Malmö Art Academy

2017 – 2018
## Foreword

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A great deal of time and effort has been spent preparing and decorating Malmö Art Academy’s new premises in the old tram sheds on Förargatan, in Mazetti Culture House, and in the Dimman neighbourhood just across Bergsgatan in Malmö. The Academy moved into these temporary premises on September 3, 2018, where it will be located until the new shared campus for the three arts academies in Malmö opens. Of course, everybody at the school has been involved in this move, but particularly remarkable efforts have been made by Silvana Hed, Per Olof Persson, Sophie Ljungblom and Joakim Sima. A special thanks to them!

The Academy recently appointed two new professors. Emily Wardill, who has worked as Associate Professor at the school since 2014, has been awarded a professorship in material-based film and narrative structures, which began in November 2017. Fredrik Vaerslev has been granted a professorship in conceptual painting, which he assumed this January. They are succeeding Haegue Yang, now a professor at the Städelschule, and Mats Leiderstam, who will continue teaching courses at the Academy in a new role as External Visiting Lecturer.

This year the Academy has awarded two new Doctorates of Fine Arts: one to Andrea Ray in January, and the other to Marion von Osten in May. Ray’s thesis is titled Sounding Elective Affinities: A Polytemporal Approach to Reconceptualizing Egalitarian Social Relations. Her dissertation opponent was Katy Deepwell and the examination committee included Mats Leiderstam, Åsa Lundqvist, and Lycia Trouton. Von Osten’s opponent for her thesis, In the Making: Traversing the Project Exhibition In the Desert of Modernity. Colonial Planning and After, was Lucy Cotter. Her examination committee consisted of Charlotte Bydler, Frans Jacobi, and Lucy Steeds.

Matts Leiderstam and Maj Hasager ran an extensive MFA-level project as part of the Academy’s Critical & Pedagogical Studies (CPS) programme. “Practise Practice” arranged for the students unique (and most generous) access to the premises of Skånes konstförening, and the participants produced an exhibition with experimental aspects that changed as the project proceeded. The course was both analytical and creative, and as such offered significant practice for future research.

Among all the other interesting and stimulating workshops given during the year by our own teachers as well as by visiting artists, Simryn Gill’s workshop on “material and materials to make substitutions/stand-ins/facsimiles/records” is particularly worthy of mention. Our students were also granted the privilege of taking part in a workshop entitled “The Aesthetics of Resistance” given by Ulf Peter Hallberg and the legendary artist and set designer Gunilla Palmstierna-Weiss.

Our external examiners this year were Belgian curator Heidi Ballet for the BFA programme, Portuguese curator Rita Fabiani for the MFA programme, and Dean of the Oslo Academy of Fine Art Stine Hebert for the CPS programme.

And, of course, we extend a special thank you to our outstanding Yearbook editor, Marie Thams.

With the move, the Art Academy is entering a new environment, and since the beginning of the year our already operating galleries in Mazetti Culture House have been offering new challenges and opportunities to our students. The two exhibition spaces have distinctly individual lighting and spatial qualities, which has been highly stimulating to the students, whose graduation exhibitions form part of their degrees.

We continue to build on Malmö Art Academy’s well-established modus operandi, with our focus on the individual student placed within an international flow of thinking through art.

The results of these important efforts can be witnessed in the pages of this Yearbook.

—Gertrud Sandqvist
Rector
Master of Fine Arts

Year 2

Sebastião Borges
Axel Burendahl
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Cadernos do M.A.L [Notes on M.A.L]

Note on “Notes on M.A.L.”
[I] no longer know if I’m reinventing myself in this text or if I’m reinventing my work as I write.
—26 March 2018

If my practice is entirely dependent on production in the studio, not everything is solved here; on the contrary, there is a permanent battle for the survival and validation of thoughts. This reflection is made essential by writing; it happens not for the production of content per se, but it rather works, in the loneliness that the studio’s practice allows, as one of the few ways that I have to relate my experiences, ideas, notions, and references. Often it arises as a necessity. I would not say I only think through the written word, but it is indeed a way to settle some concerns.
—27 December 2017

When I arrived to Malmö in 2016, I encountered an entirely new environment. Aware of why I applied for this program, from the beginning I have tried [and struggled] to face my work. In order to understand it, I force myself to keep a diary [I thought this would help keep track], but just as I have always tried to structure my days, to create a routine, this plan was destined to fail. The diary was something that has always been impossible for me to maintain, at least in the more traditional sense; the process of writing every day is painful and often becomes empty.
—6 November 2017

I have decided to compose this text from a collection of notes I have been gathering since I arrived. In a collage exercise the text has grown and acquired new forms. Until now, the writing process would result for me, in a private moment, as an extension of my thoughts. […] [But by] assuming the texts would lose their private character, the written production over time lost its impetus and spontaneity, to acquire more conscious characteristics.
—27 December 2017

Not pretending to theorise what I do as an artist or to fit myself into a category of thought, this text is only intended to reflect the way I think, work, and understand my process. It is true that in many instances the text may tend to place itself in a path of approximation with others who better know how to develop and present their concepts; here, similarities when not assumed are, because they are precisely that. On the other hand, the text relies on a theoretical component for its elaboration, primarily because for me it’s impossible to create a distance from what interests and surrounds me. And if my work in the studio asks precisely for awareness, the text that unfolds in parallel is assumed and affirmed in its references. On the other hand, I also try to create links to references from the field of art, always from a perspective of not defining but of surrounding myself [and my work] with what can best point in a direction.
—12 November 2017
I
[in Lisbon, I would have just been accepted into the Faculty of Fine Arts. After failing to get into the painting department, I was sent to the sculpture department.]

From Betrayal to Tool (or the Past of the Current Situation)
For too long I understood the dichotomy of art as painting vs. sculpture. [...] this was sedimented in the structure in the way I first came into contact with art. [But even stranger is to realise that this is still a problem in my daily practice.]

— 19 January 2018

Have I projected a trauma onto my academic past? Placing myself as the victim of an oppressive system? Mike Kelley once said, “My education must have been a form of mental abuse, of brainwashing.” If in my case there was a victim, is it because the oppressor was living in the same body? (Or this is exactly how oppressive systems work: directing the guilt towards the individual?)

— 6 March 2018

I wouldn’t have imagined that a “Good morning” would be the beginning of a long walk towards painting. In my final year, I had full access to the working spaces in the Academy [in Lisbon], and if in the regular working hours I was dividing a studio with thirty fellow sculptors, at night I was alone.

— 19 January 2018

[During those days] I would arrive in the morning, attend the classes I needed to, do my work in the workshop, and wait for the night. I would get the keys to the sculpture studio and stay there until the security guard, in his final round, would knock on the door, and then I knew it was time to clean the brushes and store the work. Together we would lock the school, [and I would] return the next day as a sculptor.

— 19 January 2018

I found myself in a privileged situation; few students had this opportunity. Strangely but completely normally, it started with a simple [and necessary] “Good morning” [to the staff].

[...] this respect led to some sort of friendship and understanding of what I was doing. Weekends, holidays, and post—9 pm periods became part of, what I would call today, my informal painting education [even if at the time I was reluctant to call it painting]. An empty studio that allowed me the necessary isolation, away from the eyes of the teachers and colleagues that projected onto me the image of a sculptor. These hours led to the deconstruction of who I was, to become the artist I am today.

— 19 January 2018

II
At first sight, I wouldn’t find in my father’s biomedical engineering background any similarities with what I’m doing. [...] [He] departs from a question or a problem, [and] based on his own experiences he analyses facts, through conventions he relates the experiments with the analysed data, he compares it with [the data of] others, and draws his conclusions. I wouldn’t say that it is the creativity implicit in both worlds that creates the link between the two, but rather the very core of this process—departing from a question and using an autochthonous language to arrive at a conclusion. It can happen that art doesn’t lead to anything, but I have the same “scientific” approach towards my work. A conclusion in art will always be too rigid, since it might imply an end, and with that, a presumption of an acquired or produced knowledge. In my work, a conclusion always has to come.

— 17 January 2018

Very often, my artistic process departs from my universe, and most of the time transforms itself into forms where motivations are diluted with conceptual concerns that in turn are reflected in the resolution of formalistic and aesthetic problems.

— 13 November 2017

I often recall how difficult it is to separate and categorise all these experiences; multifaceted, they are visually translated and unfolded in different ways, and if sometimes take the form of dreams; many are contrasted with the stiffness of a photograph. Part of my fascination is in realising where they come from, to understand, to use, and to manipulate them. Because if my work departs from a personal universe, I need to know how to use my experiences.

Over the years, these experiences have become corrupted by what I think is true [“I know”]. This disruption can occur in a variety of ways, at a time now distant from the experience in situ. When they have already been translated into memories, these images can then work in two ways—remember memory or deceive it. But in both cases I believe that the brain process is the same: creating a short circuit. In this reboot, our brain becomes more suggestive and accepts these memories as images of a past.

[“That previous experience may very well be the cause of my present certitude; but is it its ground?”]

But how can I relate these experiences to my practice? Not necessarily in autobiographical work, but they are the base and sometimes my only references. [In writing, I'm limited by my vocabulary and understanding of the language. [...] Can the imagination, [by that I mean] the capacity of creating forms from assimilated and non-assimilated experiences, contribute to the creation of a new vocabulary and consequently my work? —unknown date, 2017
On Painting

Notes on From Black to Blue and Back Again (2018)

A – selection of the wood; build the stretchers (the painting should be 240 x 180 cm); stretch the cotton fabric; apply two layers of prime (wood glue); paint the background (with a proportion of $\frac{1}{3}$ oil paint to $\frac{2}{3}$ (mix of $\frac{1}{3}$ linseed oil with $\frac{2}{3}$ turpentine)); apply two layers with a brush (size 10 cm); work the surface with a roller (no brushwork should be visible at this point, the background should be as flat as the fabric); let it dry.

B – Make the necessary mixture of the oil colour (with a proportion of $\frac{1}{3}$ oil paint to $\frac{2}{3}$ medium); select brush; paint all the $4:3$; each layer should be painted on a grid system, until it covers all the surface; the size of the $4:3$ should be the same and should keep the proportion $4:3$; each layer has to be painted on the same day.

C – The paintings should be done in pairs; the background of one is painted with Ivory Black while the other is with Prussian Blue; according to preset rules, the background colour is added proportionally to its opposite colour; the result is a transformation from one colour to another, layer by layer [e.g., If the background is black, the second layer should be painted with a mixture of $\frac{1}{6}$ Prussian Blue and $\frac{5}{6}$ Ivory Black (see chart); each layer should have its specific colour (according to the chart)].

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Background</th>
<th>(1 Prussian Blue (PB))</th>
<th>(1 Ivory Black (B))</th>
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<tr>
<td>The second layer has 1,024 pairs of $4:3$</td>
<td>$\frac{1}{6}$ B + $\frac{5}{6}$ PB</td>
<td>$\frac{1}{6}$ PB + $\frac{5}{6}$ B</td>
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<tr>
<td>The third layer has 256 pairs of $4:3$</td>
<td>$\frac{2}{6}$ B + $\frac{4}{6}$ PB</td>
<td>$\frac{2}{6}$ PB + $\frac{4}{6}$ B</td>
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<tr>
<td>The fourth layer has 64 pairs of $4:3$</td>
<td>$\frac{3}{6}$ B + $\frac{3}{6}$ PB</td>
<td>$\frac{3}{6}$ PB + $\frac{3}{6}$ B</td>
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<tr>
<td>The fifth layer has 16 pairs of $4:3$</td>
<td>$\frac{4}{6}$ B + $\frac{2}{6}$ PB</td>
<td>$\frac{4}{6}$ PB + $\frac{2}{6}$ B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sixth layer has 4 pairs of $4:3$</td>
<td>$\frac{5}{6}$ B + $\frac{1}{6}$ PB</td>
<td>$\frac{5}{6}$ PB + $\frac{1}{6}$ B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The seventh layer has 1 pair of $4:3$</td>
<td>(1 B)</td>
<td>(1 PB)</td>
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—unknown date, 2017

From Black to Blue and Back Again (VI–XV), 2018. Oil on canvas, 240 x 180 cm. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2018. Sebastião Borges
From Black to Blue and Back Again (VI–XV), 2018. Oil on canvas, 240 x 180 cm. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2018. Sebastião Borges
From Black to Blue and Back Again (VI–XV), 2018. Oil on canvas, 240 x 180 cm. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2018. Sebastião Borges
After Two Years and 28,671 Characters

Each 4:3 (sign) is structured by its size and proportion; at the same time, it structures the size of the canvas. The logic of the composition is reflected by the size of the sign (4:3), its proportion (4:3), and in their multiplicity, where layer by layer it covers the surface of the painting. 4 and 3 are two signs extracted from the repertoire of communal symbols of what we call numerals, “part of a language that belongs ... to the world rather that to the private, originating capacity ... to invent shapes.”

[In these paintings,] through repetition [and the consequential juxtaposition of layers,] their numerical value is thinned into the surface of the canvas. I'm interested to see 4 and 3 as abstract identities; they work as an externally given structure, a system that can provide the hand the possibility of working alone.

[One could make a connection to Frank Stella’s Die Fahne hoch! (1959), where he arrives at the composition by “deriving a pattern of stripes from the external, physical fact of the canvas's own shape.”]

—12 March 2018

Still 32,760 to Go

Might be contradictory, but I find these paintings arising from two different operations: on one side a logical language […] where all the schemes, proportions, colour gradations, […] and rules structure what I have to paint. […] [On the other side] this is opposed to a natural operation, where the gap between the idea and its execution is extended, and a different notion of temporality arises. Through the act of making, the rationality is emptied out […] [and] I'm able to create a distance from the painting while painting, because in this process of repetition some sort of alienation is created, and the painting (as painting) ceases to exist.

[…] It is through the deconstruction of the logical operation that a body works with a mind disconnected from the act of doing […] [and] it is precisely in this mixture of rationality and non-rationality that the work’s meaning was seen to reside. [In other words, it is the methodology used and the act of making that becomes the first step in the construction of meaning.]

—7 February 2018

From Black to Blue and Back Again (VI–XV), 2018. Oil on canvas, 240 x 180 cm. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2018. Sebastião Borges
“d’après AD/ REIN/HARDT”

Thomas Merton once wrote this poem to Ad Reinhardt:

d’après AD/ REIN/HARDT
art
is
one
thing:
art –
as –
art
art
is
not
what
is
not
art
(the
one
way
to
to
say
what
art-
art
is
is
say
what
it
is
not)5

Merton was a Trappist monk and close friend of Reinhardt. Early in his life he surrendered all his worldly possessions and took a vow of silence. Despite Merton’s isolation from the material world, he and Reinhardt stayed in touch through letters and occasional meetings. Merton in his poem appropriates from his world the use of negative theology, but instead of defining what God is by what God is not, he applies and uses this methodology in art.

Reinhardt’s discourse seems to be structured precisely in the via negativa. Not that his paintings are non-paintings or denials of painting, but when he states that he painted “the last paintings anyone can make,”7 I do not think he is enunciating the death of painting, but might [instead] be proposing a painting completely decoupled from meanings and historicisms. Painting that distances itself from the artist and assumes itself within its formal limits; from expression and meaning we get contemplation and visual experience.

—20 March 2018

From Black to Blue and Back Again II

But if the tools for meaning reside in the act of doing. What happens when I move away from the moment of production? Now distant, the painting leans against a wall in my studio, stacked a top of others, drying and occupying more and more space.

Seriality is born from the painting and, as if it has the ability to become one module, it is in the possibility of an unbroken repetition that the painting breaks its own physical limits.

In this case, doesn’t the last painted 4:3 (240 x 180 cm) become the same as the first, or any other 4:3? One painting becomes a potentiator of a new one; once it carries its internal structure, in its multiplicity the possibility of its external structure is revealed. Through the possibility of expansion, the painting not only becomes sizeless but timeless, where the end of a painting reveals its beginning.

[…] It is in this invisibility [the invisibility of doing, the invisibility of the image, the invisibility of structural/relational links to other paintings and to space] that my interests and its installation possibilities lie.

—10 February 2018

On Writing

[As with From Black to Blue and Back Again, this text is also the result of two distinct operations: a daily and reflective one, done on studio work, written in Portuguese and on paper (primary text), and another that seeks in the translation of Portuguese to English an analytical look at my work (secondary text).]

Traduttore, traditore

“The traditional concepts in any discussion of translations are fidelity and license—the freedom of faithful reproduction and, in its service, fidelity to the word. These ideas seem to be no longer serviceable to a theory that looks for other things in a translation than a reproduction of meaning.”

—Walter Benjamin11
The texts in Portuguese exist because it is for me natural to write in this language [...] I knew that at some point it would have to be translated, essentially because the text had to be understood in another context [outside the studio and by others]. But I would never expect, while trying to translate a simple note to English, that I would discover what structures “Notes on M.A.L.” [and what reveals the operations developed in the studio]. [...] At that moment I realised that writing this text was an attempt to ask B to translate A’s text, not through the original words and expressions, but [through] the thoughts he has when [re-] reading the texts. The result ends up being the re-composition (re-creation? transfiguration?) of the original text. The translator who is aware of the source of this primary text deconstructs the original text, not for the sake of the translation, but for the creation of a new text (secondary text).

Aware of the losses caused by his work, B frees the text of its author, because it is not only words and little semantic games that are lost; emotionally there is a disconnect with the text and the author [and with it the possibility of reinventing it].

— 13 November 2017

On Photography

Just as the structure in which elements of reality are combined represents the structure of the state of affairs, so the structure represented by elements combined in a picture represents the structure of the state of affairs.12

[It is] the correlations of the picture’s elements that enable the law of projection to activate the translation from three-dimensionality (world) to two-dimensionality (picture) [...] and through perspective [now visible in the two-dimensionality], elements [that were] spatially distanced [in three-dimensionality] are now forced to relate on the same plane.

[I find it curious to think that the law of projection and the translatability condition of reality reveals the “family resemblance”13 in the three (two-dimensional) mediums that I have been working on—writing, painting, photography.]

But where lies its translatability? In the fact that it exists and you have at your disposal several ways to capture it?

— 29 March 2018

From Black to Blue and Back Again (VI–XV), 2018. Oil on canvas, 240 x 180 cm. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2018. Sebastião Borges
From Black to Blue and Back Again (VI–XV), 2018. Detail. Sebastião Borges
Border Phenomena (IV)
Photography appears in my practice as a way of documenting reality. I am interested in its use because of the ability to mechanically reproduce what I see and to objectively [from the objective (photographic lens)] arrive at the model of a moment or situation [photographed].

Despite the “family resemblance” shared between painting and writing, photography (ontologically) departs from its kin. It’s not the relation to reality that is different; rather, it is its ability to create images without the artist’s hand and directly from reality. If in painting [and writing] I have an additive process towards the image, in photography it is exactly the opposite: the extraction of a moment, in reality, is what creates the image.

[As opposed to photography, in painting and writing through the act of making I’m trying to create a distance from my work (whether through repetition and the rules used to structure my painting, or in the case of this text, the use of translation from Portuguese to English). In photography I cannot claim any authorship through the act, because between the object (reality) and its reproduction (picture), photography only uses the mechanisms (camera). I decide what to photograph, how to photograph, and what purpose to give the photographs, but by no means do I create the image. Its creation is autonomous, but it is not independent.]

— 30 March 2018

Border Phenomena (XIX)
If with From Black to Blue and Back Again, I pragmatically paint the 4:3 on the surface of the canvas, claiming that by using the numerals, the forms extract from the world, it is because I’m trying to approach with painting what photography allows me from the very beginning. [...] My role is not the composition of the image; it is rather the composition of the photographed situation. It is bringing together different objects that makes it possible for the image to be captured by the camera.

— 30 March 2018

Art in Itself Finds Its Existence through the Loss of Semblance
Paintings and photography might share the possibility of breaking with semblance, but in which circumstances could I provide their emancipation? Hovering between form and content, semblance is both a visual and a conceptual quality: it relates to imagery and to a pictorial form.

[...] 

[José Gil defends the possibility of reaching a non-verbal state; however, he says the difficulty here is to see the non-verbal as not being pre-verbal, because in a world where comprehension is made through language, it would be through retroaction and rupture that we would create a non-verbal language, as the holder of meanings not expressible by verbal signs. Thus a non-verbal state would indeed be a post-preverbal state.]

— 7 March 2018

The game of observation and interpretation is divided between form and content, where the demand for meaning is confronted by the perception and aesthetic experience of the work of art. [And in] the same way that two parallel lines intersect [perspective], these two approaches that seem to struggle in parallel, at the moment the lines intersect, make it possible to perceive the work of art.

— 14 November 2017

Throughout the resemblance and its deconstruction, I find my process of producing a picture arising, but here also language remains my deepest interest. [...] [It is] sedimented on a deeper layer, under the skin of the pictorial quality of the picture, and it is waiting (and asking) patiently to be discovered (and set free).

— 7 March 2018

In this cyclical process, the reverse occurrence is quite essential. Finished, the work of art is open to the other, the gap between the two is accentuated, and the difference from who reads it to who made it is now more evident than ever. [...] The reader now has to make the opposite path, and from the work moves to [...] everything that surrounds them (the background); associations are created and the work becomes a mere vehicle of communication, which is only made possible by the consequent losses throughout this degenerative process.

— 13 November 2017

On Chess
The Chess Player
It is known that Marcel Duchamp turned his focus to playing chess at some point in his life, but I would say he started playing chess long before moving to Buenos Aires. The act to “perform and execute,” as one moves a pawn to attack and capture the opponent’s pieces, contains a transparency of intentions and clear objectives, which is something I find in both chess and Duchamp’s practice.

[The meaning of the “king” is defined by its role in the chess game, as the meaning of a readymade is defined by the artist’s decision: “When one shews someone the king and says: ‘This is the king,’ this does not tell him the use of this piece—unless he already knows the rules of the game up to this last point: the shape of the king. You could imagine his having learned the rules of the game without ever having been shewn]
Sebastião Borges

the actual piece. The shape of the chessman corresponds here to the sound or shape of a word.\[19]\]

One can see in Duchamp's conceptual approach to art the linearity between the idea and the work. As one decides to move a chess piece from one square to another, in Duchamp's practice, it is the movement (and process) that constitutes the work of art. The selection, the decision, and ultimately the process of appropriation itself is what transforms the objects into works of art.

—28 March 2018

The Chessman and the Chessboard

[...] At the beginning of The Seventh Seal, Antonius Block, a knight who returns to Sweden after years in the Crusades, is alone playing chess when he is interrupted by Death. In an attempt to gain more time, he defies Death by inviting him to a game, with the condition that he remain alive as long the game lasted.

—16 January 2018

In the spring of 2016, when I arrived in Malmö, an exhibition of Heimo Zobernig was about to open at Malmö Konsthall. [...] Walking through the exhibition space, the reference game played by Zobernig was clear: the chessboard-printed blankets enunciated and created a dialogue with the Swedish film director Ingmar Bergman, who wrote the play Wood Painting\[17\] [the name appropriated by Zobernig for the exhibition], which afterwards became the foundation for the film The Seventh Seal.

—30 November 2017

The knight seems to have the notion that it is only a matter of time before he faces his destiny, but by enticing Death, he appeals to reason (through chess and over death), in an attempt to save time and accomplish his one “meaningful deed.” It’s not that Zobernig is offering salvation, but perhaps through his own game is [rather] calling for the viewer’s rationality.

[“For, within the situation of postmodernism, practice is not defined in relation to a given medium—sculpture—but rather in relation to the logical operations on a set of cultural terms, for which any medium—photography, books on walls, mirrors, or sculpture itself—might be used.”\[18\]]

Most of his works “appear at first glance abstract and self-referential (‘art for art’s sake’); they seem to have no other function that to exist by and for themselves.”\[19\] Zobernig seems to use this language exactly to create a dualist discourse, because even if they might be consumed and branded as self-referential works, he also offers the possibility of taking the same path as Antonius: it is exactly due to the possibility of finding the one “meaningful deed” that we are forced to play (and use rationality) in his game.

[“Just as a move in chess doesn’t consist simply in moving a piece in such-and-such a way on the board—nor yet in one’s thoughts and feelings as one makes: but in the circumstances that we call ‘playing a game of chess,’ ‘solving a chess problem,’ and so on.”\[20\]]

And even if Duchamp’s act of performance and execution is present, Zobernig’s checkmate is accomplished by a different set of rules. While the exhibition presented objects located somewhere between artworks, furniture, and display elements, it is through the appropriation of the language of art, the context of art, the history of art, and the making of art [...] that Zobernig creates and validates his discourse—creates the rules and extends the game beyond the chessboard. By framing the context around it, he appropriates the exhibition space to validate the next move. Here, in the “mise-en-scène of art,” is where everything comes together, where the exhibition itself becomes the work of art.\[21\] It is through displacement, the articulation of different languages, the evocation of historicism that Zobernig show us the rules of his game.

And perhaps, in the end, Antonius’s search for his one “meaningful deed” becomes insignificant or even out of context, because Zobernig is not giving us a checkmate; instead, he creates a situation where all the different moves that one could do before ending the game might be revealed.

—16 January 2018

On the Way to Checkmate

As I paint and write [...] August is coming, and as I have to deal with the circumstances of art production, the time to install my work approaches. Today I started a new painting. Before, in a final attempt to contribute to this text, I tried to visualize my exhibition, but the closest I can get is to a foam-board maquette, where scaled paintings and photographs are arranged in the space. It seems like a good plan, the one I came to some weeks ago; it appears to cohere some of my ideas together. It would be easier to test it in the space, as if the experience in situ would illuminate my work. [...] Maybe I’m completely naive, maybe it is lack of experience that allows me to think that I can anticipate and have control of all moments of production. [...] Can’t do anything about it; the only thing left for me to do is paint. [And] it seems to me, in order to not betray my work, I need to wait, work, and keep quiet. Silence is the key; silence is golden.

—3 April 2018

How to Avoid a Stalemate\[22\]

But, due to the possibility of ending up in a “king vs. king” situation,\[23\] where unconsciously one would create a rupture between the work and the text, in case they have to face each other on the chessboard, I want to reaffirm that the way I see and understand my process, work, and text are the two aspects that constitute my production. And if the act of making
and the implications of reading the work of art are impossible to dissociate [I'm at the same time the producer and the (first) reader], the act of making and what is being done here through language in any circumstances could be pulled apart!

Giorgio Agamben once wrote: “Every written work can be regarded as the prologue (or rather, the broken cast) of a work never penned, and destined to remain so because later works, which in turn will be the prologues or the molds for other absent works, represent only sketches or death masks.”²⁴ Maybe this is what this text is: a prologue to a body of work yet to come. But a body of work that shouldn’t be analysed with the previous understanding of its prologue, because if a king doesn’t have any meaning outside its game, my text shouldn’t have any meaning outside its framing, and ultimately what constitutes its context is the inseparability of theory and practice.

—1 April 2018

Further Reference

Anne Carson is my hero, and Fernando Pessoa too. I want to be able to write like them. This I will never be able to do. Nevertheless, it is some consolation to think about the fact that Carson draws, but no one seems to give her any credit for it. She keeps on drawing—it seems to be a way for her to think and reflect that is different from writing. She has even said she sees drawing as a greater creative challenge than writing. The first hints of Pessoa’s heteronyms appeared when he wanted to write a couple of poems that didn’t actually suit him. The story goes that the poems he wanted to write were meant to tease one of his colleagues, but because that way of writing didn’t fit his own character, he felt forced to refrain from doing it. But imagining himself as someone else—or perhaps even allowing one of the personalities he had inside himself to emerge and to speak, without attributing it to Fernando Pessoa—helped him to find the right voice and do what would otherwise have been impossible. I’ll say nothing of Pessoa’s shortcomings—or perhaps even allowing one of the personalities he had inside himself to emerge and to speak, without attributing it to Fernando Pessoa—helped him to find the right voice and do what would otherwise have been impossible. I’ll say nothing of Pessoa’s shortcomings, because he does such a good job of it himself in The Book of Disquiet.¹

At the risk of annoying the reader, I want to look a little closer at one of the quotations above. The Carson quotation comes from one of her earliest books, Short Talks, from the end of the first prose poem. In these sentences I see a driving force full of contradictions that I recognise in myself: whether something is credible or necessary. This is a pretty clear idea of how creating is supposed to happen. A work is created if it is necessary, it is developed in a particular direction according to what could be seen as necessary for its execution, its completion, according to an inner logic, cause and effect. Whether the work is credible or not depends on its correspondence to something in the world. But, as Carson adds, what’s exciting about a story that doesn’t include dragons?

In a conversation between Carson and interviewer Michael Silverblatt, the two eventually come to the topic of realism, and Silverblatt implies—after a rather lengthy argument—that Carson does not write realism. Instead, in her work we see an opening to escape from the grip realism has been holding us in. And our need for the comfort that realism grants us abates as well. The conversation continues as follows:

**Anne Carson**: You don’t think I’m a realist.

**Michael Silverblatt**: I think that you enact ... ceremonies of realism.

**AC**: (Laughing gently) That’s nice. I like that.

**MS**: Without it being realism exactly. I think realism would bore you if you had to write it.

**AC**: Well ... yeah, but see ... yeah ... I think though that there isn’t any difference. I mean there’s George Elliot, Trollope ... What I’m trying to do ... It’s all, you know, John Cage has this saying somewhere: “Looking closely helps.” That’s all it is. In a different framework. So, I have a little tiny screen in my head, and George Elliot had a huge screen, Trollope had like five heads’ worth of screens.

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“Aristotle talks about probability and necessity, but what good is a marvel, what good is a story that does not contain poison dragons. Well you can never work hard enough.”

—Anne Carson¹

“I’ve got everything confused. When I’m sure I’m remembering, it’s actually something else I’m thinking; if I see, I don’t know, and when I’m distracted, I see clearly.”

—Fernando Pessoa²

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“I’ve got everything confused. When I’m sure I’m remembering, it’s actually something else I’m thinking; if I see, I don’t know, and when I’m distracted, I see clearly.”

—Fernando Pessoa²
I understand the screen Carson is describing exactly, on an intuitive level. Here dragons can come flying in. For me, it's often an indeterminate body that approaches with an unsettled, almost pecking kind of movement.

I want to go a little deeper now into the topic that I would like to address in this essay: I'm going to relate my practice to those of other visual artists, but beyond that I also want to try to relate my practice to the world outside the visual arts, simply because I'm interested in literature and other fields. Primarily because I imagine that in between them something intriguing emerges. First I want to look closer at Jasper Johns's practice, and specifically at two pieces: Painting Bitten by a Man (1961) and Flag (1954). These two are perhaps opposites in terms of how they are regarded by interpreters of his work. I will start with the one that has a bite mark.

**Jasper Johns**

I see it on a website and it captures my eye immediately. The spatial aspect of the work is lacking entirely; it is completely flat on the screen before me. The painting strikes me with a clarity that I can't quite explain at first. The title makes it a little clearer: Painting Bitten by a Man. On the screen in my head the title morphs into the expression “to be bitten.” The entire piece turns inside out and I am suddenly in the position of the creator, and not just in the way Marcel Duchamp writes about in “The Creative Act”: I experience it more as getting a direct connection to the space in which the work was created—the teeth marks are so clear that I can remember having watched them being made. It may also just be that it's Johns's bite that through the painting bites me.

The mark on the surface opens up a portal into a space that is not stable but rather disjointed. The space can be defined as a form of reading. I form pictures, events, and meanings in my head. I see the act as it happens. I can feel it in my right side between my ribs and my hip. A yellow fluid seems to be seeping out from under the skin of the painting. The skin is greenish and decrepit; the muscles beneath are without fibre and presumably smell rotten. It’s a folded skin, one that doesn’t enclose all of its body. At the very bottom of the painting, we get a glimpse of ungrounded canvas. The body’s skeleton is poking through, the frame that's propping up this old shack. My gaze is divided between my here and now and a there and then that I can’t even locate—everything comes out of my screen and I get stuck somewhere in the middle. It’s mostly images and voices that pass by in an indistinct murmuring of watered-down contours. He has built up the painting in the traditional way, layer upon layer, only to start stripping it off and breaking it down. Painting’s customary window extends out into the room, and in this case it reaches out across my desk. It is insistent with its presence. When I notice the format, a diminutive 24.1 x 17.5 cm, the piece transforms from a body into a portrait, and with that I also realise that the body I saw previously was without a head. The face that gazes out at me is primordial, from another age, or if it’s more recent, then it’s one of those pictures that document a battle injury from World War I.

The title of the piece is a play on words, a game I've seen pop up several times in Johns’s work. Sometimes it's a title or a text incorporated directly into the piece, but in other cases it's conveyed through the artist's statements about the work. I don't know if they're riddles we're supposed to solve, or if they convey any significant meaning or understanding of the artist's work. Maybe they're mostly offered as red herrings, but I choose to take the bait and follow along. When he was asked why he made the (now iconic) painting Flag, Johns answered that he dreamed that he had painted it.

I want to look at the last part of this statement he made about Flag. Apparently he started painting it in enamel, but was never satisfied with the result. Every brushstroke took several hours to dry. So instead he used a different material and continued painting the flag again, and this time he was satisfied. This new material was encaustic (also used in Painting Bitten by a Man), which is made from wax and pigment. The wax is warmed up and then painted/sculpted onto a board or a canvas. In Flag, the reading of the work is incredibly multifaceted. It’s not just that the motif is ambivalent, but the entire construction makes a stable reading difficult. Johns inserted a great many newspaper clippings into the wax, and these can be glimpsed through the pigment. The wax has the attribute of preserving every gesture, so each layer does not change the previous one, and every gesture is still there to be found.

The technique used to create Flag is particularly important because it creates a distance both to the motif and to the act of painting. The viewer has an opportunity to see the flag over again. And that opportunity of seeing again is one of Johns’s main themes. The material and the motif create a space in which to see again. The motif in itself can question both painting and its relationship to what it depicts; but to get that far, he needed all those intricate little details he included, the anachronistic medium, the newspaper clippings that peek through from behind and inside the painting. Material and formal aspects are intercepted in the reading of his work in a way that is not always
obvious. For example, the many iterations he made of his number paintings. The repeated motif constantly shifts the meaning of the work further and further away in the form of a spiral, recurring and adjusting. But considering his use of material it is not just a matter of things shifting, but rather causes every painting to stand on its own. The fact that every individual gesture is preserved in the painting of Flag leaves an impression that is tied to its time and place. This could obviously be said of all painting, perhaps even all art, a simple axiom, but given how Johns uses materials and methods, he elevates the material and imbues it with content that for many other artists we could only be sure of after a lengthy debate.\(^{5}\)

“Things the mind already knows” is how Johns defines several of the motifs he began painting after making Flag.\(^{6}\) I can definitely understand what it means in relation to his paintings of targets, maps, numbers, and some other motifs, but it’s much harder to grasp regarding Painting Bitten by a Man. I have never seen this piece except as a reproduction, but I still feel like it’s one I have a direct connection with. In this piece I see something my senses already know about, but I can’t quite say what. There is a duplicity in this work: the oscillation between abstract and figurative, between present and past. The big difference between this work and the other motifs, as I see it, is that in the bite mark there is the presence of something cosmic, something that is lacking in the other works. Maybe the bite mark speaks of something we’ve forgotten about ourselves. A soft light is projected onto the screen in my head, my eyelids open up, but in a new way, and more than anything I am hungry.

**Anne Carson**

On Anne Carson’s screen I imagine there are many monsters, centaurs, a whole pile of barely recognisable words and their synonyms. She is a scholar of classical languages and extremely well versed in the writers of antiquity. Her texts span essentially all genres of writing, including novels, essays, poetry, translations, and more. To try to give an overview of Carson’s work and content is more than I can manage, and it’s not the point of this section. Instead, I want to look closer at a couple of aspects I find interesting: fragments and synaesthesia. Carson’s writing often makes reference to ancient texts, and it’s here I imagine that a careful inspection happens. It seems like a whole universe emerges—one that bridges the gap between two worlds.

In *If Not, Winter*, Carson’s translation of Sappho, this inspection process becomes clear. She has tried to translate the work directly, distancing herself and remaining as faithful to the original as she could. Nevertheless, her translation has become a work in its own right. That becomes clear in the act of reading. A triad emerges, and I must ask: “Who is Sappho? Where is Carson here? And what part of this is me?” The translation is marked with square brackets to indicate where words are missing or illegible in the original text. And it is here that the text really lifts off: I start chewing on the different brackets, humming along, with a few individual small reactions. After a while my gaze shifts more and more out to the sides, and the holes start becoming clearer. The blank page comes to life, and my imagination runs away, making me believe I know things, showing me the most fantastical things, things that are obviously just make-believe. It is hard to allow this; I have to put on the brakes and regain my bearings. And now I remember how a number of stanzas are without brackets, and remember that these include writing by other authors quoting Sappho. I reread these and find they are undeniably voiceless by comparison—they go a little further in the way of providing clarity on certain sentences, but the experience of the blank page disappears. At the very end of the book, we find a section entitled “Who’s Who,” comprising a long list of names, some of whom may have been Sappho’s friends, a number of deities, and a river. Under “Adonis,” we find the following description: “Young man loved by Aphrodite whose cult was popular with women and had something to do with lettuce.”\(^{7}\)

A different set of fragmented sheets of papyrus were reproduced in another of Carson’s works. *Autobiography of Red* makes use of another ancient author, Stesichorus, and his writing about the myth of Herakles. When reading it, I almost immediately encounter fragments again. This time the text does not indicate where the holes in the papyrus sheets are; this time, Carson offers a free translation, a kind of paraphrase. The text comprises seven parts: an essay, the fragments, three appendices, the novel itself, and a fake interview between Carson and Stesichorus. The main narrative deals with Geryon, a red-winged monster taken directly from the Herakles myth. Carson places the red monster in our own time and turns it into a boy. Geryon “writes” his own autobiography. As a child he does it in the form of a sculpture, an assemblage of objects he finds here and there. In the end, he resorts to photography as a way of capturing his own identity and story. It is a coming-of-age story, including his first love.

The photographs, the sculpture, the remarkable descriptions of people, the varying tone of the writing, all complement one another. At times it is so volatile that I try desperately to keep them all separate in my mind. This turns into an intense listening over multiple levels that are hard to distinguish from one another. Voices combine into a choir that becomes a pulse, and here I have to try to think laterally—the realm of synaesthetes. It is one of the areas Carson zooms in on—how a little shift can change everything. Just like the fragments, it leaves me with a lot of guessing and forces me to start searching and thinking in ways that are not at all clear. It could be argued to
Untitled, 2018. Chip board, screws, paint, plaster, 74 x 9 x 156 cm, and water pipe, 150 cm/length, 2.69 cm/diameter. Axel Burendahl
Untitled, 2018. Wax, pigment, 22.2 x 27.3 x 3 cm. Axel Burendahl
Untitled, 2018. Pine wood, paint, dried and pressed basil flowers, 100 x 9 x 9 cm. Axel Burendahl
be the condition of a being’s search in a here and now: there does seem to be a clear beginning, but when everything comes around, it turns out that the beginning comes just as much from the middle and from the arriving prelude. Fiction and reality blend together and the end is without a terminus.

Reading Carson is ultimately to stumble along, disappearing into dreams, listening to a cacophony of different voices all talking from their own positions. And in the case of If Not, Winter all the cracks are revealed—it’s like a quotation, demonstrating a kind of fact—whereas Autobiography of Red is more like a paraphrase, something like the building of a self. It is an indication of a coherent confusion, an attempt to get a grip on the innermost self. And if the seams are examined carefully—very carefully—something unpleasant—very unpleasant—begins to emerge.

Michael E. Smith
Michael E. Smith is an artist who has been following me since I started preparatory art school. Like that tooth-marked painting, his work creates a direct connection with the viewer. He uses found materials in his work: junk, clothing, stuffed animals, bicycle frames, computers, drawings, clips from the Cartoon Network, and videos from the internet. Most of these are generic objects, and many have to do with the human body. His method is like that of a bricoleur: he tinkers with whatever he finds close at hand, odd things people sell on eBay, putting together one thing and another, encasing them in another material, and then setting fire to the whole thing before seeing it apart. Several critics trace his working methods to his hometown of Detroit, and though I haven’t been there, I imagine a city that has collapsed several times in succession; but Smith’s installations are not portrayals of dystopia. There are no old trash cans rolling down vacant streets, no broken windows, no weeds growing up through cracks in the ground. His installations are far too uncluttered for that, verging on being empty. He lets the gallery space become inhabited by his objects, remarkable bodies of the most obscene sort.

The placement of these objects serves to puncture the space—they are more like cryptic notations than traces. They are far too detailed to be traces. I cannot read Smith’s notations, but with the way they are placed in the space, they create a logic of their own. It is when we stop trying to read the notations as some form of history that they really stand out. Several artistic traditions become visible. This is not a new form of naivism or corporeal realism presented here; although many of the objects speak of fundamental human needs, they don’t stop there. The spaces are like abandoned memory palaces. In Untitled (2017), nine stuffed bluefish are stacked up to make a bluefish tower. Here a vague echo of minimalism can be heard. And in another piece called Untitled (2017), a flock of stuffed starlings have been assembled to form an ornament over a doorway, with several of the birds hanging down from the frame. These objects have already been the subjects of many long explications. Smith turns something inside out for us. He allows (what I want to call) culture to be seen as nature. The division between the two is not in any way given, and in fact each represents the potential of the other. A larger picture emerges and it is dizzying. In a fractal pattern, ideas are shot out, each one giving rise to another. To try to understand what one kind of interpretation has created just gives rise to another one, and another, and another.

Bruce Nauman
Bruce Nauman is the last artist I plan to examine here, and I’ll concentrate specifically on his use of negation. Square Depression (2007) is a public sculpture that commissioned for the Skulptur Projekte Münster 07 exhibition. It is situated in front of a university building for theoretical physics just outside the ring road in the German city of Münster, a place that to visitors can seem to have been abandoned. The piece is made up of four concrete blocks, all equilateral triangles, assembled to form a pyramid—an inverted pyramid that is sunken down into the ground. The piece can be described as a negation. It is a negation of all public sculpture and its history. The traditional sculpture as an object to gather around has here become something to fall down into. And in one sweeping gesture, it evokes all sculpture: here it is not about looking at individual sculptures, with their contexts and their histories and their specific purposes. This is about getting access to all of them at once, in a massive shadow image.

I find another of Nauman’s negations with a different aim in From Hand to Mouth (1967), a casting of a hand, forearm, shoulder, part of a neck, chin, and part of a cheek and mouth. The whole is missing, and just as the idiom of the title suggests, it portrays a body in distress, a person with a bleak future. Or is this just a quip about his own economic situation as an artist? Nauman’s negations punch holes in a surface and come through the back way. And this makes conventions visible. We are thrown back to that part of ourselves we often take for granted—our personal and shared history.

The Object Intimacy and the Intimacy of Objects
“I want it to be for real.” —Ola Julén

I have to confess something: for a long time I believed that if I worked on a piece about intimacy, I would learn to understand something about intimacy, or that the piece might actually be able to address intimacy as an object. Ola Julén’s book Orissa is a collection of
poems, most of them as short as one sentence. There are around a hundred of them, and they are only printed on the right side of each spread. They are straightforward, tending towards despair before moving on to joy like that of a child. They express a longing for love and know almost no bounds—a deep-seated longing that is hard to recognise and express.

With my own work MKRGNAOO (My Lover’s Eyes) (2017),¹⁰ I became aware how invasive it can be to address something private in my practice. The piece was made from my partner’s used disposable contact lenses and letters written by James Joyce to his beloved Nora Barnacle. The letters are half of a private correspondence that I don’t believe was intended for publication, and of which we have only Joyce’s side. The contacts were framed and the letters made into a film—rolling text on a monitor.

Joyce’s letters have several qualities that I found interesting. They are full of desire, lust, longing, shame, and regret, and then there’s the way they were written. We keep meeting in them a person who is in need of expressing something he knows he’s going to regret, which he expresses anyway and then apologises for, and then retracts, and then carries on again. For me they were just way too much—too much in that they got too close. And just as they got too close to me, I found that others I talked with similarly thought that with the content of MKRGNAOO, I needed to rein back the project. I couldn’t present it in the tone that either the lenses or the letters came in. The overwhelming tone they had could only be made audible by distancing it through its opposite.

After introducing this opposition, I ended up somewhere that can most accurately be called a hospital aesthetic. Different spheres mix together and words no longer mean the same thing. It is an intimacy that is so intimate that it turns into something else, found not in a meeting of two people but rather in leaving the individuals behind and transforming them into a biomechanical system. It is a voiceless intimacy—functional. A feeling of shame blossomed. It was hard to identify it, and yet it had a presence that made the room stiffen. A cleft and disinfectated world in which bodily fluids are experienced not in life but in the waiting for a life, or where one is being phased out, where the body, instead of becoming one with its surroundings, is constantly relegated to a place confined within the contours of the body. And if any fluid should seep through, a hair fall out, or a voice raise too loudly, it must be dried up, picked up, or shut up.

The language of the letters does not correspond to their contents. There is something warped about the relationship between the two. The content is erotic, verging on the vulgar. The act of reading turned a private correspondence into a practically pornographic, and definitely voyeuristic, display. The use of the contact lenses made me double over. My memories came into play in my work. The whole project was off, and ended up in an attempt to control things. The experience I had was not one of intimacy, but rather that of attempting to use a very foreign language to address the question of intimacy.

Some Pictures

Since I’ve already started confessing things, I may as well continue: I’m not entirely sure how my thesis exhibition is going to look, or entirely sure what it’s going to be about. “You lack a goal,” a professor told me recently, but let me at least try to describe some of the tracks I’ve been following.

Over the past two years, I’ve worked with a form. It’s a form because it has served as a contour. It has taken me to a great many different places—I’ve ended up in nineteenth-century Europe and North America, where photography resurrected the memento mori tradition, and I’ve spent some time by the Mediterranean Sea looking at portraits that weren’t meant to be seen.

It began as an idea about a broken form—a form that could somehow show a gap, a split of sorts. The final result is going to be a relief that is based on a photograph. The points of light and darkness in the photograph are transformed with the help of an animation program into elevations and depressions, respectively, and then 3D printed. It is a relief based on light. Because the form has been more or less amorphous, I’ve worked with a method I can’t describe as anything other than trial and error.

I started by doing investigations of photography. In the beginning photography was a luxury item, something most people couldn’t afford. Therefore, they usually didn’t take pictures of their family members until they died—the postmortem photograph, the memento mori. These photos were often placed in a special setting, a little ornamental case that surrounded the subject with red satin and a gold frame. At the time, the average life expectancy was low, and so there are memento mori pictures of people of all ages. Often they were posed to look like they were still alive. Sometimes living relatives are included in the pictures, dressed up and sitting or standing around the deceased, and sometimes the family members are dressed in mourning black, covering their faces with their hands in a symbolic gesture. In some the subjects are surrounded by their favourite things—a man with his dogs, a girl with her toys. Many of the pictures are explicit, with stiff bodies and closed eyes. In others, eyes have been painted onto the lids. I am captivated by one picture of a father and son, because at first it’s hard to see which one of them is dead—often the deceased is more in focus due to the long exposure time. Technological development and the outbreak of epidemics increased the demand for such photos, until the time when photography and medicine had both advanced.
I:1, 2018. Detail. Graph paper, forehead grease, pencil, window glass, 60 x 68,7 cm. Axel Burendahl
Untitled, 2018. Detail. Stacked transparent graph papers, transparent book film, 33.5 x 44 cm. Axel Burendahl
For the Fayum portrait painter, it was completely different. A while later I read John Berger’s *Portraits*, one chapter of which deals with the Fayum portraits that were made between the first and third century AD. Berger says they are not portraits in the sense we usually think of. They weren’t meant for posterity, and the relationship between painter and model was altogether different. They were instead part of a religious ritual: the portrait was placed at the head of a mummy before burial. When we look at them now, they’ve been pulled from their intended places. Berger describes the difference between these portraits and later ones:

The address, the approach is different from anything we find later in the history of portraits. Later ones were painted for posterity, offering evidence of the once living to future generations. Whilst still being painted, they were imagined in the past tense, and the painter, painting, addressed his sitter in the third person—either singular or plural. *He, She, They as I observed them.*

For the Fayum portrait painter, it was completely different:

He submitted to the look of the sitter, for whom he was Death’s painter or, perhaps more precisely, Eternity’s painter. And the sitter’s look, to which he submitted, addressed him in the second person singular. So that his reply—which was the act of painting—used the same personal pronoun: *Toi, Tu, Esy, Ty … who is here.*

That is to say, it was an encounter. They are also what Berger calls “bastards”: pictures that reveal a paradigm shift, in which one way of looking at and creating pictures is influenced by another. In these it is the Egyptian upper and middle class that are being portrayed in a Greco-Roman style, presumably because at the time parts of Egypt were under the control of Roman prefects.

Postmortem photographs have more or less disappeared now, and even fewer are taken with relatives in the picture and showing the deceased as though still alive. Today such a picture would almost certainly be an exception, while at one time it might well have been the only type of photograph in the home. When I look at them now, they retain their private character—just like the Fayum portraits, they reveal both an encounter and a resistance. This could be attributed to the circumstances of their creation, but I wonder if it isn’t something else instead. I wonder if it isn’t that private pictures today are no longer private, but have instead almost become meditative.

This work of mine has ended up developing to include not just the relief form but also several ways of making a picture, such as castings and imprints—mostly pictures with a one-to-one ratio. I have also explored the connection between the picture and the room around it, and how movement in the room changes the picture—most importantly, in the case of the relief, the motifs ability to cast its own shadow.

**A Practice**

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty examines a number of pathological conditions: people who have lost their motor skills, been maimed or paralyzed, and suffered a variety of traumas. The book is an attempt to understand how our body inhabits the world and how it can be a bridge between thought and matter. Merleau-Ponty identifies in the body what he calls the existential analysis, one that he thinks makes man into a subject-object that is not an object among others (the scientific method) or a pure consciousness that is cut off from its world (what he calls intellectualism), but rather a subject-object that is conditioned by its surroundings and yet free to act within them. In one of the cases described in the book, we find a person who has motor skills and can understand complicated questions, but has suffered an injury that has led to some peculiar symptoms. When the patient is asked to do a certain kind of movement (without looking at his own body), he understands the instruction intellectually and has the motor function to make the movement with his body, but what he can’t do is connect the movement with the instruction. He has to move his whole body, make multiple series of movements, and then like a trace within his body, he can find the movement that corresponds to the instruction he has been given.

I want to focus on the picture I find in this description—a picture of a person who’s searching for something he understands and that he can physically do, but can’t put together; an image becomes an instruction and finally it is sensed like a trace from within the body.

I find my work as an artist to be divided. I go in different directions at the same time. It’s like a message with multiple meanings, each of which makes the others impossible. There’s the one about rootedness, which can’t be anything other than dominant, and the one about a particular specificity, which I am closest to seeing and feeling like a sensation. And thus a whole system must be put in motion, with both an instruction in mind and a sensation in sight.
A sensation:
Colour: faded black with yellow tones
Format: shifting, landscape with a figure, half-figure portrait
Form: round
Size: small like a steel marble
Weight: like a small steel marble
Density: like a steel marble
Taste: buttery, bone marrow
Sound: muted, like when you're wearing earplugs
Interpretation: semi-literal
Feel: pressure on the belly, as in a physical examination
Feeling: drugged, a mix of up and down
Smell: has no smell
Direction: two-way
Rhythm: broken
Pulse: strong, ceaseless

An instruction:
“Just pierce the surface of the space.”

My notation relates to a thought on how a space can be filled, how something I have formulated in my head can begin to seep out and spread out into a room. By allowing objects to just pierce the surface of the space, I imagine an object that is not entirely inhabitable. An object that does not lend itself to a practical horizon (even though a “non-function” is a form of function), without clear incorporation; a symptom.

What exists in this dividedness is—in the cases where it doesn’t lead to a totally stupefying passivity—the emergence of a picture. It takes off through conceptual somersaults, aesthetic attractions, and a whole bunch of no’s. The picture that grows out of this becomes like finding tracks, or an encounter with something I recognise but can’t quite place.

Further References
Nils Ekman
**Etox Alba (SSZ)**, 2018. Inkjet print, 28 x 21 cm. Nils Ekman

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**Etox Vernalis, Etox Coronfolia, Etox Alba (SSZ)**, 2018. Inkjet prints on frosted glass, fluorescent light, MDF shelf, 120 x 60 cm. Nils Ekman
In June 1999, a thirty-six-year old man in India is forced to seek emergency care. What appears to be a tumour within the abdomen has begun to push against the man’s diaphragm, making it hard for him to breathe. During surgery, however, something unexpected is found: a small distorted body, consisting of four limbs, a spine, intestines, and an anus. What was believed to be a tumour turns out to be an example of a very rare phenomenon called foetus in foetu or endadelphos, a developmental abnormality in which a mass of tissue resembling a foetus forms inside the body. It occurs when embryonic cells from a vanished twin are absorbed by the sole survivor and continue to grow inside the host body in a random kind of fashion. To be defined as endadelphos, the cyst requires a hint of a skeletal structure, its own skin, and the beginnings of a vascular system. It may also have a rudimentary amniotic sac, hair, teeth, extremities, and genitals.

Within oncology, the phenomenon is regarded as a highly developed form of teratoma. The word derives from the ancient Greek “téras”—monster.

Like a small piece of fleshy jumble. A lump of randomly selected organs, shuffled like a somatic anagram; a carnal abstraction. An absorption of the bodily plenitude in a blasphematic form of immaculate conception; a mock virgin birth. Each limb is contracted and placed in the wrong order like the fleshly equivalent of a syntactic error. An interrupted sentence. Interesting, however, to reverse it—to understand the host body as the circumstantial choice of words and the teratoma as the precise expression. Perhaps endadelphos is the perfect result, the finished product, pruned from the vulgar somatic ornament that adorns its kitschy host being; elegant minimalistic design. The philosopher Catherine Malabou has argued, that, as a result of a trauma, the body can die without being dead, that there is a destructive mutation that is not the transformation of the body into a cadaver, but rather the transformation of the body into another body in the same body. Endadelphos could be the physical realisation of this idea—an actual embodiment of an elegant philosophical concept. An autistic reading of an allegory; the terrible consequence of a literal interpretation of figurative language.

Hydrographics, water transfer printing or hydro dipping, is a method used in the automotive industry to apply two-dimensional design to three-dimensional surfaces. The technique is used to decorate everything from motorcycle helmets and dashboards to entire vehicles. A transparent film consisting of polyvinyl alcohol is printed with an image and then placed in a water tank. The hydrographic film is water soluble and disintegrates when a specific solvent is applied. As the object to be printed is slowly submerged, the surface tension of the water allows the image to follow its three-dimensional shape. The adhesion results from the chemical components of the solvent softening the object’s base coat, which allows it to be combined with the ink.

For one of my works, I bought a fragment of a conch shell on the Swedish auction page Tradera. I then took a photograph of the shell, transferred the image to a computer, and manipulated it in Photoshop using the software’s built-in effects such as noise and emboss. The digitally manipulated image was then printed on a hydrographic film and through hydro dipping pasted on the inside of the shell fragment. The image is fixed obliquely over the original texture, and in some places the film has been cut up where the shell was too sharp to allow the image to completely adhere to its shape. The result is a distortion of the original texture of the shell. A strange analogue glitch. It is difficult to distinguish the true texture of the shell from the digital copy. If observed closely, the digital noise can be seen.

Like a failed facelift, the object carries its own distorted representation. The accidental abstraction, caused by the mutilation of the real shell, is doubled by the digital distortion of the photographic image. A double perversion that causes a seamless integration of the virtual and the real; the distortion becomes a link unifying one with the other. With its outside left in our material world, its inside is digital, as if the shell is in the middle of becoming unreal from within. Dissected, as in an autopsy, the shell exposes its digital flesh. Exquisitely displayed, on a hovering plinth, like a rare artefact, the object appears as the exclusive occurrence
of a three-dimensional manifestation of a Photoshop effect—an archaeological finding from a digital ocean. Or a pristine design prototype made for a semivirtual world. Is the shell becoming unreal, or is it the other way around? Something unreal transcending into this afterlife of the real.

While many species escape their predators by mimicking the appearance of other animals or objects, there are certain butterflies that take this approach to a paranoid extreme. The two-tailed pasha butterfly, normally found in the Mediterranean and Africa, employs an elaborate optical illusion that allows it to take on different appearances depending on the angle it is viewed from. In order to hide from every possible threat, its wings are covered with numerous pastiches in what looks like a surrealist collage. The butterfly manifests a confusion of what it is and how it appears. Of course it is a butterfly. But it is also a collection of images of non-butterflies. Nevertheless, these images shown on the butterfly’s wings are not make-up. Or if it’s make-up, it’s engraved in the butterfly’s DNA. It’s in the insect’s genome to be both something and an appearance of what it is not.

As a perverted mediation of itself, the shell fragment constitutes a corruption of the language it intends to use and at the same time be. Sculpture as a kind of speech impediment, a stutter. A lisp. As a failure to coincide with itself, the object illustrates what the philosopher Timothy Morton describes as an ontological gap between being and appearance. A rift that all objects have in common. A fragile inconsistency that completely permeates everything. Like a Möbius strip whose outside is also its inside: nowhere are what things are the same as how they appear. This ontological gap constitutes the very being of objects as such. In order to exist, an object must fail to coincide with itself totally.

\textit{Drakaea}, or the hammer orchid, has a single flat, thumbnail-sized, heart-shaped, fleshy, ground-hugging leaf and a long, thin, wiry stem. The stem bears a leaflike bract about halfway up and a single flower at its summit. The flower is remarkable in that the form of the labellum resembles the body of a female wasp. The appearance of this flower has evolved to attract pollinating male wasps. Like a trompe l’oeil for insects, the flower is haunted by its own appearance in a necessary duplication of itself—the display of an appearance that is not the plant’s own but a plant appearance for another entity. Like a wolf in sheep’s clothing, the orchid emits an \textit{unheimlich} double of itself in a beautiful illustration of the ontological fragility of objects; to constantly emit a ghost of oneself.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari describe the relationship between orchid and wasp in terms of becomings and assemblage rather than mimicry and representation. Their theory uses the example of the orchid and the wasp to illustrate an understanding of relationships in which parts, instead of being fixed, can be moved around and exchanged inside and between bodies in an uninterrupted flow of becomings. Instead of understanding the appearance of the orchid as the imitation of an insect, like a flower in wasp drag, Deleuze and Guattari contend that the image the orchid emits exceeds the notion of copy, as it is no longer bound to what it represents. Rather than imitating an insect, the flower appropriates the wasp’s appearance in a process that alters them both. The wasp becomes a real part of the orchid’s reproductive apparatus in their mutually created assemblage, one that dissolves the boundaries separating one from the other. Orchid becomes wasp, wasp becomes orchid.

Jan van Eyck’s painting \textit{The Arnolfini Marriage} from 1434 consists of a double portrait of the Italian wedding couple in what is believed to be the Arnolfinis’ home in Bruges. The painting is considered to be one of the most original and complex paintings in Western art history, largely due to the expansion of the image space through a round mirror placed in the centre of the painting. The convex mirror reflects the space backwards, and in the mirrored image the depicted couple as well as the artist can be seen. The fact that the artist himself is present in the portrait has led art historians to consider the painting to be a unique form of marriage contract. Ernst Gombrich states that the mirror magically fixes a corner of reality on the canvas: “For the first time in history, the artist became the perfect eye-witness in the truest sense of the term.” The painting represents the culmination of an endeavour among artists of this period to represent reality as it appears to our eyes. In a passionate search for truth, this generation of artists defied older ideas of beauty in favour of a higher degree of realism. Man was seen as God’s alternate on earth and the artist’s purpose was to reproduce the beauty of God’s creation. As an undistorted representation of reality, the mirror in van Eyck’s painting stands for purity and clarity and has been interpreted as a representation of God’s eye regarding the promise of marriage. The reflection authenticates a specific time and place and confirms the existence of a fundamental reality in which the depicted event takes place.

This is opposed to how the reflection works in the film \textit{Made in ‘Eaven}, a work by Mark Leckey from 2004. In the film we see Jeff Koons’s sculpture \textit{Rabbit} (1986) placed on a plinth in the middle of an empty room. The glossy surface of the stainless-steel object reflects a clear image of the surrounding space. The camera hovers softly back and forth, pans and circulates slowly, with the sculpture always in focus. Sometimes the object is so close that its outlines disappear and the reflection of the surrounding space fills the frame. For a while, the camera stays on the reflected image. Only if we see the film from the beginning do we know that what we see is a reflected image,
since the recording camera is nowhere to be seen. The difference between the real space and its reflected image is thus dissolved. *Made in ‘Eaven* consists of a digitally reconstructed version of Koons’s sculpture, a 3D-modulated copy. By deliberately zooming in on its shiny surface, Leckey emphasises the absence of the camera, an obvious impossibility in our reality, since a mirror by definition reflects what’s in front of it. While the mirror in van Eyck’s painting serves as a confirmation of truth, the reflective surface in *Made in ‘Eaven* exposes the absence of anything real. Namely, the sculpture is in a space that is not our reality but a totally self-reflective space—the digitally simulated universe.

In his book *Simulacra and Simulation*, Jean Baudrillard describes the difference between simulation, desimulation, and pretending. While desimulation gives a false impression of missing something it has, simulation gives the impression of possessing something it lacks. The difference consists of false absence (desimulation) and false presence (simulation). But simulation is not the same as pretending; while desimulation and that which pretends to imitate symptoms, the simulation actually generates them. Therefore, desimulating and pretending leave the principle of reality intact, as the difference between sign and reality is merely masked. The simulation, however, threatens the difference between true and false, reality and fiction. In order to transcend from a good representation to a simulation, the image must pass through four phases. In the first stage, the image is a reflection of a fundamental reality. This is an appearance of the sacramental order—a good appearance. In the second stage, the image is a distortion of a fundamental reality: an evil appearance. In the third stage, the image masks the absence of a fundamental reality. The image is then an appearance in the form of sorcery: a desimulation. In the fourth stage, the image has no relation to any reality whatsoever. The image is then no longer in the order of appearance, but in the order of simulation. This image is what Baudrillard calls the “simulacrum”: a copy without original.9
If the mirror in van Eyck’s painting represents the eye of God, which maintains the truth, there is in Leckey’s work as little truth as there is any God that can separate it from the lie. Van Eyck’s painting is in the first order of appearance, where the image reflects a theology of truth. The image in *Made in ’Eaven*, however, is of the fourth order: the inauguration of simulation in which there is no God that can recognise his own creation, no last judgment that can separate the truth from the false, the real from its artificial resurrection, since everything is already dead and resurrected in advance. This was what the iconoclasts of the Middle Ages were afraid of. What happens to the divine when it appears in icons? Is the transcendental power only incarnated in images, or does it destroy itself by its own representation? For the iconoclasts, a fear arose with the possible situation where the icon simulates God to reveal that God never existed, that only the simulation existed, and that God was never anything but his own simulacrum. From this came their urge to destroy icons.

Michel Foucault describes the mirror as a heterotopy, a space that is both virtual and real. The mirror is utopic in that it represents a placeless place, a virtual, nonexistent space that opens up behind its shiny surface and gives us our own visibility where we are not. But the mirror is also a real object, existing in reality where it exerts a counteraction against the reflected space. From the gaze directed at me in the surface of the glass, I return to myself; my eye is directed back and reconstitutes me where
I am and thus makes the place I occupy absolutely real and connected to all the places surrounding it. In the simulated universe, however, the mirror is only utopian. It is derived from its heterotopic trait since it no longer affirms any real space. The digital mirror is a nonexistent object, reflecting nothing but its own virtual inside—an endlessly extending non-space, an inwardly blooming universe. The digital mirror is an utopia, just not ours.

From a damp coarse stone mould follows a thin conical stem that protrudes into an upside-down tulip skirt in gummy dark mahogany brown synthetic leather. The petal of the leather skirt gracefully enfolds an egglike shape that shines in fluorescent orange terry. A transparent hose is attached to the coarse rock and forms an elegant circle before it proceeds by running vertically along the right-hand side of the synthetic leather flower and then finally disappearing behind the orange egg. On the left-hand side of the skirt, the tip of a large marble phallus penetrates a shiny glass ball. In the glossy surface of the ball, a distorted reflection of a room with large skylights can be seen. As in Leckey’s *Made in Eaven*, no camera can be seen in the reflective surface of the sphere, only the reflection of an empty space with large windows. The described thing is an artificially generated sculpture, a digitally modulated object, which is part of a series of images that I have been working on during my master’s studies, in which I render 3D-sculpted objects in high resolution and print them as photographs. These digital sculptures are totally computer generated, made in a virtual vacuum provided by a software application called Blender. In a time-consuming process of 3D modulation, each object has been sculpted from a grey digital mass consisting of an intricate geometry, a dense weave of points, which has been adjusted using a mouse. As an extension of my hands, the mouse has kneaded, smoothed, stretched, and pulled this immaterial dough into various shapes, which I’ve watched through the window of the computer screen. Telekinesis as a sculptural process.

Following the modulation, the work proceeds with the determination of what materials the different parts of the image should simulate. In a kind of cutting and pasting of algorithms, the sculpture is stored with information about how the virtual light is to be broken, which colours will be generated, how shadows should fall, and to what extent the different surfaces should mirror each other. This weave of code is the preparation of what is called rendering, the generation of the finished image. Rendering is the process by which the computer processes information from a coded data source and uses that information to produce and display an image, a remarkable ectoplasmic process in which the object transcends from a colourless mass to a convincing representation with realistically portrayed materials. So what happens when rendering is applied to moving images? In film production, the rendering is what creates an immersive experience—the sensation of being in another place at another time. After a scene has been filmed and all effects have been added to it, the scene is rendered so that all cinematic elements together generate a consistent sense of a specific atmosphere, like a sunny day in the Alps rather than a damp night in the tropics. This is often opposed to a more faithful reproduction of how things actually sound or look in reality. The rendering is what makes the simulated world believable. Tearing down our aesthetic distance, it plunges us into the simulacrum, replacing the real with the simulation of it.

In *Natural History*, Pliny the Elder describes how the Greek painters Zeuxis and Parrhasius challenged each other in a dare that would determine who was the most skilled painter. When Zeuxis removed the drape covering his painting, birds flew down to pick at the grapes he had so skillfully painted. When it became Parrhasius’s turn, he presented a curtain “drawn with such singular truthfulness, that Zeuxis, elated with the judgment which had been passed upon his work by the birds, haughtily demanded that the curtain should be drawn aside to let the picture be seen. Upon finding his mistake, with a great degree of ingenuous candour he admitted that he had been surpassed, for that whereas he himself had only deceived the birds, Parrhasius had deceived him, an artist.”

Around 1413, the Italian architect Filippo Brunelleschi developed what later became known as central perspective: a system that could represent distances in a scientifically measurable way. The key to this system lies in the observation that all parallel lines passing through a room in straight angles to the subject converge at a central point—the vanishing point—at the height of the viewer’s eye. As an illustration, the canvas can be likened to a window where the artist paints what they see directly on the glass. This discovery, further developed by Leon Battista Alberti and Piero della Francesca, made it possible for artists in Europe to bring about more convincing optical illusions, refinements of the perspectival trick known as trompe l’oeil, or “deception of the eye.” Motivated by the church’s aim to transfer knowledge about the beauty of the divine to an illiterate population, fresco painters could now make the miracles believable. With help from the principles of central perspective, the ceiling could be opened and the angels could enter.

Within 3D graphics, the computer screen can be likened to the painter’s canvas. An object’s extension in virtual space is calculated according to the central perspective principles, where the lines originate from an imagined eye on the other side of the screen. What enables hyperrealistic representations is a technique called ray tracing. This technique traces the path of the light rays from the imaginary eye through the pixels on the screen, where each pixel represents one ray. When a ray intersects with an object, the algorithm
BARAKA, 2018. HD video projection on laser cut plexiglass, 80 x 175 cm, 00:20 min, loop. Nils Ekman

DR800S, 2018. Industrial clay, plastic, MDF platform, 120 x 120 cm. Nils Ekman
estimates the incoming light at the intersection, examines the object's material properties, and then calculates the final colour of the pixel. Ray tracing not only accomplishes accurate calculations of an object's extension in a three-dimensional space, but also calculates how light rays are broken depending on the different characteristics a particular surface may have. When something interrupts the progress of a light ray, one of four things can happen: absorption, reflection, refraction, or fluorescence. Absorption means that the surface absorbs part of the light, which results in a loss of intensity of the reflected light. Reflection means that all or part of the light ray is reflected in one or more directions. If the surface is transparent or translucent, it will refract a portion of the light beam into itself in a different direction while absorbing some of the spectrum. A surface can also absorb some of the light and "fluorescently" re-emit the light at a longer wavelength in a random direction. Precise calculations of the light's interaction with different types of surfaces are what enable the extremely realistic representations that digital rendering can achieve. Ray tracing not only creates an illusion of an object's extension in three-dimensional space, but also provides detailed sensory information; the rendering creates the tactile presence that makes digital textures hyperreal.

Leather, PVC, fur, metal, and skin. Intricate assemblages compiled into floral compositions. The digital sculptures in my series of 3D-rendered images represent strange combinations of materials and shapes. Organic textures are seamlessly integrated with surfaces reminiscent of mass-fabricated objects. The textures are so drenched in tactile information that they generate a direct bodily sensation. In one presentation of the images, the prints are mounted on a leaning mirror placed on a wooden shelf. When looking at these objects, we cannot avoid seeing ourselves in the reflection. We are thus forced to compare these heavenly textures to the appearance of our own fallible skin.

The objects possess an explicit fetish quality with clear sexual connotations. A pornographic aesthetic. Glossy, smooth, slightly moist. Illuminated by white lights, spread-eagled, and centrally placed in the image space. The writer Paul B. Preciado suggests the pornographic image is characterised by its capacity to be activated inside the body of the viewer; to stimulate—regardless of the spectator's will—the biochemical and muscular mechanisms that regulate the production of pleasure. He explains: "It's enough for a body, whether natural or artificial, 'living' or 'dead,' human or animal, to be very well lit, and as desirable as it is inaccessible, possessing a masturbatory value directly proportional to its ability to act as an abstract and dazzling fantasy." The pornographic image is an "embodied image," one that incorporates itself as a body and captures the viewer's body at the encounter with an eroticised technological device. If trompe l'oeil is an optical illusion, an image that deceives the perceptual system, the pornographic image is a bodily deception, an illusion of physical intimacy made possible by the ability of the image to transfer bodily sensation.

The digital objects I've made constitute a catalogue of fictions, an archive of imaginary objects. The project is thus a visually enigmatic manifestation of an impossibility; a photographic index of nonexistent objects. As a sort of categorisation of phantoms, the series represents an homage to Karl Blossfeldt's elegant taxonomic studies from the 1920s. For many years, the German teacher and sculptor photographed plants in extreme close-up. The photographs were meant to serve as a basis and inspiration for designers. With the help of a self-made camera, Blossfeldt could enlarge his subjects up to thirty times their size, thus visualising details previously hidden from the human eye. The result is exceptionally beautiful photographs of plants appearing as curious beings from another world. Centrally placed in the image space, delimited sensitively by the shape of each specific plant, rested against a matte black or white background. Sharp, concentrated, highly contrasted, the plants constitute a threatening and erotic presence. The extreme detail of something so small makes it difficult to determine the scale. They resemble monumental industrial buildings as well as enlarged microscopic organisms. Grasping leaves, intricately developed ranks, stems covered with small rhizoids that seem to mutate into architectural structures. Complex patterns cover surfaces that resemble modernist design. The images reveal what Walter Benjamin calls the optical unconscious: what the retina of the eye receives but that is not converted into information by the perceptive system. Like a psychodynamic dream interpretation that reveals our unconscious drives by decoding the metaphors of our dreams, these photographs reveal a hidden retinal reality. The photographic technology allows a portal to what is hidden by the limitation of our own personal technology for seeing—the human eye.

In his 1932 book Magic Garden of Nature, Blossfeldt speaks of nature as "a teacher of beauty and inwardness and a source of the noblest delight." His photographs, however, can be seen as an account of something quite different: an exposure of a deeply strange quality of nature. By placing these plants in the foreground, something eerie is revealed in what was previously a decorative background. Something that we previously saw from a comfortable aesthetic distance appears in these photographs with an unprecedented monstrous presence, and through this uncanny presence the plants brings to the fore a ghostly aspect of the very term "nature"; it is hard to point at what nature actually is. The more we study nature, the more clear it becomes that the term hovers between
things: it is both/and, neither/or. Timothy Morton describes nature as a transcendental term in a material mask. Nature stands at the never-arriving end of a potentially infinite metonymic list of terms: fish, grass, flowers, trees, heterosexuality, chimpanzees ... nature. Like a ghost, it searches through the universe for its reflection, only to find none. It is both animals and weather; both the set and the entities. Nature wavers between the divine and the material. If it is another word for supernatural power, why not call it God? But if now God is not outside the material sphere, why not just call it matter? Nature should be natural, but we cannot point to it. It becomes either supernatural or it disappears and leaves us with only matter.

Blossfeldt’s plants are naked, spread-eagled, and saturated with tactile information. Our harmless virgin nature appears in these photographs as something strange, sexual, and threatening. Unheimlich nature pornography.

But despite their ghostly appearance, Blossfeldt’s photographs possess something that my digitally sculpted objects lack: a relation to reality. The plants are representations of real plants. The image status as an index is thus intact. The digitally rendered images on the other hand lack any relation to any reality whatsoever. They are no longer in the order of appearance, and to describe them as an index is thus fraudulent. They are simulations, beautiful lies. If Blossfeldt’s photographs, as Benjamin states, manifest our optical unconscious by making visible that which we see but does not register, this hyperreal ghost index constitutes a fabricated optical unconscious. An attempt to implant a false retinal reality. Like the trick of a skilled magician, by pointing at something hidden, the image hides the fact that what was hidden never existed. The lie becomes credible through the formation of another.

