jorge Pinto Books, 2010), 20.
- 11 “The Quiet in the Land (Complete),” video, 1:32:54 (lecture, Asia Society, New York, April 6, 2010), <http://www.asiasociety.org/video/quiet-land-complete>.
- 12 Biesta, “Mind the Gap!”
- 13 “One doesn’t know how a conversation partner will respond to a question or expression of thought, and vice-versa.” Jennie Waldow, “Constructed Situations: Communicating the Influence of John Cage,” *Inside/Out* (blog), MoMA, February 19, 2014, https://moma.org/explore/inside_out/2014/02/19/constructed-situations-communicating-the-influence-of-john-cage/.
- 14 Lee Lozano was a visual and conceptual artist who, in the early 1970s, withdrew from the art world.
- 15 Waldow, “Constructed Situations.”
- 16 “The purpose of this piece is to have dialogues, not to make a piece. No recordings or notes are made during dialogues, which exist solely for their own sake as joyous social occasions.” Lee Lozano, *Lee Lozano: Notebooks 1967–70* (New York: Art Publishers, 2009).
- 17 Waldow, “Constructed Situations.”
- 18 “Post-construction is nothing to be ashamed of (as many artists are) but should be regarded as belonging to the domain of afterthought and as a fundamental part of the self-observation and reflection on one’s own practice.” Magnus Bårtås, “You Told Me: Work Stories and Video Essays” (PhD diss., Valand School of Fine Arts, Gothenburg, 2010), 58.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 50.
- 20 “Within the art world, works of art are often mediated as stories and are allocated a place within circulation and reception first and foremost as a story of a series of actions. I call the account of these actions a *work story*.” *Ibid.*, 46.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 46–47.
- 22 David Bohm was a quantum physicist who made significant contributions to the fields of theoretical physics, philosophy, and neuropsychology. He introduced a new theory of group dialogue that has since been named Bohm Dialogue.
- 23 David Bohm, *On Dialogue*, ed. Lee Nichol (London: Routledge, 1996), 6.

Text written during the course Track Changes:
Collective Editorial Processes

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Critical & Pedagogical Studies

Regarding how one can change negative thought patterns through proposals made in artistic work, about what can be counted as private and what as work, and the correlation between them. On critique, pedagogy, and working procedure at large, on objects and spatial images, real time and transformation, and on communication, longing, loneliness, and perception.¹

We have contact points where we, among each other, compare expressions with languages or traces of signs. This can deal with interpretations of that which is in what's hidden, on others' strict knowledge concerning materials, in the relationship between the affective and reality, in existing through association to the other, or regarding that what nature wants and what we as humans want probably are very different things in our time, about our separation from nature. I'm trying to remove or disregard a much too clear symbolism by reading about how symbols and communication functions and have functioned. As if trying to leave them by finding out more about them, just like with the materials that I work with for sculptures. But also in trying to simplify the language to increase its accessibility. It can be about how languages and translations, objects, and experiences are mediated, how they are negotiated, how they can become clouded, covered, or suffocated by human language. Languages are coloured, and the primary etymological meaning of "colour" is *to cover*. We can, through that meaning, get a coloured, painted language that doesn't depict anything figurative; instead it covers other things. That the surface also can be considered to be an image is secondary.

Can there exist other forms of communication that somehow can be counted as being before, around, or after linguistics? Maybe it isn't possible to go beyond what's human as a human necessarily, but we should probably include more factors from the beginning and also when moving forward. Because, how did we end up here, and is this where we want to be? How much of our early communication did we share, or receive, from other animals? If my aim is to move outside of languages, to try to understand communication as if it lies latent in things, then I can't do that as a separate unit. I'm not talking about internal languages but rather ones that are of a mutual nature, and this text can be viewed as a reply in a conversation. Maybe it is primarily through attempting to change patterns of thought in others and oneself through the work of art that this can become possible. It's hard to go against one's impulses, one's automatic thoughts, but maybe it's also highly

necessary. When it's been done enough times, a new pattern is formed. If one views absence as a kind of presence, if one gives it that attribute, then absence is only longing if it is not acknowledged, not being thought about or knowing about it. The now is not put before absence, because it only exists in the now. The rest are memories or guesses. Those who are absent in history are missing because of who told it, where it was being told, and why. Absence in a story can be presence in someone else's story. What would a complete absence be like, beyond death? Loneliness, perhaps.

Could communication that lies dormant or resting in things be a language in and of itself and not just a prediction? It would inevitably be an analysis of language and time understood through the prison, which it is to be a part of them, in how we perceive them and how we share that view as well as we can. One can choose to see it as being locked in or as freedom. How deeply can we gain insight into somebody else's view on subsistence? Does the resting language lie in the particles that together make a material and later an object? Otherwise they are particles in becoming, those that haven't yet taken a material form. Or that will change form. They will have been there for a long time, longer than the view of them as something else will have existed. What was the first material that we made into an object? When did we extend our body and consider things to *belong* to our bodies? The next step after that probably was that we considered things to belong to us even though we were not in the same place as them; the object and ownership have a partly mutual history. *I made a sculpture about the text; we read the sculpture*. Someone put a stone on another stone, but they are not my stones, they are the stone's stones, and that which is material has a lifespan in that it will sooner or later dissolve into smaller parts and become transformed into something else. Time as we understand it is tailored for our conceptual framework.

We divide time into portions; one of them is that of the private and work. The private can be transformed into work, and for me it's usually not unclear what's what. There is a correlation, but I need to have the areas transparent and separated to be able to work—to believe in the illusion, if you want to put it that way. Maybe the private needs to be more private in order to make it more than the work needs as work. Could it be a good approach to let the private in observation become work, and also self-help in the private, without them damaging one another? Isn't a sanctuary away from work sometimes needed? A sanctuary away from the private on the other hand should be somewhat closer to

an escape from reality; the person who you are is possibly not as malleable as your work. The private probably contains more basic needs; in comparison, it will be more difficult to criticise when it's more about emotions. So how can one handle one's private everyday and our mutual problems in work together? Not as in being alone, or on one's own, in the same way as it's said that we die alone. One can die both internally and externally, with others and with oneself. The will to keep on living can disappear, but maybe the body doesn't give up because of that.

To find pedagogy is something that seems to happen communally. I do not have a determined starting point for pedagogy; instead, it is something that I am trying to build up and into my working procedure at the moment. Tearing down at the same time as building up. Through proposing things to others after having listened to them, in presenting lines of thoughts and then discussing them. Maybe a pedagogy that is to be found through tests of fields of application, functions, within the social interaction. What pedagogy can there be in trying to help others by influencing the space where we work? Maybe in the preparations leading to the dialogue, big parts of the *dialogue* happen before it happens, so to speak. Unannounced or non-advertised changes to the physical workplace to try to make it easier, to help others. The planting of thoughts that go back and forth between us everyday—not whole thoughts, but insinuating fragments. Thoughts about the *optimisation* of functions, or fields of application, how we can move further on. What's private shifts into becoming fuel for a method of working, and in that way I can work relatively privately without exposing myself to danger, to risks I do not wish to take. It's not me; it is instead more like a tool as any other tool. As long as one knows where you are private, you can hide it better for others; I choose that illusion. But the next day I will change my mind, that test is done, a new starting point needs to be developed. Problems are absorbed into the working procedure and are then transformed into methods or physical contributions, and in that way they will hopefully not generate problems for others. My hope is always that my private problems won't have to be others' problems. Or at least that we can meet in the generality of the problems. Theory, problems, has become practice, work. Loneliness gave work.

In this manner it becomes even more important to separate work from the private, especially in one's thoughts, to not care too much about what others think if they have hurtful or non-understanding thoughts about this. To be thorough in explaining one's view on this is to be able to keep things separate for oneself; it will be troublesome if one stops believing that the self exists. If you lose your voice like that, you are extradited, you are no longer only yourself. Someone stole a part of you and you don't know how it will come back to you. However I don't think it's about a need for control in dividing like that. The working procedure at large will be looked upon as in flux, and in this way one cannot know what will lead where. One has to be receptive and adapt to the situation. The constant is the change in itself. One has to be able to fail many times if it should lead somewhere, towards a reply. One of the risks with this approach is that it can still be floating where one is oneself as a person. When working, you are not alone in the same way; it is partly communal. The purpose with the work is not private or singular. If it were, then it would be strictly self-indulgent, selfish. It probably needs to be more of a symbiosis than a parasite relationship, where someone's *self* has taken others' hostage. In that self, loneliness

probably lives also. Work related there is no emphasis in loneliness, necessarily.

If I am afraid of almost everything when I am alone, and I can no longer know what's considered to be *reality*, and also experience that as being far too private; other people will most likely feel the same way. Is there anything unique in fear? Do you have a unique fear? I may not share my fears with everybody, but to think that I don't share them with anyone I find hard to believe. In the loneliness I am afraid of getting stuck, again, in thoughts that I often have. That I won't be able to find a way out of them and won't be able to return from them, becoming imprisoned in my own mind; it has happened before. It's very unpleasant to not be able to know who you are, who others are, what the difference is. So, what's real for you? How many times will you be able to find your way back if you become imprisoned like that? The soul can become undermined. But one can also help others by talking and sharing one's problems, cutting steps for others, being a part of a mutual development, a rehabilitation. There is an enormous potential in sharing, in language about the private in work. In how we tell stories for one another and how we do it again to anchor them in the collective mind.

How can it be considered that we are our own in our minds without thinking that we encounter proposals and influences from others, and if that is so, when is it that we can be considered to be completely our own? The lone, the unique might always be in our thoughts, but that won't be communicable to anybody else in the exact way as we experience it ourselves; therefore, perhaps nobody else should see it as unique. Besides that, every human might seem separate from others, strictly physically speaking. There might not be any support that the subjective even exists in that way. If we can't share it, how can we know that it exists? Even if we are our own in our thoughts, we don't have a possibility of knowing that it is so. On the other hand, if it's possible to keep the interest up for whatever is being discussed, one might direct it into whatever one wants, change the course of the tracks. In that which is considered to be infinite, where everything would exist inside everything, time needs to be defined differently. To do something, anything, means that you at the same time are not doing all other things it is possible to do. What is forsaken is always unimaginable much more in quantity. There are different solutions to elude this feeling of endlessly growing spatiality. Decisions can seem to be very solitary, but that is also an illusion, something we have invented to fit our conceptual framework. What does it then mean to *not* make a decision, and is it even possible to do so in the view of automatic thinking? What is a decision?

In a subjective visual envisagement of a spatial image, all angles are excluded besides the one that the eyes are fixated on, but the eye's central view constitutes a very small percentage. Your gaze flickers around in order to build an image of the room. In the peripheral view there is instead a negotiation going on between memory and the eye; the seeing is situated not only in the now and the eye is an instrument. It's not the eye that sees the image—it's the brain. The impression of a spatial image outside of vision, with other senses, greatly affects the overall picture. The memory of touching a material can later be added to the overall picture when just seeing it. However, this would work differently in a group, as bigger areas can be covered as an organism, a network. To make a decision is in its foundation painful and hard like that, whatever one chooses. We are used to that. But again, what does it then mean to

not choose? How has early thinking been administrated and altered, how is information added to our mutual space of thoughts and when? Are trains of thoughts shut down eventually, do they become obsolete? Is it possible to talk about origin when talking about information? Experiences and things are repeated with small alterations; has information been there since before we thought we reached it, understood it?

If I look at a table and can concentrate on that I see a table, it can feel very good, I'm happy to see it. But usually I don't see it. It's rare that one is *there* when one sees it as one should perhaps see it, without a mask. These moments of clarity, when you feel that you are there in the moment with what one thinks or looks at, are probably rare. When you manage to leave the thoughts that drift off in peace for a while, when the vision of the future from the present is consistent. I'm not talking about dreams; I'm talking about when you are awake. But what is it really that one sees? There is much that is added to the apparition of the table that is not the table itself. The table in itself might not mean very much at all to you; it's a composite of many different experiences and attempts that lead to the appreciation and the view of it. Threads of events that led there—right then you are in sync with what you look at. However, there are perhaps even more directly appreciated things in observing. One can talk about longing in the action of seeing, though if what you look at can be seen with longing it might mean that you are not really *there*. If you are inside an experience, you probably don't simultaneously long for the same. Can one even long for the same moment that you experience in the present, at the same time as it takes place? How long is the now? Would it add a romantic shimmer to the situation? Like the mirages in the summer heat, further down the road; when you arrive at where you saw it, it has disappeared, moved even further down the road. How will the future be able to recognise how one once imagined it? Maybe if something doesn't exist anymore, like in death? It depends on what one means by *the now* and which focus lies there.

One can be afraid of losing an experience while having it, but one might also be able to accept being inside the experience of liking the longing as such. Maybe then what one sees or experiences is undermined by the longing itself. In longing as a unit. Maybe it needs the image, the sounds, the scents, the tastes, the emotions, and the touch in order to exist. But it is something other in itself, complete as an experience. Longing as a sense-based unit. One

singular sense can have the power to activate all the other senses together. Maybe then we can see longing and like it for what it is, as an overlap. When we are our own in our thoughts in the way that we cannot reproduce an experience to someone else in the same way that we experienced it, communication might then always be a negotiation. Your longing is my being and vice versa. The communal doesn't know anything about lonely people, as that doesn't exist in its definition. But the lonely person knows that the group exists.

Communication lies dormant in most things, and it is active where the *living* and the *dead* meet, where paths intersect. These crossings can be described in what the objects communicate to the living inhabitants of a spatial image. They wouldn't exist if it weren't for us, except if they have been taken directly as what they are from nature outside of our sphere. In those cases it's the situation that they have *not* been a part of before that is the difference, not the physical. They would have the same form and content, except for what has fallen off them during transport. A stone can be a table, but what is a stone? Fossils were alive and then became stone. Cells are alive, but not when they are dust. A big part of the dust in our rooms consists of dead skin cells and other bodily leavings; we meet in the dust all the time. At least if that can still be considered to be *us*, our dead cells floating around among us.

The dust doesn't care whether or not it came from something private or from work; we can't see the difference anymore. The groups' dust is gathered where we work. The dead and the living meet in active situations. Death is not always as still as one needs it to be when thinking about it, when processing it. It's swift and it doesn't take into consideration how we see things today. We have alienated ourselves from death in the linear, in time as a human invention. The living and the dead are the same thing, only in different moments. In that sense, maybe they don't meet at all, as they can be considered to be the same as information. What we call the *dead* and the *living* meet, and there is communication. We see ourselves in what's dead and wonder how things work when we are dead. When one is dead one can probably not work anymore, but one is then highly private to many other people, if that possibility hasn't been taken from one. Everything that has existed before me is writing together with me and my not at all unique, negative, patterns of thoughts that I wish to change. What falls off during our transport is what becomes work; the rest is too private, I presume.

1 This text should be read in the context of thoughts from Giorgio Agamben, Hannah Arendt, Roland Barthes, Walter Benjamin, Jimmie Durham, Umberto Eco, Michel Foucault, Selma Lagerlöf, Marcel Proust and Robert Smithson. But also in the context of oral storytelling as such, how we tell stories to each other, how they are passed on. With interest also in how one can try to merge theory with practice.

Text written during the course Track Changes:
Collective Editorial Processes

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Within my constant struggle between art and philosophy, I find myself turning towards philosophy again and again. I don't mean to contradict these two extremely strong discourses, but bonding them together seems more violent specifically for art than for philosophy. I'm asking a question: Why do I study art? What is there in art that brings me back to it, since on a conscious level philosophy appears to me much more important and valuable?

I will start this piece of writing with some intuitions that I believe many of us share. After that, I'm going to argue for them.

I would say that if not true for everyone, at least most of us are continuously seeking an answer to the question that can, in short, be verbalised as "Why?" Many people focus their hunt for an answer upon religion, too many on the ideology of the era, some on an illusion of love. The question "Why?" can also be translated as a question of origins, which we can see used in multiple cases, for instance, as means to create a delusion of an authentic and solid nationality.

Martin Heidegger starts *Being and Time* by saying that the question of being has been forgotten.¹ I would say the question is constantly asked by the means of artistic practice. Art prevails through time. It penetrates cultures in numerous and transforming shapes within epochs; it traverses along phenomena, from one to another, from sacred lands into the mundane and back again. It's not commonplace, but still occupies its spot in everyday life; it is not routine and it cannot become so. It is within insolubility and holds the potential for extremely intense ecstasy: an experience that can elevate, shake, wound, oscillate into organs, which can appear in forms of pleasure and delectation, fear and threat (within satisfaction).

In our social era, which puts a strong emphasis on productivity, utility, being-for-something (for capital), art making—if we can separate it from the art market, as I would say most artists do not work with the goal of wealth creation—can be seen as a nonsensical practice to undertake. It's not the most rational choice in terms of making a living or conforming to social requirements. Beyond the need to "experience art," how does art prevail upon so many without being profitable, or entertaining, or the source of any type of carefree delight?

Can it be suggested that the human need to have art sprouts from the question mentioned above? From a fallacy, misbelief, hope; from the substratum of one's being based on the lack of a foundation of being, a lack of the origin that would provide completeness in terms of meaning of

being. An effort to approach the origin through art, which art is not able to provide—an incompetence from which art gains its strength.

With the word "origin," I'm working in the area between a couple of concepts. I'm referring to the Heideggerian *Dasein*² ("being there" or "presence"), a fundamental part of being human at the ontological level. My use of "the origin" can also be interpreted as indicating the "truth of an existence," or like the Greek word "*aletheia*," as "truth and disclosure." I don't follow the Heideggerian terminology exactly, so "the origin" also refers to an individual subject, since its being is a misbelief of a subject. Therefore "the origin" can be understood in more popular terms as an "authenticity" and "beginning."

I'm going to relate art's functioning mechanics to the Derridean concept of writing. Through that metaphor of writing and Jacques Derrida's critique of the "metaphysics of pure presence," I will refute the existence of such an origin. I will also describe this presupposed origin as "radical otherness," the term that comes from Merja Hintsä's reading of Derrida and Sigmund Freud;³ however, my use of the term doesn't precisely go along with Freud's. Instead by "radical otherness" I imply the opposite of oneness, sameness, the original state of existence as the presupposed origin of a subject. The term can be related to "alterity," that is to say, there's no constant base beyond the everyday phenomenon of a subject. A subject is always constituted by its environment, culture, education, and history. A subject cannot be found in its pure authentic form. In other words, a subject's subjectivity is a cultural reflection.

*"Everything begins by referring back, that is to say, does not begin."*⁴

Art is an endeavour towards the origin, in the case of both art practice and experiencing art. It often happens that artists are not willing or even able to verbalise the content, premises, or meanings of their works. Rather, they rely on an inner image, a process, tendencies, and traces, without these intentionally and explicitly stemming from their own personal histories. Sometimes artists are content to describe only the visual aspect of their work or a way of using materials. Many times I have heard an artist saying that there is just an inexplicable necessity to make. Just as often, one hears how a beholder stammers when trying to articulate the reason why a certain art piece has stuck him or her.

An art piece is more than its external corporeal essence. Just as important as what composes a piece is what is excluded from it, such as signs of implications, references, and allusions. The first time I encountered the Derridean concept of writing and its relation to the origin, and especially to the crisis of the origin, was while reading the book *Mahdottoman rajoilla*⁵ by Merja Hintsa, a philosophy scholar at the University of Helsinki.

Following Hintsa's reading, the problem that Derrida discovers in traditional Western metaphysics, since Plato, is its reliance on presence; that is, how it confines the origin of truth to the possession of *logos*,⁶ interpreted as speech, and thus excludes writing from its logocentric circle, together with forgetting that speech is also constituted by signs and therefore implicates a representation of a presence, a radical possibility of otherness.⁷ In other words, a subject cannot rely on *logos*, speech and presence, as the pure origin, since those can come into a present only through signs, which are traces that cannot be derived from the origin. In Derrida's words:

The symptomatic form of the return of the repressed: the metaphor of writing which haunts European discourse, and the systematic contradictions of the ontotheological exclusion of the trace. The repression of writing as the repression of that which threatens presence and the mastering of absence.⁸

Hintsa points out that Derrida uncovers a contradiction that he finds has existed since Plato. Philosophy begins within crisis, wherein truth and presence prove themselves controversial. Insofar as Plato has condemned writing on the realm of *hypomnesis* (reminder, extended, and technical memory), as opposed to *mneme* (natural living memory), Derrida's critique reveals an internal conflict of the claim: memory already needs characters to return to not what is in a present but to what it possesses a necessary relation to. For Derrida, this opens the space for writing in motion between *mneme* and *hypomnesis*. The origin, to which thought constantly tries to return, presupposes something non-original by the means of *hypomnesis*.⁹ This is the place to which I turn my sights when it comes to art.

The Derridean concept of writing is not writing in its everyday sense; more precisely it is traces, inscription, engraving. It finds its place in the ambivalent term "*pharmakon*," poison and remedy at once. According to Derrida's reading:

If the *pharmakon* is "ambivalent," it is because it constitutes a medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and the play, that links them among themselves, reverses them or makes one side cross over into the other. ... The *pharmakon* is the movement, the locus, and the play: (the production of) difference.¹⁰

According to Hintsa, Derrida invokes Freud in his drive to demonstrate the hidden conflict in the metaphysics of presence; in Freud's description, the psyche is inhabited by radical otherness.¹¹ Consciousness—the observing subject's awareness of itself—loses its status as the last non-reversible principle, since it is shaped by radical absence, the trace of the other.

The Derridean arche-trace is the element that shatters the horizon of presence. It is the trace that represents itself as a difference, the trace that does not come into its presence in a phenomenon as such. Trace as a trace,

difference as a difference, intrinsic with its disappearance. Difference between presence and absence cannot be thought without a trace that generates divergent entities. For Derrida, the arche-trace is more original than the entities it generates, such as presence. Trace exceeds the question of "what is." It finds its place beyond the origin; it is a pure motion that produces differences.¹²

Let's return to the argument that art unfolds itself in an effort to approach the origin, and in doing so it is analogical with, or at least touching on, Derridean writing. In this effort, art is condemned to fail; it remains a representation of the approach. It should be emphasised, despite connotations of the term "fail," that the event of the failure of art in its approach towards the origin is to art's own gain; in being unable to fulfil the fundamental lack of the origin, art manages to retain its appeal, that element that persuades a beholder to turn back to art again and again.

Contrary to the Heideggerian argument that holds there is some revelation in art¹³ that makes humans return to art by awakening them from conventionality, it is the beholders themselves who construct this wish of revelation and incessantly seek it from an art piece without finding it. Lack of the origin, lack of the truth, maintains itself in this incessant seeking.

According to Immanuel Kant's aesthetical judgment, art is distinguished from labour and craft by being free from interests.¹⁴ Art doesn't possess the same value as a practical tool, that is to say, it cannot be defined in the same manner as everyday items such as scissors, hammers, and chairs, which lose their intrinsic essence by existing for a predefined task. Art is not a commodity or a consumer good; it does not exist to assist some specified purpose, and it has no singular form of appearance. According to Kant, we are aware that art is made by humans, but nevertheless view it as free from social restrictions, as if were instead a part of nature. Art is creative without being bonded with utility. I will come back to this idea later on.

Art, in essence, is an approach. It cannot come to conclusion or be totally finished—it is never "done"—and therein lies its dissimilarity with products. Art is constantly in motion, coming from, going to, but all the same it is present with a beholder in time and space, in an instant, under observation, in its effectiveness, to be experienced.

In spite of its very existence in time and space, an art piece fails to restore a beholder to a beholder's own presence and base, a state beyond his or her corporeal appearance. As with the Derridean writing, art functions as a manner of living memory; within the interplay between a work and a beholder, the work affects a beholder through associations. It engraves from a beholder and onto a beholder in the beholder's requirement of an answer (or an acknowledgement), to approach the base as the truth, to which, in Plato's words, thought always tries to make a return, but which, in my claim, it is not able to find. From the features of an art piece thought recalls the absolute past¹⁵ as well as traces, that is, meanings already experienced and learned.

Here otherness steps in: what can be more "other" than that which we most strive to find—and striving requires a need, and need requires, in short, a lack of something. As noted earlier, following Freud's use of the term "radical otherness" (here relating the "consciousness of a subject" with "the presence as truth," and thereby, the origin), the other is inhabited within a subject, and in being so characterises the other—as a subject—as radical. In other

words, the other is an agent who constructs a subject; a subject is no more than the motion of differences with(in) the other(s).

Now I want to invite Jacques Lacan into the fray. For Lacan, a subject is conditioned by lack, which generates desire. The Lacanian unconscious is shaped by this lack and is structured in the manner of language, through metaphors and metonymies. Through endless chains of signifiers, a subject chases what it has lost when it enters into the language system.¹⁶ My concept of the false belief of the origin can also take its place as the Lacanian concept of a subject delineated by the fundamental lack. The force of the desire to find the origin is thus the operative agent for the making of art.

The lack of the origin—the lack of a subject itself as an authentic being—engenders desire, the fulfilment of which is attempted by projecting it onto art. Art has achieved this “target” status by transgressing everyday matters, exceeding spoken and written languages, in an occurrence of words that cannot become uttered. Art in its visual form is as the Derridean writing, operating through traces: associations, metaphors, and metonymies. By being an illusion, the origin cannot manifest in its pure essence, not without references to the past. The dialectics of the steps towards the origin and the very absence of a destination.

This projecting onto art creates a back-and-forth motion that at once generates satisfaction and causes its withdrawal. “Satisfaction,” in its first sense, is a belief of the foundation of the origin, and secondly, a satisfaction within the withdrawal of the first satisfaction, which becomes an affirmation of a subject’s own subjectivity, since a subject cannot find itself exhaustively from an art piece. In this withdrawal, art maintains a beholder in motion, being aware of itself.

According to Heidegger, consciousness is never permanently present for itself; it seeks its own meaning from the objects with which it interacts.¹⁷

To make parallel these two conflicting satisfactions, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Friedrich Nietzsche generates the concepts of the Dionysian and the Apollonian. The Dionysian is an ecstatic force of life, an all-inclusive state wherein subjectivity vanishes and becomes absorbed into the chaotic totality of the nature of life itself. There is no longer any distance between good and bad, pleasure and pain, you and me. The Apollonian steps in as a counterpart for the Dionysian, in order to maintain a subject with its functionality as a separate subject in a social order. In the Dionysian, language disappears; however, a subject cannot distinguish itself without definitions served by language. The Apollonian can be thought of as language: it balances the revelry of the nature of life, it creates a distance to life, and brings with it social order.

An art piece remains an object. It is not able to cause the downfall of the subject/object distinction, although an experience of art can blur it. Art cannot serve the desired unity, oneness, the origin—although it does provoke longing for it. An art piece is thoroughly corrupted and constituted by traces. It recalls the past, but not in a linear sense of time.

Here I want to make a distinction between “art” and an “art piece.”¹⁸ According to one fellow student, art is always political. To make a correction: all art pieces are political. For Kant, art is free from social restrictions. Right when a beholder is totally corrupted by traces, as well as when the beholder is inscribing into an art piece, is when

an art piece is brought into the social. Here is, as well, the moment when an art piece enters into instrumentality. As noted, the experience of a piece is constituted through associations, in a manner of living memory. This memory is always structured in and by some certain cultural context, and it has no ability to exceed that context. Thus where art is considered to refer away from social restrictions, culture retains a piece in its realm. In this way, an art piece either endorses or defies a culture, or at least it confronts it. A subject tries to identify an art piece with himself or herself, and in doing so, tries to find and identify himself or herself through an art piece; such an identifying process is always social and contractual.

The origin is inevitably an illusion and an ideology, a post-structure, that is built up to strive to explain a present time more than to explain causality, which has produced the present time. In other words, the present produces the origin, not vice versa.

According to Derrida, we are finite because in the beginning, there is the other. That is to say, since in the beginning there is no presence, there is the arche-trace, which is at first difference. After that come entities, which are constituted by difference.