J.G. Ballard’s baroque sci-fi novel Crash revolves around a small group of people united in their mutual sexual obsession with car accidents. At the centre of this group is Vaughan, a man who sees the car crash as key to a new sexuality made possible by the progress of technology. Modernity has paved the way for new types of pleasure that were previously unthinkable. The book consists of in-depth descriptions of bodies being destroyed in car accidents and fused with technology through this violent act. Machine and body interact and form new experimental relationships where the human body and design objects blend into baroque assemblages. The border between human and world, inside and outside is repeatedly demolished by technology’s penetration of the body. Within design, the term “skeuomorph” is used to describe objects with decorative attributes that lack function but refer to details that once had a function. In Crash, penis and vagina become skeuomorphs due to a reorganisation of the body’s functions that makes former sexual practices obsolete in favour of new technosexual practices.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, every human body, with its limited set of properties, also holds a virtual dimension. This virtual dimension, which Deleuze and Guattari call the “body without organs,” consists of a vast reservoir of potential traits, connections, and affects open to reconfiguration. No organ is fixed in relation to its position or function, and to make oneself a body without organs is to actively experiment with oneself to draw out and activate these virtual potentials. The characters in Crash construct bodies without organs when they allow themselves to find pleasure in the new relationships between body and machine caused by the accidents. The characters redraw the map according to which their pleasure flows, and their bodies are reconfigured as new wounds caused by accidents begin to act as sexual organs. The organic body becomes a sign that, together with the car, creates a new language of carnal abstractions and design.

In Ed Atkins’s video Safe Conduct (2016), a young man performs self-mutilation at a calm and rhythmic pace. The man peels off the skin from his face, tears out his eyes, and pulls off his nose. The protagonist is a hyperreal 3D model: a dead-born body performing an auto-autopsy in a hypnotic loop. The video is like a mock illustration of the concept of making yourself into a body without organs. The character is literally debodying himself. Piece by piece, he frees himself from parts of his body, pours his blood out, and empties his intestines into the type of safety bin used at security checkpoints at airports. A redundant act, since a computer-generated avatar is already empty.

Like the body in Atkins’s video, my digitally generated sculptures are nothing but rubbery shells. Their organs are replaced with algorithms, their flesh with strings of code. They are bodies born backwards; always already wounded creatures without beating hearts. Illuminated by the heavenly light of commercial photography, they appear like pristine prototypes for odd luxury products; utopian visions of divine design. Like predictions of future prostheses whose functions we cannot yet understand since we haven’t undergone the bodily transformations that will make them useful.

In terms of representation, the prototype is a peculiar kind; it is a copy that precedes its original. It is thus a stand-in for the future, a prophecy. Describing a prototype as failed is therefore a misnomer, since the model and its representation have swapped places. The prototype is always perfect. A possible failure is then more correctly described as the future’s mal-adaptation to its prediction. A failure to deliver the prophecy. But what happens to objects when they find themselves in a simulated world? If design is the production of prophecies, what happens to a prototype
when everything is already dead and resurrected in advance? In a simulated world, time is flat. Past and future are dissolved categories, absorbed by an all-encompassing now. As a consequence, the differences between archaeology and design disappear. Archiving and production happens simultaneously. Or rather: nothing will ever be produced before it gets archived. Stuck in a purgatory of either have been or will be, the object becomes disjointed from the specific time that gives it its unique identity. Fossils become prototypes. Prototypes become antiques treated as curious remnants of a past we have forgotten. Archaeology becomes an excavation of the future, filling its shelves with luminous design. Rather born than being, these objects have no aura, no provenance, just a coagulated surface of a never ageing skin.

As utopian visions of technosomatic transmogrifications, the work is an inventory of our blossoming desire for the perfect body free from the flaws that are the inevitable consequence of physical existence. With all the sex that sells, suspended in an übermaterial void, lubricated in the divine light of pornographic product photography. A fetishisation of the fabulous nonexistence we all seem to have a subconscious longing for.

Further References
Daniel Fleur

Isophote (Painting no 5), 2018. Oil on canvas, 300 x 200 cm. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2018. Daniel Fleur
In Transition

The word “transition” has French and Latin origins and is used to denote a transfer, movement, or progression from one stage or state to another. Transition is also related to the word “transit,” which is both a noun and a verb, both of which are related to the transferring of one or more objects from one country to another.

The Greek word that is the source of our own word “metaphor” has the same meaning as transition: relocation to another place.

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In a class we took during the 2016/17 school year, we studied museums in general, and Malmö Art Museum in particular. In close collaboration with the museum’s staff, we were given access to the museum’s premises, collections, archives, and research.

“Malmö Art Museum has the biggest Hill collection,” he told me.

“Oh, right,” I heard myself respond.

I couldn’t quite understand why I said that, because I actually had no idea. Malmö Art Museum may very well have the largest collection of Carl Fredrik Hill, but for me to respond as though that was old news to me seemed almost deceptive. Although I had visited the museum on several occasions during my time at Malmö Art Academy, and spent a lot of time in front of Hill’s landscapes, my knowledge of the artist, and of Malmö Art Museum for that matter, was still insufficient for me to have anything to say that would have moved the conversation along. Even though I wanted to make up for having just lied, or at the very least implying that I knew something I didn’t, I fell silent instead. On the other hand, you could also take my statement to have been more of an affirmation of his knowledge of a collection that is apparently unique. In any case, it made me think of a drawing I saw about five years ago. It was done in graphite or charcoal on paper, a cold bluish-grey colour, and depicted a landscape. At least, I think it was a landscape, because I remember a fragile horizon line. From right to left, spread out across the drawing in various sizes, the name “HILL” was written in italic capitals. The conventional signature was there in the bottom right.
Seams (Painting no 2). 2018. Oil on canvas, 300 x 200 cm. Daniel Fleur
The repetitions of the surname on the other parts of the image surface were used to depict a rainstorm. It’s comical at first sight. But after closer consideration, it seems highly serious. I didn’t bring this drawing up, either. I didn’t think there would be any point. I was just hoping that the conversation would die down. And before too long, it did.

With a heavy sense of shame hanging over me, I ran an image search on Google. In the search field, I entered the phrase “Carl Fredrik Hill drawings.” The drawing I’d been thinking of was in the second row of thumbnails. But it didn’t look like I remembered it. The greyish-blue paper was actually yellowish, not at all as cold as I had thought. The drawing was done in crayon, and there was no trace of any charcoal or graphite. The italicised signatures I remembered turned out to lean in the opposite direction compared to my recollection of them. The movement, then, was from left to right, not the other way round. The horizon that I had thought consisted of a single line, was actually several lines that were drawn with great precision. These lines formed the ground, and produced a sense of space where they overlapped. I had completely forgotten the cobalt green mountainous landscape in the background, and the cadmium yellow sky. Either that, or I had simply never registered them to begin with.

There are certain phenomena, let’s say, which I have never experienced, for a variety of reasons. It’s not that I wouldn’t appreciate them. In fact, in all likelihood, the outcome would be the opposite. There are artists, like Hill, who I barely know about, and whose works I run the risk of never seeing. I have no excuse to offer for why I’ve never explored his works more extensively before. Or, for that matter, why I’ve allowed other phenomena to pass me by.

Now that all the students in the course were to be given access to Malmö Art Museum’s collection, I decided I really ought to ask for permission to explore its Hill collection. I thought to myself that there’s bound to be lots of people who would leap at any opportunity to see these works by Carl Fredrik Hill up close, and who would probably have loved to be given access to this firsthand experience. It seemed unfair that I should be given this kind of time with his works.

I decided that I wanted to take a closer look at some of Hill’s drawings. I was interested in studying his technique.
I was given two inventory lists of works matching the search terms “Hill,” “landscape,” “tree,” and “crayon.” One list was for the trees and the other one was for the landscapes. I came up with these keywords after the museum staff asked me to provide some. My idea was that these two lists would aid me in my selection process, and that they would provide me with the most accurate documentation available of the works. I opened the PDF files up in my computer and was instantly disappointed that the lists didn’t match my expectations. I scrolled through to give myself an idea of which works they included. The thumbnails all seemed to have the same poor resolution. It wasn’t a matter of giving the images time to buffer, either, like when a YouTube clip needs some time before you can play it back at the highest resolution. Waiting didn’t help at all. The PDF files contained too many works to allow them to be attached to an email with the pictures represented at any kind of decent resolution.

There was a table to the left of the compressed images that listed the museum’s information about the works. Sizes. Materials. Most of them were listed as “Untitled,” and there were occasional descriptions of the subjects of the different pieces given in parentheses. The works weren’t assigned specific dates of creation, but rather a date range that stretched from 1883 to 1911.

I begged him to unlock for me the chapel in the northeast corner of the church, where are preserved the frescoes of Volterrano. He introduced me to the place, then left me to my own devices. There, seated upon the step of a faldstool, with my head thrown back to rest upon the desk, so that I might let my gaze dwell on the ceiling, I underwent, through the medium of Volterrano’s Sybils, the profoundest experience of ecstasy that, as far as I am aware, I ever encountered through the painter’s art. My soul, affected by the very notion of being in Florence, and by the proximity of those great men whose tombs I had just beheld, was already in a state of trance.”

It was as though there were air between the layers of paint. The porous materials, the paper and the crayons, caused the pigments to stick to the surface unevenly, which produced a raster of paint. There is a technique in oil painting called scumbling. The effect I think I am seeing in these drawings is similar. A scumbling effect arises when paint that isn’t too wet is applied with the side of the brush. This produces a discontinuous surface of paint that doesn’t fully cover what lies beneath. The effect is a bit like a veil made from a fine web of dots. The top layer of paint reveals parts of the layer underneath. When these layers of paint have been applied on top of each other, and resound with and against each other, this produces a physical distance between them. This perceived distance can vary, depending on the colour and its value. The gap between the layers can be minimal, or infinite. Suddenly, I lose my sense of space, and I can no longer tell if the tree in the drawing is far away or right in front of me.

Carl Fredrik Hill had managed to paint air.

Hill stood at the very same distance from these drawings that I’m standing, to view them. He made the choices that have been encapsulated into these drawings. This is communicated to me, across time and space.

I am in the conference room of Malmö Art Museum’s warehouse, which is located in the Norra Hamnen district. The room is booked today. The drawings have been gathered up and stacked into piles. Some of these stacks are on a blue four-legged metal table. Some of them are stacked on one corner of a long table. There are thirty-seven drawings in total. Two white gloves, a magnifying glass, and a light have also been brought out in preparation for my visit.

Hill’s drawings are fragile; the paper they were made on isn’t acid free. This means that they decompose with the passage of time and are gradually falling apart. Using these sheets of paper wasn’t some deliberate choice the artist made. Hill simply worked with the materials he had access to and was supplied with. Sometimes, he used his father’s notes from his mathematical work.

Each drawing is sandwiched between sheets of cardboard. The drawings are mounted on sheets of paper, which are in turn mounted on back sheets of cardboard. Each drawing is nested in sheets of paper that are for one reason or another missing from the drawings. Wearing the white gloves, I carefully move the drawings into the sterile glow of the light. Everything feels as though it belongs in an operating theatre. Just like the myth about the seventh-century Chinese artist Wu Daozi, who is said to have once viewed a mural he finished and then walked through it’s temple gates and disappeared into the painted landscape, I’m granted the perspectival escape point that a magnifying glass provides.

Sven Lindqvist, author of the book The Myth of Wu Tao-Tzu (1967), writes that he doesn’t feel that a work of art has actually been “penetrated” until one has made the cliché mistake of confusing fiction and reality.

However dearly I wanted to stay in the museum’s warehouse, with all those drawings, I couldn’t. The distance between the warehouse’s floor and ceiling seemed to be shrinking. The hallways were growing...
narrower and narrower. My body was completely exhausted, and it felt like I’d been pierced in the temple with a red-hot poker. Each waking moment was a struggle, and my head was on fire. When I returned to my flat early in the afternoon, I slept, uninterrupted, until the next morning.

“Absorbed in the contemplation of sublime beauty, I could perceive its very essence close at hand; I could, as it were, feel the stuff of it beneath my fingertips. I had attained to that supreme degree of sensibility where the divine intimations of art merge with the impassioned sensuality of emotion. As I emerged from the porch of Santa Croce, I was seized with a fierce palpitation of the heart (that same symptom which, in Berlin, is referred to as an attack of the nerves); the well-spring of life was dried up within me, and I walked in constant fear of falling to the ground.”

In my earlier paintings, I employed the illusion of depth that figurative painting entails. The actual physical depth that is produced by applying paint on top of paint tended to be of secondary concern to me. This usually was an unconscious choice.

In my encounters with Hill’s drawings, the subjects became of less significance to me. On the other hand, the things that exist between the subject, the layers of paint, and myself—that is, the air and my new experience of the image space—have become new bearers of meaning. My painting has taken on a new mission. I’m not painting a landscape, first and foremost: I’m painting the air between the trees, the mountains, and the water in the landscape that I’m painting.

“Two days later, the memory of this experience touched off a most impertinent train of thought: for is it not a surer guarantee of happiness (so I reflected) to possess a heart so fashioned, than to strut about in the coveted regalia of a Knight of the Order of the Holy Ghost?”

Carl Fredrik Hill gave me the key that opens the door to the pointillist art represented by the likes of Camille Pissarro, Auguste Renoir, and Claude Monet. When done right, allowing the colours to blend in the viewer’s eyes through optic colour mixing, it can produce an airy effect.

In some of their works, it’s as though they were really sculptors who worked in canvas and paint.

Getting close to my paintings reveals details. Smaller and smaller elements are enlarged as you come closer. If you move away, the different pieces all blend together. You shift from viewing abstraction to viewing figuration.

There is a group of paintings by Paul Fägerskiöld that looks like a series of grainy, monochrome canvases. However, they’re only monochrome at first sight, from a certain distance. The paintings were made with acrylic paint from spray cans. The dripping and spraying technique used by Fägerskiöld produced patches of paint that seem to be floating freely in the finished paintings. These patches emanate from a centre or core and extend towards the edges of the canvas from there. Usually, a small part of the naked, raw canvas is left exposed. The canvas is attached to a simple wooden frame. The frame gives the patches of paint a weightless quality. The paint in the paintings seems to lack all structure and discernible hierarchy. At close range, the free flows break down, revealing layer upon layer of contrasting nuances in the myriad trickles of paint. The dots of paint basically swim around in your field of vision.

The paintings respond to external factors, such as light and the surrounding space, and this requires direct engagement with the viewer, as these elements are all processed at varying distances. Here, paint takes on a communicative role, because the optic properties of the paintings depend on their interactions with the viewer. How the paintings appear to you as a viewer will depend on what you do.

Last autumn, Fägerskiöld gave a lecture at the academy, in which he discussed his artistic work. He said he wants his pointillist spray-can paintings to mimic the function of a Richter scale, which is used to measure the magnitude of earthquakes.

I liked it. The idea that a painting might cause an earthquake.

A few years ago, Eric Schüldt hosted a show on Swedish radio P1 called Den andra världen (The other world). It was about the connections between faith and art. In one episode, Schüldt meets with Andreas Eriksson in Kinnekulle, where Eriksson lives. Towards the end of the episode, Schüldt states that Eriksson has said that “things are so painterly” several times during their conversation, but that he’s not sure what Eriksson means by that, and that he’d like him to explain. They are out in nature, walking. Eriksson explains what he means by pointing to a tree trunk that’s close to where they’re standing. The trunk, which seemed grey initially, apparently has almost every colour in it. Moss is growing on the trunk, and the new branches that shoot out have a glossy surface that contrasts with the dryness of the trunk. “It’s highly, excitingly, painterly.”

Once, during a studio visit, Christine Ödlund asked me how I see the world. At first, I didn’t understand the question. She explained that because of her
background in photography, she views her surroundings based on what might be over- or underexposed in a photo. She identifies the critical aspects in case she needs to take a photograph of wherever she currently happens to be. This made me realise that when I study my surroundings, what I'm preoccupied with more than anything else is the colours. I often think about how I would mix the colours that I see if I were to use them in a painting.

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At the risk of oversimplifying, I'd like to say that an oil painting can be made in one of two ways: *alla prima*, or systematic layer painting.

*Alla prima* involves making a painting in one sitting, wet on wet, with no overpainting. Layer painting can be done using various methods, but the process in general is divided into two stages: underpainting and overpainting.

Whichever approach you opt for, in oil painting it is usually best to start with the darker areas and gradually progress to the brightest. By working from dark to light, you'll achieve the greatest purity of tone in your colours, as you'll also avoid mixing white paint in at a premature point in the process.
A watercolourist typically paints from light to dark. Traditionally, they won’t use white paint at all. Instead, they use the whiteness of the paper to give the colours the greatest possible brilliance. It’s a matter of achieving a dialogue with the paper. White areas are produced by leaving the white paper unpainted. If you want to paint lighter shades, you dilute the colour pigments with a lot of water. It’s hard to change something once it’s been painted. It runs the risk of ruining the surface of the paper. Painting over it won’t work very well either, because watercolours are transparent.

I mainly use oil paints, but I try to think like a watercolourist. For me, the challenge lies in acknowledging the noncreative light. The light that comes from the canvas. This makes my choices of canvas highly important. Choosing a canvas is a matter of considering its weave, its textile qualities, its priming, and its absorbency. After this, I need to get the grain of the canvas and the consistency of the paint to enter into a dialogue with the tools I’m using.

All paints can be divided into two categories based on a single property: there is opaque paint, and transparent paint. Opaque paint is less affected by the surface underneath, but transparent paint is highly dependent on it. Achieving a specific value and tone is not merely a matter of mixing paint to produce the desired property on, say, a palette; more than anything else, it is a matter of calculating the effect the paint will have on the part of the painting where it is to be applied. A white canvas doesn’t always make this easy to get right. The whiteness can be blinding, which makes it even more difficult to achieve the desired values. Besides, the canvas will raise the value of any transparent paint you apply to it. Often, this takes some time to happen.

Sooner or later in the working process, almost all of my paintings end up having several layers. This means that they are made in stages. At least two. This is so that the layers underneath can be distinguished from the upper layers. Like a pulsing vein, the underlying paint can be painted over, and then reappear some distance away in the picture. Each new brushstroke is a response to the previous one. Once you’ve made it, you can’t completely unmake it. It’s always going to be there and leave some sort of visible trace. Once a layer has dried, if I haven’t achieved the effect I want, I paint on, to correct and change it. I always want the new layer to contrast with the underlying layers. I want a contrast of value or one of tone, or both. This creates a certain tension, which sets the painted layers into motion.

The world of music offers an interesting parallel to this undulating phenomenon in painting technique. It happens when somebody playing a string instrument performs a vibrato with a finger on the string, or with pipe organs that have two pipes for each key: one tuned to pitch, the other slightly higher. This gives the note an airy, floating quality. If we compare these musical phenomena with the painting techniques discussed above, we see that in both cases, it’s a matter of the airiness of tone, and in both cases, it is achieved the same way: in painting, by a division of tone into a higher and a slightly lower one, which is close enough to cause the eye to perceive a vibration or vibrato, and in music, by an immediate undulation between a higher and a slightly lower note. Excessive use, however, in either discipline, can counteract this effect. An overpowering use of vibrato in music gives the impression of imprecise noting.

When I work with paint, I think of my paints as belonging to the categories I outlined above: they are transparent or opaque. I also divide the paints into temperatures, like warm or cold. By cold, I mean colours like blue and green, and by warm, I mean colours like red and yellow. This terminology is also applied to tone in relation to the immediate surroundings.

In an area of warm colours, a red or yellowish colour can behave like a cold one if it is less warm than the area in question. In a cold area, a colour can seem warm even if it is cold, as long as it is less so than its surroundings. Cold and warm, then, are relative concepts. This means that any colour is dependent on its immediate context.

One artist who has inspired me to practice my sense of colour and helped me understand the effects of colour is Mark Rothko. Of course, he was aware of the term “aerial Rothko.” This denotes the ways that the colour of an object changes due to distance and atmospheric influences. Cold colours are positioned towards the rear of the image space, while warm ones are fed energy, and position themselves closer to the viewer.

The digital image is a mutable image. At first sight, a compressed, pixelated image can seem like a copy of an original image that is in motion. It gives the viewer an idea of its previous visual appearance so it seems like a preview. The image quality is low, and the resolution is poor. Like words in a game of telephone, the representation of the image is distorted, along with its meaning, as it is passed through various distribution channels. As a result of this change to the image, and the way that its component parts are revealed, the image is given a new aura. In some cases, this new appearance can approach abstraction. This aura is no longer based on the permanence of the “original,” but on the transient nature of the “copy.”
Cache (Painting no 1), 2018. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 150 x 190 cm. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2018. Daniel Fleur
Cache (Painting no 1), 2018. Detail. Daniel Fleur
Running an image search for Giorgio Morandi can be a stimulating exercise, as well as a confusing one. His serial, intensely studied works focusing on vases, tins, and bottles pose challenges to our perception. The digital repetitions of the image search are blended with the artist’s own distortions of the subject. Images from online encyclopaedias, museum exhibitions, and viewers’ photographs of Morandi’s works blend into and out of one another. The drive to gather and arrange the information and the images becomes highly apparent.

Allow me to play with the thought of saving one of Giorgio Morandi’s paintings as an image file: Doing this would mean it becomes part of my own archive. But it would also belong to the internet and to a specific webpage. It could also be a part of an analogue archive that has been digitised and made available electronically. Further, it could belong to a collective, shared memory archive, or an individual memory archive. And so on.

There is a fine line holding the necessary and the specific together in Morandi’s paintings. It’s as though some of his landscapes contain that suddenness and accuracy you experience when you look out at the scenery passing by a train window as you move through it at great speed. Light and shadow become briefly identifiable abstractions. Walls, foliage, and fields are surfaces stripped bare. A concentrated range of greyish-pear tones makes it possible to follow the damp, misty light of the autumn and spring to the dusty, penetrating light of summer.

The symbiotic relationship between the earthy and green pigments and the Italian scenery seems obvious. In fact, it’s so obvious that Morandi’s pairing of them also turns the artist into a kind of translator. Being a translator, however, is not a way of making your work impersonal. By giving a work different translations, we transfer it through different expressions, and through this process, we approach the core meaning of the work. The line work in the etchings open us to a new way of perceiving the light in the oil paintings, for example. However, Morandi’s landscapes are never the result of any simple transfer to canvas or paper. Studies of his works have made it clear to me that this is a drawn-out mental process. Just like his countrymen, the great Italian masters like Piero della Francesca, Morandi framed the impressions of nature within an organised composition. Morandi’s attentive eyes were able to somehow capture a secret formula that determines a painting’s composition. Later, he could also see and find this same principle in nature. He never thought a subject seemed worthy of being painted until the correspondence he was looking for had been revealed.

When I was given a guided tour of the Morandi/Edmund de Waal exhibition at Artipelag on Värmdö last summer, I was told that Morandi never left his studio when he painted his landscapes. He used a pair of binoculars to study the landscape outside his studio window.

The landscapes are soundless, distanced, and almost dreamlike.

Why Morandi used this process is a good question. It seems to me that since his art isn’t a reproduction of reality, but rather a reality in itself, it is suitable as a place for achieved experiences. An adventure for the eyes. Morandi makes it evident that you as a viewer might see the same subject on repeated occasions and still discover something astonishingly new about it each time.

Jacques Derrida’s essay “Ellipsis” addresses the idea of text as a spiral, the reiteration of something that is undergoing constant change, and the fact that, given this view, no reader ever reads the same text twice. Everything has always been added. Everything is always in development, in a way. I think this idea can be applied to images too.

Derrida refers to the ellipsis as a space that a text can grow to occupy. The ellipsis can provide points of contact between texts, or meanings that are permitted by the text’s structure. It becomes a third space, between textual meaning and textuality. The ellipsis, then, is not a semantic sign used to close a text. The ellipsis between texts is an invitation to a meaning that cannot be fulfilled. Derrida writes:

If nothing has preceded repetition, if no present has kept watch over the trace, if, after a fashion, it is the void which reemptes itself and marks itself with imprints, then the time of writing no longer follows the line of modified present tenses. What is to come is not a future present, yesterday is not a past present. The beyond of the closure of the book is neither to be awaited nor to be refound. It is there, but out there, beyond, within repetition, but eluding us there. It is there like the shadow of the book, the deferral within the now of writing, the distance between the book and the book, that other hand.

I think of the order of a sequence of images, and the spaces between them, as a kind of ellipsis.

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“The joyous wandering of the graphein then became wandering without return. The opening into the text was adventure, expenditure without reserve.”

The first painting.

A new core. It is a world opening up, spreading itself out. The forms are there, directing the gestures of the hand. The forms are given new life. Repeated irregularity. The forms constitute a world to enter into and change.

“Repetition does not reissue the book but describes its origin from the vantage of a writing which does not yet belong to it, or no longer belongs to it, a writing which feigns, by repeating the book, inclusion in the book. Far from letting itself be oppressed or enveloped within the volume, this repetition is the first writing. The writing of the origin, the writing that retraces the origin, tracking down the signs of its disappearance, the lost writing of the origin.”

The second painting.

Colours are disintegrating. Separating. The light seeps out from inside the painting. The background is separated from the foreground that preserves its opaque layers.

“Thus understood, the return to the book is of an elliptical essence. Something invisible is missing in the grammar of this repetition. As this lack is invisible and undeterminable, as it completely redoubles and consecrates the book, once more passing through each point along its circuit, nothing has budged. And yet all meaning is altered by this lack. Repeated, the same line is no longer exactly the same, the ring no longer has exactly the same center, the origin has played. Something is missing that would make the circle perfect. But within the ellipsis, by means of simple redoubling of the route, the solicitation of closure, and the jointing of the line, the book has let itself be thought as such.”
The third painting.

The fine features are erased. Something else appears through the layers of paint. Once the defences are detected, the forms begin to unravel. Have the forms ever been this vague, and this intimate, at the same time? When the forms soften, they open themselves to something else. The possibility of something as yet unseen. This possibility is ambiguous; it opens up the future, as it veils its mists.

In the series (...) (2018) the paintings are constructed from repetition. They latch onto each other. A new one begins where the last one ends. The serial grouping brings each painting’s unique properties into view. The work includes the photographing of each finished painting. This means the painting has been frozen in a specific light, for a few seconds of shutter time, and has thus been digitised, only to become the starting point for a new painting.

What becomes visible in the new painting is not merely the surrounding space and the light in which the preceding painting was photographed, but also the impact of technology on the alteration of a picture. The images oscillate between dematerialisation and materialisation. There is a confrontation or a meeting between coded information and the haptic qualities of painting that in itself influences the image.

It’s not simply about a then and a now, it’s also about a future, in which the image continues to undergo changes.

“The book is the labyrinth. You think you have left it, you are plunged into it. You have no chance to get away. You must destroy the work. You cannot resolve yourself to do so. I notice the slow but sure rise of your anguish. Wall after wall. Who waits for you at the end?—No one … Your name has folded over on itself, like the hand on the white arm.”

I have built myself a specific personal archive of artists and works, or certain aspects of their works and working methods. The paths to my paintings, the painterly space I am trying to create, can sometimes be found through the study of these artists. But I can never use them consciously and simply insert their solutions into my paintings like “collages.” I can view them before I begin my painting session. But it’s best if I don’t think of them while I paint. Because then they will come of their own volition and insert themselves into the painting to assist in the creation of this place, or image space, that is being created.

The original light and air comes from the canvas. It’s already there, charged and stored in it from the beginning. When paint is applied to the canvas, the flow of light and air that emanates towards the viewer is activated and altered. This is why so much of a painting’s potential is determined by the choice of canvas. Clara Gesang-Gottowt chooses her canvases with great precision whenever she is about to make a painting. In her exhibition Trädgård vatten rum (Garden water space, 2018), I saw with my own eyes what I had previously only seen hints of in photographs of her works: how her choice of canvas is not some mechanistic repetition, but rather is guided by her desire to permit the various woven surfaces to impact the paintings’ expression.

I like to leave a section of the canvas completely unpainted, white, left with nothing but the primer. This becomes an entrance and exit point for the space of the painting. For me, the surface serves as a kind of spatial reference point.

When I was at preparatory art school, I was told to cover the whole canvas with paint and paint all the way to the edges.

There is a rule for oil painting in layers: the underlying paint should always be less fatty than the layers over it. This is so that the paint will stick, and also to make the painting more durable, as it reduces the risk that the paint will crack. In my practice, which involves working with several layers of paint, I have therefore found it practical to begin my oil paintings with paint that has been diluted with thinner. When the thinner has evaporated, the results can look a lot like a watercolour. Oil painting has the technical capacity for mimicking other painting techniques without necessarily ceasing to be oil painting. There might not be any better watercolours than those by Giorgio Morandi, or the works that Andreas Eriksson showed in the exhibition Recur (2013). The uncontrollable works in tandem with the controllable. It’s as though they lost control of the process and then regained it at some vital stage, and the paintings are what resulted from this. In watercolours, the fluid nature of the material brings the characters of the pigments out, for example, in blooms or alternating light. The thin paint leaves traces behind in a particular way: the outlines that remain when the fluid has evaporated.

Initially, I divide a painting up into thin patches of paint. Like cloud formations sailing in the air. Like a spray can painting by Paul Fägerskiöld in its early stages, or like the texture of the first layer of paint in a Mark Rothko. Impressions start to be made in thin watercolour. Forms are modelled, the coloured elements begin to reveal themselves. Verticals and horizontals, a little fuzzy at the edges. Perhaps also slightly out of focus, positioning the painted subject...
at a distance within the image space. In time, sharper forms start to come into view. The contrasts between the sharp and vague outlines contribute to the perception of space that I have worked with the most in the past, that is, the illusion of depth. This is something that Ylva Carlgren has mastered in her watercolour washes. In different series, she returns again and again to working with circles. You can see them hovering within a sphere of gradations.

There is less thinner being used now. The texture of the paint, which is similar to toothpaste at this point, can gradually shift to sandpapery dryness and produce scumbling layers. All the manipulation of the paint happens right on the canvas. The paint is handled with brushes, rags, spatulas—even my hands! The structure of the image space will depend on how and with what tool the paint is applied to the canvas, as well as on its physical characteristics. At this stage, I have probably reached the foreground of the painting.

The essential feature of painting is its unpredictable nature. That is to say, stuff you can’t plan for will happen while the work is underway. Imagine you are carrying a collection of objects in your arms. Suddenly, you stumble, and all the objects fall to the ground. The temporary positions of the objects on the floor are difficult to recreate after the fact, as they are out of human control. Even the digital, compressed image seems to me to have a transient quality to it. I think that is the feeling I try to evoke through my paintings. Somewhere on the canvas, I can deliberately set aside space for “unplanned eventualities” (perhaps this is something of a contradiction, but compare it with musical improvisation, which also tends to be kept within particular, predetermined limits). If I was using a pure paint mixture earlier, a broken one can produce a new, contrasting direction. It can be a bit like how Gerhard Richter works on his abstract paintings. However, in my case, the layers become more like smaller compositional elements for me to build on, like in Adrian Ghenie’s paintings, for example.

“We have to point out the visible working of time: craquelure, yellowing, crumbling, and so on. As a consequence of this ageing process, which takes place in parallel with real life, this loss is in fact inherent in the painting from the start. Every static image depicts its own vanishing from the very time of its creation: it is always finite and precisely for that reason not reproducible. So the image can do nothing other than absorb, soak up and fade.”

Now, in sequence: canvas, background, middle ground, and foreground. All of them have been encapsulated and stored. The time that has passed, and the choices that have been made, have left their marks on the canvas. The painting has become a monument to the past. But it is never static. Now, a different labour of change begins.

Further References

Event V: Om språket som distanse / On Language as Distance, 2018. Detail. Martine Flor
On Language as Distance

“There is a thing that escapes me the whole time. When it doesn’t escape, I gain certitude: life is something else.”
—Clarice Lispector

I want to write about my practice. Perhaps this attempt will turn out as a landscape, perhaps not. Something that you move around in, where you are shaped by encounters, whether organic, linguistic, or human: a kind of post-structuralist scab, a coagulation of the living, streaming blood, a rift in the surface where magma becomes lava and where lava in turn becomes a hard, organic mass of rock. A rift in the symbolic surface of language, in its structure of underlying and inherent desire: a desire for life, truth, and self-survival—a rift in its structure of constant escape from its own body and condition, its constant escape from the vibrating moment. These coagulations, these congealed traces post factum—from the Father’s Law to the Mother’s annihilating unity—these amassments at the rifts of language, at its underlying structures and words, become the residuals of something un-grasppable, something that has never been articulated but that nonetheless has lived and breathed, pulsated and streamed—these will be the traces of my practice, these will be its existing, visible, and material witnesses.

(The condition of the I, the subject and the ego, is inherent in language. “The I” is a product of language as a function, and the ego is its upholding construction. What the I intellectually comprehends is thus a part of language’s system of meaning, a part of its grasp.)

what cannot be reached what pulsates streams hides behind all these partitions partition walls the separations the boundaries me you it the words the concepts everything it me I you, remove or re-work or un-practise or unlearn (that is, well, you know, there are no fitting words but at least it wants to strive to strive to stretch out, to let go but not indifferently, let go but not because, or not give up, let go actively and instantaneously is that possible? Striving for not-striving, is that possible?)

I want to write about my practice, and language is my tool. One says that the I’s condition is within language, the sole locus of the subject, the ego. That the
ego cannot exist outside language, that in language it is constantly renewed, apparently settled, and destroyed, only to once again be reborn, renewed, and temporarily settled. It keeps alive through the functions of language, but within language it also inevitably ceases, and this thus leads to a distance and a melancholy. (Do you always recognise your subject’s voice? Mine has so many.) One says that the subject is a mistake or a breach. It is the result of breaches, disruptions, and deficiencies in the condition of language, in its human function as a tool, and what upholds the ego is its inexhaustible and unsated desire, a desire that is not even its “own.” I am afraid of the non-I, because it does not belong there, but it seduces me; I glimpse it, but it frightens me. Because even though it doesn’t belong there, it is there. It is there as a negative or arbitrary half, as a binary to language itself. Because language is not just the ego’s place; it is also a place that in its inescapable universality reminds me about my, my subject’s, ephemerality, about my non-individuality, about my ego’s origins and inevitable future termination, because the condition of the ego is change and renewal, an eternal making, and the illusion of its settled permanence and unity is dominant in language. The place where I write from is thus not a quiet place but a place of profound existential disunion, a place in revolt, a battlefield. It is a place without a centre, without stability, dominated by a vital and endless change. I am in mourning over I.

Why don’t I want to be I, why can’t the ego be content with its place and condition? It searches, never finding an answer, hoping, striving for fulfilment, for something grasp-able — why this existence of constant seeking and endless dissatisfaction? I don’t know; perhaps I don’t want to be I because language, the origins and condition of the ego, also seems to have stemmed from an alienation, a distance. Because there arises, as a double alienation in the ego, through language as the tool — the tool that must have universal qualities in order to serve as language — a feeling of double distance, a counterpoint to the experience of the living life. It is as though the primary separation remains as the motor of all language, as its negative though creative force. That even though the ego does not exist outside language, it is as though something is aware that there must be something else; in the feeling the I experiences as a distance between itself and the world, itself and the objects, itself and the direct sense impressions, itself and the other (the one that I would love to love). It is this distance, this alienation, that is so raw, so painful, that the I cannot endure with itself, that the I seeks its own collapse.

(They say that the ego is sustained by its search for the fulfilment of desire, but is that really the case? Is complete fulfilment what the ego really seeks? Doesn’t complete fulfilment also inevitably become its greatest threat — for what would then sustain its existence? Be its motor? Does not complete fulfilment, and thus a quenching of all of the ego’s desire, also become a complete quenching of the ego itself, bringing about its complete collapse? Frenetically we live in pursuit of one desire after the other — and this is also the ego’s eternal struggle against itself. The I is because it desires and believes it wants complete gratification, because it upholds the ego’s split condition, even though this also inevitably leads to its annihilation. This struggle thus seems to be the origin of the I’s, of the subject’s, miserable condition. Poor ego, I feel it, I feel it so strongly — the pain, that there must be a way around it, a way where the distance is less apparent, if only for a fraction of a second.)
I want to write about my practice, and language is my tool. In my reality they exist, in my studio they lie: the mater-ials. They seem foreign to me, because they aren’t me, but they are also close to me, they are my chosen ones. Soon, I know they will melt together with me in new connections of meaning, a collective grasping, a mutual interaction—a birth. They are my chosen ones. Soon, I know they will melt together with me in new connections of meaning, if only for a fraction of a second. Everything that my practice is is this: this selection, this fall, this rebirth; nothing exists separately or escapes this collective grasp. My practice is existential, for it arises there where the distance between the object and the ego’s alienation becomes so great that it inevitably must collapse. There where objects and mater-ials around me become so distant that they become frighteningly close, where they seem so brutally enslaved by language that they are forced to become actors, where the distance from them to me becomes so great that they suddenly become inevitably reminiscent of the subject itself, of the ego’s tragic condition, where I, you, it must inexorably melt together. This is a place where language’s binarity becomes visible, and one realises that that which defines the ego is the non-I, that which one does not intellectually grasp, and that all the objects one clings on to are also defined by something else, something that can solely exist within language. A desperation arises; a desperation at the beginning of the cessation of the grasp.

Perhaps the living life becomes yet another illusion, another striving or fantasy. Everything the subject can separate as experience, as events and impressions, must be a part of language’s grasp, within a system of meaning-making, in order to proceed from total chaos to comprehensible order, from total non-sense to sense—it is in other words through language that the world, one’s experiences, and one’s sense impressions become graspable and thus understandable, and language cannot therefore only be seen as “language,” but rather a tool with which one grasp’s after the world, including all concepts, all forms of creating meaning through binary structures, symbols, and so forth. Language is thus what we use in order to make the living world comprehensible—but something must then also be there to be grasped after, to be comprehended, something outside, namely that something that always seems to escape us.

“If one thinks about a reality that exists before the definitions of speculative thought, that in itself creates a kind of definition, recreating the problem. The speculated-about and redefined reality no longer exists prior to definition. You can easily wind up thinking that definitions are reality.”

“They are sensations that transform into ideas because I must use words. Even just using them mentally. The primary thought thinks with words. The ‘freedom’ frees itself from the slavery of the word.”

Hence, my mater-ials can never be seen as completely external, as things in themselves, as they only seem available to the ego through language’s grasp. On the other hand, what seems to be glimpsed in precisely those materials I select as mater-ials, what entails that they are selected while others go unselected, is the part about them that makes them so distant that they become close—this fragment of the un-graspable, that which may perhaps never let itself be articulat-ed, namely that which entails that one become aware of the (if only imaginary) primary separation. These are fragments of something that is unavoidably the arbitrary half of all objects, but that in precisely these mater-ials coagulates like blood, or like the skin that forms on warm milk—that directly, rawly, and without hindrance remind the I about its own possible collapse and about the subject’s tragic and yet inescapable situation as both slave and actor in language. One can intellectually comprehend such objects through language, although through a language permeated with the other’s foreign desire and that thus emits a fragment of this something that always escapes, this it that always escapes the grasp of the desiring subject.

“The abject is not an ob­ject facing me, which I name or imagine. Nor is it an ob­jest, an otherness ceaselessly fleeing in a systematic quest of desire. ... The abject has only one quality of the object—that of being opposed to I.”

Language seems thus to colour, shape, and “human­ise” everything we touch, through our desires and our endless search for the fulfilment of them, of our inner conflicts and false selves. Nonetheless, there are, as mentioned, fragments of certain objects that for the ego appear as a coagulation of something un-linguistic, un-articulated, something that the subject cannot yet grasp. These objects with these abject fragments are not the imaginary, always already lost object of complete fulfilment, that which always seems to lie in the future, in front of desire, nor are they objects that are completely comprehensible through language. They are objects that in the encounter with the subject, with their fragments that escape the articulated, are split like the subject itself and that therefore reflect the self’s and the object’s unavoidable position and miserable condition within language. For a fraction of a second they thus become identical, dissolving the divide between object and subject, making the self collapse, fall. When I stand above my bright and shiny, nauseatingly artificial, seductive but nonetheless repulsive objects, I do so in terrified delight, feeling a sort of repellent attraction. They have something that makes me small, that entails that my condition as a person, an I, a living subject, feels un-graspably
small. They may perhaps assume shapes that seem comprehensible and recognisable, but there is none-the-less something about them that scratches, that wants to reflect something, that visually itches.

*hides hides and opens opens hides in order to have a chance to open impossible to open without first hiding the inescapable binary condition the inescapable binary opposition impossible to be both hidden and visibly open and closed or hide in order to underline hide in order to open in order to hide in order to show it is what it does it is what it is here because it only is but triggers something in one triggers a desire to be able to see the entire picture to be able to see what is behind, is this what's being done that is being done what that is what one does in order to survive

It is as though in the encounter with these objects and abject fragments, if only for a fraction of a second, they have the upper hand—as though the balance has been turned on its head: from a position where the apparently settled ego senses and experiences its world, to the opposite, the total abyss of the I, where there is nothing stable to hold on to. It is as though the non-visible and always already binary half of everything living takes control of the constructed self and makes it realise its fragile fundament—it demolishes the ego’s basis for existence, if only for a momentary flash. It is as though one for a momentary flash becomes extracted from oneself, and that the body reacts to this brutal detachment with spasms, nausea, vomiting. (For a momentary flash it is as if the earth’s crust collapses and engulfs me with its bottomless, dark mouth; down in the forever falling abyss, the draining bottomless abyss, and its ice-cold claw grasps hold of the only thing that seems stable, my living heart, and freezes all the blood in my veins.) In the dyad that follows the primary separation, the self’s placement within language, the Mother is both the only other subject and the only other object—she is the Subject’s first object and “other,” both as a desiring being by herself and as a signifier. This is what makes her the prototype of all objects. It is thus this foreign desire, the fragment of this annihilating symbiosis, that leaves behind vestiges and that in turn reminds the subject that nothing it experiences as itself actually is its own; it reminds the subject about its individual collapse. What one repulses when encountering the abject, is thus oneself.

“I want none of that element, sign of their desire; I do not want to listen, I do not assimilate it, I expel it. But since [the object] is not an ‘other’ for ‘me,’ who am only in their desire, I expel myself, I spit myself out, I abject myself.”

*Event V: Om språket som distanse / On Language as Distance, 2018. Detail. Martine Flor*
Is the pool the perfect o/abject? This shape that is grasp-able and recognisable for the subject in language but that nonetheless seems to contain something that extends far beyond its linguistic form, its everyday language, whether as a commodity, as a conveyer of hegemonic structures, as the bearer of the burden of human hubris and the strata of repressed desire—as an artificially upheld human function in a system where living life is not allowed to enter, must not enter? As a mirror of man’s need to control nature with abstraction, order, and control, in order to further manage it and keep it at a safe distance? As an idiom that is to evoke and provide a feeling of “nature” (already separated from and in opposition to “culture”) but that, with its lethal, chlorine-infested water, absolutely cannot or should not contain anything living except for people themselves? Living life, that is, “nature,” does not belong in the pool; perhaps the pool symbolises something about the concept of “nature,” but things that actually live, things that are uncontrollable, un-graspable, incomprehensible, must be kept at a safe distance. Thus, there is something abject about the thought of living insects and other creatures in a pool, something that disrupts the reflective, pure, glimmering surface that people can glimpse themselves in—glimpse their own reflection, their own identity and status. See themselves as a whole, as an unfragmented object, confirm themselves as a living subject. There is something appealing and alluring about this shiny, glistening surface, as in Narcissus’s pool, where he saw his own reflection, so entrancing and seemingly so all-absorbing that it ended with his individual death, the collapse of the subject. There is something about the pool that extends beyond its linguistic form and that therefore constantly escapes articulation, escapes being grasped; something that constantly reminds us that it does not signify what it professes to signify, that the thing it refers to cannot exist, because if it had existed it had not been that, that which seduces but at the same time frightens, that which attracts but at the same time repulses.
(This subject I write about is not the conventionally accepted Western, Cartesian subject, but rather a subject that stems from fundamental alienation, a fundamental doubt about one’s, the subject’s, own existence. It is Jacques Lacan’s universe of meaning I make use of to try to explain this difficult situation, one I know far too well in my own practice, but one that time and again escapes the grasp of language. This subject thus stems from two fundamental alienations: first the alienation that arises after the primary separation from the complete symbiosis that leads to the child’s placement in language, and second in the dyad where the child realises that its mother as well is a desiring subject and further internalises and makes her desires, the other’s desires, its own. The subject thus comes into being as either an “error,” a breach, or a remainder of this inner rift between the alienated language of the unconscious and the status of the subject in and as a slave of the other’s desire within language. In Lacan’s universe of meaning, one can thus regard the unconscious as being structured like a language, and language as primarily external, where our experience as subjects is constituted as a discontinuity or a friction between the subjectless, unconscious language and the living, external, meaning-making language such as we know it, in which the subject must constantly sustain its apparently settled position. This initiation into language (the other’s desire and the symbolic order) is essential, since we as people in this world are dependent on communicating in order to survive. The subject will therefore never achieve balance, fulfilment, and stability as a living being in language. The framework of language therefore becomes both the only framework within which it can exist as a subject, within which it is constituted, but also where it constantly ceases to exist and is forced to renew itself.)

“The subject is split between ego … and unconscious …, between conscious and unconscious, between an ineluctably false sense of self and the automatic functioning of language (the signifying chain) in the unconscious. … The [Lacanian] subject is nothing but this very split.”

I want to write about my practice, language is my tool and my condition. There is no constant place, no bank of meaning or stable content that is constant in language—meaning is created, desire is created, and the subject is created. My practice thus becomes a form of writing—a form of practice of writing. It is an active form of writing of a condition that constantly balances between an apparently permanent position and complete annihilation, between something apparently safe and complete anxiety. It is always so painful to begin to write, to make, because it is as though the ego knows that it will collapse, fall, that it must fall, because its nature, which is an apparently settled state, is not really a part of this world. That its nature as apparently settled is only the result of an inner breach and that total anxiety is inevitable, unavoidable, if one is to encounter the living life behind the already grasp-able, behind the ego’s apparently stable image of itself and the world around it. For the world is not stable, it cannot be; everything living dies, everything we accept as given originates in paradigms; a truth cannot be settled because the living world is not settled. Hence, my act of making becomes a form of writing out of, or writing around, the other’s desire through language, which is my only tool; a sort of attack on the foreign from within, a form of writing that leads to an awareness of the colonising effect that language actually has. It is always a painful and upsetting process, especially when the ego brutally and cataclysmically realises that it is itself an effect of this colonisation, and that it has no other choice than to fall, to let itself fall. I write, thus I create, I fall, and I write again.

“The ‘being’ … is that which appears in a lightning moment in the void of the verb ‘to be’. … It does not pose it before the subject, since the subject cannot come to the place where it is posed, but it poses it in place of the subject, that is to say, in that place it poses the question with the subject, as one poses a problem with a pen.”

(In the act of writing, in the act of creating, I get ready to jump from the edge. The obscure, though glimmering, surface approaches frighteningly fast and I can just barely glimpse a “me,” first as a tiny reflection, then suddenly as something far too close, before it eventually becomes inseparably all-embracing, before one thus is unable to discern it from oneself, the surface, the reflection and each other; one then dives downwards and it and oneself end up deep, deep down beneath something. A complete darkness, a complete all-embracing darkness reigns, and one keeps sinking. One sinks so far down that this something is diluted into a vague idea, a lost memory, or maybe a lost fragment of a memory, one no longer remembers. It sticks to one’s entire being as a viscous and undryable moisture, and one no longer knows where this moisture begins or ends, it only seems ponderous, penetrating, pulsating, and it won’t respect any boundaries, any inside or outside any longer.)
1 A pool shape named “LIBERTY”.
2 Water and viscous fluids pass; we pass. Each of us unstable at our station; a bit softer than metal frames and fixtures or epoxy filling, skeleton and skin, living or dead, but somewhat harder than flowing water.
3 Aluminum frames, plastic sheets, epoxy.
4 Light-sensitive polyester exposed by digital projection while covering object.
5 How can soft mass be said in hard words? Would I know that pain etc., was something ‘Inner’ if I weren’t told so?
6 Reason is recognized by its ghosts. Here in the black and white space the corpse reappears and the object that is missing in the balance sheet is risen—the return of the real in the rational.
7 Language is the locus for our grasping of time and space.
8 A digital image can never be merely copied; it is always newly staged or performed.
9 Searching for "DESIRE".

I want to write about my practice. Perhaps this attempt will turn out as a landscape, perhaps not. I want to write about my practice, but I don't succeed. A deliberate writing is my practice—and my practice, that which I practise, becomes an attempt to see this, see that language actually is one's condition and simultaneously constitutive agent, and then make in such a way, select in such a way, that the inside is wrenched outwards, that one is forced to get tumbled around, forced to fall. This apparent landscape, this zone, becomes like something one can move around in, something that is created organically and linguistically, humanly, and that wants to let all egos fall. Prepare all the egos to glimpse themselves in the reflection and to get ready to dive in. Open up for all the egos to glimpse themselves in the reflection of their own language, their own inevitable constitution and condition. To mourn, mourn, because this visually itching fragment scrapes at the actual skin of the fragile construction of the ego, scrapes at the thin membrane, its weak but upholding and ego-preserving barrier, and the I loses its footing. To write, to create, is to grasp the un-graspable, that which lies underneath the articulated, the existing—it is to re-articulate the pain of the fundamental alienation and separation in language. Come into contact with the living, breathing life, with pulsating blood, with the flowing water streaming underneath the structures, the apparently settled, and create wounds, breaches, rifts, break it up, so that it perhaps, if only for a fraction of a second, can flow on the surface, meet the surface, erupt, even though it does so only to once again coagulate, congeal, create new landscapes, new apparently settled positions, new strata. Break up and let the ego fall in the encounter with these breaches, these aching wounds, and constantly strive for, search for, grasp at that which is the opposite of the meaningful, the universal, the apparently settled, the articulated, namely that which is its arbitrary other.

write write must anti-write get past language by pressing it to its limit limit through a stream a pulsating through me through limiting another form namely the form, the physical shape that in its concept and logic, the logic is always the most difficult perhaps because it is impossible to get past impossible to use language as language without logic, but rather make its own logic that is based on a stream a pulsating, and hand, stream pulsating is connected to the external world to direct making stream pulsating is connected to a direct making a making that takes place so quickly or so directly that one does not have the time or opportunity to think about or use unnecessary structures and concepts and signifiers that only exist in order to provide more order and structure, logic rationality, material, material, one does not get access to that through logic I or I want to stop writing because it is not about I it is about what flows what leaves traces marks what belongs together what breathes what moves what drives us, what flows what courses what never stops—that which does not have any limitations does not have any definitions but what only is, let it come let it live let it breathe—

if only with the stomach with the body with a feeling of being in the world at the same time and in the same place here and now feel a contact a sympathy we are both mortal the curtain and I the curtain without a window the curtain without an illusion but with a potential a potential to be both illusion and reality illusion as reality and reality as illusion in folds in the folds in the material's thickness in its expectation and in its non-meeting of that but nonetheless its presence, in its non-representation. Clear clear one's head strip one's body is it possible clear oneself strip oneself completely for words for thoughts thoughts are words that are others' and stale is there no way to write oneself out of it to think oneself out of it if only by freeing oneself distance oneself from language is it possible distance oneself and thus find out that one is still that one is enough and much more still

a striving for non-striving is to treat one's thoughts like plastic or a piece of wood, plastic and synthetic or natural and everywhere, nothing special, only as material for observation and interest or, I can but who am I, my thoughts are I and it, that is I exist only where striving for non-striving has a striving for non-I, an I that strives for non-I or an I that non-strives for a non-I, the form the material the living that only is (we do not know why it only is), only because inner language gives meaning in its own, and thoughts and concepts are of language, does not mean that the rest gives meaning or that the thought's relationship to the world does, it's maybe the other way around but thoughts or memories are sensed as being so real one can believe them—one does not want to be alone one does not want to exist from one moment to the next because one is naked there, entirely brutally naked, one senses and experiences without an ego without something that divides one from the universe's
pulsating life and it is brutal, naked, frightening, the best thing then is to hang on hang on tight to the I to the ego as construction

“Beatitude starts in the moment when the act of thinking has freed itself from the necessity of form. Beatitude starts at the moment when the thinking-feeling has surpassed the author’s need to think—he no longer needs to think and now finds himself close to the grandeur of the nothing.”

This is thus my practice, this is thus not my practice. Striving for non-striving, is that possible? A desire for total non-desire, for total collapse, is that possible? To let go of concepts, let go of one’s grasp on the comprehensible world, is that possible? To achieve tranquility after total anxiety, total sorrow, is that possible? One wanders around in this landscape and realises that it is being created for each step, for each movement. That each, albeit minimal, movement has a creative effect. That everything is like a big dough, like an all-embracing organic dough that rises, is kneaded and formed, and that is constantly growing together with all its inner components, all its inner components that one can no longer divide from each other. One wanders around in this landscape and slowly realises that it doesn’t have a goal or an aim but that each step simply leads to another, and to another, and to yet another without ending. That the paths are endless and entropic, that one cannot un-walk them. That the paths take place regardless of whether one thinks them or intellectually grasps them or not, that they pump and pulsate, flow, stream, and live, regardless of whether one writes them or not. That these steps and paths that are walked and made are without a distance, that there is no distance between walking and making, between being the inner and outer at the same time. I fall, I mourn, I mourn over the fall of the I, but the movement never ceases. An inevitable fall for the ones who walk these paths. That in order to grasp that one is unable to fully grasp this collective act of making, this living act of becoming, the I must fall, again and again, because it resists. It fights, it mourns, it fights again. This text is, this text makes; your reading, the other’s reading, makes. This is thus how I make it, this is thus how I not make it; practice is no tool, practice is no language — but there in the fall, in the fall together with the all-embracing pulsating moisture, where one is falling, flowing and streaming together; there is where practice is found, there is where one finally can open the grasp — but only for a fraction of a second, and don’t you think it, articulate it, say it, or try to comprehend it—it escapes and is always already lost. What remains is its bare residuals, its witnesses, and anew I am again I, and it is it, and everything seems familiar once again, and one is suddenly standing there dry, looking at one’s feet that are planted firmly, that are apparently planted firmly, on the edge expecting something—an endless repetition.

3 Lispector, Água Viva, 84.
5 Kristeva, Powers of Horror, 3.
8 Lispector, Água Viva, 82.
The Night Said


The brides walk behind. The walk towards-away.

Underneath their surfaces. Repetitions. One eternity more. When is something too much? They know no boundaries.

The bride stands in the middle, with an escort on each side. They are standing close to her, and along with the repetition of patterns and colours, they constitute one single aggregate form of architectural organism. The bride is hidden under a basket-like hat, with a long veil undulating downwards. The two escorts have flowers on stems sticking up from their collars, right where their heads should otherwise be sitting. No limbs can be seen. Maybe human existence is peering out from behind the clothing, but the figures are also of a sculptural substance.

I've got to choose my words with care. Otherwise, things that I might not want to evoke will be wakened to life. Every word creates its own form; every sentence its path.

In the sea, two mummies are floating. The painting is painted in strong colours and streams in the sea are colliding, restlessly, while the two mummies are resting calmly on the water's surface. They've left a trail in the sea, from whence they came. Two receptacles. Two archives keeping quiet. Silently, albeit generously, they are bringing forth the prophecy from the past.

There is, in my work, a wave, from one painting to the next, and back again. Sentences, sensory impulses, and titles seep into the paint and wander among canvases. They give body to motifs, in a field situated between figuration and abstraction. Parallels to my sculptural practice turn up in my paintings. It sometimes happens that form winds up as surface and that shadow conversely takes shape. Canvases hang side by side, or opposite to each other. And, in a dialogue of daily exchanges, the individual motives make themselves known, and a form of identification and sorting out of individuals gradually arises.

Individuals who are also, in certain periods, holding their tongues and contributing, as silent receptacles, to the currents transpiring in the studio. Their conversations often link to sensations from memories, freewheeling fabulations, and lingering presentiments. They are the means of transport that carries the substance forth to the points of transit.

It's time to clean up and empty out, in order to make room for the next. I've got to move some of the unnecessary furniture and other things to free up space. I become euphorically gripped by the rush of freedom in this act of minimisation, and it ends up that I, beyond whatever I can squash into a suitcase, give virtually everything away. Restlessly, I wander around in order to find a connection, in the now almost empty rooms. What naturally becomes important is the question of what I now, instead, can place inside the rooms. New objects to which I have been attracted, in the course of my wanderings. The other matter is that the walls are still speaking about their previous memories. Incessant conversations that gradually reveal that these spaces are not empty at all. And as the darkness settles in, I almost stumble over the bodies.

You have been on one of your nocturnal wanderings again. Your one eye is blue, the other looks away. The dumbwaiter is being blamed and carries the responsibility for this discoloration. Nothing is where it usually is. You identify with Jack Nicholson's character from One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest, and it's all the others who are stark raving mad. You confide it to me, with a softly whispered wheezing voice while you, in your white smock, lean unsteadily forward through the doorway of the lift, in an attempt at making an intimate exchange, so that none of the other people in the hall will overhear what you are saying. I press the button for the ground floor. The grey doors glide in and separate inside from outside. This is one of the last times I see you. I will try, later on, to set you free in the sea, but you'll float in onto the land again.

The dark clings around your face. It falls eternally loyal, in faithfulness with the pact, which both of you have forgotten, but jointly lashed into your cells, so as not to deviate from the beloved. The colour flows
further downwards, and merges with the chair in which you are seated. You do not need the words any longer. The evening is nameless, and you dive into a liquid substance. At one point, you start to plait the darkness into a braid. The light from the setting sun strikes the braid and reveals an enigmatic colour spectrum as it undulates down along the back of the chair. It converges with the spot on the floor where the shadow takes its point of departure. Astray, the spectrum and the shadow mess around together, in a chaos of contrasts. Concentrating with the narrow focus that can still be established, in order to keep the floor still, they continue restlessly together along the vertical surface. At last they slip between the cracks, where they deposit themselves behind the black. Finally, you clip the braid and interrupt the colours.

*Seen from one room, we get to take a peek—through an open door—into the next room. A red piece of furniture in the foreground flows downwards and out. The colour spreads partially upwards—giving form to the rim around the door frame—and partially downwards, and comes to establish the floor. It flows further into the next room. A patterned rug on the ground simulates that this is indoors, but the green and tumultuous fields in the background, with their sporadically scattered clusters of cherries, lead to nature.* Painting #1

In her essay “The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction,” Ursula K. Le Guin describes her view on writing fiction: “I would go so far as to say that the natural, proper, fitting shape of the novel might be a sack, a bag. Words hold things. They bear meanings. A novel is a medicine bundle, holding things in a particular, powerful relationship to one another and to us.”

In my praxis I too prefer the tale of everyday life, or—even closer to what I want to say—everyday life’s mystery. The tale about the body that gets up in the morning and holds itself erect as the day slides forward until night-time lays it down again.

I would also like to hear the one about the magical fact that we can live side by side, and that we may just be more inseparable than we are able to fully sense. But also the one about what binds me to my body, and you to yours.

Édouard Vuillard (1868–1940) found, almost exclusively and ceaselessly, his inspiration in his intimate surroundings. He repeatedly depicted his home and his closest relations. With his refined technique, he deconstructed rooms and objects in his motifs, wherein he had an ability, in the most elegant way, to imply a form of expansion of these rooms. In seemingly subdued compositions, through small subtle hints an experience of an extra room or dimension turns up in the midst of what is depicted. Like in the painting *The Window* (1894), in which a woman is standing in a closed room with her back to us. Bent over and enclosed in her own world, she is drawn up near to a closet. What can be seen through the window is what might be the wall of the neighbouring building; in any event, we see only a solid, impenetrable yellow surface. The sunlight’s reflection strikes a closed door, and this is the sole thing that testifies to a world outside. The room offers no escape, but it opens itself inwardly.

The boundaries in Vuillard’s paintings are often not determined among the objects. In his use of colours and twists of pattern, he plays with the similarities of the objects as subjects to such an extreme that things depicted next to each other sometimes hardly can be discerned from one another. The depictions suggest a dissolution of whatever happens to be settled; this could be perceived as a contortion or a distortion of the dimensions. Poetically but also roguishly, he plays ingeniously with his compositions, as can be seen in *Portrait of Pierre Bonnard* (1935), in which Bonnard’s shadow enshrouds a dog.

With simple restrictions, Vuillard bends and twists figures and interiors for his purposes.

In *Interior, Mother and Sister of the Artist* (1893), Vuillard’s sister, Marie, is standing in such a way that she appears to be glued to the wall, wearing a dress whose pattern is in the process, in chameleon fashion, of merging with the wallpaper. She awkwardly bends over in some kind of gesture that could be interpreted as an attempt to not appear taller than her mother. The mother is sitting calmly and cocksure, like a rock, in spite of the fact that the floor, in all its crookedness, is almost swinging beneath her.

I observe the corners, I look underneath my cushion, I watch my table, I look behind the dustbin. Constellations of daily interactions between gathered items. In my mind I jump from one room to the next, and on my canvas I make them consult one another. I see receptacles in cast-offs and in items that bear a connection to you.

Leonora Carrington (1917–2011) did not make any distinctions in value between her daily practice of painting, her domestic work, and her practice of alchemy. In the words of Carrington, “The matter of our bodies, like everything we call matter, should be thought of as thinking substance.” According to Marina Warner’s essay on Carrington, published in conjunction with her retrospective exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery, “She thinks, she dreams, through the substance of paint.”

Carrington aimed to neutralise the hierarchy between her various processes and was often busy with the kitchen pots while she painted. She also gathered inspiration and vessels for her motifs from recipes and food dishes, which she used in her paintings and short stories. She considered these various creation processes to be a similar sort of alchemy.

The moods, the lopsided proportions of the figures, the colours, and the fabulous animals are endowed with a quantum of recognition, and the magical atmosphere of her universe immediately
Anna Skov Hassing
I should be thinking, but I can't stop dreaming, 2018. Acrylic on canvas, 250 x 200 cm. Anna Skov Hassing
Carrying me back to my own childhood notions and visions. Upon dwelling further upon this, however, what unfurls itself is a far more complex universe, viewed through the unspoiled eyes of a child but fortified with the adult’s flourish and sometimes a painful twisting.

Carrington possessed a cultivated sense of faith about her dream world, the childlike, and the magical, and she insisted that their power was equally in force during the waking state.

In the painting “Clean Up at Once”, said the Archbishop (1951), the archbishop, with a forbidding body language, is telling the female hare that she is going to have her nighttime alchemical activity, with its attendant animal audience, put to an immediate stop.

Two paintings depict a collection of dolls and teddy bears. The objects in both paintings have been rendered in light, transparent hues, but they emit a much darker shadow. This imbues them with a hovering and distanced feeling. A couple of dolls have been pinned—with needles—to the background, which, with their attendant animal audience, put to an immediate stop.

My mother hauls things back to her house. Adding items similar to the ones that are already in her collection. Her living room is filled with things from the collection, which have spread their way into the kitchen, out into the bathroom, and have now also come to fill up the foyer—all the way to its breaking point. In addition, the small front yard is also densely populated by all kinds of findings. Consequently, she started at one point to bring some of the things from the collection to my home—things that she thought had belonged to me in my childhood. “Look at this teddy bear. You were so incredibly fond of this when you were a child.” I recognised none of the things and had most certainly never seen that teddy bear before.

There was something crooked, maladaptive, and uneven, which I tried to capture, during the period these paintings were made. The echo from memories and various similar episodes, which had now embedded themselves in my fingertips and uncontrollably rubbed off on whatever I was touching. I started to move my way backwards. Tracing the path back to its place of origin. Nothing starts out alone and isolated. Nevertheless, I am always landing bent over backwards in the same bed. In the dark, through the window, I can see the familiar sights outside, with giants and witches, busy with their nocturnal rituals. Around the fire, they are circling. Dancing around and around. I stretch out my arms in order to get them to loosen their sorcery’s hold on my hands, and I start painting. With the brush in my hand, it goes fast. With small brushes, to get all the details in, the details of the populations that saturate the canvas. With the speed of light, glimpses of foreign scenes, faces, and masks overlap each other and leave their traces. It’s essential that I freeze the imprint immediately so that it cannot subsequently resurrect and escape. This is why I primarily use acrylic paints. It is the immediate that’s the crucial element. The hands have to speak spontaneously.

Like a tornado, Séraphine de Senlis’s (1864–1942) strokes and colours whip restlessly around. Incredibly, the dynamic whirlwind nonetheless manages to generate a focus of coherence in her own magical compositions. The depictions are often allowed to rest at the bottom of a uniformly coloured and saturated surface. De Senlis’s palette is gloomy and alluring. She blended and created her own colours from plants and special ingredients, using recipes that she came up with on her own. And she never revealed the secrets behind them.

The motifs are frequently floral compositions, but they also remind me of microworlds, like insect habitats that are observed under a magnifying glass, or maybe even a throng of human beings as seen from the hovering position of a helicopter. Her flowers look back at the viewer, and they have fastened their gaze on me.

On a shelf in a corner, there is a vase with flowers. A lamp and a record player are floating, in their severed forms, under the shelf. There is a screen on the wall next to the shelf and another object on the opposite wall. These are everyday objects. The things are being interrupted in their forms. Some wires hang down, but all of them have been severed. Objects are partially swallowed up by the wall. The shadows are not differentiated and cannot with any guarantee be separated from the objects.

“Through gentleness and understanding between the mountain, my body, and mind…

“Through the skin, by means of a sort of ‘touch’ language… I could draw near animals where other human beings would put them to precipitate flight.”
My sisters have no skin, 2018. Acrylic on canvas, 155 x 205 cm. Anna Skov Hassing
From within the forest, eyes peer out. The rest of the animal is still not distinguishable from the dense greenery. One of them shouts, “I’m right over here.” Loudly! But I still cannot navigate from what direction the exclamation came. Then it’s quiet. Nature can be heard, but without interference from humankind. It’s alive. So alive that it feels strange. It requires strength to stay still. My impulse is to flee. I am separated from my body, my nature, and floating somewhere very close to my body while simultaneously infinitely far away from it. A gaze is resting upon me that will not let go. The gaze originates from the outside. It’s strange. An equally strange internal eye is drilling its way from the inside out. They are taking a greater and greater distance from me.

On a reddish carpet two bluish child mummies are lying. Nine cups are spread out in a semicircle around them. They contain fabric of the same transparent red roundish form that also symbolically indicates the placement of the face on the mummy. Painting #8

With your presence, you wake up from afar, from a past that casts its shadow far into my future.

As mummies do, Florine Stettheimer (1871 – 1944) also activates something very timeless within me. The people she portrays are frequently rendered in all their devotedness, dedicated to mental activities and less concerned with worldly doings.

The artist often makes an appearance in her own scenic compositions as a participant, while simultaneously giving the impression that she has painted herself from behind the coulisse, as an observer. And with a distanced gaze, she exists both within and without. In her Family Portrait II (1933), Stettheimer has cryptically written, inside the very painting, a helix-twisted banner that reads “Seen by Florine.” There is a myth-like narrative form about this scenario, in spite of the fact that she has gathered inspiration from her everyday life and everyday scenes. She elicits the sensation that she is historically ahead of her time.

Inside and outside, in the Family Portrait II painting, evidently dissolved, and in the background, a chandelier hangs freely above the sea, side by side with New Yorker skyscrapers. The colour possesses a crafty satiety; the forms are soft and it’s as if the subjects are moving around inside an inner universe of organs. The family has been placed on a kind of podium of voluminously bulging ornamentations, as though these were alive. The flower bouquet appears in a scaled-up dimension, hovering in the foreground, eliciting, with its winding stems, associations to tentacles and could be said to be adding the quality of octopus to the motherly figure, which is centrally enthroned in the background. The mother is busy laying out her cards, enclosed by this organic organism in the middle of New York City.

In a room, 2018. Acrylic on canvas, 230 x 195 cm. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2018. Anna Skov Hassing
The mammoth hunters spectacularly occupy the cave wall and the mind, but what we actually did to stay alive and fat was gather seeds, roots, sprouts, shoots, leaves, nuts, berries, fruits, and grains, adding bugs and molluscs and netting, or snaring birds, fish, rats, rabbits, and other tuskless small fry to up the protein.

On the refrigerator hangs a drawing drawn in red Indian ink by Ias, five years old. It represents a kind of supernatural warrior of the genus that always has a new magic weapon in reserve. When it comes to defence and attack, only the imagination can set limits on the capabilities of this warrior. More than this, the warrior can, of course, both mutate and duplicate itself so that an entire army can instantly appear to face and to ward off any attempted assault coming from without.

The line in the drawing marks out only the contours of this warrior figure. The rest of the figure consists of split voids. Untouched yellowish-white surfaces, which correspond to the space that surrounds the figure. There is absolutely nothing symmetrical about this figure, and every empty space inside and around the figure gives rise to its own uneven and unique receptacle. It’s both the egg and the chicken, and where the figure and the line stop is where I start. I find a passage in to and am surrounded by the yellowish-white isolation of the empty-space-receptacle. What I find here is a kindred community, with forces of an unknown nature. You step forward and breathe on me. You roam the apartment upstairs. Everything is soft up here, with wall-to-wall carpeting, and in light colours: it’s like stepping into cream. You are wearing a long, white decorated kirtle. And your fragrance is soft up here, with wall-to-wall carpeting, and in light colours, are pitted against each other in a confrontational clash, I am still in doubt about what is the space and what is the creature. It’s as if the one cannot exist without the other. It’s punk. But it’s also ultrascrupulous. Certain decisions cannot be negotiated. Only in precisely this composition and in precisely this colour palette could what is special about this image emerge. It’s not always like this, but in this painting it becomes very clear. It could not have been otherwise. It is incredibly headstrong.

In a bed at the bottom of the painting there are pillows and blankets left in a mess. The space behind is defined by a white-grey colour, applied with strokes that, in an organic circulation, move their way around, upward, and out from the painting. This circulation has, in its movement, absorbed some of the colour from the bed’s headboard, thereby taking on the form of the bed in the upward direction.

Painting #9

The bed, the passion, the intimacy, from where we take our beginnings, there where we end, there where we meet, there where we control, there where we devote ourselves, where we let go and slip into a state of sleep, alone side by side. You are there when I wake up. I am there when you fall asleep. I watch you sleeping. We meet at daybreak, with sleep in our eyes and two different tales to tell.

The window is open and lets the wind take us. It is impossible to chronologically recreate the order that we came from. I recognise fragments of the narrative and feel like I’m finding ends that hang together. However, new pairs have been formed. In incidental beds, with strange partners.

The Vivians, characters created by Henry Darger, have escaped the line that constituted them. They are beyond the whole thing now, and cannot be stopped again. With baronets and pitfalls, they are taking their revenge. I sense them, like the butterfly’s tender flapping near my face and the flower’s delicious fragrance in my nostrils. Suddenly they are here, and mercilessly, they chop off my head.

I am freed by captivation. It’s never claustrophobic. In the event that this were the case, it would be because the fascination is diminishing. I become consumed by another force. This is not an experience or an imagining of being another. It is rather the experience of being everything else. At the same time, the reflection of sensory perception is happening through me. It becomes a form of collective intimacy that, by virtue of its greatness, dissolves contours. The lines that otherwise write their categories into my skin, my senses, and my mind are being dissolved.

In their struggle against sadistic powers, manifested as the Glandelinians, the Vivians meet the outer edge, in a world of delicate watercolours of an altogether
Til Havet/To(o) the Sea, 2018. Acrylic on canvas, 230 x 200 cm. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2018. Anna Skov Hassing
**Taken by the wind, summoned by the day, overnight absorbed**, 2018. Acrylic on canvas, 180 x 200 cm. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2018. Anna Skov Hassing

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**I din mund smager alt af jordbær** / **In your mouth everything tastes like strawberries**, 2018. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2018. Anna Skov Hassing
fine nature. Darger’s (1892–1973) universe is delicate, like crystallised sugar dissolved in absinthe; there is something peculiar and unknown dripping from it. Notwithstanding this universe’s autonomous aesthetics, there is something in it that feels familiar, but I have never before encountered the likes of this.

In macabre scenes grow flowers that serve to disseminate a sense of observation and a secret presence. Nature’s presence is tender, but it is also the silent witness that sees and remembers. In Darger’s universe, it is the Vivians who act on behalf of justice; in their own order and logic, they take revenge and defend their rights.

The works were created in isolation, withdrawn from the world, and shielded from the influence of public opinion. Darger collected clippings of photographs from daily newspapers and magazines, which he subsequently transformed into templates, developing different methods to use them in his compositions.

The more than 15,000 pages of The Story of the Vivian Girls, in What Is Known as the Realms of the Unreal, of the Glandeco-Angelinian War Storm, Caused by the Child Slave Rebellion is the detailed story of his paintings. At the time of Darger’s death, his voluminous oeuvre went from occupying every nook and cranny of his apartment (and mind) to, for the first time, being let out to the public.

In a corner hangs a simple shelf with a grouping of objects. A bundle of green twigs, tied together by a red ribbon, leans against a mask, covering its face and partially erasing its identity. The twig, the mask, and the other little objects on the shelf all recur in several places. Each of these, with repetitions in either the shape or the surface, is being reminded of itself. Painting #10

I am awakened by the presence of something vigilant. It must have been calling to me from my dream. The night is dark and quiet. I roll over in bed, and as I turn away from the wall and in towards the room, light particles follow my sight’s pathway. Like flickering grains in the darkened room. It goes fast, but I manage to register it, as the grains collect—and take form—as a person in front of me. A man, sitting in lotus position—with the clearest eyes I have ever seen. Everything about him is complete, but wholly transparent. With his persistent gaze, he stares directly at and right through me, creating the perception that it is I who am transparent. He drinks from a cup.