I would say that however it is understood in the academic field, in the common sense, the Cartesian distinction still prevails. Where a subject (or a beholder, in the case of art) attempts to find itself from an art piece, it attempts to find itself as the origin. What gives art more potential to be found as the origin than other objects is the hidden inexplicableness of it. As noted, art cannot exhaustively come into words in the same way we can use words to define implements or devices. Art is thoroughly permeated by its own history; it still lives under the shadow of the genius myth.

An art piece is always political, and likewise, it is always subjective. Since a subject can present itself only through objects, those objects will become the very representation of a subject, and thus, of the origin. The Derridean deconstruction negates the pure origin. The Derridean trace, the arche-trace, has already polluted “the transcendental horizon of the question of Being,” which tries to recall the origin. As he says, in the beginning, there is the other, there are traces.

“[The arche-trace] presents itself as an explicating thought of the myth of origins.”¹⁹

Without its own presence, the origin of a subject can be derived only from objects. Before objects, a subject is nothing. Before traces pollute the presence of a subject, there is no subject, nor are there objects that can define themselves in any sense. There is no origin.

The failure of art as the origin is also the condition of its success. If art succeeded in being found as the origin, the event of a subject would end in a closure—an event where motion disappears, a subject ceases, and difference dies.

- 1 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 2.
- 2 This term comes from *Being and Time*.
- 3 For more on the term "radical otherness," see Merja Hintsu, *Mahdottoman rajoilla: Derrida ja psykoanalyysi* (Helsinki: Tutkijaliitto, 1998), 51.
- 4 Jacques Derrida, *Psyche: Inventions of the Other*, ed. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth G. Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 126.
- 5 *Mahdottoman rajoilla* can be translated as "at the borders of the unthinkable."
- 6 The Greek word *logos* means "word," "speech," "account," "cause," "oration."
- 7 Hintsu, *Mahdottoman rajoilla*, 29.
- 8 Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 247.
- 9 Hintsu, *Mahdottoman rajoilla*, 37.
- 10 Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 127.
- 11 Hintsu, *Mahdottoman rajoilla*, 51.
- 12 See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).
- 13 Iain Thomson, "Heidegger's Aesthetics," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2015 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/heidegger-aesthetics/>.
- 14 Douglas Burnham, "Immanuel Kant: Aesthetics," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/kantaest/>.
- 15 The concept of "absolute past" is summed up by Emmanuel Levinas: "supreme presence is inseparable from its supreme and irreversible absence."
- 16 Jussi Saarinen, "Taidettatutkimaan—menetelmiä ja näkökulmia," 2012, http://www.academia.edu/2049917/Teoreettisia_%C3%A4ht%C3%B6kohtia_%C3%B0psykoanalyttiseen_taideentutkimukseen_On_the_theoretical_foundations_of_psychanalytic_aesthetics_.
- 17 Jani Vanhala, "Heideggerin taidefilosofia," *LOGOS-ensyklopedia*, Filosofia.fi, 2014, <http://filosofia.fi/node/5853>.
- 18 Joseph Kosuth has made this distinction before, but I'm not referring to him here.
- 19 Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 54.

Biographies

Gertrud Sandqvist

Professor of Art Theory
and the History of Ideas;
Supervisor for the
Doctoral Programme

Gertrud Sandqvist has been Rector of Malmö Art Academy since 2011, a post she also previously held from 1995 to 2007. Professor Sandqvist has been writing extensively on mainly European contemporary art since the early 1990s. In 2010 she was the co-curator of the *Modernautställningen* at Moderna Museet, Stockholm. She co-curated, together with Sarat Maharaj, Dorothee Albrecht, and Stina Edblom, the Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art 2011. She also recently curated *Siksi—The Nordic Miracle Revisited* at Galleri F 15, Moss, Norway, 2015; *Red Dawn* at HISK, Ghent 2014; *Channeled*, an exhibition of contemporary artists alongside Hilma af Klint, at Lunds Konsthall, 2013; and *Against Method*, at the Generali Foundation, Vienna, 2013. Currently she is researching the occult diaries of Hilma af Klint.

Dr. Sarat Maharaj

Professor of Visual Art
and Knowledge Systems;
Supervisor for the
Doctoral Programme

Sarat Maharaj is a writer and curator. He was one of the curators of documenta XI (2002), in collaboration with Okwui Enwezor, and he was chief curator of *Pandemonium—Art in a time of creativity fever*, at the Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art 2011. He co-curated the 29th Sao Paulo Biennial (2010) and *Farewell to Postcolonialism* at the Third Guangzhou Triennial (2008) and acted as curatorial advisor to the Sharjah Biennial 2012.

His PhD dissertation was entitled “The Dialectic of Modernism and Mass Culture: Studies in Post War British Art” (University of Reading, UK). Between 1980 and 2005, he was Professor of History and Theory of Art at Goldsmiths, University of London. Dr. Maharaj was the first Rudolf Arnheim Professor, Humboldt University, Berlin (2001–02) and Research Fellow at the Jan Van Eyck Akademie, Maastricht (1999–2001).

His specialist research and publications cover Marcel Duchamp, James Joyce, and Richard Hamilton, with extensive writing on visual art as knowledge production, art research, globalisation, and cultural translation, among other subjects.

Current projects: As part of the Distinguished Scholar Professorship in Pretoria, South Africa, Dr. Maharaj is working on a series of visual-textual-film constructions called *Drakensberg*. The project *Ignorantitis Sapiens* focuses on the “knowledge/ignorance virus,” looking at knowledge produced through art practice as a kind of “knowledgeable ignorance.” It is part of a mapping of the ongoing transformation of London from a postcolonial city into a post-imperial, global exchange zone. How do the migrations, changes in housing and work regimes, city space, and infrastructure, etc., shape the rise of “a design for living of a new urbanity”? This is explored through the demolition/construction works in the patch of London he lives in: the “knowledge mecca” called Bloomsbury.

Dr. Matts Leiderstam

Professor of Fine Arts

Matts Leiderstam is a Swedish artist based in Stockholm. He obtained a PhD in Fine Arts at Malmö Art Academy in 2006 and studied painting at Valand Academy between 1984 and 1989. Selected solo exhibitions include Wilfried Lentz, Rotterdam; Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm; Kunsthalle Düsseldorf; Grazer Kunstverein, Graz; Salon MoCAB—Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade; Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe; Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz; and Magasin III, Stockholm. Selected group shows include the National Gallery in Prague; Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Høvikodden, Norway; Fondazione Prada, Milan; 8th Berlin Biennale; Gasworks, London; Museo

Tamayo, Mexico City; Witte de With, Rotterdam; the Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art 2010; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; and the Third Guangzhou Triennial. Publications on and of his work include the artist book *MOM/2011/47 (and into the room swallows flew)*, 2012; *Matts Leiderstam: Seen from Here*, Verlag für moderne Kunst, 2010; *Matts Leiderstam: Nachbild/After Image*, Argobooks, 2010; and his dissertation, "See and Seen: Seeing Landscape through Artistic Practice," Malmö Art Academy, Lund University, 2006 (www.seeandseen.net/dissertation).

Haegue Yang
Professor of Fine Arts

Haegue Yang is a Korean artist based in Berlin. She has studied at Seoul National University, Fine Arts College; Cooper Union, New York; and Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Städelschule, Frankfurt. Her most recent solo exhibitions include Hamburger Kunsthalle, 2016; Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, 2015; Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, 2015; Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Strasbourg, 2013; Bergen Kunsthall, 2013; Haus der Kunst, Munich, 2012; and major institutions including the New Museum, New York; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Aspen Art Museum, Colorado; Kunsthau Bregenz, Austria; Arnolfini, Bristol; Modern Art Oxford; and Tate Modern Tanks, London. Yang has exhibited in major international exhibitions including the 53rd Venice Biennale (2009), as the South Korean representative; DOCUMENTA (13), Kassel, 2012; Taipei Biennial, 2014; Sharjah Biennial 12, 2015; Vienna Biennale, 2015; and 8th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Brisbane, 2015. Her work can be found in the following museums and collections: AmorePacific Museum of Art, Yongin; Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Explum, Murcia; Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig; Guggenheim Abu Dhabi; Kulturstiftung des Bundes, Halle an der Saale; Hamburger Kunsthalle; Kunstmuseum Stuttgart; Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź; M+, Hong Kong; National Museum of Contemporary Art, South Korea; Neuer Berliner Kunstverein; Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane; Seoul Museum of Art (SeMA); Serralves Foundation, Contemporary Art Museum, Porto; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and Westfälisches Landesmuseum, Münster.

Joachim Koester
Professor of Fine Arts

Joachim Koester is a Danish artist based in Copenhagen. His work has been shown at documenta X, Kassel; the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale; the Gwangju Biennale 1995; the 54th Venice Biennale; Busan Biennale 2006; Manifesta 7, Trento; Tate Triennial 2009, London; and Taipei Biennale 2012, as well as in solo shows at Centre national de la photographie, Paris; Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen; Centre d'Art Santa Mònica, Barcelona; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Museo Tamayo, Mexico City; Power Plant, Toronto; Kestnergesellschaft, Hanover; Institut d'art contemporain, Villeurbanne; MIT, Boston; Charlottenborg, Copenhagen; S.M.A.K, Ghent; Camera Austria, Graz; Centre d'art contemporain, Geneva; Turner Contemporary, Margate; Greene Naftali Gallery, New York; Galleri Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen; and Jan Mot, Brussels.

Koester's work can be found in the following museums and collections: Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Reina Sofia Museo Nacional Centro de Arte, Madrid; Museum Boijmans, Rotterdam; S.M.A.K, Ghent; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Baltimore Museum of Art; Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, Madrid; Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Kiasma, Helsinki; Kongelige Biblioteks Fotografiske Samling, Copenhagen; Fonds national d'art contemporain, Paris; Sorø Kunstmuseum, Denmark; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Malmö Konstmuseum; Sammlung Hoffmann, Berlin; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; MAC's, Grand-Hornu, Belgium; Kadist Art Foundation, Paris; FRAC Le Plateau, Institut d'art contemporain, Villeurbanne, France; Generali Foundation, Vienna; Sammlung Verbund, Vienna; and Museum Sztuki, Łódź.

Emily Wardill

Professor of Fine Arts

Emily Wardill is a British artist based in Lisbon, Portugal. She has had solo exhibitions at the National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen, 2012; Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, 2012; de Appel arts centre, Amsterdam, 2010; Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, 2011; and Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 2007–08.

She participated in the 54th Venice Biennale (2011) and the 19th Sydney Biennale (2014), as well as in group exhibitions at Hayward Gallery, London; Witte de With, Rotterdam; mumok, Vienna; and Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami. Wardill was the recipient of the Jarman Award in 2010 and the Leverhulme Award in 2011. Her work is in international collections from Tate Britain to mumok, Vienna. She is represented by carlier | gebauer, Berlin; STANDARD (OSLO); and Altman Siegel, San Francisco.

Maj Hasager

Programme Director of Critical & Pedagogical Studies (MFA); Senior Lecturer in Fine Arts

Maj Hasager is a Danish artist based in Copenhagen. She studied Photography and Fine Art in Denmark, Sweden, and the UK, earning an MFA from Malmö Art Academy.

Hasager's artistic approach is research based and interdisciplinary, and she works predominantly with text, sound, video, and photography.

She has exhibited her work internationally in events and at institutions such as GL STRAND, Copenhagen; Galleri Image, Aarhus; Fokus Video Art Festival, Nikolaj Kunsthal, Copenhagen; *Society Acts*, Moderna Museet, Malmö; *Community Works*, Cleveland Institute of Art; Red Barn Gallery, Belfast; Laznia Centre for Contemporary Art, Gdańsk; Liverpool Biennial; Al-Hoash Gallery, Jerusalem; Al-Kahf Gallery, Bethlehem; Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center, Ramallah; Overgaden Institute of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen; Guangzhou Triennial; Gallery 21, Malmö; LOOP film festival, Barcelona; EMERGED Space, Glasgow; and KargART festival, Istanbul.

Hasager is the recipient of several international residencies and most recently a fellow at Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart. She has been awarded grants in support of her work from the Danish Arts Council, the Danish Arts Foundation, Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (Beirut), ArtSchool Palestine, the Danish Centre for Culture and Development, and the Danish Arts Agency. In 2015, she was awarded the Edstranska stiftelsens stipendium. Additionally, Hasager is a guest lecturer at the International Academy of Art Palestine; Dar al-Kalima College, Bethlehem; and the University of Ulster, Belfast. She occasionally writes essays, catalogue texts, and articles.

Maria HedlundSenior Lecturer
in Fine Arts

Maria Hedlund is a Swedish artist based in Stockholm. She studied in the Photography Department at the University of Gothenburg, graduating in 1993.

Two of her recent, ongoing works were exhibited in Stockholm during spring 2014: *Life at Hyttödammen*, in a group show at Artipelag, and *Some kind of knowledge*, at Elastic Gallery. In the latter work, one of the items comes from a friend. It used to stand on a plinth, inscribed with the words "I love you" underneath. The plinth was never to be found again. The work also includes a plant shaped into its current form by taxi ride. Another object was found at Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale outside of Brussels. Adopted plants and things that no one actually wants. Things that are in a state of transition: on the way to oblivion but equally likely to enter new contexts where a different set of narratives appear.

The things were placed and photographed in front of the same wall. These become images, whereas the objects as a group function as an image bank. Pictures lead to new pictures that become objects, which consequently lead to new items. The image bank grows and the work continues. Parts of the works are now being transformed into books.

Per Olof PerssonSenior Lecturer
in Fine Arts

P-O Persson is a Swedish artist based in Malmö. He graduated from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Stockholm, in 1988.

As Senior Lecturer at Malmö Art Academy, P-O Persson is responsible for technical and practical courses.

Exhibitions include Liljevalchs konsthall, Stockholm, 2004; Krognoshuset, Lund, 2003; Busan Metropolitan Art Museum, Seoul, 1999; Kampnagelfabrik, Hamburg, 1991; Lunds Konsthall, 1989; and Malmö Konsthall, 1987. Public commissions include Landskrona stad, 2007; Helsingborg Fire Department, Public Art Agency Sweden, 2005; Karlskrona stad, 2001; and Astra Zeneca, Lund, 1999–2000.