The white canvas quivers. A sketch with areas still untouched by paint that represent breath holes. Larger surfaces of the tissue are saturated and drowned in colour. There is a point where the saturated starts breathing, in its own autonomous existence, and the hand is detached.

Paintings, Anna Skov Hassing
#1 A bride on her path towards away, 2016–17, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 160 cm
#2 Blue, red, purple, where the seas never meet, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 140 x 150 cm
#3 I din mund smager alt af jordbær / In your mouth everything tastes like strawberries, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 175 x 205 cm
#4 Thought objects I, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 75 x 90 cm
#5 Thought objects II, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 80 x 95 cm
#6 Untitled, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 160 cm
#7 My sisters have no skin, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 185 x 205 cm
#8 Untitled, 2017, acrylic on untreated canvas 70 x 90 cm
#9 Taken by the wind, summoned by the day, overnight absorbed, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 180 x 200 cm
#10 Tara, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 75 x 115 cm


Further References
New Sidon Sun, 2018. HD video with sound, 00:50, 00:40, and 5:00 min., and papier mache. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM2 Gallery, Malmö, 2018. Maxime Hourani
As we crossed over from an army checkpoint in the town of Jezzine to the liberated southern Lebanese territories, the roads turned from a rugged decaying bright-grey asphalt into a uniform block of solid black bitumen with light traces of, most probably, heavy military machinery. These belonged to the Israeli forces, who, along with the South Lebanon Army, controlled the security belt enforced in this region after the first Israeli invasion in 1978. This was the first trip to my family’s place of origin in the south of Lebanon following its liberation in 2000 and the withdrawal of the Israeli forces who had occupied it since the second invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The symbolic return to the south was marked by the materiality of the bold petroleum remains of the Israeli military complex. Asphalt’s use as a building material predates biblical times. The asphalt laid here to fortify the robust network of roads used to control 20 percent of the Lebanese territories was industrially produced and a byproduct of the oil complex.

That day on the way back from the south, the sea was visible beyond the city of Saida. While descending from the hill to get to the coastal highway, we crossed a site that bore traces of armed clashes, looking from a distance like scorched land. The site was unusual. It was uncommon to see on that road a minimalist architectural development of that scale. It was impossible to tell if the buildings were under construction or if they had ever been inhabited. Ephemeral structures sat on top of the unfinished buildings. One could assume that some army occupied the building or it was a frontline. A nearby road sign read “Kfar Falous.” Now it was clear that this was the border to the occupied south; this was the frontier that the Israeli and South Lebanon forces had set up after the invasion of Saida in 1982 and held after its evacuation in 1985. Another sign read “Hariri Medical Center.” It was uncanny to see in this hilly and arborous landscape these prototypical buildings, this postmodern and functionalist architecture, which are almost aesthetically identical, with repetitive facade elements that shy away from ornamentation yet hint at oriental motifs.

For someone who grew up in the capital city of Beirut after the end of a protracted war, reconstruction was the primary force, manifesting in all aspects of social and political life from infrastructure to imported cultures of entertainment. My relationship to sites and places started to form when I began studying architecture. My understanding of the built environment sought to transgress the functionalism of the discipline by expanding my interest in critical spatial practices. These practices tread between art and architecture and operate between modes of seeing, experiencing, and conceiving. They are incommensurable and don’t dwell in a finite chronology. The collective memory of the postwar era was marked by the ruined buildings that were memorialised in the architectural heritage of modern Lebanon. Many questions circulate in relationship to these landmarks, wishing to uncover an obscure past, looking to determine their symbolic function, and searching for a transmaterialist understanding of these places. In my practice as an artist, I regard these ruined places as living archives rather than as a tabula rasa that is perpetually looking for a centre of conception.

The Kfar Falous site is one of those political, social, architectural, and historical repositories that is not shared in the collective memory and is referenced by many differing and controversial perspectives. Some people say it was built to aid the nationalisation of Palestinian refugees, others see it as a mark of progress, and some frame it as an agent of the extension of the imperial powers in the region. Many colloquial narratives lurk around the modern architectural heritage of Lebanon, dissolving the border between
myth and fact. In my practice, I approach those sites by appropriating through artistic research, surveying as an instrument of spatial practice. The artistic medium is on one side a directed index that stages the real and on the other an agent of entanglement approaching unfamiliar foes.

Tripoli (2010), a fictional film by the Norwegian artist Knut Åsdam, was produced as a response to a modernist architectural relic that is set in a transnational historical narrative. Åsdam chose to title his film after the city of Tripoli. Yet, the city only exists in the diegetic space of the film. We only relate to it from within the fences of the Rachid Karami International Fair. The Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer was commissioned to develop this ten-thousand-hectare site in the 1960s, but his project was never finished because of the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975. According to Åsdam, it became an “instant ruin.” The film starts with a sequence of wide shots that fail to take an inclusive view of this modernist utopia. The materiality and style of the site are uniform. The scale of the project is undefinable. In the film, the theatrical aesthetic of the architecture is coupled with scenographic elements that blend in with the atmosphere of 1970s spy cinema.

From the beginning of the film, we follow a character. The film gives the feel of a role-playing game set in a singular planned world. We are always in the intersection between the architectural wonder seen from the gaze of the main protagonist and the movement of the camera that is tracking this agent. This simulated navigation in the space of this modernist utopia speaks in the form of an official blueprint. But this seamless cinematic flow is interrupted by theatrical interjections. The character has found a mysterious object, a corpse-looking thing wrapped in plastic film. The object appears to be coming out of the rubble, emerging from an extradicetic space, from the exposed ground at the edges of the seamless concrete plane. The access to a mystical dimension is experienced through the interaction with nature, transposing our perception to a shamanistic world view. The theatrical interjections also appear as different encounters, engaging in absurd dialogue with different characters. These characters are ominous, always expressing their contemptuous feelings for the site.

Tripoli was produced on a site that, although a ruin, doesn’t bear the traces of the war. On this site, people only engage in deviant conversations and seem to be trapped in an immaterial prison. When Åsdam chose this site, he was interested not only in architecture per se, but also in place as a referent to cultural and social history. His approach veers from the analysis of a site and treads on the phenomenological. He thinks of this work as an anti-architecture documentary, for which, in response to the uncanniness of this transnational architecture, he chose to produce a set of theatrical tableaux by stitching together fragments of different dramatic narratives that he devised while on site. In one of the fragments, the main character is warned about digging too deep. In an encounter with a woman, he is warned not to look into certain memories in the place. At a time when the Lebanese are struggling to find a language to speak about the war, muteness is an imperative and a condition to live through in this film.

The first encounter with the ruins of an architectural edifice in my artistic practice is always accompanied by a muteness that silences the collaborative nature of planning and construction. The modes of inspection are often silent, recording in all directions. These sites are abandoned and their new inhabitants are long gone, leaving me with voiceless material indices that compel me to excavate or project onto these sites. The first steps into one of the buildings in Kfar Falous lands you on a soft carpet of dust, paper, and moss; a sediment of a historical nature. Amid the dispersed papers lying beneath the thick and wet layer of dust, I collected handwritten papers with charts and an article on dyschromatopsia (colour blindness) among Saudi Arabians. What I found were fragments of a genetic study that might have been one conducted at the Hariri Medical Center or in one of the other departments of this educational complex.

It’s not known who was doing the research, a student or a lab director at the school or at the hospital. The papers I found were scattered in the buildings where the laboratories of the Jesuit university were located. The study includes samples from different regions in Lebanon. The highest number comes from the “mountain of Lebanon”; the numbers don’t seem to be responding to a proportional demographic. For the study to be valid, it is required to have a thousand samples. This study was conducted at the beginning of the 1980s, during the war, to identify the prevalence of defective colour vision among Lebanese people and was based on a study published in a Saudi Arabian medical journal. The common method of surveying colour blindness prevalence on a national level uses either the geographical division of a country or ethnicity, if diversity is more prominent. When I went through other papers I found on site, I was astounded to find fragments from an extended study on phenotype distribution that divided its subjects by religious sect. The study doesn’t show a racial bias or try to place one sect above the other.

From exploring this modernist institution, I found that the sectarian mentality can even contaminate scientific integrity. These papers were a latent expression of the “Manifesto of the Racist Scientists,” a text published in 1938 at the height of Italian fascism by a group of scientists who shared a desire to put the Italian race above all others. This virulent dissertation was not based on any scientific reasoning, yet it
became state law, instrumentalising science for the benefit of political totalitarianism. This case leaves us to question the limits of the institution whose role is to bring people together around visions of progress and of the individual's agency outside of their social and political loyalties.

By examining the documents I found in Kfar Falous, I was able to access part of history through the practices of a Lebanese citizen who possibly represents a social class that holds a stigmatising view of others. Despite the corporeal absence of this person, the importance of looking at history from below is a marking position in my practice. In a talk on Benjamin Lay, a sailor and a revolutionary slavery abolitionist who was disowned by his Quaker community, American historian Marcus Rediker spoke about the great historian of the French Revolution Georges Lefebvre, who in the 1930s talked about the need to write and understand history “from below,” from the perspective of ordinary working people usually left out of older historical narratives, which usually concentrate on great men. Lefebvre emphasises that it is not only about the history of the poor and working classes, but also about their capacity to act and to change the course of history. History from below represents a resistance to humanist professionalisation and is an acknowledgment of the agency of lower classes in the making of progress. It is the resistance of the disenfranchised, the oppressed, the poor, the nonconformist, the subaltern, and the otherwise forgotten. Resistance to hegemonic narratives and ideas stated by the ruling class.

*In This House* (2005) is a video work by the Lebanese artist Akram Zaatari that takes us back to the Kfar Falous frontier. The video documents the trip he made to Ain el Mir to help find a letter that an ex-militant had buried in the garden of the Dagher family house, which was situated on the frontline. Ali Hashisho, a member of a leftist resistance group, had addressed the letter to the owners of the house, explaining the reasons behind his group’s occupation of their house (to take it as a shelter, as it was on the front) and welcoming them back at the end of the war in 1991. Split into two equal frames mimicking a web interface, the video shows on one side interviews with the writer of the letter and documentation of this quest to find it, and on the other, a POV shot following the worker who digs up the letter, which was concealed in an empty plastic mortar casing. In the video, only the voices of people are audible and no faces are visible to the viewer; each voice is identified by a tag on the master frame. Zaatari’s interest in collecting documents from the time of the war led him to Ali Hashisho. This chance encounter was an element in the reconstruction of the story, which starts at the time of the burial of the letter by Hashisho in 1986 and ends with Zaatari delivering the letter to the family who owns the house after the excavation in 2002. For a historian from below, this story is a representation of a part of the unspoken history of the war characterised by all those led into contradicting ideological wars but who, like Hashisho, still left traces of humanity through unsolicited actions. By prematurely reconstructing this story from below, Zaatari pushed forward in time a moment of possible reconciliation.

At the conclusion of the Lebanese wars, there was a radical change in how art was produced. Postwar Lebanese art is characterised by an interest in documentary practices and the production of historical truth. Like Zaatari, Walid Raad also evokes the individual’s agency. His body of work started to form with the contributions of Raad himself along with those of Souheil Bachar, Fadl Fakhouri, Youssef Bitar, Nahla Hassan, operator #17, and others. To unify a documentary history, he collectivises the voices of his agents. The Atlas Group Archive is built around the narratives of these real and sometimes fictional agents. Raad presents the Atlas Group (a pseudonym of the artist) as a think tank of sorts, investigating the possibilities but also the limits of the writing of the history of the wars of the past few decades. Raad is committed to not reducing the wars into a chronology of massacres or invasions, and certainly not reducing it to the psychobiographies of its participants.

“The think neck file” is the folder title in the Atlas Group Archive of the project that organises experiences and stories surrounding the detonation of 245 bombs that exploded between 1975 and 1991 and killed and injured thousands of people in major Lebanese cities. Yussef Nassar, an explosives expert during the war, extensively documented these events. His large collection of photographs, taken by amateurs and professionals, was given to Raad’s archive, mainly showing the engines of bombed cars after they landed.

Nahla Hassan was a senior topographer in the Lebanese Army’s Directorate of Geographic Affairs. She produced a cartographic representation of all the craters created by bombed cars as well as a circular scaled model of all the detonations that happened in Beirut between 1975 and 1991. Hassan went on to present her model to the Parliamentary Committee on Development and Reconstruction, leading to a halt of all reconstruction activities that had currently been underway. After this incident, Hassan was dismissed from her job and her model was destroyed; she reproduced it for the Atlas Group Archive, in the work titled *I Was Overcome with a Momentary Panic at the Thought That They Might Be Right* (1998).

Raad gives voice to people like Hassan and others who do not get to write their own histories. Their stories are lost in the context of a country coming out of a protracted war that ended with a continued occupation by Syria and Israel and where peace was instated in the form of an agreement under the patronage of
Saudi Arabia and reconciliations between the old feudal lords and the new warlords, which allowed internal refugees to come back to their homes. Still to this day, Lebanon is not able to cohere around a unified history book, and the muteness of individual stories remains.

Raad is troubled by the idea that one can live an experience but not experience it. He asks, “Is it possible that the events of the Lebanese wars of the past years might have been lived but not experienced?” Raad’s project is driven by the need to identify, collect, and archive the hysterical historical symptoms of culture that were left by that lived past. To break the muteness caused by the trauma of war, Raad resorts to producing and fabulating these symptoms if he isn’t able to find them. Raad as the Atlas Group is performing the voices of the people killed during the hostilities in an act of ventriloquism. The truth is that people died because they experienced brutal events, while those who lived these events are unable to find ways to speak of them. The characters in Raad’s work have been brought back from the dead. In his fictional accounts, the rules of physics don’t apply. He goes beyond a classist reading of society and writes history from below. His subjects are the living dead, those who are still representative but were considered dispensable.

There’s no question that the Lebanese Civil War was on its face primarily sectarian and influenced by political divisions. The historian Zeina Halabi puts emphasis on the asymmetrical economic growth induced by the injection of petrodollars into the Lebanese economy in the early 1970s, which created inequalities and marginalised communities who did not benefit from this influx, and who later in 1975 engaged in a vicious cycle of protracted wars, epitomised as “others’ wars on our own land.” For myself and others from my generation, born between the 1970s and ’90s, it became important to find ways to understand history beyond the calamity of war. The violent events and skirmishes were unaccountable and tracing the causes of the fifteen-year war was counterproductive.

In her book Living Oil: Petroleum Culture in the American Century, the literary historian and environmental activist Stephanie LeMenager defines “petromodernity” as modern life based on the cheap energy made possible by petroleum. Although she focuses on the American landscape, these development models have crossed to other continents, emerging first in the major oil producing countries and then expanding as far as the tentacles of the oil complex are able to reach. These petroleum infrastructures have entered our lives in every possible way: we have shaped our environment around petroleum products and developed a dependency on fossil fuels. Oil for many became the basis for our ability to exist.

According to the political scientist Hannes Baumann, “The oil shock of the 1970s, caused by the oil embargo imposed by OPEC in response to the Yom Kippur War in 1973, meant that enormous amounts of petrodollars were being recycled by Gulf economies via investment, trade, arms purchase, and construction contracts.” In the late 1970s, the building contractor Rafik Hariri came back to his home country of Lebanon with accumulated wealth from contracts awarded by the king of Saudi Arabia. He returned with a vision and a plan backed by the financial and political potential of Saudi Arabia’s petrodollars. Hariri intended to contribute to the reconstruction of Lebanon at a time when the region was unstable and in the midst of the Cold War. I came to this history through my research on the development of Kfar Falous. The first impression at that site is often centred on the chronology of the civil strife, and most research unconditionally follows the historical narratives of the conflicting parties. In my work, I am concerned with the overarching and global agents that produced this history. Fossil fuel cultures and the social and political subjectivities produced by capitalism are central in shaping my world view.

After establishing the Islamic Foundation for Culture and Higher Education, Hariri started working in 1978 on the Kfar Falous project, a large educational complex built to reinforce the area with technical and medical sciences as well as foundational education and vocational training. Hariri’s project wouldn’t have been possible without the wealth he accumulated during the years of the oil surplus and petrodollar exchange, when he was working closely with the Saudi royal family. His projects were planned and executed by the French transnational company Oger International, which he had purchased during the years of the oil surplus and petrodollar exchange, when he was working closely with the Saudi royal family. His projects were planned and executed by the French transnational company Oger International, which he had purchased during the global oil crisis. Oger was involved in major projects in the Gulf as well as in the reconstruction of Beirut, which became Hariri’s prime venture.

In 1998, Hariri offered his organs for transplant after his death; this wasn’t ultimately possible, as in 2005 he was assassinated in the biggest car bombing to occur following the civil war. Hariri’s private speculations were not only for a humanitarian cause; he was a “state project in one man”. He had established new development models that stepped in for the state at a time when interregional mobility was a civilian risk. Any form of history writing on Hariri is deemed to come from the top, although he came to power from the bottom; Hariri epitomised the success story of a provincial man who travelled away from home to the desert and became inconceivably wealthy.

Hariri’s projects put petromodernity at the centre of cultural and civic production. His neoliberal partnership brought a modernist model into the midst of the civil war to help steer the conversation away from the debacle between the right and the left and to advance
his vision of the reconstruction of Lebanon through transnational entrepreneurship. His educational complex in Kfar Falous is the architectural product of a petro-subjectivity that turned capitalist speculation into a work of fiction. Oger International is a construction company that contributed to the modern heritage of Lebanon with a building that uses post–World War II and Fordist construction techniques. The same construction techniques of prefabrication and mass production used in the reconstruction of European cities in the 1950s were also used to speed up the construction of a mega petro-utopia on the frontline of a battle zone in Lebanon. The petrodollar surplus was an agent of acceleration that sporadically stretched out the oil complex and funded political projects.

My work is often place based, in particular looking at the history of the built environment and exploring the poetics and politics of land transformation. In my artistic process, disciplinary research is principal to comprehending the effects of modernity and how it influences interhuman relations while shaping an anthropocentric rapport with nature. The present global disruptions caused by climate events, regional wars, and migrations are producing a subjectivity of endangerment. Every individual is concerned about the future of the place we collectively inhabit as well as the future of our livelihoods. I find that analogy is one method to speak within the muteness of this situation. Metaphor and analogy are potentially connecting even when they run in parallel to, or on the verge of, the researched subject.

According to cultural theorist Paul Virilio, catastrophe comes with progress: “When you invent the ship, you also invent the shipwreck; when you invent the plane you also invent the plane crash. ... Every technology carries its own negativity, which is invented at the same time as technical progress.” The oil spill became a natural condition of extractive capitalism in the form of an environmental disaster. During a panel on hydrocarbon at Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin, Stephanie LeMenager commented, in relation to a scene from the 1953 film The Wages of Fear, “what to do with such a leaking event as an oil spill?” She went on to describe the spill as a kind of origin story of petromodernity, a kind of perpetually opening and reopening wound that in fact feeds oil culture by demanding our recommitment to it while nevertheless continually showing us its dysfunction and the fragility of its structures.

The oil complex is a not only a network of pipes, pumps, refineries, and filters; it is also a set of transnational powers that silently evict the indigenous before colonising territories by importing people. The oil complex functions safely by ensuring that the people that operate it are systemically segregated. In the oil encounter you find yourself sequestered culturally, socially, racially, linguistically, and ethnically. The contradicting polyphony omnipresent in the oil complex is one element that stands in front of the muteness of the oil encounter.

The novelist Amitav Ghosh talks about the muteness of the oil encounter in literary works in his essay “Petrofiction: The Oil Encounter and the Novel,” written in 1992, one year after the end of the Gulf War. I remember it was the first foreign war broadcast live on TV, in tandem with the end of the Lebanese Civil War in 1991. The Iraq-Kuwait war was mainly provoked by the continued overproduction of oil by the state of Kuwait, against OPEC directions. Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, causing the formation of an international coalition led by the United States to liberate Kuwait. At the end of this short war that left minimal casualties, the Iraqi Army caused major environmental disasters by burning contested oil wells in Kuwait and dumping crude oil in the Persian Gulf as a shield to keep the US Navy from charging from the coast.

Ghosh speaks of oil as the primary substance of the twentieth century that can generate far-flung political, military, and cultural encounters. In “Petrofiction,” he addresses how these encounters rarely manifest in literary works, in comparison to the troves that haven been written on the roads of the spice trade. The oil encounter lies in the possibility to represent petromodernity outside of an operational logic that can only reproduce a problem and imagine its solutions. The oil encounter’s muteness is implied. In front of this barreness stand events of historical nature. Ghosh asks how can one imagine a story that is its equal in drama, equal in the impact of the disasters that the oil complex has caused.

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With an ecocritic view on cli-fi (climate fiction) as a genre that segregates the environmental disaster from the heated source of pollution that is disrupting life in the biosphere, the Swedish author and human ecology lecturer Andreas Malm calls for a return to a fiction written before the discoveries of climate science and that brings fossil fuels back from the diegetic space of the novel. In his essay “This Is the Hell That I Have Heard Of: Some Dialectical Images in Fossil Fuel Fiction,” he develops dialectical images meant to challenge the reader’s views on the miseries of

global warming as well as on the anthropocentric claims of a Prometheanist viewpoint that prioritises human interests and is always obscured by the phenomenal affect of the events humans create in the form of war, disaster, or spill. For Malm, global warming has changed everything, including the reading of literature. This change of perception compels a fiction writer to break the muteness of the oil encounter with an ontological return to fossil fuels as experienced in literary works.

In an age of climate disruption, when temperatures are still on the rise, even artworks become vulnerable and susceptible to change. The Atlas Group’s My Neck Is Thinner Than a Hair: A History of Car Bombs in the Lebanese Wars (1975–1991) (2003) is above all a work about the photojournalists who compete to find the engine, the only remaining element that survives after the explosion of a car. Cars are vehicles that consume fossil fuels and transfer energy into motion, leaving behind poisonous emissions. Every time they are activated, engines are internally detonating. Cars are explosive subjects that enclose in their entrails explosions that leave no visible craters. Here, all the elements of the oil complex are in an encounter with muteness.

When looking at the Kfar Falous project, I find myself troubled by this muteness, in the attempt of my work on fossil fuel cultures to communicate with the project as an architectural landmark ravaged by war. For the Lebanese artist Jalal Toufic, ruins are places haunted by the living who inhabit them.14 War-torn buildings temporarily transform into archaeological artifacts. Ruins are site specific, characterised by a labyrinthine temporality. In giving us the impulse to document them, these buildings instance an architecture implicated with a fiction that potentially reveals the labyrinthine space-time of these ruins. In my view, the Kfar Falous project is a ruin that sits outside this labyrinthine temporality when seen as a petro-subjectivity. Yet fiction is also for me a standing force that can materialise the iridescent temporality of the Kfar Falous project as an oil spill. The spill’s impact is inescapable. Here, the viscous nature of oil and its biochemical materiality is a metaphor of the oil complex. In my practice, I reproduce this iridescent temporality with modalities of fiction that bring the antagonists affected by this subjectivity into a shimmering reality, by bringing them together with those whose hands are stained with oil.

Further References

As an emerging artist, I always ask myself what makes me unique in relation to other artists. How original is my work? How original are my ideas? What is more important: a work that is visually original, or the concept behind it? I fear making a non-authentic work. This can be extremely demotivating and inhibit your productivity, especially at the starting point of your artistic career.

Within the contemporary art world, originality can be seen as the key to success. It is always a question of coming up with an original new concept, approach, or technique. The world of art is built on originality, authenticity, and uniqueness. The role of the artist is to be an “individual.” This extraordinary “individual” is in charge of producing a unique work of art in order to amaze and daze the viewer.

In modern capitalist society, the idea of innovation in artistic practice has become a tradable object that increases a work’s value in the art market. The idea of the “original” is now directly related to the monetary value of the art piece, as the more unique it is, the more it can be sold for. The modern art world is represented by individualism, progressivism, private ownership, and a market-based society. This capitalist model leads to the production of “authenticity,” and this creates speculation on the originality of the work of art.

The constant search for authenticity and the fear of the non-original, or the so-called reproduction, is based on our fear of becoming unemployed by being replaced by the machines of technological progress. It feels like there is always a competition between human and objects, between humans and machines, and between humans and algorithms. We believe that it is essential to always be one step ahead of progress so as to keep our own value and to remain relevant. Capitalism will always cause these questions to arise: Which skills are valuable now? What do we want to pay for them?

With the continuous arrival of new technologies, the scope of work is constantly transforming. Some human skills and crafts are being replaced by machine or computer production. In cases where humans are more expensive to employ than a machine, the choice to use the machine will be obvious. The need to create new or different jobs to replace the old ones is more than obvious. It is certain that these new jobs will require different skills than the old ones. But are we ready for these jobs? Do we need to have these new, authentic, and irreplaceable skills? Or will we end up in a world of two classes: the artist “bourgeois”—highly educated and highly skilled people who are not yet replaced by machines; and the artisan “proletariat”—the working class, which will not be replaced by machines, due to its cheap labour? Especially with the arrival of artificial intelligence, the human mind and thinking capability might one day be replaced by the computer. I believe this makes it of utter importance to discuss the following questions: What does authenticity in art mean in modern society? What risks does art face with technological development?

It seems to me that today we are focused on the production of authenticity rather than making art. From this point of view, I would like to discuss the changing role of the artist in the process of creation and production of their works of art. I will trace this development through the past hundred years. Questions surrounding authenticity in relation to rising technological development and the changing values of art in modern society were addressed by Walter Benjamin more than eighty years ago in his still relevant essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility” from 1936. In this essay, he introduces the idea of the “aura” of the artwork. He connects the aura to the idea of uniqueness, authenticity, and originality. But he argues that the presence of the aura as a sacral substance creates distance between the reader and the work of art: “What, then, is the aura? A strange tissue of space and time: the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be.” For Benjamin, the aura of a work of art could be used to politically manipulate people. Because of that, he argued that art must be separated from its aura. In this context, new media and new technologies could contribute to a revolution in art by liberating art from its aura through reproduction.

My research starts from the beginning of industrialisation in Russia in the late nineteenth century, as during that time the question of authenticity was clearly addressed by artists in that country. I continue by analysing the Dada movement, the development of photography, and modern technological innovations up to the present day. The comparison I make between Western and Eastern European development on this subject of authenticity in the era of technological progress reflects my personal background, as someone who has experienced living in both post-communist and capitalist nations. I also define three fears over the years that have influenced artistic work throughout history: fear of the machine,
fear of the image, and fear of new technologies. In this essay, I search for a way to overcome these fears and their influence on the production of authenticity. Are new technologies capable of liberating art from its authenticity and labour? Did this revolution, or liberation, actually happen over the last hundred years? Has the work of art become liberated from its aura? If it has, then it remains unclear why the question of authenticity is still being asked by artists such as myself up to this day. Ultimately, I find that the idea of reproduction and repetition rather than new technologies might be the solution.

Fear 1.1—Machine
Industriisation in Russia started in the 1890s, which is comparatively late when you look at the other European powers. After the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Communist Party made industrialisation and collectivisation a priority in order to build a new communist society. Under industrialisation, craftsmanship was replaced by machine production, and the crafted object was no longer seen as unique. In the newly formed Soviet Union, artists began to question the commodity of the work of art: Should an artist separate their art from the ordinary object produced by a machine? Is an artwork more than just an object? What is the value and social aim of the artist and their craft in this newly built society?

For the Russian avant-garde, the traditional work of art was seen as a collector’s item, representing the wealth and power of the bourgeois elite. With the end of Tsarist Russia, artists started to search for the possibility of integrating art with society and bringing an end to its use as a mere market commodity. These artists wanted to react to the changing values of their society. They saw the power and value of art in the creation of a new country, underpinned by Marxist social ideals. Their goal was to achieve “the production of a new human being through art.” In order to get rid of the bourgeois fetish object, liberation from authenticity and originality was required. In this materialistic time, the Russian avant-garde was investigating the difference between artworks and ordinary objects, without building a wall between them. Artists of this movement started to champion the machine and manufacturing by readily accepting new technologies and mass production. This idea of being directly involved in production, accepting mass production, and becoming liberated from “high art” is in my opinion connected to Benjamin’s idea of the liberation of art from its aura through mass production and new technologies.

In 1914, Vladimir Tatlin became inspired by the cubism of Pablo Picasso and he and a fellow group of artists started to form a new art movement. The combination of the pre-revolutionary thought that the work of art should be a nonrepresentational construction and the post-revolutionary idea of building a socialist society gave birth to constructivism. Tatlin can be seen as a pioneer of this movement. In 1923, in the constructivist magazine LEF, the following manifesto was published:

The material formation of the object is to be substituted for its aesthetic combination. The object is to be treated as a whole and thus will be of no discernible “style” but simply a product of an industrial order like a car, an aeroplane and such like. Constructivism is a purely technical mastery and organisation of materials.

Being both an artist and an architect, Tatlin was inspired by the idea that construction could replace the traditional work of art. This became the central point of his practice. Within his constructions, Tatlin wanted to overcome materiality and the force of gravity. His artworks appear to force their own labour of existence onto the viewer. This difficult labour and “pictorial” clarity are the main components of his work.

The constructivist movement was highly intellectual, as its participants were pure materialists, mainly professionals trained in engineering, biology, and philosophy. In using their scientific backgrounds, they tried to lay the connections between theory and praxis. The main aim of constructivism was to create a utopian future—a future of new materials and a new world. This movement reacted to the era of mass production by constructing visual objects that would reveal their own place in the world of materials, commodities, and common objects, but at the same time transcend their original value within art and its theories. Constructivists were full of desire for a collective art that would enlighten and cultivate knowledge within the proletariat through its admiration for machines and technology. To be closer to the viewer, they searched for new platforms to present their art, exploring new artistic terrain through fabric design, murals, architecture, and city planning. This contributed to the development of applied arts, such as design and advertising.

Another important artist to mention here is Varvara Stepanova. As a constructivist artist, Stepanova was led by the ideas of breaking down the barriers between high art and ordinary life and of defining art as an instrument for social and political change. She aspired to create works that would take the viewer out of the traditional exhibition setting and make them an active participant, or a user of the artwork, and through that create a strong “use” relationship between art and its audience. Her challenge was to make art for the everyday user. As such, Stepanova’s artistic practice strongly involved design. She was convinced that design had nothing to do with subjective artistic expression; it was thoroughly public and thoroughly political.

In 1922, Stepanova, Liubov Popova, and Aleksandr Rodchenko were selected to design new patterns for a textile factory. For all three avant-garde artists, this was an opportunity to comply with the main principle of constructivism—the rejection
of “art for art’s sake.” Henceforth, art should serve production, and production should serve the people. Stepanova managed, like no one else, to get directly involved in mass production by designing dresses with bright, geometric patterns. Stepanova did not want to hide the objects’ history and the production conditions that shaped them. The way in which the clothes were made was more important than their aesthetics. To achieve that, the aesthetic elements represented the production process of the sewing of the garments. Most of these designs were intended to create a reaction and to function on both emotional and substantive levels. Textile design became her artistic medium. However, her stance was so outspoken that it became considered dangerous to the new government. For that reason, her fabric designs were quickly replaced by inoffensive botanical patterns.

Parallel to the constructivist movement in the Soviet Union, Western European avant-garde artists also focused on the concept of authenticity and originality and the “aura.” Their reactions to these concepts can be traced back to the Dada and surrealist movements of the 1910s and ‘20s. These movements reacted to the fact that the work of art was primarily seen as an object, manually produced by an individual artist in such a way that the physical craft remained visible. Benjamin dedicated an essay to surrealism, which in his opinion had a revolutionary potential. In “Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia,” he asserts that only surrealism had a strong concept of freedom in the new post-industrial society: “No one before these visionaries and augurs perceived how destitution—not only social but architectonic, the poverty of interiors, enslaved and enslaving objects—can be suddenly transformed into revolutionary nihilism.”

I think that his admiration for surrealism came from the dismissal of traditions and rituals shared by both Benjamin and surrealists. According to Benjamin, traditional art originated from ritual and depended on its aura. Surrealists reacted to this concept by offering an alternative to the “idolised” commodity object. This alternative could redefine the role of objecthood and thingness within Western capitalism. Therefore, surrealists chose to use everyday objects, sometimes dated and out of use, to create their art. This reflected their concept of going back to what came before, back to the past. Benjamin talks about this approach by noting that the surrealists wanted to define the value of things or objects that are out of fashion in order to rethink the concept of the “object” and to liberate the work of art from its commodity status. To show how objects that might be dated or no longer in use can still have meaning or validity by being placed in a new context. This negates the idea that the latest thing is the best thing. This approach was meant to liberate art from its dependence on ritual and to reject the capitalist idea of linear progress.

Another important aspect for the surrealists was the liberation of art from the object through its liberation from manual skill and craft. The best example of this is the work of Marcel Duchamp, who was able to jump over the traditions of high art by redefining art through the objects of technological production. Duchamp took the radical action of ceasing to make paintings after 1912 to instead create his first “readymades” in 1913. His readymades are ordinary objects of everyday use placed in the context of art. This was the opposite approach to the constructivists, who were directly involved in the production of their works. Readymades changed the work process of the artist from an active manual producer to a passive user of industrially manufactured goods. Duchamp defined the readymade as “an ordinary object elevated to the dignity of a work of art by the mere choice of an artist.” Through this declaration, the connection between artist and craft was removed from artistic practice. At the same time, the distance between making art and understanding the value of art was also erased by the readymade. The use of technologically reproducible objects, from Benjamin’s point of view, should have eliminated the aura from the original work of art. But did this actually happen?

The readymade confronts the Marxist theory of value. If the “use-value” of a product is determined by the amount of labour expended during its production, what kind of additional value can the readymades hold, if Duchamp did not add any manual work to them? With his readymades, the artist was not involved in the production of the artwork and liberated himself from craft. But did the artist liberate himself from labour? Is liberation from labour even possible? According to historian and philosopher Thierry de Duve, the readymade did not liberate art from labour through its pronouncement that “anything can be art,” but he acknowledges the “fact” that the true message behind the readymade was that “anyone can be an artist.”

In my opinion, the introduction of the readymade led to a change in the role of the artist, moving it from producer to user. The artist makes a choice of what object will become an artwork, but is not required to have any artisanal skills to be an artist. The artist becomes a consumer of commodities and loses the ability to be in charge of their own production. This role of “choosing the object” fits perfectly into the idea of a consumption-based society. The concept or idea behind the artwork becomes the main component of the work of art, and the artist becomes a producer of this immaterial component. In this moment occurred the shift of the artwork from physical commodity object to intellectual commodity. This change transformed the object-oriented art market into an idea-oriented art market. If it thus became true that an artwork’s concept is more important than its material presence, does this then mean that any object or material can be marketed as “art”?

De Duve continues that the value of the word “art” was exalted by the readymade, as the attachment of the “art” label to an ordinary object
element 2, 2018. Detail. Alexandra Hunts

element 2, 2018. Self-made pencils, larch wood, graphite, acrylic, 450 x 200 cm. Alexandra Hunts
transforms it into an artwork. He states, “The readymades, by contrast, are ‘art’ and nothing but ‘art.’ Whereas an abstract painting reduced to a black square on a white background is art only when you accept seeing it as a painting, a urinal is a sculpture only when you accept seeing it as an object. Otherwise it simply remains a urinal.” Is it then just the attached label of “art” that converts the ordinary object into art?

In my opinion, the essence of what makes Duchamp’s work so powerful is its context. Even when he signed Fountain (1917) with “R. Mutt,” everyone knew that the real artist behind it was M. Duchamp. Fountain becomes an artwork only in the context of a museum. Duchamp used his privileged position of being an artist to add additional value to the manufactured object by deciding to display it within an art institution. That does not automatically mean that everyone has this privileged position, and the readymades cannot be considered art outside the walls of the museum. It seems that in this case, the choice of the artist to showcase the object, and the institution’s willingness to display the readymades as artworks, produces a new commodity value, but this commodity is separated from manual labour. The art institution redefines these objects as readymades by multiplying their aura and their value. This moment in art history leads to the rising power of the art institution.

What I conclude from the examples I’ve outlined above is that the liberation of art from labour and “authenticity” has failed. In regard to Duchamp and the readymade, I conclude that from that moment art and artists became dependent on art institutions, and further that the dematerialisation of art was followed by the new fetish object of the “idea.” The concept of labour changed from an object to a subject, and this increased the gap between different societal ranks: between artisan and artist, between craftsmanship and intellectualism, between poorly educated and highly educated. An “idea” became a new product to trade, a new art commodity. The relationship between an artist as a producer and as an observer also dramatically changed. The artist became the presenter of “ideas,” “projects,” and “concepts,” rather than a subject of hard manual work. At the same time, the artist transformed into a consumer of technology within capitalist society. This dematerialisation of art and its liberation from objectness excludes empirical thinkers and dissolves art into the world of abstraction.

On the other hand, the constructivist movement also failed in its attempts to liberate art from authenticity, even though becoming fully involved in mass production. The “free-thinking” constructivist artists like Popova, Stepanova, and Tatlin became strong individual political voices within Soviet society due to their artistic abilities and art’s power to reform society through cultural revolution. This group of artists was seen by the governing party as dangerous and uncontrollable, and for this reason it was discredited by Joseph Stalin between 1928 and 1931. Stalin believed that the cultural revolution had done its work, and artists like the constructivists had to be replaced by artists under the control of the Soviet Party who had no political voice. After 1931, many constructivists were forced to serve the state by creating propaganda art. This failure of liberation from individualism and the reaction of the state, which became directly involved with art, created a new problem in the development of art and society in the Soviet Union. It led to an era of art tied to commerce and propaganda.

In summary, neither the Western European nor the Soviet art movements at the beginning of the twentieth century fully succeeded in liberating art from labour and authenticity. The use of mass-produced goods as artwork or the direct involvement of artists in industry were not enough to make it possible.

Fear 2.2—Image/Reproduction
Photography is especially interesting to investigate from the point of view of the artist as user of a machine. The camera was one of the first mechanical tools that established itself as an artistic medium. In photography, the camera produces the image, the artist (photographer) is a user, and the art is the vision of the artist.

Benjamin starts “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility” with a quote
from the French poet and essayist Paul Valéry: “We must expect great innovations to transform the entire technique of the arts, thereby affecting artistic invention itself and perhaps even bringing about an amazing change in our very notion of art.” Benjamin follows up this statement by saying that mass media like photography, film, and other forms of recording could be this “great innovation.” He suggests that these new media are the crucial art forms of the twentieth century. They lose their “aura” through the possibility of their reproduction: “for the first time in world history, technological reproducibility emancipates the work of art from its parasitic subservience to ritual.” This shattering of aura and tradition according to Benjamin could provide the revolutionary potential to renew humanity.

Photography was responsible for an apparent crisis in art. According to John Berger, photography killed the image value of all works of art made before its invention by being a strong and reproducible medium. The image is conquered by photography. The awareness of the loss of authenticity of art through reproducibility provoked a new fear for the image. But at the same time, Berger admits: “For the first time ever, images of art have become ephemeral, ubiquitous, insubstantial, available, valueless, free.” For the first time, art became immaterial in the direct sense. Art became liberated from its physical body and value by transforming itself into the image. The form of the image took over other artistic mediums. Artists were forced to rethink the value and function of art in light of the reproduction that photography offered. This prompted some of them to look for new meanings and purposes for art as an “idea,” rather than as a craft. On the other hand, this crisis allowed new people to enter the world of art through photography. I believe that these developments make it important for artists to take a look at photography and the power of photographic reproduction.

Photography is a child of the industrial revolution. It is a mechanism, that is to say, a medium where almost everything is determined by the manufacturer. Photography was capable of exploring the essence of what artists were looking for at that time: a new means and the “purity” of art. Benjamin provides this explanation: “[art] reacted with the doctrine of l’art pour l’art, that is, with a theology of art. This in turn gave rise to a negative theology in the form of the idea of ‘pure’ art, which rejects not only social function but any definition in terms of a representational content.” While some painters were searching for “pure colour” and “pure painting” after the era of pigment grinding, photography was always a “pure” medium from its origins as it is a mirror. Duchamp was also convinced that photography had big potential to become a “truly popular art.”

Aleksandr Rodchenko, husband of Varvara Stepanova and one of the main constructivist artists, tried to achieve the same level of “purity” in his paintings. In 1939, he wrote: “I reduced painting to its logical construction and exhibited three canvas: red, blue and yellow. I affirmed: it’s all over. Basic colour. Every plane is a plane and there is no representation.” Later, Rodchenko turned his focus to photography: a new medium without an individualistic bourgeois past and saturated by the reality of the world outside the artist’s studio. Rodchenko was convinced that photography could develop an influential social function with its potential to reach the masses. According to Benjamin, this became possible after the liberation of photography from individualism in 1897, when Eugène Atget turned his camera to photograph the emptiness of the city instead of photographing the portraits of individuals in his studio.

Despite the fact that photography is a form of mechanical reproduction, artists like Rodchenko still managed to find their artistic voices not in their personal creativity, but in the collective idea of a revolution that broke with the past to create a different future through the use of new media. Within this utopian idea, Rodchenko tried to draw a link between the modern urban environment and changes in human perception due to the increasing mechanisation of the city. As a great supporter of the revolution, Rodchenko was convinced that art should serve the revolution’s needs. The newly built cities required a drastic revolution of the human gaze; photography could offer the solution. In Ways of Seeing, Berger writes, “Every drawing or painting that used perspective proposed to the spectator that he was the unique centre of the world. The camera—and more particularly the moving camera—demonstrated that there was no centre.” Rodchenko started to make photo collages and photographs, which later inspired other artists from outside the Soviet Union, such as László Moholy-Nagy. The photogram and photo collage can be seen as technical analyses of modern materials. The common subject of Rodchenko and Moholy-Nagy was the industrialisation of society and technological progress: factories, power plants, public transport, new buildings.

Photography gave Rodchenko the opportunity to liberate his art from an individualistically oriented art practice and it also gave him the ability to shift his perspective into different kaleidoscopic dimensions of reality. To capture the modern urban environment, Rodchenko started to experiment with perspective by trying to find interesting, unusual, and unique photographic angles, often working in series and taking multiple shots of the same subject. This multiplicity of the subject in his images does not refer to the ability of the camera to multiply, but instead shows the complexity of the world and the reality that we are either able or unable to perceive with our eyes. At the same time, this type of serial work allowed Rodchenko to master photographic skills, to show the plasticity and possibility of the new medium of photography, and to establish the medium’s modernist identity.

With photography, any work of art could become an image, an image that could be reproduced
in thousands of different ways and be used in books, newspapers, exhibitions, and advertisements. This power of the reproducible image was seen by politicians as an innovative tool to help achieve political goals. Photography had its place in political propaganda culture, as was the case with Rodchenko’s work. His art was deeply ingrained with political ideology, which first fostered his artistic career and then finally killed it, as he was forced to contribute to the new regime’s political propaganda campaigns.

When taking all these developments in art into consideration, it might seem that liberation from “authenticity” was achieved by the arrival of the image and new technological reproduction methods, such as photography. These new techniques did their job—meaning that the revolution in art predicted by Benjamin almost a century ago should have been completed by now. But where has this liberation brought us to? Why does the artistic search for “authenticity” continue to breathe?

Often my investigations for my research-based projects start with a particular image I came across that triggered my curiosity as a representation of reality. In my work I explore the influence of the image on the process of acquisition of information and the generation of knowledge. I am interested in this complex relationship of an image as an objective medium to physical reality. I think that one of the reasons why the photographic medium became so popular is its relation to the representation of reality and time. Photography has a unique position in relation to other mediums, as it reflects the moment of time. Benjamin discusses the concept of authenticity, of being in accordance with facts, noting that “even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: Its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.” I believe that this notion of time is one of the key elements that liberated photographic reproduction from authenticity and aura; but at the same time,
element 3 "Nicolas-Jacques Conte", 2018. Graphite drawing transported directly into the wall with scotch tape, 10 x 15 cm. Alexandra Hunts

element 3 "Production", 2018. Graphite drawing transported directly into the wall with scotch tape, 15 x 10 cm. Alexandra Hunts
the relation of photography to time and place gives the photographic image qualities considered to be those of a document and evidence of the past. The click of the shutter release can fix a moment of time forever, but it also reminds us of the sequence of time, of the moment between the past when the photograph was made and the present when the photograph is being viewed. Within this relation of photography to the present and past, photography has established itself as being a “copy” of reality. However, this position of photography is dangerous, as it opens up the possibility of manipulating the viewer by manipulating the image.

Fear 3.3—New Media/Technologies
We have come a long way since the first photographs of space were taken. Today we can take photos of the surface of Mars and of distant asteroids. Satellites can send us sharper and more colourful images than ever before. Nowadays, in the era of big data and big calculations, we have the ability to formulate and test complicated theories, and in particular to understand phenomena that are yet to be observed in nature, such as dark matter and dark energy. But can we trust in what we see and what we are told?

Being an artefact of time, photography has built a bridge between art and science, with a prime example being Eadweard Muybridge, who took a very scientific approach to photography. His method of taking multiple pictures of the same subject does not refer to the ability of the camera to multiply, but points to the ability of the camera to capture one specific moment of time that the human eye is unable to distinguish. Muybridge conducted his motion studies using repetition as a method to learn and to see beyond the physical capacity of humans.

As a child of scientific and technological progress, photography started to be widely used as a tool in science. The photographic method as tool of obtaining knowledge is the one that best fits our human way of understanding the world, as vision is a fundamental mode of observation, which is one of the tenets of the modern scientific method. As a representation of reality, the photographic image is rooted so deep in our minds that we started to explore the world through the images. Our perception of reality is often influenced by the images we have seen before.

Photography can provide an objective means of visualisation, a framework to deal with subjects that lack formal definitions. It enables us to see objects and places that we would never see without a picture. For that reason, scientists started to invest in the development of photography-related technology in order to tailor it to their needs. The medium of photography and other new techniques became more accessible and easier to use. However, this made the process behind the formation of an image more difficult to understand. I think that the last time we could consider an average human to be on the same level as the technique was in 1923, with the publication of Dziga Vertov’s symbolic, still optimistic manifesto, followed by his film Man with a Movie Camera from 1929. In this movie the man is represented by the camera; human and machine merge together, but in the end, the machine submits to the man. Vertov’s manifesto reads:

I am an eye. A mechanical eye. I am the machine that reveals the world to you as only the machine can see it. I am now free of human immobility. I am in perpetual motion. I approach things, I move away from them. I slide under them, into them. I move toward the muzzle of a race horse. I move quickly through crowds, I advance ahead of the soldiers in an assault, I take off with airplanes, I fall on my back and get up at the same time that the body falls and gets up. This is what I am, a machine that runs in chaotic manoeuvres, recording movements one after the other, assembling them in a patchwork. Freed from the constraints of time and space, I organise each point of the universe as I wish. My route is that of a new conception of the world. I can make you discover the world you did not know existed.

The explosive development of technology supported by science dramatically changed our relation to it. We should not underestimate our deep dependence on technology and its developers. As someone who uses photography a lot as a medium of representation, I can confirm that my relation to technology is one of a user, rather than a producer. In my work I always deal with the question of the mechanism of a camera. I am charmed by the struggle between the human interpretation and experience of the environment and reality itself, as well as the role of art in this fight. I try to challenge the audience’s trust in the veracity of the medium and its mechanisms as a system of representation. By exposing the various artifacts of the photographic medium, I question how and why photography acquires a seductive truthfulness in the eyes of its viewers and to what extent we can trust the technique nowadays.

Technology has become so complicated that it is now beyond the limits of our general knowledge and our ability to understand. We are so far distanced from the new technology that we already accept the fact we do not understand it. Hannah Arendt identifies how science and technology has changed a lot in the modern society: “the layman and the humanist, still trusting their common sense and communicating in everyday language, are out of touch with reality; that they understand only what appears but not what is behind appearances, … and that their questions and anxieties are simply caused by ignorance and therefore are irrelevant.” In the same essay, she says that we have come to live in a world where only the “scientists” understand the world and that this gives them the position to rule over the rest of us—the masses. The loss of understanding makes the objectiveness of
Left: *element 7*, 2018. Graphene on silicon oxide, 12 cm/diameter. Provided by Applied Nanolayers BV. Alexandra Hunts

Right: *element 1*, 2018. Larch wood, 50x6 cm. Alexandra Hunts
knowledge questionable. It is interesting that modern photography tries to provide a wide range of examples and hypotheses to illustrate the way science affects our knowledge, by trying to predict possible developments through manipulation. This indirect involvement of the artist in the image as a model for the exploration of reality pushes the concept of ambivalence further towards contemporary ideas of science. Today artists are no longer “pure” photographers, as many of them use various manipulation techniques to create their images. Elements such as 3D space and image manipulation have become part of the photographic world. These elements enable new ideas and allow for conceptual development.

The German photographer Thomas Ruff attempts to address this issue by sceptically using photographs of what is today considered a scientific truth. In the project Sterne (1990), Ruff links his interest in astronomy with photography. He bought images from the European Southern Observatory and to each print added the precise time of day and exact geographic position of the areas that appear in the photographs. In doing this, he creates a strong connection between the pictorial effect of the image and the objectivity of the description. Ruff also notes that the finite speed of light in space makes the data in these images relative. The stars we see are hundreds of light years away, so the images only capture a reality that is hundreds of years old. The purpose of this series is to show the limits of the human eye and technology as a means for understanding the universe.

In 2004, another German photographer, Wolfgang Tillmans, photographed the transit of Venus. During this transition, the sun, Earth, and Venus are fully aligned. For Tillmans, this was a way to show our location in the universe, to find our position relative to what surrounds us. This photograph became a symbol of the information that proves the existence of these celestial bodies. It acts as a mirror of science itself, reflecting the long journey it has undertaken through the ages, from the idea of the Enlightenment to the proof of planets far from our own solar system. With this photograph, Tillmans reminds us of the secrets uncovered through science and the magic of photography. It is a reminder of how light has produced some of the most striking images in both science and art.

With the dematerialisation of art, the “idea” produced by the intellect became the most valuable element of an artwork. After the arrival of the technological revolution, a time when the machine has the ability and power to do the job better and faster than the human brain, the machine could also possibly take over the production of the idea. Fear of artificial intelligence is more than present today. The famous physicist Stephen Hawking was convinced that efforts to develop machines capable of thinking pose a threat to humankind’s very existence. Artificial intelligence could spell the end of the human race.

I feel that we are becoming “astronauts,” as described by Arendt in her essay “The Conquest of Space and the Stature of Man.” She argues that space travel did not make any technological sense for humankind, but it was needed to fulfill our lack of imagination—imagination we lost through deep isolation and the limits of understanding. We want to enter space just to get rid of our fears, fears of the unknown and ungraspable. Is escaping from Earth the real liberation from authenticity? Or was it instead our power of curiosity and imagination that we lost by accepting our limits? We have forgotten that the leading motivation for all great discoveries lies not in the technology itself, but in the power of the imagination and an awareness of reality.

Due to the capitalist society we live in, fear of the unknown will remain even after the arrival of any “revolutionary” technology: fear of the machine; fear of the object, the image, and the artificial brain; fear of space. New media such as photography, film, computers, and even spacecraft did not succeed in liberating art from authenticity, as Walter Benjamin was convinced would happen. Progress-oriented politics will always require us to get ahead of ourselves, to fear not being included in the new developing society, to remain on the roadside of the highway of innovation. Is it the loss of authenticity and originality we were always afraid of? Or should we instead fear losing control over technology and institutions that represent our ideas, and us being transformed into mere users?

No Fears
We live in a world of abstraction, a world of “idea.” We are disconnected from the present by our limited knowledge of technology. This loss of imagination, our dependence on the producers of knowledge and technic, and the dematerialisation of art and the increased power of art institutions makes artists vulnerable to being used and manipulated by others. Benjamin mistakenly believed that technology could be a panacea for art. We should not wait for any technological development to come and liberate us from our fears and authenticity. This liberation should start from ourselves. The solution to getting rid of aura and authenticity lies not in any particular technique, but in reproduction. We should dare to reject the constant search for capitalistic innovation by going back to the past through reproduction to regain control over material, technique, knowledge. My solution to regaining control of our understanding of reality and reviving imagination lies in reproduction. Investigating history, returning to craft and material, gaining some insight into the tangled thickness in which we are embedded, and understanding the substance of objects will lead us to an awareness of our existence and liberate art from authenticity.

In my work, I often return to the act of reproduction. A copy has elements of both the past and the future. This quality of time allows me the possibility of positioning myself in the present. The act of returning to the past through reproduction comes
from the idea of moving forward without losing aware-
ness of the past. In my project History of Desire from
2017, my aim was to go back to the roots of produc-
sion society, to the invention of the wheel. I tried to
recreate from an image I found during my research a
ceramic pot made by the Funnel Beaker culture,
the earliest farmers in Northern Europe. This pot,
called the Bronocice pot, is engraved with the earli-
est known image of what may be called a wheeled
vehicle. Through the reconstruction of the pot I tried
to understand the possibility of developing through
reproduction.

I believe that reproduction is an indispen-
sable part of life. Everything is reproducible. Even
human beings are a product of reproduction through
evolution. But with each reproduction, they adapt and
adjust to the current time. This transformation is the
key to evolution. From this I conclude that there is
a connection between repetition and innovation, or
between reproduction and evolution. I want to find
out what kind of reproduction can liberate art from
producing “commodities of authenticity” for capitalist
society.

At the same time, with my performative
act of recreating the Bronocice pot from an image,
I have tried to make the research physical, to connect
a physical relation to the invisible world of theory.
It also represents my belief that craft should return
to artistic practice. At the same time, through this
work I explore the value of labour and my position as
a female artist through the historical role of women in
the ancient craft of pottery. I have tried to create a
tension between the object and the flat image, a con-
flict between real and unreal, copy and original. Hand-
craft, reproduction, and uniqueness are presented in
contrast to faultless mechanical precision.

The way we should act towards technolog-
ical development and innovation is best captured by
the famous science fiction writer Alexander Belyaev in
his short story “Hold on West!” from 1929. The story
describes a future where humans live until the age of
150, where science knows almost everything and can
give the solution to any problem, and where the lead-
er of society is called the Great Mind. But due to his
demanding intellectual work, the story’s protagonist
is dying earlier than expected. No scientist can find a
solution that will keep him alive. But the Great Mind
finds ones: the Great Mind decides to travel against
the rotation of the Earth to overcome the time barrier.
He boards a spaceship and flies west, until his contact
with Earth is lost. Everyone on Earth is very worried,
as they cannot imagine their life without the Great
Mind. So, they send another spaceship with a physi-
cist on board to find the Great Mind. When the second
ship reaches the first one, the physicist finds a small
baby instead of the old Great Mind:

The Great Mind was alive. We only had to wait
until he grew up so he could finish his work. The
physicist took the wire and began to decipher the
last records of the thoughts of the Great Mind.
The thought process went backwards. The Great
Mind was rethinking everything he had thought
before. But at the same time, the wire contained
some secondary weak records. Obviously, the
Great Mind, while defeating time, was also think-
ing about the present, trying to comprehend his
position, and taking measures towards salvation.
This was the most astonishing discovery of all!


Berger, Ways of Seeing, 25.


de Duve, Kant after Duchamp, 171.


Berger, Ways of Seeing, 11.


Further References


Jonna Hägg

My interests revolve around questions of how we perceive the culture we live in and our natural habitats, how man-made structures and logics have for man become more natural than nature itself. Technology surrounds us wherever we go, around the clock and around the world. It can seem like a peripheral element in the ecological system, but could man survive without technology? Technology without nature is like nature without bees. But without bees, there is no pollination. Without pollination, there are no plants. And I wonder, what are the prospects for life without plants?

Clear warnings of climate catastrophe have been ignored for decades, leading to extremely high temperatures, rising seas, and widespread drought. In a report from 2012, the World Bank declared that we are on the way to a world that will be four degrees warmer as soon as the turn of the next century. We live in a world plagued by heat waves, decreasing access to food, loss of ecosystems and biodiversity, and a life-threatening rise in sea levels. The report also states that there is no guarantee we will be able to adapt to a world that is four degrees warmer. As early as 2100, a four-degree increase may elevate the level of the sea by as much as two metres. That means that island nations such as the Maldives and Tuvalu would drown and many coastal areas would be permanently flooded. Brazil and Ecuador, large parts of California and other American states, and many areas of Southeast Asia would also be afflicted. At the same time, during the warmest months of the year, powerful heat waves would likely kill tens of thousands of people on every continent except Antarctica. Almost no crops would survive such warm temperatures. Hurricanes would likely get stronger, earthquakes become more common, and incurable diseases spread over the entire planet.

Human civilisation is fragile—it depends on all the infrastructure we’ve surrounded ourselves with, all the complicated systems for communications and energy supply, the sprawling urban landscapes that can look from a great height like complex organisms with lives of their own. Civilisation is completely dependent on continuous, uninterrupted maintenance; without it, traffic would come to a stop and the electrical grid would crash. I know all this quite well, but I prefer not to think about it because it is about the same as the thought of death, which creates a kind of dizzying void in me when I realise how close we actually are now to the abyss. It’s like all the alarms going off in a building simultaneously, and then all the alarms in the street, one after another. Climate change has conferred on man an existential crisis. Fear is presumably a natural reaction to the intolerable truth that we live in a dying world.

If people were to disappear from Earth, it would immediately become pitch black at night, the power plants would come to a halt and soon begin to crumble, and tunnels would flood. In the first winter, frost would begin breaking down building facades and road surfaces, and in the cracks, trees and bushes would begin to grow. Birds and predatory animals would fill the streets, and after a few hundred years even the largest cities would be hard to discern beneath the green hills now blanketing the heaps of collapsed
structures. And when the next ice age finally comes around in about 15,000 years or so, it will essentially erase all the remaining visible traces of us.

One year ago, the temperature in the Arctic was twenty-five degrees above normal, which is of course worrisome. At the same time, I think the apocalyptic view of climate alarmists is somewhat exaggerated, because what is threatened by climate change is hardly the planet Earth but rather the conditions for human civilisation—perhaps even the conditions for human life. The planet, on the other hand, would certainly adapt, as it has done in the past. The climate would change, but life would in all likelihood endure, and in 250 million years the rapid mass die-off that occurred during the human epoch—the Anthropocene—would seem like a necessary rejuvenation. One thing is certain: if and when human beings disappear, there will be a quick end to the comprehensive extermination for which we are guilty.

There won’t be many who mourn us, but two animals that literally can’t survive without us are Pediculus humanus capitis and Pediculus humanus humanus, the head and the body louse, respectively. The body louse is so adapted to us that it is not just dependent on us, but on our clothing specifically. Mites are so small that there are hundreds of them in our eyelashes, helpfully eating up our discarded skin cells and keeping us from drowning in dandruff. There are even about two hundred different species of bacteria that call us home, particularly those that live in our large intestines and nostrils, in our mouths and on our teeth. And there are hundreds of little staphylococcus microbes on our skin, thousands in our armpits and crotches and between our toes. Almost half of them are so used to us that they will vanish along with us.

In the book The World Without Us (2007), American environmental journalist Alan Weisman concludes that what would probably happen if we disappear from the planet Earth is that birds would stop crashing into our airplanes and glass building facades, the seas would once again become full of fish, and predatory animals would spread out across the land at the expense of all our tame livestock. Weisman asserts, however, that the outcome depends on how much time we humans have to screw things up before we go. Although even the largest cities will likely be transformed into verdant hills in a few thousand years, materials such as stainless steel and plastic are going to take significantly longer for nature to deal with. Nevertheless, over the really long term, and for the planet and its atmosphere on the whole, none of this is particularly important. Habitats heal themselves, and the fact is that such processes are already underway in areas that have been abandoned for one reason or another for a long time. For example, take the demilitarised zone between North and South Korea, where birds and predatory animals on the verge of extinction have found a way to survive, and of course in the evacuated area surrounding Chernobyl in the Ukraine, where nature is well on her way to taking over from man thirty years after the disaster.

In the 1983 documentary Koyaanisqatsi (Life Out of Balance), directed by Godfrey Reggio, the musical score composed by Philip Glass plays an important role, since the film is without words. Magnificent natural scenes in slow motion are juxtaposed with man’s technology-saturated urban environments. Reggio features what normally would be the background of a movie: the clouds that move across the sky, the flows of people in a big city, the pulsing traffic of its network of streets. Only a few parts of Koyaanisqatsi run at regular speed; in the rest of the film, the time axis is manipulated so that the movement of clouds, waterways, people, and vehicles is sped up many times over, and sometimes slowed down. Combined with Glass’s repetitive, minimalist music, the film evokes an almost hypnotic feeling in me. Koyaanisqatsi has been described as a critique of civilisation, but it does not give a uniformly negative picture of technological society. Often the cinematography even makes urban environments look evocatively beautiful, albeit with something disturbingly fevered about them. I interpret the film as a requiem for the ecosphere, due to humanity’s derailing addiction to technology. Tragically enough, that aspect of the film ensures that it continues to be relevant today.

“Ecology includes all the ways we imagine how we live together. Ecology is profoundly about coexistence. No man is an island. Human beings need each other as much as they need an environment. Human beings are each other’s environment. Thinking ecologically isn’t simply about nonhuman things. Ecology has to do with you and me.”

What happens if the bees disappear and the flowers are no longer pollinated by them? That is the question at the centre of my latest work, and the foundation for almost two years of research. This study began in the summer of 2016, when I was sitting in my garden on the island of Gotland, listening to the sounds of nature surrounding me—the birdsong, the whispering wind. And the bees. I identified the buzzing of the bees in the bushes behind me, picked up my camera, and started filming. Every time I was about to zoom in on a bee it vanished from my sight, but the sound persisted all around me, intense and provocative as ever. It was then I began thinking about what would happen if the bees disappeared from our world. Would we survive without them?

Approximately 65 million years after the first bees appeared, which coincidentally was also 65 million years before our own time, Earth went through a catastrophic transformation. Most researchers now
agree that a meteor struck about where the Yucatán Peninsula is today, creating tidal waves and powerful volcanic eruptions that filled the air with so much debris that it blocked out sunlight, which in turn caused the temperature to fall below the freezing point for several months or years. Nearly all the larger forms of life on Earth died out very quickly, including the dinosaurs. Astonishingly enough, representatives of many smaller groups of organisms somehow survived. Bees, ants, grasshoppers, beetles, and other insect life forms recovered quickly, even if many other species of insects probably died out. Flowering plants survived as well, probably as dormant seeds. Today species are going extinct at a pace that is somewhere between a hundred and a thousand times the natural rate, and it is largely because of humankind’s annihilation of natural habitats and our invasion of other species’ territories.

The cause of colony collapse disorder has not been unanimously determined, because there isn’t just one. There are many. The spraying of poisonous chemicals is one. In Europe, certain forms of pesticide were temporarily banned in 2013, and gradually in the rest of the world as well. Only the United States has refused. These poisons affect the bees’ internal navigation system and prevent them from finding their way back to the hive. These poisonous chemicals impact the nervous systems of all small insects, and many researchers firmly believe that a major cause of bee death can be attributed to these poisons. The research findings are not sufficiently unanimous, however. The United States has decided that the consequences of banning the poisons are too far-reaching. Entire farms could be destroyed by insect pests, leading to food shortages. Modern agriculture is impossible without pesticides. And the bees will disappear anyway, since the poison stays in the earth, but the poisons themselves won’t be blamed. The varroa mite, a tiny little parasite that infests bees, is another cause of colony collapse disorder. The mite latches onto the body of a bee like a large ball, sucking lymph fluid and spreading viruses that often can’t be detected until much later. And then there’s extreme weather. The world has slowly been acquiring a new climate; from now on, it will be changing with increasing speed. Dry, hot summers without flowers and nectar are killing bees. Hard winters kill them, too. And rain: like people, bees stay inside when it rains. Wet summers bring a slow death.

As we all know, bees play a very specific role in nature’s pollination of plants. It is necessary for the continuance of the life cycle of many crops. Albert Einstein believed so deeply in the bee’s importance to our ecosystem that he predicted that if they disappear, we will not survive more than four years.
What would happen if robotic bees took over the organic bees’ pollination work? In the animation *Controllers* (2018), I have created a population of such robotic bees to circulate within a contained, clinical, artificial world where there is no vegetation or any other organic form of life. The organic bees have been replaced by metallic robot bees, which are guided by “controllers” who send out electronic signals to direct the robots’ movements. In the animation one can detect that one of the bees circulates in a particular pattern—the so-called “waggle dance” that bees use to communicate with one another in the hive. The dance allows a bee to show others what direction to fly and how far to go to find nectar, and thus pollen. But the sad thing is that none of the other bees follow the “dance.” The animation works like a simulation of a natural environment in an artificial space—a place that may soon perhaps need to be constructed and exist in the physical world. In the near future the artificial bee will surely be a solution to the problem of declining bee populations around the world. The artificial robot bee has become the first of many robots we will introduce into the environment to compensate for the current era of widespread extinction. At a time when scientists at Harvard University have created the bee drone, and Walmart has already patented the bee drone for pollination, I wonder: Is this the future? As one recent article explains:

Walmart has just filed a patent for autonomous, robot bees. Yes, that Walmart—and no, you didn’t slip into another, stranger dimension. The megacorporation’s patent specifically covers “pollination drones.” These tiny robots could act just like bees, pollinating crops autonomously.

The robot bees would operate using sensors and cameras to help them navigate to crops. Flying around autonomously, these drones could potentially pollinate as effectively as the real thing.
Oddly enough, this is not the only farming patent that Walmart has filed recently. According to CB Insights, this is only one of six Walmart patents for farming drones that would do everything from monitor crop damage to spray pesticides. Incorporating autonomous robots into farming could cut costs and increase agriculture efficiency.

Science and technology join forces to derail nature and take over its functions; artificial intelligence and virtual reality create constructed environments. Every one of the environmental problems confronting man is rooted in technology. Donna Haraway lists some examples here:

Communications technologies depend on electronics. Modern states, multinational corporations, military power, welfare state apparatuses, satellite systems, political processes, fabrication of our imaginations, labour-control systems, medical constructions of our bodies, commercial pornography, the international division of labour, and religious evangelism depend intimately upon electronics.

What then would it mean to live in a world in which robotic bees are reality? It won’t be fiction much longer. Before long, our reality will be changed so that nearly everything that was once organic is replaced by something artificial.

Machines have become so intelligent that we can almost believe they’re alive. The biggest hurdle in the way of robots and computers taking the step from “object” to “life form” is that we’ve never constructed a machine that is aware of itself, a robot that reflects on its place in the world. But an even larger problem is that no machine has been able to keep working in perpetuity without maintenance from a human hand. Things without moving parts break down, too—repair
programs crash and signal errors occur. Real-world robots are not often very humanlike; they consist of a mechanical arm next to a conveyor belt and are controlled by a processor or a computer program that solves some administrative task. I think it is terrifying that robots are occupying an increasingly larger place in our society, even if we mostly don’t even think of them as robots but rather as automatons, digital algorithms, apps, and all the other little things that make everyday life a little easier for us. The fact is that we find ourselves in a phase in the development of robotics—or automation, as it might also be called—that is seriously challenging the prevailing conditions of our society.

The word “robot” comes from *robota*, the Czech word for “forced labour.” Much of the technological development of artificial intelligence is driven by man’s desire for new and better ways to kill. Who is responsible when a robot makes a mistake? The person who built


*Twelve pieces and a half second*, 2018. Detail. Aluminium foil, 156.5 x 88 cm, twenty-one table fans, three small construction spotlights. Jonna Hägg
it, the one who made the latest updates to its program-
ing, or the one who sent it off on its mission? If we
eventually see robots that have been constructed and
instructed by other robots, who will be responsible for
them? The question of their contribution to warfare
is also a technological matter. How do we deal with
the risk that the enemy could hack our robots so that
they switch sides? The more autonomous they become,
the less vulnerable they are to cyberattacks, but that
also makes them harder in general for humans to
control.9

“How sad to think that nature speaks and mankind
doesn’t listen.”10

Nature corresponds to a comprehensive plan that
has set parameters in which various forms of life can
interact. In the book The Ecological Thought (2012),
Timothy Morton argues that all life forms are inter-
connected in a vast, entangled mesh that extends in
different directions and unites both living and nonliv-
ing things in a cohesive structure.11 It is not only human
history that should be of interest, but also the history
of Earth, its plants and animals and ecosystems,
and in fact the flow of all energy. In A Thousand
Years of Nonlinear History (1997), Manuel DeLanda
examines the material processes that are embedded
in human cultures, the emergence of different kinds
of cities, and the construction of states as patterns of
complex processes embedded in a flow of energy and
matter. DeLanda conceptualises these as geological,
biological, and linguistic structures that have influ-
cenced, and possibly even determined, the development
of Earth and its inhabitants over the last thousand
years. He explains:

Industrial development is like biological evolution,
which not only lacks any progressive direction,
it does not even have a consistent drive toward
complexification: while some species complexify,
others simplify. In both cases, a variety of process-
es result in accumulations of complexity in some
areas, deaccumulations in others, and the coexist-
ence of different types of accumulated complexity.
The large-scale, concentrated industry of coal-
fueled towns represented only one possible direc-
tion for the complexification of technology.12

“I believe that art is the essence of life, as much as
anything can be a true essence. It is extracted from
existence by a process. Art is a reflection on life and an
analysis of its structure. As such, art should be a great
moving force shaping the future.”13

The artist Agnes Denes, quoted above, is the originator
of environmental art. She coined the term eco-logic,”
by which she particularly refers to art with an
ecological orientation, focusing on the analysis of what
we’re doing to our environment and how we’re making
it impossible for Earth to sustain us. The visualisation
process is important for Denes. Her work examines the
invisible systems, underlying structures, and natural
patterns that are inherent to our existence. By trying
to find new experiences of perception, she searches
for systems and invisible motifs that can give us a
better understanding of the reality in which we live.
Denes’s work is largely about visualising mathematical,
philosophical, and scientific concepts. She creates
a dialogue among disciplines as diverse as physics,
biology, history, astronomy, psychology, geometry,
geology, linguistics, and so on. Above all she aims to
visually communicate her own philosophy, which she
describes in her textual artwork Manifesto (1970).
The first lines read: “working with a paradox, defining
the elusive, visualising the invisible, communicating
the incommunicable.”

Art is an eternal journey, and the artwork is only
a means to a higher—if ultimately unattainable—goal.

“I am a mountain climber, and there is no way out
but up. Not for the peak—I have long since under-
stood about that—but for the mountain. You create
the mountain, and then you climb it. Not for the final
peak; the challenge is the process and the journey, and
the unattainable answers are the lure.”14

Whether the Weather
For as long as I can remember, I have always been
captivated by the weather. When you grow up on an
island you become accustomed to extreme weather.
But the extreme weather on Gotland is nothing
compared to Iceland. On Iceland the weather is ines-
capable. It is a force, a force of nature that confronts,
disturbs, surrounds, and captivates. To absorb and
register the effects of small climate changes—to take
note of a cloud passing before the sun, a shift in the
direction of the wind, or the first drop of rain—is
something you do if you are surrounded by it around
the clock. When all these weather events run together
during the course of a single day, they create a chaotic
natural symphony.

“Weather is the key paradox of our time. Weather
that is nice is often weather that is wrong. The nice is
occurring in the immediate and individual and wrong
is occurring system wide.”15

“Weather” is a word full of doubt. We are all involved
in the destruction that is leading to our own demise.
We probably all have a story about the weather—it can
even be one of the only things we all have in common.
And even if the weather varies a great deal from here to
there, it is in the end one weather we all share.

“Changing weather can strand you quick. Rivers can
turn into lakes, and so can fields. When a field be-
comes a lake it is intimidating just standing near.
There instant lakes have properties unpredictable and
unmapped. Weather kills here in Iceland.”16
The weather kills people in Iceland. One Sunday in early January last year, I hiked with some friends up Mount Esja, just a few kilometres from Reykjavik. It was early in the morning and the sun was rising slowly behind the mountain, the weather clear and calm. We decided to take the second-most-difficult trail to the summit. The hike began in perfect harmony and tranquility, with a beautiful sunrise and a snow-covered white landscape all around us. As we walked we began to notice the wind becoming stronger and stronger, and how new snow swirled around us more and more. Sometimes the wind was so strong that I had to use my whole body to try to keep my balance. After an hour and a half, we realised we could no longer see more than five metres in front of us, and I could barely keep my balance, so we decided to turn back without reaching the summit. It was a little disappointing, but also a wise decision, since that night we read in the local news that three Icelandic hikers had gone missing from the same mountain that day. After reading the news, I realised that we had been right on the edge of an avalanche. Later I read more about the accident: they found all three men, but one of them died. You really have to respect the weather. I felt it in my body and very strongly in my face. The Icelandic weather stuck itself into me and onto me.

In Joan Jonas’s video performance Wind (1968), a group of people struggle against the wind as it redirects their movements, creating a mystical choreography. Some of the actors wear black masks, and others have mirrors attached to their bodies. Filming in long takes, in black and white and without sound, Jonas allows the wind to direct the movements of the actors in a mix of choreography, ceremony, and improvisation. “There is an art of attending to the weather, to the route you take, to the landmarks along the way, to how if you turn around you can see how different the journey back looks from the journey out, to reading the sun and moon and stars and how you can orient yourself, to the direction of running water, to the thousand things that make the wild a text that can be read by the literate. The lost are often illiterate in this language that is the language of the earth itself, or don’t stop to read it. And there’s another art of being at home in the unknown, so that being in its midst isn’t cause for panic or suffering, of being at home with being lost.”