Grants include Edstrandska stiftelsens stipendium, 1996; the Swedish Arts Grants Committee, working grant, 1990–95; Ellen Trolzig Foundation, Malmö, 1981; Malmö Stad kulturstipendium; and Aase and Rickard Björklund stipendium, Malmö. Public collections include Malmö Museum, Kristianstad Museum, and Blekinge Museum, Karlskrona.

P-O Persson is currently working on a public commission for the city of Landskrona, Sweden, where his work will be part of a new public park.

Viktor KoppJunior Lecturer
in Fine Arts

Viktor Kopp is a Swedish artist based in Stockholm. He has completed studies in Fine Arts in Malmö, Gothenburg, and Helsinki and teaches painting at Malmö Art Academy.

Selected solo exhibitions include Bureau, New York; Ribordy Contemporary, Geneva; Blondeau & Cie., Geneva; Galleri Riis, Stockholm; Passagen Linköpings Konsthall; and Galleri Magnus Åklundh, Malmö.

Group exhibitions include Galerie Nordenhake, Stockholm; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Royal/T, Culver City, California; Salon Zurcher, New York; Ribordy Contemporary, Geneva; Bureau, New York; and Ystad Konstmuseum.

Margot EdströmJunior Lecturer
in Fine Arts

Margot Edström is specialised in video and digital media (2D and 3D animation, 3D printing, digital imaging, and postproduction).

For the past decade, Edström has been working as a freelance motion graphic designer, mainly for Swedish television and documentary film companies in the region. She graduated from Malmö Art Academy in 1997.

Her artistic background is in performance-based video and experimentation with different kinds of narratives.

Nathalie Melikian

External Visiting Lecturer
in Fine Arts

Nathalie Melikian is an artist based in Vancouver, Canada, and Malmö, Sweden.

Since the late 1990s, she has been creating videos in which she calls into question and analyses the narrative structures of various film genres.

Her work has been exhibited in solo shows at the MuHKA Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp; Malmö Art Museum; Frankfurter Kunstverein; Centre pour l'image Contemporaine, Geneva; and VOX Centre de l'image contemporaine, Montreal. She has also participated in group shows at the 4th Biennale de Montréal; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Seattle Art Museum; Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, University of Toronto; Fridericianum, Kassel; Vancouver Art Gallery; Centro José Guerrero, Granada; MARCO, Museo de Arte Contemporánea de Vigo, Spain; Museum of Contemporary Art, Oslo; and Bergen Art Museum. Her works feature in the collections of Centre Georges Pompidou, Malmö Art Museum, and Vancouver Art Gallery, among others.

João Penalva

External Visiting Lecturer
in Fine Arts

João Penalva is a Portuguese artist. He studied at Chelsea School of Art, in London, where he has lived since 1976. He has been external visiting tutor at Malmö Art Academy since 2003. Penalva represented Portugal in the 23rd São Paulo Biennial (1996) and in the 49th Venice Biennale (2001). He also exhibited in the 2nd Berlin Biennale (2001) and the 13th Biennale of Sydney (2002).

Solo exhibitions include Camden Arts Centre, London; Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius; Galerie im Taxispalais, Innsbruck; Tramway, Glasgow; Rooseum Center for Contemporary Art, Malmö; Institute of Visual Arts, Milwaukee; Power Plant, Toronto; Serralves Museum, Porto; Ludwig Museum Budapest; Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; DAAD Gallery, Berlin; Mead Gallery, University of Warwick, UK; Lunds Konsthall; Centro de Arte Moderna, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon; Brandts Kunsthallen, Odense; and Trondheim Kunstmuseum, Norway. Penalva was awarded the DAAD Berlin Artist's Residency in 2003 and the Bryan Robertson Award, London, in 2009. Penalva is represented by Simon Lee Gallery, London and Hong Kong; Galerie Thomas Schulte, Berlin; Barbara Gross Galerie, Munich; and Galeria Filomena Soares, Lisbon.

Nina Roos

External Visiting Lecturer
in Fine Arts

Nina Roos is a visual artist working in the field of painting. She lives and works in Helsinki.

Solo exhibitions have been held at Galerie Francois Mansart, Paris; Galleri K, Oslo; Kunsternes Hus, Oslo; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Malmö Konsthall; Kiasma, Helsinki; and Brandts Klædefabrik, Odense.

Selected group exhibitions include Artipelag, Stockholm; Lunds Konsthall; Carnegie Art Award touring exhibition (first prize 2004); KUMU Art Museum, Tallinn; Kunstverein München; MuHKA Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp; Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki; the 46th Venice Biennale (Nordic Pavilion); and Frankfurter Kunstverein.

Public commissions include Campus Allegro, Pietarsaari, Finland (2013); the Church of Shadows, Chengdu, China (2012); and University of Gävle, Sweden (2006).

Christine Ödlund

External Visiting Lecturer
in Fine Arts

Christine Ödlund is a Swedish artist living and working in Stockholm.

Ödlund graduated from the University College of Art, Crafts and Design, Stockholm, in 1995, and from the Video Department of the Royal Academy of Art, Stockholm, in 1996. She studied composition at EMS (Elektronmusikstudion) in Stockholm (2002–04) and is a regular contributor to electro-acoustic and sound work festivals around the world.

Ödlund's work has been shown in group exhibitions in Stockholm, Tel Aviv, and Tokyo. Her work is included in the public collections of Moderna Museet, Stockholm, and Magasin III, Stockholm. Her most recent solo exhibition is *Aether & Einstein* at Magasin III, in February–December 2016.

Charif Benhelima

External Visiting Lecturer
in Fine Arts

Charif Benhelima is a Belgian artist. He lives and works in Antwerp, Belgium, and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Through the medium of photography, Benhelima deals with the topics of memory/oblivion, time, space, origin, identity, politics of representation, and perception. He gained recognition with the *Welcome to Belgium* series (1990–99), a nine-year research project on the sentiment of being a foreigner. Besides having worked with analogical photography, he has been experimenting for fifteen years with the Polaroid 600. In parallel to his artistic research, Benhelima is a guest professor at the Higher Institute for Fine Arts (HISK), Ghent. Recent solo exhibitions were held at Museu Oscar Niemeyer, Curitiba, Brazil; Niterói Museum of Contemporary Art, Rio de Janeiro; BPS 22, Charleroi, Belgium; Palais des Beaux-Arts (Bozar), Brussels; Station Museum of Contemporary Art, Houston; Volta NY 2010; and Künstlerhaus Bethanien GmbH, Berlin, among others. Benhelima recently participated in the fourth edition of the Lubumbashi Biennale, 2015; fifth edition of Beaufort Triennial of Contemporary Art by the Sea, 2015; the Marrakech Biennale 5; and the International Biennial of Photography 2010 and 2012, Houston; as well as in group exhibitions at Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro; MuHKA Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp; Musée de Marrakech; Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore; Bag Factory, Johannesburg; Shanghai Art Museum; Palau de la Virreina—La Capella, Barcelona; Centro Arte Moderna e Contemporanea Della Spezia, Italy; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Buenos Aires; and Witte de With, Rotterdam.

Andreas Eriksson

External Visiting Lecturer
in Fine Arts

Andreas Eriksson is a visual artist based in Medelplana, Sweden. He graduated from the Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm, in 1998. Recent solo exhibitions include Michel Majerus Estate, Berlin; Sommer & Kohl, Berlin; Galleri Riis, Oslo; Stephen Friedman Gallery, London; Lidköpings Konsthall, Sweden; the 54th Venice Biennale; Galleri Susanne Ottesen, Copenhagen; mumok, Vienna; Art Statements, Basel; Skövde Konsthall; and Trondheim Kunstmuseum. Selected group exhibitions include Sven-Harrys Konstmuseum, Stockholm; Neugerriemschneider, Berlin; Gumbostrand Gallery, Helsinki; Galleri Rotor, Gothenburg; FRAC Auvergne, France; the 30th São Paulo Biennial; D'Amelio Gallery, New York; Artipelag, Stockholm; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark; LAUTOM Contemporary, Oslo; mumok, Vienna; and Moderna Museet, Stockholm. Eriksson's work can be found in the following collections: the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark; AstraZeneca, Lund; ECB, Frankfurt; Göteborgs Konstmuseum; Landstinget Halland; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; mumok, Vienna; Skövde Konstmuseum; Statens Konstråd; Sundsvalls Museum; and Uppsala Konstmuseum.

About Malmö Art Academy

Malmö Art Academy is a department at Lund University that has been offering higher education in fine arts since 1995. Together with the Academy of Music and the Theatre Academy, Malmö Art Academy is part of the Faculty of Fine and Performing Arts, one of nine faculties within Lund University.

Malmö Art Academy offers advanced study programmes in fine arts at the Bachelor's and Master's degree levels for aspiring artists. The academy also has a well-reputed research studies programme. Teaching is not divided into separate categories of art. As a student, you can choose to move freely between various forms of artistic expression or to specialise in a particular form. Your studies will provide ample opportunity to develop your art and a firm professional identity. You will be included in new and inspiring contexts and acquire the tools to develop your critical thinking. To enable you to develop your skills, you have access to the academy's premises and your own studio around the clock.

Malmö Art Academy offers well-equipped workshops for work with wood, metal, plaster, plastic, clay, concrete, photography, video, and computing. It also features large project studios, a library, and lecture rooms, as well as the students' own studios and a common study room for students on the Master's programme in Critical and Pedagogical Studies. Malmö Art Academy also offers a PhD programme in fine arts, mainly intended for internationally active artists, at the academy's research centre, the Inter Arts Centre. The programme is key to current artistic research.

Our study programmes offer students the opportunity to work with internationally active artists and teachers, whose expertise covers a broad spectrum of interests and media. Individual supervision of the student is considered to be key. The lecturers' expertise covers a broad spectrum of interests and media. The language of tuition is usually English. The students' commitment to and influence on the design of the study programme is given high priority. In 2014, Malmö Art Academy was assessed as being of very high quality, with regard to both its BFA and MFA programmes, by the Swedish Higher Education Authority's quality evaluation of all higher education in fine arts in Sweden.

Malmö Art Academy cooperates with other fine arts programmes all over the world and has built up strong networks over the years. The education offered at Malmö Art Academy also benefits from the active artistic climate in the Öresund region, with its galleries, museums, and other arts institutions in a markedly cosmopolitan context. Lectures from visiting artists, critics, and curators, as well as various forms of collaborative projects, are natural elements of Malmö Art Academy's activities.

Several graduates of Malmö Art Academy have become successful artists who have earned strong international recognition.

HISTORY

Malmö Art Academy was set up in 1995 by Lund University. Its study programmes were offered in the former Mellersta Förstadsskolan in central Malmö, a building that was considered a model of modern school architecture in 1900.

Lund University's remit for the new school included the ambition that the academy be interdisciplinary and international. This did indeed happen. The academy became the first school in Sweden to actively avoid the so-called professors' school model. No divisions were created at the academy—the idea was to make the hierarchies as horizontal as possible. Another of the academy's central concepts was the requirement for students to be independent. It is still the case that meetings with lecturers take place on the students' own initiative.

From the outset, Malmö Art Academy wanted to make the most of the artistic expertise of its lecturers and professors. This is also why administration is not part of their duties. The academy also wished to facilitate the continuation of the artistic careers of its lecturers and professors, enabling them to participate in major international contexts. Hence lecturers and professors have come, and continue to come, to the academy for certain periods in order to free up time for their artistic work. In 1996, external supervisors were introduced into the academy's teaching structure, extending further opportunities for students to benefit from a broad spectrum of artistic supervision. External supervisors are internationally active artists who come to the academy five times per year.

Malmö Art Academy launched its Master of Fine Arts in 2002, the same year the PhD in Fine Arts was established. In 2006, Malmö Art Academy was the first institution in Sweden to award three doctoral degrees in fine arts.

The Bachelor of Fine Arts was introduced in 2007.

Critical Studies was first set up as a one-year Master's programme in 2001, and became a two-year Master's programme in 2008–10. The following year, it was reconfigured into the two-year Master's degree programme in Critical & Pedagogical Studies.

Gertrud Sandqvist has been Rector of Malmö Art Academy since 2011, before which she was Head of Department from 1995 to 2007. Anders Kreuger was Director of Malmö Academy from 2007 to 2010.

The academy's first *Yearbook* came out in 1996 and has been published every year since then.

Programme Descriptions

Programmes

Malmö Art Academy is the ideal institution for those intending to pursue a professional career as an artist and who want solid training in their field of interest. The teaching is not divided into artistic specialisations and the Academy has no separate departments. Students have the opportunity to move freely between different forms of artistic expression or to specialise in a specific form. The programmes offer a range of courses and projects in artistic creation, theory, and technique. Students choose freely from these options and build up a personalised programme of study. Regardless of the focus the students choose for their work, their own artistic development is always key, and emphasis is therefore placed on individual artistic supervision.

Bachelor's Programme in Fine Arts —BFA

The three-year Bachelor's programme consists of individual work in the studio and individual tutoring from professors and other teachers, as well as scheduled courses in major areas of artistic techniques, artistic interpretation, and art theory. Since Malmö Art Academy has no separate departments, students organise their own curriculum by choosing from a wide range of courses. The programme begins with a set of compulsory foundation courses dealing primarily with different artistic techniques and the development of the artist's role over the last two hundred years. After this, students select their courses in theory, technique, and artistic creation. The topics offered vary from year to year, depending on students' interests and the current artistic activities of teaching staff. Students who successfully achieve 180 ECTS credits through their studio practice and the completion of courses, and who are approved for their graduation work and written dissertation based on their artistic position, receive a Bachelor of Fine Arts. Students furthermore must also participate and exhibit their graduation work in a group exhibition at Malmö Art Academy's gallery, KHM (documentation and texts from this year's graduating students are available in this Yearbook). Professors at Malmö Art Academy act as examiners for undergraduate students, and an external examiner is also invited to participate in the assessment. Graduates with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Malmö Art Academy are entitled to apply for the two-year Master of Fine Arts programme at the academy or for Master's programmes at other institutions.