“The distances are very great on Iceland, and you have to prepare yourself for excursions—checking the weather before a road trip is essential, since certain roads get completely shut down when it’s too windy or there’s a snowstorm. The longest continuous car trip I ever took on Iceland was to the Vatnajökull glacier, which required several hours of uninterrupted driving through the lava fields. This monotonous, gray, and flat landscape evoked a special feeling in me. I found a kind of peace and enormous inspiration.

In the fall of 2016, Malmö Konsthall showed Light Time Tales, an exhibition of Joan Jonas’s work. This multimedia exhibition clearly showed Jonas’s unique feeling for the motion picture—how it can be presented and perceived. It involved a series of installations varying from monumental projections to smaller screens and projections on a variety of different materials and forms, where the use of light and objects created shadows and moods until the media of communication itself became a work of art. Her piece Reanimation (2010/2012/2013) made an especially strong impression on me. I returned to the installation again and again over the space of several weeks. I just couldn’t get enough. It was inspired by Under the Glacier (1968), a novel by the Icelandic author Hálfdor Laxness. Jonas chose selections from the book that describe a glacier on Iceland in poetic wording and that refer to certain miraculous aspects of the natural world, such as dandelions and honeybees. Four frames of wood and rice paper made up the screens used for projecting the videos—Nordic landscapes, mountains at sunset, and black ink drawings in the snow. From a metal construction hung a large number of crystals that reflected into the projections. Nature plays a huge role in Jonas’s ideas: she sees nature as a world in constant development that must be preserved and that is a source of strength for the soul.

When I first trekked across one of the constantly shifting glacial masses at Vatnajökull, the largest glacier in Iceland (and in Europe), I was well aware of the risks involved in being there. There are cracks and holes in the glacier that could literally have swallowed me. The rivers that run off from it in turn present a danger to their surroundings. Iceland’s rivers are destructive and unpredictable forces, and the glacier itself is a measure of how the state of Earth is changing, and probably in a way that jeopardises the conditions required for human life. Glaciers in most parts of the world are melting and shrinking, and they are therefore perhaps one of the most visible indicators of
global warming, and in many parts of the world this is going to lead to a shortage of water. One can imagine, for example, the catastrophic effects of the reduction in water resources in the rivers of India and China, whose sources are the glaciers of the Himalayas.

In Stykkishólmur, a little fishing village in western Iceland, lies Vatnasafn (2007), which is a water library created by Roni Horn. The library is full of not books but glaciers. The glaciers stand upright. Silent. Ordered like books on a shelf. But they are melted. That may sound relaxed and safe, but in fact this piece was created in a crisis—not so relaxing, but very historical and imaginative. Horn has filled twenty-four floor-to-ceiling glass cylinders with water gathered from as many glaciers all around Iceland. The cylinders are arranged in a room that overlooks a bay, with a window that bulges out toward the horizon like an eye. Every one of the cylinders has an optical effect of reflecting the others, along with the daylight. Horn has catalogued the melted glaciers because they are at risk of disappearing. Each cylinder has a slightly different colour than the others because of the particular sediment it contains, each one showing a unique history and refracting beautiful light through the irregular glass. Vatnasafn is for me the best kind of science fiction: feminist science fiction—ecological, meteorological, apprehensive about hydrology, chemistry, linguistics, and architecture. As with the weather, Vatnasafn is something you are in—or something you experience when you are in it. It is, as Anne Carson describes it in her poem “Wildly Constant,” an other world:

... Sometimes at night
when I can’t sleep
because of the wind
I go and stand
in the library of glaciers.

I stand in another world.
Not the past not the future.
Not paradise not reality not
a dream.
An other competence,
Wild and constant.

Who knows why it exists. I
stand amid glaciers.
Listen to the wind outside
falling towards me from the outer edges of night
and space.
I have no theory
of why we are here
or what any of us is a sign of.
But a room of melted glaciers
rocking in the nightwind of Stykkishólmur
is a good place to ponder it ... 19

My sound and sculpture installation Twelve pieces and a half second (2018) comprises twelve aluminum sheets in 16:9 format (156.5 cm x 88 cm), twenty-one small table fans, and three small construction spotlights. The aluminum foil sheets are placed on the floor, where the fans blow life into the material like leftover leaves on a tree, stubbornly holding on and vibrating in the wind. The small spotlights illuminate the material and reflect the light vibrations up onto the walls, setting the whole room to vibrate with the movement. The installation is composed like a piece of music, each sheet of aluminum acting like a single tone, each one wrinkled to a different extent so that they each give off a different kind of sound and vibration. Working as much as possible like a simulation, I have recreated a reality in a controlled environment.

Sound has come to be a major focus of my artistic practice in recent years, and is still a largely unexplored area to which I want to commit myself. I have learned to listen actively all around me.

Sound moves me. It surrounds, presses, pokes, caresses, crawls along my skin, forces itself upon me from behind, and around, the sound embodied in me. I listen. The sound of a car moving at high speed. The atmospheric sound between power lines. Wind. Murmuring. A whisper. Or the pattering sound of rain against my window.

I sculpt with sound, like a mass being molded. Capture it, controlling, manipulating, cutting and clipping, layer upon layer. I see the frequencies visually, sometimes as long “threads” stretched to the breaking point and cut off, repeated and drawn out. Long, sustained tones, a flood of ringing, static tones that hold a multitude of micro changes. Every interval in the soundtrack has an absolute meaning, every detail of sound carefully tested and selected. The American composer Pauline Oliveros, who was active in the 1960s, developed a concept she calls “deep listening” that allows her to achieve a meditative state and higher consciousness. Deep listening involves the continual movements that happen beneath the motionless and unchanging surface. When I listen actively to separate sustained sounds, I am transported into that hypnotic state.

The seven tracks on my album Constructed Weather (2017) were created based on field recordings I made in different locations around Iceland. In these sounds you can sense the power of nature in a kind of imbalance or syncopation. I explore the interplay between what I see as human, organic, and artificial constructions of our environments. The sounds are threatening, vibrating, and alarming; at the same time, they capture nature’s great reserves of power. In the track “Windcall,” I imagine winds—both light and hard winds, winds through cracks of door and wind across open fields. You never hear the wind whispering in
the trees on Iceland; there are only raw gusts pounding through the flat landscape and dancing among the buildings and the mountains. In “Windcall,” the winds communicate with one another in a symphony. In many of the tracks I work with muted tones, with extremely slow changes, where I imagine I’m painting an electronic landscape painting, a broad, sweeping perspective where I want to capture the rawness in every composition, either completely untouched or manipulated to the furthest extreme.

“Creativity is a state of anxiety, euphoria, and stress. Ordinary people seem happier, live longer, have not so much constant stress and tension. A lifetime of stress, and you burn out, your body suffers and parts degenerate. Tension is a constant nervous energy that makes the art and never gives you complete satisfaction, if only for a moment, to dissolve into new tension and anxiety that comes with new art that you need to create.”

I am never so present as when I’m creating. When it comes to the sounds I compose, it is important that I am alone, rather like I’m preparing myself to meditate. I am committed to the sounds and sound variations that require an extreme concentration. I could describe my sound landscapes as both intriguing and disquieting. I want people to feel these sounds in their bodies; they are not meant to be easily accessible, but require patience and time to reach their full depths. I see my sound works as political in relation to how society looks and functions today, when above all everything is supposed to go quickly and we’re meant to consume culture rapidly. And as an act of resistance to that escalating social climate, I think there is something very liberating in sound, because it requires patience and a lot of time. And it’s about changing perception by listening to something actively. It’s not possible to consume sound in the same way as other art mediums; it requires completely different frames, for example, long concerts, where we can commit to listening in a different way. And that kind of change in perception doesn’t occur until after several hours of listening.


3. In the Hopi language, *Koyaanisqatsi* means “crazy life, life in turbulence, life dissolution, a lifestyle that demands another way of living,” and the film implies that modern man is living in such a way.


10. disclaimer


Further References:


Ellinor Lager
Earth Dough

For Ebbe-Lo Ellis, to whom I owe motherhood, and who gave me a room of my own.

Its Midst

“What is more true is poetic because it is not stopped-stoppable. All that is stopped, grasped, all that is subjugated, easily transmitted, easily picked up, all that comes under the word concept, which is to say all that is taken caged, is less true. Has lost what is life itself, which is always in the process of seething, of emitting, of transmitting itself. Each object is in reality a small virtual volcano.”

—Hélène Cixous

Some Sunsets Don’t Set

The Fragment’s

I want to begin by returning to my bachelor’s thesis, which was titled “Att i-akt-ta ting” (Ob-serve-ject). The essay was about how best to approach things in general, and “ingentinget” (the no-thing), as a definite noun, in particular. My reasoning was that what I was working with was the “no-thing”: something unarticulated, “anti-defined,” and yet, definite. First, I must clarify that because, thanks to Hélène Cixous’s writings, with the assistance of Julia Kristeva, in particular Kristeva’s comment about how Sigmund Freud abandoned the maternal body as “a massive nothing,” I have realised that my own nothing, and the “no-thing,” as a definite noun, is related to the female body, more specifically to maternity, as a position in relation to my own future subject. This might seem paradoxical, as there are few things that are so tangible and yet a no-thing, because at the time I wasn’t a mother, and because the representation of motherhood in art and language still seems to me to be every bit as repressed and evasive as the basic premise of grasping a nothing, and perhaps that is precisely why this is. I want to pursue this line of argument and draw some connections to Nina Power’s November 2017 article about void feminism, which encourages the reader to “embrace” the void that has been assigned to us women, and to merge with it. Power’s discussion takes off from artist Audrey Wollen’s Instagram piece BEWARE MALE ARTISTS MAKING ARTWORK ABOUT EMPTINESS/NOTHING DOES NOT BELONG TO YOU/GIRLS OWN THE VOID/BACK OFF FUCKERS!!!! (2015).

Power’s line of reasoning rests on the notion that the object of feminism is nothing, because it forces us to reconsider the conditions of thinking about what objects can possibly be. “To ‘void’ something is to declare that it no longer stands,” and thinking from emptiness itself is the only real option: “To think from the standpoint of the VOID then is to begin from what looks like incompleteness but which is fully real,” as we are always unfamiliar to ourselves. But while her void feminism does pave the way for a discourse of “emptiness,” one with which I am all too familiar, in light of Power’s accord—or conspiracy, even—with nothing, it is very difficult to seek acknowledgment and representation. Does this mean that it all amounts to nothing? To me, it seems a shame that it doesn’t actively seek just that, and for this reason, I’d like to appropriate the concept, and fill that void as well. More specifically and plainly, I’d like to articulate the pleat within the body, within...
culture, which is also the place where life comes from. I think this is especially important in relation to contemporary discourse and tendencies at this point in time, when we seem unable to speak of women and the experiences that seem to have been locked inside this dead point of trembling equilibrium from the very beginning. And Power's article, at best, manages to explain why we have failed to do this, because thinking and acting from emptiness is not as easily done as merging with it. These lines by poet Jila Mossaed express a part of this problem: “I walk in darkness / like my mother / thinking like my father.”

Despite this difficulty, then, I will now be making a second attempt to acknowledge and to reason on the void—maternal body that my work is rooted in.

The Balance’s

“Real female innovation (in whatever field) will only come about when maternity, female creation and the link between them are better understood.” —Julia Kristeva

The Rift’s

I would like to begin by describing a general problem that arises when working with sculpture, which I both inevitably and actively pursue. It concerns the state in which an object is finished. The problem lies in the delivery, in that when I finish a work, it separates from me, and becomes its own. Despite the process of creation—and even if it stems from me—I definitely lose control. Of course, there are ways of relating to, approaching, and to some extent reclaiming this control, but in the first place, the objects, which have finally withdrawn and closed themselves off, belong to a place from which I cannot fully recover or enter them, except by means of physical force.

The Ripple’s

It’s impossible to fully stop, grasp, and cage an object, just as it is impossible to maintain one’s clarity of vision while entering the place where one works. Just as difficult as fully grasping my own being—my own subjecthood, and the intricate materiality that has pleased it. However, my practice relies fundamentally on this double endeavour. With physical force, the objects act as extensions of my body, but each time I lose my grip I return to being a visitor, posing questions and (seeking) answers with my hand and with my body. I shift the enquiry to the next object, pick up on a detail, a choice of material, or property, and explore it further—embody it. In this way, my works are woven together. The objects are about each other. This is how a language is articulated. I write in objects, about objects, and the ways that they resound with, and eventually extend, the body.

The Prologue’s Earth

The touch of my hand triggers a frustration, both a recognition and (thereby) a feeling of abjection, which in turn leaves distinct traces in the objects, but without revealing itself (myself) completely. My works are mutations, or hybrids, of objects; body and language.

The Fold’s

“What is most true is naked life. I can only attain this mode of seeing with the aid of poetic writing. I apply myself to ‘seeing’ the world nude, that is almost to en-un-um-erating the world, with the naked, obstinate, defenceless eye of my nearsightedness. And while looking very very closely, I copy. The world written nude is poetic.”

—Hélène Cixous

The Breach’s Head

The phrase “some sunsets don’t set” (which was also the title of my master’s exhibition) was articulated during a walk with the stroller. I can’t remember when it was, but I do remember exactly how the light of that sunset infiltrated every nook and cranny of my body, the feeling of then becoming one with the light—with the world—as simple as it was clear!

And just as distinctly the other way around, when the euphoria flattened out and the shadows fell somewhat more contoured and distinct in my body as the dusk furnished itself. More than anything, the experience shed light on the shadowland I’m working from, where language takes shape.

Light’s Extension

A shadowland, a me-landscape, being body in the world. It is in relation to and with an emphasis on the body that my work arises.

Tract’s

Like that euphoria, I distinctly remember my first experience of anxiety, which came when I, as a child, stepped out of the shower in my family home: going suddenly from running rivulets of warmth to icy cold—it was an old house. Or inversely, being cold and naked and stepping into the warmth caused me to experience a powerful sensation that I had no better word for than “homesickness.” I remember how that in itself was a source of great confusion, as I was already home. But then again, it was never a matter of longing for a secure exterior, was it?

And, for the sake of simplicity, I might add that in that case, the exterior that existed at the time wasn’t exactly fulfilling this purpose to satisfaction. I’m actually referring to an exterior—interior that fails to be secure, and might even be experienced as uncanny. The fact that Western culture, a coded structure, hangs from the objects
The Curtain’s Colour’s Condensation

The Harbouring’s

Meanwhile, in the optical unconscious,9 in the tiny details, in the structure of cells, there is an equation with the “everything” that articulates every aspect of its origin. Like Cixous, I’ve felt a need for this nearsightedness. Perhaps it serves as a source of comfort in relation to culture, as it is a basis for existential dissonance. This could be why my body has always had a distinct signalling of emotion, constantly ensnared by inner conflict, which always originates in a dual inability to either feel at home in society or live outside of it.”

— Hannah Arendt12

The Equilibrium’s

Patriarchy—boring as hell, and as long as we don’t refurnish the whole order, or at least give it a proper spring cleaning15 and enumerate a whole lot more female,16 and other,17 text, form, and structure, the nature of our society will continue to submit me to this doubly concrete homesickness. I long to feel truly at home—both in culture and in (and with) my body. But this is also a privileged side position, which feeds my practice through its concreteness.

The Circuit’s

The multiplied homesickness is caused by the way that the form of society constantly forces the body to remember to remember. My own room, entering myself, and better understanding the contradiction inherent to life in the shroud of this society. Being impregnated with a never-ending drive to formulate and write about this concrete emptiness or gap of the flesh, how its borders leave themselves around structures and form, harbouring experiences and objects, children—organising the loading bay of memories, and constantly expanding in dreams. Explore how things fold in the body; perhaps the dream testifies to the free way in which things anchor themselves. Unfold the recesses of the body. Search—write—weave. Implications and signs. Never definite and rarely allegorical descriptions of something given—that remains impossible—but, instead, creating works and text that are rife with cavities, that offer space for multiple narratives, irreconcilably open, and that correspond to the way contradiction, memories, emotions, poetry inhabit the body. A way to create a language for the body’s wrinkles, corners, and folds. My sculptures close themselves like their own objects, like bodies, vessels best read on their own, but still belonging with, not just each other, but a more extensive project. To borrow a phrase from Cixous: “I’m aiming for a space I am filling, no volume is an end, you have to look to the whole, it is a process of growth.”18

The Skinness’s

And it is also an act of weaving within the growing entanglement, riddled with holes around the female and maternal bodies. Because in the same way that the body is highly palpable, it is devoid of or absent from me.
The Bones'
Inversely, when it is present, it is undoubtedly so, drowning everything else out! It's as though every fibre in my body is responding to a choir of women, prehistoric companions, and/or myself, of all ages, shrieking in unison, a high-pitched, hortative “DO it!,” as Sol LeWitt wrote to Eva Hesse. Make and write body! We dare you! We need even more! Need to be unveiled!

Even though she lived in a different time, I think that Hesse’s uncertainty, which addressed this exhortation by LeWitt, still exists within this subject. However, this also makes me certain that uncertainty is the strongest suture.

“By writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display—the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions. Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time. Write your self ... and the immense resources of the unconscious [will] spring forth.”

Steel of the Line
But when I search for the maternal body, in the double sense of body, the sculptural representation, apart from in some of Louise Bourgeois work, I mainly find it in the corners of the home, where its text is embodied in the objects that vibrate on the periphery. It makes me very self-conscious all of a sudden; the vibration resounds with my internal architecture. Unfolding the landscape of memories that looks like the one in dreams. Sometimes a minor tremble, sometimes violently shaking, making it obvious that nothing is static.

The Suspend’s
“Homogeneous space is in no way a smooth space; on the contrary, it is the form of striated space. The space of pillars. It is striated by the fall of bodies, the verticals of gravity, the distribution of matter into parallel layers, the lamellar and laminar movement of flows.”
—Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

The Rhythm’s
This vibration brings to my mind the semiotics of the body, in crocheting, like an unopened letter from the past, in the will and last testament of the rag rug I am weaving and articulating. The rag rug—an intricate web, housing several bodies, and from this body, a language is born. In the rug’s sediments of fabric, in its own strata. Each and every one of these holds the object together under pressure, the object that cannot be interpreted as anything but vibrating as a whole; it’s the multiple narratives that do it. About recycling, about crafts, about being at home, its form, the folds of the body, the histories of the various fabrics. Being endlessly. It is somatic, too, in the sense that it follows the immanence of the fabric—distributed and collected, but mobile, flippant to the point of being transcendent, and always an addition. At first, the rug interests me because of how it fails at its task of lying flat against the floor. Since rugs are hard to tame, it gets up instead, altering the entire rhythm of the room. Shifting it into a new balance, from order into chaos. And when it raises its topography, it causes an expansion of space-time itself, like the ripples on the waves of the Big Bang. I unravel it, and by unweaving the text-ile, signs and symbols appear—a foreign language.

The Flow’s
“[She] felt as she has lost herself ... // It wasn’t that she felt she had assumed the identity, even partially, of some remote ancestor. // No. She felt rather that she was living with a great many people from the past, that they were in her brain or mind // and that people from human antecedents were bound up with her, influencing her, controlling her every bit as much as, up to now, she had been controlling herself.”
—Patricia Highsmith

The Striate’s
The Curtain’s. Its movements, sounds, form, folds, role as a gatekeeper between the private and what is outside. A place to hide. Associating in the folds: mum’s skirt, grannie’s, great-grannie’s, great-great-grannie’s, and so on, a supporting column, or rather, a caryatid. A female sculpture taking the place of a column, serving as an architectural support. The caryatids were named for the maidens of Karyai, “those Karyatides, who in their ecstatic round-dance carried on their heads baskets of live reeds, as if they were dancing plants.” I fix it within the fold.

The Fit’s
I also work against the material. Within the oppositions of material/immaterial, body/space, balance/motion. I literally work my way through the material, to liberate the language of the body that I lack, and mediate the domestic labour that has sustained the body thus far. But also, the distinctive characteristc and languages of the materials. I make objects that are self-reflective in that they question their own internal logic, a balance of opposites. I read the materials. I question their composition while articulating my own need for them. A sculpture is finished when it vibrates.
The Pulsations’

The rhythm of my process depends on the various materials. For harmony, I require peaceful drawing, quick note-taking, and rapid polishing of iron, a dance of bows,\textsuperscript{24} the tactile calm of sewing and kneading. Listening to my body, as well as questioning myself. Scrutinising, doubting the contents of my thoughts, searching, returning to find details in notebooks, in doodles, and in old works, which are suddenly obviously related to something that is currently ongoing. The ongoing.

The Volume’s

(I have kept an old drawing, with the words “when I sit down in the imprint on my bed, but look in another direction.” I had previously been sitting there, looking out through the window, when all of a sudden I felt ill at ease, as though someone was watching me. Later, when I went back inside and sat down again, I noticed the mirror reflecting me as I looked outside.)

The Reverberations’

“Again if one is a woman one is often surprised by a sudden splitting off of consciousness. ... // when from being the natural inheritor of that civilization, she becomes, on the contrary, outside of it, alien and critical.”

— Virginia Woolf\textsuperscript{25}

The Furrow’s

The maternal body. A fundamental confusion: how could the culture have cemented a side position for us, when Anthropos sprang forth from us?

An antithesis of logic. With an inherent knowledge of the primal force that is the maternal body, perhaps we have had no further need for self-affirmation in a culture that revolves around the compensatory quest that humanity’s claim to exceptionality constitutes (we had and were the answer). If our entire culture is founded on a self-affirmation originating in an active repression of the “origin,” this would also explain the most extreme expressions this takes: making life itself artificial, and the scientific and technological advances that aim at eventually cutting the umbilical cord to Mother Earth clean off. The desire to cease to be earthbound creatures. Or, while Gaia surrenders, as Solanas says, to “just sit back, relax, enjoy the show and ride the waves to their demise.”\textsuperscript{26}

The Weave’s

I am motivated equally by this confusion and by the frustration it brings. I want to give it a language, to extract the primordial void and unfold it in the light. But the primal also awakens a need to set myself aside. A basic requirement, in itself practised in the role of motherhood. Not merely in the biological sense, by being harboured and doubled; maternity also eliminates all other things, and this split is necessary—at times, I move back and forth between being Ellinor and being Mum. But am I tripled? I create a third body in my art, a bridge in the in-between of the first two, which rests in the primordial void; when I extract this body does the void simultaneously expand, postpartum? It is in relation to the origin that I set myself aside (and yet another split). One that is necessary and clear in relation to society, as well as to existence. I think the “original” is a constant reminder of that haze within the body that is not attached solely to it, but is rather ever-present in all things. It is synonymous with existence; nothing in itself but what all things have in common, as concrete as it is problematic, within myself as in every object. In every bud that bursts. Hito Steyerl ask herself: “How about siding with the object for a change? Why not affirm it? Why not be a thing? An object without a subject? A thing among other things?”\textsuperscript{27} From the perspective of motherhood, of women,\textsuperscript{28} it seems obvious; it’s part of it all, thinking from a state of objecthood, in everything, and in poetry. I think that’s why “her speech is never simple or linear… She writes in white ink.”\textsuperscript{29} A poetic attitude is a way of relating to, and finding a place within, the order of things, and by extension, also a strategy for toppling it. There is room for us in being, in disorder, in the variations, and in the gaps—in the options, in the leakage—in poetry.

The Hold’s

“My civilised society abuses its women, and then wipes its hands clean and reads poetry.” ... If it weren’t for the fact that I live in a civilised society, I would have wanted to talk to you about reading poems. I would have told you about how poetry permits associative thinking, how it allows me to perceive truth outside of its generally accepted linguistic forms. I would tell you that I don’t believe people when they say that poetry is inaccessible—to me, it’s the most immediate thing around. But instead, I have to speak about being a woman.”

— Athena Farrokhzad\textsuperscript{30}

The Leakage’s

Leakage and poetry are the same. Poetry is a way of getting at and describing the constant leakage that occurs between body, object, emotion, and thought. I’ve defined a concept to explain this, which incorporates everything, or allows you to put everything in parentheses.

Earth Dough: a literary trope, for everything that is, it stretches out to—and reaches part of the way inside—dark energy and matter. All that is visible, thinkable, 1D, 2D, 3D, time D, language D. All that holds everything. All that is perceived, interpreted, consumed, and
understood. It is the reason for all its endless variations, an ultimate framework, constantly changing and transmitting itself. This is not to be taken as a joke, but as the concept that everything that is known is just a single variation of what is given in that specific moment. It is the between, in-between known-unknown.

Putting everything in parentheses also means giving myself the frame of reference of Earth Dough; I work from it, and use a parenthesis when there is suddenly too much there for me to grasp. In the body’s, the narrative’s, the emotion’s, the memory’s, the material’s. I need it when I work from the silent vacuum from the depths deep inside my body. In the chora:

Kristeva defines the chora as a pre-semiotic form, all that which cannot be said or written, that has survived the cultural pressure towards sublimation in signs: gestures, rhythm, the timbre of words, interruptions in the text. The chora is form-creating, but not meaning-forming, in more or less the same way that Freud considered the process of dreaming to predate the production of the conscious... .

... Art, says Kristeva, always carries an unpaid debt to the maternal body, by virtue of being a sublimation originating in the moment when the child separates itself from this world of body. The satisfaction of artistic creation, just like the pleasure we derive when we read the poem or view the artwork, resides in the stretching of, play with, and crossing of this boundary.31

When I was a child, I had a recurring fever nightmare, in which cylindrical shapes of various sizes hovered through a white space. Through a white grid that resembled the squares in the ceiling over my parents’ bed. One at a time, their speed would depend on the thickness and length of the shapes, which would then crash into something peripheral with varied force and varied amounts of noise. Since I’ve watched, nursed, and taught my child, I’ve come to realise that this recurring dream must have been connected to some early perception of mine. From when the shapes around us were sound and motion, varying degrees of calm and turmoil. Is sound, motion, calm, and turmoil. Meaning.

Clay remember its form. I make the shape of a back. The Mother’s back, my own, with equal emphasis on the perineal vessel and the cavity of the navel. The portal between generations. Ceramics remember, at a certain temperature in the firing process, everything vibrates, and sways through its levelling of pre-shape and new meaning before it settles. I share this capacity; I bring out the feeling of heaviness during pregnancy, and the empty feeling now. I equate myself with the material.

The Navel’s
At last: “We are the granddaughters of the witches you didn’t burn.” 32

Right: *Some Sunsets Don't Set*, 2018. Steel, porcelain. Ellinor Lager


3 Maybe it’s too tangible; maybe the only way to both hold and understand the creation of life, which is really an expansion of both body and thought, a fold in the universe, is by actually folding creation into its “antonym” no-thing, a lingering potential.

Among other things, I am referring to the fierce opposition that the journalist Kajsa Ekis Ekman faced, mainly from feminists, after posing the following questions in her 2018 article “Knet i knoppen” (Gender in mind): “Exactly what is a woman, or a man? What happens when society embraces a definition of gender as something that is up to the individual? Ought we to surgically correct children whose bodies don’t conform to our sexual categories? Why is gender thought to be a flexible category, while ethnicity is thought to be rigid?” She posed these questions in the wake of the proposed legislation that would make legal gender a matter of personal choice. Kajsa Ekman, “Knet i Knoppen” [Gender in mind], Aftonbladet, January 16, 2018, https://www.aftonbladet.se/kultur/u/a/r2/ke/ke-n-mmek-t-i-knokep.


“During that course in which T become, I give birth to myself. … Mute protest of the symptom, shattering violence of a convulsion that to be sure is inscribed in a symbolic system, but in which, without either wanting or being able to become integrated in order to answer to it … it is no longer T who expel, T is expelled. The border has become an object.” Julia Kristeva, Abjection: A Lecture on the Powers of Horror (New York : Columbia Univ. Press, 1980), 3–4.

Cixous and Calle-Gruber, Rootprints, 4.


An expression my father often used when he let us kids decide something.

Genitally mutilating, even, since flowers are plants’ reproductive organs.


‘Here they are, returning arriving over and over again because the unconscious is impregnable. They have wandered around in circles, confined to the narrow room in which they’ve been given a deadly brainwashing. You can incarcerate them, slow them down, get away with the old Apartheid routine, but for a time only. But as soon as they begin to speak, at the same time as they’re taught their name, they can be taught that their territory is black: because you are Africa you are black. Your continent is dark. Dark is dangerous. You can’t see anything in the dark, you’re afraid. Don’t move, you might fall. Most of all, don’t go into the forest. And so we have internalized this horror of the dark.” Hélène Cixous, “Laugh of the Medusa,” Signs 1, no. 4. (Summer 1976): 877.

In the Swedish word I use here, vår-städarn, the hyphen suggests an ambiguity: vår-städa = spring clean, or clean thoroughly, and vår = ours, belongs to us.

Made by women.

Made externally to the perspective of the white male, the norm.


I am not sure what words to use to describe the significance of Louise Bourgeois’ work. Mostly because I think you understand. Although her main oeuvre revolved around being a daughter, she is one of a few who also opened up the space of motherhood and the maternal body that I want to work in. Therefore, I am a little ashamed to admit how jealous I felt the first time I saw her work. I was jealous of how her immensely personal oeuvre was awarded so much space of motherhood and the maternal body that I want to work in. Therefore, I am a little ashamed to admit how jealous I felt the first time I saw her work. I was jealous of how her immensely personal oeuvre was awarded so much space, and how her work was so varied, and she was so free in relation to her materials and idiom. There is so much to say about that; sometimes the simplest things are very difficult, and the most difficult things are very simple.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 370.


Bending metal with your body.

Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Modern Classics, 1973), 96. Double slash added to indicate paragraph break.


“A woman is never far from ‘mother.’” Cixous, “Laugh of the Medusa,” 881.


Further References


Eli Maria Lundgaard
Top: *Disappearing Act*, 2018. Still image. 16mm film scanned to HD video, 04:32 min. Eli Maria Lundgaard

Bottom: *The Earth is Moving Because it is Alive*, 2018. Still image. HD video, 16:43 min. Eli Maria Lundgaard
Disappearing Act

In my work I’m fascinated by the way we as humans ascribe meaning to the world and the environment we live in. In my work I am striving to appropriate, challenge, and disturb the world around me, to erase or blur definitions and concepts, and to explore the way we define or look at something that has been transformed or changed. This text is based on what I think about while working, the themes I want to integrate into the work I do. I am also interested in narratives, situations, and phenomena that can be neither confirmed nor dismissed, that are somewhere between fact and fiction. By reconstruction and manipulation, I want to turn the seemingly familiar into something strange and foreign.

Something changes and becomes something else.¹

As humans, we have an inherent need to categorise and organise our surroundings. In my practice I would like to explore the different methods we implement in order to do this. We try to put things in order and we search for definitions, systems, and frames in which to place them. These categories and systems tend to reproduce what we are already conditioned to notice. We learn both from evolution and experience, as we are continuously influenced by our circumstances.

I believe that what cannot be described in words, but can only be felt physically easily leads to speculation and fantasy. What do we do in the absence of explanation? What we cannot observe or immediately understand often turns into myths, monsters, and magic. Fictions and dreams blend with the actual world and create a space inside in which we can live and think. Emotions like anxiety, hypochondria, and paranoia are examples of some of the ways the human psyche tries to handle situations in either an external or an internal world.

We are busy dividing, separating, and classifying. It seems that we wish to make the world as simple as possible, even if we are not always able to do this. I’m interested in what exists unhindered in nature and cannot be controlled by humans—I’m interested in the wild. Through my practice I want to examine the natural and the artificial alike. I want to show how things are not always the way they appear. Things we find in-between, in the middle, in the neither-nor, or in the all-of-the-above; something that can be both pet and beast.

The need to organise and to name so as to distinguish one thing from the other I find characteristic of all humans. We want things to have a meaning or an explanation. The human brain is by nature preconditioned for pattern recognition, and this is both useful and important: if two different kinds of red berries made you sick, it is smart to suspect that other red berries will also do so. This could be one reason why we have this need to classify. By naming something, we also make it actual and real for us. Our natural surroundings are recounted and understood through man-made contexts, such as zoos, botanical gardens, and museums of natural history. Everything should preferably be incorporated into some sort of logical archive, catalogue, encyclopaedia, museum, or library. We strive to organise everything. And as with the objects in our surroundings, we put thoughts in the right place.
When something has been named and labelled, it is fixed, controlled. But, though we have named rock as “rock,” it may also be something else:

But then, rocks are cultural too, in that they are thus categorized, included in the definition of the natural world, classified into sedimentary and igneous, divided into grains of sand, pieces of gravel, pebbles, stones, rocks, boulders, mountains, domesticated in parks and ornamental gardens, protected in wilderness, cut, bought, used and displayed as “precious stones”, and include as a subcategory “girls’ best friends”; not to mention coolant for vodka.12

This list of interpretations and definitions can be continued infinitely.

Do we experience reality? We create our own reality through our senses, and we need language to define it. This makes reality a vulnerable concept. Much that once was considered imaginary is now, by means of technology, assumed to be real. Conversely, an established concept may suddenly be deemed a misperception or outdated and end up regarded as ludicrous and invalid. What fairy tales and money have in common is that they both have their origins in the human mind.

Because we are human, we can only see the world from a human perspective. This makes it nearly impossible for us to understand and explain what is not human. Therefore, we can never see things exactly as they are in themselves.3 To contemplate something incites recognition, identification, and comparison.

Everything we experience is filtered through the thoughts and the mind. We may question established concepts through critical thinking and through art. Borders shift and become blurred. Things we’re sure about today may appear to be something completely else tomorrow, as our reality is still based on shared myths and stories. When I show a work, my world merges with those of others.

Maybe art is not bound by logic? I am interested in experiences and situations that lie outside the rational. When we look at art, we use our emotions, we look for things we recognise, and we associate. We try to categorise what we’re seeing. But since art doesn’t always follow what we consider to be the normal lines of reasoning, we may be led down unfamiliar new paths, turning what we see upside-down and questioning it. Art may be a mix of conscious and subconscious processes, aspects of human nature, and manifestations of rationality. It may be like ghosts from the depths of a gloomy forest, or something else that haunts or disturbs you.

In Mercedes Mühleisen’s black-and-white video The Gnomic Puddle (2015), we encounter a humanoid creature that speaks, gesticulates, and deliberates in the middle of an abstract, animated, and undulating landscape. A monologue delivered with a distorted voice consists of garbled sentences where language breaks up and is warped. Riddles, wordplay, rhymes, tautologies, and aphorisms are used to penetrate something that language itself cannot describe.

I want to examine things that are concealed in the world, or perhaps don’t exist but are nonetheless rationalised. Perhaps we recognise such things as parallel worlds, netherworlds, or supernatural phenomena—situations that can be experienced both physically and mentally. We use words to try to explain events and our physical surroundings, but at the same time these words describe something more abstract, something deep inside our thoughts. Ghosts and netherworlds are sometimes felt to be actual, experienced realities but nevertheless not scientific truths. The ground upon which you stand and walk feels safe and stable, until it suddenly opens up as during an earthquake, collapses, and tears down all your familiar surroundings. Ghosts are dismissed as superstition, but an encounter with them can nonetheless be felt. Darkness is empty but at the same time saturated. And if we stumble about in the dark, perhaps we need organs other than eyes to make sense of it? I want to give these thoughts a visual and physical manifestation.

I am interested in the inner and the outer, in how they merge and how their boundaries can shift or disappear. Darkness and the unknown once were part of people’s everyday lives. The figures of trolls, fairies, and other supernatural beings arose from people’s anxieties and fears related to the dark.

I want to merge the physical world and its interpretations. Though our everyday life is more distanced from nature than before and we now have technological aids to brighten up dark winter nights, age-old Norwegian myths and legends surrounding nature still maintain their appeal. Darkness is often associated with danger, with things you can’t control, or with something evil. The deadly Norwegian waterbeing nøkken lurked beneath the surface of tarns and ponds, while its oceanic equivalent, the undead draugen, hid away off the coast, waiting ominously to ensnare unlucky seafarers. These creatures, and also trolls and ghosts, still have their purpose as metaphors and they evoke both actual phenomena and emotions. A number of artists have explored such themes, such as Theodor Kittelsen more than a century ago and contemporary artists such as Tori Wrånes, Klara Kristalova, and Ingrid Torvund. Darkness is interesting because it makes our eyes redundant, and if you are ensnared in darkness and deprived of your senses, sooner or later you will begin to hallucinate. In the dark, superstitions start to flourish. Everything can be possible in the dark. Even if we don’t believe in these hallucinations, they nevertheless affect our feelings and actions. A category of fear we cannot escape is fear of the unknown, the unnamed. The growing darkness of the evening both intensifies and weakens the senses, allowing the imagination to roam freely. As the darkness grows denser, it can bring with it an
Eli Maria Lundgaard
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increasing fear, which, no matter how many words they have, people are unable to explain.

Darkness can be overwhelming and may hide unknown presences. By interpreting nature and its contents, people try to master it. Nature is disorganised, and we want to put it in order. With their secret tricks and arcane knowledge, trolls live both in nature and in us, as a counterpoint to the cultured.5

Let us return to the idea of categorisation, to early modern science and its attempts to sort through and explain our natural surroundings. Everything was expected to become part of a system. Maps are one example of such systems, and in 1539 the Swedish clergyman and historian Olaus Magnus drew his renowned Carta Marina, a map of the Nordic nations and their surrounding oceans. While such maps may resemble maps we have today, they are also full of outlandish creatures and animals, like terrifying sea monsters hidden in the water. Each monster has its own story, which describes events or sightings that have taken place. These creatures were of course man-made explanations for unfamiliar phenomena occurring in familiar circumstances.

Two centuries later, Carl Linnaeus invented the modern biological classification of plants and animals. The old monsters could subsequently be named and converted into crocodiles and rhinoceroses, and as this scientific vocabulary gradually increased, the old monsters died out—but only for new monsters to establish themselves in new places. Throughout history, monsters have changed their appearance and assumed whatever new shapes are needed. Today’s monsters often represent a deviation of some kind, something abnormal; they are figments of the imagination living in a borderland. To try to fill the unknown, when the mind imagines and creates something on its own, can lead to paranoia and anxiety, and thus create a new monster, which is not some strange being, but actually ourselves.

If we travel far enough, we will find something strange. From once being conceived as physical entities, as in the Carta Marina, monsters have gradually changed shape and become internalised. Today, monsters are something more human, a dark and unknown side of our thoughts and actions. Our subconscious is perhaps the most unknown continent today.

In literary genres such as science fiction and horror, we encounter unknown worlds and creatures. Werewolves, vampires, and other figures—or frequently a child, the very symbol of innocence—reveal themselves to be demons concealed behind a civilised mask. These stories come from inside us; they are images that represent and symbolise abstract thoughts and fears from the past, the present, and the future.

The differences between an actual occurrence or event and our individual, superstitious thoughts have created not only monsters but also rumours, myths, and folk tales. Both the sea monster of Loch Ness and the yetis of the Himalayas are explanations for old questions. Legends of such beings are spread through stories, which in this way become established in the collective consciousness. These are allegories for something that is very much a reality.

One well-known example of this is the novel Frankenstein (1818), written by Mary Shelley, in which the aspiring scientist Victor Frankenstein creates a monster by reanimating a corpse, which he then loses control of. This creature originated from Frankenstein’s intellect and imagination. At the time the novel is set, during the Industrial Revolution, the monster Frankenstein being brought to life represented a future possibility, in the same way that technologies we can only imagine today might become real sometime in the future.

Another allegory where an idea is mutated into a physical, flesh-and-blood figure is found in the description of Fama, the goddess of rumour, in Virgil’s The Aeneid. Here, rumours and gossip spread around town and take the shape of a living creature:

Rumour raced at once through Libya’s great cities, Rumour, compared with whom no other is as swift. She flourishes by speed and gains strength as she goes: first limited by fear, she soon reaches into the sky, walks on the ground, and hides her head in the clouds. Earth, incited to anger against the gods, so they say, bore her last, a monster, vast and terrible, fleet-winged and swift-footed, sister to Coeus and Enceladus, who for every feather on her body has as many watchful eyes below (marvellous to tell), as many tongues speaking, as many listening ears. She flies, screeching, by night through the shadows between earth and sky, never closing her eyelids in sweet sleep: by day she sits on guard on tall roof-tops or high towers, and scares great cities, as tenacious of lies and evil, as she is messenger of truth. Now in delight she filled the ears of the nations with endless gossip, singing fact and fiction alike. ...6

In Sorting Things Out, the informatics scholar Geoffrey Bowker and the sociologist Susan Leigh Star see monsters as entities created when an object is unnatural or cannot be explained. This is an entity that exists in a grey area and though encapsulated in a single form, embodies several things at the same time. It is consequently impossible to place within a known category; it is a hybrid. This condition can also be found outside fantasy worlds and often relates to the way people identify themselves with various groups and cultures. What is normal for one person may be perceived as strange and even wrong by someone else. Something that seems normal in the dominant community will frequently exclude those who don’t fit into this often narrow category. This may say more about our society and its customs than the object in question.7
When I saw Pierre Huyghe’s work *Untitled (Human Mask)* (2014), I was fascinated by its uncanny yet thrilling presentation of the remains of a Japanese landscape, virtually abandoned after the 2011 tsunami and the subsequent nuclear disaster in Fukushima. We see a chimpanzee wearing a theatre mask and a wig inside an empty restaurant. The chimpanzee is running around, listening to sounds, stirring the window. It has been trained to carry out human tasks, and it does so in the video. This makes it seem more human than an ape normally is. And though apes bear a similarity with humans, this particular ape resembles a human just a little too much. It is neither an ape nor a human; it is a mix of both. Huyghe often uses animals in his works, including alongside the ape in *Untitled (Human Mask)*, a dog named Human, who has a pink leg, and a reclining female statue whose head is a colony of bees in *Untitled*, 2011–12 and peacocks and sea animals in *After A Life Ahead*, 2017.

To us, animals are strange creatures. They are like humans, but still different. They are something we can compare ourselves with. They fascinate us because they resemble us, but still we can never fully understand them. In real life we use them as pets and for carrying out work, and also as metaphors, in images, and for decoration. Animals have been depicted by a number of artists, both past and present, from the cave drawings in the French areas of Lascaux and Chauvet, to Huyghe’s work, to the spiders of Louise Bourgeois, to the parrots in *The Unheimlich*, or the

Existing through disappearing.

When the body changes,
even more than during puberty.
When the body dissolves,
and blends with the surroundings.

Leftovers and ribs and livers and souls.
Remnants of old bodies
crawl into your body.
Enter your lungs and your brain and your eyes.

Abjection is a state of ambiguity. It occurs when the boundary between the inside and the outside of an individual collapses. It is as though one’s skin becomes translucent, turning into a porous container and something that suddenly cannot be distinguished from its surroundings. Abjection is where meaning collapses and so is something that exists outside the symbolic and linguistic orders. This is a dissolution that disrupts identity, order, and systems, which do not respect boundaries, positions, and rules. The abject reveals the fragility of the rules and the order of things.

In my practice I explore the ways in which language is structured to conceal something that is either missing or wrong—the indescribable, the unfathomable. Language is something in between or outside subjectivity. It stems from structures outside the subject, but structures that the subject in turn can open up or tear down. By writing something down, one is already in a dialogue with something outside oneself. Through narration, the subject meets the object. The subject disappears into the object. The object is influenced and changed by the subject.

Language may also be an ambiguous abjection. Distortions seeping out from the unknown, the indescribable, take advantage of the uncertainty of language, disrupt the dominant order, and break down the established symbols. Apart from language, do we have other tools or systems to implement in order to understand something? In such distortions as mentioned above, the subject’s position becomes more unclear. Defined truth is nothing more than symbols and language, but with language one can make compromises, discuss, and thus distort this truth. This, for instance, happens in hallucinations. Abjection can be seen as a borderline state of mind. There is something at the intersection between subject and object that evokes disassociation, depersonalisation, derealisation, and out-of-body experiences. The rational system breaks down if we can’t use words to reason with.

The monster hides inside the invisible body, haunting someone, emerging in moments of uncertainty and doubt.

What Sigmund Freud called the *unheimlich*, or the uncanny, is something that is both old and familiar even if it may feel new and strange. It is something already established in the mind as a latent, concealed force that has nevertheless come to light and become visible—an intellectual uncertainty, a feeling, or a kind of shared reality that slowly but surely is invaded by tiny hints of what is being suppressed. This is similar to the development in horror films: the supernatural or eerie elements emerge slowly so that both the protagonists and the viewers can normalise them. Filmmakers, artists, and writers are all interested in how the audience experiences their work, and in the essay “Psycho-oLOGY 101: Incipient Madness in the Weird Tales of Robert Bloch,” Paul Shovlin describes how some authors seek to get inside the head of a mentally disturbed individual, similar to how they may try to get inside the head of a reader. This
Travellers, 2018. Ceramics, synthetic fur and sound, 12 sculptures, dimensions variable. Eli Maria Lundgaard

yyyyyyyyaaah OOOuuuOOOO tttt mmmm, 2018. Wood and synthetic fur, 100 x 100 x 60 cm. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM2 Gallery, Malmö, 2018. Eli Maria Lundgaard
suggests that the author’s imagination, the reader’s imagination, and the mental state of a psychotic character can merge into one, and thus shows the difficulty of distinguishing the inside from the outside. The borders between the subject and their surroundings are broken down and shifted. It is not enough that we can see a fictional character as being of an unsound mind, or that we question the author’s mental state, but that the author may make their readers question the world around them and maybe even doubt themselves and their own rationality. What is scary about this is not in what way the real world has influenced the work, but how the work gives us insight into the real world—into how much we don’t know about others, about ourselves, into how psychology is of little help in understanding it all, and into the difficulty of deciding what or who we should believe in.15

Everything contains its own beginning and end.

Where do I end? Where do you begin?16

Because we usually are raised to trust facts, they are more manipulative than fiction, and because fiction shows what reality is not, in this way it also shows what reality actually is. Text and images charge and impact each other, but they may also undermine and cast doubt upon each other. Language is used for describing and explaining, but though language defines and separates, it can also confuse and manipulate. It can be foreign but at the same time familiar.

The films and television shows of David Lynch have always interested me. Twin Peaks (1990–91 and 2017) takes place in a small American town beset by bizarre and supernatural events. It begins with a murder, when the body of Laura Palmer is found at the water’s edge, and develops during the course of the investigation, when more and more inexplicable and illogical situations arise. All the explanations of these events hail from a kind of narrative challenges the audience to make up their stories, and the locations are varied: Las Vegas and the lumber town of Twin Peaks in the Pacific Northwest, but also other sites that seemingly exist somewhere between dreams and nightmares. Enigmatic and incomprehensible, the narrative challenges the audience to make up their own minds about what they are seeing, and it becomes our job to connect the inscrutable scenes, fragments, and symbols, one way or another. The series provides no answers, only a distorted, multiperspective narrative. In this way, Lynch uses fiction to question the supposed “real” world. Everything has an explanation, but perhaps not an explanation we know, which again inspires speculation.

An enclosed container where animals and plants are kept for observation and research is called a vivarium. Here snakes, spiders, and other poisonous and fanged beasts may be placed, making it a place full of life and danger. In his short essay “The Paradox of the Phasmid,” Georges Didi-Huberman describes how phasmids can be experienced in such a vivarium:

So what is a phasmid? An insect, undoubtedly. Where does its name come from? From phasma, undoubtedly, which simultaneously means apparition, a sign from the gods, a prodigious or even monstrous phenomenon; and also simulacrum, an omen, in a word. What does it feed on? This forest, undoubtedly, whose form it has taken on, whose matter it will soon take in. For the phasmid is not content to imitate a certain aspect of its environment, like color for example, as so many other animals are. The phasmid makes its own body into the scenery which hides it, by incorporating the scenery where it was born. The phasmid is that which it eats and that in which it lives. It is branch, bine, bough, bush. It is bark and tree, thorn, stem and rhizome. I quickly realized that the rotten leaves turning brown in the second case were also living phasmids. Because all of it, all over, was quivering very slowly, as in a bad dream.17

The boundary between the inside and the outside of a vivarium may be nearly invisible, and the glass walls can be broken so the creatures inside are released. Viewers on the outside peering in usually know there are living animals on the inside, but because of the phasmids’ camouflage, one can be fooled. We try to see the insect, but may suddenly realise that it’s actually the surroundings we’re seeing, or vice versa, the surroundings we’re studying suddenly turn out to be living creatures. Like in a horror film, we may no longer trust our own rationality, and we are unable to distinguish one thing from another.

I work through metaphors and associations and usually choose a certain phenomenon, object, or action, for which I subsequently seek to find as many associations and connotations as possible. I often begin with a text where I note down different ways to represent an idea through something else and then link all these associations together to a larger whole, and from there one thing leads to another. In my video works, the text often is read out loud as a voiceover. This text apparently describes inner processes, but at the same time talks about outer events and phenomena. I approach my sculptures in a similar way: picking different elements from various places, combining them as an assemblage, and in this way something new may be created. The outcome often visually appears to be more undefined or abstract than familiar. In my works the result is usually that I erase what I originally started out with and am left with a description of something new, something that is more unclear, indistinct, or ambiguous.
A fantasy is often rooted in the existing world and opens up different concepts and new rhetoric. Serious thoughts are often conveyed through metaphors. They can be present in things you cannot say or explain and are able to break down boundaries and definitions. They may describe imaginary ideas and nonexistent events, but because of the language, they can merge with what is real in the same way that stories and fairy tales describe actual psychological spaces.

In Eija-Liisa Ahtila’s video work The House (2002), we meet a woman going about her business in a house and its surroundings: she drives a car in the rain, uses a sewing machine, floats in the air between the pine trees, and hangs up textiles in front of the house’s windows. The video depicts the woman’s inner thoughts, something conveying a sense of isolation and alienation. Here, Ahtila focuses on the individual’s identity, on how the self and the body relate to the outside world. She examines both how an individual, subjective experience is affected by one’s surroundings, which factors underlie the construction of personal identity, and how the subject and the object may be one and the same. The boundary between one’s inner, personal thoughts and feelings and the outer world is sometimes vague, and such an unclear boundary may lead to an experience of delusion and alienation. In such situations, the individual’s imagination may be all they can hold on to, something that may also be observed in Ahtila’s video. As she explains, “The film brings out similarities between the ordered mind and the disordered mind: the ways in which the mind works and creates solutions in unusual situations.”

A person’s mind may collapse and psychosis take over, and situations fraught with uncertainty may instead be interpreted as something obvious. One may begin to mistrust everything. The trees in the forest become insignificant, and the darkness in the background is what you see; you no longer listen to what people say, only to what they don’t say. Everything you cannot see suddenly becomes terribly important. The background becomes just as important as what stands in front. This can lead to doubt and an inability to understand what is happening around you, though you won’t necessarily understand what is wrong. Something changes and become something else; the person sleeping and snoring in the same room as you may turn into someone who’s only pretending to sleep and is secretly spying on you. Symbols and hidden meanings can be found in every situation. If you focus on something long enough, you can find something concealed everywhere. Partitions become erased. A paranoid person will always be their own subject. A stranger’s shoes, clothes, or voice may make a stranger appear familiar or disguised, and the same may happen to places and objects. This process may also go the other way, when something familiar becomes something foreign: the sun may be a surveillance camera, or your surroundings may be experienced as a stage, with the events perceived as being directed by someone. People with schizophrenia may hear internal voices. These voices can be perceived as external, even sacred or divine. They may give instructions or make threats. A person with schizophrenia may also feel that other people can hear their thoughts, as though the surroundings become transparent and make what is inside visible. The voices inside one’s head may reflect or mirror, as if a voice from the next room is constantly commenting on one’s actions: “Now he’s putting a cigarette in his mouth, now he’s lighting it, now he’s sitting down, now he’s …” Objects may change their meaning: a sign that says “Newcastle” may be understood as meaning “no” because they both begin with an “n”; since “no” is a negative word, this may further imply that something bad is about to happen. In these processes, anything may be connected to anything else, without it necessarily being possible to explain why. I mention these descriptions of schizophrenia because this reasoning and manner of thinking is also something I believe other people might sometimes recognise in themselves. What separates the healthy person from the sick one is the ability to identify one’s thoughts as one’s own. A person with schizophrenia may experience their thoughts as alienating and distanced from their own mind and their own body.

Schizophrenic thoughts often seem unorganised and unsystematic. They produce information and create new links. Words and objects may be something else or be several things at once. For Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, things and bodies are not so much “beings” as “becomings.” The ego may disappear and your head is now also the other person’s head; the self is constantly fluctuating and influenced by surroundings. Perception changes; it is an unorganised body, either in complete chaos or one where everything is connected to everything else. For people with schizophrenia, all information may become equally important, and when creating meanings and symbols, different parts and things can be put together like in an assemblage. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that an experience of schizophrenia is not necessarily the sign of an unsound mind. Social construction and encoding organise bodies and objects just as they do symbols and words. As such, schizophrenia can deconstruct powerful representations and symbols.

A new, unknown monster, consisting of human thoughts and emotions, may often seem strange and frightening, but it may also stimulate curiosity. The protagonists in horror films will usually walk alone into the dark room behind the old squeaky door—and viewers will often continue to watch the film. This curiosity of our psychological, inner, but still very real life is something that motivates me and my work.

I am interested in things that are difficult to define or are as yet undefined, and I want to destabilise things that are apparently fully explained and certain. I want to create a kind of parallel world to
our reality that we may use to compare, to add something new, and to question things that are already resolved and understood. I try to achieve this by implementing an alternative reasoning to common logic, by examining something to which I don’t know the answer, and by trying to eliminate my pre-existing knowledge or understanding. Instead of finding logical explanations and definitions, I wish to create something that may be used for fantasising, imagining, something that makes us think, that encompasses and includes things that are different, things that replace the old and familiar with something new and foreign.

The part of me which is not human says: I can show you this. Afterwards I can tell you that it isn’t just sand and swamps. It is something else.

The part of me which is an earthworm says: Some bodies are just dust, and have always been so.

The dead parts of me say: We dreamt a portion of the earth had disappeared.

A different part of me says: Find what is hidden and covered.

And yet another part of me says: I have one leg which is too long and one which is too short. My hair is wet and sticky. It has been too long under the ground. I am too dissolved to work and too liquid to think.

My subconscious is just noise and says: yyyyyyyaaaaah OOOuuuOOO tttt mmmmm.\textsuperscript{21}


Lundgaard, *Disappearing Act*.


Lundgaard, *Disappearing Act*.


**Further References**


Emil Palmsköld

A Brief History of Time
Pinpointing the beginning would be difficult, but I think it was the following reassuring statement, boldly stated to my BA class by a representative from the Department of Photography of the beginning of my studies: “You are all photographers; there’s no need for a studio. You belong out on the streets. Go outside and hunt for images. That is what you are supposed to do!”

Are you a photographer? Is your experience reminiscent of mine? The visual cortex seems linked to a mechanical body and your lens of choice. Everything outside the actual image circle gets blurred and stuck in the periphery. Abstraction dilutes vision, judgment, and the mind. From the moment the alien body has attached itself, a gradual destabilisation in perception occurs and a loss of reality begins.

Your mission becomes that of a numb collector, Click-Clack-Kodak. Memories you won’t remember because the only thing that remains is the sound of the shutter and the winding of the film, latent images stuck in limbo. I have experienced and lived it; four years of specific studies in photography led me to it. The faded lines of a rangefinder appear, at times, as a layer on top of my right eye, often while squinting. Beside ophthalmic issues, there is conditioned behaviour. For example, my mind recalls parameters relating to focal length and depth of field to calculate distance, like an operator deciding which lens to use.

Why did I stop painting and eight years later embrace photography? It might be a chance occurrence. During my hiatus, I did not feel a need for artistic expression. When I met and kept the first apparatus, its ability to enchant and confine seemed natural, and I accepted its terms without critical thought.

Photographing for record-keeping eventually leads to a state of subjugation. Three steps follow: dismissal, criticism, and a “fight” to resist the phenomena. We tend to not admit this, causing a loop of denial. Critical writings, primarily based on technical abstractions inherent in the photographic medium, supported the work that I made then. I regarded the works as an explicit critique of photography by having subject matter that refers to the medium in question often accompanied by descriptive titles. Now they manifest resistance to pursuing creativity and experimentation, and thereby reduce possibilities.1

Due to unknown reasons, I continued producing experimental works, seemingly unexplainable to me. Because of this, I decided to view them as unfinished, justifying non-mediation and a place in the archive of my works. I wrote concepts, made several books printed in a unique edition of one, and created manuals for (at the time) hypothetical autonomous cameras.

I had almost forgotten them until an essential shift: beginning studies for a Master of Fine Arts. Material slowly began to emerge through a rift in the archives. Discussing the content and possible outcomes turned a parallel activity into my primary practice.

The mechanical eye remained prevalent, obstructing efforts and afflicting thoughts; a radical change was necessary to break the mould. A need to separate the medium from years of conditioning had grown, and remapping the possible paths to photography became necessary.

Event Horizon
Three artists and their oeuvres, Hardy Strid, La Monte Young, and Masami Akita (a.k.a. Merzbow), have between them a variety of expressions and, by extension, movements through individual connections. The totality led to a lineage connecting them to my practice. My mind cleared, as did my practice, once the fog of the medium faded. Resulting in a combination of Fluxus, Bauhaus Situationniste, minimalism, serialism, and improvisation performed or composed.

Hardy Strid was part of my extended family, due to a long friendship with my grandmother that continued on with my father. He influenced me at a very young age, by showing in his effortless and ingenious ways that pursuing art was as self-evident as anything else.

One example of a creative outburst that I recall distinctly: he was mounting a pole in his garden, and at its maximum height he tied a long rubber rope and
proceeded to attach a tennis ball at the end of it so that one could play tennis with or against oneself.

His presentation of how to accurately use the construction included wearing slippers, his hair reaching an unwieldy peak, running in circles, anticipating the recoil while continually laughing.

Now I think of it like a small happening in private, inventing a game with no rules and one player. However, it still occurred among friends and family, so somewhat of a social anti-happening.

When I look at Strid’s complete body of work, I see his fearless attitude regarding creativity, as he explored painting and printing to such extents. His curiosity, playfulness, and sensible approach as well as the multitude of mediums used and abused intrigues me.

An example is the painting *Two Courtesans* (1978), which is not a single work, but a moment in the process of works in different media: silkscreen, acrylic painting, collage, line drawing, and mixed media. The series of works revolves around the original work of that name by the Italian painter Carpaccio, a work Strid had never seen in real life (until later) and only knew through a black-and-white reproduction.

A returning point of attack is the breaking down of different shapes, which are treated as flat, like pieces of a puzzle. New objects reinserted into the picture, intentionally ill fitting. Objects or parts of objects in the original work removed, leaving gaps and holes in the composition. In the actual final painting by Strid, which can be considered the main work in the series, the women seem dehumanised, and their limbs no longer rest on any architectural surroundings. They are like cardboard figures, stuck in a theatrical setting together with a more lifelike-looking dwarf and two dogs.

Akita and Intermedia

By coincidence, the word “composition” led me to rediscover earlier works in need of elaboration and explanation, while reflecting on and comparing the range of associations and meanings inherent in the word itself. The conclusion at first emerged as a syntax error, because my associations did not refer to sensations relating to the retina. Instead, a sharp and immediate association with “composition” echoed in my head—it signified audible frequencies, noise, intensity, energy, and sonic journeys.

Fixed and at times lingering in my memory is a performance by Merzbow I attended when he was on a rare visit to Sweden. Sitting in a pitch-black concert hall and experiencing the shift from total silence to a wall of sonic pressure so dense it felt like crossing the event horizon; reaching the equivalent of a singularity, it cleansed my head of unnecessary noise.

I became focused and receptive because the composition lacked almost every characteristic ascribed to music in general: no beat, rhythm, tempo, or vocals. So why describe it as such? Was it not an improvised performance I had seen?

Before the laptop evolved to a point where Akita could no longer resist using them because of practical reasons, he used to build monumental self-invented instruments, frequency modulators, distortion pedals, tape loops, and a wide variety of objects used with the equipment. He usually incorporated screenings of experimental films during his energetic performances.

Akita’s pre-laptop phase shares similarities with early performances by Boyd Rice. Operating under the moniker NON, Rice released a 7” in 1975, titled *Play at any speed!*, with two to four holes punched in it to allow for “multi-axial rotation,” which challenges listeners to make a choice, as there are multiple ways to perceive the record.

Rice performed live using volumes right at the threshold of pain accompanied by extreme strobes pointed directly at the audience, placed just out of their reach. The excessive volumes would reach 120–130 dB, approximately the same level used earlier by La Monte Young in his early performances.

Merzbow’s innovation in sonic assemblages, performance, and use of aesthetics rooted in underground culture; Strid, as one of the initiators of the Bauhaus Situationniste, and his embracing attitude toward means of expression and his presence as extended family; and Young’s work, past and present, coupled with his early Fluxus involvement, for me acted as catalysts for creativity, art, and my decision to pursue it. These influences were and remain the point of departure leading to an extensive and experimental approach in my methods.

The Speed of Art

Common in the photographic community is an irrational evaluation based on the number of exposures a photographer makes. To me, the purpose of this is confusing and only serves to create mythology or romanticism connected to a photographer. Presenting it as a body of work would make the argument that x number of rolls results in y (a series or book, for example), while binary relations tend to reach absurd levels.

However, this is not a valid argument. It implies something else, reducing the work to a pile of negatives. It occurs both in a historical context and in contemporary photography. It is implicit in Henri Cartier-Bresson’s famous statement: “Your first 10,000 photographs are your worst.” But my work has more of a connection to a quotation by Robert Filliou: “I started to think of something I called The Speed of Art. I proposed that we might look at art as a function
of life plus fiction, with fiction tending towards zero. So that if art is a function, I can get perhaps the first derivative of a function, and the first derivative of a function mathematically, is the speed.

What a Place, Unfortunately, I Have to Keep the Pace, Continuing in Haste, What a Disgrace

I developed a concept based on a set of parameters, time and space (separated as in classical mechanics), after I read “The Speed of Art,” a 1978 article by Filliou based on one of his video works. The equation contains a set time and a limited area predicting an outcome of uncertain mass based on the variable \( P \), as in “photographer.”

I have been performing this concept at regular intervals for over a year, by establishing it as a routine. Making it into a project allowed it to grow continuously, as much as possible; this project is titled WHAT A PLACE, UNFORTUNATELY, I HAVE TO KEEP THE PACE, CONTINUING IN HASTE, WHAT A DISGRACE (2015–). An example equation is: [approx. 10 minutes] + [specification of the exact area] = \( x \) (number of 35 mm rolls). These are the rules I adhere to while simultaneously and vigorously shuffling between three compact cameras. I cannot pause due to automatic rewinds and reloads stealing time. The mission for each duration is to expose as many rolls as possible.

Linked to past relations to the medium in question, acting on what I thought was impossible; playing the roles of the apparatus and the operator remains a relief every session. Strictly adhering to rules turns me into a reliable and dedicated machine, and the use of multiple cameras adds a performative aspect that intrigues me.

Besides, I embrace elements of uncertainty; this work is reliant on and prone to chance because the photographer, my persona, has a goal of taking as many images as possible (according to the project).

Time is a factor in the equation, but what does it signify? There is no in-between, only a slice of time that happened to stick to the emulsion. One cannot place it outside the context of photography due to the use of grainy black-and-white film, the presentation of contact sheets, and the roots of the concept.

The performative parts and the creation of a system governed by an abstract and fragmented concept of time, taking into consideration the Situationist concept of the dérive, describing a drifting stage, consciously letting go and flowing through the currents and contours of a city. The boundaries of photography begin to fade.

I find that in my work there is a connection between La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela’s installation Dream House (1993). Commissioned by Dia Art Foundation, the sixth iteration has been reinstated in its original setting, above Young and Zazeela’s apartment in a townhouse located at 275 Church Street, New York. Consisting of sound and light, it creates a time installation using continuous frequencies that affect each other.

Visitors cause measurable changes, both visible and audible, through their movement. The subsequent physical or vocal reactions of the visitors act as functions to add data. Akin to a doppler shift, it occurs while spectators are interacting with the surroundings.

La Monte Young: Principles

During 1961–63, after the German and Swedish artists were excommunicated from the Situationist International, the Scandinavian section, accompanied by Gruppe SPUR, relocated to Sweden and began a ten-year rebellion. That same year, La Monte Young became affiliated with Fluxus, when he was asked by George Maciunas, the founder of Fluxus, to edit the group’s first anthology.

Young did so by using methods and materials later considered to be of a DIY aesthetic commonly associated with Fluxus. It was self-published in 1963, presenting some of Young’s early works as well as most of the first wave of artists associated with Fluxus. It is titled: An Anthology of chance operations concept art anti-art indeterminacy improvisation meaningless work natural disasters plans of action stories diagrams Music poetry essays dance constructions mathematics compositions.

Fluxus compositions made during the 1960s were often discussed and collaborated on with John Cage, as the artists shared in exploring the limits of music and composition. They corresponded by mail and sent instructions (compositions), and the recipient performed the composition and responded with a letter describing reactions among the audience.

Young’s work “Compositions” (1960) provides some insight, as it consists of written instructions, like the collaborations with Cage. It comprises a bundle of cards, each with instructions to perform one action that examines both music and art, as the following examples show:

#4 Turn off all the lights for the announced duration.

When the lights are turned back on, the announcer may tell the audience that their activities have been the composition, although this is not at all necessary

#10 (“To Bob Morris”) Draw a straight line and follow it.
Young has stated that instruction #10 has remained a directive guiding his life and work ever since he wrote it.10

Years of academic achievement taught Young to “follow the rules,” and every piece he has executed or performed has had rules set in stone. They are not necessarily aurally perceivable, as he combines classical, electronic, and Indian traditional composition on a highly technical level. Here Young describes the rules governing “dream music”:

The specific rules that governed the performance of my music, including the sections of The Tortoise, His Dreams and Journeys participated in by Tony Conrad and John Cale, create a sound characterized by the predominance of musical intervals whose numerators and denominators in just intonation are factorable by the primes 7, 3, and 2, and selected higher primes, especially 31, and by the exclusion of intervals whose numerators and denominators are factorable by the prime 5. If we represent intervals with numerators and denominators factorable by the primes 7, 3, and 2 in conventional music notation and terminology, we obtain intervals that include various sized major and minor sevenths (with emphasis on the septimally derived blues minor seventh in my compositions such as B Flat Dorian Blues, Early Tuesday Morning Blues, and The Tortoise), perfect fifths, octaves, unisons and their inversions, various sized major and minor seconds, and perfect fourths.11

It is worth mentioning that Young invented minimalism, but he calls it “dream music.” In contemporary discourse, his works are regarded as the first instance of pure minimalism in music and in composition during modern times.

There is not much published by Young, as he is not interested in temporal popularity. A few recordings, a couple of essays and written compositions remain, the latter in a manner that only Young can decipher.12

To put Young’s influence on his contemporaries in a broader perspective, Andy Warhol began working on his films after attending a concert by the Theatre of Eternal Music, a trio consisting of Young, John Cale, and Tony Conrad. The lineup changed from time to time, but that very night, when Warhol heard and saw them, Cale was present. The same John Cale that together with Lou Reed later formed the Velvet Underground, with Warhol as their manager. Cale later accredited the Velvet Underground’s success and the unique soundscape the band is known for to his time with Young.

In a way, my process relates to Young’s methodology on some levels, such as using chance, creativity, structure, and incoherent methods. Young is a classically trained composer, aware of the rigid rules of composition, yet consistently manages to stay within the framework while at the same time expanding it.

I have a similar approach to photography, applying technical ability as well as knowledge and awareness of rules and structures. Twisting and turning them, allowing room for possibilities.

An Idea about Substance

A manual, made several years ago, never with the intention of it being shown in any context whatsoever. Using a Fluxus-like approach to material and the making of art, by using a regular printer, paper, and cord.

The manual, AN IDEA ABOUT SUBSTANCE (2013), consisting of one copy, was created without planning over one night and has since been in my archive. Cohesive and concise, it features hand-drawn illustrations and cut-and-paste imagery sourced from the internet.

I have now decided to realise the project after the rediscovery of the manual, and to present it as a functioning sculpture or disassembled kit, alongside the manual. To prospective users, the manual states the following instructions [sic]:

AN IDEA ABOUT SUBSTANCE (cover page)
NECESSARY ITEMS (page 1)
1. Fully automatic compact camera with a plastic body
2. Battery driven clock motor
3. 1x hour hand cut to appropriate size.
4. Screws for mounting item 3
5. Glue
6. 2 x Magnets
7. A flexible rubber finger.
INSTRUCTIONS (page 2)
8. Use the glue to mount the clock motor, under the viewfinder approximately in the middle of the film door.
9. Apply the hour hand to the clock motor using the provided screws.
10. Glue one of the magnets to the shutter button
INSTRUCTIONS (page 3)
11. Bring out the hollow rubber finger and use glue to attach the other magnet inside it.
12. Measure the distance needed for allowing the trigger to move, freely so the magnets interact but the trigger does not catch on the camera body.
13. When the correct distance is established, cut the hour hand and glue the finger.
INSTRUCTIONS (page 4)
14. Find some way to randomize the movements of the motor.
15. Put it on a tripod, throw it in a ditch, a taxi or whatever.
16. Let it create a story. Present the images uncropped and in order.
**Draw a Line and Follow It**

Andy Warhol attended a concert by La Monte Young in 1962 and heard and saw first-hand Young’s use of prolonged notes, a durational performance with no definite beginning or end. It left a deep impression on Warhol, who not long after made his seminal film *Empire* (1964), an eight-hour film of a fixed viewpoint of the Empire State Building. He applied the same strategy of Young’s durational performance to filmmaking. With no narrative or characters, something very audacious at the time, Warhol reduced the experience of cinema to the passing of time.

For the film Warhol collaborated with Jonas Mekas, the avant-garde filmmaker, who gave the idea to shoot the Empire State Building to Warhol. Mekas was the cinematographer on the shoot and framed the now iconic shot of the building to Warhol’s approval, making this static shot the de facto framing for most durational films.

Mekas describes how during the first screening of *Empire*, there was lots of fidgeting and uneasiness initially, and then slowly it quieted down and the viewing became a meditative activity, only to be broken when the light changed on the building, and then lapsing back into a meditative state again.

Audience members could go in and out of the screening, sit for a stretch of time and leave again, come back, and so forth. No one was forced to watch all eight hours of *Empire*. This mode of seeing became the blueprint for durational films and video.

After seeing *Empire* and being inspired by Young’s performances for so long, I had no choice but to move outside the realm of still photography and to try and make a durational video. I would take into consideration Young’s use of prolonged notes, the ideas prevalent in Warhol’s films, and duration and the creation of meditative space, where everything and nothing can happen.

My film **DRAW A LINE AND FOLLOW IT** (2018) is a homage to Young’s installation as well as to Warhol’s film. It draws on the manifold photographs inside Dream House, all depicting the very same windows and light sources, and borrows the length of *Empire*. It also echoes similarities shared by *Empire* and Young’s experiments, such as exposure to prolonged frequencies and patterns of sound.

The video has a fixed viewpoint overlooking a living room with a set of windows and various items. Long shots of stillness are interrupted now and then by the flickering of passing cars, dusk turns to night to dawn, more passing cars, and then stillness returns. It is accompanied by a soundtrack of randomly generated sounds, made by using a pedal that employs sounds from record players spinning at the end of a record, emulating the dust and scratches that tell us to go to the turntable and lift the arm.

The almost-static and randomised sound began with remnants of actual dust, stored and run through a module emulating the very same sound. What remains is dust run through three outputs and a monitor. Added are the sonic properties of the actual room the recording took place in. What we hear is something both familiar and strange, a specific sound that evokes timeless minimalist music. Together, the film and the soundtrack are approximately twenty-four-hours long.

The passing of time has always been at the crux of my photographic works. However, **DRAW A LINE AND FOLLOW IT** is a nod to artists that have inspired me. I too have experienced chance operation and durational music and, like Warhol, have had an urge to stretch my practice.

**A Reflection on Chance Operations—Order and Disorder**

The idea for **A REFLECTION ON CHANCE OPERATIONS—ORDER AND DISORDER** (2018) crystallised while looking through my archives. I had previously worked with mundane subject matter, photographed in extreme detail. For me it was poking fun at conceptual photography. The title of the series, *Indifference* (2014–15), acts as a reference to Jeff Wall’s essay “Marks of Indifference: Aspects of Photography in, or as, Conceptual Art” (1995) My method was to use a large-format camera and black-and-white film and strictly adhere to the photographer’s book of compositional rules.

There is one photograph in the series that appears differently to me now, depicting the laundry-booking system in the building I lived in at the time. I thought it could not get more ordinary than a laundry-booking system. However, upon close examination, I realised the subject matter was the furthest from banal, its subtext leaping out at me.

Let me explain:

In the modern welfare state that developed in Sweden during the 1960s, the laundry room in apartment complexes stood for a vital symbol regarding the development of society. Every building had one, it was free and for everyone—it was the democratisation of laundry. In these laundry rooms, the tenants could book time for washing, drying, and ironing.

Though the system is still around, much has changed. What was once a site for social harmony is now fraught with conflict. The laundry room’s rigid rules for booking specific time slots have made for contentious spaces that present many Swedes only outlet for negative behaviour. If a person takes up even a few minutes of the booked time of the next person, wet laundry can wind up on the floor, passive-aggressive notes are sometimes left on the booking table, and at times, even a screaming match occurs.
Doing the laundry in Sweden is often riddled with anxiety, with the fear of either being late starting laundry or too late finishing. No one wants a confrontation and a screaming match with an angry and upset neighbour. It is a space where we disregard the facade of politeness our nation is known for, and where fissures form in an otherwise even-tempered society.

Viewing the photograph from the series I made some years ago, I began to see the laundry-booking system, made up of the time-slot board, cylindrical slots, cylinders, and objects standing in for cylinders, as a confined board game, containing order, structure, and chance operations.

This game appeared before me—as I imagine it would have for some Fluxus artists, such as Young. I remember when making the first series, the images had references to German conceptual photography. Now I see a deadpan quality in the photographs’ aesthetics coupled with what most of us know lies within the framework of a Swedish laundry-booking system; in (dis)harmony with the common subject matter, there is a Fluxus-like humour present.

**Conclusion**

Hardy, Akita, and Young shared a similar viewpoint, a firm belief in art. Within that group, a constant restlessness prevailed; all of them wanted or want to expand the notion of art utilising aesthetics, anti-aesthetics, and collaborative works. They sought to disrupt a system and art by embracing chance, similar to how Marcel Duchamp praised the unplanned cracks in *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*, commonly referred to as *The Large Glass* (1923):

> The glass was broken in transit to an exhibition in 1926. How did you feel when it was broken?

Nothing, not much, because I am fatalist enough maybe to take anything as it comes along. And fortunately, a little later, when I looked at the breaks, I loved the breaks. 'Cause it happened to be two glass panes on top of one another, when they broke on the vibration of being transported flat, you see, on a truck. The breaks take a similar direction in the two panes, so when you put them on top on each other, they seem to continue the same breaks, as though I had done it on purpose.

...  

> What do you think now the element of chance in a work of art is? Having tried to control and devise chance to serve your ends, do you think it is something subconsciously that the artist projects into the work?

Yes, because, chance may be unknown to us, in other words, we do not know the results of chance, because we have not got enough brains for that. You see the divine brain, for example, could perfectly say there’s no chance, and I know what’s going to happen. You see we don’t know because were ignorant enough not to be able to detect what chance is going to bring. So it’s a kind of adoration for chance or consideration of chance as an almost religious element too.¹⁵

I feel a connection to the outsider perspective, especially in a photographic context, a setting that has never been right for me. The technique and the history were the only things I needed to be able to move on, but then I was tainted by four years of snapshots and streams of imagery that Wolfgang Tillmans could only imagine. To photograph made me numb. Today I am grateful for having continued, as I have an extensive archive to use when realising projects.

I think about the time when Hardy Strid visited Gothenburg and Gallery 54, of which he was one of the founding members, and provided a reply to the discussion regarding the separable reality of fine arts and photography at my previous school. He smiled and said that when he was involved with running the gallery, there used to be the ongoing “aquarelle versus gouache phalanx” battle. What he meant was that squabbling about non-issues when one can learn from each other is pointless.

Ending this wandering of thoughts with a description of my current surroundings seems appropriate, to be specific, the view from my couch: on the opposite wall to the left hangs a large acrylic by Strid titled *Samtal om konst i New York* (Conversations on art in New York) (1968). To the right hangs the corresponding screenprint, made one year before, titled *Samtal om konst* (Conversations on art) (1967). When Hardy painted the acrylic, he had an exhibition in New York City, and during the visit he stayed with my grandfather, who was born, raised, and lived in Manhattan. Except for the summers of the 1960s and ’70s, my grandfather spent his summers just outside Halmstad, living with my grandmother and father and visiting with Hardy.

> “Around the beginning of the 1970’s, all art brought historicism; I tried to handle it by making Stochastic Paintings / Random Art by using cut-outs randomly distributed on papers, Chance Collages. I did it to create a polarising view, all art was political, but the Random Art series brought the value of uncertainty and ambiguities while completely lacking explicitness.”

—Hardy Strid¹⁶
AN IDEA ABOUT SUBSTANCE, 2018. Functional semi-autonomous camera, MDF-board, Plexiglass, a modified coat hanger (the finger), glue, a programmed and controlled electric motor, running for approximately 90 hours and 30 exposed rolls of film. Emil Palmaköld.
I preferred reading theory like Vilém Flusser’s seminal *A Philosophy for Photography* (first published in 1983) and his ideas about the photographic image as circular and the photographer as a primal hunter, trying to realise as many viewpoints as possible. The arguments stem from phenomenology and communications theory, among others, Henri Van Lier’s work *Philosophy of Photography*, published a year earlier, in French. Unfortunately, Lier’s remained untranslated until 2007. The difference between them: Lier argues from a very technical point of view, how everything in photography is just a step towards abstraction, from lens to chemistry.


Rice began producing noise during the mid-1970s and became known for the crowd control he exerted on his audience, likened to psychological and aural torture. He considered his performances “de-indoctrination rites.” He was also known for the use of homemade instruments, such as a “roto-guitar,” an electric guitar with a fan on it.


The first iteration was to be found in their own apartment, from September 1966 to July 1970. It featured sine waves,

La Monte Young, "Compositions)1960, 7


Joana Pereira

A painting wants to be like a piece of clothing at home. It wants to spread across the floor or over the sofa, as if waiting to be used, tidy in a corner. A painting wants to be elastic, to assume the shape of things, just like covers for furniture.

A painting wants to be everything else besides a painting. It needs to be something else to be a painting.

The history of painting carries a heavy weight of tradition. Yet the complexities of these traditions tend to remain out of sight. There are too many perspectives to be included in just one history. There is the perspective of the painter, of the model, of the spectator, and of the material itself. Painting becomes playful as it enters into the rhythm of daily life. The weight of traditions becomes contaminated.

The Painter
One day when looking out the window of my flat, I noticed a window open in the building opposite mine. Inside the flat across the street, there was a mirror on the wall. In the mirror I could see my image reflected. The reflected image also contained parts of the street, and in the back I could see the open door of my room.

An old painting comes to mind, in which the painter stages himself in the act of painting. The painter is at same time the model and the painter. This *mise en abyme* becomes more complex when the viewer notices the presence of a mirror in the background of the motif. The mirror reveals the subject of the artist’s ongoing painting where we, the spectators, should be reflected. In the background of the picture plane, behind the painter, we can see the rest of the room, maybe the artist’s studio. In the far back, next to the mirror, there is an open door, through which someone is peeking. But the painting is actually a play between two mirrors. There is a larger mirror in front of the painter, beyond the picture plane, making us, the spectators, look into this mirror image. It is in the middle ground that the artist is staged, together with a huge ground that the artist is staged, together with a huge canvas and a group of characters. In the centre of the image, La Infanta appears, gazes and perspectives all around her.1

These intertwined relations between the painter, the model, and the spectator create a constant awareness of the surface of the painting, the space where the painting is hung, and the space where the painting was painted.

While there may be a possible transition in space, things are often lost in the transition of time. There is a time when the painting was made, and there is a time when the spectator perceives it. The positions of the perceiver seem to suggest a constant switching of roles with the changing of the times. On that day looking at myself reflected from across the street, here posed as the real model in the space between the two buildings, I confronted myself with the complexity of presentness, the *now* that ceases to be as soon as it is mentioned.

I heard a story about an American painter who used to go to New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art in the 1960s to look at the paintings from the very same seventeenth-century painter I mentioned above. He wanted to create paintings just as that painter did. But he knew he couldn’t. There were three centuries between the two artists. They lived in different times. The painter wanted to be able to respond to his own time just as the three-centuries-old painter responded to his, but to do that, he couldn’t paint in the same way. So instead he painted stripes. By mimicking the shape of the painting’s frame, the stripes extended...
from the edge to the centre of the canvas. The painting reverberated its own form into itself; it became the frame. At once it also opened itself up to the space where it was hung. Between the stripes, where the canvas appeared still in its raw form, one could maybe find the three-centuries-old painter saying hello.  

The Viewer  
Paintings are constantly triggered by what is behind them. With what can be hidden in their gesture, in their paint, inside the wall, behind the wall, behind their language, their surface, and their materiality.

The metal paintings were organised in groups of four. All had the same composition and size. Blinky Palermo just added one horizontal stripe on the top and another on the bottom. The shape of the surface was vertical but the horizontal stripes compensated for this, to reveal a square. The space of the gallery wall between each metal painting was very precise. The colour accelerated the rhythm. Each of the groups bounced the rhythm back to the other. When viewing the paintings, one couldn’t stop, but rather constantly shifted direction, from left to right, from right to left. Thus, the space between each group of paintings seemed to increase, and this finally slowed down the movement.

In this series of paintings, Palermo placed a hidden structure behind the surface. He wanted the paintings to look as if they were floating in space. It was his wish to continue the sensation he had when he visited the Rothko Chapel in Texas. He said he could spend hours and days there, contemplating the paintings.  

It is from the shadow between the wall and the surface that these spaces attract one’s sight. Looking through them, one wonders what one will find. There, from the edges of the surface, a play of revealing and concealment begins.

In a series of two white monochrome paintings, I used wool textile as canvas. Rather than expanding the canvas on a stretcher, I decided I would let the textile hang freely, suspended from a support structure. Wool is thicker than regular cotton canvas, so it falls straighter. The piece of cloth I used was originally a grey blanket. The size changed when the oil paint was applied, and it also gave the material a different texture. In my practice I often recycle textiles used in domestic spaces. I’m interested in how the monochrome, with its elevated history, can be lowered into the everyday like this. It’s a way to use the painterly traditions of flatness and spatiality. Folds (2016), the title of this piece, was chosen to emphasise the way the textile conceals and reveal. The structures used were round, with the textile folded on top of them. When mounted, the white paintings seemed like extensions of the wall.

The Model  
A painting can be very self-centred. It is obsessed with its own image. If it doesn’t like its body, it will destroy itself before anyone can see it. Paintings can empty themselves and adapt to anything and to any place. In extreme situations, they even become invisible. A painting likes to tease with its visibility and invisibility. Walls have eyes, and a painting knows that. Paintings are messy, chaotic. They leave traces everywhere they go. On the wall, on the floor, through the door, in the chair, on the doorknob, by the window, on the lamp. Everywhere. Paintings sometimes need a private space for themselves.

The plinth, the wall, and the frame also have histories and are not merely the supports where the artworks are supposed to be placed. Like props ready to be used when needed, these elements did not always have an evident place of belonging. It was once believed they should be as invisible as possible. Just like extras on a film set. The plinth, the wall, and the frame were not supposed to interfere with the contemplation of the artwork. They should behave as if both parts and non-parts of the place where they were. On top or in front of these elements, avoiding any contact with the actual place, the artwork preserves its own dimension. In the meantime, later on, the artwork absorbed these structures into itself. And after, by mimicking it through the representation of its shape and material, the structure became the artwork.  

I made a video (Untitled, 2017) of a walking performance in which I presented wearable architectural structures that also functioned as suits. The structures mimicked the infrastructure of exhibition making, for instance, plinths and temporary walls, which move around. To paraphrase and imitate these as artworks is a way to consciously blur the line between art and support. The video was filmed inside an art institution against the backdrop of a labour process rarely shown to the public. During this period, one exhibition was being dismantled and another installed. There are just a few traces of the construction materials to indicate that the performance took place in the period between exhibitions; no artworks from the preceding or the coming exhibition appear in the video. Each one of the suit-structures was foldable, like a piece of clothing waiting to be used. Inside, they had belts to fasten the structure to the person wearing it. The video does not reveal these details; they hide underneath the slow movement of the structures. The slow motion emphasises the weight and the balance of the body carrying each structure. The camera was set in a fixed position to contrast the movement of the performing actors. This also emphasises the video’s tone of being a recorded document rather than a narrative of the structures walking around the space. In the film, the structures never meet each other. They are trying to find their place, somewhere to belong. Some try to blend in with similar structures in
the space, others with parts of the building. I felt the need to emphasise the building; it was also part of the performance. The building is familiar to people who have visited southern Sweden for its peculiar architecture or its exhibitions. Lunds Konsthall was planned and designed in 1956 by the Swedish architect Klas Anshelm. The angles of the video were based on the first photos taken of the building by the architect. Part of the landscape of the city is visible through the windows, which is a very relevant aspect of the building. The windows evolve the space in a very special dense bright light that makes it reverberate as a whole. There are many resemblances to the windows in Constantin Brâncuși’s studio, which, according to some, might have been a source of inspiration for Anshelm.

**The Brushstroke**

There is a rumour that Pina Bausch closed herself off in her home for almost a month until she could move like a centipede. She wanted to be a centipede. Since Bausch lacked the multiple body parts of a centipede, one can’t help but imagine an extension of multiple arms and legs gradually appearing in the flow of the movement, extending through the walls, floor, and windows.

When standing upright for a long time, a body tends to swing from side to side. Little by little, the knees start bending, the legs lose their straight posture, and the back falls forward. For a short while, the whole body is in balance, shifting its weight around itself. Without resisting, the edges twist and bubbles of air start to appear on the surface. But then, more paint is added, and as it soaks it in, the surface gets heavier, the edges untwist, and it begins to fall down.

In the movie *The Complaint of an Empress* (1990), directed by Bausch, it seems that everyone is constantly on the verge of falling. Even the violin music that plays throughout most of the film gives that sensation. In fact, the whole movie seems like a celebration of the unbalanced, of the almost-falling.

There is a sort of fascination in seeing things fall. In slow-motion movement, flipping and turning in the air, and gently falling to the ground. It has to do with the weight of gravity; everything has the potential to fall. I did a series of monochrome paintings with a light lemon-yellow colour. It was a cold colour, intense and vibrant. I liked that it was hard to stare at; against the white wall it became very bright. Someone called it acid coloured. The surface was a cotton canvas with
a very thin grain. I hung the canvas on the wall of the studio with very thin nails. The hole the nail made in the material became part of the painting. With the weight of the paint, still wet, the surface had a tendency to fall, creating a smooth wide “U” shape in the space between where the nails struck. The position and the number of the nails directed the final shape of the canvas. The process of drying paint seemed like a slow moment of falling.

The Material
There is a curious story about a king who, because of a crime he committed, had to leave the city. The story goes that he was sentenced to remain on his land, in the village where he had been born. He was forbidden to go anywhere else. One day, angry about his punishment, he filled up his wagon with the soil of his land and went to the city. When he arrived at the main square, he unloaded the wagon and sat himself on top of the soil. When the guards came to arrest him, he claimed that he had the right to be there since the soil he was on was from his village. The guards took a quick look at the soil and could not see the difference between the soil beneath the king and the rest of the ground.

Objects supporting each other are involved in an act of balancing weights that can easily fall if not properly distributed. Objects can form constellations reminiscent of social life. Arrangements are oftentimes close to both equilibrium and collapse. In the last years of his life, Brâncuși stopped producing sculptures and dedicated himself entirely to arrangements and relations between sculptures and other objects in the studio. It is uncertain if the podium is still a podium or if it is an art installation. There is a series of documents in which the artist stages himself in different scenes. It seems as if everything visible can be embedded and detached from the surrounding space. The gestures behind the movement of the materials bring to mind the act of furnishing the interior of an apartment; the similar colour tones suggest three-dimensional monochrome paintings. However, what is literally visible are pieces of materials with different sizes and shapes assembled and balanced together.

The Studio
During a performance, the actors told the spectators that the play would take place in the backyard downstairs, and that the audience should attend it through the window. It was getting dark; the distance to the yard from the window was quite far. After some time, I lost concentration. The lights and movements inside the other windows around caught my attention. Inside one there was a couple having dinner. They were talking and they had expressive gestures. Another window was completely empty. In the one on the left there was a woman who was standing peeling carrots. My mind drifted when seeing those familiar gestures that are so strange to observe. It was then, in the lowest lit window, that I thought I saw the artist Marc Camille Chaimowicz. There he was, looking out the window, still, with a straight posture, staring at the passage of time: “Being neither quite public nor private … the space existed in limbo, somewhere between the world of ideas and interior life of the artist.”

It is hard to define Chaïmowicz’s work, and it is this ambivalence that attracts me. His work blurs the line between living and making art. He creates installations that are between being rooms from someone’s home and stage sets for performances. There are some traces that reveal to the viewer that they might be stepping into an art installation, like, for instance, the structure of an archway leaning against the window. There might also be arrangements of small objects on the floor, organised in a very careful way. It is not very clear what the objects are or if they have a function outside of the arrangement. In the end, it is still not clear if it is an art installation. There is a series of photographs in which the artist stages himself in these environments. These documentation images were made at different points of his life. In the mid-1970s, he opened his flat to the public to be visited. It became an art exhibition space. Nothing obvious was actually changed, but just the fact that the door was open to the public transformed the apartment space. The artist did not receive visitors just to show
the space, but he actually performed in this setting. Chaimowicz creates a realm where all things—the place, the time, and the act—have the same possibilities and importance. In one photograph, the artist appears still, looking straight through the window. In another, he is lying on a bed. Chaimowicz’s work extends the meaning of materiality to actions such as reading a book, looking at a window, fixing curtains, and putting up wallpaper. Activities that are seen on a daily basis, part of a routine that one tends to forget at the end of the day, familiar to everyone but also invisible to anyone outside the action. In Chaimowicz’s works, these acts, places, and times present reflections on what it means to create art: What is a work of art? What is an action? What is materiality? And to some extent, what does it mean to live?

The materiality of a work here is not confined to the traditional work materials that the artist used. It is also in the place where his flat is located, inside and outside the window, in the process of finding objects, in the furniture, and in bodily activities such as reading a book, resting, drinking coffee, and so on. Opposing realms such as private and public, feminine and masculine, life and art are in his work to some extent abandoned. Thus, his installations appear like a dreamy realm where things, actions, space, and time merge into each other with uncertain roles.

**The Wall**

A house in Utrecht, in the morning. Three movable walls divide each room. They are heavy and difficult to move; they should, ideally, be manoeuvred smoothly. The walls shouldn’t be rearranged too often, as it might damage the entire system. Foldable beds are built into the main walls; bed-shaped silhouettes are outlined in the wall when they are tucked away. A rectangle. At the top there is a handle to push the bed into a horizontal position. It is necessary to apply pressure on the top of the bed and at the same time fasten a hook. A window in the ceiling can be opened when the weather is good. There is a handle connected to a mechanical apparatus that opens it. Everything is a bit rusty because of the rain. It is better to not do
this in heavy wind or rainy weather. The same system is used to bring food from the kitchen up to the top floor. In this case, it is harder to rotate, easier with both hands. Considering the tray is hung by just two ropes, it is better to ask someone on the ground floor to pull the tray while it is being lifted. Each element is articulated in colour compositions that make closets, doorknobs, tables, chairs, and walls look like a three-dimensional painting. Even the house looks like a piece of furniture that could be folded up, packed, and reopened at a different time. Looking through the window to the inside, life there appears like a never-ending stage play.

In Brazilian Portuguese, there is an expression, together with its meaning and its sound, that prolongs the act of doing to a point where the subject doing it becomes interwoven with the object of the act itself. *Estou fazendo*. And that is how the body is connected to painting. Part of the body is outside, in the street; part is inside, holding the structure, at home or in the studio.

The shape of clothes asks for action, for a body. That was the first thought I had when I saw Franz Erhard Walther's *Wall Formation* (1979–85). Made with canvas textiles, the work seemingly occupies a place between clothing, architecture, sculpture, and performance stage. The *Wall Formation* series consists of large textile pieces that cover entire walls and part of the floor. Like pockets on a piece of clothing, square-shaped elements emerge from the wall textile. There are also other textile elements, such as coats and suits, attached in a way that resembles the way clothes are hung in a wardrobe. In some works in the series, there are just legs from pants or sleeves from coats attached to the wall structure. I would imagine a body, someone, dressing up in that cloth and merging into the wall textile. Part of the body would disappear, maybe even enter the other side of the wall. The clothing has simple shapes that are fastened with laces. Each of these works asks for action, for a body, and is constantly in the process of rolling up, folding, and hiding, to be opened up again.

The *Wall Formation* pieces were made in the late 1970s and early ‘80s. Making use of intense hues of blue, yellow, or red, the artworks stand out from reality. Some of the wall structures have wooden rod elements that lean or are placed just in front. These vertical elements are covered in the same colour textile. On the edges of each rod, the textile protrudes from the wooden structure, like a carpet fringe. There is an act of doing behind each detail of the work. In fact, it is hard to imagine the work of Walther without connecting it to an act of performance. It is evident that the artist has conceived his works in relation to the scale of the human body. During his performance with the installations, the artist would dress up in one of the cloths, hold the wooden rods, and lift the square textiles from the wall. Moving on, he would hold the rods in the air, horizontally against the wall structure. The wooden rods then created lines in space, extending the wall structure further into the room. The extended fringe fabric at the end of each rod became a vertical line, creating divisions in the social space of the gallery. The movement would be slow; between each “formation” the artist stood still, falling into a pose that merged into the silence of a sculpture or a painting. With everything in the same colour textile, the work mimics the key characteristic of a monochrome painting. A constant ambivalence arises when looking at these textile artworks: Are they protective shells of clothing for a human body, or are they architectural structures? Which part would support which? Is the space supporting the body or the body supporting the space?

When imagining this, a café I once visited in Amsterdam comes to mind. This was at the time when the law that banned cigarette smoking in public places was gaining ground all over the Western world. The owner of this café, probably a committed smoker, opened up holes in the facade and extended them outside with sleeves and hoodies. The hands of café guests would pop through the sleeves and heads would fill up the hoodies. The guests could thus enjoy being at the café and still have a smoke. The café owner had, in this instance, created a place that was both inside and outside, subject and object, body and architecture.

The View

All the panes from the windows on the first floor were taken out and left leaning on the balconies. Each balcony had a glass window wrapped in plastic. Blue tones fade in and fade out, shifting as soon as one’s sight moves. Paintings want to be like these windowpanes on the balconies. Partly at home, partly in the street.

The balcony connects the privacy of the apartment with the outside world; it is somewhat a space that is an in-between. In Sanja Iveković’s *Triangle* (1979), the artist used the space of the balcony of her flat for a performance. The balcony was used as an ambivalent stage for the performing body. The performance alludes to two exteriorities. One communicated with the event taking place on the street: a political parade. The other, simultaneous act spoke about private life, inside the flat. Lines of division are constantly being reformulated through time and space. Semipublic places such as balconies and porches act as areas of transition, where things slip out of the control of the public. In constant formation, adapting to the characteristics of each space that it transited through, here the body on the balcony emerged connected to a combination of spaces: inside and outside, apartment and street.
For *Interior*, part of a temporary public art project presented during the summer of 2017 in Lund, I made foldable modules that were attached to a bench running along the facade of an art institution. By using a construction of hinges and folding brackets, visitors could open and close the modules themselves. The extension on the facade created an element of improvised use; some used the pieces as footrests, others as tables. The Rietveld Schröder House, built outside Amsterdam in 1924, inspired the colours and the foldable elements. The Dutch modernist house seems to make use of the functionalist idea of folding and rearranging to such an extent that the very idea of practicality has disappeared. The *Interior* modules were painted so that the sets of colours would coincide differently depending on where the viewer stood in relation to the bench. This created a rhythmic movement when the spectator moved along the facade. The title of the work has the intimacy of the living room in mind. When the modules were unfolded, they invited users to rest in a more relaxed posture than a regular seated position. This aspect aimed at re-emphasising the idea of the institution as a common ground in public life, but with some characteristics of the private home. The benches were partly in public space, but they were literally attached to the wall of the art institution. The structures also were designed to mimic the foldable, portable nature of laptops, where the body that uses them is often in a position between sitting and lying down.

**The Surface**

The priest and his two assistants visited each house while carrying a statue of Jesus Christ as a baby, covered with a thin, glossy fabric. They entered, carefully stepping into the house. Inside, they uncovered the statue, and while intoning a song, they presented the statue to each person living in the house, who greeted it with a kiss. Between each kiss, one of the assistants cleaned the spot where the kiss was placed. Afterwards, they dashed holy water across the house using a conical metal pendulum. As the visit drew to an end, the priest left a paper sheet behind with three black dots forming a triangle-like shape. By keeping the gaze fixed to the sheet for half a minute and then switching the gaze towards the white wall, an image would appear before the eyes of the spectator. A radiating shadow would present itself, resembling a man’s face with long hair. From a statue to a shadow, a live portrait.

The colour white appears as a process of elimination. It is a process of retreat, of going back to the blank sheet of paper or the empty canvas. Arriving there, a process of separation has begun. First the white paint, then the fabric, the wooden structure, the wall, the space, and the involvement of the space. When these elements are detached from each other, the painting becomes materials, colours, sounds, and movements.

I made a series of paintings with white oil paint on white linen (2017–18). There is something represented in the sheer surface itself. The series was painted with white titanium, which is more bright and vibrant than zinc. I used two different brands of the same white. One has less pigment; it looks darker than the other. It is hard to distinguish the differences; however, it is here that the representation seems to gain volume. Mounted on the wall, the representations resemble architectural details. White shapes floating on a surface. The gesture of the brushstroke follows a movement; the thick layers of paint seem to be moulding a shape, as if a three-dimensional structure.

At the end of a day’s work, when I turn off the lights of my studio, I tend to think about what happens there when I’m not present. I often have the feeling that the paintings have some sort of life and that the paint, the colours, and the forms will change. One would expect the experience of an artwork to stay the same, but both the moment of perception and the person perceiving constantly changes. To counteract this, I try to lose all expectations and follow a set of rules. This process is costly and frustrating. Perhaps this is what Agnes Martin means when she talks about the loss of the self. In all her writings, there is a reference and a suggestion to putting aside the “I,” the “mine.” This self for Martin seems to be a prison, a distraction. Something that stopped her from seeing the truth. Martin wrote much about the truth. I interpret this truth as simplicity, something that is one of the most surprising things to find. She said that this is happiness.

I also often want to be free from myself. Sometimes I have the feeling that the self speaks too loudly. It talks about very different things at the same time. From superfluous and trivial things to philosophical questions about life and existence. Matters blend as if they are of equal importance and go away as fast as they appear. In these moments, I wish to get outside of myself—but to what? I think it is at this moment that the work appears.

I see paintings as transitions between the spaces that I normally use, like the studio and the flat where I live, the roads I pass by, the supermarkets, cafés, construction sites, galleries spaces, and so on. In this process, paintings can gain different shapes. They can look like pieces of furniture, walking structures, supports, painted textiles, curtains, materials, or extensions of architectural elements. I call them paintings because in each form they take, there is a concern about the compositional frame, the tone of the colour, the spatiality, the type of lights, the movement of the gesture, and the sense of time.

2 This story is taken from the text “A View of Modernism” by Rosalind Krauss. My aim is to question the relation of the art object and its own time and understand how each one is perceived and reflected in the other. In this text, Krauss discusses a comment that Michael Fried made to a student about Frank Stella’s *Black Paintings* from 1959 in the exhibition *Three American Painters*, at the Fogg Museum at Harvard University in 1965: “He wants to be Velásquez so he paints stripes.” See Rosalind Krauss, “A View of Modernism,” in *Art in Theory: An Anthology of Changing Ideas, 1900–1990*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 976–79, 977.


5 “Through its fetishization of the base, the sculpture reaches downward to absorb the pedestal into itself and away from actual place; and through the representation of its own materials or the process of its construction, the sculpture depicts its own autonomy.” See Rosalind Krauss, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 280.

6 At the time I was planning the video, I understood that the first photos of the building, taken in 1956, before it was open to the public, were taken by Anshelm. Although there is no clear evidence of that fact, they are the first register of the building, which at the time was still hidden from the public. As the camera operator, I felt an urge to see the building through the same position as the architect once did.


Further references


The Undead, 2018. VHS film 4:3, 19:00 min, loop. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2018. Rasmus Ramö Streith

Untitled, 2018. White bed sheets, white thread, iron, foam rubber, 89 x 200 x 9 cm. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2018. Rasmus Ramö Streith
Un-

“If you walk along the main street on an August afternoon there is nothing whatsoever to do. The largest building, in the very center of the town, is boarded up completely and leans so far to the right that it seems bound to collapse at any minute. The house is very old. There is about it a curious, cracked look that is very puzzling until you suddenly realize that at one time, and long ago, the right side of the front porch had been painted, and part of the wall—but the painting was left unfinished and one portion of the house is darker and dingier than the other. The building looks completely deserted. Nevertheless, on the second floor there is one window which is not boarded; sometimes in the late afternoon when the heat is at its worst a hand will slowly open the shutter and a face will look down on the town. It is a face like the terrible dim faces known in dreams.”
—Carson McCullers

(1823) Somewhere on the outskirts of Madrid
You wake up every morning just as the light hits the wall above the bed. Another night of poor sleep. Breakfast is simple and doesn't take long to prepare; in fact, today, you'll settle for just a cup of coffee. Time is essential. Time is everything. The world outside has changed. You've seen enough of it. The skin of your fingers has grown rougher as the years have gone by, and a little numb at the tips. And yet you find your fingers to be the most beautiful feature of your body. They are attached to a steady hand, still steady. They have served you well, as have your eyes. Thank goodness, this might turn out to be a good day. It's barely begun. You look out the window, and further into the distance. The neighbour's house is still there. Today, you're going to finish the last painting. Months have passed, and nobody has been allowed to see it yet. Nobody has come to visit. On the way upstairs, you lose your footing, and the coffee cup falls from your hands. You follow it with your gaze, turning slowly to follow its fall. It all happens without a single sound: the china shatters all over the floor, getting mixed up with the black coffee. Seconds, maybe minutes, pass. The light above the bed is shining on the pillow now, and you try to remember what it used to sound like when things broke.

Arrival
I'm going to try to explain how I ended up here. I came here to write this paper. I came here through a landscape from another time. Along the way, I met people who spoke a foreign language.

I had just gotten off the bus by a hostel close to the motorway we'd just been driving on. From there, however, I had to continue on foot. The young man at the reception seemed indifferent about my visit. The heat was glistening on his face, and the fan on the small bookshelf behind him didn't seem to be making any difference. Before I fell asleep that night in that sparsely furnished room, my eyes came to rest on a framed picture. An etching had been hung on the far wall of the room. A man leaning against a desk. Judging by his clothes, it likely was a late eighteenth-century scene. Has he fallen asleep while writing? Bats and other nocturnal creatures appear from the dark background. They might want to do him harm. Is that why he's concealing his face, to fend them off? Or are they monsters, haunting his dreams? A feline predator is lying next to the chair the man is sitting in, waiting.2 There is something written on the desk in the picture:

“El sueño de la razón produce monstruos.”3

Before I left the hostel the next morning, I showed the receptionist a map. It was an elderly woman working at the desk this time. After a short while, she realised which direction I was headed in, and shook her head. She gave me the same response as all the others I'd asked: “No, sorry, it's no use. Turn back! Go home! There's nothing there.”

For a long time, I thought I was lost, gone. This place really doesn't exist. I cursed myself in my solitude while I dragged my finger along a line that
was drawn on the map. Earth can’t be this dead. There’s nothing here but sand mixed with rocks. Time was going to waste. But just as I was about to give up, there it was, right in front of me. The windows looked like a pair of recently awakened eyes that had just caught sight of me.

I must have made my way inside through the back entrance. A small hall, shrouded in darkness, greeted me. The walls are made of white plastered stone. There is an oil lamp on the floor, next to the entrance. I light it, and it chases the shadows away wherever my footsteps take it. The old wooden floor is creaking. The hall leads to an open door. I end up in a corridor that soon turns to the right. I look down at my shoes, which are white from the dust outside. The air in here has been still for a long time, and I suddenly become aware of my own breathing. After several footsteps, the footsteps continue, and I begin to suspect that I’m going around in circles. I look back to where I came from. The light of the lamp only reaches a few metres, and after that, there’s just dense shadow. Soon, I reach a wall. Somebody has made a painting on the bare surface. It depicts a mountain, obscuring the sun, and at its foot, a tree that almost disappears into the dark colours of the mountain. The landscape takes up almost all the space of the picture. The composition is odd. Eventually, the eye lands on the four faces that protrude from the corner in the lower right. They look like passers-by—or have they ended up here by mistake? Do they live somewhere near the mountain? Are they farmers, or travellers? One of them looks happy, another looks sad, and you can barely see the last one’s head; all you can make out is a hat and part of the forehead.

When me and my siblings, were young, we would sometimes gather to draw little comics on paper or plastic bags. Later, we would tape them to the radiators in our rooms. The ceiling light would be turned off, and we would sit down on the floor. One of us lit a torch and illuminated a single frame at a time. Whoever was holding the torch would make up a scary story for each picture, and the rest of us listened as the darkness closed in around us.

It’s a picture. It can be so clear, but it doesn’t mean anything. Not right now.

The flying house began its existence as a small drawing, just a few centimetres in width and height. A few simple lines on a small slip of paper, which had been on its way to the bin on many occasions. I ended up framing it, along with another pencil drawing. It depicted a potted plant, and I had made it during a stay in a house I once visited, and ended up spending a whole summer in. I had a vague notion that I would draw all the plants in that house. Mostly as a way to get started with my drawing again. The house and the plants were connected. They told a story together. Everything tells stories, especially the objects and personal belongings that we keep inside our homes. The flying house is set to make a return in a film project I am developing and working on as I write this.

A scene from *The Wizard of Oz*, from 1939. Just a short way into the story, the protagonist, Dorothy, desperately runs back after attempting to run away from home. Full of regret, she returns to an empty house and an abandoned farm. She doesn’t know that her family has gone down into the shelter, to seek protection from the coming tornado, which will carry the house off with it. Dorothy is still inside, and she can see out through a window. It’s spinning round and round. A model of the house, suspended from the ceiling by a string, was used to film this scene. Once the storm dies down, and the house has returned to the ground, Dorothy walks out the front door. However, she is no longer on the farm, or even in this world.

I want the house to fly just like Dorothy’s house. Against the black backdrop, it exists as a weightless object, a state of mind. Once the house was there, as an image, it could be further developed. It has an inside too. What’s it like in there? It’s an artificial world. It’s a film, it’s a world inside the TV. Each scene is its own space, colour, and theme. Like a tableau, like a painting. Everything is at a distance, somehow. The people exist inside, like a doll’s house. Boxlike environments. Doors to pass through. Sometimes they can’t move, or they get stuck in a loop. Characters are dissolved. This is the first time I’ve worked with amateur actors. But in this film, the actors don’t act; they don’t speak. Once they are in motion, it all seems repetitive and dull. I begin to see how the actors and the objects are trading places. The film is constructed, in this case in a set. The actors are acting as extras, like placed props. And the sound, which isolates the image, but also tells the story of what’s going on outside the image. The moving images take you to one space, the written words to another, and the sound to the next. The challenge is to keep them from cancelling each other out.

How is the film shown, and where? Thinking of the film as a “material” that can be shaped and considered from 360 degrees. A similar process takes place during the shoot. As we’ve been working on this film, the composition, the placing of the actors, and the appearance of the sets have been important. There is this sculptural element to filmmaking.

I write scripts for most of my projects, even the ones that aren’t videos or films. This text does more than just explain to me what is going to happen or be made clear. The act of writing carries me forward. Writing to become somebody else is a method often used for developing characters. In the film, there is a narrator who has neither a face nor a body as of yet. Perhaps the voice will never be granted a physical body and will remain solely textual.
Up ahead over the horizon was the moon. I looked up and saw the enormous, oval body of an animal, covered in fur, and a head with two pointed ears. I’ve never seen ears that big before. A pair of leathery, flapping wings extended out on each side. I wasn’t afraid, and the creature’s claws didn’t harm me.

The landscape beneath me was littered with holes, holes everywhere. No trees, no houses, no roads, and no people. Just row upon row of holes.

Whatever was holding onto me slowly lost altitude. The closer I came to the ground, the better I could see that each hole had an object placed inside it. Bicycle, tire, gravestone, rubbish bin, plastic mug, door, plate, knife, dress, computer, book, ladder, key ...

It landed in one of the holes; an empty one. The creature very carefully set me down. Now, it was able to fold its wings away. Then, it stood there, like a dark pillar. It was hard to make out, apart from the bulbous eyes, which looked like a pair of black spheres. They were impossible to look into. I thought that it was speaking to me, but then, suddenly, there was nothing, where it had been only a moment ago.

I couldn’t move my feet. I was stuck. I looked down, and the legs that were no longer my own had ceased to be human. They had turned into wood, finely carved and lacquered, like the leg of a chair or dining table.

—Excerpt from an untitled manuscript

The corridor continues to the left. I leave the wall with the painting behind. But after just a few steps, I’m greeted by a new painting on the wall. Its style is reminiscent of the one I was just looking at. Three women dressed in dark clothes, standing in a semi-circle. The bodies’ outlines are difficult to make out against the near-black background. But their faces are clearly visible—not their eyes, but their grins! They are talking, or laughing. The woman at the far right has rough facial features, a toothless smile, and much of her face is veiled in shadow.

Once again, I continue moving along the gradually narrowing corridor. Eventually, I have to twist my body to get any further. Taking one step at a time, sideways, I see a door up ahead. There is a large area above the door, which is occupied by another painting. I raise my arm that is holding the lamp, to get a better look at it. When the beam of light reaches all the way up, I suddenly shrink back. Something resembling a human being is standing in the dark, again, almost pitch-black, landscape. This creature is staring straight into the air. Its naked, slim arms end in a pair of hands that are clutching a human being. Or rather, what’s left of a human being. The rest is in the creature’s jaws. After a few quick steps, I make it through the door, and the painting is behind me. It brought back a memory. During my last year of secondary school, I had an art teacher who encouraged me to pursue my interest in drawing. It was the last week of school, just before the term ended. She handed me an envelope with my name on it and told me I was going to like it. When I got home, I pulled the contents out and found that it was a book. I quickly leafed through it and realised it was about old paintings. Boring, I thought to myself, and sighed. But I kept the book, and have returned to it many times since then. Especially to its more macabre and grotesque parts, the black.

Once I’m out the other side, I advance through a new hallway. But then a strange sensation comes over me. The corridor seems identical to the one I had started out in earlier. I hurry through, shuffling along. This can’t be right! Am I back where I started? Everything is identical, except for one detail: the painting on the wall over the door is gone. As are the other paintings I passed by. This can’t be the same corridor. I shake my head and decide to go through the door one more time. However, this time, I do so with a certain degree of trepidation.

“Time is compressed or stopped inside the movie house. ... to spend time in a movie house is to make a ‘hole’ in one’s life.”

—Robert Smithson

The first time I visited a cinema was relatively late in my life. To me, film was something you experienced at home, on your couch in front of the TV, by inserting a video cassette into the player and pressing play. We had VHS movies lined up on our bookshelf. Off we’d go to the rental shop, where we would choose two films: one for grown-ups (a drama, thriller, or action movie) and one for kids (a cartoon). I watched them over and over again. One day, a VHS tape on the table caught my attention. First, I saw the cover. I knew this was something forbidden, something scary. This film ended up meaning a great deal to me, but not because it had any deeper meaning. However, it was completely different from anything I’d ever seen before, far removed from costly Hollywood productions. This was a film that somebody had made all by himself, with nothing but the help of his closest friends. An intergalactic fast food chain has landed on Earth. Its representatives disguise themselves as
humans and settle in a small village somewhere in New Zealand. They are here for human meat, which they intend to use in hamburgers. Fortunately, their plan is foiled by a heroic group of humans. However, one of the aliens manages to escape in his spacecraft. His craft is also camouflaged to blend in on Earth; it’s disguised as an ordinary wooden house.8

In the 1980s, the VHS format changed the way people watched films. The VHS camera wasn’t the first video camera, but it was the first one intended for the family market. It was a camera you could use on your holiday and in your everyday life at home. Today, I found a couple of films that my grandfather shot on midsummer’s eve in 1992. The colours bleed into each other, and part of the picture is distorted when I play the tape back. I decide that my project with the flying house is to be shot entirely on a VHS camera. I’m thinking of the movie Blair Witch Project (1999), in which three American film students head out into the woods to make a documentary about a local legend, a ghost story. The students go missing under mysterious circumstances, and the only trace of them that can be found is the videocassette they left behind in their video camera. Rumours said that Blair Witch Project was real: it was a true story, and the tape was genuine. I’m also thinking about Videodrome (1983), by Canadian director David Cronenberg. A secret TV channel induces a trance in its viewers that causes reality and nightmares to blend. The TV set itself comes to life, and the VHS cassette turns into flesh and blood, so that it can be inserted into people rather than into the player.

Whenever something scary happened in a film, one of the grown-ups would ask me to cover my
eyes. It’s not real, it’s just a film. But if it’s not real, then what is it? Corn syrup, foam latex, silicon, and prosthetics. Trick photography and costuming.

In the early twentieth century, interest in the inner world of mankind grew. Modern society and technology were on the rise. Science was working harder than ever to help us understand the unknown. The medium of film was still very young, and it was thought to be a key way of portraying the subconscious and dreams of human beings. Germany after World War I: a nation in ruins. Art and film mirrored people’s lives and concerns. When there was still no room for dialogue, before sound film took over, the nonrealistic sets with weird angles, deep shadows, and the makeup all helped to communicate the characters’ inner thoughts. A way of further blurring the line between dream and reality. German expressionism took its inspiration from painting and theatre. Films about external threats invading and disturbing the status quo. This disturbance can take a variety of forms, the most tangible of which is a monster. It’s easier to address uncomfortable topics when they’ve been dressed up as or converted into fictions. Horror, just like humour, is a way of laying bare our fears, or talking about the things we mustn’t or daren’t speak of. However, monsters are rarely frightening unless they draw their power from something familiar, that we have either intentionally or unintentionally forgotten. The discomfort intensifies if, instead of being external, it comes from something in the immediate vicinity, from the most mundane of things.

I want to try different ways of making film. In many cases, what attracts me has to do with the actual craft. I like to look at the things that
go on behind the camera. How was the film made, how was it written, how has it been portrayed, and which materials have been used? My first films were animations made with a technique called stop-motion. To a great extent, it mirrors the way an ordinary feature film is shot. Everything happens in front of the camera with actors (puppets), a set, and lighting. It’s a lot like a real movie studio, only everything is made to a smaller scale. It’s film as miniature. We create these environments in the studio and they don’t look like anything comprehensible, but once they are seen through the camera lens and the various layers are combined, something completely different is produced.

The film is shown on a lit screen or projected onto a screen—it’s flat, but it also depicts a space, a space beyond space. The film is viewed from a distance, but it still feels real, close, and alive. Today, we use smartphones, computers, and VR goggles. The body has stayed in one place while the mind, the experience, has wandered into another world. The experience of space has become more and more disembodied. We no longer experience space; rather, we experience depictions of space.

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2.

A large group of people has gathered. They are sitting on the ground, close to each other, in a semicircle. Several of their faces disappear or distort and are blended into abstract shapes. Some of them have grotesque features. Wrapped up in layers of clothing blended into abstract shapes. Some of them have grotesque features. Wrapped up in layers of clothing and different fabrics. Somebody whispers into somebody else’s ear. Another warms his hands. They’re old, and they’re young. At the far left, what looks like a goat. Two long horns, wearing a cape. Or is it a mask? Is there a person behind its muzzle, behind those horns?10

The painting is wide and occupies a large part of one of the long walls of what looks to be the dining room. There’s an old oak table in the centre of the room. A pair of plates has been left out, still covered with dust. I imagine myself sitting down at the table to eat a meal with that painting behind me. Suddenly, out of their hand, the oil lamp I’m holding in my hand goes out, and the room turns pitch black. In the lower part of the room, I glimpse a narrow crack of dim light, which is seeping into the room I’m standing in. I move towards the light, but I can’t see where to set my foot down for my next step. A chair gets knocked over, and the noise is made unusually loud by the quiet of the dark room. I stop for a moment, waiting for a reaction. When I get closer, I can see that it’s a doorway. On the other side, I am greeted by an odd sight: a bright light. I bring my eyes closer, I can make out handprints on the moving shapes.

On the other side of the tunnel, the white light fades into red. Hundreds of photographs hang from strings attached to the ceiling, at eye level. It still reeks of development fluid, and you can almost make out a kitchen under all the various objects that have been jumbled around and piled up. It takes some time for the eyes to adjust to the red light. The photographs mostly depict corridors and different rooms full of various things. More corridors and doors. Several of the rooms seems to have different-coloured walls. Purple, red, green, or blue.

* * *

“If we characterise the logic of installation art as, simply, the construction of fabrication of space ...” —Helen Hughes11

“Gilman’s room was of good size but queerly irregular shape; the north wall slanting perceptibly inward from the outer to the inner end, while the low ceiling slanted gently downward in the same direction. ...”

“... As time wore along, his absorption in the irregular wall and ceiling of his room increased; for he began to read into the odd angles a mathematical significance which seemed to offer vague clues regarding their purpose. Old Keziah, he reflected, might have had excellent reasons for living in a room with peculiar angles; for was it not through certain angles that she claimed to have gone outside the boundaries of the world of space we know?” —H.P. Lovecraft12

If the sets in the expressionist films of the 1920s were a way of portraying the inner thoughts of the characters, and to dissolve the boundaries between the realms of dream and reality, then Kurt Schwitters’s project Merzbau was a way of embodying space and one’s surroundings. In Hanover, around 1923, Schwitters was back in his childhood home at Waldhausenstrasse 5 after suffering a series of setbacks. There, Merzbau grew into being, from one room to the next. If World War II hadn’t interrupted the work, it would probably have grown into even more. Schwitters collected things and piled them up. These piles gradually turned into something else. Nobody knew about them at first, secretly constructed from wood, plaster, and pulp as they were. Found objects from the street, and private objects that were encapsulated inside, became parts of the walls of the flat, and determined the geometric shapes of their protrusions. It took a while before even Schwitters himself began to think of it as art. Eventually, friends and acquaintances were invited to experience and interact with the strange passageways. A room that is also a sculpture? Before anybody had ever used the term “installation,” Schwitters explained it as follows: “not only a room construction, but also a sculpture in space, which one can enter,
in which one can go for a walk. ... I am building a composition without boundaries, and each individual part is at the same time a frame for the neighboring parts; everything is reciprocal.”

Merzbau, then, was a chamber you could walk through, stay in, and notice the different colours of various sections of the spaces. Mirrors on the walls and small sculptures in various spots. “Grottoes” full of personal objects, including the death mask of Schwitters’s firstborn son, who died just one week old. Architecture as self-portrait, but just as much a portrait of the surroundings and the city. A time capsule. Collective stories and personal ones, constantly undergoing transformation. While this “nest” was growing, the unrest in the streets intensified.

“Schwitters’s Merzbau may be the first example of a ‘gallery’ as a chamber of transformation, from which the world can be colonized by the converted eye.”

In her book Installation Art (2005), Claire Bishop writes about the “dream scene.” She bases this discussion on The Interpretation of Dreams, which was written in 1900 by Sigmund Freud. In it, Freud defines the nature of dreams in psychoanalytical terms, and explains how they are to be interpreted. According to him, dreams have three main properties: 1. They are essentially made up of images, although they can also include sound fragments; 2. They have a composite structure, and can only be interpreted when they are divided and solved, like picture puzzles. Most of all, Freud claims that dreams aren’t supposed to be decoded; they are supposed to be analysed by means of free association; 3. Each element of a dream can be replaced with an associated word or sound.

A total installation can be compared to the dream scene. By bringing objects, sounds, texts, and images into the gallery, or constructing architectural scenes for the visitor to pass through and experience, information comes at us from all directions, and activates several of our senses at once. The visitor doesn’t identify with some character in a depicted scene; instead, they end up taking the role of protagonist. Through the act of interpreting the work, you become a part of it. Atmosphere is very important for installations of this kind. The gallery transforms, and the visitor is transported elsewhere.

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“I’m looking to make installations that allow the viewer to walk in and occupy an idea, rather than have the idea imposed on you.”
—Mike Nelson

The Coral Reef was installed for the first time by artist Mike Nelson and a small team of assistants at Matt’s Gallery in London, during the last three months of 1999. It was a large installation, consisting of fifteen rooms with attached corridors. When it’s installed in a gallery, the entrance and exit of the installation become part of the building. There’s simply no way of seeing the size of the installation from the outside. Floors, walls, doors, ceilings—they’re all constructed! None of the gallery space as such remains visible to the eye. The first room the visitor enters looks like a waiting room. This leads to a rundown taxi office, with a calendar on the wall from a Muslim association in Nigeria. After this, the visitor can roam at will through a network of dimly lit, dusty corridors leading to other rooms. Several of the rooms have vaguely defined themes. There is a CCTV monitoring room, a mechanic’s garage, a room full of drug paraphernalia, a wood-panelled lobby decorated with American kitsch. Other spaces contain various objects: advertisements for a religious group, Soviet and Western propaganda, a toy gun, a clown mask, and an empty sleeping bag. One room is full of motorcycle gear, another is full of computers. All the different objects were found and chosen by the artist. The last room of the installation is a replica of the waiting room that appears at the beginning. This is intentional, and done to confuse the visitor, to get them to lose their orientation, feel trapped, and experience repetition. In the artist’s own words, it’s getting “lost in the lost world of lost people.” This sense of confusion that the visitor experiences in this network of rooms is, according to Nelson, among other things an analogy of various systems of faith that provide the illusion of freedom while actually keeping you trapped.

The rooms look recently used and lived in, but there are no other people here apart from the other visitors. Individuals or fictional characters have lived in and used the spaces, and then disappeared.

Like the places depicted in William Burroughs’s novel Naked Lunch (1959), Nelson’s rooms and corridors can be regarded as “interzones,” or dreamlike spaces that exist between other places. This is reflected by the ambivalence that emerges in these rooms, their lack of a clear purpose, or the illogical transitions between them. Doors and corridors seem to perform another role in The Coral Reef; they act like gaps, transitions, or edits in a film. They give rise to a montage of sorts. But also to a circular motion, which supports the fragmented narrative, and opens the installation up rather than closing it.

“The main motor of the total installation, what it lives by—is the cranking up of the wheel of associations, cultural everyday analogies, personal memories.”

Ilya Kabakov installed his work Ten Characters in 1988. It consists of ten rooms. Each room portrays a character. The rooms have names like The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away, The Man Who Flew into Space from His Apartment, The Untalented Artist, The Garbage Man, and so on. It’s a sociopolitical work on lost communities, capitalism, and communism. Kabakov was born in Russia in 1933 and worked there as an artist until the 1980s. After that,
he moved to the United States. Much of the inspiration for his works comes from his own experiences and memories. He constructs spaces filled with objects, much like Nelson. Both of them create environments and fictional characters. However, they are also very different. Kabakov often includes text in his works, which gives them a more clear reading, in a way. He also compares his own work to theatre—a stage play directed by the artist, in which all the objects in the room have their own dramatic plot functions. Nelson’s work gives rise to further ambiguities, and is perhaps even closer to the dream scene than Kabakov’s.

Similar to Nelson’s fictional biker gang, the Amnesiacs, Mai-Thu Perret has created a fictional feminist collective that refers to itself as the Crystal Frontier. They live in the desert of New Mexico and are led by their founder, Beatrice Mandell, who is also fictional. Perret has a great interest in utopias and fictional characters. However, they are also very different. Kabakov often includes text in his works, which gives them a more clear reading, in a way. He also compares his own work to theatre—a stage play directed by the artist, in which all the objects in the room have their own dramatic plot functions. Nelson’s work gives rise to further ambiguities, and is perhaps even closer to the dream scene than Kabakov’s.

Perret’s fictional characters write diary entries, sew clothes, make ceramic sculptures, and author letters and manifestos. They also sometimes make films. Instead of creating an entirely new environment for you to enter, here Perret presents a kind of fragment-mediated archive. The characters are sometimes included in her installation as dolls or dummies, usually faceless ones.20

3. If this were a body, I would be balancing on one of the ribs right now.

I take a few steps inside, to get a better view of the ceiling. It must be more than fifteen metres high. I glimpse a pair of rough roof beams made of dark, old wood. I’m standing in the waiting room. It could be a door to the outside that I’m seeing, all the way over there on the other side. The door is sealed from the inside and has several boards of wood nailed to it. To protect myself from whatever is out there, or to protect the outside from whatever is here, on the inside.

I turn my attention to yet another painting. Whoever painted these might have lived in this house at some time or other. Maybe they spent a lot of time in this exact spot. Painted them right onto the wall, as though to attach them to something, give them a body, or have them keep something away, like a magic spell. I begin to think about the way the paintings have been placed in the house. The artist is telling a story. Who are these characters, and what are these places? Observations, nightmares. Just like the one I viewed earlier in the dining room. The same elongated landscape format. But this painting is darker, if that’s possible, and much larger. A brown, desolate landscape; the horizon almost black. The sky looks to be the same colour. On the ground, thousands of people in a line, snaking their way down between the hills. A pilgrimage—or maybe they’re running from something? Faces and bodies are close together; in some places, the colours blend together, and the brushstrokes transform the people into a cohesive dark mass. The closest ones, in the foreground, look like they’re screaming. One part madness, one part despair.21

*  

“Let me explain: In order truly to see a thing, one must first understand it. An armchair implies the human body, its joints and members; scissors, the act of cutting. What can be told from a lamp, or an automobile? The savage cannot really perceive the missionary’s Bible; the passenger does not see the same ship’s rigging as the crew. If we truly saw the universe, perhaps we would understand it.”

—Jorge Luis Borges22

For me in my own work, it’s all about creating an image, an idea for you to experience and to formulate your own conception of and rules for. I don’t dictate the viewer’s movements, but I do plant hints and clues. In various materials and mediums. They are usually linked by an invisible thread of some sort.

**Drawing x 3, wooden frames (42.5 × 60.5 cm)**

1. Untitled. There was a drawing on this paper once. Spiral notebooks are filled with notes. The paper is lined. Its edges are broken. Perhaps the artist found the right sheet. Was there something written or drawn on it that should no longer be there? Something that’s been erased? It’s a note that has been forgotten in somebody’s clothes for a long time. Not even the person who once put the note there can remember what was on it. It’s a forgery of time, an attempt to attach a history or fiction.

2. Untitled. This is the second page of a spread from the same spiral notebook. There is a drawing here that hasn’t been erased. An oval shape (which reminds me of an eye) in the centre of the paper, filled in with pencil.

3. Sunrise. The title of this drawing is taken from the German silent film of the same name from 1927 (directed by F. W. Murnau). One of the first-ever films to use synchronised music and sound effects. It is about a man who gets an opportunity to leave an impoverished life in the countryside for a wealthier life in the big city. However, he has to do an evil deed in exchange for this. The film has a particular, dreamy look, which matches the way the story is told. Sunrise was one of the last silent movies ever made. The drawing depicts the closing scene of the film, in which the sun rises over the village where the man lives. It’s a little narrower than a regular sheet of A4, and thinner, too. The drawing is a negative, making the rising sun black. In the middle of the paper, a dark stain gives rise to a hole.
**Sculpture: Glove on Arm. Wax, cotton, thread**
A glove with letters embroidered on the palm and fingers. Based on William Terry’s touch alphabet, invented in 1917. A glove that allows the outside world to communicate with a deaf and blind person, and vice versa. A person who lives in absolute darkness and silence. “I found myself a dozen years ago in the valley of two-fold solitude,” explained Helen Keller, who became one of the first to use the glove in the late nineteenth century. The glove is worn by a prosthetic arm. A casting of my own arm. It is a broken chain of communication.

**Sculpture: Two casts of wooden boards, snapped at the middle. Bronze, aluminium, plywood**
The crunching noise of the arm breaking when the board snaps. They are standing on top of boxes, which raise the sculptures over the ground. To produce movement and amplify the sound that can only be heard when you’re looking at the board.

4. I’ve arrived at a dead end. There’s no way to progress from here. I am standing at the deepest point of a corridor that ends abruptly. The stone of the wall has been replaced by wallpaper. I suspect that the wallpaper was patterned once, long ago, and perhaps even had a colour. What have I missed? A door somewhere. But then, my gaze gets stuck to one of the corners. A line from the floor, about two metres up, to the ceiling, then it turns 90 degrees, continues on for a bit, and then on down to the floor again. It creates a rectangular section, wallpapered over to hide it from sight. There’s no door handle, so I try putting my weight against it, and it makes a noise and opens slowly...

For a while—I can’t tell how long—everything is completely black. I can’t see my hand in front of me. I also can’t tell if I’m moving down, sideways, or up. It’s as though I am in a state of nothingness, utterly weightless. But then, I see two dots of
light, next to each other, in the distance. I try to steer my steps towards them, and the dots come closer. Soon I can see that they are actually two holes that are letting light in from the other side. The holes are in a door, but it doesn’t look like the door belongs to this house. It’s wide, sturdy, and old. It reminds me of the door to a dungeon where something is kept locked up. The holes are almost at eye level, but a little too low, so I have to bend down to look through them. On the other side, I see a pair of eyes staring back at me. My body reacts before I have time to think, and I withdraw with a jolt. But I’m slowly drawn back, and the eyes are still there. There’s nothing threatening about them; they rather look insecure and uncertain. They never look away. I close my eyes, wait, and then reopen them. They’re still there. Wink, and a wink back.

“Page 45/(top left) screw/Head fixed in place/(top right) upper shell/lower shell./The head is attached to the body with this screw/point on the body into which the corner of the lower shell of the head is slipped/Head fixed in place/(bottom) hair attached with the clothespin.”
—Marcel Duchamp

There are certain artists who I can never quite seem to figure out; they leave something behind that draws me back to them. And I return, over and over. Sometimes only to certain pieces, sometimes to whole periods, sometimes to specific methods.

“Marcel Duchamp” is more than a name; it is a symbol, a milestone in the timeline. It took me some time to approach him. I haven’t fully committed yet, but I’m getting there.

“Étant donnés” means in English: Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas (1946–66). There are many different theories, and an equal number of answers. Was that the idea all along? To leave a question mark, or riddle, behind? Duchamp himself was a seeker, and he worked on one main issue for most of his artistic career.

“What art is in reality is this missing link, not the links which exist. It’s not what you see that is art, art is the gap.”

Around 1946: The artist has explained to the outside world that he won’t be producing any more art. Instead, the artist plays chess, writes some articles, reads, and appears on TV shows. Twenty years go by, and nobody knows that in secret, behind a closed, hidden door in the artist’s studio, passionate work has been underway all along. In the end, the piece is shown, along with the artist’s request that it not be presented to the public until after his death. Today, Étant donnés (Given) is permanently installed in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. There, at the far end of one of the galleries. The visitor is confronted by the massive wooden door, and two holes you can peek through. But the holes aren’t immediately apparent; the visitor has to find them themself. There’s only room for one person at a time at the door, to look through the holes with slightly bent posture. In the foreground, there is a brick wall, with an oval hole in the middle where the bricks have fallen or been knocked out. On the other side, a naked woman’s body is lying among the branches and fallen leaves.

We can only see part of her body: the thighs and torso, and the left arm holding a gaslight. We see some hair, but no face. In the background, a waterfall glistens under a blue sky. What you’re looking at is a diorama. A picture that is also a frozen theatre stage. The visitor feels uncomfortable, maybe even a little ashamed. If certain parts of the body have been left out of the field of vision, others are granted more focus. The eyes wander back and forth between her exposed sex, the gaslight, and the waterfall. The visitor straightens up, blinks, and lets their eyes adjust. Back in the gallery in the museum. Another visitor is in line, waiting for their turn. Soon, the peepholes will be free.

Duchamp made installations before this. Back in 1938, with a group of surrealists, he installed 1,200 Coal Sacks. The exhibition or installation consisted of sacks hanging down from the ceiling. There were paintings hanging on the walls and leaves on the floor. Along with this, sounds were played in the rooms. To see the paintings on the walls, you needed to carry a torch. Given is something else. It is an image that has to be activated through the act of looking through the holes. An illusion that is dispelled as soon as you take a step back from the door. The dream scene described earlier is about dissolving the ego. The visitor takes on the role of protagonist, becoming a part of the installation. Duchamp’s point seems to be the opposite: the peephole shuts the viewer out, screens the picture off. What do we get when we look, or rather, what don’t we get? What is on the other side reminds you that you’re standing there looking, and that others can look at you. We receive something inexplicable, and dark. A dream image, but approached from the other direction. Behind the scenes we can tell that it’s an optical illusion produced using various materials, handmade parts, chosen angles, and directed light. The museum visitors never see this side of it. In the restored and published manual for Given, you get to see Duchamp’s own photographs and handwritten instructions explaining how to attach the various components and in which order. You might expect this to shatter the illusion, but it actually strengthens it.

The darkness has lifted now, and I can see further. In the centre of the room is a pillar. It is bright yellow all over. What looks like one object at first is actually
Katharina Fritsch’s sculptures also create nightmares and wise familiar objects. Everything has a dual meaning. The materials confuse, transform, and recode othermades, but they are all made by hand, from scratch. Some of his sculptures could be mistaken for ready-made but always kept silent. Nothing is what it seems.

An underlying violence that exists in the home, but also revolve around the body, gender, and religion. An installation in which several of the sculptures and chairs, and wallpaper. Later, he would build full-scale installations in which several of the sculptures and motifs reappeared. They often include a sensitive, dreamy background narrative, which is divided into fragments and symbols. The word “trauma” is often used in relation to Gober and his works. His themes revolve around the body, gender, and religion. An underlying violence that exists in the home, but also in society at large. Never visible, always restrained, and always kept silent. Nothing is what it seems. Some of his sculptures could be mistaken for ready-mades, but they are all made by hand, from scratch. The materials confuse, transform, and recode otherwise familiar objects. Everything has a dual meaning. Similar to the worlds Grober creates, nightmares and dreams can be described as distortions of reality.

Katharina Fritsch's sculptures also create a bridge of this kind. She is very particular about referring to them as “pictures.” Pictures that you can walk around. In a solo exhibition at the Matthew Marks Gallery in New York in 2008, she installed several sculptures in different rooms. A giant with a club, an all-black Madonna figure, a black snake, a skeleton dressed as a doctor, a pair of skeleton’s feet. They are realistically sculpted and usually cast from plastic. Each sculpture was positioned in front of an image. The images came from postcards and photographs that she had collected during her childhood. Enlarged, and then printed in black and white or given a single monochrome hue. Blue, red, yellow, or green. The format of the images reminds me of old films and old special effects, which were used back when almost all films were shot in big studios. Rear projections were used to transport the actors and the set to another location. Something similar happened to Fritsch’s sculptures in the gallery. Her world originates in the fairy tales we all know. She's interested in mass production and stereotypes. Fritsch’s sculptures lack texture and usually are only one colour. They look like they fell from the sky, like they came from nowhere.

5.
I wake up in a bed. I stand up and walk over to a window that’s letting light in on my left. I can’t see outside, because the window is covered in dust. But I see enough. I’m on the top floor of the house. The room isn’t very large, and besides the bed, there is also a wardrobe and a door. On a chair next to the bed is an old TV. I walk over to the chair and turn the TV on. A railway, supported by beams, following the slope of the mountain. There are more mountains up ahead. It’s an old black-and-white film. There’s no sound, and the film keeps skipping. The train disappears into a new tunnel. There is a cut, and then the sequence starts over again. I stop, to take another look. It’s the same the next time: a cut, and then it starts over again. I walk out of the room.

A rattling noise, and then I have just enough time to see another door close in front of me. I walk over to it and open it, but there’s nobody there—just a staircase. A bluish light falls onto the steps from above. I reach the top floor of the house. It’s big and spacious for an attic. There are boxes and things that have been left behind lined up along the walls. In the centre, a man’s suit hovers in mid-air. I know every part of it, every last stitch. I assembled it and created it.

* * *

“In normal contexts, the room, the simplest form of shelter, expresses the most benign potential of human life. It is, on the one hand, an enlargement of the body: it keeps warm and safe the individual it houses in the same way the body encloses and protects the individual within; like the body its walls put boundaries around the self preventing undifferentiated contact with the world, yet in its windows and doors, crude versions of the senses, it enables the self to move out into the
world and allows that world to enter. But while the room is a magnification of the body, it is simultaneously a miniaturization of the world, of civilization.”
—Elaine Scarry

I was tired of film. I wanted to make something involving space, something that would interact with the visitor on a more physical level. I had been to experience an exhibition by Mika Rottenberg at Magasin 3 in Stockholm, in 2013. It was an important visit. The sets from Rottenberg’s films were reconstructed in the hall, dividing the gallery into several spaces, each usually centred on a particular film. Characters and environments changed, but they all belonged in the same world. The films’ contents were made stronger by their inclusion in the installation, which resembled a peculiar machine. The visitor ended up on a conveyor belt, transported through an endless production of “things.”

I wanted to work in a new material, one that I didn’t have the same experience using and control of, so that I wouldn’t know how to begin. The idea of sewing a suit was the trigger for the whole project. Sewing a suit for a character who doesn’t exist, who is invisible. I soon realised that the craft would be an issue all of its own. The challenge of making something by hand, fumbling with the fabric and thread, became an aspect of the character that had begun to appear. I had no idea how I was going to present the suit when it was finished. At first, I intended to use it in a film. But I never made the film. Instead, I got an idea for a scene after I began writing a manuscript, which took the form of a logbook. Finally, the suit was installed in a large room. Using thin lines and a dress form that I installed in the suit, I created the illusion that it was hovering in mid-air. More lighting was added, as well as some found objects, which I placed along the edges of the room.

The light goes out, and the suit disappears into the attic space, which is now dark. The door closes. My steps are heavy on the way down. I catch sight of one of the house’s paintings, one that I must have missed on the way up. A solitary dog’s head protrudes from what looks like a sand dune. The dog is completely alone. It’s looking up at something. What might be the sky occupies the greater portion of the painting. I continue to make my way down the stairs.

* There is no real beginning, for anything. And that means there can’t be a real end, either. A new thought begins where the last one left off. Like an artistic process. An excavation that begins by digging through the upper layers. The earth is more than dirt; it’s also moss, leaves, and dead animals, all mixed up with worms. Or, like the rings inside tree trunks. Dad showed them to us once during one of many excursions to the woods. He pointed at them with his finger. “Look, that is time, lots of time.” Suddenly the trees seemed more alive to me.

Francisco de Goya, The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters, from the Los Caprichos series of 1799.

“...the sleep of reason produces monsters.”

Francisco de Goya, Heads in Passage, 1819–1823

Francisco de Goya, Women Laughing, 1819–1823

Francisco de Goya, Saturn Devouring His Son, 1819–1823


Bad Taste, feature film, directed by Peter Jackson (New Zealand: WingNut Films, New Zealand Film Commission, 1987).


Francisco de Goya, Witches’ Sabbath, 1819–1823


Francisco de Goya, A Pilgrimage to San Isidro, 1819–1923


Stan Douglas, Overture, 1986, 16 mm film, black-and-white, sound, 7:00 loop.


Robert Gober, Untitled Leg, 1989–90


Francisco de Goya, The Dog, 1819–1823

Further references


Foreground: *Untitled*, 2018. Series of sculptures. Brick, mortar, sea salt, wall material (plaster, plywood, wood, paint), 57 x 51 x 64 cm and 51 x 50 x 64 cm.

Background: *Gradient_Black-White*, *Gradient_Grey-Blue*, and *Gradient_Yellow-Black*, 2018. Jacquard weave, each one measures 120 x 184 cm.

Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM2 Gallery, Malmö, 2018. Joakim Sandqvist
Gradient_Yellow-Black, 2018. Jaquard weave, 120 x 184 cm. Joakim Sandqvist
Prologue
This essay is divided into four sections, which do not necessarily need to be read in any particular order. The first is a technical section, in which I consider the relation between analogue and digital systems of communication. This is a field of research that has been important for my thinking about the shift from industrial to post-industrial that is underway in the Western world. It is also connected to a group of works I describe in the second section, for which I have been working with textiles woven on a digital loom. The third and fourth sections are about works that are more closely linked to the disappearance of industries typical of industrialisation, and the legacy and traces they leave behind. Today, work in post-industrial countries has become less connected to physical production, on the one hand because of automatisation and robotics, and on the other because of outsourcing to other parts of the globe. In this post-work era, we seem to romanticise the very idea of work, while simultaneously forgetting about it. Work seems to have taken on an almost existential dimension when every political party claims to be the workers' party.

I regard the descriptions of works in this text as a way of contextualising my practice in broader geopolitical and historical terms, to define the position from which I make art. I regard art as performative, the insertion of an act into a sequence of events. Materials and images come with histories and meanings, which I act upon. My works originate in the material they are made from. This means that I do not differentiate between content, form, and material.

SECTION 1
Digital and Analogue
The invention of electrified digital communication between machines and of machines that perform calculations by means of their inner workings are the root causes of what has been called a digital revolution. However, in contemporary discourse, the digital often seems to lack history, as though it is an entirely new phenomenon with no relation to the past. Naturally, in some regards, it is new, but that doesn’t mean it has no history. Digital machines originated in language and mathematics, and in broader terms, we could consider their history a history of differentiation. Ironically, in order to discuss digital technology in a meaningful way, we have to start by differentiating its possible meanings. Digital machine communication differs from discrete linguistic communication between humans in that the message is decoded by a machine rather than by a person. Although comparisons can be made, they should be made with a modicum of caution, as we are quite prone to projecting the qualities of machines onto humans, and vice versa. In order to speak about digital communication, we also need to define the notions of “digital” and “analogue.”

Discrete Machines
In his paper “A Mathematical Theory of Communication,” Claude E. Shannon addresses discrete and continuous systems. These terms can be translated into what we refer to as digital and analogue. A continuous signal can be simply defined as a physical phenomenon that is proportionally translated into
another phenomenon. An example of this would be a microphone, in which sound is translated into variations of electrical voltage through the movements of a membrane. This translation occurs immediately and continuously.

In order to produce a digital signal out of an analogue one, the analogue signal needs to be transformed by being sampled at discrete moments in time, to discrete values, which must then be compressed, quantified, and coded. Shannon classifies this type of system, in which a continuous signal is translated into a discrete one, as a “mixed” system.

A discrete system has a discrete source, such as one of the natural written languages. A continuous signal rendered discrete by a process of quantification could also be considered a discrete source. So, whether the system is regarded as mixed or discrete will depend on how its limits are defined. In everyday speech, mixed systems are often referred to as digital, as is the case with digital cameras. But in actuality, any system that is used to record physical phenomena is mixed.

“The fundamental problem of communication is that of reproducing at one point either exactly or approximately a message selected at another point. Frequently the messages have meaning; that is, they refer to or are correlated according to some system with certain physical or conceptual entities. These semantic aspects of communication are irrelevant to the engineering problem. The significant aspect is that the actual message is one selected from a set of possible messages. The system must be designed to operate for each possible selection, not just the one which will actually be chosen since this is unknown at the time of design.”

The “mathematical theory of communication” is a theory of communication between machines. As it does not address semantic interpretation, it is philosophically distinct from any discussion of communication between human beings. Nonetheless, this digital technology has great implications for human communication, both in terms of function and behaviour, and it might also impact the ways in which we create meaning. A change of this kind occurs in part on a structural level, and in part on a perceptual and cognitive level. Structurally, the flow of information changes and increases, which shortens distances and increases connectivity. Perception and cognition are altered as the result of the quality of novel information. Digital images and sounds have other characteristic features and aesthetic possibilities than analogue ones, which changes the way we experience them.

**Fidelity and Resolution**

“In the first place a continuously variable quantity can assume an infinite number of values and requires, therefore, an infinite number of binary digits for exact specification. This means that to transmit the output of a continuous source with exact recovery at the receiving point requires, in general, a channel of infinite capacity (in bits per second). Since, ordinarily, channels have a certain amount of noise, and therefore a finite capacity, exact transmission is impossible. This, however, evades the real issue. Practically, we are not interested in exact transmission when we have a continuous source, but only in transmission to within a certain tolerance.”

When translating an analogue signal to a digital one, the accuracy with which the digital signal represents the original is referred to as its fidelity. This fidelity depends on the amount of information included in the digital signal, that is, on the signal’s resolution. Noise appears in the analogue signal whenever it is translated from one physical phenomenon to another, like when a microphone converts sound into electrical voltage, but the environment in which the sound is created is also a source of noise. Noise can thus serve as an index of the site where the recording was made and of the equipment that was used. If you define noise as an aspect of the signal, then the resolution of an analogue signal would be infinite. A signal like that would be an impossibility, as it would require an infinite amount of information. Determining the limits of tolerance is a matter of defining the signal, or what is significant —what the message is. The separation of signal in relation to noise, then, is a matter of choice, a choice that could conceivably be made differently. In this way, digital communication can entail a reduction of the analogue signal, which in turn has consequences for the interpretation of the signal.

In 4’33” (1952), John Cage turns the audience’s learned patterns for the concept of music on its head. Having the ensemble prepare to play a piece of music produces tension and silent expectation. Then, this tension goes unreleased for three minutes and forty-two seconds. What appears at first to be silence gradually proves to be a cacophony of coughs, shoes scraping against the floor, and the breaths of an entire concert hall. Attention turns from the traditional instruments to the body as instrument, and the presence of other people—that is, the noise becomes the signal. What we consider to be a signal or not, then, depends on where our attention lies.

Noise is the signature of an analogue medium: the scratches in a record, the enlarged grains of silver in a photograph, or the dust stuck to a film in the cinema. This noise has been aestheticised and fetishised in our digital age of sampling and remixing. In a medium that appears to lack all limits and specificity, we constantly refer back to the analogue, perhaps to provide it with that specificity. In the music of the artist Burial, record player pops and cassette player hisses are almost equally essential to the music as the beats. The noise has been digitally sampled in order to be used as an instrument.
Discrete Human Communication

The argument could be made that human communication was first digitised with the arrival of literacy, in the sense that the written word affords language a discrete nature. However, spoken language can also be considered to be digital, as it consists of words, which are in turn made up of phonemes. The words categorise the things that we see, and are constructed out of combinations of discernible sounds produced by our oral and respiratory organs. These words can be translated into a discrete code, without any loss of information, as is demonstrated by written language. But spoken language is also more than words; it includes analogue aspects such as body language, vocal qualities, and context. If these contextual qualities influence the interpretation of the text, this means that the interpretation, and thus the entire act of communication, cannot be said to be fully discrete.