Master's Programme in Fine Arts —MFA

The Master's programme in Fine Arts at Malmö Art Academy is a two-year graduate programme in fine arts, including in-depth research in art through individual studio practice and courses in art and various related disciplines. During the first year, the students begin their advanced artistic work, with continuous discussions in seminars led by teachers as well as a study tour to an artistically interesting place. Students organise their own curriculum, choosing from a wide range of technical and theoretical courses, many of which are taught by internationally renowned artists. Guest lectures from visiting artists and critics as well as various forms of collaborative projects are regularly offered at the academy. In the second year, students focus on their graduation work, which includes writing a dissertation about their artistic practice and presenting a solo exhibition at the academy's gallery, KHM (documentation and texts from this year's graduating students are available in this Yearbook). Students who pass their degree project are awarded a Master of Fine Arts (120 ECTS credits). Professors at Malmö Art Academy act as examiners for Master's students, and an external examiner is also invited to participate in the assessment.

Master's Programme
in Critical & Pedagogical Studies
—MFA

Critical & Pedagogical Studies (CPS) is a two-year international postgraduate study programme leading to a Master of Fine Arts degree (120 ECTS credits). The programme works across the borders between art theory, practice, and pedagogy and aims to encourage applied thinking within the artistic field related to art creation, training, and production. Students in the CPS programme include postgraduate students who hold a BFA as well as students who have previously completed a studio-based MFA. .

Critical & Pedagogical Studies is a pioneering programme that seeks to examine the ways in which critical theory and pedagogy inform artistic practice. It encourages initiative and experimentation among the students and investigates how we might both produce and discuss art, as well as how pedagogical strategies can be seen as artistic models in art practice and as teaching. Theory is viewed as a practice, and practice is theorised. Key issues and topics of discussion are pedagogical strategies such as artists teaching artists and the artist's role in mediating to a public, combined with critical thinking on artistic production, with the goal of enabling students to be critical of how educational structures operate, both within the programme itself and in relation to an educational practice. The curriculum is in constant development and is well suited for artists working from a hybrid or expanded practice.

The students and programme facilitators work together to form the programme structure through group dialogue and a critical examination of the content as it suits the participants' areas of interest, while responding to relevant topics of the day. This normally takes the form of intensive seminars and workshops led by visiting lecturers, the professors at Malmö Art Academy, and the facilitators of the CPS programme. Students also develop their own projects through group critiques and individual tutorials. In the final year of the programme, students participate in a work placement, where they apply theoretical knowledge to a practical teaching situation within an art school, museum, or other relevant institution. The final work towards completion of the degree is developed to bridge theory and practice through individual exam projects and a written thesis. Malmö Art Academy provides the participants with a collective workspace, and they may use all premises at the Academy, including the library and workshops. The facilitators of the programme have also negotiated strong relationships with local arts organisations that are keen to collaborate with our group and to support student initiatives.

As the programme enrolls a small group, of maximum nine students per year, participants receive individual attention and guidance on their projects. The programme usually entails at least one study trip, which in the past have taken students to London, Gothenburg, Graz, Italy and Scotland. The programme is conducted in English.

PhD Programme in Fine Arts

The four-year doctoral programme (PhD) in Fine Arts for practising artists and curators is the first of its kind. Sweden's first doctors in Fine Art graduated from Malmö Art Academy, Lund University, in 2006. Professor Gertrud Sandqvist is responsible for the programme, and Professor Sarat Maharaj is Head Supervisor of the doctoral candidates, who gather for seminars in Malmö at least twice every semester.

The study programme is experimental and highly individualised, focusing on identifying, understanding, and developing artistic thinking as a specialised field of knowledge production. Studies are based on artistic knowledge and artistic work, and the focus is on individual artistic work and research.

The artistic work is both object and method. Reflective and theoretical study is not a self-fulfilling goal but serves the purpose of being a means for developing artistic competence. The programme in total is 240 ECTS credits, subdivided into various seminars or courses (60 ECTS credits) and a documented artistic research project (180 ECTS credits).

Admission requirements, the selection process, and tuition fees

Find more information about admission requirements, the selection process, and tuition fees at khm.lu.se/en/studies/application.

Course Descriptions

BFA Fine Art—Technical Courses

Plastic

Teacher	Senior Lecturer P–O Persson
Guest Teacher	David Nilsson
Credits	3

Participating students: Andreas Bentsdal Amble, Gabriel Karlsson, Marie Raffn, Wilfred Wagner

This course in handling plastics gives knowledge in the laminating and casting of plastics, plus basic information about safety prescriptions in the workshop. After finishing the course, you will get a “driver’s licence” that permits you to work in the workshop on your own.

Welding

Teacher	Senior Lecturer P–O Persson
Guest Teacher	Robert Cassland
Credits	6

Participating students: Axel Berger, Cecilia Jonsson, Rasmus Ramö Streith, Samaneh Reihani, Selma Sjöstedt, Georgina Sleaf, Johan Österholm

Through this course you will gain knowledge about different welding techniques such as mig- and gas-welding as well as information about the security regulations for the different techniques. After the course, you will receive a “driver’s licence” that allows you to work on your own with the welding equipment.

Ceramics

Teacher	Senior Lecturer P–O Persson
Guest Teacher	Klara Kristalova
Credits	3

Participating students: John Alberts, Gabriel Karlsson, Marcus Matt, Carolina Sandvik, Selma Sjöstedt, Anna Skov Hassing, Øystein Sølberg, Elisabeth Östin

This course is intended as an introduction to pottery, using ceramics and dealing with the different techniques and stages in the process leading to the final object.

The course consists of two one-week sessions bridging a period of individual work in which the pieces in progress are also to be dried and fired once. The second session consists of glazing and final firing.

16 mm Film—The Fundamentals

Teacher	Professor Joachim Koester
Technician	Sophie Ljungblom
Guest Teacher	Lui Mokrzycki
Credits	5

Participating students: Milena Desse, Simen Godtfredsen, Ernst Skoog Göransson, Viktor Landström, Henrique Pavão, Rasmus Ramö Streith, Tomas Sjögren, Daniel Seferian Spies, Þorgerður Þórhallsdóttir, Johan Österholm, Carl Østberg

This course is designed to introduce the necessary skills involved in making 16 mm film. Students will learn how to use a 16 mm camera, how to measure and set lights, and also how to edit 16 mm film, including cutting and splicing the film on a Steenbeck editing table.

The first part of the course focuses on a series of hands-on exercises with the camera in the studio or on location. The exercises are structured as scenes in a collaborative film. Additionally, each student is given three films and the opportunity to shoot a film of his or her own, which will be presented at the end of the course.

In the second part of the course the students will be introduced to working on a Steenbeck editing table. This will be done through collective and individual exercises. Students will edit the material shot together and the students will be able to edit their individual films as well.

The course will also include discussions on media archaeology and media theory, exploring the history of images and film in relation to new digital media.

3D Digital Modelling And Printing

Teacher	Junior Lecturer Margot Edström
Credits	6

Participating students: Lavinia Jannesson, Viktor Landström, Sung Jae Lee, Samaneh Reihani, Anna Skov Hassing

This course teaches the creation of digital 3D sculptures or prototypes to be printed. The students will obtain modelling skills from the industry-leading software, Autodesk Maya 2016, and use freeware Sculptris to create an organic sculpting workflow. It will also be possible to scan existing objects using Kinect or, for a more high-resolution result, using a hand-held laser scanner at Mediaverkstan.

Students will print the optimised 3D models using MakerBot Replicator Z18. The maximum size of printed objects is 30.5 L x 30.5 W x 45.7 H cm. The materials used for printing are versions of biodegradable plastic (PLA). Printed prototypes can also be used for a later occasion to make moulds for bronze or other casting material.

The course is split into two weeks, where the first week is focused on hands-on exercise, technique demonstrations, intense online work, printing tutorials, and the creation and printing of students’ own models. In the second week, students will practise the techniques in individual projects to complete a 3D model of their own and to print 3D objects

Prerequisites: The course is designed for beginners but for students with previous knowledge of 3D modelling or other 3D software, such as Blender, Sketch-up, C4D, and Z-Brush. An individual syllabus of the course can be made.

Topics

Planning for a sculpture or prototype to be printed; How is the technique used by other artists?; Understanding the software interface and workflow; Polygon modelling/ “Box modelling”; Using freeware models; Assembling parts of readymade objects; Various techniques for surface manipulation; Understanding mesh topology; Optimising polygon models to be printed using Mesh-Lab; Scanning objects using Kinect.

BFA Fine Art—Art Courses

The Movements, The Score, And The Exhibition Space

Teacher Professor
Joachim Koester
Guest Teacher Liz Kinoshita
Credits 3

Participating students: Axel Berger, Axel Burendahl, Milena Desse, Ivar Gloi Gunnarsson, Thomas Hostrup, Jonna Hägg, Lavinia Jannesson, Carl-Oskar Jonsson, Sung Jae Lee, Stephan Möller, Marie Raffn, Rasmus Ramö Streith, Anna Skov Hassing, Simon Söder

Each morning we will start with a training session. This will consist of a thorough warm up followed by a series of exercises and tools for movement. The idea is to introduce bodily awareness as a way to develop our sense of space. There are many different kinds of performativity that can be considered when configuring in a space—whether the work is mostly static or in motion. In the sessions, the physical body becomes a tool through which we become familiar with and expand upon spatial considerations. In this way the training is also meant to enhance the skills needed when we plan and make the “choreography” of our artworks and exhibitions.

In the afternoons we will further develop ideas of space and choreography through the discussion of movement, dance, and performance scores presented by Liz Kinoshita. We will do this with an interdisciplinary approach, translating ideas into movement and back again, going from movement to idea. The intention is to create an expanded field for thinking, developing, and working with art through movement, choreography, and score making.

Cascade of Idiosyncrasies

Guest Teacher Ieva Misevičiūtė
Credits 6

Participating students: Axel Berger, Tina Kryhlmann, Andreas Franzén, Viktor Lanström, Sung Jae Lee, Nicklas Randau, Selma Sjöstedt, Georgina Slep, Simon Söder

The aim of this workshop is to activate a broader creative apparatus through a number of physical and mental exercises, mostly derived from Butoh, Action Theater, and Jerzy Grotowski’s physical actions techniques. Sometimes we will be going into deeper states of mind in order to excavate and reach for a form of intelligence that

resides beyond our humanness. We will examine and collect idiosyncrasies—very personal occurrences in our minds and bodies. Eventually, we will treat those as seeds for planting further creative acts: be it a dance, a character, a beginning of a film, a sculpture, or a painting. This workshop is based on my belief that as artists we should first and foremost be experts on ourselves as very intricate creative machines (a study that most probably will take a lifetime). The workshop uses a type of vertical research in addition to a more horizontal collection of knowledge and facts. Thus it would only make sense that this course takes place in the margins of the rest of the curriculum: the sessions will be in the evening—after a full day of work.

“Drop a ladder deep into your body and climb down it.” —Tatsumi Hijikata

Sculpture

Guest Teacher Tiril Hasselknippe
Credits 9

Participating students: Andreas Bentsdal Amble, Julie Falk Christensen, Ivar Gloi Gunnarsson, Carl-Oskar Jonsson, Henrique Pavão, Samaneh Reihani, Georgina Slep, Martine Flor

During this workshop we will take an in-depth look at sculpture as a medium, paying close attention to how ideas are translated into three-dimensional space and looking at how sculpture has interfered with and been influenced by body politics, convention, history, technology, and culture as a whole. In unpacking formal qualities and strategies, an intersectional operation appears as a collaboration between architecture and nature, the viewer and the object, and in understanding tools and material we can read sculpture both as acts of aggression and the outlines of survival tactics. In addition to looking at an extensive amount of sculpture as well as texts by Hannah Arendt, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Robert Smithson, and Judith Butler, a selection of films will aid our discussions about form and perception. There will also be guest lectures during the workshop, and students are expected to make a short presentation at the end of the course.

Light Setting and Narratives

Junior Lecturer Margot Edström
Senior Lecturer Maria Hedlund
Credits 7.5

Participating students: Milena Desse, Daniel Fleur, Thomas Hostrup, Jonna Hägg, Agnes Jonasson, Carl Østberg

Over the course of three weeks we will work with the concepts of light and narration. The students will work independently with their own work or in groups. For three days we will stay on the island of Ven, where we will go in the second week of the course. Students will either continue working with something already started or make a completely new work. The idea is that the students will create a material to continue working with during the rest of the course and that they will try to use the different possibilities and dynamics of the place.

In the first week we will start by watching and discussing films and art relating to the theme of the course. One of the introductions involves the possibilities enabled by technical developments in digital film to better shoot in darkness, as, for example, in the later films of Michael Mann, in which the light is rather luminous and radiates (or glows) from the things in themselves, rather than being illuminating. Another theme is the absence of light or the fluctuation between light and darkness, as in the film *Nosferatu* (1922) by F.W. Murnau, in which the vampire becomes a metaphor for that which cannot stand light. We will also look at examples where photography relates to film, and vice versa.

Additionally, during week one Lui Mokrzycki, who is an artist and works professionally with light setting, will give some practical workshops on light setting. Throughout the entire course, Margot Edström will provide technical tutoring in post-production (such as grading or image enhancement) of filmed or photographed media. To be able to catch a wider range of brightness values under low-light conditions, we have access to a DSLR camera with the option to shoot in RAW video. Maria Hedlund will demonstrate the functions of the large-format still photography camera, as well as film processing and copying, in the black and white lab for those interested.