In “Signature Event Context,” Jacques Derrida argues against J.L. Austin’s theory of speech acts and the roles he assigns to presence and context within it. Derrida begins his critique by describing written language as a code, and thus as something that can be repeated. According to Derrida, this code can’t possibly be secret, as it is in the code’s nature that it should always be possible for third parties—that is, anyone—to duplicate and decode it. To be writing, it must function even in the absence of any specific recipient. This absence is described as a radical break with presence. He explains: “To write is to produce a mark that will constitute a sort of machine which is productive in turn, and which my future disappearance will not, in principle, hinder in its functioning, offering things and itself to be read and to be rewritten.\(^5\)

Derrida describes text as discrete, or digital. Interestingly enough, he refers to written language as a machine and avoids all discussion of the interpretation of the contents of the code. Perhaps written language can be regarded as a kind of machine, but the two points between which the message is sent aren’t machines—they are human beings. If the text is a machine, it is of a different kind than the one described by Shannon, because we perform the decoding, rather than some system that is carrying out internal digital communication. However, we should note that just like humans, machines are able to decode—that is, convert a code into another form—without interpreting the contents of the message. Derrida continues his argument by generalising this digital quality of writing, claiming that this structure applies not only to spoken language, but even “beyond semio-linguistic communication, for what the entire field of philosophy would call experience, even the experience of being: the above-mentioned ‘presence.’”\(^4\) He continues:

Let us consider any element of spoken language, be it a small or large unit. The first condition of its functioning is its delineation with regard to a certain code; but I prefer not to become too involved here with this concept of code which does not seem very reliable to me; let us say that a certain self-identity of this element (mark, sign, etc.) is required to permit its recognition and repetition. Through empirical variations of tone, voice, etc., possibly of a certain accent, for example, we must be able to recognize the identity, roughly speaking, of a signifying form.\(^5\)

Here, a shift occurs between code and signifying form. This is a shift in which a code, which is separated from content, is transformed into representation, which implies an interpretation of meaning. According to Derrida, this representation can only constitute itself by virtue of its own iterability.\(^5\) In his response to “Signature Event Context,” John Searle objects to Derrida’s critique of Austin. His main argument is that Derrida has misunderstood what it is that makes it possible for a text to function outside of its original context.\(^7\) Rather than iterability, Searle claims that the factor in question is the permanence of text. What Searle fails to acknowledge is that the permanence of text would always be in an indexical relationship with its origin, and thus its original context, if it were not for the fact that it is also iterable.

Derrida continues:

This structural possibility of being weaned from the referent or from the signified (hence from communication and from its context) seems to me to make every mark, including those which are oral, a grapheme in general; which is to say, as we have seen, the nonpresent remainder [restance] of a differential mark cut off from its putative “production” or origin. And I shall even extend this law to all “experience” in general if it is conceded that there is no experience consisting of pure presence but only of chains of differential marks.\(^8\)

What Derrida is describing here must be taken to be an extreme version of the digital, where everything can be divided into fundamental semantic components. If this were true, the world as we experience it would be essentially digital. At its core, Derrida’s theory rests on the notion that “signifying” is something precise, in the same way that “a” precisely represents or signifies “a.” The word “tree” signifies a tree, but there are many kinds of trees, and even if the various kinds have names, there is an infinite number of appearances any given kind of tree might take, which means that this could be taken to be continuous or analogue.

It can also be argued that iterability merely demonstrates that code can be transported in non-indexical ways. This does not prevent the new context from influencing the interpretation of the code’s content.
In his book *Languages of Art*, Nelson Goodman presents the difference between analogue and digital systems in terms of density and differentiation. Goodman describes analogue systems as semiotically and syntactically dense, while digital systems are semiotically and syntactically differentiated. If you follow his argument, it becomes apparent that he also includes, and is mainly referring to, the reading of systems, that is, interpretation. While Goodman does distinguish analogue systems from digital ones, he claims that in the end they are both read based on convention rather than representation. Goodman’s theory can be considered a lighter version of Derrida’s, because the idea that the reading of pictures is based on convention could also be applied to perception and experience. However, unlike code, convention opens the way to affording context a greater significance. Goodman’s separation of digital from analogue relies on taking the system out of its context. If the system is to incorporate interpretation, it must have an analogue, material context and form. Therefore, as regards interpretation, it is impossible to separate digital signals from their analogue forms and the environments in which they exist.

In visual art, there are many examples of how a text’s material form and context can play a vital role in determining how it will be read. For instance, we have Bruce Nauman’s neon signs, which orchestrate a dialectic between the content of the code and the connotations of the neon sign as form. Finding some unambiguous discrete or digital method of human communication would be difficult, as digital codes are always carried by some physical, analogue medium. If the context of this medium impacts the way we will perceive the code, this also means that our interpretations of it cannot be said to be discrete in any strict sense. Thus, we might rather speak of digital tendencies in communication and in our experience of the world. These tendencies are related to a way of thinking that involves differentiation and classification.

### SECTION 2

In the radio play *Das kalte Herz* (Heart of stone) by Walter Benjamin, the characters are transported from Wilhelm Hauff’s story of the same title to “Voice Land.”

As the play begins, the radio announcer is selecting a story to read when there is a sudden knock on the door of the studio. The characters from Hauff’s story enter and explain to the somewhat annoyed and surprised announcer that they want to go to Voice Land. One of the characters explains that it has become fashionable for characters in stories to travel to Voice Land, where they can speak to thousands of children at once, instead of only one at a time. The announcer responds that there is a requirement for entry into Voice Land: you have to give up everything you own and everything you are, except for your voice.

Benjamin writes this transition from one medium to another into his adaptation of Hauff’s story, thereby offering commentary on the requirements and qualities of this new medium.

By indicating how it is recontextualised, and thus how its meaning is shifted, Benjamin produces a historical dialectic. This way of thinking is characteristic of my practice. I think of these explorations as a kind of archaeology of mediums.

### Digital Weaves

I have based a series of works on the use of the Jacquard loom, a mechanical precursor of electrified digital technology. As with early computers, the information fed into the loom is stored on punch cards, on which a hole represents a 1, and no hole represents a 0. The colours of the pixels correspond to the colours of the threads and serve as patterns for the weaves. Like a digital screen, each weave is a coordinate system, where discrete points are assigned discrete values, but the weaves also possess contrasting and haptically rich material qualities. I imagine the weaves to be like enlarged versions of the sensors in a digital camera. The information captured by these sensors is not naturally adapted to our way of experiencing representation. As such, the information they gather has to be processed in various ways before we can experience it as an accurate representation of the world. The machine’s information is adapted for our purposes, but the machine perceives things differently than we do. My work *Gradient_Black-White* (2018) is a woven representation of a gradient. Its front consists of nothing but black and white thread, with a white warp. Because of the discrete nature of the weave, the gradient, which is a continuous curve, must be divided into black and white points. To ensure that this won’t result in a stripy separation of patterns, artificial noise (dither) has to be introduced to the weave. This is a common practice in digital image processing, as it makes us perceive the images as better representations. Our perceptual apparatus is more sensitive to patches of single colours (banding) in images than it is to noise. The result can be likened to pointillism. As more or less all analogue experiences of the world involve noise, our minds are able to filter it out. The differentiation is performed through the use of an algorithm that simulates white noise. Because of the limited colour palette and resolution, the weave will still have some patterning in parts of the gradient.

I sent the pattern file to a factory in California, where it was woven on a computerised Jacquard loom and then mailed back to me as a completed textile. The factory wove a strip with its name at the top of the fabric, and at the bottom, added my name along with the name of the file.
An artist who was an early explorer of digital representation is Alighiero Boetti. His works incorporate monotonous repetition and explorations of sets for possible representation. He constantly returned to grids, maps, copies, text, and letters used outside of text. Many of these works are titled *Order and Disorder* and bring to mind ideas about signals and noise from information theory. His embroidered maps of the world have a chaotic and organic material quality, but also point to the digital quality of flags as a system for dividing land. The maps are a framed by sequences of letters, which often form messages that explain where they were produced or give the artist’s name. Most of Boetti’s embroidered works were handmade by craftswomen in Afghanistan. By leaving decisions regarding aspects like colour up to the workers, he integrated the production process into the form of the pieces.

His work *Alternando da uno a cento e viceversa* (Alternating one to one hundred and vice versa), which was made in 1993, consists of woven rugs that have been divided into one hundred squares, which have each in turn been divided into another hundred squares. The squares can be either black or white and function just like pixels in that they can be used to produce
Foreground: *Untitled*, 2018. Series of sculptures. Brick, mortar, sea salt, wall material (plaster, plywood, wood, paint), 57 x 51 x 64 cm, 100 x 49 x 42 cm, and 53 x 51 x 42 cm. Background: *AF-TT-4x6*, 2018. Jacquard weave, 58 x 78 cm. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM2 Gallery, Malmö, 2018. Joakim Sandqvist
different pictures. These pixels can also be regarded as an enlarged illustration of how the weave itself is constructed. The work suggests a method of representation that seems almost unlimited in scope. Digital representation as a form of representative atomism. In his short story “The Library of Babel,” Jorge Luis Borges offers a similar description of written language. Borges’s narrator describes an enormous library built as a succession of hexagonal rooms, all filled with 410-page books that contain every possible combination of twenty-five symbols. This means that most of the books in the library are filled with illegible nonsense, but it also means that the library must contain every legible book that could ever be written, including accurate biographies of all the people who will live in the future, and translations of these into every language ever spoken. In *Quiddities*, Willard Van Orman Quine notes that Borges’s library could also have been written in binary code.

SECTION 3

Bricks
My first memory of Malmö is sitting on a balcony on the fourth floor in the Western Harbour district. Down below the balcony, a canal streamed towards the distant ocean horizon in one direction, and disappeared between the buildings in the other. Beyond the point where the canal disappeared between the buildings, you could see the Turning Torso towering over all the other buildings, twisted like an abstracted torso in contrapposto, a gigantic human figure gazing out to sea. The buildings in the area were built in a variety of styles, but there is still no doubt that they were built recently, and at the same time. There was a sense that this whole area had no context, as though it were all a movie set. Perhaps this impression was reinforced by the fact that I had just passed through a desert of gravelly car parks on the way to this balcony, an area that separated this neighbourhood from the rest of the city.

Several years later, I was walking along the beach in Malmö when I noticed that it was full of red bricks. They had all been given unique, rounded shapes by the erosive force of the ocean. You almost couldn’t tell that this was the same beach as last summer; the winter storms had hit it hard, and it looked like a miniature of an eroded coastline. The bricks were balancing on the edge of fitting in perfectly and seeming out of place in this environment. I collected some of them and took them with me to my studio. There, I thought about where they might have come from and how long they had been in the ocean, and these musings soon led me on to searching through history books and archives for clues.

In the thirteenth century, a city was founded on the coast of what is now known as Sweden. It took the name Malmö from a church village further inland, but because of the shallow waters that surround the city, it didn’t have a real harbour. The building of the harbour didn’t start until the eighteenth century, and by the mid-nineteenth century, the city had begun to grow at an impressive rate. The harbour was constructed by dredging the ocean floor and making landfills. At the turn of the twentieth century, Malmö had become an industrial city, and it was also a city of workers and a stronghold for the Social Democrat party. The local machining, textile, and shipbuilding industries were strong. At one point, the shipyard was one of the largest civilian facilities of its kind in the world. The harbour district, where the shipyard was located, was continuously developed until the 1980s, when all civilian shipbuilding in the city ceased. At the dawn of the ’90s, the city was facing an imminent crisis, both in terms of its finances and in terms of its identity. The industries collapsed in the face of competition from new, cheaper markets. As a result of this crisis, the city’s identity shifted. This industrial city of workers became a “city of knowledge.” A new university was built in the location of the old West Harbour, on top of the landfill. Closest to the sea, where the shipyard used to be, housing for the city’s upper middle class was built. Set apart from the city centre by a small distance, it became like a suburb for wealthy people. In the middle of this residential area, a high-rise was raised to symbolise the new city of Malmö, now that the old landmark—the largest gantry crane in the world—had been shipped off to Korea. In Ulsan, the crane’s new home, it is referred to as the “tears of Malmö,” as it is said that the people of the city wept when it left the harbour on a barge.

I continued my search for information about why the landfills contain so much brick, beginning at the city planning office, and then continuing at the Malmö city property registry. There, I come across an archive of about twenty folders containing documentation from surveys carried out on the site before the new residential area was built. The documentation from when the landfills were made seems to be almost nonexistent. There are records of many industries that were located in the area, but there is very little information on the particulars of their activities and the possible waste they may have generated. The survey’s investigation followed two paths: First, attempts were made to gather information about the activities at the site, particularly in the shipbuilding industry, and to use this data to chart what might be in the ground. Second, a more geological method was applied, in which the researchers simply dug in the ground to see what they would find.

As I made my way through the folders, a fax message from 1993, sent by Alex Milwe of the Occam & Morton consulting firm in Newcastle, caught my eye. He starts out with a personal observation: “It must be a sign of growing old, I occasionally see the names of
ships in Fairplay going to the scrapyard. Now they are building houses on one of my favourite shipyards! 'sic transit .......’” He then goes on to list various toxins and chemicals that could have been used in the ship-building industry between 1940 and 1980.

In one section of a report from 2001, there is an account of “collected impressions of smells and sights during a sample pit survey.” The first thing described is the smell of tar and oil. This is followed by an inventory of the various objects found in the pit: “In several pits, the landfill was coloured a greyish black, as though it contained oil or tar. There were black patches in the landfill; these were probably small quantities of crushed asphalt. Most of the pits contained brick, and some of them also yielded other demolition waste, such as iron rebars and concrete.” He concludes: “The presence of demolition waste suggests that the black patches are asphalt from demolished streets and blocks within the city.”

This residential area is like those found in most other cities: built on top of an older part of the city. The difference here is that the demolished parts of the city were used as material for the creation of new land in Öresund, which means that the land’s history is fairly short. Brick has been a common building material in Malmö for ages, because of the limited access to stone in the province and its abundance of clay. Ironically enough, the clay was quarried from the ground in the region and fired into bricks, in which form it served as buildings for a time, before being demolished and used as ground filler once more. Negatives, that is, ponds, exist in many locations across the province because of the great quantity of clay that has been quarried.

The oldest evidence of bricks is from around the time when humans first began to settle in permanent dwellings and abandoned the nomadic lifestyle. Bricks have been made in more or less the same way, in almost every culture, for more than five thousand years. The right angles of a brick set it apart from nature, but its size and shape are nonetheless closely related to the human body. A brick is made to be graspable in one hand, so that the other hand is free to handle the trowel. When they are stacked to make a wall, the result is a grid of bricks. Bricks have a digital quality reminiscent of that of the building blocks in the computer game Minecraft. Their mathematical geometry gives bricks an ideal, standardised shape.

However, unlike Minecraft’s building blocks, real bricks are materially homogenous and can be reshaped, divided, sculpted, and fragmented into smaller parts. As a result of the time they’ve spent in the ocean, the bricks washed ashore on the beach in Malmö have begun an entropic process—a journey from culture back into nature.

I’ve been collecting these bricks for several years, and I’ve concluded that the best time of year to find them is early spring. By then, the winter storms will have flushed in large quantities of bricks, the weather will have turned milder, and the bricks will no longer be hidden by ice or snow. In early May, the season comes to an end, when the city sends big excavators in to restore the beaches after the winter storms, to make them look like you’d expect. The bricks always disappear during this yearly restoration. Whether this occurs as a result of the digging or through some process of deliberate removal, I do not know.

The Forgotten Space

In his book Fish Story, Allan Sekula discusses how the ocean and maritime trade of the twentieth century have been forgotten in political, aesthetic, and social terms, despite the enormous influence it’s had on the financial structures of the world. The invention most responsible for this change in the global economy, according to Sekula, is the “containerization of cargo movement.” This invention was made in the United States in the 1950s and led to the adoption a new global standard for containerised transport during the ‘60s. Sekula explains: “By reducing loading and unloading time and greatly increasing the volume of cargo in global movement, containerisation links peripheries to centres in a novel fashion, making it possible for industries formerly rooted to the centre to become restless and nomadic in their search for cheaper labour.”

Factories became mobile, like ships, and the ships became seamlessly integrated with trucks and trains. In this way, a fluid network of production was established. With containerisation, the regularity of freight introduced by the steam engine was perfected through the establishment of a new, boxed order. Containerisation conceals the goods being freighted, but it also makes the harbour less visible, and more distant from the city, which causes it to become rather peripheral in the minds of the citizens.

Sekula argues against the common notion that computers and telecommunications are the sole engines powering the third industrial revolution, and claims that the marine dimension will continue to be highly significant:

I am often struck by the ignorance of intellectuals in this respect: the self-congratulating conceptual aggrandizement of “information” frequently is accompanied by peculiar erroneous beliefs: among these is the widely held quasi-anthropomorphic notion that most of the world’s cargo travels as people do, by air. This is an instance of the blinkered narcissism of the information specialist: a “materialism” that goes no further than “the body.” In the imagination emails and airmail come to bracket the totality of global movement,
Appendix 5 of Karl-Gustav Möller, *Markundersökning i Västra hamnen, Malmö, Delrapport 1 f d Kockumsområdet* [Soil site survey of the West Harbour district, Malmö, subsection 1, the previous Kockums area] (Malmö: Miljöförvaltningen Malmö Stad, 1993), 15.
Joakim Sandqvist

with the airplane taking care of everything that is heavy. Thus the proliferation of air-courier companies and mail order catalogues serving the professional, domestic, and leisure needs of the managerial and intellectual classes does nothing to bring consciousness down to earth, or turn it in the direction of the sea, the forgotten space.\textsuperscript{14}

Since Sekula wrote \textit{Fish Story}, in 1995, the distance to the harbour has continued to increase throughout the West. At the same time, the mass of freighting and material production has expanded, while private commerce is increasingly being carried out on the internet. Goods seem to just appear out of thin air in our “dematerialised” information economy. Containerisation is not the antithesis of an economy based on digital communication; rather, they depend on each other. To put it loosely, we might describe containerisation as a digitalisation of shipping, which is carried out by dividing it into separate units.

SECTION 4

\textbf{Jeans}

“What we must understand is that a piece of clothing gives form to an existent body, while a painting gives form to a non-existent body.”

— Tristan Garcia\textsuperscript{15}

Denim is a durable fabric, in which the weft is passed under two or more warps. The warp tends to be dyed indigo, while the weft remains white. This means that one side is dominated by blue warp, and the other by white weft. Since the blue dye does not penetrate the thread fully, the thread’s core remains white. This is what produces the characteristic fading that occurs when blue denim garments are worn through use.

Blue jeans as we know them first appeared in the middle of the nineteenth century, in California. A Bavarian immigrant began to produce trousers for local gold prospectors, whose work in the mines subjected their clothes to a lot of wear and tear. Jeans were designed for utility and as such were associated with hard-working manual labourers. In the early twentieth century, jeans and protective denim overalls began to be worn by farmers in the western United States. The garment wasn’t worn outside of the work context until the 1920s, when a group of artists in Santa Fe adopted jeans as a kind of anti-fashion statement, by which they were “identifying themselves with the ruggedness, the directness, and the earthiness of the labourer, and were placing themselves as a part of the Western scene.”\textsuperscript{16}

In the 1930s, jeans began to spread to the eastern regions of the US. Tourists to the east coast, enjoying their then-fashionable holidays on dude ranches, began to wear jeans. Levi’s ran an ad in \textit{Vogue} that proclaimed that “true Western chic was invented by cowboys.”\textsuperscript{17} During World War II, large quantities of work clothes were needed for the war industries, and jeans were declared essential goods in order to meet this demand. Work in the factories was regarded in a positive light, and jeans became a garment associated with patriotism. After the war, jeans were no longer fashionable. On the contrary, they had begun to be considered anti-fashion, and would soon be associated with youth, freedom, and the spirit of rebellion. For a while, this freedom was a privilege of youth, and thought to be harmless. But in the early 50s, a more outspoken jeans-wearing rebel appeared, unable to find his place within the conformist zeitgeist of the Cold War–era. This was the rebel Marlon Brando portrayed in \textit{The Wild One} (1953) and who James Dean played in \textit{Rebel without a Cause} (1955). By the close of the 50s, a new brand of rebel saw the light of day: the bohemian, or “beatnik.” This was more of an urban intellectual type, who began to wear jeans as a deliberate statement against the materialistic and conformist society of the times. In the 60s, sales of jeans multiplied many times over, as they became a symbol of a youth culture that rejected the social norms of the mainstream in a society that was growing more and more polarised.

Jeans themselves were also becoming much more varied and personalised. Worn jeans eventually shape themselves around the body and begin to show traces of the wearer’s life in their worn spots, patches, stains, and tears. Apart from this personalisation, which occurs naturally over time, the garments also began to be decorated with anything from leather and silk patches to rhinestones and paint. During the 70s, jeans began to need to be worn-in and personalised in order to continue to serve their function as a kind of anti-fashion. Jeans were so accepted by the mainstream by this time that Jimmy Carter was photographed in a pair when he ran for president. They had simply become a symbol of the US in general. During the 80s, jeans continued to be gradually incorporated into commercial fashion. Predistressed jeans began to be developed in the 80s, but they weren’t widely adopted until the 90s. The weathering was produced mainly by washing the trousers with stones for extended periods of time—a prefabrication of experience, which fashionably referred to the history of denim as anti-fashion. The indexical relation between the pattern of wear on a pair of jeans and their actual wearer had been exchanged for an icon of this relation. Around the time jeans began to be prefaded to present \textit{the} appearance of an active lifestyle, a large portion of the Western textile industry was relocated to places where labour was cheaper.

Prefaded jeans are still being made, and there are new methods for distressing them being invented all the time. As the cost of labour has decreased, the option to use labour-intensive methods has become more viable.
Today, many pairs of jeans are hand-distressed in a process where a reference pair is copied by a worker who treats the garments with chemicals, sandpaper, and other tools. This mimetic relationship transforms an index into an icon, which is produced by the hard-working labourer that it once symbolised. The index of the craft that produces this image is hidden by what it symbolises. Documenting the work of producing a pair of worn jeans as it is carried out gives rise to the possibility of an inverted reading. Jeans are a symbol of America, freedom, and work, but what does this mean when people in the West go to work in front of a computer in a pair of jeans that has been distressed manually in another part of the world? Does the popularity of beaten-up jeans and work wear in general suggest a nostalgia for a kind of work that is disappearing in the West?
Critical & Pedagogical Studies

MFA, Year 2

Karen Bohøj
Karen Bohøj

Objects as Pedagogical Tools: An Investigation of How Objects Can Activate Storytelling and Exchange

My exam project, entitled “Objects as Pedagogical Tools,” consisted of two parts. The first part was a workshop, held two times, in two different places, once with participants from a younger generation and once with an older generation. The second part was a public event that included a talk, a screening of my film piece TOVE (2018), and a conversation around the conducted workshops. Through exercises and dialogue, the workshop functioned as a practical investigation to learn about how objects can activate storytelling and what the meaning of passing stories and objects down through generations is. There was a specific focus on pedagogy as exchange, what this means, and how it can be activated through objects. I turn here to the ideas of educator and artist Pablo Helguera, who argues that “pedagogy and education are about putting emphasis on the embodiment of the process, on the dialogue, on the exchange, on intersubjective communication, and on human relationships. The product may or may not be necessary or important. But it cannot happen if this exchange does not take place.” Dialogue and exchange continue to be my main points of focus and are explored both in the film and in all the conducted case studies.

The aim of the exam workshop was to emphasise the dialogue around an object, what memory and emotions it can trigger, and the effect of exchanging and passing objects down through generations. This has been an ongoing investigation during my time in the Critical & Pedagogical Studies programme, and I have personally engaged with these issues through conversations with my grandmother, Tove Irene Rasmussen, about objects. These exchanges led to the film piece TOVE, which is about her, and which was presented in the second part of my exam project. During the time I spent with my grandmother, I realised that the process of getting to know her was also a process of getting to know myself. I became interested in hearing her story and understanding her current life situation in order to better understand my own story and where I come from. Talking about objects was a way for me to start the conversation around feelings and emotions, especially related to topics of loss and death. Writer and feminist theorist Sara Ahmed talks about objects and emotions as a way to understand the world. She writes, “emotions are always ‘about’ something therefore they involve a direction or they are orientated towards an object. The object can both have a material and nonmaterial existence (e.g. a memory). It is a way of trying to understand the world and objects can be seen as a way of comprehending the world.” My workshops were influenced by this and consisted of both material and nonmaterial exercises, where the participants worked with both the physical materialisation and nonmaterial forms of dialogue.

I will present previous workshops as case studies for my exploration. Each of these case studies are connected to one another and have influenced each other. They use different methods of exploration, but what has always been central to my research around the object has been to learn and explore through practical activities. My exam project is the culmination of all the different elements of research conducted during my time at Malmö Art Academy. I will outline these elements and view them as case studies for my exploration both before and during the exam project. Each case study has informed my practice, and in the following section I will outline the research questions, aims, methods, and theories in relation to each exploration. I will connect the case studies to my ongoing practice around storytelling and exchange, which has materialised in the film about my grandmother.
By looking at my own working method, I will comment on my relationship to my camera and how it has functioned as my pedagogical tool.

I will begin by introducing the exam project, including how it originated and how it is situated in my artistic practice.

The Anchor of My Work
The point of departure for my project was my grandmother’s stone collection. All the stones are kept in a beautiful bowl, which stands in my grandmother’s living room. I wondered where she collected all the stones from, and so I asked her. She replied that she had not collected them but rather inherited them from her sister, who had collected them during her stay in Baghdad in the 1960s. I found inheriting a stone collection interesting, as I consider the action of collecting stones to be a very personal one and to be a symbol of a memory from a certain place. Furthermore, my grandmother told me that she had saved all the letters she and her sister exchanged during the years when her sister lived abroad. My grandmother, who wrote on a typewriter, kept a copy of all the letters she sent off and saved every letter she received. In a file, she has the full correspondence between them. I read the letters and explored my own family archive. My grandmother and her sister exchanged everyday thoughts and reflections on family problems and future dreams. The file is a personal time capsule, and the format of the letters makes them easy to engage with. I thought to myself that I probably never would have heard these stories or read the letters if I had not asked my grandmother where the stones originated from. I then began asking for the stories and meanings behind many of my grandmother’s belongings. I found it easier to start a conversation around an object and was able to ask questions that I had never asked before. The object became the centre for conversation.3

I became interested in how dialogue could be passed on through an object and if it was possible to materialise this passing. I collaborated with fellow student Kezia Pritchard, who has a similar interest in storytelling, and together we created the workshop “Dialogue Impressions.”4 It was an attempt to materialise the dialogue that participants had around an object. I learned that by using a simple method, the participants were able to share personal and meaningful stories with each other. The object triggered the story. The exchange happened sitting back-to-back, with one person telling the story while the listener moulded a new object in play dough.

These two experiences—conversations with my grandmother and the “Dialogue Impressions” workshop—have helped form my practice and exam project. They have led into several further explorations around dialogue, objects, exchange, and storytelling.
Case Study 1: Krabbesholm Højskole, Skive, Denmark

Title: “The Way Objects Do”—an introduction on how to work with the object through materialisation, representation, and display.

Aim: The aim of this workshop was to introduce the participants to a broader understanding of how objects are situated in both an art and an everyday context and how their meanings and functions can shift in relation to display. These areas of interest started with my own reflection on my grandmother’s belongings and how the meaning of her objects will change when they have to leave her house one day. The workshop participants were asked to translate an object into a new material through the means of dialogue. The participants explored how an object, chosen by them, could be read in various ways depending on representation and material. The workshop revolved around a collective exploration of the following questions: How do we translate a description of an object into a new material? How do things become or feel “alive”? How can the meaning or function of an object change through display and mediation?

Description: My internship at Krabbesholm Højskole consisted of a five-day workshop with twenty-two art students aged between twenty and twenty-five. I introduced three exercises throughout the week, each building on the previous one. The group had been at the school for four months, knew each other well, and while they had various approaches to art, they were all practitioners in some way.

Method: This workshop used practical exercises to explore the object, building upon existing artworks and mimicking different ways of working. We explored different working methodologies such as Joseph Kosuth’s and Fred Wilson’s methods of display, along with the texts “The Cares of a Family Man” by Franz Kafka and Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things by the philosopher Jane Bennett.5

New materialism was introduced by exploring Vibrant Matter. The text aims to create awareness of the human being’s and the world’s materiality. This materiality consists of impulses that affect the human and of which the human is also a part. It is a vital materialism that is essential for our being in the world.5 In relation to this, I wished to emphasise some of Bennett’s key points and explain her notion of “thing-power,” which we explored during the workshop at Krabbesholm Højskole. The students were asked to find an object that, to them, had “power.” It was their decision what kind of power it possessed and what agency the object had. First, they explored thing-power as form, material, and visual expression, by describing a physical object to each other in pairs. While one person described, the other moulded the object in clay, and the outcome of this exercise was a presentation of the two objects placed next to one another. As a group, we discussed and compared the objects and their different agencies. To most of the students, the new moulded object had the most thing-power. It was abstract and ambiguous in its appearance, which was appealing both visually and in terms of agency. For the next step, they worked with thing-power in terms of display. They were asked to recreate new objects in relation to the original one and to explore the context of representation.

There was a focus on how the object situated itself and potentially created new meaning when interacting with its surroundings. Bennett describes thing-power not as what the object is, but what it can do. She questions when it is that things and objects become alive and active, arguing that they become alive only when they interact with the world.7 In the workshop, we noticed how some of the things seem to interact with each other and some with us. We discussed how both interactions made them alive, but also how it was subjective when determining which interaction created the most thing-power.

According to Bennett, all things, including humans, animals, and material objects, have agent, which means that all things interact and connect with each other. This connection is what Bennett calls “collections.” The collections have power and can be sent and received by both human and nonhuman material:

Its efficacy or agency always depends on the collaboration, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and forces. A lot happens to the concept of agency once nonhuman things are figured less as social constructions and more as actors, and once humans themselves are assessed not as autonomous but as vital materialities.8

The term “collections” moves the focus from human beings towards a broader understanding of the organic and nonorganic materials that the world consists of. The human being is imbued with materiality. Because of the collections, the human being is both affected by and affects itself materially both inside and outside the body.9 Researcher Olivia Dasté also acknowledges the importance of what an object can do over what it is. She is afraid to open her grandmother’s suitcase years after her death. What if the contents cannot live up to her memory? What if the objects cannot do what she expects them to do? She states, “It feels dangerous to open it. Memories evolve with you, through you. Objects don’t have this fluidity; I fear that the contents of the suitcase might betray my grandmother.”10 Although the contents of the suitcase will always be the same, memory is always in flux and not static like an object. An object connected to memory will not always fit with our perception of time.
Case Study 2:  
Club 92, Odder, Denmark

Title: “How Can a Man Be a Rock?”—an exploration of what objects represent and how they reflect memory, time, and identity.

Aim: This workshop’s aim was to investigate how personal storytelling could be triggered through objects. I wanted to explore how the methods I used with my grandmother could be shared by other women in her age group. Together the participants and I shared personal stories both with and without an object as a starting point for conversation. The participants were also asked to reflect on the value of passing on an object to the next generation. The dialogue focused on exploring the following questions: What is the difference between telling a story from memory and from an object? What does it mean to receive objects and pass them on? How is the object related to your identity?

Description: A three-hour workshop with five women from Club 92, a women’s club my grandmother co-founded in 1992. Each person brought along an object that meant something special to them.

Method: Through dialogue, each participant had the opportunity to share a story around a special object. I facilitated the conversation and all participants contributed. Every object brought led back to the owner’s parents, and four specifically related to their fathers.

Bennett notes that objects with thing-power often have the “advantage of calling to mind a childhood sense of the world as filled with all sorts of animate beings, some human, some not, some organic, some not.” This makes me think of our relation to objects and identity. How do we talk about ourselves through something else, such as an object? The participants in the workshop used the objects to connect themselves to their histories. My grandmother brought along a doll bed that was handmade by her father. It reminded her that she came from a poor family, which made both of her parents very creative, as they were limited to using, and reusing, only the materials readily available to them. She expressed feeling proud of her heritage, which is a large part of who she is and how she thinks today. Another participant similarly felt proud of her heritage and the fact that she came from a wealthy family. She brought along a text and images that proved her father was the founder of the first dairy cooperative in Denmark. She related very much to her father’s story, which had become part of her story. Through the documentation, she could represent herself to the outside world.

Psychologist Robert Kegan talks about the “I” in his book *The Evolving Self* as a “meaning-making organism” and the method by which a human organism organises meaning. It is not the person who makes meaning, but rather the activity of being a person is the activity of meaning-making. He expands on this notion by referring to how we as infants physically grasp for things in order to understand the world and ourselves. To try and recognise and be recognised is an activity we continue to do for the rest of our lives. Besides the physical activity of grasping and seeing, meaning-making also includes social activity and survival activity. The activity of grasping for things in order to understand and to tell stories about ourselves to others was explored in this workshop. Starting with the object, each participant shared personal stories from their life. It was my impression that, for three of the participants especially, the object was closely related to, or was represented through, how they described themselves to the group.

With her recently published book on decluttering one’s life, artist and writer Margareta Magnusson coined the term “Swedish death cleaning.” Essentially, it describes the practice of organising your belongings while you are still alive so others will not find them to be a burden when you pass away. Her book covers the idea of this type of death cleaning and how to put it into practice in one’s own life. Magnusson is not sentimental about getting rid of things. She sees death cleaning as a duty, and believes leaving this job to the people you leave behind is unacceptable. She talks about how she does not want to be a burden and how “living smaller is a relief,” both for her as well as her family. During my workshop, one of the participants expressed the same concern about leaving objects behind. She used the expression “passing something on from a warm hand.” Instead of one day having to empty a house full of things without knowing what her intentions were for the objects, her children and family would prefer that she do most of it herself while she is alive. Magnusson agrees and states, “If you don’t death clean and show people what is valuable, once you die there will be a big truck that takes all the wonderful things you have to an auction (at best) or a dump.” This statement relates closely to my work with my grandmother. She has the same fear. According to Magnusson, the effect of passing things on is that something ordinary can become extraordinary through time. I experienced how I got to know my grandmother and myself through the stories the objects activated. During the workshop, I noticed how the objects became the participants’ tools for representation. I could relate to this in the way the footage of my grandmother in my video work TOVE was part of my documentation for representing myself.
Case Study 3:
Rude Strand Højskole, Odder, Denmark

Title: “Objects as Pedagogical Tools, Session 1” — an investigation of how objects can function as carriers for storytelling and exchange between generations.

Aim: This workshop, which was part of my exam project, was the culmination of previous workshops and experiences and allowed me to draw comparisons between older and younger generations. I wanted to explore the differences between narratives around the same objects presented to two different age groups, specifically the two age groups that my grandmother and I are part of. I chose to work with these groups in order to expand the research beyond my grandmother and I. By sharing my own interests and work with my grandmother, I wished to inspire the participants to build up connections to their own relatives after the workshop, if it made sense to them. The exercises reflected on the meaning of passing on stories down through generations, starting with an object and based on the following questions: How can storytelling, dialogue, and exchange between generations be prompted by objects? Can an object function as a pedagogical tool and activate learning? Is the meaning, emotion, function, and purpose of an object described differently by two different generations?

Description: Ninety-minute workshop with eight participants. The participants were between seventy and eighty years old. They were enrolled in a week-long course at Rude Strand Højskole (Folk High School). The small number of participants was suitable because it created an intimate environment where we could easily share thoughts as a whole group as well as divide into two smaller groups. Especially for older generations, hearing can be a challenge in group work, but it is easier to feel included when you are a part of a smaller group.16

Method: Through a dialogical approach, the intent was for participants to exchange stories and reflections among themselves as well as to activate a learning situation that would take place outside the workshop, with the people who meant something to them. Based on previous experience from the workshops with Krabbe’s Højskole and Club 92, I made the decision to preselect objects to discuss. I wanted to see how an initial encounter with an unfamiliar object could potentially activate personal memory. The conditions for this workshop were different than for the others, both in terms of the time frame and the fact that the participants were only at the school for a week and most likely did not bring many valuable objects with them.

The twenty-one objects used in the workshop were chosen by me and included seven abstract objects, seven everyday objects with a particular function, and seven time-based objects. This categorisation was, of course, based on my experience of the objects, which needs to be taken into consideration, as it had an impact on the workshop in various ways. For one, it made it possible for me to compare the reading of the same objects by the two generations. One of the objects was a plastic clip. The older generation described this as an object that did not exist when they were children and entered their home in the 1950s. The younger generation described it as an object used to seal a lunch bag. It showed me how we use language, how we adjust our language in relation to who we are talking to, and how we share the same references with our own generation. But the fact that I chose the objects also meant that I took control, potentially narrowing the exploration, as the selection was based on my own presumptions. The control on the one hand affected the workshop negatively, but on the other hand it created a clear workshop frame where everyone who was interested could attend without having to bring along objects. It was comfortable for the participants to engage with the objects, and this comfortableness encouraged them to start thinking around the object. Beginning with impersonal objects was a good “ice breaker” to get them talking about personal objects and what they mean. The method was another way of connecting to Robert Kegan’s previously mentioned theory around meaning-making and how we grasp for things to understand and create meaning. I placed the objects on a table and the participants were able to grasp any object they wanted. Some deliberately chose objects they did not know the function of to try to create meaning and give the object a purpose.

This workshop allowed me to notice the differences between more objective observation (as objective as it can get) and more subjective observation. These differences were visible both in the participants’ descriptions of the objects and also when they had to decide whether or not their partner had correctly guessed the object they were describing. For example, one of the participants sat with a book in her hands, which was a poetry collection. Even though the other participant kept guessing that it was a magazine, a book, and so on, she would not accept the answer because the other person did not say “poetry collection.” It revealed how a personal relationship and experience with an object informs our impressions and views of it. This workshop reflected on personal meaning-making and the subjectivity of what made sense to each participant.
Case Study 4:
Eriksminde Efterskole, Odder, Denmark

Title: “Objects as Pedagogical Tools, Session 2” — an investigation of how objects can function as carriers for storytelling and exchange between generations.

Aim: This was the second iteration of the workshop first run at Rude Strand Højskole. Therefore, the aim and research questions for this workshop are the same as those for Case Study 3.

Description: Ninety-minute workshop with sixteen participants. All participants were sixteen years old and enrolled in a year-long course at Eriksminde Efterskole (Folk High School), where they lived and studied art-related subjects. This meant that the participants already had a shared language and common ground. They were comfortable around each other and found it easy to engage with the exercises and share thoughts and ideas.

Method: In all the workshops, it was important to me that the participants felt it made sense for them to take part in the exercises. This was especially true during the final exercise, when the “thought exchange” was brought into play. This was an attempt to encourage a potential exchange outside of the workshop with someone who meant something to each participant, but only if it was meaningful. I made the decision to include this part of the workshop based on my own experience of the process of exchanging stories with my grandmother. Personal exchanges that take place right in front of you and the histories told first-hand by someone you have a relationship with are the kind of knowledges that you cannot gain from any history book.

The first two exercises of this workshop were easy to engage with, just as it was for the older generation. During the final exercise, however, the younger generation stood out from the older generation, as they all chose to mould an object, whereas the older generation preferred talking about the object instead of moulding. Many of them focused on objects that told a story about themselves or their parents or grandparents.

Some participants also took this opportunity to recreate an object that they had lost or remembered from their childhood. One participant moulded the sandal he had been wearing for the past year — the sandal he had walked all his memories and experiences into while living at Eriksminde Efterskole. He wanted to use the sandal as a symbol to tell his younger brother about these experiences. Another student recreated a name tag that he remembered making as a gift for his sister when he was younger. He did not know if the name tag still existed, but he wanted to recreate it because it was the first gift he remembered giving.

I left the participants with the personal decision of whether or not they wanted to initiate an exchange with the person they had made the object for. As the facilitator of the two workshops, I did not feel it was my job to force this contact, but rather to inspire and encourage it through the exercises as well as by sharing my own experiences. Although I received both written and verbal comments from participants and audiences following the workshops, the effect of the exchange outside the workshops and the film screening that occurred a few days later is difficult to measure. It was my impression that the workshops and film screening for many participants were an eye opener that had the effect of encouraging them to create connections with their own immediate family.

Reflection on the Case Studies
Psychologist and writer Martin Seligman says that what creates joy and meaning in life is to know that there is something that is bigger than one’s own life. That one is a part of something. Through documentation and objects, this something can be made visual. Artist Susan Hiller supports this by saying that human beings seek immortality and meaning through objects. These ideas relate to my own process of documenting my grandmother as a way to preserve her in my life after she dies. My grandmother expresses in my film TOVE that, to her, knowing her history calms her because it reassures her that there has been something before her and that there will be something after her. In the workshop at Eriksminde Efterskole with the sixteen-year-olds, one of the participants expressed that the object she inherited gave her the same feeling, that is, that it reminded her that there has been something before her and life will go on after. It made her feel part of the world. Philosopher Jacques Derrida points to the intimacy between being and following: “To be (anything, anyone) is always to be following (something, someone), always to be in response to call from something, however nonhuman it may be.” This quote highlights the importance of how our own being is connected to what has been before.

During my exam workshops, it was interesting for me to experience the differences in what mattered to the older and the younger generations. When the older generation had to think of an object of importance, most of them chose a nonmaterial object such as the ocean, traditions, and the community. The younger generation mainly chose physical objects that they had inherited from an older generation. The question around the relationship between identity and objects was again raised in my mind. Is it more important to the younger generation to have physical objects to help identify themselves with? Is the older generation content enough with themselves or have physical objects to help identify themselves with? What is especially interesting is that I experienced the opposite during the case study with Club 92, where I noticed a strong link between the objects and identity.
Again, I turn to psychologist Robert Kegan and the ideas he presents in *The Evolving Self*, particularly how we look for meaning throughout our life, but the meaning we are looking for changes depending on which stage of life we are in. Kegan divides life into five mind stages as a way to understand human formation. Two stages are of particular interest to me: the self-authoring stage and the self-transforming stage. The younger generation (including myself) is in the self-authoring stage, and the older generation (including my grandmother) is in the self-transforming. The younger generation is in the process of designing their own lives and trying to figure out who they are. By contrast, the older generation appears content; through their life experiences they have settled down and they know who they are. These observations are in accord with what I experienced during my workshops.

In the exam workshop with the older generation, the participants expressed a great concern for the younger generation. Based on their life experiences, they were especially worried about the future of the “community feeling.” They also discussed that while you can pass on learning, you cannot make sure that children will do as you taught them. The younger generation seemed to “receive” this life learning through the objects they received from the older generation. Sara Ahmed talks about how we can gain experience through objects without having experienced them ourselves: “Objects acquire the value of proximities that are not derived from our own experiences.” Many of the stories that meant something special to the younger generation were told around objects they had inherited. One participant inherited a necklace with the female gender symbol from her mother, which had taught her about feminism and reminded her to keep fighting. When objects are passed down through generations, it is not only the receiver who gains something, but also the giver. Social theorist Marcel Mauss explains, “As people exchange objects, they assert and confirm their roles in the social system, with all its historical inequalities and contradictions. A gift carries an economic and relational web; the object is animated by the network within it.” It confirms that both parties gain something from the exchange. The object reflects back at us and helps us to identify ourselves in relation to others.

**My Role as Facilitator**

As a facilitator, I have focused on my own learning through these workshops as well as the participants’ learning. To aid this process, I invited current Critical & Pedagogical Studies student Rune Elkjær Rasmussen to attend the two exam workshops as an observer. His role was to observe the participants’ conversations as well as evaluate my role as facilitator. I have been aware of my role as initiator and that the workshop’s questions and methods were established and guided by me. Although I aimed for the participants to connect the workshop to their own personal interests and involved them in the process of the activities, sometimes it did not make sense for them to do the exercises. Instead we talked about what the exercise was about and why it did not make sense for them to do it. I found this method very beneficial as it explored difficulties instead of neglecting them. It was a balance between a guided and an open process.

My hope was to create an intimate and safe environment for dialogue and exchange. Inspiration for this came from the writer bell hooks, who talks about engaged pedagogy and how it is important, as a teacher, to be vulnerable and honest about one’s intention. hooks believes that a learning process is more about respect and individual growth of the student than the mere sharing of information. She also believes that engaged pedagogy and a holistic way of learning needs to include the growth of the teacher. She talks about vulnerability in relation to growth and how the teacher must express this quality in order to grow.

As part of the workshop I shared my private reflections around the project and how it started with filming my grandmother’s objects as a way to preserve her, as I have a fear of losing her. I introduced each exercise by giving examples from my own practice and asked guided questions to create a clear framework for the participants. I kept coming back to my own interests and research to remind and inspire the participants to reflect on the same questions. One of the observations Rune made was how my language changed depending on which generation I was engaged with. The younger generation was closer to my way of expressing myself and I felt immediate connection. I learned that being precise and giving simple instructions helped the discussion to expand. Previously, I have had a tendency to try to be as open as possible because I do not want to shut down any unforeseen actions. However, often it has left the participants with a facilitator who appeared vague and indecisive, doing the opposite of what I intended.

In addition to hooks, I have been strongly influenced by John Dewey and his approach to learning through experience and process, both in relation to the workshop and in my work with my grandmother. He talks about education as a social process for learning, stating, “The principle that development of experience comes about through interaction means that education is essentially a social process.” Furthermore, he states how it is absurd to exclude the teacher as a member of the group: “When education is based upon experience and educative experience is seen to be a social process the situation changes radically. The teacher loses the position of external boss or dictator but takes on that of leader of group activities.”

I experienced the workshops and the making of the film as two different ways of engaging in a social process for learning. Both experiences necessitated involving others in my own interests. The workshop, which was the product of extensive research, was carefully planned,
and the aim was to observe how different generations reacted to and experienced my research questions and area of interest. Working with my grandmother was an unplanned social process of engagement with her over the course of multiple years. Our journey has been individual as well as collective. We have learned from interacting with each other. The power structure has shifted during the process. In the case of both the film and the workshop, I initiated the project but I experienced how others took over in the process and, maybe unconsciously, guided the work, especially with my grandmother, probably because of the duration of the project.

My Camera as Pedagogical Tool and the Film as an Object
I put an object into play in order to engage with my grandmother. The object was my camera. It has functioned as a tool for me to see and spend time with her. I wanted to investigate how the camera has functioned as my pedagogical tool. Through the process of interacting and filming my grandmother, I have used my camera to create contact. I have looked through the camera in order to see her. She has looked through it in order to see me. We have looked at the footage together, she has seen herself, and we have seen us together. We have discussed and commented on the recorded footage and the function of the camera. How does it feel to be recorded and to look at yourself? In the film, my grandmother comments on the footage, and when she notices herself, she states, “I can see that it’s me; I can definitely see that, yet it’s quite funny to watch this. That it’s filmed.”

TOVE explores the film format as a document to capture time. It reflects on the past, present, and future. The film functions as an object to engage with and a tool to preserve my grandmother for the future. I have explored the tactility of the camera. I have looked at how everyday observations can create theory and knowledge around personal lives and times.

According to professor and author Sherry Turkle, “theory enables us, for example, to explore how everyday objects become part of our inner life: how we use them to extend the reach of our sympathies by bringing the world within. As theory defamiliarises objects, objects familiarise theory. The abstract becomes concrete, closer to lived experience.” My camera has helped me turn the abstract into something physical and concrete. The film represents time but is, in itself, timeless. Psychologist Susan Pollack talks about her grandmother’s rolling pin in a similar way, referring to it as an “evocative object”: “it anchors me in the past, yet holds more than memory; it holds memory and feeling, and evoke attachments that have long been forgotten.” I finished the film TOVE only a few months ago, but I am already wondering what its future holds. In the film, my grandmother touches upon this thought when she states that there will come a day where the film will feel strange to watch—the day when she is no longer around.

The Process of Filming My Grandmother
I took my interest in the materialisation of stories into my research with my grandmother. We first tried to together share a story around an object, and then we materialised it. We tested the exercise of sharing a memory while the other moulded clay. We undertook different experiments in her house. For one, I set up the camera to film a white canvas, and then we took turns collecting objects from around the house, placing them on the canvas, and moving them around in relation to each other. With time, the investigation and my recordings went from filming and talking about objects to recording situations where I felt truly present. The most real moments I experienced with her were when we were together and doing everyday activities. In the final cut of TOVE, these moments of everyday life take up most of the film and remind me of other such moments that I often forget to document.

In the video works of Gitte Villesen, one almost always experiences her presence, although she might not be physically present in the film. Her interaction and personal engagement with her subjects is obvious, and this approach has provided inspiration when working with my grandmother. Villesen works with the coincidences and scenarios that happen in front of her, and her work is therefore often experienced as present and alive. By exploring the boundary between fiction and documentary, she reveals her voice behind the camera and points to the gaze of the artist. The one doing the observing, whether it is the filmmaker behind the camera or the spectator behind the screen, is just as important as the subject in focus. I have used this method, whereby I highlight the interaction between my grandmother and I, to create engagement with the spectator and my grandmother. The aim was to make the spectator observe and feel as I, the filmmaker, did in the process of making.

In a lecture and conversation between bell hooks and Jill Soloway, the two writers and feminists talk about how the personal is political. hooks states, “There is a powerful prestige of being recognized and being seen. To be honoured by the people you feel are a part of your tribe.” There is no doubt that the process of making the film has been beneficial for my grandmother and me. Our relationship has changed; the way we look at each other and acknowledge each other’s presence has
been acknowledged by the camera. I know that my grandmother feels honoured by my interest in her as well as the other way around.

Filmmaker Chantal Akerman has inspired both my process and the final outcome of the film. About her own process, Akerman notes, “When I begin a documentary, I want to have no ideas without knowing anything. Just be there like a sponge. When people ask what are you going to do, I say, ‘I don’t know,’ and that is the truth.” I have used a similar working method and concentrated on being around my grandmother and being part of her life. During the process, I have, at times, felt frustrated by not knowing what exactly it was I was looking for, but in the end I feel as if I have created a film that embodies those frustrations and explores the search for myself. What I am left with is a document, a film work that represents my grandmother, our relationship, and myself. It questions the self and the personal archive, the learning that takes place through different generations, and how we document and preserve time.

On May 8, 2018, I hosted a public talk related to my exam project, a screening of TOVE, and a continued conversation between my grandmother and I at Odder Library. During the conversation, my grandmother spoke about the meaning of self-archiving and how she tries to archive herself through objects and stories. She gave an example of how last year she asked everyone in the family to take one Christmas tree ornament to keep for the future. She added that it was in some ways a selfish deed in order to not be forgotten. Psychologist Jean Piaget talks about how objects help us think about things in terms of numbers, space, time, causality, and life; Piaget “reminds us that our learning is situated, concrete and personal. We invent and reinvent it for ourselves.” Like my grandmother, I value storytelling through objects, and the Christmas ornament I took that year has become a personal and concrete memory of her. It helps me to locate memory in physical material in order to remember and reflect on time.
For *No Home Movie* (2015), Akerman filmed her mother in her home in Brussels. The film records her everyday life in her flat and includes conversations between Akerman and her mother about the past and the Holocaust. The scenes are long and presented in real time. Akerman talks about how she believes time on film should be experienced as real-life time. I adapted this approach so that many of the scenes where my grandmother is shown doing practical housework, such as shovelling snow, making the bed, and so on, take as long in the film as it did in real life. The time experienced on film reflects back on the time experienced in real life. Many audience members noticed this element of time and presence. After the screening, I received an email from an audience member saying that everyday observations are an important part of remembrance and passing on, but these are often the parts you forget. She further stated how important it is for her to know her own heritage and how she was impressed by how I managed to write my history with images.

My grandmother has an interest in archiving personal history. As previously mentioned, she kept and filed the letter correspondence between her and her sister. Furthermore, she has created files on her family members’ lives that include both private and practical information. She is the last of her generation left in the family, and she feels responsible for passing on its stories. If she does not pass on the knowledge she has, it will die with her. As I state in the film:

She has written a lot about her own family. When she retired, she visited her mother every Monday and wrote her story down. She says she did it mostly for her own sake, and she has told me before that it doesn’t matter if others read it, but now she would like to share it with the family. I think it matters to her that the stories can live beyond her.
My Relationship to My Grandmother and My Fear of Death

The fiction writer Edwidge Danticat wrote about the “art of death” after the loss of her mother. She states that the act of talking about one’s death makes one an active participant in one’s life. When writing or talking about death, you are not dying passively but actively. Life and death are eternally connected: “We cannot write about death without writing about life. Stories that start at the end of life often take us back to the past, to the beginning—or to some beginning—to unearth what there was before, what will be missed, what will be lost.” In my work with my grandmother, I spent a lot of time hearing her stories from the past. Although most of them are not revealed to the spectator in the final film, it was an important part of the process to reach the point where we were able to confront death and ask questions about death while recording life.

During one of my workshops, a participant stated that objects, to her, were dead things that did not talk about life itself. For me, although my investigations went from recordings of physical objects to those of everyday life, objects continue to hold great sentimental value and remind me of the past. But I wanted the film to focus on what was alive, right at that moment. I wanted to document my grandmother and confront others with what I observed and how I felt about loss and death. I turned to the ideas of philosopher Roland Barthes, who talks about how photography can trigger emotions: “As a Spectator I was interested in Photography only for ‘sentimental’ reasons; I wanted to explore it not as a question (a theme) but as a wound: I see, I feel, hence I notice, I observe and I think.”

Though Barthes is here talking about a still image that obviously holds a different kind of power than the moving image, I would argue that many of the characteristics of the “wound” are also present within film. The power of cinema is that it can give the spectator the impression of experienced reality. Film can give us the feeling of watching an almost real spectacle and offers perceptual participation to the spectator. Because of its ability to convey presence, a film is believable and holds an impression of reality. Barthes believes that the presence in a photograph is located in the past, because the still image represents “what has been.” In my opinion, these feelings of the “wound” that Barthes connects to photography are feelings that are actually amplified by video, as the subject I care about is captured in motion.

I have dealt with my own death anxiety and tried to seek help and knowledge about this together with my grandmother. In her own way, she controlled the conversations and tried to calm me. At the end of TOVE, I ask her if she can ask me some questions about death, which she avoids, maybe because she is afraid to hear the answers as well. She is not direct and avoids asking the questions by talking about her own relationship to death, perhaps as a way to calm me (and maybe herself) down. It is in situations like this where she can be seen to take control over the conversation in a subtle way.

Philosopher and writer Julia Kristeva talks about melancholia in the book Black Sun. According to her, melancholia is the primary foundation for artistic creation. Artworks are created to protect against melancholia, emptiness, and the fear of death that is present in all human beings. When I began my exam work, I was not completely aware of my own death anxiety, but I wanted to explore the objects and stories that my grandmother would, one day, leave behind. Benjamin says that the past must be understood in relation to the present, otherwise it will stay as a ruin. Through the process of creating TOVE and running the workshops, I discovered that I was trying to connect my grandmother’s past to my present. I started writing my own story and was confronted by my death anxiety. I felt miserable thinking about the fact that I, one day, would lose my grandmother. I wanted to act on this feeling and found inspiration in the psychoanalytic thought of Sigmund Freud, who states that you must transfer the energy of sorrow from what you have lost to something new. Otherwise you will stay in a melancholic condition. During the two years of filming, my personal life has changed in ways I had not imagined, and I have felt rootless. The film as a project and artwork became something to hold onto in order to work through my own grief. It became my way of dealing with the sorrow that I experienced at that moment in time and a way to deal with the sorrow of loss in the future.

In The Art of Death, Danticat states, “Many pieces of writing are crafted around a question, or a series of questions, that the writer is seeking answers to.” I think this goes for visual artists too, and especially my work with my grandmother. I have been seeking answers to questions that I am, in some ways, only starting to figure out as the video piece has been completed and the project has come to a sense of resolution. From the beginning, it has been quite difficult for me to figure out what exactly it was that I was doing. My curiosity and insecurity allowed me to continue and stick with the piece. At one point, I decided to show my grandmother the recordings and to record the comments we made while watching them. Once I included that recording of our voices as a voiceover, the piece, for the first time, made sense to me as a whole. Essentially, to me, that is what TOVE has done: it has brought us and our voices together.

When I asked my grandmother what the film has done for her, she said that the way we spent time together, and have continued to spend time together, has changed. Time itself has come to play an important role: we have spent time on “nothing,” in silence, and while sleeping next to one another. We have
shared everyday life experiences together and allowed everyday things to occur. Time’s purpose became to facilitate reflection, which I think the final piece as a whole contemplates. My grandmother and I do not have the same expectations towards each other as she does to her children and that I have to my parents. At one point in the film, my grandmother comments that I do not criticise her and allow her to be. I respond that I feel the same way. With her, I am good enough as I am. The distance between us, by belonging to different generations, allowed us to give each other peace and space.

Final Thoughts
I began my exam project by asking questions about objects. Can they activate storytelling and exchange? Can they function as pedagogical tools and initiate learning? How are the emotions and meanings around objects described differently by younger and older generations?

I can conclude that for most people, the object is an important element in holding on to memories. Many found it easier to start a conversation about memory beginning with the object because of its physical presence. To others, the object was less important. But what mattered to almost everyone I have engaged with throughout my exploration these past years is knowing about one’s own history and personal family archive. I learned that for most people, ownership of objects that are able to remind us of the past creates the feeling of being part of a larger community. It creates happiness to know that you are part of something bigger than yourself.

The future of this project seeks to create a direct link between the two generations. I am currently involved in a long-term project at a nursing home called Betania Hjemmet, located in the borough of Frederiksberg in Denmark. The project, entitled Storytelling of Life, aims to build bridges between the residents who live at the home and the general public. I wish to take this opportunity to experiment further on the format I have established by inviting the grandchildren of the citizens to take part in the workshop. I will build upon experiences from the exam workshops and continue to explore and challenge how we learn from each other through storytelling.

The process with my grandmother started with my curiosity surrounding how objects can pass stories down through generations. Through the process of making the film TOVE, my focus shifted from objects to death, relationships, and time. In the end, the film explores how it, as an object for the future, can potentially preserve the past. As mentioned near the beginning of this text, researcher Olivia Dasté has a fear of opening her grandmother’s old suitcase because she is afraid that the contents will betray her and not be able to live up to her memories of her grandmother. I can relate to this fear, even though my grandmother is still around. In the future, will the film as a document be able to live up to my memories of those true moments of presence I shared with my grandmother? I have longed for a document that can keep my grandmother eternally alive. I do not wish to be confronted with inevitable death. Time will tell if the film can be that document.


3 The exploration of storytelling and the personal archive around the stones materialised as two video pieces exhibited at Inter Arts Center, Malmö, in connection to the course “The Archive—Documents, Object and Desires,” held at Malmo Art Academy in 2016. “Dialogue Impressions’ was hosted at Malmo Art Academy’s annual exhibition in 2016.

4 Please see Appendix for a full description of the internship.

5 Please see Appendix for a full description of the internship.


8 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 23.


16 Please see Appendix for a full description of the exam project.

17 Please see Appendix for a full description of the exam project.


28 The scene in TOVE referred to takes place at 23:41 min. My translation from Danish to English.


35 Villesen, “Two Readings by Bubba Jallow.”


40 Akerman, in *I Don’t Belong Anywhere*, directed by Lambert.

41 Dorthe Bach, audience member at the screening at Odder Library, May 8, 2018.

42 This scene of TOVE takes place at 2:59 min. My translation from Danish to English.


46 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 100.


Further References

Appendix:  
Full Description of the Exam Project

PART ONE

Workshop: Objects as Pedagogical Tools
The workshop will be held at two different folk high schools in Denmark: Rude Strand Højskole (with participants who are seventy to eighty years old) and Eriksminde Efterskole (with participants who are sixteen years old). The aim of running two iterations of the workshop is to investigate and reflect on the same questions using the same working method in order to compare how objects are perceived and talked about by the two different generational groups. What objects are timeless? Do you think differently around objects when you are closer to death? Do objects hold more or less sentimental value depending on your age? What does it mean to pass on personal objects? The workshop will explore how objects can work as pedagogical tools and facilitate the exchange of memories between the older and the younger generation.

The format of the workshop focuses on honest dialogue. I will be aware of my role as an outsider asking the participants to take part in my own exploration, and I will do everything I can to make them feel as if they can take something away from the workshop in terms of thoughts and reflection and objects in a physical form. With this in mind, the workshop is structured around conversation between fellow participants who already know each other, and then the sharing of observations and comments as a bigger group.

I have invited artist and current CPS student Rune Elkjær Rasmussen to join the workshops as an observer and photographer. I will ask him both to observe the participants’ actions and dialogue during the workshops as well as to observe me in the role of facilitator. This will help me to be critical towards my own role and to reflect on my own pedagogy, development, and learning. Rune and I have previously shared exchanged ideas around art and pedagogy, which makes me feel confident having him critiquing and observing me. I’m aware of how the framework can change when an observer and photographer enters the room and will ask him to focus on hands, objects, and the environment rather than on specific participants. I have made the decision to include an external observer as I have experienced many times before how difficult it is to keep track of all the things being said and at the same time be present as a facilitator for guidance and questions.

Outline of the Workshop (75 min.)
The workshop aims to explore the proposed research questions in a practical and concrete way. The workshop includes three exercises, and I will describe to the participants my intention, instruction, and desired outcome for each exercise. It is important to stress that the desired outcome is a potential outcome and that the exercises are open to seeking unpredicted outcomes.

Introduction (10 min.)
I will introduce my artistic practice and interest in personal objects. I will talk about how I started investigating my grandmother’s belongings, and how through video documentation I have tried to capture and preserve time. I will explain how I have noticed that objects in my grandmother’s house have functioned as starting points for conversation, and how I’m curious to open up this exploration to an audience beyond my grandmother and me, in order to explore the notion of the object and what it can activate. I will introduce Rune and his role in the workshop. I will talk about why I’m interested in hearing the participants’ stories and reflections, and I will invite them to take part in my research and explore if objects can function as pedagogical tools for exchange.

On a table I will display a variety of objects, in order to present objects with different forms, shapes, levels of abstraction, and so on. I will explain that we will work through three exercises and that I’ll allow time after each exercise for comments and reflections. I will write down the agenda of the day on a large sheet of paper to create an overview of the content of the workshop. Each exercise will also both be presented by me and written down with the title, guided questions, and instructions. I will let the participants know how much time they have for each exercise before beginning, and I’ll be the timekeeper. At the end, there will be time for a group discussion and feedback. I will hand out an A4 sheet where the participants will be asked to answer questions such as: Did anything surprise you today? What was easy or difficult? What will you take away with you when you leave today? These sheets are for me to collect and keep for analysing afterwards. Everything else produced during the workshop is personal and for the participants to keep.

1. Exercise: “Around the Object in Its Physical Form”
—How do we describe objects objectively? (10 min.)

Intention: To introduce the area of investigation and at the same time start with an “ice breaker” to get the participants started talking and thinking around objects.

Instructions: Participants are asked to split into pairs. The table with objects should be visible to one participant and hidden from the other. The participant who can see the table will describe an object only according to its physical form, including shape, colour, etc. The other participant has to guess the object. After describing a couple of objects, they can
both look at the table and discuss the objects. New objects will be added to the table, and the participants will swap positions and repeat the exercise.

**Desired outcome:** To loosen up the atmosphere and get everyone talking. I’m interested in how the objects are described and if this exercise in its simplicity is experienced as easy or difficult.

2. **Exercise:**
   “Around the Object in Relation to Memory”
   — How do we describe objects subjectively? (10 min.)

**Intention:** To introduce the personal reading of an object.

**Instructions:** New objects will be put on the table. The participants are asked to describe the objects through personal observations, such as the object’s perceived purpose or function, its smell, what it reminds the participant of, etc. The participants will swap positions and repeat the exercise.

**Desired outcome:** To make the participants think of objects in relation to memory, working towards the reflection around the personal object. To begin thinking about what makes an object personal, historical, or both.

3. **Exercise:**
   “The Personal Object as a Tool for Exchange and Learning” — How can an object motivate the learning of something new?

**Part One (15 min.)**

**Intention:** To question what it means to pass on an object and what kind of learning is passed on. To invite the participants to exchange an object between generations.

**Instructions:** The participants are asked to think of a special object they have. It could tell a personal story, be a symbol of their time (generation), carry a certain knowledge, etc. They are then asked to think of a specific person who they would like to pass this information on to. I will hand out a pre-made mind map to help write down the associations they have to the object. The mind map should only be used if it’s helpful for the individual participant. The important thing is to write thoughts down. The participants should question in relation to the object: What value, story, and memory does it hold? Who would they like to give it to, and why? What would it mean for this person to take over the object? What is the motive or reason for passing it on? Is it important to pass on? Why or why not?

**Desired outcome:** For the participants to reflect upon the notion of passing on an object. What is it that the object triggers?

**Part Two (15 min.)**

**Instructions:** After writing, the participants are asked to (re)create the object they have in mind in another form and material. I will present writing, drawing, and moulding in play dough as ways to transfer the original object into a new object. How can the new object hold information and knowledge that might not be available in the original object? Can it function as a carrier for personal storytelling? What can the older generation learn from the younger, and the other way around?

**Desired outcome:** I will encourage the participants to exchange and pass on the story to the person they had in mind after the workshop. The new object does not necessarily have to be passed on physically, but could function as a trigger and activate an exchange.

I have also planned backup exercises in the event the participants finish before time is up (this might especially concern the younger generation).

**Backup exercises:**
1. Sit back to back, hold an object in your hand while you are blindfolded, and describe it. The listener will mould the object.
2. Sit back to back, describe the emotions around an object you were given or an object you have passed on. The listener will mould the object.
3. Create a fantasy object as a tool for learning using the material available. What would you like to learn?

**Group reflection and feedback (15 min.)**

As a group we will reflect upon the different readings around the object as a pedagogical tool. What can it be a tool for? I will hand out a form with four open questions to answer and ask if I can keep the answers afterwards for my research. After writing our answers down, we will, as a group, discuss the different exercises and if any new questions have occurred to us. We will talk about the function of the new object: What could they imagine doing with it? Would they like to use it as a prompt to exchange their memory around it? I will encourage them to pass on the new moulded object or let it be an activator for storytelling.

I will invite them to the public talk the week after, and ask if anyone would like to share their experiences in the workshop at the talk. I will give them my contact information and tell them that I would be very interested in hearing about any exchanges they have using the moulded objects. It is important for me to acknowledge the participants, to let them know that they are a part of a bigger investigation, and tell them they have played an important role in my research.
PART TWO

Public Talk:
Feedback and Reflection from Workshop Participants
I will host a film screening and talk at the public library in Odder a week after the workshops have taken place. It is the city located between the two schools where the workshops took place and where my grandmother lives. I will invite the participants from the workshops and the event will be open to the public. I have chosen this location because there will be a higher chance of the participants being able to attend and because there is a direct link for the elder generation to participate, because of my grandmother’s relationship to that group and to the city.

First, I will screen TOVE (2018), a twenty-five-minute film about my grandmother. It is an important element of my research and my learning around storytelling and exchange through generations and objects. It reflects upon death, what we leave behind, and how and why we document the present for the future. Next, I will share my thoughts around these themes and how I have used my camera as a tool to activate the exchange between my grandmother and myself. I will invite my grandmother to share her thoughts and ideas around the film and the process of making it. I will share my research and observations from the workshops and open up the discussion for questions.
Bachelor of Fine Arts

Year 3

Anna Andersson
Tine Maria Damgaard
Nadja Ericsson
Mads Kristian Frøslev
Helen Haskakis
Inka Hiltunen
Theis Madsen
Oskar Persson
Samaneh Roghani
Moa Sjöstrand
Albin Skaghammar
Frederikke Jul Vedelsby
 Carrier, 2018. Concrete, sand, black iron oxide pigment, water, 20 x 40 x 170 cm. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM2 Gallery, Malmo, 2018. Anna Andersson
Carrier, 2018. Concrete, sand, black iron oxide pigment, water, 20 x 40 x 170 cm. Anna Andersson
No title, 2018. Detail. Plaster, 20 x 30 x 170 cm. Anna Andersson
Moving In and Out of Fiction: A Composite of Transformation

“The word has been separated from the original feeling. Words are filled with the content we decide they should have. They can undergo further transformations, move along and mean something new and different. Words are not static, but volatile. They get away when they want to. But almost all scientific names—even the abstract ones—are rooted in the everyday and the nearby, in that accessible to the senses. Therefore, I want to go back to the origin.”

—Karin Johannisson

“Peripety” is defined as a sudden change, a reverse of a situation, turning it into its opposite. Its origins lie in Aristotle’s term “peripeteia,” which describes when a hero in a drama goes through a transformation in a reversal of fortune through his or her own actions. It’s the ultimate change.

I dream of the purely unknown formation, an object unloaded with recognition, detached from origin and influence from its environment. It’s frustrating being aware of the impossibility of being able to embrace it, like a blue dahlia. It doesn’t matter if I travel to a faraway planet, what is seen is seen and will always leave a trace. Whatever I perceive on the foreign planet will probably be filled with resemblance. Maybe the object will have alien characteristics to my human senses, leaving me to be deceived, oblivious—just like here, on Earth.

The shape is in movement; it can change anytime, like a word in a language trying to figure out what it means. I’m trying to figure out what it means, how I perceive the world around me and why. A drive.

I know the world around me isn’t the only one; there are others—every creature carries its own perception. We’re made to perceive and be perceived. This makes me observe my own surroundings in a different way. I try to observe my surroundings in a different way. There’s a bridge between every word, every form, in every direction. The ship is a bridge in movement, a bridge is something interlinking the land, and land is interlinked by the water in between. A vehicle or a body is in movement with the bridge; together they become an excellent tool for transportation.
The physical work is the main part of the process.

The feeling of working undisturbed is similar to that of playing alone as a child in the forest. I used to build a square on the ground with sticks, and everything happening inside that square was happening from the inside out, and the outside in, back and forth—like an in-between screen. The experiences became fictions I could relate to and build upon. There's no now—it's always memory or future conjecture. Conjecture built on perceptions. The vision of the sculpture is built on what I already know, but it can become something else through the process of making.

I have a specific route I walk around a lake in the forest. The path is there because many others have also wanted to take this exact route before. There are various destinations for different purposes along the path. One of them is a narrow point of land built on low rocks close to the surface of the water. When you sit down on the outer rock in the lake, you're surrounded by a mirror reflecting the sky and you're taken over by a feeling of height and endlessness. There's something hidden in the reflection of the surface. The mirroring always carries a layer of the material itself. When I see the sky in the lake, I also see a layer of the lake in the sky.

The forest is something that lies before us and after us. It's under an erratic transformation, you don't know beforehand its next movement. Between every movement there's a bridge creating a fellowship.

The bridge between vision and sculpture is the transportation. The transportation is an in-between state.

I try to let the material guide me. To throw it in new directions where I lose control over it for a moment to create a space for reflection, to question, and to force myself to make a decision. It's about decisions, to trust the inner image, and letting go.

I've been working on a sculpture that looks like a bridge wanting to become some kind of vehicle. I cast it in plaster. It's fragile and would never do for a real-life bridge. I want to know what's happening inside the mould and see the hidden processes. I only let the chemical reaction between the plaster and water go through at given parts of the sculpture, resulting in the material taking an in-between state. It builds up a landscape of cracks that reminds me of Robert Smithson's description of a quarry in his text “The Crystal Land”: “It was an arid region, bleached and dry. An infinity of surfaces spread in every direction. A chaos of cracks surrounded us.” My interest in materiality grew when I saw the work of Tiril Hassellknippe. She has a poetic way of letting the material be what it is at the same time as it functions as a portal for reading. She also often uses story (fiction) as a tool, giving the sculptures a verbal visual layer of meaning, guiding the viewers.

Strata are Earth's memories. Written in layers of the remains of everything that existed in that specific moment. The vision arrives at an unexpected moment, the image constructed on components of old impressions. I'm interested in the drive for understanding. It drives me—I'm too curious not to go through with it. The astronomer is an archaeologist searching through the past of our universe, for our origins. In my work I go back and forth in time, finding fragmented parts that seem to fit together in the strangest ways. Shapes overlapping, transforming, repeating themselves.

We're used to something being useful, the useful object. The sculpture's strength isn't being useful. The strength of the sculpture is that it can become anything without ever being practical in our everyday life. In this way, it stands on its own, in an alternative space. Or rather, the space where the sculpture is placed becomes alternative because of its presence.

In the essay “Art and Objecthood,” Michael Fried points out how sculpture can be theatrical. Theatre is an act of fiction based on sensations. The theatrical in the sculpture is dependent on a viewer, and they will always be in the situation as one "experiences as his,” which means the experience with the work will always be different. This also means that the work keeps on changing and moving every time someone interacts with it.

Liquid crystals can change from fluid to stable, back and forth. The artistic process is fluid and crystallises when the artist decides it should. It's a decision for a departure, a starting point. There is no landing in this process.

"Anything one touches and forms will have subtle reflections of the maker's energy in it.”

I've been working in a factory. In the factory everything is on repeat. The machine never stops. Everything happening in the factory is the opposite to my artistic practice; there's no room for change, for altering. I'm following a recipe when I work. Everything is calculated down to the very last detail. I feel mechanical when I do my tasks; they're very simple. The process is stable and fixed in time, so it can never become anything other than what it was supposed to be.

The flooring in the factory is a metal grid. The grid separates and eliminates. It separates the coloured water and chemicals leaking out from the machine—everywhere I see pools of coloured water resting on the machine's uneven metallic body.

There's a science fiction quality to the factory: shapes and materials are
No title, 2018. Plaster, 20 x 30 x 170 cm. Anna Andersson
morpheing together within a sci-fi movie setting. The hidden factory environment has been moving in and out of fiction for decades and created an alternative space in between. This slowly created in-between space connects to how my sculptures arrive. However, my view of the factory is one of infinite others. My parents have always worked in factories, and as a child I thought it was an intriguing and exiting environment. I also used to watch a lot of so-called dirty industrial science fiction with my big sister and my dad. It’s a natural transition, becoming the image of the living ruin.

This phenomenon of how the “actual” and the “virtual,” as described in Gilles Deleuze’s *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, “run after each other” and “refer to each other, reflect each other, without it being possible to say which is first” is something I try to have in mind when I see how the objects I’m surrounded by are constructed. Deleuze describes how a zone of dreams and thoughts is created that “corresponds to a particular aspect of the thing: each time it is a plane or a circuit, so that the thing passes through an infinite number of planes or circuits which correspond to its own ‘layers’ or its aspects. A different, virtual mental image would correspond to a different description, and vice versa: a different circuit.” This means, as I see it, that the fictional is intertwined with how the actual object is in constant change.

It’s a composite of transformation.

The sculpture takes up signals from the world, the world of the artist. It can receive anything, from anywhere. Like a single world receiver. Isa Genzken’s works are often described like this—as world receivers. Her sculptures, which appear like concrete-cast radios with antennae, are the signifiers. She’s the expert in assembling and transforming the objects that surround us into familiar strangers.

I had a vision of sand falling out of a concrete structure. I made a prototype of this vision in my parents’ garage. Then I waited for the right shape to arrive. I came across the shape of the aircraft carrier. It morphed with the prototype. Aircraft carriers come in various models, restrained by the qualities needed of an ocean-based battle airfield in motion. A megastructure constructed only to prove power. It starts to look like those rock islands shaped by erosion from water flow. A chunk of land gone out on an expedition.

Through the working process the shape of the carrier transforms. I become interested in the relationship between the ocean, the aircraft carrier, the aircrafts, and the sky. I cast the carrier at the size of my own body, of solid concrete, unsuitable for a floating vessel. I blend the earthy concrete with black pigment, resulting in a specific hue, the one of melting ice covered in coal dust, eventually hitting the soil. The high concentration of limestone in the water used to make the concrete leaches out through the dark surface. The more I feed the sculpture with water, the more it starts to look like it’s been carbonised. The aircraft carrier has gone through a change; it’s reversed. The sculpture is carrying the ocean, reflecting the sky.

Out of nowhere, the object arrives. It reminds me of something I’ve seen before. The moment it transforms from process to objecthood, everything in between is forgiven. It’s like the lapse of time has become disoriented, reduced, illusive. Translation has been lost somewhere in between—it stands observable, observing, and there is no doubt it’s always been there.

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Tine Maria Damgaard


Tine Maria Damgaard
It is often a finding of tracks that show the road of your work, perhaps reflecting your life, certainly your interests. The tracks seemingly going in all different directions, but from afar or in the aftermath showing a clear line. Let me give an example of how this works, this experience of complete clarity (affirmation, knowledge, quiet epiphany): I was rummaging about in my room, half-concentrating, picking out books from my shelves that I found of some abstract use for writing this text, works that have lent me (among other accomplices) ideas and energy over the past years. The picked-out books turned into the following list:

- Italo Calvino, *Collection of Sand*
- Gary Urton, *Sign of the Inka Khipu*
- Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*
- Jorge Luis Borges, *Collected Fictions*
- Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*

Over the course of days, some similarities or linkages occurred to me, and it should be noted here that I acquired these books independently and without prior knowledge of the different interconnections. Cursorily, Calvino, Perec, and Borges have multiple subjects of interest in common, and the three particular books I picked out somewhat bear stylistic resemblances to each other. All three authors inject great affection into their descriptions of the library and how books should be arranged, and two of them worked as librarians (not strangely, two of them were even close friends). All juggled with the fantastic and the ordinary in very diverse ways.

I began rereading Calvino’s *Collection of Sand*, a wonderful book of essays taking all kinds of departures—one of them being the *khipu*, the mysterious system of knots of the Inca Empire.

Proceeding into reading the *Signs of the Inka Khipu*, I found a reference to Yates’s *The Art of Memory* in a passage where Urton describes one of the theories about what the *khipu* represents (or rather does not represent).

Now, to me all these references represent a variety of topics, but when paying a certain kind of attention to the works, they point at one particular subject of interest for me: the ways of our memory, the ways in which we do or do not recollect.

“Serendipity” is a curious word that quite strikingly describes this process. An immediate answer to my search for the definition of the word suggested: “the occurrence and development of events by chance or in a beneficial way.” According to *Merriam-Webster*, it’s “the faculty or phenomenon of finding valuable or agreeable things not sought for.”

These brief definitions give us some idea of the subject, but do not quite reflect the breadth of the term. For essentially serendipity is a skill or a way of learning, moving, working, etc. Serendipity dictates a certain will and sensitivity that one has to be attentive to. Or, as the American sociologist John Paul Lederach describes it, serendipity is a moving sideways:

If you have ever watched a crab work the sands of sea tides, you will have a concrete image of a creature that has peripheral vision and a sense of purpose at the same time. Peripheral vision, or what I have come to call the art of serendipity in social change, is the capacity to situate oneself in a changing environment with a sense of direction and purpose and at the same time develop an ability to see and move with the unexpected.

The term has its origin in romanticism and describes a longing for truth believed to be found through the labyrinthine processes of the arts rather than through scientific endeavour.

I believe a less elevated version of the term echoes in my process of working in the field of art, which seems to seldom adhere to careful planning—in regard to both physicality and concept. At best, serendipity covers most of the process, keeps the idea of the work vibrant, and leaves me somewhat surprised at the outcome. It is a way of making use of things that occur along the way.

It seems there is often serendipity involved in the process of discovering things that one learns, forgets, and then rediscovers in a new order or new setting.
A sense of humility is involved in this way of seeing and this way of working—relying on chance to find and be overcome, to be not certain but to hope for it. The end of the road of willed coincidence, when looking at the outcome of your efforts, (also) carries the knowledge that this might also have been different, which is a very fragile position. A preset finish time can be the determining factor for when a work is done. Until then, the possibility of changing something exists.

Before this point, it is a chancing upon some things just revealing themselves, somehow slowly evincing their inner logic. In these cases you have to be ready and responsive and lend them (the necessary) time and energy, and eventually something might come of it.

When working with matter, there seems to be something inexplicable but very clear, a certain (maybe personal, intimate?) logic of material. It is a logic that is not necessarily attained through learned craftsmanship, but something that slowly builds up over time, and through running wild, failing.

You go through stages of caring for the matter, tending it, violating it, to find its potentialities.

There are things you will come to accept and things you will brush off about the boundaries of the material. These potentialities and boundaries might originate in historical use and the notations built up around that, or they might be directly experienced through physical handling.

In an interview with Joseph Beuys I read some years ago, I found a voice describing this intimate relation to matter. Beuys takes the notion of perception of matter further, stressing a need to develop organs to work with and understand that the “complexes of forces that unfold in substance complexes are not just purely rational, analytic factors, where you analytically interpret and separate out different strands of information, according to the logical methodologies, or suchlike. Here logic goes further, and organs of intuition, inspiration and imagination are necessary for this, otherwise you can’t experience such things.”

Eva Hesse was a painter and sculptor who possessed a high sensibility in working with these logics. She often used industrial materials and was able to dig out and show the sensual and fragile abilities of these. Her work has very distinct qualities, inexplicable yet highly communicative. An almost abject feeling is induced when looking at works like her glass displays with small objects made of plastic, latex, and thread, or Vinculum I (1969), or almost any of her other hanging sculptures. The sculptures seem to cause a direct and simultaneous approval and rejection in some part of the viewer other than the brain.

A certain trembling is caused by looking at Hesse’s work, a trembling that I find further echoed in Susan Sontag’s short 1962 text “Against Interpretation,” specifically in her call for a gaze that regards the artwork as a whole rather than as the expected outcome of a sum of certainties: “What is important now is to recover our senses. We must learn to see more, to hear more, to feel more. Our task is not to find the maximum amount of content in a work of art, much less to squeeze more content out of the work than is already there.”

Sontag finds there is a great reducibility in the way arts audiences had begun analysing and boiling down the works in an exhibition to a few key subjects instead of paying wider attention to the sensual qualities of the arts.

This might seem like a hasty move between topics, but Sontag’s notion leads me to an old recording of something the author W.G. Sebald once said in an interview, something I have lingered upon ever since, more or less consciously acknowledging the source:

People always want what seem to them to be symbolic elements in a text to have certain meanings. But of course that isn’t how symbols work. If they are any good at all they are usually multivalent, they are simply there to give you a sense that there must be something of significance here at that point, but what it is and what the significance is, is entirely a different matter.

This attention that Sebald describes, and this uncertainty of what but certainly that is a potential in art, seems valuable when the focus around us (at least in the secular West) tunnels in on certainty.

Sebald’s words and the non-binary coupling of what and that, reminds me of a story once told to me by a fellow student about Werner Herzog’s use of footage of a dancing chicken at the end of the film Stroszek. I was told that when asked about the symbolism of the chicken, Herzog answered that it was a great symbol; for what, he just did not know.

Both statements reverberate loudly in the hopes and aspirations for my own artistic practice. This idea of a type of uncertain (but not necessarily unconfident) communication as its point of departure, yet communicating strongly, appeals to me, and this concession I believe draws together all the quotations above.

This is also something I experience as being at play in the works of the late Emil Westman Hertz. His unusual range of materials reflects a great sensitivity and humility, and a close bond to the immediate world around him. The viewer senses a strong intention, yet the work somehow seems unattainable.
7.46 I wake for the first time / Ode to Clive Wearing, 2018. Concrete, cotton thread, aluminium hoops, dimensions variable. Tine Maria Damgaard
The feeble branches and small cardboard boxes, pieces of what is otherwise treated as waste, form sculptures that the viewer becomes aware of breathing carefully near, in case they might break. The objects are elevated in that an intention and a trust has been put into them; the viewer is able to perceive these familiar objects in a novel way. The figures become almost holy, like they may have ritualistic uses. At the same time as the viewer is moved by this poetic fragility, the assembled detritus, and perhaps especially the sculptures made of wax, come too close, become too bodily. As with Hesse, the body of work becomes almost abject yet strongly draws you in.

Art as a Means of Collecting
What can also be drawn from Hertz’s body of work is the sense that we are presented with a collection. These are the displays of a passionate collector.

In the short essay “Collection of Sand,” Italo Calvino recounts a certain collection exhibited among other collections in a “recent Paris exhibition,” a collection he finds most bizarre. It is, as the title of the essay (and the title of this particular collection of essays) reveals, indeed a collection of sand from various places in the world, in bottles of a variety of shapes and colours.

Sparked by this wondrous landscape of sand-filled bottles, Calvino muses on the subject of collections, suggesting that a collection might work as a diary, a catalogue of lived feelings, or experienced events. Every small bottle of sand is a token of this or that moment, here or there.
"Or perhaps," Calvino figures, "it is only a record of that obscure mania which urges us as much to put together a collection as to keep a diary, in other words the need to transform the flow of one’s own existence into a series of objects saved from dispersal, or into a series of written lines abstracted and crystallized from the continuous flux of thought."7

This idea clings very much to the idea of St. Thomas as cited in Frances Yates’s The Art of Memory. Yates quotes: “spiritual and simple intentions slip easily from the soul unless they are linked with certain corporeal similitudes.”8

Yates’s book sets out to explain the history of the art of remembering, going through the earliest accounts of the systematic preservation of memories. The history begins with the poet Simonides of Ceos attending a banquet where he by luck avoids being crushed under the falling roof of the banquet hall. When the relatives of the deceased guests come to take the bodies away for burial, they are unable to identify the dead, as they are so entirely disfigured. But Simonides recalls each guest’s placement at the banquet table, and is thus able to help identify the bodies.

This rather morbid early account shows a systematisation of memory that has not actually changed much since 500 BCE. Mnemonic devices still rely on the vision of a room, a deck of cards, or whatever a person might choose. The important part is the imagining of the physical object and placement in relation to it or a concrete physical signifier. The latter is seen in, for example, religious imagery depicting both brutality and bliss, as a reminder for the people of the beyond, which might otherwise seem distant and arbitrary. This finding is further echoed in Yates’s quotations of the legendary orator Cicero, who found strong imagery to be the most stimulating of memory.

Calvino and Yates differ in their approaches to the subject of remembrance. Calvino describes a very personal systematisation of memory, whereas Yates covers the story of memory systems, which are essentially applicable to anyone. What they do have in common, however, is the shared thought of how memory can be fastened to objects or imagery.
Considering appropriate weight / homage to Sergei Parajanov, 2016. Bronze, cotton thread, 12 cm/diameter. Tine Maria Damgaard

The Total Record
Georges Perec also had a way of working around this thought of fastening memory, a method of keeping record, which I am convinced has independently crossed the minds of many.

I recall a time when I deemed it entirely possible that I could remember every single event that had passed in my life. I believe it was around the same time I thought it completely absurd that someone could just lose track of an important document in their home. I later arrived at a somewhat different approach to that issue. But this arrival, and this sudden realisation that one might forget what has come to pass, also seems to call for closer attention to keeping order.

Perec at some point in his life became gravely worried that he was losing his memory, and to keep track of his life, and hold this fear of loss at hand, he simply recorded everything he ate, all the possessions he owned, the way he decorated his home, and so on. It was an impressive attempt to keep with him the details he would otherwise later forget, the seemingly unimportant details of everyday life.

This idea of a total and exact archive is alluring, yet completely exhausting.

The exhaustion of this vivid fantasy of total recollection, the total library, is exemplified by Jorge Luis Borges in his sharp-witted text “The Library of Babel.”

All the books ever written, all the books that ever could be written, are contained in this wild place, and they are placed on its shelves randomly, without a total record of what is there (the possibility of a book that sums up the entire catalogue is impossible, because that book too would need a reference in another book and so the line goes on).

Borges’s story portrays a sense of the impossibility of ever gaining an overview when imagining a mass so vast and unfathomable that you can never get to the bottom of it. Though this might be a subject of great seriousness, the satire in the story is never far away: the light in the library is never sufficient, the overpowering amount of literature
make the librarians suicidal or superstitious, undertaking cult-like actions; the examples are numerous. What is at play in the fantasy as a whole is a satire of the cosmological principle, which is “the notion that the spatial distribution of matter in the universe is homogeneous and isotropic when viewed on a large enough scale, since the forces are expected to act uniformly throughout the universe.”

In Camille Henrot’s installation work The Pale Fox (2014), some of this wild fantasy of an eternal catalogue, a universe of more or less random findings, again seems to echo. One might perceive this to be a glimpse into the thoughts of the artist over the course of a day or a week, or a catalogue of objects reflecting the life of the artist over a period of time. Or indeed, as a reflection of this vast sea of information that we are constantly more or less willingly preoccupied with.

The installation is a vast display of various objects—found, bought, and handmade. There seems to be a line going through the installation, guiding the viewer through a muddle of things, arranging the diverse objects into an order. The arrangement reminds me of a kind of diary, or a number of hours spent on Google. It seems like an attempt to keep track and keep order in a realm where this really seems quite impossible.

And as with Borges’s story, Henrot’s exhibition was proclaimed to also “mock the act of building a coherent environment.”

The two works portray beautifully the way in which serious matter can be treated with an attentive wit and still be genuine and thoughtful. It provides the works with an admirable lightness.

The history of keeping track, of keeping a record, goes back so far in time that it must be perceived as something of a basic psychological need. This history likewise provides us with a fascinating scope of systems of aid for these actions. At the National Museum of Denmark, I often visit and marvel at an object whose use has long been forgotten and experts have long attempted to rediscover.

The pre-Columbian khipu is an early and most complex method of keeping record of large quantities of information.

The system is a fascinating and puzzling one. It consists of a main thread with a number of threads attached to it that bear a variation of knots placed at various lengths. Though this idea of a physical object that supposedly spurs in the beholder a recollection of certain information may remind us of the ideas presented in The Art of Memory, Gary Urton, the author of Signs of the Inka Khipu, rejects the idea that the khipu was used as a mnemonic device like the type Frances Yates describes in her book. The exact function of the khipu is to this date unknown, but Urton stresses the theory that it might have been used as a means of keeping statistics over various official issues.

It is tempting to lose oneself in wandering thoughts on how the Incas came upon the figure of the khipu—such a simple device for such complex record-keeping, seemingly so far removed from the systems we know. In both the khipu’s history and its immediate appearance lies the promise and fascination that something of great importance is held within, but of what nature we cannot know.

The khipu in its insolubility, in its mere physicality, seems like a potential metaphor to describe the road of willed coincidence, the eternal collection, the keeping track of days and belongings, and the overall structure that this text has arrived at: a long thread with a number of other threads attached to it.

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1 Excerpt from the confessions of St. Augustine, quoted in Frances Yates, The Art of Memory (London: Routledge, 1999), 46.
4 Susan Sontag Against Interpretation and Other Essays (London: Penguin, 2009), 10.
5 W.G. Sebald, The Emergence of Memory: Conversations with W.G. Sebald (London: Seven Stories, 2010), 53.
6 My deep regrets that even as an educated librarian I have not been able to retrieve this tale from a direct source. However, my friend Oskar Persson has been so kind as to provide me with a source for the quote: Roger Ebert, “Stroszek” (review), rogerebert.com, July 7, 2002, https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/great-movie-stroszek-1977.
11 A funny side note here is that the use of the khipu in Urton’s finding employs the exact same basic system as the devices we now use for record-keeping: the system of binary coding.
Det var i augusti som jag gick in i tallskogen
Some notes on a pine forest

There's a birds' nest outside my window; we stare right into each other's homes. No one except them has a view into my apartment. I live in a building from the 1940s, so it was built at a time when apartments were designed to get light at any cost, and the old way of arranging houses, with blocks organised so you were always mere feet away from a window just like your own, was becoming very unpopular. But what do the birds care about such ideals? Last spring, they began gathering twigs, and now there is a solid nest there, which seems to be strong enough to withstand even the windiest of nights, when the tree's limbs and the nest literally flail against my windowpane. They are magpies. They should be the ultimate birds for film, with their characteristic contrast of black and white, clearly distinguishable both in colour and in black and white. I try to film them, but they always seem to fly out of the frame.

Maybe they are too quick to be caught by the medium of film? One thing that is sure is that the movement of their wings is more complex than what can be caught in twenty-four or twenty-five frames per second. That is why they are so hard to animate. On his website, an animation expert goes through some of the most common mistakes in a post titled “How to make birds fly good.”. The first example: birds don't swim through the air. He explains: “Swimming is the closest thing we experience to flying, and it is tempting to animate bird flight like an airborne swim-cycle. Because of the vast difference in density between air and water, this can often lead us astray in a number of ways.”

Another website illustrates the key requirement for good animation of birds: understanding the anatomy of wings. By starting out with an illustration of a human arm, and then gradually covering it with feathers and changing the hand into a tip, it shows how birds' wings don't point straight away from their bodies, but actually possess many different joints.

I have an idea for a film that will connect the animation of birds with a lost work by the ancient writer Boios, in which mythological figures are turned into birds, as well as with the fact that the Swedish fighter jet JAS 39 Gripen keeps undergoing constant metamorphoses, as the great costs involved in airplane development lead to continuous refitting of older planes into new variants rather than constructing entirely new planes from scratch. This process goes under the macabre name “cannibalisation,” and since the number of airplanes in circulation (or “individuals,” as they are called by professionals) is relatively low, it's easy to track how material and fragments travel through time and geography. The connection between birds and airplanes is obvious: the bird served as inspiration during the early history of human flight and has continued to do so, although humans eventually did let go of the flapping wings and started to make airplanes that instead mimic a bird soaring through the air. But the bird is also one of airplane's biggest enemies: when it comes to the JAS Gripen—a fighter jet that thus far never has been used in combat—collisions with birds represent a high proportion of accidents. Birds can be useful for military purposes too. Like the opposite of the more famous peace dove, war pigeons were used as military messengers during both World Wars I and II, to help to deliver messages to the front. Today, drones are built to look like birds to avoid being discovered by radar as well as the human eye. Unlike airplanes and other human-made flying objects, their wings flap. In fact, they look like the badly animated birds listed on the animation website, but just like them, they seem to appear realistic to most people. A conclusion: the best way to hide in a combat would be to undergo metamorphosis to a—however badly animated—bird. To return to my proposed artwork, I'm not quite sure at the moment how I could actually put it all together.

In my process of tracking down all the different JAS Gripen planes, looking through all kinds of military footage, I find a series of films that amateur military photographers have shot during military exercises and uploaded online. The footage is heavily damaged, the colours bleed and flicker in the way that old VHS videos often do. The editing is dramatised, although the plots to me as a viewer seem quite vague and the director absent. The soldiers are mostly shown driving tanks, lying and running in the forest, and in monotonous scenes preparing themselves for upcoming events. I follow the clips from the 1950s through the decades up until the '90s. The films are all shot at Gotland. I watch them while at the same time the military exercise
Aurora 17 is taking place in the area. It’s Sweden’s biggest exercise in twenty-three years, with involved troops from the United States as well as other NATO countries, and the defence of Gotland—as the island occupies a strategic location in the Baltic Sea—is the main focus.

After the ‘90s, the military enthusiasts seem to have stopped filming; instead, I find more and more material shot by the Swedish Armed Forces’ own combat camera unit. These films are way more professional than the previous ones: the editing is fast, the images stable and sharp. This footage is meant not only for the military’s own channels, but also for the regular media, where it accompanies the news coverage of Aurora 17. In a podcast, one camera soldier explains that the purpose of having them shooting instead of journalists is that they can get closer. In order to be a camera soldier, you have to be trained both as a soldier and as a photojournalist, and the aesthetics of the material that they produce is a mix between news broadcasts, war films, and infomercials. Just like with the amateurish VHS films, when looking at the combat camera footage, the technical apparatus—the camera—becomes very present, as the soldiers overuse cinematic effects, playing with sharpness, panning, and tilts.

Maybe something could be told here from the perspective of the camera? I come to think of Emad Burnat and Guy Davidis’s documentary 5 Broken Cameras (2011), in which events on the West Bank are told through the five cameras that break during the process. When his fourth son is born, Burnat, the film’s self-trained cameraman, gets the first camera. At the same time in his village of Bil’in, the Israelis begin bulldozing village olive groves to build a barrier to separate the village from the Israeli settlement. In the following years, Burnat films his son growing, as well as soldiers and police beating and arresting villagers and settlers destroying olive trees. One after another, his cameras are destroyed. The practice of allowing the camera to dictate the structure becomes a system for telling a story that doesn’t fit into a conventional narrative with plot turns and endings, but that rather could be told as a Sisyphean tale.

In 5 Broken Cameras, the broken cameras become both symbols and victims of violence. The changes in camera technique when it comes to the films of the military exercises on Gotland is by contrast caused by technical improvement, and parallel to the change of camera technology in other sectors. Although these shifts could both say a lot about the professionalisation of military photography and provide a case study for media history, the fascination surrounding footage from different time periods can often lead to a dead end, where this fascination becomes merely aesthetic.

I start to look at the picturesque nature motifs in the images instead. It’s an easy thing to shift the focus to; in much of the earlier footage, the soldiers are barely visible, camouflaged both by their clothes and by the VHS glitches, and they often somehow seem to be quite far away from the camera. In the more recent films, there are plenty of shots evoking the beautiful nature of Gotland. In its attempts at being cinematic, it is hard not to associate the footage with Ingmar Bergman, who shot six of his films in the same area. A camera shifts its focus from one lime rock to another, pans over the characteristically sparse pine woods; aerial footage pictures the pine woods from above; a camera follows a soldier into the pine woods... Maybe this story could be told through the pine trees?

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In 1940, during the German occupation of France, modernist poet Francis Ponge goes out into the pine forest. He wants to capture the characteristics and beauty of it, and does so through a series of notes, which later are compiled into one long poem: Le carnet du bois des pins (The notebook of the pine woods) (1947). He tries out different ways of describing the trees, while at the same time writing about the process of doing so. The book ends with some suggestions of what a pine tree poem could look like. He is also exploring the language of the forest and tries to find connections between different words, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. It’s a classic meta-poem, but one that does not completely lose itself at the meta level, but rather swings back and forth between content and comments. Another example: in her video piece Les Goddesses (2011), Moyra Davey walks around in her untidy flat, which appears to be a place intended for scriptwriting rather than an interior in a film—it’s filled with piles of paper and photographs. She reads a text about Mary Wollstonecraft, her daughters Fanny Imlay and Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (later Shelley), and their stepsister Claire Claremont. The three sisters were called “les goddesses” by a friend of the family. Davey walks around the flat with a voice recorder and a headphone in one ear, repeating parts of her voiceover, correcting herself, redoing takes. At the same time, the camera passes by Davey’s photo album with pictures of her and her sisters from when they were young. Now and then, the story of les goddesses is interrupted by personal commentary about things like how Davey’s own sister Jane looks a lot like Mary Shelley. This is a coincidence, of course, and after this point, the entire film begins to slip back and forth between coincidence, chance occurrence, and genuine connection. Davey herself comments on the whole experiment: “Why does everybody
bara ett kort manus

Allt började med att jag ville skriva om tallskogen

want to tell their story?” she asks. “Why do all my students talk about ‘representing memory’?” Just like Ponge commenting on every step in his poem, stopping it from becoming too romantic, you could say that Davey is playing it safe, both by questioning her motivation for her own film and by her use of repetitions and mistakes. But alongside the meta-narrative, we still see an organised attempt to take two disparate things and reflect on how they might be connected, and what one of them might reveal about the other. I think that is a privilege that art possesses: to test connections and pick up fragments and facts, combine and misuse them.

Solmaz Sharif’s *Look* (2016) is a poetry collection that circulates around terms from the US Military’s word list: *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*. But instead of using the words to describe war scenes, Sharif forces the terms into everyday scenarios. Military language and metaphors are already a big part of everyday language, but since the insertion of these terms into another context is more drastic, they seem far more violent. The poems act on two levels: visually the military terms stand out from the texts, written in capital letters, but when reading out loud, the borders between the different vocabularies becomes blurred, and the violence arrives step by step.

* I feel drawn to pieces that work with form and content without letting the form be so dominant that the work only becomes a reflection or a critique of the form itself. That’s a fine line to balance on. One example that pushes the limits of that balancing act is Peter Watkins’s *La Commune (Paris, 1871)* (2000). Upset by the marginalised role the events of the Paris Commune were given in the French education system, Watkins chose, in his characteristic style, to portray the events within an environment of many anachronisms, where a television team document each step of the revolution in 1871 as a modern-day news crew would. The film is shot in black and white and uses amateur actors, who get interviewed about their lives in Paris. As a viewer, you sometimes find yourself in a relatively “real” scenario, allowing yourself to listen to and feel with the characters, but in the next moment the film pushes you back again, when the film crew enters and your voyeuristic position as spectator becomes obvious. What keeps the film from being a kind of didactic device for making us reflect upon the media is simply that

Another kind of form of experimentation I often feel drawn to is repetition. It would be possible to go on at length about the effects and purpose of repetition in art, but to me the most obvious and strong effect is that it functions as metaperspectives do: it reveals both construction and content simultaneously. The repetition in Gertrude Stein’s most famous line, “Rose is a rose is a rose” is open to different interpretations. It can be either a way of emphasising the importance of the rose, or a way of revealing how a single word can be used to denote many different roses, with all their various connotations. It can be taken as a cynical phrase, exposing how the word “rose” has been exhausted through use, or as a phrase that lends the rose new rosiness by calling it just that, a rose, rather than equating it to some tired adjective, like “red” or “beautiful.” It could also be argued that in our linear minds, a repetition is never a going back, it is rather to be referred to as a *panta rei*— never being able to step into the same river twice—or maybe a parallel more relevant to this text: different frames in a film or an animation.

Claude Monet started working with series in the 1890s, and in his romantic impressionistic urge to catch the light, repeatedly painted the same motifs over and over again: cathedrals, bridges, haystacks. When looking at his paintings hanging in their series, a lot of things happen: the act of painting becomes very present, which is the construction, as do the small differences, the heightened perception, and the motif itself.

Another key effect of repetition appears when the repetition is stopped. I often think of the opening scene of *Landscape Suicide* (1986) by James Benning: a man swings a tennis racket over and over, the jarring rhythm of the editing making the whole thing seem like a form experiment, a repetition of a single scene. But then, the camera turns away and reveals the other half of the tennis court, where all the balls are. Each repetition was its own labour. Or like in Inger Christensen’s classic *Alphabet* (1981), where the poem is arranged in accordance with two systems applied in tandem: the alphabet and the Fibonacci sequence, a numerical sequence in which each number is the sum of the two preceding numbers, which turns up in many different aspects of nature, from the shapes of shells to the reproduction of rabbits. At first, Christensen’s system edits the self, the human, out of the poem. It goes through the alphabet as if it were a mantra, evoking different things that exist:

- apricot trees exist, apricot trees exist
- bracken exists; and blackberries, blackberries; bromine exists; and hydrogen, hydrogen

Initially, the system looks like it might actually hold together all the way through, and the suite maintains its form: one poem for each letter of the alphabet, the number of lines of each poem determined by the Fibonacci sequence. But eventually, the lines grow too plentiful, and the poems collapse under their weight. Among all the apricot trees, blackberries, and June nights, a different narrative begins to take shape: the story of the atomic bomb. When the turn comes for the letter N (for “nuclear bomb”), the poem is six hundred lines long, and the alphabet—and poem ends. This is again a way to try to create structure and to make sense through both real and false connections, and these attempts at turning something wild, incomprehensible, and indefinable into a system can produce meaning and also serve as a means to scrutinise (and make transparent) the systems used to capture that very meaning.

* A military exercise has to balance between fiction and reality. On the one hand, it has to have some similarities to reality (or an imagined future reality) to serve its purpose as an exercise. On the other hand, it can’t be too close to reality, because then you risk revealing your strategies to the enemy. Military exercises also have their lines between content and form. Just as with many other actions of the Armed Forces, a big part of it is a show made to maintain military balance. It doesn’t only look like a war film: it is a war film, or rather, a commercial.

Aurora 17 continues. There’s some critique against the plot: that it too obviously points out Russia as an enemy and therefore could be seen as a provocation. It becomes winter and some JAS planes fly in the shape of a Christmas tree (yet another pine!) over the sky. The birds outside my window keep flying in and out of their nest.

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live evil, 2017. Still image. 16-mm film transferred to video, 4:00 min. Mads Kristian Froslev
There is a sequence in my film *live-evil* (2017) featuring a close-up of the hand gesture of a young man dancing by himself. The shot lasts only one second, then cuts to the man's swaying torso—framed in the opposite side—then back to the hand gesture repeated, but this time with a slight advancement. The sequence cross-cuts between these two looping movements, developing each of them slowly frame by frame, creating a gradually evolving *pas de deux*. Through the countless repetitions, the attention becomes focused intensely on the hand, which floats elegantly through the air with a sassy carelessness—yet at the same time having the precision of a conductor. The fingers release themselves and are led by gravity towards the floor, before the middle finger pulls back—beckoning—after which the other fingers follow like a flock of starlings in a murmuration.

I am interested in how human physicality is connected to psychology. How movements, gestures, and the voice express the character and identity of the person they belong to. The specific attributes of a simple body movement have characteristics that can be related to psychology, identity, and cultural background. It is my hypothesis that even the slightest unconscious physical act contains a character and a story.

“You express who you are through your body as much as through your mind. You don’t have a body, you are your body. And looking at a body and sensing a body—we can know who the person is.”

The statement above is spoken by the psychotherapist Alexander Lowen in the Serbian film *W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism*, which is partly a documentary on the life and theories of Lowen's mentor, Wilhelm Reich. Reich was invested in—among many other fields—how body language and muscular structure relate to the psyche of a person. In his 1933 book *Character Analysis*, he surveys general patterns of physical behaviour that connect to experiences and trauma that occurred during the person's upbringing. His notion of “character armour” explains how physical blocks and muscular tensions are developed as defence mechanisms to protect a person from the trauma or repression they encountered in their childhood and adolescence.

The media I work in—film, video, and sound—all depict a defined amount of time, which is implemented in the timeline that is inevitable to all three. The timeline and the de-limitation of time are the basis for my artistic practice. Having a confined slice of time makes time possible to grasp. By letting the timelines of my works—composed of material I shoot or record myself or of found material—undergo varying levels of altering, editing, manipulation, and repetition, I generate new narratives and systems that reach out for new or hidden emotional and psychological ranges that are inherent to the content.

“Repetition can serve to enforce the discreetness of a movement, objectify it, make it more object-like. It also offers an alternative way of ordering material, literally making the material easier to see.”

Looping and varying types of repetition is a recurring element in my moving-image and sound work. As Yvonne Rainer, who also works with repetition in her choreography and films, points out in the above statement, this technique can clarify and simplify an object. I use repetition with this purpose—to objectify a part of the timeline—and to further distil a shape of its essence.

Looking at a film loop of a fluttering shirt repeatedly will at some point cause the images to lose their literal meaning and evolve into an abstract field of colours and movement, where the re-emphasis, the familiarity, the return becomes the object—the rhythm itself. Fifty years prior to Rainer's statement on dance, the French philosopher Henri Bergson touched on the same idea in his 1896 book *Matter and Memory*: “By allowing us to grasp in a single intuition multiple moments of duration, it frees us from the movement of the flow of things, that is to say, from the rhythm of necessity.”

In the 1990s, the Scottish video artist Douglas Gordon reworked pre-existing film footage using repetition and slowing down to investigate and reveal hidden aspects of the material in a very powerful way. His film installation *10ms-1* (1994) is a slowed-down, looping fragment...
I Have the Best of Time, 2017. Sound installation, speaker, pole, mp3-player, 9 hours. Installation view, The Annual Exhibition, Cooper Union School of Art, New York, 2017. Mads Kristian Froslev
of a medical film from World War I that documents the attempts of a psychologically injured man to stand up and walk. The half-naked—apparently physically healthy—man falls slowly to the ground; he tries to raise himself again, but never succeeds. The slow playback allows for a close study of the struggle between the patient’s body and mind. The infinite looping enacts the fate of Sisyphus, the mythical Greek figure who was condemned to push a heavy boulder up a hill, after which it would roll down again, only for Sisyphus to start over again—and again. With these two simple timeline interventions of repetition and slowing down, Gordon turns this short strip of heavily loaded historical film from WWI into a haunting universal piece that deals with the connection of psychology and physicality, and trauma and human struggle in general.

In Gordon's 24 Hour Psycho (1993), it is Alfred Hitchcock’s iconic feature film Psycho from 1960 that is seen through the looking glass. In Gordon's installation, the film has been slowed down so it lasts twenty-four hours—making every frame crystallise for a quarter of a second on the freestanding screen—like a fast-cutting slideshow. The viewer is confronted by every single image as an independent statement, making the plot impossible to follow but letting all the emotional affects, unconscious plotlines, and personal associations the film may provoke in the viewer take over and become the message. By breaking down this mass cultural classic through slow motion, Gordon reveals the “aspects of our experience we carry around and are unaware of how they might be shaping our perception.”

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Repetition and looping is one of the tools I use to alter perception of the images and free elements, freeing them from their presumed coherences and contexts. Other tools I use in my films with this purpose are image flipping and colour inversion. The simple reversal of the colours of a black-and-white film can liberate the reading of the image completely. In an inverted image you recognise the forms and movement of the action, but the character has changed and it is the actual movement, texture, and form that becomes the object—instead of the action that they depict. The British artist James Richards makes eclectic, mesmerising collage videos composed of found footage. He juxtaposes footage from Hollywood films, old VHS documentaries, and handheld home recordings of everyday life in an abstract, sensual, and at times violent manner. He also completes technical interventions with the content, such as looping, distorting, and inverting. His colleague Ed Atkins describes the effect of Richards’s colour inversion quite precisely:

The image is inverted and emptied of presumed coherences—appearance and familiarity, for instance—and revealed as something altogether alien. Things are as what they actually are: a world of textures and sensations confessed in the inversion. In the negative, the texture of the subject and the image springs to the fore. Strikingly, and simply.

In my sound installation I Have the Best of Time (2017), a six-minute a cappella track has been transformed into a long-durational sound tour de force. A software logarithm, which loops half a second of the original track and advances it a minimal, inaudible step each time, creates a super slow progression through the original timeline of the track. It sounds like a seemingly endless stream of staggering rhythmic and melodic sounds, which varies across abstract linguistics, foreign languages, technoïstique rhythms, crackling ambience, and dead silence over the course of nine hours. The looping processing extracts all these hidden sounds, words, and emotions from the original phrasings of the American singer Petria on her 1986 single “I Miss Your Love.” The song was originally an underground hit associated with New York’s queer scene in the 1980s, but since then, its atmosphere and personality have sneaked into the unconscious memory of the clubbing crowd—through fragments of the vocal track being sampled and remixed into numerous techno and house records over the years.

“By not altering (the vocal’s) pitch or timbre, one keeps the original emotional power that speech has while intensifying its melody and meaning through repetition and rhythm.”

In the quote above, the American minimalist composer Steve Reich elaborates on his experience with processing original speech. In Reich’s sound piece Come Out from 1966, a recording of the speaking voice of a young black man, who was arrested for a murder he did not commit, saying “Come out to show them” is played in a loop on two channels, one of them slightly faster than the other. This gradually creates a phase shift, as the two channels go in and out of sync, that generates submelodies within the repeated melodic patterns and stereophonic effects—all produced from the original speech recording. This formal technical process reveals an unconscious layer, both in the recording of the young man and in the mind of the listener, that indirectly deals with the painful issue of racial discrimination within American society.

In Reich’s 1968 essay “Music as a Gradual Process,” he explains his idea on how formal processes, such as his tape loops, give the creator
complete control over the outcome yet at the same time allow the output to be independent and definite. He explains:

Musical processes can give one a direct contact with the impersonal and also a kind of complete control, and one doesn't always think of the impersonal and complete control as going together. By “a kind” of complete control I mean that by running this material through the process I completely control all that results, but also that I accept all that results without changes.10

Another example of the soul-searching effect of looping vocals is the minimalist hit single “O Superman” by the performance artist and musician Laurie Anderson from 1982. In this piece, Anderson's recording of her voice saying “ha ha” is looped by a harmoniser throughout the eight-minute song, creating a haunting synthetic Greek choir that answers the lead vocal of spoken word.

With my excessive use of timeline interventions of the time-based media I use in my work, I aim to reveal a sort of visual—or audible—unconscious layer of the material. Either one that I was looking for, one that I discovered on the way, or one that only appears for the viewer when submerged in the work. This idea of accessing an unconscious layer of the visual is an idea theorised by Walter Benjamin, in regard to photography. He states, “Photography makes aware for the first time the optical unconscious, just as psychoanalysis discloses the instinctual unconscious.”11

Benjamin argues that photography discovers what he calls the optical unconscious—a pendant to the psychological unconscious in psychoanalysis. Photography and its successor, moving photography and cinema, gain access to a visual layer that is not accessible in the naked eye's experience of the world. The camera and editing techniques expand the visual field further. Benjamin explains:

With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. The enlargement of a snapshot does not only simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject. So, too, slow motion not only presents familiar qualities of movement but reveals in them entirely unknown ones.12

The camera’s ability to capture fragments of seconds and to investigate what gestures and actions are made of in detail makes tangible a brand-new material, one not graspable in the pre-photography reality:

Even if one has a general knowledge of the way people walk, one knows nothing of a person's posture during the fractional second of a stride. The act of reaching for a lighter or a spoon is familiar routine, yet we hardly know what really goes on between hand and metal, not to mention how this fluctuates with our moods.13

My work with moving images builds on these foundational potentials of photography and film that Benjamin describes in his texts from the early 1930s, when these media were still in their adolescence. With the much later possibilities enabled by digital editing, I strive to take these media a step further—trying to squeeze out their potentials through my use of image manipulation, frame-by-frame editing, repetitions, and loops.

“*The world is in motion and in chiaroscuro. We can see only one side of things, only halfway, always changing. Their outline dissolves into shadow, reemerges in movement, then disappears in darkness or a surfeit of light.*”14

In the rich collection of the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin hangs Caravaggio’s painting *Amor Vincit Omnia* (1602). It depicts Amor—the Roman cupid—wearing eagle wings climbing down from a table scattered with musical instruments. The bright clarity of Amor’s naked body in movement in dramatic contrast to the dark stillness of the background is an example of the Renaissance painting technique chiaroscuro, which Caravaggio was a master of. The above quote comes from the French film theorist Michel Chion’s book *Audio-Vision*. In the following passage, he explains how chiaroscuro is closely connected to cinema:

Our attention, too, is in chiaroscuro. It flits from one object to another, grasping a succession of details and then the whole. The cinema seems to have been invented to represent all of this. It shows us bodies in shadow and light; it abandons an object only to find it again.15

Chiaroscuro is an important aesthetic tool in my artistic language. It is a way of focusing on and objectifying certain elements, actions, and movements that I want to elevate. By brightly lighting a moving hand in close-up against a black background, everything unnecessary is cut away. The hand gesture is isolated and placed on a filmic pedestal. These principles—originally formed through the painting of light and shadow—can also be applied in a broader sense to my installation and exhibition designs. The dark walls and carpet of a black-box film...
installation absorb the black nothingness of the background of a film—expanding it into a three-dimensional space that the viewer becomes immersed in. These principles can also be applied to a non-image-driven work: by majestically suspending one speaker from the ceiling in the middle of a room, it cuts the surroundings away, elevating the speaker and displaying the audio issuing from it with enough isolation to invite sustained attention.

My latest work, Christie (2018), is a film installation in which a digitised black-and-white 16 mm film is projected on one of the four walls in a blackened room, with the projection taking up all of the wall, side to side, floor to ceiling. The film depicts a group of hand movements that rapidly cut through the blackness of the screen. The hands—marked with many tattoos—move in an extraordinary way that indicates they are performing a task of some sort, without knowing what specific task that might be. The movements are repeated and seen from different angles and distances while the film speed shifts from real time to hypnotically slow. The blackness of the background becomes one with the darkness of the room—creating an infinite black space—only to be disrupted when the hand is cut off by the edges of the projection, revealing the rectangularity of the image.
Christie, 2018. Still image. 16-mm film transferred to video, 14:00 min, loop. Mads Kristian Frosløv
Quick glimpses of the fingers plucking the vertical strings of a harp occur once in a while—revealing the particular gesture to be that made by a harpist between striking the strings. Also, in the blink of an eye, the very indiscreet crocodile logo of the black Lacoste polo shirt the harpist is wearing materializes on the screen. The piece depicts the different layers of character and identity that these gestures and this body inhere. The most immediate characteristics are caused by the technique of harp playing. The tattoos of different bits of text and Catholic imagery are another layer that exposes the indeterminable character of these hands. The Lacoste polo is yet another superficial layer that symbolizes a play on identity, since it is a clothing brand that has a liquid identity, associated with a vast number of different cultures and subcultures. But underneath these different identity markers and the tasks the hands perform lies the actual way the hands move through the image—the way they carry these identity markers and tasks—which is the most essential layer of expression.

The film has a repetitious structure: a looped sequence of ten clips—but every time with a slight displacement of the joint between the clips. One clip of the hand moving through the air cuts smoothly to the same movement out of focus seen from another angle. But the next time the transition between these two clips appears, the cut is displaced a little—making a jump in the movement between the first and the second clip. All of the cuts in the film vary slightly from each other in this way every time they appear, investigating all possible juxtapositions of the movements and slowly accelerating the tempo of the sequence from a slowly floating pace to one of rapidity.

By introducing all these slight variations and repetitions to the gestures in this elevating and minimalistic presentation, all the different aspects of identity and character are extracted one at a time. They are squeezed out of the gestures through all the different angles, different cuts, and ways of looping in an attempt to get the full potential out of these materials—an attempt to squeeze all the juice from the fruit.
live evil, 2017. Still image. 16-mm film transferred to video, 4:00 min. Mads Kristian Froslev
Mads Kristian Frøslev, *live evil*, 2017, black-and-white 16 mm film transferred to video, silent, 4:00. Screened at the Cooper Union Film Festival, Anthology Film Archives, and at Dance Film; Deconstructed, Brooklyn Studios for Dance, New York, 2017.


See, for example, James Richards, *Not Blacking Out, Just Turning the Lights Off*, 2011, video, 16:15; *Radio at Night*, 2015, HD video, 8:00; and, with Leslie Thornton, *Crossing*, 2016, video, duration unknown.


Mads Kristian Frøslev, *I Have the Best of Time*, 2017, sound installation, 9:00:00, speaker, pole, mp3 player. Shown at *The Annual Exhibition* at the Cooper Union School of Art, New York, 2017.

Steve Reich, liner notes of *Steve Reich: Early Works*, Elektra and Nonesuch, 1992.


Mads Kristian Frøslev, *Christie*, 2018, black-and-white 16 mm film transferred to video, silent, 14:00. Projected wall to wall, floor to ceiling, in a 5 x 5 m black box. Exhibited at the BA degree show at Malmo Art Academy, 2018.

In *The Blink of an Eye* is the title of Walter Murch's book on film editing, in which he explains, among other theories, how film editing is parallel to the mind's perception of visual reality and how a film cut is parallel to the blink of the eye.
Helen Haskakis

*Untitled (Statue 1)* and *Untitled (Statue 2)*, 2018. Oil on linen, 180 x 120 cm each. Installation view, Annual Exhibition, Malmö Art Academy, 2018.

Helen Haskakis
Living skin on an ancient body, 2018. Oil on linen, 100 x 90 cm. Helen Haskakis
“Sometimes, my father would quiz me. One day, when I was alone with him in the studio, sitting there with my books and crayons as usual, he suddenly interrupted me by pointing at his shirt and asking me: ‘What colour is that?’ … When I answered, ‘Yellow,’ he moved his finger to a point where the fabric was partly shadowed and repeated his question. After a brief moment’s thought, I responded ‘Brownish yellow with some green.’ … I realised that I had only made isolated observations of the colour where it was at its purest, but that its constitution had evaded me as it was obscured by the names of the objects.”  
— Ola Billgren

At the same time each morning, I go to my studio, make a cup of coffee, and turn the radio on. Hearing people speaking on the radio in the background helps me think clearly; silence can get too invasive and cause my mind to wander. I sit down in front of the paintings that I’m currently working on, taking my time to view them. Paradoxically enough, going to the studio to not paint is as important as actually painting. That aspect of my working method is a strategy I use to keep my way of seeing from growing too mechanical, to keep me from thinking that I know what something looks like instead of looking to make sure. I also need to take into consideration things that are accidental or mistakes in the painting rather than automatically dismissing them as unusable. This way, I can remain attentive to myself as well as to the painting and all the possible turns it can take.

The First Thing I Saw Was Colour
My first and greatest discovery in terms of painting and seeing was when I came to understand colour the way that Ola Billgren describes above. It coincided with the first time I realised that my ambitions were poorly matched with my abilities when it came to creating images. During this time, the forest was one of my recurring subjects.

Beyond the Automatic Gaze Lies the Painting
The community where I grew up is located about thirty miles from the closest town and is surrounded by other smaller villages, which are in turn surrounded by forest. The long distances meant that I spent a lot of time riding in cars as a child, and this gave me plenty of time to watch the forest flicker past outside the window.

Whenever we went west, inland, the landscape soon changed and turned very rocky. The points where the inland road reached its highest elevation offered the best views over the vast expanses of forest.

I knew that painting the forest the way I thought it looked was possible — I’d seen this in the copies of paintings by Bruno Liljefors that hung next to my grandparents’ kitchen bench. But I was completely unable to do it myself, and I couldn’t figure out why. At first, I assumed that it had something to do with light and dark. But the problem remained when I tried to translate my experience of the foliage into pictures drawn with my dark- and light-green coloured pencils. I realised that something was eluding me and concluded that I could only find out what it was by closely examining the colours of different objects.

I don’t recall if it happened suddenly or if it dawned on me more gradually, but by diligently studying the colours in the world around me, I discovered what Billgren calls the “constitution of colour.” It felt incredibly, but it was also disquieting. With all these colours flickering before my eyes, I found myself unable to determine the colour of anything with absolute certainty. My struggles to reach understanding had only caused more problems, and everything around me seemed to be overwhelmingly complex.

The Imagery of Kristina Jansson

“I think the English word volatile, meaning violent, instable, powerful, alternating, describes the condition you can experience when confronted by painting. But it requires a trained sight. I have a cat metaphor that I’m particularly fond of. It’s from the author Jorge Luis Borges who writes about a man about to embark on a journey by train. The man locates a café before leaving and finds a sleeping sphinx-like cat. ... When he strokes his hand against the fur of the cat, he realises that the cat is in a now, but the man is in the movement of time. When I see art, I can sense the existence of a pocket in time, I lose ground, and find myself in a drawn-out now. One might say that a painting is a place, not the image of a place.”

— Kristina Jansson

One of my favourite artworks, Imitatörerna (The imitators) (2003) by Kristina Jansson, is at Moderna Museet in Stockholm. I also keep a picture of it in my studio, to make sure it is always available, as it is a piece that I constantly return to whenever I need to find solutions to use in my own work. I must have looked at this painting at least a hundred times, but despite all the time I’ve spent viewing it, it still awakens just as much curiosity and longing to paint in me every time I see it.

The subject is twenty-four people, sitting and standing in lines in front of and behind each other, as if they are about to be photographed. Some of them look dressed up and are wearing suits, dresses, and different kinds of hats. Others look like they are in costume: I notice what looks like a mime and a sheriff from the Old West. The size of the canvas means that you have to face it with your whole body, we’re standing across from one another, these creatures and I. It’s hard to take my eyes off them, and they seem to be looking back at me. If you look closer, you can tell that some of the faces are repeated, although only partially, as though there is a glitch in the painting. About half of them meet the viewer’s gaze, while others look away, as though their attention is being held by something behind the viewer’s field of vision. I can’t decide about the rest; their faces are blurred, as though they are in motion.

Although Imitatörerna might easily be mistaken for being painted all in grey on first look, anybody who looks closer will soon discover that it shimmers with browns, reds, and blues. Maybe Jansson mixed two dark, warm colours into a black shade, and then blended that with white paint. In this way, you could create a whole spectrum of colours, ranging from dark to light, which would have an organic quality that you could not achieve with black and white paints straight from the tube. There are hints of warm reds and browns in the characters’ faces, which give them a sense of inner life and light, but their distorted features are more reminiscent of some ghostly realm. Jansson’s brushstrokes are rich and flowing; her way of applying paint gives an impression of rapidity. As in all her paintings, it seems self-evident that each stroke is in its right place. Colour and subject are in harmony, and each shade is precise in relation to the reality that exists within the painting.

The Failed Painting

It’s August, and I’m back in Malmö, back in the studio, after having been away for three months to work during the summer.

I’m sitting down, looking at a painting that I couldn’t finish before I left, a painting I call the “mother painting.” It depicts a woman who is holding a child in her arms. The top half of the woman’s face is outside the picture, and she’s wearing a large light-blue
Untitled (statue 2), 2018. Oil on linen, 180 x 120 cm. Helen Haskakis
Living skin on an ancient body, Marshland, and Untitled, 2018. Oil on linen, 100 x 90 cm, 92 x 100, and 21 x 29 cm. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM2 Gallery, Malmo, 2018. Helen Haskakis
T-shirt, black sweatpants, and a loose-fitting brownish-grey cardigan. The child is sucking its thumb and wearing light-pink pyjamas, which are almost the same colour as its skin. These two figures are in the foreground, brightly illuminated, as though from a sudden flash of light. Their shadow is cast onto the wall behind them, where there is also a doorway. For a while, there was a black rectangle there too, which was the start of a window. But right before I left, I removed it. It’s been a long time since I found a new subject; the whole summer has gone by, and I have no idea how to proceed from here. I’m not really in the mood, but I decide to resume working on the painting anyway.

There were parts of it that I felt connected to, like the child’s and the mother’s faces. When I painted them, several months earlier, I knew how to do it right away, and I was able to paint quickly and freely. That’s the state I try to be in whenever I paint: allowing myself to work intuitively. But the whole of the painting didn’t work—it was sterile somehow. I had painted over and redone parts of it so many times that the layers of paint had settled on the painting like a dull membrane.

In order to find some way to proceed, I open my Vera Nilsson book, and then I feel like a cliché for turning to Nilsson to figure out how to portray a child. But I don’t know of anybody else who can do that in a way that affects me like her paintings do. I look at Lillan med leksakerna (Little girl and the toys) (1925). The colours in it make me think of the word “fleshy.” A small child is playing, withdrawn into herself. Her skin is a reddish-purple. Behind her is a dark reddish-black room with two black rectangles, maybe a window. The child’s gaze is fixed on the toys in front of her. She’s reaching for a doll, completely caught up in her game, oblivious to what I’ve seen. One or more of these photos is to be used as a reference for a painting.

French artist Jean-Siméon Chardin’s painting La Serinette (1751) depicts a sitting woman with a serinette. On her right is a birdcage with a canary inside, which she is training to sing with the instrument. Art historian Ewa Lajer-Burcharth writes that this painting can be interpreted as an image of Chardin's relationship to the academy and the strict, repetition-based training it offered, with the woman representing the academy and the caged bird the painter himself. Chardin managed his lack of experience with making preparatory sketches for his paintings by skipping that step, painting directly on the canvas, and using his own body as a tool and an imaginary basis for the bodies in his paintings. X-ray photographs of La Serinette have revealed that this wasn’t entirely easy for him: he made three attempts at painting the figure before he settled on a composition. Lajer-Burcharth calls this “work[ing] from a state of unknowing.” She continues: “Chardin’s materiality is thus the very means through which the artist formulates his individuality. But this does not happen through a wilful, demiurgic shaping of matter, but through a complex and conflicted dialogue with the stuff of painting in the course of which an artistic personality emerges into view.”

About Chardin, whose genre paintings she claims possess a subjectivity unusual for their time, Lajer-Burcharth further writes that one reason for this was that he began his studies at a guild establishment that didn’t have permission to offer life-drawing instruction while he was enrolled there. This meant he never underwent years of rigorous drawing training before he began painting, as the students at the rival academy did. Lajer-Burcharth claims that even though he went on to attend
the latter institution five years after graduating, he had no method in place for drawing bodies, and this meant he faced some challenges as he went from painting still lifes to genre paintings.11

Although I base my works on photographs, I can relate to the idea of painting from a state of uncertainty. In the initial stages of a painting, I never know why I've chosen a particular subject; I've simply followed my intuition. Therefore, I also don't know how or to what extent I will end up relying on the photo references. Everything can change. The more I paint, and the more decisions I have to make, the more I slowly realise what the painting is supposed to be.

But I'm also attracted to Lajer-Burcharth's interpretation, as I'm very familiar with the feeling of having to rely on yourself after encountering the limits of your knowledge. The mother painting is big. I made a conscious decision to set the characters' sizes in relation to myself, because I wanted to make the viewers feel like they are present in the room with them. I also used my own body as a reference, studying the colour of my skin and the way my hands look in various positions, for instance. However, I didn't want to relate the painting to my own person as such. On the contrary, I've tried to detach it from myself, to create a more general image of a woman with her child. The paradoxical nature of what I do does not elude me.

The fact that the way something has been painted is important to our understanding of the painting makes sense to me. When I see Lillan med leksakerna, I know that Nilsson's handling of the material is significant and not merely the result of her preference for one surface over another. But I've never previously reflected on how the very search for a solution for a painting can also leave traces of the person painting it.

In a letter, Chardin wrote that his paintings are finished when he has nothing more to desire in them.12 The only thing I never changed in the mother painting was the faces — I knew that they were right. They were in line with my feelings about the picture; there was nothing more I wished from them. In retrospect, I can understand why I chose my subject, and the way I kept moving back and forth from personal to private while I worked on it, without ever feeling prepared to take it all the way. Since the reason for painting the image is so deeply self-centred, it was never a matter of lacking technique; the only way I could have made the painting credible/finished would have been by making it refer back to myself (and my own person) — something I'm opposed to doing, as it becomes too private.

Eventually, I have had enough. I pick up a brush and paint over their faces, remove the canvas from its frame, fold it up, and toss it into the bin used for leftover paint. The next day, I go there to see if it's still there, but it isn't. The painting is gone, and my studio is empty.

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4 Imitatörrerna is 160 x 480 cm.
9 Lajer-Burcharth, “Materiality and Subjectivity,” 65.
crust, 2018. Still image. HD video, sound, 40:06 min. Inka Hiltnen
“You have become an empty talking head,” she told me.

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I don’t believe authenticity; I don’t believe bliss. No coming of a paradise, no walks towards nirvana. There are no great stories beyond us; we have no single morals, Nietzsche said; we perform discursive roles, I learned after Lacan; and later Derrida told me, there is no original state of being, neither present nor absent, yes or no. But the skeleton of the human mind does not apply itself to its own constraints; it relies on faith, a trust of some kind that comes to be called meaning. With the search of fundamentals, one fears and desires, objectifies so as to subjectify—a living that is confined to its corporeal essence, restricted by linguistic understanding; that is to say, we need to believe in order to pass anxiety.

“I” is a word one calls oneself as another calls you by your name. But it is never a proper name and evermore given. There is no “I” before language, and language is given by narrative perception. What is this “I,” that which I call myself, if not the story I and you tell me, and tell others, and thus that which structures my linguistic subjectivity?

“The I is not a being but something attributed to that which speaks, a solitude by which a rupture of being leaves a trace.”

What the “I” is, is a response and reflection of the outer world.

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In this essay I take an approach to art, and precisely art of that kind; I try to go even a bit closer in my own practice. It is necessary to mention right at the beginning that since the concept of art is and can be adapted to extensive differing ways of presentation, my use of the word does not attempt to cover them all.

To speak of art is to speak around it, towards it, passing it, since art is something that evades words. Erases them, is the silence between them. That which differs, defers, refers, and yet does not reveal itself as articulable. I will come back to this later in the essay.

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The time from the spring of 2013 to the end of 2014 marked a sea change in my life: I finished high school and moved to a small town in the countryside, far from my previous home. At the preparatory art school I attended, my practice in painting and drawing ceased, and my interest turned to video. I grew and changed as anyone does at such an age. But what made the time
remarkable was the shift in language: at the time, my English skills were not even average, but in the new environment, it was no longer possible to use my mother tongue. When everyday interaction turned into a language I couldn’t yet handle, my thinking underwent a radical change.

It was also the time I discovered a deep fascination with philosophy and psychoanalysis, and started gathering knowledge about them. New strains of thinking seized me. I read a lot of overviews on different philosophers, and sometime later I heard the name of the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. All the fascination with unfamiliar language, after a few months, those thoughts I began dealing with in English I was not able to translate into my mother language without effort, and vice versa. The more I learned English, the more there was no single stable place. I felt split. Matters related to my past I dealt with in Finnish, and everything about the present and future, I considered in English. Part of my identity became based on a different character. The question arose: What is this “I” or “me” that I call myself, since I can’t find a single self?

My practice with art followed this transition. Painting became distanced, but at the same time I was becoming more sensitive to imagery. I discovered new film directors and watched movies of a kind I had never seen before. I could not hold a pen or a brush between my fingers without reproducing old learned manners. Yet I saw how movement and rhythm started to take the place of aspiration. They became drivers of my practice. After the first semester of my bachelor programme at Malmö Art Academy, in the autumn of 2014, video had become the only medium I would work with.

I didn’t identify myself with the past “me” anymore. The year 2014 wiped out my old character. It was a year of remarkable newness; no interests from the past were left intact. But that which remained and couldn’t follow the transition was the body, the imperatrive restricting mortality.

Since then, with ever more intensitiy, my practice has revolved around questions of the dialectical play between I and you, the subject (that of the “I,” the “self”), language, discursive social roles, and the very finiteness of being, the restrictions set by the imperative of mortality.

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“At the heart of this monument the soul keeps itself alive, but it needs the monument only to the extent that it is exposed—to death—in its living relation to its own body. It was indeed necessary for death to be at work—the Phenomenology of the Spirit describes the work of death—for a monument to come to retain and protect the life of the soul by signifying it.”

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II (the subject/language)
Psychoanalysis reverses the intuitive, commonplace understanding of a person’s selfhood: that which is commonly thought to come from the outside is actually what is within, and vice versa; the outside becomes conceived as an identity of a self.

According to Lacan, in three stages—the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real, together called register theory—the infant’s generation of subjectivity begins by creating a fantasied, imaginary image of an ego, an entity, and wholeness. Through demands made on a caretaker, the other, the infant receives its first conceptualised properties through interactions between it and the other. It then enters into the stage of language, the Symbolic, which encompasses not only the spoken word but the entire Symbolic order: an internalised understanding of the function of the societal play, that is, all interaction in a society, including all subjects, both human and nonhuman, body language, accents and tones of voice, also objects—in short, the complete environment in which the child grows and gathers its self-understanding. The third stage, the Real, is that which remains outside cognitive comprehension, and is therefore inaccessible, but is within the Imaginary and the Symbolic. It does not take part of the linguistic fabric constituted by the Imaginary and the Symbolic, but manifests itself as absences, lacks, and blind spots in the Symbolic order. It is the place in which the “I” doesn’t exist; in short, death and mortality. The subject is therefore barred by language.

The Lacanian subject is primarily a linguistic-functioning creature without an original selfhood, never coming to realise that it has no original “I.” I would say that before entering into language, the infant is not even human.

The subject is a response and reflection to the other, of the other, and for the Other. It cannot reach a pure, authentic, original state. This self-understanding is alien: one never was it and is never going to be it; it is constant movement; transition, transference, and misrecognition. What holds this unstable entity together is the objectified ego, paralysed into its
name and to the Imaginary and Symbolic image it holds of itself. But the fantasied ego is not the main structure of the subject; it is merely what remains throughout one's lifetime and makes coherent the evermore floating linguistic creature. That is to say, what consciousness has is language.

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I follow fragments. In the shattered world, with constant inferences, I can't do more than interpret and reflect the external world. I have neither guidelines nor principles; all I can say is that at first I need to read. It is an entryway into a journey that is new and unknown, eyes open, something shivering all through the skin—I'm not able to hold myself composed any longer—then comes rhythm. The place of departure cannot be seen anymore; a notebook full of fragmented marks; I'm enchanted and not yet able to stay; one word repeats. I have to follow.

At first there is the language of words—fragmented quotes, longer passages written down. The notebook full of citations that I can't trace back anymore. Weeks run forward; everything takes time and nothing can be rushed. To have the right words, to find the proper language (that, after all, cannot arrive). During this time many days are spent in a frustrated blindness. But yet, one day I embrace and gather (with passion) — afterwards leaving so much behind, before finding the right path. It is more about seeing than understanding, though it is in order to understand.

Yet I can't stay any longer; I need to escape, alienate myself, submerge myself in the world of imagery.

Movement and rhythm. Breathing. Those words I always come back to when I try to put my practice into words. I turn to them year by year, never abandoning them; yet at the same time I abandon so much else.

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These past few years I have been very inclined toward historical art; paintings especially, and increasingly ancient tragedy, which I have not yet taken enough time to explore.

I will never forget those first moments in the hall of Italian baroque painting in Vienna's Art History Museum in 2017. In front of huge, ornately framed works hanging on wide lofty walls, in less than ten minutes, air did not pass through the lungs, the skeleton trembled, and the muscles in the legs weakened. Something penetrated me with such great impact and impression that I was not able to stay and had to leave the entire building; I returned six times afterwards. Caravaggio's and his contemporaries' use of light and dark with realistic physicality and psychological themes infiltrated my entire cognition and body; all cells, muscles, and bones within it.

When I look at works like that, I can't speak of a picture or merely a figure. For instance, a painting might be a pictorial representation displayed on a material surface, but the entirety transforms into a strong aesthetic experience that I would call existential. And this can apply to many kinds of art as well as other varying aesthetic phenomena after they reach a certain point. The phenomenon of how desire comes to be triggered cannot be articulated.

And in my case, it is not only baroque art that affects me in this way. An experience as inarticulable, overwhelming, and intense I have also found from Nina Roos's recent paintings and from various films. But more than any other work or anyone else, I find this experience in the works of Béla Tarr; they occupy one's entire being, bringing it between pleasure and pain—between which we can draw no line (it might be called passion, or fear)—embracing melancholy, waving air, and creating incredible pressure, the violence of which is not explicit but is nevertheless precisely there. Breathing beyond, motion without a moving figure, rhythm that captures the movement of a beating heart. The sensation that is cold but welcoming, gathering and embracing, repulsive and alien—unknown, in short. Tearing one apart, and flashing the image of the place where identity has no gateway to enter. There are no right words for these works.

I once asked my deeply Christian friend, who also works in the fine arts, how she experiences the divine or her god. Can we relate that experience to a strong aesthetic phenomenon? She couldn't say yes or no. There was no answer, there were no words. Neither yes nor no.

III (representation)

We are so familiar with representation that that which leads us to the unrepresentable is representation itself, regardless of the fact that representation is never singular nor pure.

Following Ferdinand de Saussure against the dualistic tradition in philosophy, primarily marked by the Cartesian distinction between "body" and "soul," in Positions, Jacques Derrida states, "the signified is inseparable from the signifier, ... the signified and the signifier are the two sides of one and the same production." He continues, "every signified is also in the position of a signifier," and any distinction between them is "problematical at its root." He goes on to speak of translation, saying, "translation practices the difference between signed and signer. But if this difference is never pure, no more so is translation, and for the notion of translation we would have to substitute a notion of transformation."
crust, 2018. Still image. HD video, sound, 40:06 min. Inka Hiltnen
I would say that since all perceptions are conceived from the perspective of a person's subjective historic linguistic composition—structured by the history of the individual lifespan—they are thus interpretations, translations, never pure or original. To apply this to my understanding of the Lacanian subject, that of linguistic construction that has, in the words of Lacan, an “unconscious structured like a language (Saussurian un langage)” and is “overwritten by signifiers,” the subject is— I would claim—the translation and transformation of perceived presentations of the play between signifier and signified. The subject is this movement.

Every action is a presentation and becomes read and comprehended by means of language, signer, and signified—taken in a more encompassing sense than spoken language. Lacan's use of the word “language” implies the subject's entire living environment; it is not limited to the spoken word, but encompasses the entire social context from which the subject gathers its self-understanding, all connotations and associations, to its consciousness.

The subject represents what it has conceived through norms and repetition. For instance, a theatre play is understood as fictional, but one might say that the Lacanian gaze, the gaze of the Other, is there embodied by the audience. Actual social roles follow specified norms and rules as theatre roles do. In other words, every reality can be constructed via other kinds of conventions, which therefore suppose another comprehension of reality in which fiction is also determined by different terms. Following Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the Lacanian subject conceives its body as both subject and object, as itself and as a thing, the seer and the seen. The subject is constantly under observation, under the gaze of the Other, which delineates its subjectivity. Every subject is alienated from itself by this gaze, which also triggers desire.

“In our relation to things, in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision, and ordered in the figures of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is to some degree eluded in it—that is what we call the gaze.”

“We are beings who are looked at, in the spectacle of the world. That which makes us consciousness institutes us by the same token as spectum mundi. Is there no satisfaction in being under that gaze of which, following Merleau-Ponty, I spoke just now, that gaze that circumscribes us, and which in the first instance makes us beings who are looked at, but without showing this?”

In other words: unable to be stable, we have to find ourselves, place ourselves, become ourselves, which we never are and never come to be since the “we” exists only in the conceptualised and contextualised world of linguistic cognition. In short, we perform narratives of ourselves.

In Derrida's terms, we are “polluted” and final meaning is always “deferred.” This is the Derridean trace, the play of differences. Or, in these oft-quoted words of Lacan: “I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think. ... I am not whenever I am the playing of my thought; I think of what I am where I do not think to think.”

IV

After the spring of 2016, I lost all images. I wasn't drained and dry; I was full of words, but without my previous embrace of them in relation to imagery. I saw still, of course, imagery that might take a place in prospective works, but my manner of observing the world had transformed. It wilted. I was not able to see what I am constantly looking for. The shoots I eventually filmed were mere reproduction of the old in a new form. I was aware I was hitting a wall. The autumn came without hope; still before winter I read and wrote, had some breathing room, but through the months I lost words and text, and became more frustrated and distressed than ever. I couldn't read, was without images, and thus drained out.

The year turned to 2017. Life presented its blank face over the darkest time of the year: Christmas, January, and beyond. Winter in the north is tardy and long, and not even spring brings much more than plentiful rain revealing greyish ground and decomposed plants on lawns, meadows with their muddy hay; rude headlands beside motorways. But together with these ashen landscapes, spring brings daylight. In the spring of 2017, I gained more strength, and after some struggle—slowly, like a child—drew myself back to books again; I spent my time reading and writing and submerged in the practice of language. During those months, when I still didn't have the sight of imagery, the previous relation between language and image transformed to sound: instead of imagery, I was seeking sound.

V (absence/presence)

“If the word silence ‘among all words,’ is ‘the most perverse or the most poetic,’ it is because in pretending to silence meaning, it says nonmeaning ...”

“…it slides and it erases itself, does not maintain itself, silences itself, not as silence, but as speech.”
Silence is that of nothing: a no-thing, the absence of everything. But to think of nothing is to think of something and already erase nothing. Just as there is no silence for us, there is no nothing for us, for our world of experiences. We cannot stay silent and we cannot become nothing nor reach nothing, since then we will have already ceased to be. How to speak of silence? That which we all relate to but cannot comprehend?

According to Derrida, presence is inseparable from absence. The presentation of absence overtakes the presence/absence opposition. The subject is already in language in order for differentiation to be possible, and thus self-awareness that requires differences, traces of elements, and every trace is a trace of another trace. “Trace” is the name Derrida gives to the entwinement of the other in the same.9

Trace is also internal to the Derridean concept of writing, which not only encompasses the written mark but is the entire weaving of conscious comprehension.10 By condemning Western metaphysics since Plato and its reliance on presence in relation to speech, with the repression of writing as the repression of absence, Derrida disputes the existence of any possibility of an origin. There never was one and will never come to be one. That is to say, all is made of traces; everything comes from somewhere and does not originate anywhere. Derridean difference, by questioning the entire concept of originality, reveals that representation is reality itself, deferred, delayed, and forever referring and alluding to.11 Derrida states:

This was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse—provided we can agree on this word—that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely.12

Here I find a strong relation to art, and precisely to the experience I referred to in section II. That which Derrida names “the entwinement of the other in the same” takes a discernible role. Artworks are often considered to have to some extent dependence on the viewer’s interpretation of them, and thus open up the possibility for associations to be triggered. In the case of analytical texts, it might be more common to suppose that the text has a designated meaning that is to be understood in terms of the author’s intention.13 But often art and works of art cannot be read as statements. They provide a difference, that is to say, they allow themselves to be discussed in a wider sense—sense exactly, since art leaves more space for a subjective experience; that is, associations to elsewhere, traces, to use the Derridean terminology, traces that apply to all cognitive perceptions. If I were to provide an actual instance—of art’s relation to presence and absence, that which is called “the entwinement of the other in the same,” without oppositions—it would be the actual event of art and how one, as a spectator, reflects upon an artwork and immerses oneself, if not in it, towards it, towards the other. One is in the physical presence of art, but is it such that the experience leads one astray, to wander elsewhere, away from social human reality, far from rationalised understanding in the conceptualised world, to an illusion in relation to subjective associations? In other words, is this experience an opening of a new space rather than the closing off of previous ones? Not a closure but an unfolding, not a judgment but an inquiry? Not that which I am able to analyse throughout, but that which eludes me, eludes my understanding, and shakes off words, terms, and concepts? So often one stumbles with words when one tries to articulate the impact of an artwork.

Every time I watch Tarr’s The Turin Horse, I happen to forget space and time around me, no matter whether the chair I am sitting on is comfortable or not, no matter what noise is coming from the environment: I am there, in the presence of the experience—but simultaneously elsewhere. I lose space and time, my being in the world becomes displaced from the here and now. Films are durational: they have a beginning and an end; but even temporal presentations are never limited to their set durations. The experience comes to live in oneself, and in the best cases confuses one’s previous understandings. It questions one in one, as the other.

What is revealed is the experience of the absence within the presence.

Does art have the means to lead our cognition beyond words: to the inarticulable, unfathomable place to which rational understanding has no entrance?

Most art is not able to reach up there. Now I’m speaking of my own experiences. Most artworks I encounter do not imprint any notable mark on me; they pass and cease without a myth of genius; they remain as figures and images, objects without strong thrust that allows one to relate to them. Among the field of art there are only a few works that I can name that have the force to elevate me from the mundane. Art that cannot come to words, is unfamiliar, alien, may be painful, but evermore penetrating as such. These works confuse ideas of self-limitation and question the condition of life; they continue to
crust, 2018. Still image. HD video, sound, 40:06 min. Inka Hiltunen
haunt for months, and return at times one could not have anticipated beforehand. If something cannot be articulated in one way or another, can it be apprehended? I would say no. That is what I call the illusion of a meaning.

Am I speaking of the words of love here? Love that is an illusion in the same sense as art, self, and any kind of meaning within life. Perhaps art can present something that would be a no-thing without art, and is there anything more important than precisely no in order to say yes, and thus in order to be?

It is also the paradoxical horror within life.

VI (mortality)
We have already abandoned our bodies by giving them an external word: a body, a corpse, a cadaver. We have made them strangers to us; peeled our skins away from our identifiable being by falling into language. There is no more left for a body than a word, not even a name, the sole representation of the identities of our Imaginary selves.

“A dream then the world appeared to me, and a God's fiction; coloured smoke before the eyes of godlike discontented one.

Good and evil, and pleasure and pain, and I and thou— coloured smoke it appeared to me before creative eyes. When the creator wished to look away from himself—he created the world.