At the end of week two, Bodil Marie Stavning Thomsen, Professor at Aarhus University in the Department of Aesthetics, will give the lecture “The Haptic Image and the ‘Signaletic Material’ in Lars von Trier’s

BFA Fine Art—Theory Courses

films." Lars von Trier's films have often been debated in terms of themes and narration; this talk will focus on their compositions. In line with Baruch Spinoza's understanding of affect and Alois Riegl's concept on the haptic, von Trier's films can be seen as a "signaletic material" (Gilles Deleuze). Seen in this light, it is possible to get closer to an understanding of why people are affected almost physically by the director's display of states of mind and events. The lecture will touch upon most of von Trier's films, though examples will primarily be from the Depression Trilogy: *Antichrist* (2009), *Melancholia* (2011), and *Nymphomaniac* (2013/14).

Course material

David Campany; Davide Panagia; Bodil Marie Stavning Thomsen; Jalal Toufic.

■ **Some Roses and Their Phantoms**

Teachers	Professor Emily Wardill Professor Gertrud Sandqvist
Guest Teacher	Martin Clark
Credits	10

Participating students: John Alberts, Sergio Alvear, Andreas Bentsdal Amble, Julie Falk Christensen, Simen Godtfredsen, Ivar Gloi Gunnarsson, Ernst Skoog, Inka Hiltunen, Lavinia Jannesson, Mads Juel Johansen, Cecilia Jonsson, Hanni Kamaly

In this course we will look at the natural as it appears through three guises: the supernatural, nature as ontology, and against nature. The course will run over the autumn and spring terms, and in the autumn term there will be a small exhibition at Sølvesborg Art Association.

Martin Clark, Director at the Kunsthalle in Bergen, will speak about the supernatural in relation to his show *The Dark Monarch* at Tate St Ives in 2009–10. This exhibition explored the influence of folklore, mysticism, mythology, and the occult on the development of art in Britain.

Gertrud Sandqvist will speak on nature and its central role in Scandinavian discourse since the early nineteenth century. In particular, she will consider how the worship of nature continued into modernism and the so-called *folkhemmet*, this time as the true and authentic environment for the modern citizen, the modern member of the working class. Sandqvist's course will analyze not only texts but also images, from the pixies of the early nineteenth century to the naked *najads* depicted on rocks between the pines in pornography from the 1930s.

During the course we will also consider Graham Harman's ideas around nature as ontology through his reading of H.P. Lovecraft as well as turn back to the surrealists, and particularly Dorothea Tanning, to look at their consideration of the natural and the supernatural as it travelled through objects.

The last part of the course will focus on Beatriz Preciado's book *Testo Junkie* (2008) as a way to think about nature as it relates to gender and ideas around the "unnatural" or anti-nature.

■ **Economy and Law**

Guest Teacher	Géza Antal
Credits	7.5

Participating students: Sergio Alvear, Daniel Fleur, Ernst Skoog, Carl-Oskar Jonsson, Gabriel Karlsson, Stephan Möller, Joakim Sandqvist, Carolina Sandvik, Elisabeth Östing

The aim of this course is to give students theoretical knowledge and practical skills in accounting and legislation relevant to their future work as artists.

The course consists of lectures about basic accounting and Swedish tax law for the cultural sector, with special emphasis on artists as entrepreneurs, and workshops with practical training in basic accounting and income tax declaration. Further, there will be lectures in basic Swedish and international intellectual property law, with emphasis on artists and their working situation, and an introduction to economic and legal circumstances in the Nordic countries, with focus on Norway and Denmark.

MFA Fine Art—Theory Courses

Cutting Publics Out of Communities

Guest Teachers FREEE (Mel Jordan, Andy Hewitt, Dave Beech)

Credits 6

Participating students: Karen Bohøj, Francis Brady, Gabriel Camnitzer, Angel Nuñez Pombo, Max Ockborn, Kezia Pritchard, Lucy Smalley, Elena Strempek, Wilfred Wagner, Ieke Trinks

This course introduces students to theories and practices surrounding art for the public sphere. The aim of the course is to enable students to develop a rigorous engagement with what it means to be public.

In a period of neoliberal advance and the colonisation of the public sphere by market interests and the third way state, art needs to function for social democracy and not become thoroughly debased by the surrounding apparatus. In order to address practical problems on “how we can live together,” which includes both critical deliberation on social issues and a recognition of economic difference, a social democracy, not a liberal democracy, is required. It is therefore vital we examine existing notions of art, publics, and participation with the aim to exceed them—to bring to the fore art’s potential for enabling political and social organisation.

FREEE complicates the notion of the convivial in social practice by using witnesses instead of participants and develops theories of place and space from radical geography, theories of hegemony and the multitude, the theory of the philistine, and the political theory of parrhesia in its projects. In its artwork, FREEE does not create consensus, manage, or co-opt people, nor become their mouthpiece. Politics needs conflict and dissent, not improved techniques to dominate political processes that manage the public. To address the well-known tensions in the concept and formation of publics, FREEE generates publics through techniques that derive from montage: cutting, rearranging, pasting, splitting, and joining.

In a series of lectures, seminars, and workshops, FREEE will explore practice at the intersection between art and politics. The members of FREEE will discuss ideas key to their art including real montage, the passerby, the witness, and the heckler, together with their strategies and tactics for art production such as publishing, converting passersby into publics, sloganeering, and spoken choirs. Students will be encouraged to consider their own practices in relation

to FREEE’s key concepts and to make a proposal, artefact, or action that demonstrates their understanding and position.

Instructors’ Bios

Dave Beech, Andy Hewitt, and Mel Jordan work collectively as the FREEE art collective. FREEE is concerned with the publishing and dissemination understood as the formation of publics. FREEE’s practice combines and links a number of key art historical elements: the use of text, print, sculptural props, installation, video, photography, and montage to develop speech act theory and theories of art’s social turn. In 2011, Beech, Hewitt, and Jordan established the journal *Art & the Public Sphere*.

FREEE’s recent exhibitions include *Critical Machines*, Beirut, 2014; Istanbul Biennial, 2013; *We are Grammar*, Pratt Manhattan Gallery, New York, 2011; *Touched*, Liverpool Biennial, 2010; and *When Guests Become Hosts*, Culturgest, Porto, Portugal, 2010. FREEE recently contributed chapters to two books: *Manifesto Now! Instructions for Performance, Philosophy, Politics*, eds. Laura Cull and Will Daddario (Intellect, 2013) and *New Interactive Practices in Contemporary Art*, ed. Kathryn Brown (I.B. Tauris, 2013).

Dave Beech is Professor at Valand Academy, Gothenburg. His recent book *Art & Value: Art’s Economic Exceptionalism in Classical, Neoclassical and Marxist Economics* was published by Brill in 2015.

Andy Hewitt is Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at University of Northampton, UK. He recently completed his PhD at Chelsea College of Art, London.

Mel Jordan is Reader in Art and the Public Sphere at the Royal College of Art, London. She is also principal editor of the journal *Art & the Public Sphere*, published by Intellect.

For more information on FREEE’s projects go to: www.freee.org.uk

Afropean Film Seminar

Guest Teachers Alanna Lockward
Jeannette Ehlers

Credits 6

Participating students: Karen Bohøj, Francis Brady, Milena Desse, Angel Nuñez Pombo, Max Ockborn, Kezia Pritchard, Selma Sjøstedt, Georgina Sleap, Lucy Smalley, Elena Strempek, Ieke Trinks

This course comprises four days of film screenings and discussions based on the transdisciplinary Afropean decoloniality project BE.BOP. BLACK EUROPE BODY POLITICS, initiated by the Berlin-based Caribbean curator and author Alanna Lockward, Founding Director of Art Labour Archives. BE.BOP engages European audiences in intricate detail with the outrage generated by Black/African diaspora peoples when confronting a racist world order structured along the lines of coloniality. Together with Lockward and Caribbean diaspora artist Jeannette Ehlers, who was born and lives and works in Copenhagen, the participants will discuss the racialising legacies of the Enlightenment and how European aesthetics became “universal.” Through discussion of seminal texts by African philosophers such as Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, decolonial thinkers such as Walter Dignolo, and Black feminists such as Audre Lorde, these hegemonic narratives of art will be examined in dialogue with works by African diaspora artists including Teresa María Díaz Nerio, Quinsy Gario, Patricia Kaersenhout, Gloria Rolando, and Ingrid Mwangi Robert Hutter.

Instructors’ Bios

Alanna Lockward is a Berlin-based Dominican author and decolonial catalyst. She is the founding director of Art Labour Archives, an exceptional platform centred on theory, political activism, and art, and she conceptualised and curated the groundbreaking transdisciplinary meeting BE.BOP. BLACK EUROPE BODY POLITICS (2012–14) at Ballhaus Naunynstrasse.

Her interests are Caribbean marronage discursive and mystical legacies in time-based practices, critical race theory, decolonial aesthetics/aesthesis, Black feminism, and womanist ethics. Lockward is the author of *Apremio: apuntes sobre el pensamiento y la creación contemporánea desde el Caribe* (Cendeac, 2006), a collection of essays; the short novel *Marassá y la Nada* (Santuario, 2013); and *Un Haití Dominicano. Tatuajes fantasmas y narrativas bilaterales* (1994–2014), a compilation of her investigative work on the history and current challenges between both

island nations (Santuario, 2014). Her essays and reviews have been widely published internationally.

Lockward has been awarded by the Allianz Cultural Foundation, the Danish Arts Council, and the Nordic Council of Ministers. Her first documentary project on Black liberation theology and the transnational history of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) received the production prize FONPROCINE 2013.

Jeannette Ehlers studied at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts and the Funen Academy of Fine Arts, Denmark. Her works explore the Danish enslavement trade and colonialism worldwide through digitally manipulated photographs and video installations. She lives and works in Copenhagen.

Selected exhibitions include Autograph ABP, Rivington Place, London; Urban Video Project on Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York; Brundyn+ Gallery, Cape Town; Nikolaj Kunsthal, Copenhagen; REDCAT, Los Angeles; LMAK Projects, New York; Dak'Art, Dakar; Pérez Art Museum Miami; Videokunst.ch, Bern; Cooper Union, New York; ArtCenter South Florida; New Shelter Plan, Copenhagen; Parisian Laundry, Montreal; Ballhaus Naunynstrasse, Berlin; Frammer Framed, Amsterdam; El Museo Del Barrio, New York; International Studio & Curatorial Program, New York; Cartel Gallery, London; Total Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul; Aarhus Art Building; Brandts, Odense; BRAENNEN Gallery, Berlin; Image 10, Vevey; and Kunstforeningen Gl Strand, Copenhagen.

Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?

Guest Teacher Georgia Holz
Credits 5

Participating students: Julie Falk Christensen, Tina Kryhlmann, Andreas Franzén, Lavinia Jannesson, Mads Johansen, Sung Jae Lee, Marie Raffn, Nicklas Randau, Ana Rebordão, Samaneh Reihani, Georgina Slep, Þorgerður Þórhallsdóttir, ieke Trinks

Women artists were the first to implement feminism's claim for the "personal being political" into art and to combine it with conceptual practice. Female subjectivity brought attention to one of modernism's central and most symptomatic blind spots: the woman as artist and mother. For example, Mary Kelly using her son's diapers and other "specimens" to interrogate the relationship of the working mother with her child. Consequently the (woman) artist functioned as analyst and analysand at the same time, and thereby opened up the distinction between sociopolitical art and conceptual art.

Critical contemporary art production still benefits from these achievements, through artists using the question of desire as the vehicle for approaching their actual subject matter and using art as a critical agent. Within this intense seminar we will take a close look at the artworks and writings of important artists such as Mary Kelly, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Anna Oppermann, and Andrea Fraser while using key texts like Roland Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* as a backdrop for this close examination.

The Archive—Documents, Objects, and Desires (Part I)

Teachers Senior Lecturer
Maj Hasager
Professor
Matts Leiderstam
Credits 10

Participating students: Karen Bohøj, Francis Brady, Angel Nuñez Pombo, Max Ockborn, Kezia Pritchard, Daniel Seferian Spies, Lucy Smalley, Elena Strempek, ieke Trinks, Youngjae Lih, Johan Lundqwist, Mads Juel Johansen

In his famous essay "An Archival Impulse" (2004), Hal Foster defines "archival art" as a genre in which "archival artists seek to make historical information, often lost or displaced, physically present. To this end they elaborate on the found image, object, and favor the installation format." As the archive can inhabit a multitude of forms and collections that have been deemed historically relevant for preservation, artists making use of the archive can do so in a variety of forms, and possibilities. The translation and interpretation of material and objects can function as the foundation for an artistic process. The archive can also serve the sole purpose of subjectivity—this means that the artist through processing vast amounts of material, narratives, and research potentially creates a new sort of subjective archive. In the words of Jan Verwoert, the material is being "certified" due to the selection process, even though there is no scientific validation that takes place. The material, such as texts, sound recordings, images, objects, and so forth, become documents through the very act of being included and categorised in an archive.

The course will look into ways of thinking through the archive and how to approach different archives, as well as research methodologies for an art practice. We will discuss some central texts and look closer at significant art practices in relation to the subject, for example the Atlas Group and its approach to facts and fictions, through which the archive becomes a complex fabric in an artistic production. We will visit different archives in the region, and the course will run for three days every month between December and February. During this time the participants will most importantly develop individual projects, ending with a presentation of these in an exhibition.

MFA Critical & Pedagogical Studies Courses

Supply Chain Art(ists)

Guest Teachers BFAMFAPhD
(Susan Jahoda,
Caroline Woolard)

Credits 5

Participating students: Karen Bohøj, Francis Brady, Gabriel Camnitzer, Angel Nuñez Pombo, Max Ockborn, Kezia Pritchard, Lucy Smalley, Elena Strempek, ieke Trinks

We are part of a rising generation of visual artists and arts educators who aim to articulate the relationship between art making and political economy. Integral to this process is a belief that practices of solidarity economies and collaboration are foundational for contemporary visual arts education.

The workshop will begin with an introductory presentation on the current work of BFAMFAPhD and an exploration of these questions: What is an “alternative” economy, and what economies are in hiding? We will continue with a series of listening and making practices, where participants will create projects in relationship to carefully articulated forms of property, types of exchange, consumption, and surplus allocation. The focus of this work will be to uncover practices of cooperation, self-determination, and mutual aid in the arts, investigating what Viviana Zelizer describes as the “relational work” of compensation, entitlement, and gifting. Readings, screenings, and discussions will be integrated into the work we do together.

This workshop is organised around a PROPOSITION, PRACTICES, and MOTIVATING CONTRADICTIONS.

Proposition

The workshop “Supply Chain Art(ists)” recognises that meaning is made not simply in the minutes or seconds of an initial encounter with a work of art, but in the laborious hours of production, transportation, and deconstruction; in the centuries of stasis in collections, storage units, compost heaps, and landfills. If a work of art is understood as the materialisation of multiple flows of labour and capital, then how might the entire supply chain that assembles and disassembles a work of art be integral to its meaning?

Practices

Our workshop will begin with an introductory presentation on the current work of BFAMFAPhD and an exploration of these questions: What is an “alternative” economy, and what economies are in hiding? We will continue with a series of listening and

making practices, where participants will create projects in relationship to carefully articulated forms of production, distribution, and exchange.

Project: Reimagine or remake a past project of yours, creating it anew with a final departure in mind. If this is not possible or interesting, make a site-specific work for the final destination: a landfill, a recycling centre, a public space, the water, a compost pile, a storage unit, or a rumour/memory/secret.

Motivating Contradictions

(1) What supply chains are necessary for conventional models of “success” in the visual arts?

(2) How do the majority of artists already navigate art economies of solidarity, sustainability, cooperation, and justice within current economic systems while also acknowledging that they are strained by the contradictions of making a living?

(3) How can artists who are not from communities that have been historically marginalised recognise that the majority of practices associated with solidarity economies are not self-conscious lifestyle decisions but instead forms of collective courage to counter the structural violence of racism and disinvestment? How do we, as artists, find the time, space, and energy to make artwork after paid work is over? How do we continue to work (labour) after work (a day job) in order to claim labour for ourselves as our work (art)?

Instructors' Bio

Caroline Woolard and Susan Jahoda are core members of BFAMFAPhD

Concerned about the impact of debt, rent, and precarity on the lives of creative people, BFAMFAPhD asks: What is a work of art in the age of \$120,000 art degrees? Artists Report Back and Census Report, as well as Statements, are recent efforts of core members Susan Jahoda, Blair Murphy, Agnes Szanyi, Vicky Virgin, and Caroline Woolard and contributing members Julian Boilen and Dan Nott. BFAMFAPhD's reports and installations contextualise personal experience in relation to national data. They have been cited widely by mainstream and art-centric press, and have been exhibited at the Museum of Art and Design, New York; Cleveland Art Institute; and the Brooklyn Museum.

Cut Through the Text

Teachers Senior Lecturer
Maj Hasager
Laura Hatfield

Guest Teacher Marie Thams
Credits 4

Participating students: Karen Bohøj, Francis Brady, Gabriel Camnitzer, Angel Nuñez Pombo, Max Ockborn, Kezia Pritchard, Lucy Smalley, Elena Strempek, ieke Trinks

“Cut Through the Text” is an ongoing series of close reading seminars looking at intersections between art and pedagogy, concluding with a written assignment and group critique. The seminars are meant to enable students to develop comprehensive reading techniques and to form a critical dialogue. Detailed textual analysis will be followed by group discussions. Participants will each guide a seminar on an assigned text throughout the semester. The written component of the course will assist students in identifying a research question around which to construct a research proposal that relates to their individual art practices. The proposals will be reviewed in a group presentation and critique at the end of the semester.

Written Assignment

Thinking through Practice: Conceiving and Planning—Write a two-page proposal for a project that relates to this term's discussions on expanded notions of practice and intersections between artistic methods, critical theory, and pedagogy. Identify a research question as part of the proposed project and list the potential methods you would use to investigate your question. Describe how these methods relate to your art practice.

Study Trip To Graz, Austria—Back To The Future, Steirischer Herbst

Guest Teachers Gülsen Bal, Walter Seidl, Regine Dura, and Hans-Werner Kroesinger

Credits 5

Participating students: Karen Bohøj, Francis Brady, Gabriel Camnitzer, Angel Nuñez Pombo, Max Ockborn, Kezia Pritchard, Lucy Smalley, Elena Strempek, ieke Trink

During the CPS study trip to Graz in October 2015, the students attended workshops and a conference.

Conference (two days)

Future Perfect—Dystopia, Disruption and Alternatives: What We Will Have to Have Provided For

Topic

Not all destruction is creative—the Steirischer Herbst conference looks into the question of what needs to be preserved and what needs to be fought for.

Our legacy for future archaeologists is increasingly narrowing down to two things: waste and the cloud. We will have filled up the oceans with plastic, contaminated the soil with plutonium, and stored yottabytes of, by then, unreadable data. Interestingly, this tense is called “Future Perfect.” The fact that we only conceive of the future as a dystopia is because we see tomorrow as an extension of today. True: if we continue like this, all will be lost. However, the future can be completely different. “Future Perfect” sets out to imagine this difference. Not by demanding disruption, radical replacements, and constant (self-)reinvention, like Silicon Valley and our neoliberal mind set, but by carefully examining the totality of relationships in which we find ourselves. Because contrary to the capitalist assertion, not all destruction is in fact creative. Sometimes something is simply gone—resources, life forms, options for the future.

In lectures, artist presentations, discussions, and a large-scale expedition, “Future Perfect” looks into the material and immaterial legacy that needs to be preserved, discovered, or finally realised. What will we have to have provided for, fought for, to ensure that the future will be a good one, if not perfect, beyond the horizon of our own time? What role is played not only by cultural memory, digitalisation, legal order, and wealth, but also speculation, subversion, and artistic practice? And what makes us believe that future generations will even care?

Workshop option I (two days)

To What End?

Held by: Gülsen Bal and Walter Seidl

Topic

The exhibition *To What End?* investigates the idea of “inheritance” as a device for reclaiming historical memories so as to enable criticism of dominant narratives and cultural ideas. How can we understand the concept of inheritance when it is a matter of making a wide range of voices heard, all reflecting different cultural contexts? What potential lies in post-national forms of belonging that run counter to widely accepted strategies of globalisation? And how are current political and social changes manifested in the creative world? How can we integrate them into the spheres of art? Through artist talks, discussions, and a film programme, the aim is to widen the range of topics connected with social, political, and economic codes by means of experimental research.

Workshop option II (two days)

United States of Europe—Europe as a Location or Idea?

Held by: Regine Dura and Hans-Werner Kroesinger

Topic

Modern-day Europe, which we prefer to see as having been born out of the spirit of the French Revolution, came into being in 1950 as a coal and steel union: if you work together, you don’t fight against each other. So the birth of the European Union was induced by economic concerns and a desire for security. Internal borders were abolished for the movement of goods, and external borders closed. Is Europe a community of values, and, if so, which values are involved? To whom do they apply? And what kind of role does common cultural heritage play? What is the role of the EU Frontex agency? Director Hans-Werner Kroesinger and dramaturg and documentary filmmaker Regine Dura examine Europe with the aid of documents. In this workshop, a document is everything that the participants regard as relevant in this context, be it political, philosophical, or personal. Material for a later presentation will be developed from the pool of resources.

*BFA Fine Art/Technical Courses***Casting: Bronze/Aluminium/Silicone**

Lead Teacher Senior Lecturer
P-O Persson
Guest Teacher Robert Cassland
Credits 9

Participating students: Sergio Alvear, Andreas Bentsdal Amble, Tine Damgaard, Theis Madsen, Henrique Pavão, Samaneh Reihani, Georgina Sleaf, Victor Selinger Aas

The course provides basic knowledge in silicone and cire perdue casting. With the help of moulds and silicone, the students will produce objects and moulds in wax in which they will cast bronze or aluminum.

The course is divided into two blocks:
Block 1 (duration two weeks): Silicone casting, producing objects suited for casting in bronze/aluminum.

Block 2 (duration two weeks): Casting (cire perdue, sand form casting), grind work, patination.

Plastic

Lead Teacher Senior Lecturer
P-O Persson
Guest Teacher David Nilsson
Credits 3

Participating students: Cecilia Jonsson, Joakim Sandqvist, Selma Sjöstedt, Carl Østberg

This course in handling plastics gives knowledge in laminating and casting of plastics, plus basic information about safety prescriptions in the workshop. After finishing the course, you will get a "driver's license" that permits you to work in the workshop on your own.

Screen-Print

Guest Teacher Ella Tillema
Credits 3

Participating students: Anna Andersson, Helen Haskakis, Sebastião Borges, Mads Kristian Højlund Frøslev, Ernst Skoog, Asger Dybvad Larsen, Samaneh Reihani, Samaneh Roghani

This course trains you in using screen-printing in your artistic practice. We will consider the value of analogue printing versus digital printing and look at the uses of screen-printing artistically and commercially and within subcultures and DIY contexts. The course also includes a study visit to KKV Grafik in Malmö.

The course focuses on the practical aspects of screen-printing, and we will produce prints analogically, digitally, and rasterised, prepare screens, and make multicolour prints. There is a wide variety of surfaces to try out for printing—clothes, textiles, plastics, mirrors, foam rubber, self-adhesive paper, etc. Provided the surface is flat, almost anything is possible. We will work with multiple layers of ink, both transparent and opaque, so this is good to bear in mind when planning the translation of images and ideas to print.

The first week focuses on the technical basics and the range of possibilities of screen-printing, whereas week two is based on individual ideas and projects, for which I will serve as supervisor and technical assistant.

Please bring your own coloured pencils, scissors, glue, tape, sketching paper, and any special material you would like to try out for printing. Also prepare a simple image for your first screen-print, for example a drawing or short text. Paper, plastic film, emulsion, and ink will be available throughout the course.

*BFA Fine Art/Art Courses***Painting Course with Practical Assignment**

Teacher Junior Lecturer
Viktor Kopp
Credits 6

Participating students: Helen Haskakis, Sebastião Borges, Marcus Matt, Nicklas Randau, Samaneh Roghani, Frederikke Vedelsby, Elisabeth Östin

For our first meeting, we all should bring something that has inspired us or has been important to our work in some way. This can be a text, an artist's oeuvre, an image, a film, or something else. What matters is that you can show this to the others and do a presentation on it and how it has mattered to your work.

I will bring a text that everyone will have read the first day of the course, and I will do a presentation on that. Then we will go through everyone's contributions over a couple of days.

Part two of the course is a practical painting assignment, and the plan is that everyone should complete a work that can be presented at the end of the course. During the course we will have mini reviews and visit the studios of the participants.

We will work together in the teaching studio and some materials will be available. The work that is done during these two weeks doesn't have to be part of your ongoing practice but can be viewed as an opportunity to try new ways of thinking and of working.

BFA Fine Art/Theory Courses

Everyday Matter In Exhibition Making

Guest Teacher Kirsty Bell
Credits 3

Participating students: Anna Andersson, Axel Berger, Sebastião Borges, Milena Desse, Tina Kryhlmann, Mads Kristian Højlund Frøslev, Simen Godtfredsen, Ivar Gloi Gunnarsson, Viktor Landström, Marcus Matt, Stephan Möller, Oskar Persson, Nicklas Randau, Ana Rebordão, Samaneh Roghani, Moa Sjöstrand, Albin Skaghammar, Nadja Erixon, Øystein Sølberg, Carl Østberg

Félix González-Torres used to describe himself as a “kitchen table artist”: “My studio is under my bed,” he said. His friend and colleague Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, a frequent visitor to his New York apartment, described how “everything came out of the domestic environment, the home, and not at all from a professional environment. It came from cakes, things like that.”

This course focuses on exhibition making from the last twenty years, in particular different strategies that take everyday matter as a primary material. Borrowing from Georges Perec’s notion of the “infra-ordinary” and his subjection of the everyday to a ruthless, systematic attention, we will think about the role that a studio or domestic space can play in artistic production, look at diaristic forms of practice, and consider the kinds of transfigurations through which ordinary things become carriers of wider meaning. The effect on boundaries between private and public modes of experience is contingent to all of these areas.

We will begin by looking at exhibitions from the mid 1990s by artists including Félix González-Torres, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, and Frances Stark, and analysing their approaches to production and the contemporaneous reception of their work. We will continue by looking at various artists from the subsequent two decades, moving towards more recent examples that begin to take into account the influence of technology on quotidian experience.

In the visual material and texts we examine, the central question will be how the everyday or infra-ordinary may be harnessed as a means by which to reorient subjective experience towards the public sphere, thereby questioning assumptions about identity, gender, and wider social structures. Here the quotidian is useful not primarily as a means of self-expression, but rather as a way of analysing the relation of the self to the conditions of society.

Male Fantasies and Powers of Horror

Teacher Professor
Gertrud Sandqvist
Credits 15

Participating students: John Alberts, Sergio Alvear, Julie Falk Christensen, Milena Desse, Tina Kryhlmann, Andreas Franzén, Mads Kristian Højlund Frøslev, Inka Hiltunen, Cecilia Jonsson, Gabriel Karlsson, Viktor Landström, Theis Madsen, Marcus Matt, Stephan Möller, Oskar Persson, Nicklas Randau, Samaneh Reihani, Carolina Sandvik, Selma Sjöstedt, Albin Skaghammar, Georgina Sleap, Nadja Erixon, Øystein Sølberg, Elisabeth Östin

It is a sad truth that studies of the psychology of fascism are no longer merely of historical interest. On the basis of two classics—Klaus Theweleit’s famous analysis of the fascist body through the so-called Free Corps literature of World War I, and Julia Kristeva’s concept of the abject and the representation of the abject in the work of Louis-Ferdinand Céline—we will engage in in-depth study and discussion of the mechanisms of fascism.

The Great Rift

Guest Teacher Jürgen Bock
Credits 3

Participating students: Inka Hiltunen, Nadja Erixon, Øystein Sølberg, Martine Flor, Frederikke Vedelsby, Victor Selinger Aas

Non-European poetry and politics, mirroring our European condition of being, is the focus of this seminar. During our seminar discussions we will compare thinkers from the Americas, Africa, and Europe who are in dialogue on our condition(s) of being. We will read texts, watch films, and discuss the relevancies of such thoughts to notions of the colonial, post-, and neocolonial in the light of our here and now in the north of Europe, in South Sweden, in Malmö, in April 2016.

Together we will study negritude and pan-Africanism, the writings of Wole Soyinka and Léopold Senghor, the oeuvres of Ângela Ferreira and Renée Green, the films of Ousmane Sembène and Jean Rouch, and the thinking of Manthia Diawara and Denis Ekpo in the light of European notions of modernity, modernism, and the postmodern (e.g., Jean-François Lyotard, Zygmunt Bauman, and Jürgen Habermas) and we may also touch on the art and the writings of Allan Sekula and Harun Farocki.

Science Fiction 2.0

Guest Teacher Tiril Hasselknippe
Credits 9

Participating students: Anna Andersson, Axel Berger, Julie Falk Christensen, Tine Maria Damgaard, Mads Kristian Højlund Frøslev, Viktor Landström, Samaneh Reihani, Frederikke Vedelsby, Johan Österholm, Carl Østberg

See the genre of science fiction anew with analytical and censorious goggles, through a close inspection of this much-beloved part of popular culture and contemporary thinking, with special attention paid to gender and race politics of the projected futures.

A society is defined not by its material means but by how it treats its minorities, so we need to define what the criteria are and pin them down so we can understand why the same representations appear again and again in film, literature, and art, and how structural violence in this field operates. Tropes of the future include sexualized android fembots and white, heteronormative, male protagonists, but when these social constructs are broken, the consequences of the repeated messaging shift.

In defining the microaggressions that transfer from society onto art forms, new ways of reading and creating appear as the new and old class structures and oppressions—which have been camouflaged by aesthetics, convention, and comedy—begin to seem unjust or out of date. We will look for rebellion and resistance from within the colony and discuss the trailblazers that offer signs of fluidity and optimism. The workshop will be an intensive screening program of classics and cult favourites of speculative fiction, as well as include theory and art related to the genre

MFA Fine Art Courses

Real-Time Composition vs. Didactic Transmission—Practising Models of Research and First-Person Presentation Between Postmodern Dance and Lecture Performance
 Guest Teacher Jeremiah Day
 Credits 3

Participating students: Karen Bohøj, Francis Brady, Georgina Sleaf, Angel Nuñez Pombo, Max Ockborn, Kezia Pritchard, Lucy Smalley, Elena Strempek

This workshop introduces methods of improvisational performance with movement and speaking alongside conventional strategies of lecture performance.

Most of the workshop consists of moving/talking exercises and improvisation (please be prepared to run, crawl, roll on the ground, jump, so wear appropriate clothing, etc.). This section draws upon Simone Forti's "research-moving-talking" methods.

In addition we will look at and contextualize other approaches—in particular, the one-person show—through discussion.

The workshop will create a peer dialogue environment through doing and experimentation, and is open to people with all levels of experience in working with their bodies or performing.

The course is held in conjunction with the symposium *Move This! A Symposium on Choreography and Performance in Relation to Visual Arts*, organised by Moderna Museet Malmö and Critical & Pedagogical Studies, Malmö Art Academy. See the symposium description for details.

Instructor's Bio

Jeremiah Day's work employs photography, speech, and improvisational movement. Questions of site and historical memory are explored through fractured narrative and image. In a hybrid form of realism, Day appropriates historical incident to serve as metaphor and exemplification that can shed light upon broader philosophical and political questions.

Day graduated from the Department of Art at the University of California, Los Angeles in 1997 and lived and worked in Los Angeles until moving to Holland in 2003 to attend the Rijksakademie. From 2000 to 2002, Day was artist-in-residence at Beyond Baroque Literary Arts Center in Los Angeles, where he organised such events as "The Great Silence: 10 Years after the Burning," commemorating the 1992 LA riots.

Day is presently pursuing a Doctorate in Arts with Vrije University Amsterdam titled "A Kind of Imagination That Has Nothing to Do with Fiction" and focused on the work of Hannah Arendt and its potential for cultural practice. Day's performances, photographs, and installations have been presented at the Santa Monica Museum of Art, the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago, the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, and last year's Liverpool Biennial. He is represented by Ellen de Bruijne Projects, Amsterdam, and Arcade, London.

Track Changes: Collective Editorial Processes

Teacher Laura Hatfield
 Guest Teacher Matthew Rana
 Credits 5

Participating students: Karen Bohøj, Francis Brady, Angel Nuñez Pombo, Max Ockborn, Kezia Pritchard, Lucy Smalley, Elena Strempek, ieke Trinks, Inka Hiltunen, Milena Desse

This course in collective editorial processes approaches writing as a multimodal form of practice while emphasising the social dimensions inherent to the production of text in a broader sense. Using a variety of written forms—such as journaling, annotation, and essay—in combination with extensive group discussion, course participants will produce a critical-theoretical text in response to concerns situated within their artistic practice. Working both independently and collectively, participants will track the development of each other's work from inception to completion. Readings from a variety of sources will also be incorporated and will serve as the practical basis for workshop sessions.

Participants will develop historical, theoretical, and practical perspectives on different approaches to critical writing and a heightened awareness regarding the role writing might play within their practice. Participants will also gain tools for developing a critical text in dialogue with others and strengthen their ability to receive, give, and incorporate feedback within a group setting.

Literature

Roland Barthes, Gilda Williams, Michel de Montaigne, Hito Steyerl, Adrian Piper, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, Amy Sillman, Renée Green, T.S. Eliot, Lisa Robertson, Agnes Martin, Oscar Tuazon, Robert Filliou, Bernadette Mayer, Hannah Weiner, Lee Lozano, T.J. Clark, and Novalis, among others.

The Archive—Documents, Objects, and Desires (Part II)

Teachers Professor
 Matts Leiderstam and
 Senior Lecturer
 Maj Hasager
 Credits 6

Participating students: Karen Bohøj, Francis Brady, Angel Nuñez Pombo, Max Ockborn, Kezia Pritchard, Lucy Smalley, Elena Strempek, ieke Trinks, Youngjae Lih, Johan Lundqwist, Mads Johansen

Please see the description for "The Archive—Documents, Objects, and Desires (Part I)" in the Autumn 2015 course descriptions, on page 370

Workshop on Workshops

Guest Teachers Neil Mulholland and
 Naomi Garriock
 Credits 3

Participating students: Karen Bohøj, Francis Brady, Angel Nuñez Pombo, Max Ockborn, Kezia Pritchard, Lucy Smalley, Andreas Bentdal Amble, Ernst Skoog, Wilfred Wagner, Axel Berger

Shift/Work is a collaboration between Dan Brown (Curator of Research, Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop) and Professor Neil Mulholland (Postgraduate Director, Edinburgh College of Art, and Professor of Contemporary Art, University of Edinburgh). Founded in 2010, Shift/Work develops open educational resources for participatory arts-based learning. Our shared concern is with playfully investigating artistic pedagogy's obligations to nurture personal ontology.

Shift/Work collectively strengthens support for artists by commissioning, facilitating, developing, and sharing model experiential practices and open educational resources for artists, educators, and their audiences to adapt and perform. Our research practice reconfigures workshop-based approaches to artistic learning that are theoretically discursive, practical, and participatory. Shift/Work has established a collective ontology for participatory arts practice through a *paragogy* in which participants design, playtest, and reflect upon their learning processes. Key to this is an open engagement with practice (work) as a means of both generating and transferring new knowledge (shift).

MFA Critical & Pedagogical Studies Courses

By iterating systems to allow *anyone* to develop workshops that enable practice-based learning, Shift/Work offers one model by which artists and participants alike can conduct valuable independent research and development on participatory learning action and an ever-expanding “open syllabus.”

Malmö Art Academy will host a “flipped classroom,” which begins with practice. Since to work this relies a great deal on your trust, it’s very important that we don’t provide much information in advance. We will begin with “Decisions, Decisions,” a participatory workshop recently play-tested at Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop. This workshop has no “facilitator.” We will then supervise “Workshop Workshop.” The final workshop involves designing and participating in *unlearning*.

Over three days, you will go from launching straight into a workshop to designing and running your own workshops. This will give you a clearer idea of how you can organise ludic forms of participation within a short space of time and with little or no resources. Taking part will also help you to think more clearly about how artists learn and what and how we all learn from each other.

There is no need to prepare for the workshops, nor do you need to hone any particular skills. You simply have to commit to turning up on time and clocking-in as a Shift/Worker.

Pedagogy as Medium or Tone in Artistic and Curatorial Practice

Guest Teacher Felicity Allen
Credits 5

Participating students: Karen Bohøj, Francis Brady, Angel Nuñez Pombo, Max Ockborn, Kezia Pritchard, Lucy Smalley, Elena Strempek, ieke Trinks

This four-day course traces the threads of pedagogy in our work and explores the impact of contingency as it affects our practice both in the instant and over the longer term. In relation to both contingency and pedagogy, we will also observe and discuss issues of recognition (and non-recognition).

While reflecting on your own work, you will be invited to develop constructivist learning techniques and reflexive practice to collaboratively investigate cultural works of personal significance in Malmö. The workshop therefore involves practical work situated in the city, led by participants. Together, through close observation examining different aspects of dialogic practice, we will explore the pedagogical possibilities of open-ended and directed discussion, using a range of participatory and observational techniques to do this. In this context, opportunities for individual and one-to-one reflection will be programmed.

The course includes various pedagogical forms: seminars, workshops in which we experiment with different types of discussion and practical activities, walking tours and in-situ discussions in relation to particular sites or works, and reflective work through discussion and personal notebooks. As course leader, I will present and reflect on aspects of my own work, and will encourage participants to do the same.

The workshop is based on an idea of artistic and curatorial labour (including pedagogy) as practice. We will undertake this practical workshop informed by feminist discussions of reproductive labour and its relation to art and pedagogy, bearing in mind issues of recognition and negation.

Instructor’s Bio Felicity Allen’s expanded practice weaves in and out of art’s institutions and between artistic, curatorial, educational, and critical work. Her work stems from the studio as well as from a dialogic and facilitative practice, crossing between the verbal and the visual. Allen’s current work is developing a continuing practice of making dialogic portraits that cross media and disciplines. She has just

submitted a practice-led PhD titled “Creating the ‘Disoeuvre’: Interpreting Feminist Interventions as an Expanded Artistic Practice in Negotiation with Art’s Institutions.”

Literature: Felicity Allen, Carmen Mörsch, Silvia Federici, Hilary Robinson, Griselda Pollock, and Whitney Chadwick.

Text Seminar

Teacher Professor Gertrud Sandqvist
Credits 2

Participating students: Karen Bohøj, Francis Brady, Angel Nuñez Pombo, Max Ockborn, Kezia Pritchard, Lucy Smalley, Elena Strempek, ieke Trinks

This course is a two-day text seminar on the writings of Hannah Arendt.

Study Trip To Italy—Cultural Documents

Guest Teachers Deirdre MacKenna and guest speakers
Credits: 4

Participating students: Karen Bohøj, Francis Brady, Angel Nuñez Pombo, Max Ockborn, Kezia Pritchard, Lucy Smalley, Elena Strempek, ieke Trinks

In spring 2016, Critical & Pedagogical Studies will participate in the programme *Cultural Documents* in the village of Filignano in Italy’s Region Molise. Here we will have the unique opportunity to explore themes such as: art in a rural context, environmental sustainability, productivity in non-urban areas, human migration, and war through dialogue with each other, the local inhabitants, and the history of the area.

The study trip will foster transnational collaboration, allowing the group to focus not just on the production of art but also on art’s broader role in society. We will explore the questions of how and why to present contemporary art in a situation that is not familiar with the language and codes of art practice.

The study trip will conclude with a visit to Rome, where we will meet with artists and collectives.

Current and graduating students

Bachelor of Fine Arts—Year 1

Anna Andersson
Tine Maria Damgaard
Nadja Erixon
Helen Haskakis
Mads Kristian Højlund Frøslev
Theis Madsen
Oskar Persson
Samaneh Roghani
Victor Selinger Aas
Moa Sjöstrand

Bachelor of Fine Arts—Year 2

Sergio Alvear
Andreas Bentsdal Amble
Axel Berger
Inka Hiltunen
Cecilia Jonsson
Carl-Oskar Jonsson
Gabriel Karlsson
Stephan Möller
Ernst Skoog
Carolina Sandvik
Øystein Sølberg
Carl Østberg
Elisabeth Östin

Bachelor of Fine Arts—Year 3

Axel Burendahl
Daniel Fleur
Martine Flor
William Glass exchange student
Thomas Hostrup
Jonna Hägg
Agnes Lovisa Jonasson
Rasmus Ramö Streith
Joakim Sandqvist
Trine Struwe Hansen
Simon Söder

PhD candidates

Rosa Barba
Matthew Buckingham
Alejandro Cesarco
Marion von Osten
Lea Porsager
Andrea Ray
Imogen Stidworthy

Master of Fine Arts—Year 1

John Alberts
Milena Desse exchange student
Julie Falk
Andreas Franzen
Simen Godtfredsen
Ivar Gloi Gunnarsson
Mads Juel Johansen
Lavinia Jannesson
Tina Kryhlmann
Viktor Landström
Sung Jae Lee exchange student
Marcus Matt
Nicklas Randau
Samaneh Reihani
Selma Sjöstedt
Anna Skov Hassing
Georgina Sleap

Master of Fine Arts—Year 2

Markus Bråten
Dick Hedlund
Hanni Kamaly
Youngjae Lih
Johan Lundqwist
Henrique Pavão
Marie Raffn
Ana Rebordão
Tomas Sjögren
Daniel Seferian Spies
Wilfred Wagner
Þorgerður Þórhallsdóttir
Johan Österholm

Critical & Pedagogical Studies (MFA)

Karen Bohøj
Francis Brady
Gabriel Camnitzer
Ioanamarca Cojocariu
João Evangelista
Birta Guðjónsdóttir
Angel Nuñez Pombo
Max Ockborn
Kezia Pritchard
Lucy Smalley
Elena Strempek
ieke Trinks



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