For the sufferer it is an intoxicating joy to look away from his suffering and lose himself. An intoxicating joy and a losing of one's self the world once appeared to me.”

It is this reversed phenomenon through which one traverses: the subject that presents its self by means of representation, which it is at the same time aware of and considers, but yet still postulates, itself as authentic in itself. Life has no fundamental base, principle, nor unifying signifier, and is never secured; it is only the lack that maintains life, and there is nothing that would remain after life.

It was Friedrich Nietzsche, with the Dionysian god, who brought the ecstasy of art to the awareness of the modern mind. As a counter-force to this Dionysian chaos, he introduced the Apollonian dream—that of order and distinctiveness. These are the aesthetics that I can relate to.

The essence of non-essence from within and from without: not completely tolerated, telling more about non-presence than anything of the presence, and revealing what we are not even willing to see: the place from which one at first escapes, from no-thing to some-thing, and some-thing is that of the conceptualised and conceivable; the generation of any-thing upon no-thing engenders the illusion of some-thing, which always carries a meaning, whether religious or secular, and keeps one within the movement of the social play.

Aesthetics cannot be expelled from everyday life since they are the means of representation and perception of ourselves. What else can aesthetics be other than the sight of space, the tone of sound, and the touch of surface? Language has aesthetics of its own, which in perception become related to the visual and the acoustic. Never alone, never separated, not here but elsewhere.

“A present not as a total presence but as a trace. Therefore, before all dogmas, all conversions, all articles of faith or philosophy, experience itself is eschatological at its origin and in each of its aspects.”

So, how to extract the blood of the bloodless? How to face meaning within absence? That which suffers and delineates horizons, is in us, but we are not?


Compare this to the Lacanian “language.”

Here lies the difference between Derrida and Lacan. Referring to the Real, Lacan still points to some more fundamental reality.


This is very much questioned; see for instance Roland Barthes’s “From Work to Text” (1971) and “The Death of the Author” (1967) as well as most postmodern authors including Derrida.

Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 255.


Further References


We're better off tomorrow, 2018. Polylactic acid, metal, wax and sand, 45 x 50 x 137 cm. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM2 Gallery, Malmö, 2018.
Theis Madsen
“Art, in fact, is an omnipresent force, it cannot accept unilateralness, it works simultaneously on good and bad, positive and negative, corporeal and spiritual, historical and present. Through language, art mediates opposites, attempts to take in and deepen both sides, because limitation excludes all the infinite. The definition of a limit, even a historical limit, holds us back and defines us, turns us towards ourselves.”
— Germain Celant, writing about Anselm Kiefer

The attempt to preserve or hand down history from one generation to the next always has to contend with the inconvenience that it is the memory or the understanding of the contemporary time that is—or was—present during the given period that determines how long these memories of ways of understanding can last before they gradually disappear into oblivion, where they will lie dormant until certain occurrences serve to conjure them up again. These events provide us with the opportunity to look, with fresh eyes, at our contemporary time: useful incidents from the past might contain solutions to the situations of distress we find ourselves in today.

The notion of how history can best be preserved according to one’s ability is a question I have been struggling with for some time now. I am thinking here of two examples where time appears to have had the least impact; this involves art and religion. And in the earliest examples that I have come across, through Werner Herzog’s documentary Cave of Forgotten Dreams, the two are found as a unit, deep inside the Chauvet Grotto. Inside this cave, paintings of human beings were found, paintings created almost 32,000 years ago; they were found in a condition where they were virtually untouched, and this fact imparted to the cave an ambience of being a time capsule. At the same time that I was being reacquainted with the Chauvet Grotto, and part of our history was being retrieved, I found my way to an interesting albeit similar event when I came across Into Eternity: A Film for the Future, a documentary film directed by Michael Madsen.

This time, however, the outcome of the story had not happened yet. The film has to do with Onkalo, a nuclear waste facility that is supposed to contain nuclear waste permanently, thus endowing it with an expected lifetime of a hundred thousand years. However, the question about how to communicate a message a hundred thousand years in the future was raised, in order to give a warning to and inform future beings about the dangers that lie within it. This seems to be nothing short of an overwhelming task, to put it mildly. What mediums are going to be used: texts, symbols, illustrations, sounds, or forms?

In an attempt to process the experiences I have had, I found myself having an increased motivation to create—or maybe to find—events...
We're better off tomorrow, 2018. Details. Polylactic acid, metal, wax and sand, 45 x 50 x 137 cm. Theis Madsen
that could be transformed. But what they could be transformed into was something I did not yet know. Investigations of past occurrences in relation to the present time, and at the same time being able to take the present time apart to find proposals for an unknown future, appeared to be avenues through which I could try to parse out the interminable themes of the present day that I could neither relate to nor understand as of yet.

When I was at preparatory art school, I attended a lecture by Nils Viga Hausken. Among his other works, he described a group project where several artists made works that would go into one of the many German bunkers that had been constructed in Denmark during the time of the occupation in World War II. The works were locked inside the bunker fifty years following the liberation of Denmark, where they are to remain for another fifty years before access to them will be given again.2 The project intrinsically carries a possibility for a political message, and maybe a prediction for a future that will continue to remember its past in an attempt to create a better future for succeeding generations, or maybe a reminder of the incidents that led to Denmark’s occupation, as well as to what the rest of Europe experienced at that time, in the event that Europe finds itself about to drift back into former conditions and circumstances. In the final analysis, I can only make conjectures about the contents of the bunker, but doing so still manages to keep me engaged in history and incites me to reflect on the time that is passing. For how will Europe look, one hundred years after the war, when we take the current situation into consideration? This repetitive meeting with time — which appears to be either frozen solid, with episodes and incidents lying dormant, or matter that is slowly crumbling towards its final stage of existence, only to be resurrected again as something completely different — seems to be happening, for some reason. I felt drawn towards this, to make use of it as a foundation from where I would start to build my own praxis.

My wish was to grab hold of history, even fragments, if I could manage to do so. And through the objects, people, organisms, or other elements that were present at that given point in time, to create a work, perhaps an installation of history as physical manifestation, in order to observe these occurrences and the consequences that arose from them, so that I could reflect on them from another perspective. The function of each element in these works could be attached to the next element, and maybe even create pathways for other works that might come after. A thread of fragmented history, with open ends, that could invite those who entered into dialogue with the work, as well as myself, to find new ends to which they could be connected. I feel that this unravelled format, inside this capsule of an installation, mimics a material manifestation of the same method that William S. Burroughs used in his futuristic cut-up novels together known as The Nova Trilogy.3 In the trilogy, Burroughs cuts up and rearranges segments from manuscripts he had written previously, afterwards combining these segments into three novels. Everything seems at first glance to be familiar. But as we take a closer look, we find subtle traces indicating that things have been twisted, turned, or changed in some way or other. When I was reading the trilogy, I felt a continuous sensation of déjà vu, a kind of condition where I frequently found myself on several pages at one and the same time, a feeling of having discovered fragments that I had to store some place so that I could eventually bring these pieces together, so as to observe them in a more complete way. This seems to be an exciting approach that I could make use of myself, while I am still trying to find these events of the present day and trying to replicate this way of presenting literature, even though, in my case, this would manifest as something physical — something that would allow me to walk around in the room or in the scene of events that had been created, as part of my attempt to understand it all.

One example that I think fits neatly into this stream of thought, which I hope my works can take their place in, was the experience I had of attending a course presented by Gertrud Sandqvist. In this course, what we read through and what we were working through was fascist literature written during World Wars I and II. This course took place at the time the refugee crisis was unfolding in Europe. In many ways, reading through these texts gave rise to a dismal feeling, and at the same time, it was horrifying to see these tendencies, these thoughts, slowly infiltrating their way back into European politics. Some public figures were attempting to conceal their words, in an endeavour to obscure them so that we might not be able to discover what their origin was. Others deliberately took a stand under the banners of the extreme right, in an attempt to gain the support of those living in a state of fear and hating the so-called horde that was allegedly spilling over the borders of their countries. I found the situation to be appalling. But at the same time, it was remarkable to see elements of history reproducing themselves so flagrantly. These events ultimately shaped documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel in September 2017, the focus of which was strongly influenced by the consequences and after-effects of the ongoing shift that the world is in the process of experiencing; some of the works at documenta 14 bore, quite precisely,
a tone of history that was repeating itself, and some of history that was in the process of vanishing. Among these, the most memorable was the exhibition and the principles used by Neue Galerie dealing with the troubled history of Western cultures, and the arts involvement in these. Another was a video work by Susan Hiller, which plays the sound of twenty-three languages that are either extinct, endangered, or in the process of being revived.

It is these sorts of trials and attempts I would like to take part in, so that we might be able to discuss our contemporary era's situation on the basis of the works, before we see history repeating certain episodes—and in the event that these scenarios are already happening, all of us globally might want to take part in an attempt to lead us in a different direction, where we can try to find better solutions to our problems.

I would like to express my hopes of being able to achieve something of the same as Germano Celant describes of Anselm Kiefer here:

For Kiefer, to enter into the other side of the experience of his own culture is an attempt to enter a territory free from limits, in that it is aware of them. Thanks to the awareness of his own past, in political or mythological form, as tragedy or legend, he tries to imagine another place, that of a solitary being faced with history as much as with himself.

For when I look at my works as they have come forth, by and by, I cannot fail to see that I have been influenced by artists like Kiefer. His monumental installations, or Gesamtkunstwerks, if you prefer, in Barjac, which are called La Ribaute (1992–), are overwhelming, both by virtue of their sheer size and by virtue of the time they bear within themselves. The works extend over several decades and are often within some kind of infinite cycle that doesn't seem to have any proper end. Works are constructed, and some are destroyed and left to lie until they find a place in new works.

This is a method that I am trying to make use of myself: my works are not necessarily brought to a close. Nor are they discarded, but rather are allowed to lie there and gather time. This becomes my temporality, the quantity of amassed knowledge that accumulates, which can make itself useful throughout my whole life: a physical manifestation of my experiences. The experiences I have of occurrences, of history, I make use of to create objects that mimic these moments, as can be seen in
We're better off tomorrow, 2018. Detail. Polylactic acid, metal, wax and sand; 45 x 50 x 137 cm. Theis Madsen
one of my earlier projects, *The Saviour* (2017), an installation consisting of an Aztec agricultural invention that I converted into an environmentally friendly agricultural technology oriented to the present-day metropolis’s population. Inside, certain organisms were placed, as well as a replica model of a temple that was present during the period in question. Additionally, there were artworks containing readymade objects that reproduced religious tales. And all of this, as an ensemble, was included within a context of experience, of knowledge, that I then reproduced in our own day. In this way, I could encapsulate history, placing the objects within an installation, and could thereby create a space where past and present were incorporated in an attempt to reflect on the repetitions I saw occurring. In *The Saviour*, I included a work that consisted of a CO2 kit with a valve that released CO2 into the air; the valve was affixed to a print depicting an organism that issued from a hand and fell into the abyss. The work’s title is *Give me clean, beautiful and healthy air—not the same old climate change bullshit! I am tired of hearing this nonsense.* This points not only to the trends we see taking shape on the political scene at the moment; it also permits the work to point towards the era we are moving around at the present time: the Anthropocene.

Art becomes a tool for a politically oriented platform upon which I can make an attempt to find the golden mean in the present day, when politics is in turmoil and the established agenda is being challenged. With *The Saviour*, the hope was that the work could encapsulate the political attitudes being expressed in the public sphere, as part of an attempt to ask questions about the validity of these attitudes. Art’s possibilities seem to be inexhaustible. For me, the possibility that arises in referring to other artists’ previous works, or to historical events, is a way in which art has the potential to exceed these artists’ lifetimes and also their generations, in order to live on in the new generation, along with the artists’ attempts to convey history further, so that the art can remain accessible in our own day, in our memory. By constantly reflecting and projecting the works’ essence further, we can stake our hopes on history not wilting away and falling into forgetfulness.

So if I ask myself again: How can we communicate a message, our story, a hundred thousand years in the future, and what means can be put to use for this purpose? Then my answer may be that I do not think any medium can bear such a task alone. It is, on the other hand, art’s entirety and attempts to bear history that render it possible—like religion, which is borne forth by continuous retelling. It is therefore the total installation, the total narrative—which transpires through references, collaborative works, and comments on other people’s art, and through the present time within which one is situated—that renders possible art’s eternity, its potential for living out the next hundred thousand years. And this is what I am trying to take part in, by constructing installations of historical episodes and occurrences, as a link in this process.

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No please, make yourself at home. Why don't you go sit over there and flip through the postcards. I've made them myself, 2018. Ink, wax crayon, oil, acrylic on cotton, postcard display stand with painted postcards, 300 x 600 cm. Installation view. BFA exhibition, KHM2 Gallery, Malmo, 2018. Oskar Persson
No please, make yourself at home. Why don’t you go sit over there and flip through the postcards. I’ve made them myself, 2018. Detail. Ink, wax crayon, oil, acrylic on cotton. Oskar Persson
I was told that the Gothenburg colourist Inge Schiöler supposedly left a trail of paint behind. A painted trace beyond the frame of the canvas. After being discharged from St. Jörgens psychiatric hospital, where he had been treated for twenty-seven years, he moved to a cabin on Syd-Koster, a small island off the west coast of Sweden, where he began his rehabilitation back into society and back into painting after a prolonged spell of apathy. I was told that the island was his subject, and the rocks his palette. That the people on Nordland Syd-Koster sometimes saw odd rocks embellished with patches of emerald-green oil paint that grew on them like mould. With specks of crimson, ultramarine, and violet forming new layers of moss around the spots where Schiöler had been sitting. Was he testing out the colours on the environment, matching them up against the local flora, before slapping them onto the canvas to erase the boundaries between materialism and metaphysics? I found a photograph where you can see him sitting there on the rocks. On a folding stool, wearing a yellow sweater and blue trousers, with an open box and a loaded brush pressed against the ground like a walking stick. You can clearly make out some blotches of matching yellows and blues around him. In the lower section of the photograph, the bottom edge of a painting is seen lying against the ground, the image surface like a point of reflection in the angle between the viewed landscape and the viewing eye.

I travel to the Koster Islands with printed images of Schiöler’s paintings, to hunt for these material colour charts. Of course, nothing is persistent; things change. But still, if I can find the places where painting has become layers of sediment in the palimpsest of the landscape, perhaps I can compare them with the printed pictures and thereby find his vantage points. Find the artistic expression that reaches beyond the production.

On my way here, I thought about the paintings in the Lascaux cave. Another material trace marking its surroundings. The cave was discovered by the dog Robot, who fell through an opening and entered a world of primeval imagery. Animals, depicted in profile, with no surrounding vegetation, removed from their environment. Objects drawn up creating a background of empty space, with vibrating outlines, economically filled in with red, yellow, and brown mineral-based pigments blown from hollowed-out bones. The “hunting magic” interpretation—which I like, although it has been discredited—sees the cave painters as safeguarding their prey against decay, and thus giving them eternal life. The depictive or creative act as part of a human ritual through which the memory of something brutally destroyed by an uncaring world can be preserved, maintained, and resummoned. For fifteen thousand years, at least.

Twenty years after it was opened to the public, the Lascaux cave was closed again. It was discovered that the exhalations of the twelve hundred tourists who visited the cave each day were gradually eroding the pictures. The opening of the cave to the public had altered its environment: “Damp and mould began to spread, green algae grew on the walls, and greyish-white membranes of calcite formed over the pictures, which faded and weathered.” An exact replica of the original site, Lascaux 2, was constructed 180 metres away and opened to the public.
All attempts to remedy the damage done to Lascaux 1 seemed only to exacerbate the issue. In 2001, a team went in to install an air-conditioning system. This awakened something slumbering in the dust, and once again, mould began to cover the walls of the cave. After all this, the cave has become even less accessible. The act of observation had become a physical intervention. The powerful connection people had felt when they encountered the paintings had also caused the pictures to erode, leaving them in a state of ongoing decay. Matter is open and porous in this way, objects absorb causal influences from other objects, penetrating and modifying one another in a relationship of intimate interlacing.1 I would claim that this kind of connection brings emphasis to the context and a particular kind of performativity inherent to an embodied viewing. Others claim that the paintings in Lascaux 2 are actually even better than those in Lascaux 1.

Rather than the shared rituals and initiations of a group, many claim to see individual expressions, the genius of specific individuals, appearing in the paintings. Filtered through the frame of reference of our time, a characteristic style is evident in some of the animals when regarded in isolation or carefully compared side by side. This experience of a painter’s work and life being stored in a painting is evoked through the brushstrokes, suggests art critic Isabelle Graw.3 From the traces of activity—indexical signs—a painting acquires a kind of quasi-subjectivity, which possesses the physical force of a pointing finger. Drawing on Umberto Eco’s definition of a sign as a physical entity that refers to something it is not, Graw declares that painting in particular emphasises the physical form of these signs. We can’t deny the fact that the physical nature of these signs attracts us, regardless of what they depict. Their physicality evokes the “ghost-like presence of their absent author.”4

So, when is a trace produced? On the Koster Islands, I am looking for a remnant in the hopes that it will serve as a connecting link. However, I am beginning to think of it as a rather unsympathetic connection. Perhaps the trace I’m looking for existed beyond Schiöler’s field of attention, was not something he reflected on, and thus was irrelevant to his artistic intentions. At the same time, I feel that I myself afford my own intentions far too much significance—after all, most people couldn’t care less about intentions. There is a rumour going around that the unaccompanied cello suites of J. S. Bach, some of the most instantly recognisable solo compositions ever written and his greatest hits on Spotify, were actually written as a kind of warm-up routine for his fingers.5 Leonardo da Vinci’s Virgin of the Rocks (1483–86) was a commissioned piece, and the work order specified the subject matter, the colour of the Madonna’s clothing, the delivery date, and so on—quite a far cry from any projected ideal of the independent practice of genius. The act of searching distorts the meaning of the trace. It is as though my interpretation of Inge Schiöler’s stone paint rags is actually producing its own precursor, becoming a trail that is more of a mirror than some remnant of the past that might give me access and insight into his works. So, as such, it is a bridge of bias. For this reason, I don’t dare knock on the doors of his relatives, still living on the island, who I might otherwise have asked for directions.

Mere moments after disembarking from the ferry, I see the first stain. A big green dab of paint on a rock. I’m astonished, and I have to restrain myself. Trying to stay calm and reasonable, I think to myself that this might just be a spatter of paint from a boat that’s been repainted. But between these expectations, there is an ambivalent tension. I round a crag and find the boat. I must confess that my excitement is fading at this point. I’m starting to doubt that there really is anything to explore. Unless it’s the case that I’m stuck in some film noir, where the seemingly external imprint that I’m hunting turns out to be my own in the end. When I finally catch up with my prey, I will realise it was my own subject all along; my own desires. And suddenly, I’m alone on a cold island. A cow stares at me, and our eyes lock in mutual surprise. And there is no trace. And I feel like I’m stuck in a loop: didn’t I make the very same piece when I first applied to Malmö Art Academy? I’ve swallowed the tail of my own practice. And if we flip it around: artworks make artists, and you are what you eat. In a long, self-referential loop. There goes my attempt at maintaining some kind of neutral attitude in my explorations, and there goes my hope of ever escaping my usual old practice, which seems to just be going around in circles. Instead, I have sunk deeper into my uncanny loop, and I can’t see how anything good could come out of my eternal return. If I get the chance, I’d like to keep it at arm’s length.

I don’t find anything else. Nothing but splatters of bird shit and dead razor clams. And now it’s late. The outlines of things begin to dissolve as they become steeped in darkness. Slippery rocks. Because of the rain. “One last run” repeats like a mantra in my mind. I fall all the same, and hurt my wrist. I lick my bleeding wound like an animal while running towards the boat. Two slowly approaching eyes appear in the darkness, lighting up the quay. I board and buy two chocolate bars from the self-service snack bar. I start thawing out.

In the past, I’d tried to reach beyond the object with a brick wall made of interchangeable paintings, using...
Napkin, 2018. Oil, acrylic, and ink on cotton, 143 x 183 cm. Oskar Persson
paint for mortar. In endless repetition, where the original is slowly dissolved by the act of reproduction. By tearing the sculpture out of the painting, a restless hunt for subject matter. The obsession kept the activity going, but I needed some reason, a why, that could justify this burning perversion, which remained such an inscrutable and abstract unmotivated motive. I tried to attain understanding through negations, perched to gaze out from the edge of the concept. I tried to find the ruptures and wounds of convention, where my penetrating finger could push until it hurts. One might ask why I was playing this ridiculous game with the ship of Theseus, but that was simply where I found it the easiest to catch sight of essential principles, a way to uncover my own motivations. Taking it apart, bit by bit, until I reached the point along the infinite grey area where I've lost it. Only to go back and start over. You'll never find that point. You'll only ever know it once you've already passed it. In time, this became the actual practice. I learned that this was called the expanded field, and that this elastic definition, which questions the very limits of painting, revitalised painting as a concept.

In my attempt to eradicate colour, I had arrived at what seemed to me to be the opposition between two extremes along the colour spectrum. Two colours I thought of as each other's perfect opposite. This was the binary logic of dichotomies, so common in the alchemical notion of a constant negotiation between two opposing principles. One of them fleeting, transparent, and the other sludged over, opaque. With the shared similarity that both of them were always completely impossible to deal with in any other context. I thought that, in a mixture that hit the spot right at that intersection, the colours would break down and be consumed by an empty, formless pit of dead colour. I worked myself up to an ecstatic state of eagerness, hoping that something might actually happen at this ground zero for colour negation. A fertile compost, using “matter as the locus of generation and corruption.” To get rid of the reflective surface, I oiled the paints all out, leaving them in jars of turpentine for weeks, until the linseed oil separated and floated to the surface. Left at the bottom was a dull, shrivelled body, which I took and smeared out on a thin linen canvas. I alternated the two colours. One after another would cling to the canvas, each layer thinner and thinner, until a state of total equilibrium would supposedly be reached.

Two years later, this failed attempt stood next to my bed, and when darkness came each night, the last hint of colour would disappear, and the darkness of the canvas would slowly seep out from its edges. I would lie there, watching the painting gradually dissolve into the room before my eyes closed and I fell asleep.

I was abruptly awakened by my own stifled cry. Rapidly growing tentacles reached out from the painting's deep abyss, dripping with an oily ultra-black liquid, a thousand viscous drops forever falling without ever reaching my bedroom floor. Surrounding the tentacles, branches of dead, charred wood with blasphemous bugs crawling across the bridge of arms that was now extending towards me. The painting had opened itself up, and I could see it clearly in the dark, which was suddenly lit up by a bright spark. Bereft of any content, the fertile background had given birth to that which could fill the void. The rest of the room was just as it had always been. The only thing that was different was the precipitous maelstrom on the wall.

Just as quickly as it came, the vision disappeared, leaving me with a black inky surface. I had to stop screaming to take in air. It's hard to describe this now, in faltering language, because what was being slowly erased was no picture; the true fear resided in the emptiness of thought, which was slowly being filled up and disappearing, as though I had hit a boundary and left all earthbound thinking behind on its threshold.

Upon returning from my trip to the Koster Islands, I immediately begin an attempt to compress this experience into a production system for my work. I start to paint on unprimed cotton canvases. I use them as notice boards, posting all manner of things from the visual repertoire, making them into hand-painted collages. Drenched in connotations, the various elements collide in a forced cross-examination of one another's legitimacy. Eventually, the opposite must become a contrast. The oil paint penetrates the surface, leaving a yellow stain around the brushstrokes that reveals the undercoating to unwashed bed sheets, in which the shapes of bodily secretions had begun to appear, came to me. And I can't help wondering what it smells like at the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, while also feeling some degree of concern for the panicking conservators who are struggling to save her early paintings, from before she switched to acrylics. I felt as though a small miracle had been
generated by the rotting painting before me, which invited me to get up close and personal. Close enough to be disgusted. Beauty requires some degree of distance. Too much proximity is terrifying, too unbound- ed. I read that Frankenthaler once referred to her paintings as climates, and this assists me in creatively misreading her intentions. In a way, the unprepared, absorbent cotton canvas was necessary for exposing the oiliness of the oil paints and the infinite receptiveness of the surface. Early on, she began to use a method in which she worked actively with wet, negotiable paint that she could push around, half-directing it, across the horizontal surface of the canvas on the floor, until the paint finally sunk in and hardened into a stain of slow metamorphosis. Aesthetic surprises can make you see things in new ways. Her paintings invoke the experience of the multitude of things that have an impact, not just the surface or what is depicted, allowing individual entities and their depth to take part in the perceptual act without ever reducing things to any single perspective.

Lastly: later in life Frankenthaler recalled how critics at the time dismissed her early paintings by comparing them to a “large paint rag, casually accidental and incomplete.” Aspects that constitute a kind of condensed version of what I’ve tried to express here.

No please, make yourself at home. Why don’t you go sit over there and flip through the postcards. I’ve made them myself, 2018. Detail. Ink, wax crayon, oil, acrylic on cotton. Oskar Persson
No please, make yourself at home. Why don’t you go sit over there and flip through the postcards. I’ve made them myself, 2018. Detail. Ink, wax crayon, oil, acrylic on cotton, post card display stand with painted postcards. Oskar Persson

1 Ulla-Lena Lundberg, Jägarens Leende: Resor i hällkonstens rymd [The hunter’s smile: Travels in the space of parietal art] (Helsingfors: Schildts & Söderström, 2010).
2 Here, I am influenced by Stacy Alaimo’s concept of “trans-corporeality,” which she uses to describe the way in which all bodies are inseparably interwoven with other bodies, in the more-than-human world. Stacy Alaimo, Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).
5 After writing this, I heard a new rumour: that the cello suites weren’t even written by Johann Sebastian, but by his second wife, Anna Magdalena.
8 These comments were made about Frankenthaler’s painting Mountains and Sea (1952), which was shown in New York at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery, in January and February 1953. One review, in Art Digest, called the painting “lyric, washy, a composition of fluid spontaneities.” The reactions weren’t too positive on the whole, and Frankenthaler remembers that “at the time, the painting looked to many people like a large paint rag, casually accidental and incomplete.” E. A. Carmean Jr., Helen Frankenthaler: A Paintings Retrospective (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989), 12. This catalogue is available to download at https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_catalogue_2126_300062912.pdf.
Samaneh Roghani
Samaneh Roghani

“Human beings are members of a whole, 
In creation of one essence and soul.

If one member is afflicted with pain, 
Other members uneasy will remain.

If you have no sympathy for human pain, 
The name of human you cannot retain.”
—Saadi Shirazi

Roots
I woke up to a cold, dark morning and to the sound of blowing wind. For a few seconds, I did not know exactly where I was. I glanced through the window. On seeing the dark, thick clouds, I remembered how gloomy Malmö always seems to me in November.

I don’t know what I had been dreaming about to wake up that confused. I do know that for some time, my head had been entangled in thoughts. Only a couple days earlier, news from Zimbabwe had caught my attention. Changes were taking place in that dictatorship. The people of Zimbabwe were tired, had had enough of oppression and poverty, and were protesting in the streets. Yes, the pressure had forced the Zimbabwean dictator to resign after several decades in power.

My heart skipped a beat when I read the news. At that moment, I felt as if I were from there, about to shout for freedom. The sight of the happy, jubilant people, and my tears welling up. Yet I don’t know if I was crying because of joy or wistfulness.

[...]
Right: Detail. Samaneh Roghani
When living in Iran, I chose to make art to show my objection. I began with examining and expressing my personal issues through self-portraits. I identified my own issues as reflections of problems in a society under oppression. I had internalised the rules; I was policing myself, controlling myself, restricting myself, even unconsciously. While at the same time being painfully aware of the deeply rooted discrepancy between how I supposedly must be and how I actually want to be, act, think, live.

One important inspiration, perhaps what set me to making self-portraits from the beginning, are works by Cindy Sherman in which she takes on various characters and roles. Through my self-portraits I was trying to find my own lost character. I performed as the various characters that I've had to create in order to live in a society ruled by an oppressive regime. Several of those works I kept to myself, as they were too personal. I went through a depression, but working on self-portraits became a sort of therapy.

[...]

In one of my self-portraits, *Tehran 2009* (2009), which is after *Child with Toy Hand Grenade in Central Park* (1962) by Diane Arbus, I'm standing on a gravel road with the dull grey urban landscape of Tehran behind me. I'm wearing a torn pair of trousers and my right hand is a fist clenched so hard around a stone you can see the circulation being cut off around the fingers. My mouth is a scream, of disgust and anger.

[...]

Mahmoud Bakhshi Moakhar is an Iranian artist who has inspired me over the years because of the clever ways in which he uses metaphor and visual similarities. Bakhshi uses references to things like historical events and places, cultural traditions, and archaeological objects. All permeated with subtle political connotations.

One work that left a strong impression on me when I saw it is his *Cinema Bahman* (2010), which was exhibited in 2010 at the Azad Art Gallery in Tehran, not long after the widespread Iranian protests of the year before. The audiovisual references in the work evoke memories and personal connections for the audience. This amplifies the message in the viewer's mind.

The ambiguous theme of Bahman is central to this work. It is crucial to know that Bahman is the name of one of the winter months of the solar calendar, during which, in 1979, the Islamic Revolution took place. Because of this, it brings to mind
Barzakh, 2018. Video installation, 7 m corridor, 2:40 min. video loop projected on ropes. Samaneh Roghani
both anger and conflicting emotions. Bahman is also an Iranian cigarette brand, which is popular among the working class, artists, and intellectuals. The key reference, however, is that of the Bahman Cinema. The cinema stood next to the square that would later be renamed Revolution Square after 1979. Bakhshi has used big cartons of Bahman cigarette packs to create scale models of cinema theatres. Inside these miniature cinemas, videos featuring images of Tehran's streets, particularly Revolution Street, are projected. Repeating clips of sound can be listened to through headphones; symbolic songs of the revolution, with lyrics about freedom after the war (with Iraq), are played, leaving a strong impact on the audience.

Branches

As part of my current studies, I have attended courses to get to know media and materials other than the photographic image. This has helped me find a new path. Before this, I only expressed my ideas within the frame of the photograph. The experience of breaking the limits of the frame by using the possibilities of, for example, drawing or video has opened up a door to a new world for me, giving me the tools to add another dimension to my thoughts and ideas.

As an artist I care about what is happening around me, around the world. Be it inequality, violence, war, or poverty. The hardships of everyday life in Iran became challenges that people had built and decorated with their own hands, as well as of the bulldozers that later demolished these homes. A slideshow of photos is installed to be viewed through a periscope, which creates a distance to the event and to the people who now have been evicted; the camp and the people are in fact no longer there.

Several of them had settled on an empty lot and built makeshift shelters from what they could find, to endure the winds and rains. For different reasons, the municipality of Malmö decided to evacuate their camp during the cold season without providing any alternative shelter for these people—people who are unfortunately shunned and already not welcome in this society.

As a member of this society, I felt ashamed. Shame on the rigid legal systems and shame on the views of the society, of which I am myself a part! Silence in any of these situations adds insult to injury.

At Malmö Art Academy's annual exhibition in 2016, I exhibited my work about Roma people, For Magdalena Bonculescu et al (2016), which represents the beginning of a new way in my practice. The entrance to the installation space of my work is furnished with planks and other found items—physical objects representing one home of the camp. This evokes visual memories and feelings that the viewer may have about people living under these conditions. It recalls and brings to the viewer's mind previously formed ideas on these matters.

From visiting the camp, I had photographs of the makeshift homes that people had built and decorated with their own hands, as well as of the bulldozers that later demolished these homes. A slideshow of photos is installed to be viewed through a periscope, which creates a distance to the event and to the people who now have been evicted; the camp and the people are in fact no longer there.

When entering the room, one faces the drawing of a woman with worried but hopeful eyes. Apart from the eyes, the image is pixelated. The pixelated or redacted image symbolises censorship. But censorship also brings about a curiosity regarding what reality lies behind it. Sometimes we apply the censor ourselves, by wearing blinkers to avoid seeing things that might disturb us.

The focus in my latest work is on the fear I described earlier. The fear causing my hands and legs to feel tied. If I dare to show my dissent [...], even from here, in Sweden, will I be able to go back to Iran? But I have decided that I must face these fears; I emigrated and left half of my soul behind, precisely to attain freedom to express myself. In this work I intend to give the viewer a feeling of the experience that I have, and many others with me.

The work is a video installation that is housed within a darkened seven-metre-long corridor. Halfway along, the corridor is divided into two spaces by dozens of ropes literally hanging, arranged tightly side by side—symbolising fear in the form of a method of execution. Migration is represented by a video projected onto the ropes, showing people walking away. We are leaving, in response to a regime that rules by fear.

Passing through the ropes, trying to overcome the fear, the viewer walks together with the people in the video, thereby leaving one space for another. It is important that the viewer is meant to interact with the installation, just like in Félix González-Torres's work Untitled (Golden) (1995), though in his work the passage may be that of from life to death. Having physically passed through the hanging ropes into the next space, the projection of people walking is still visible on the opposite wall. Superimposed on the wall is the viewer's own shadow, and the shadows of the ropes—of the fears.

At the end of the corridor there is a way out.
Barzakh, 2018. Detail. Video installation, 7 m corridor, 2:40 min. video loop projected on ropes. Samaneh Roghani

3 Please note that for private reasons some parts of this text have been omitted.
So pre-existing conditions are a tough deal, 2018. Polyvinyl chloride, 80 x 600 cm. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM2 Gallery, Malmo, 2018. Moa Sjöstrand
Again again and again the time is out of joint

Scrolls were the first format for long text. They were made of parchment: animal skin, papyrus, or paper. The ink used for the scrolls had to adhere to a surface that was continually folded and unfolded. Anyhow, the ink would eventually dissolve. Ancient scrolls are hard to find. Once they were damaged or had served their purpose, they were put away or stored in libraries. Some were buried, like the Torah, while others were destroyed, hidden, or simply lost. Moreover, they are almost always impossible to read. The Herculaneum papyri, a vast corpus of Greek philosophical texts, are completely carbonised due to the eruption of Mount Vesuvius.

The parching took place in a room deprived of oxygen, and the intense heat of pyroclastic flows turned the scrolls into compact, distorted, and highly fragile blocks, which were then preserved by thick layers of volcanic rock. Many were destroyed during the excavation that took place later on: they were thrown away as mere charcoal, crushed when separated from the solid magma, or split in half during some fatuous attempt to open them. At last, an Italian monk invented a machine to unfold the scripts. This method destroyed the first parts of all the papyri, and some of the ends were never found. Researchers still have little success in opening them; many have crumbled and some have exploded in the process. In cases where the papyrus has survived, any visible writing quickly deteriorated when exposed to oxygen after some hundred years without it. A report about the excavation of Herculaneum says, “No one knew how to deal with such strange material.”

My work *So pre-existing conditions are a tough deal* (2018) consists of machine-written text on a large scroll, which is hung from a wall and unfurls across the floor. Viewers say it is too long to read. That is because they start from the beginning, which seems plausible, but they miss out on the latter part, which is the most amusing. This is of course a peculiar controversy. It is said our modern attention span has
This scroll is made of polyvinyl chloride—a material that lasts forever. It is resistant to oils and chemicals, weather, and fire. It is strong and incredibly versatile; it is everywhere around us, in bottles, packaging, construction materials, bedding, clothing, piping, wire coatings, furnishing, and more. It is not degradable; items made of this plastic will retain the same shape for decades, and the decomposition that occurs is simply granulation—the pieces just become smaller. When animals ingest the pieces, the plastic blocks their digestive tracts. The manufacture and incineration of this material is just as lethal. It creates dioxin, a deadly poison and a cumulative toxin, which means it stays in the body for a long time and concentrates in the food chains of carnivores. Other substances, like phthalates, are added to make the plastic limber. Medical studies of animals indicate that exposure to these chemicals causes cancer and kidney and reproductive system damage, and the workers who produce the material suffer from similar harm. No other plastic substance presents such an immediate threat to living species and the environment. This did not occur to me before I chose polyvinyl chloride for material: the work is a killer.

The text that covers the plastic surface is generated by a learning machine. The machine consists of an artificial neural network that regulates flows of data through its cells. Such networks are similar to those in the brain, though far more simplistic and pragmatic; they have no semantic understanding nor any sense for the meaning of words. Instead, they work solely with memory and probability, putting signs together in an order that seems logical in regard to what the machine knows from before. But it learns as it goes. Each sign affects the eventuality of the following, and each sequence of signs influences its future predictions. When the machine is faced with error, it re-evaluates its knowledge. The algorithms redefine themselves when given another input; they regenerate the network that produced them, and reconstitute it as another. This means that the learning machine will continuously transform itself into a different machine.

Artificial neural networks are used for automatic speech recognition. For years, this has been a way of interacting with computers. It is used for telephony, telematics, court reporting, automatic translation, and automatic transcription, in the military, in health care, in aerospace. YouTube introduced it in 2009 to provide its users with automatic subtitles. The challenge for these algorithms is to separate signal from noise. It takes a computer a few bytes to store a word, but it is more difficult for the algorithms to establish the complex semantic relations of living language. Thus, the system is prone to error. The phrase “again again and again you gotta join,” quoted from a press conference around the time of the 2016 US presidential inauguration, was translated into “again again and again the time is out of joint.” It is likely that the neural network used by YouTube’s transcription technology has practised on several uploaded versions of the full Hamlet audiobook trying to decipher its contemporary condition. Is it an apparition of a spectre, a ghost in the machine, the work of probability? It may seem as if the message arises chiefly from the transducer itself.

Code is one example of an artificially constructed language, that is, a language that has been intentionally invented instead of having evolved naturally. The idea of constructed languages arose in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, corresponding to the gradually decreasing use of Latin. These were made to be rational and formal, without inconsistencies and applicable for universal concepts. However, constructed languages serve other purposes also, for example, giving fiction a sense of realism, like in the made-up worlds of fantasy and sci-fi, in future and alternate universes, and in alternate histories. Most of these languages are pure gibberish, strange and dislocated, while others function as fully developed systems.

The Copiale cipher is an immense encrypted manuscript that was undeciphered for more than 260 years, until it was recently cracked with the help of a computer. The script turned out to be a complex substitution code of an encrypted German text, composed of abstract symbols assembled with letters from the Greek and Latin alphabets. The first pages portray an initiation ritual of the secret society known as the Oculists. The candidate is asked to read a blank piece of paper and, when confessing the inability to do so, is asked to try again, again, and again. Another encrypted text, the Book of Soyga, or “the book that kills,” was written in the sixteenth century and lost until 1994. The book consists of incantations and instructions on magic, astrology, demonology, and more, together with forty thousand randomly distributed letters set up in abstract schemes. The solution to the enigma was found by a mathematician twelve years ago, when, also with the assistance of a computer, he saw that each scheme
So pre-existing conditions are a tough deal, 2018. Detail. Polyvinyl chloride, 80 x 600 cm. Moa Sjöstrand.
formed a word when calculated as an equation. The meaning of the hidden words, or the purpose of encrypting them, is not as apparent. The same goes for the Oera Linda Book, which was published in Dutch in 1872. It is a manuscript written by an unknown author, purporting to cover the mythological and religious themes within Frisian history. The text is an obvious forgery, but it is unclear whether it was meant as a poem or a hoax. Nevertheless, it has been both embraced and dismissed; some saw it as authentic and significant to Frisian history, while others regarded it as a mockery of the Christian reading of the bible. In 1922, the text was rediscovered by the Dutch philologist Herman Wirth, who used it as a historical grounding in racial biology research. He called it the Nordic Bible and claimed it was evidence for the foundation of Aryan ideals. The esoteric hoax re-emerged as the basis of Nazi occultism.

The concept of cryptography in visual art is generally an imposition. The novelist Dan Brown has been widely dismissed by art history scholars for *The Da Vinci Code*. Renaissance art does not contain codes or hidden messages that predict the end of the world or point out the place where the treasure is buried. It does contain symbolism that we have simply forgotten how to interpret. Speculations will nevertheless continue. The Vatican scholar Doliner spent six years investigating Michelangelo’s work on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel and discovered some significant Jewish and Kabbalistic elements. In *The Last Judgment* over the altar, inside the circle of saints surrounding Jesus and Mary in the Garden of Eden are portrayed two Orthodox Jews. This was considered blasphemy at the time—a crime to be punished with death. Besides this, Doliner noticed a small putto making a fig gesture with its hand—the Renaissance way of
flipping someone off—behind the back of the prophet Zechariah. Zechariah was modelled on Pope Julius II, or Il Papa Terribile. The gesture is too subtle to notice from the ground, which would be the only way for the pope to see it. Speculations like these, of course, are of our time.

The process of encoding converts information from a source into symbols for storage or pragmatic communication. The reverse process, decoding, converts the coded symbols back into an intelligible form. My two video works Bertrand Russell’s message to the future (2017) and Carl Jung’s message to the dead (2018) consist of bad-quality video footage from interviews. The code in the raw data of the footage has been slightly altered, resulting in a strange glitch in the signal of the image and an intense distortion of the respondents’ faces. The glitch exchanges the recorded voice for an incessant clicking and scratching noise. The first video starts with a question: “One last question: suppose Bertrand Russell, this film would be looked at by our descendants, like a Dead Sea Scroll in a thousand years’ time—what would you think is worth telling that generation about the life you lived and the lessons you learned from it?” The transmission is lost and the answer is noise.

**Aesthetic references, more or less abstract**

*HFT The Gardener* (2015) is a vast multimedia project by the London-based artist Suzanne Treister. It consists of 175 pieces in seven distinct series of works interweaved in a fictional narrative. The pieces, according to the narrative, are made by Hillel Fischer Traumberg, a highfrequency trader who has now become an outsider artist. The project is preluded by a documentary about Traumberg, who one day at work enters a semi-hallucinogenic state...
So pre-existing conditions are a tough deal, 2018. Detail. Polyvinyl chloride, 80 x 600 cm. Moa Sjöstrand
I don’t say dishonest people doing it but something else in it what media did I know now they have for a long time without fake over the last little while hoops I feel like it was very dishonest what they knew they said thought that was very honest and they did that for the reason I just said the world of the media except that that was a good example of God right because of what’s happened in hindsight given that happening out there actually anything
So pre-existing conditions are a tough deal, 2018. Detail. Polyvinyl chloride, 80 x 600 cm. Moa Sjöstrand
that alters his perceptions of the trading algorithms he is working with. Invigorated by this experience, he starts to experiment with psychoactive drugs and explore the ethnopharmacology of the plants from which they are derived. With inspiration from Gematria, an ancient Hebrew system of code that ascribes numerical values to letters and words, Traumberg calculates the botanical names of his psychoactive plants and recognises some connections between the plants and the corporations in the FT Global 500 financial index. He leaves his job to make art and to try to map out an algorithm that explains the true nature of consciousness. His art then re-enters the world of economy, as bankers start collecting his pieces.

Rough Waves (2015), by Femke Herregraven, consists of a series of metal sticks, engraved with marks in different configurations. The sticks resemble tallies, an ancient memory-aid device of bone or wood used to record and document numbers, schedules, values, quantities, or messages, often with reference to financial and legal transactions. The tally stick served predominantly mnemonic purposes, as a way of recording bilateral exchange and debts, for instance. Each of Herregraven’s sticks carry the engraving of a high-frequency trading pattern connected to a specific event where algorithms illegally manipulated the financial market. In these works, the ultrafast abstract computational technologies are given a material form.

Umgeßen (Repouring) (2010) is a site-specific film installation by Harun Farocki. It was part of the project Seven Screens in Munich in 2010, for which seven oblong LED screens were placed on the lawn of the OSRAM GmbH headquarters, an office building from the 1960s. Farocki’s installation borrowed from a performance by the Fluxus artist Tomas Schmit called Cycle for Water Buckets (or Bottles) (1963), in which Schmit sat on the floor in a circle of empty bottles and poured the water from one bottle into the next until all of it had spilled. Farocki transformed the performance into seven sequences of film, one bottle for each screen, with the pouring and repouring of the water done by a robot arm. This meditative ritual contrasts with the spectacle expectation of the big billboard-like LED screens. “The action,” Farocki claimed, “evaded symbolism. … it had no vital quality. It was akin to a Beckett play in the simplicity of its conclusiveness. Despite the uniformity of the event, there was a development; the anti-action found an end on its own initiative.”

My scroll, made of polyvinyl chloride, a material that lasts forever, does not give much of a reward because there is no solution to the enigma. Or rather, there is no enigma at all. The text that is coded and decoded by the learning machine does not explain the purpose of encoding it nor the meaning of the words. Despite this uniformity, something strange has happened in the transcription of the speech, exemplified in the mechanic Freudian slip and the sudden apparition of the spectre. It may seem as if the message arises chiefly from the transducer itself. That is because the workings of the code in a learning machine are almost always impossible to trace. These algorithms significantly redefine themselves as conditions change. They regenerate the network that produced them, and reconstitute it as another. The learning machine will continuously transform itself into a different machine, and there is no longer a point of pure origin.

4 Nowadays, you can find a JavaScript Soyga table generator online to encrypt your own keywords with the algorithm cracked by Jim Reeds.
Albin Skaghammar

On the wall in front of me is a studio photograph in black and white. (I do not know when the photograph was taken, but I at one time happened to drop the picture; as it smashed down on the floor, both the glass and the wooden frame broke, and behind the photograph I found a newspaper dated January 23, 1923.) The photograph portrays a young girl sitting by the riverside playing with a small paper boat floating in the water. She is smiling. Leaning over the little girl from behind is a woman, a woman in white with large beautiful wings. She is the little girl's guardian angel.

I have another decoration in my studio, which is located on the windowsill. It is a small plastic tortoise lying upside down on a rock. It is a wink to the story of the death of Aeschylus. Aeschylus was a Greek tragedian, sometimes described as the father of tragedy, and it is said that he was killed by an eagle who dropped a tortoise on him, mistaking his bald head for a rock. To make the scene even more ironic, Pliny the Elder adds: “An oracle, it is said, had predicted his death on that day by the fall of a house, upon which he took the precaution of trusting himself only under the canopy of the heavens.”

—What do you call a man with a shovel on his head?
—Doug.

In her musical composition DOUG (2014), Janice Kerbel has her unfortunate protagonist Doug move through nine physical accidents, over the course of nine songs, sung by six voices. The songs, written in rhythmic verse, are sung in the shape of the catastrophic event, transposing the physical accident into musical form. In one section, titled “Hit,” Doug gets hit by a tortoise, which lands on his head:

Distant whistle from the sky
High and far the by and by
Sky is big, day is long
Shadow growing hear its song.

Eagle talons let it go
To crack on silent rock below
Gaining speed in plunge from height
Flesh to feed her young tonight.

Whine grows shrill and puddle dark
Has the sun misplaced her mark?
Look up to hear the weight of lead
Crack of tortoise on my head.2

Each song ends when the body is no longer able to sustain the event, so that Doug can move on to the next accident. Doug's misfortune encounters with the world make him resemble characters from slapstick cinema. The slapstick heroes who “don't even recognise the tragedy of their undertakings as they don't, in turn, recognise reality as an obstacle. If they fall they simply get up and keep on pushing until reality gives up its resistance and allows them to have things their own way. Their desires triumph over the reality principle that doesn't ever get a chance to assert itself fully.”3 But in DOUG there is no triumph; the tragic events just move on from one to the next, going from bad to worse. As in Alan Clarke's Elephant, where we follow anonymous men walking through grey, almost empty environments around Belfast, all of them ending with the shooting of an anonymous victim, the event keeps repeating itself. The viewer, wanting to disrupt the unfolding process, is unable to interfere and is restrained to the act of observation.

The easiest way, I thought, was just to close my eyes and pretend that nothing ever happened. When she died, my mother, Dad came into my room and asked me if I wanted to see her. They had cleaned the body and had put some new clothes on her. I told him that I didn’t want to.

The isolated tragicomic events of DOUG lead one's thoughts to the work of Bas Jan Ader. In his films, Ader, himself playing the tragic hero, is seen caught up in hopeless situations: falling from trees, from roofs, into canals, dropping things, crying. But as a contrast to DOUG (or Greek tragedy, for that matter), the events do not seem to be happening by chance or driven by fate; instead, Ader appears to put himself deliberately into these situations. He seeks tragedy, or rather, he stages it. He recognises reality and lends his body to it without resistance. And he does it like a slapstick character, like an image instead of a body made of flesh and blood, as if he were invulnerable. With the physical pain removed we are allowed to enjoy the misfortune without shame; it becomes humorous. As in the slapstick films of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton, the figure of Ader is a lovable one who ties a bond between him and the viewer. I want to help when I see it coming, but I can't do anything about it. And as with Chaplin, whose films are often the most moving of tearjerkers, he acts in a blend of the comic and the tragic (leaving with “one eye wet, the other dry”).4

“The life of every individual, viewed as a whole and in general, and when only its most significant features are
emphasized, is really a tragedy; but gone through in detail it has the character of a comedy,” Arthur Schopenhauer wrote in his WWR. A belief that Chaplin came to picture through the artificial eye: “Life is a tragedy when seen in close-up, but a comedy in long-shot.”

I’m thinking of the division and where it might be … And I remember one time when it was more or less separated physically, by floors. It was her (Mom’s) birthday party and I asked her why she was crying. She said that it was because she felt sad about not being able to attend her own party. All the guests were downstairs, friends and family, while she was upstairs walking around with her IV pole. I guess it wasn’t the best company.

The events in Ader’s short black-and-white 16 mm films are isolated, like cutouts from a comic strip. Nothing happens before or after. When Ader cries (I’m Too Sad to Tell You, 1971), he cries without reason or narrative. He cries in close-up, like in a Hollywood melodrama, to invoke emotion and touch the viewer. Even though his work often draws on genres such as slapstick and melodrama, he leaves out narrative and exposes us to something different. Our position towards the work is reversed in relation to the melodrama (and in some cases the slapstick comedy): whereas in melodrama the emotional reaction of the viewer often relies on the fact that we know more than the characters in the film, in the brief encounter with Ader, we know nothing. Crying as an expression of an emotional state (sadness, grief, sorrow) becomes widened as the personal narrative is lost and the psychological reading becomes limited. It becomes instead, as Jan Verwoert puts it, sadness in itself, as an emotional state, as an image, as an idea.

While working on a video in her studio, Georgina Starr suddenly burst into tears. She turned the video camera on herself to record her emotional outburst. The work (Crying, 1993) appears to be almost identical to that of Ader, but with some differences. Ader’s tears are real but the scene is staged. Starr’s tears are also real but the scene is not staged. And instead of the sentimental and nostalgic melodramatic close-up, Starr’s shot more resembles a webcam recording. Like the ones found on the Tumblr blog Webcam Tears, where people send in webcam videos of themselves crying.
I scroll through the Tumblr feed and I find myself having to concentrate to keep the lump in my throat from growing. It surprises me. Their tears manage to speak without narrative or content. Tears express a sense of hopelessness. And this feeling of hopelessness perhaps strengthens when impossible to intervene behind the screen. I know that it is already too late. And so my tears come; as a definitive release; as fulfilment and loss at the same time.9

When confronted with a crying person I am, in one way or another, forced to act. Everything I do from now on is made in relation to their tears. Either I walk away or I laugh about it or, more emphatically, I try to figure out why the person is crying, try to comfort them, make it right. But when faced with recorded tears, I am unable to act and my gaze instead turns somewhere else; it turns inwards. I start to recollect my own personal memories. And together with the personal reminiscence, my thoughts are also directed towards the subject matter itself (sadness, grief, sorrow) with its social, historical, and cultural connotations. All while Starr and Ader are occupied with their mourning. As Ader (does not) tell us: “I’m too sad to tell you.”

In Ed Atkins’s large-scale installation *Old Food* (2017), thick digital tears are streaming down the cheeks of a CGI baby, a young CGI boy, and an older CGI man. Feelings of empathy, however, do not really get a grip. Even though the exhibition is cloaked with a feeling of melancholy and a deep sense of sorrow and loss, the emotions of the animated characters, of course inaccessible to human emotion, seem almost grotesque. It becomes overwhelming and over-bodily. The camera tries: it closes up, closes in, does what it can to invoke a sense of empathy, but instead it becomes mechanistic. Repeating its movements until they become hollow, like the empty costumes from the Deutsche Oper Berlin that hang on racks in the exhibition space. As in the case of Ader and Starr, and perhaps even more so here, the characters do not cry for any apparent reason. However, in Atkins’s work, the absence is doubled. The crying CGI characters lack narrative not only in the realm of the work but also in regard to a personal history (mourning for an absent past, or future). Since the gap between me and the animated characters seems to be too wide, I am not moved but instead left with the materiality of tears—animated, thick, slimy, simulated tears, digitally pumping out in an endless loop. It becomes too much: “The snapper is that nothing is more grotesque than the tragic.”10

I say to myself (and others) that I very seldom cry. That I have trained it away and that I’m not really able to cry anymore because of all my training. My girlfriend says that she can't belch but I'm not so sure that it is the same thing. Anyway, when I was at my therapist's recently I started crying. I told her about this text I was writing and these fragments of memory that I was putting into the text and so I told her about this memory I have about my brothers who gave my mother a goodnight kiss. They gave her a goodnight kiss while my dad translated to her in words from whom she had received the kisses. I don't know why he had to tell her, if it was because she didn't
In contrast to other forms of literature, the “whodunnit” is almost totally devoid of emotions. Instead, it works more as a crossword puzzle or, as Theodor Adorno would describe it, as sport. In a “confession” published in Harper’s Magazine in 1948, W.H. Auden compared his relationship to detective fiction to that of an addiction, as if it were nicotine. He writes that the detective novel, or to be more precise, the whodunnit, has nothing to do with art but is in fact escapism. For him the whodunnit is about the escape from guilt. The characters in a whodunnit usually live in a closed society, for example a village, which is in a state of grace and where murder is an unheard-of act, and which therefore is without the need for law. The village’s nature should reflect the goodness of its inhabitants—the more paradise-like, the better. But when a murder actually does occur, it puts the society into a state of crisis. It is then shadowed for some time by the law, until the fallen one is found guilty. The village then returns to a state of true innocence and the law retires forever.

The characters, however, do not change throughout the story, because the “decisive event, the murder, has already occurred.” They are either perceived as good, which later is proven to be false, or they are actually good but for a while are perceived as bad, because of the fact that everyone is suspected. Their psychological complexities are reduced to a minimum on behalf of the narrative structure, each character acting more as a façade or a chess piece rather than a complex psychological subject. The golden formula of detective fiction is, for Auden, “an innocence which is discovered to contain guilt; then a suspicion of being the guilty one; and finally a real innocence from which the guilty other has been expelled, a cure effected, not by me or my neighbours, but by the miraculous intervention of a genius from outside who removes guilt by giving knowledge of guilt.” He sets the detective novel in opposition to a work of art, and as an example he mentions The Trial by Franz Kafka. Josef K. knows that he is guilty but not what he is guilty of. He walks around in a mist of non-knowledge, which will not clear away. His guilt is clear but his crime is not. And, as we know, the only way for Josef K. to get rid of the guilty feeling is to be stabbed in the heart.

Our teacher asked us once what our favourite book was, and when I told her my favourite novel was And Then There Were None, she replied that when she had read it, when she was young, the last page had been torn out so that she was left without the resolution.

In the whodunnit, the resolution is most often the solution to a crime that has already happened, outside the narrative, before the actual novel starts. An original sin with the “Oedipal quoed erat demonstrandum shining through like initials.” The reader is led through the obscure labyrinthine ruins of a crime, which needs to be deciphered and brought to light. The surroundings appear to conceal significant information and a great deal of focus is laid on investigating objects, the clues, which all might potentially be the golden key to the final revelation. Minor details and fragments become the driving force of the narrative. Everyday objects, which at a first glance look totally innocent, are transformed into secretive things that seem to withhold a larger truth. An ambiguous quality that echoes in the domain of the art world’s readymades: “This curious mechanism, by which an artefact’s meaning is uncannily doubled, is a familiar one in the art world, where much of this twentieth century’s found objects have been reframed to take meanings that have little to do with their every day use.”

Ernst Bloch would describe this suspicion towards everyone and everything as the expression of an alienation that separates people from one another and from their environment. The suspicious approach can be traced to many of the predecessors to and early examples of the detective genre. One very early example is Sophocles’s detective story-like Oedipus Rex, which is set in Thebes during a plague that, according to the Oracle of Delphi, will only be driven out when the murder of Thebes’s former king has been resolved, prompting the present King Oedipus to set out to find the murderers.

Another predecessor to the detective novel is E.T.A. Hoffmann’s novella Mademoiselle de Scudéri. The story revolves around Mademoiselle de Scudéri (based on the real-life Madeleine de Scudéry) at the time of the “affair of the poisons,” which was a big scandal in sixteenth-century France where numerous people both from the public but also from the aristocracy (including King Louis XIV’s mistress Madame de Montespan) were accused of and sentenced on charges of poisoning and witchcraft.

In the second half of the nineteenth century we start to encounter the modern detective, and in 1887 Arthur Conan Doyle published the novel A Study in Scarlet, in which Sherlock Holmes is featured for the first time. This was the same year that an intensified conflict between Londoners and the police, largely surrounding increased unemployment, which had led to political agitation among working-class citizens and
police efforts to constrain their right to free speech. This culminated in what became known as Bloody Sunday on November 13, 1887, when a march for the release of the Irish Home Rule politician William O’Brien was attacked by Metropolitan Police and the British Army.21

Sherlock Holmes, however, was not the first detective to walk the streets of a European capital in the nineteenth century, but was inspired by Edgar Allan Poe’s earlier character C. Auguste Dupin, featured in three short stories written between 1841 and 1844. All three stories take place in Paris during the reign of King Louis Philippe I. Like the London of the 1880s, Paris in the 1840s was also marked by great political conflict, due in part to poor working conditions, the lack of political agency for a large majority of French citizens, and the conservative regime’s unwillingness to compromise with any demands of the people. In 1848, after two years of suffering from crop failure and four years after Poe’s last detective story was published, revolution in France broke out.22

To return back to England once more, we have the “golden age of detective fiction,” which was an era in the 1920s and ‘30s when the classic murder mystery in the form of the whodunnit was established and popularised. And as we all know, Europe during the ’20s and ’30s was, in the aftermath of World War I, a turbulent and conflicted era with the rise of fascist regimes, which led to the catastrophic events of World War II.

Perhaps this hasty historical outlining of political conflict and the emergence of detective fiction is just a coincidence and my own attempt to prove a point and connect the dots in order to display a coherent picture (for when is there not conflict in the world!). But even if so, the explanatory and conclusive mode of the detective story is a way to make something complicated easy and comprehensible. It is a way to feel that truth, logic, and meaning exist and, to go back to Adorno, to feel that you are winning against your complex surroundings. That there is one single source of evil to put the blame on, to be subjected to divine punishment and cold–heartedly sent to the gallows. With the feelings of victory strengthened by the whodunnit’s way of addressing and integrating the reader, as a co–sleuth, always on the same page as the detective, having the opportunity to solve the crime before the resolution is revealed.

However, nothing is of course written in stone. And an exception to be pointed out from the golden age of detective fiction is G. K. Chesterton’s series of stories featuring Father Brown. While Christie’s stories are brought to life by a cold conservative breath and Conan Doyle’s by a scientific treatment of the world, Father Brown instead turns his gaze inwards, resorting to philosophy and theology rather than science. In one of his letters from prison, Antonio Gramsci writes:

Father Brown is a Catholic who pokes fun at the mechanical thought processes of the Protestants and the book is basically an apologia of the Roman Church as against the Anglican Church. Sherlock Holmes is the “Protestant” detective who finds the end of the criminal skein by starting from the outside, relying on science, on experimental method, on induction. Father Brown is the Catholic priest who through the refined psychological experiences offered by confession and by the persistent activity of the fathers’ moral casuistry, though not neglecting science and experimentation, but relying especially on deduction and introspection, totally defeats Sherlock Holmes, makes him look like a pretentious little boy, shows up his narrowness and pettiness. Moreover, Chesterton is a great artist while Conan Doyle was a mediocre writer, even though he was knighted for literary merit, thus in Chesterton there is a stylistic gap between the content, the detective story plot, and the form, and therefore a subtle irony with regard to the subject being dealt with, which renders these stories so delicious.23

I can’t make up my mind about whether I enjoy searching or not. I really want to be the person who finds things (the detective), but for the most part I’m not. When we were going around in the dark looking for her engagement ring, it was my brother who found it. We were on a visit to my grandparents out in the countryside. We were staying in the guest cottage and she had probably lost it on her way to the house. Her fingers had gotten so skinny by then that her rings didn’t really fit any longer. Not that she was skinny by chance; it was a logical consequence. She had stayed out in the sun too long or at least that was what she told me. Later she would wear her rings on a chain around her neck.

Anyway, the last page from my teacher’s book was torn out, and the owner of the page was left with a solution without a mystery. The answer turned into a question. The page becoming something similar to Cindy Sherman’s Untitled Film Stills (1977–80) (with the important distinction that here there is not an original film). An isolated fragment seemingly torn from a larger narrative. A fragment not capable of providing answers but only of generating questions.

So I ask myself:

What if it looks like a detective story in which there is no resolution. … What if the crime simply generates chaos and senselessness? What if history has no redemptive task? What if it has no meaningful narrative? If the scene of the crime cannot be narrativized, if it can never be restored to the world of meaning and comprehension, then what else can it do but decay, crumble away, and become a ruin?
And what contemplates this ruin, with its eerie relics and sinister holes and cracks, what else can we do except resort to melancholy?24

And so I make a film (Conclusion, 2017) and, like the torn-out page, it is a conclusion without a larger narrative. If the detective story is leading towards the revelation of what has already happened (the pre-existing crime, the unnarrated factor), then the conclusion is the reconstruction of that event. The unnarrated narrated.

A person in dark gloves is suspiciously walking around in an apartment, placing and taking different things with her.

I thought of Alfred Hitchcock and how he would ascribe importance to objects. Of the iconic scene in Notorious where the camera hovers over the guests at a party, way up in the ceiling. It starts moving down, down, down to land in a close-up of Alicia Huberman’s (Ingrid Bergman) hand, which holds a key. There are a lot of things going on at this party, but what is really important is this small particular key.

I use the camera, lighting, and sound to close in on, highlight, and accentuate the objects. I say: “These objects are really important, they have meaning, and they belong to something.” But what meaning should I ascribe to the object now, when I do not have a story to hinge it on? Where do they lead then?

And who am I really? If the conclusion is a reconstruction, am I then the reconstructor? The detective who sees the scene “as a place of opportunity, the site of obsessive curiosity, observation and interpretation.”25 But the camera jumps into the gloved protagonist’s point of view. So am I then the criminal? The culprit who sees the scene “as a place of ritual transgression, the site of manic enjoyment and accomplishment of evil.”26 Or am I just the spectator? The onlooker who sees the scene “as a place of transient spectacle, the site of morbid fantasy and distracting shock.”27

But let’s not go too far. Because an actual crime in Conclusion (such as murder) is not even present. Perhaps it is just a prank, perhaps it is her own apartment, perhaps it is her partner’s apartment, perhaps it is something to do with the broken-heart necklace, perhaps ...

Everybody loves crime. In the late 1990s, as a struggling young artist in London, Janice Kerbel (I love Janice Kerbel) started dreaming about having money; but where would she get the money from? Posing for over a year as architecture student, she began her investigation of the high-end bank Coutts & Co’s branch at 15 Lombard Street (today a Sainsbury’s supermarket) in central London. Her study resulted in the wall-based work Bank Job (1999), followed by the publication 15 Lombard St. (2000), a more than hundred-page-long master plan of how to rob the bank. It is a comprehensive instruction manual on how to commit the perfect crime. It includes everything (everything)
from “the exact route and time of money transportation; the location of CCTV cameras in and around the bank along with precise floor plans that mark the building’s blind spots,” to the composition of the team needed: “ten individuals, seven of whom comprise a core group and three who are contracted and paid a fixed fee, half in advance, half upon completion.” A dense, cunning, conceptual script for dreams; of protest and resistance. As Kerbel herself expresses it: “To align oneself with the impossible is to dream of a world which is not wholly defined by a means-end economy, where the laws of capital do not rule absolute and where knowledge is not assessed by use value alone.” The romantic theme of Kerbel’s work also relates to the works of Bas Jan Ader. Not relying so much on lived experience though, but rather on fantasy haunted by reality. Her work is twofold. On one side, the master plan worked out to the smallest detail, and on the other, the absence of the plan being put into action; making space for projecting images, desires, and fantasies. Rififi with a happy ending.

And a sentence written by Susan Sontag keeps echoing in my head, over and over again: “Art is seduction, not rape.”

On the wall in front of me is a studio photograph in black and white. (I do not know when the photograph was taken, but I at one time happened to drop the picture; as it smashed down on the floor, both the glass and the wooden frame broke, and behind the photograph I found a newspaper dated January 23, 1923.) The photograph portrays a young girl sitting by the riverside playing with a small paper boat floating in the water. She is smiling. Leaning over the little girl from behind is a woman, a woman in white with large beautiful wings. I look at the photograph for a while. Closely. The angel turns her tranquil face towards me, looks at me, and says: “I haven’t made up my mind about whether I should embrace her or whether I should hold her head under the surface until her lungs are filled with water.”
“Crying, therefore, is not just an expression of pain or displeasure or non-satisfaction. As a demand for satisfaction, it is the vehicle of a wish — a fantasy — that satisfaction is possible, that the object can be restored, the loss eradicated. There would be no tears were there no belief that there might be an Other capable of responding to them. Crying is thus fully compatible with — indeed perhaps the fundamental mark of — the kind of paradoxical structure of fantasy, satisfaction and pleasure that melodrama fundamentally involves. Just as a wish (the wish that there be somewhere an attainable object of desire) can be retained through the apparent non-fulfilment of a wish, so tears can mark both the failure of a wish ... while articulating a demand for its reparation in terms which imply that such a demand can be answered, that such reparation be possible. Tears, in this sense, can be comforting in a very fundamental way.”

Steve Neale, “Melodrama and Tears,” Screen 27, no. 6 (November 1986), 22.


“If anything, alienation itself has increased, an alienation that holds people in opposition to themselves, their fellow humans, and the world they have created, and the concomitant chaotic insecurity of life (compared with the relative security of the nineteenth century) had added general mistrust to the duplicity. Anything can now be expected from anybody, consistent with the economy of exchange that now applies to faces as well and that, as in an Alfred Hitchcock horror film, does not even know the direction from which the blow will come.” Bloch, “A Philosophical View of the Detective Novel,” 216–17.


The stars would be first and then the city would be second, 2018. Video, drawing and booklet. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM2 Gallery, Malmo, 2018.
Frederikke Jul Vedelsby
A Window in the Air; Children in the Knees

The Experience Is the Image
and the Image Exists in Advance

A person, a space, or an area can present itself to me as a complex and picturesque place. To take care of my impulse to make visible the potential images that are somehow “hanging in the air” there, it's crucial for me to be situated close to the person, the space, or the area for a certain period in order to figure out how I can make the images visible. Voices that speak about mysterious occurrences, experiences, and codes are drawn out from the days and the nights, and in my works I cast them as recreated and solidified narratives about invisible contexts. The voices want to be part of the same poem.

A drawing can be a state of mind, translated from a space, and in my poem the video will support the drawing. I’m looking for images that fit together. It has been my experience that the images I find and create are all made of the same substance, and that underneath everything I make, there is a structure that binds it all together.

Behind the sun, over the sea, a house is hovering. I can see the house, even though I am not where the house is. Here, from the corner of the room, I catch a glimpse of a window in the air in front of me. I want to get over there and look inside the windowpanes before it disappears. As I am looking into the window, I look out and here comes my grandfather, sailing in towards the coast. He is following a rhythm in the air and has faith that the wind at his back will result in him winding up some place where there is an image.

“So here are the questions. Is time long or is it wide?” “Why is it that things, an instant before they happen, already seem to have happened?”

I set out to travel. From another layer in the air, a man suddenly steps out in front of me and says, “I started to bake bread and this gives me a

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1 In 2017, I dreamed that my knees were small stomachs and that inside them were my children before they are born. I also dreamed that they are helping me.

2 “Læg dine hænder på bordet, luk dem op og lad mig se om de ligner dit digt” [Place your hands on the table. Close them up, and let me see whether they look like your poem]. Paul Lacour, Fragmener af en Dagbog [Fragments of a diary] (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1948), 63.

3 “So here are the questions: Is time long or is it wide? And the answers? Sometimes the answers just come in the mail! And one day you get that letter you’ve been waiting for forever! And everything it says is true! And then in the last line it says: burn this.” Laurie Anderson, “Same Time Tomorrow,” Bright Red, Warner Bros., 1994.

4 “Why is it that things an instant before they happen already seem to have happened? It’s because of the simultaneity of time. And so I ask you questions and these will be many. Because I am a question.” Clarice Lispector, Água Viva, trans. Stefan Tobler (New York: New Directions, 2012), 32.

5 He bakes bread and is named after San Andreas because his father is a Russian fisherman. “The best thing is to go with dad on the boat, no talking” (San Francisco, 2017).
The stars would be first and then the city would be second (Suzanna sings an Armenian song and encounter three Armenian women), 2018. Still image. Video, 5:15 min.
Frederikke Jul Vedelsby
great purpose in life, baking bread for people to eat. I want to film him, but I haven't done that. I figure out that he knows Suzanna, whom I have filmed. She sings songs, including in languages that she cannot speak, and we have the same eyes.

If you are inside a house, then you are “housing” (when you are inside, you’re in a state of being inside). My work is based on modes of being.

Today, my videos are your eyes: a code for a way of seeing. The videos refer to the drawings, and the drawings are a language that allows me to convey impulses about places and people, with more and other kinds of information than the words I might eventually have had.

Inside the house there are people. They consist of different colours, and the colours may be of different qualities, “sometimes like coloured smoke.”

The house’s layers of air are ajar, and I am angling my way in relation to this in order to draw. There’s always a sound.

The other realities are exactly far away from us so that we cannot reach them.

The narratives are physical. I want to communicate them further, even though I do not fully understand them. I can see them and distinguish them and put them together: they are structures, qualities, fragments of pictures, and sensory perceptions.

What is a being and what can it consist of? In your being, you have a twin.

I can remember everything that people tell me but I have forgotten what he said. He has told his parents what they should do with his body if they outlive him.

I love your stories. It is very clear—I love you. The sentence is just popping up. It is not something I am telling you. I hear some older women talking about how that phrase is misused. That “people are just saying it and it makes it empty.” Right now, I am thinking it so strongly to you.
What are often fixed parts of speech—verbs, nouns, etc.—were fluid concepts in the languages of the Indigenous peoples of South America. For example, in a Nahuatl poem, you could find the expression *ni-xochi-uitzil* (‘flower-hummingbird’), which simply serves to indicate, in the most profound sense, that the poet has identified 100 percent with the objects of their poem. This poses problems when translating, seeing as the possible solution, “I am floating like a hummingbird in front of the flower,” is merely a metaphor and is a weakening of the original identification.

*Jorge Luis Borges’s* short story *“Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius”* mentions an encyclopedia in which it is explained that in Tlön’s Ursprache language, a phrase like “The moon rose above the river” would sound like this: “Upward behind the onstreaming, it mooned,” the world being regarded as a frame of mind whereby solid objects are expressions for fields of energy that intermesh with one another. Borges writes: “The world for them is not a concourse of objects in space; it is a heterogeneous series of independent acts. It is successive and temporal, not spatial.”

“Nahuatl is described—like several of the other native South American languages—as an ‘inflected,’ ‘incorporating’ or ‘polysynthetic’ language. This means to say that in order to make sense in our language, a single phrase often has to be resolved into a whole sentence.” *Ib Michael, Det Bygendske* [The Fuming mirror] (Copenhagen: Arabesk, 2016), 21.

“When I was going through changes in my life, maybe I’d let myself down. Then I would get up in the morning and I would start chanting this chant. I am very grateful to the person who I don’t remember who taught me this chant” (Fanny, San Francisco, November 7, 2017).

“I stopped to drink cool water: the glass at this instant-now is of thick faceted crystal and with thousands of glints of instants. I am very grateful to the person who I don’t remember who taught me this chant” (Fanny, San Francisco, November 7, 2017).

Suzanna’s eyes are made of plastic. They are green. Her hair is chestnut. “Your hair is chocolate. Right, Frieda?”

“He bakes bread and is named after San Andreas (San Francisco, 2017).

“When I was going through changes in my life, maybe I’d let myself down. Then I would get up in the morning and I would start chanting this chant. I am very grateful to the person who I don’t remember who taught me this chant” (Fanny, San Francisco, November 7, 2017).

“For example, see Robert Morris’s *Blind Time Drawings* (1973–2000)—they become like an imprint of the artist’s nervous system. “What the hell are you thinking of,” Fanny says, when she sees my dark drawings and laughs. The man with the shaking hands says he likes them (Café Trieste, San Francisco, November 7, 2017).

“When I was going through changes in my life, maybe I’d let myself down. Then I would get up in the morning and I would start chanting this chant. I am very grateful to the person who I don’t remember who taught me this chant” (Fanny, San Francisco, November 7, 2017).

“I stopped to drink cool water: the glass at this instant-now is of thick faceted crystal and with thousands of glints of instants. Are objects halted time?” *Lispector, Água Viva*, 37.


“I dit væsen har du en tvilling og det kan være en slange, det kan være en fjerslange (Quetzalcoatl), et væsen du ser i en anden tilstand” [In your being, you have a twin and it can be a snake; it might be a feathered serpent (Quetzalcoatl), a being you see in another frame of mind]. *Frederikke Jul Vedelsby, I dit væsen har du en tvilling* [In your being, you have a twin], 2017, video with Ib Michael.

“I dit væsen har du en tvilling og det kan være en slange, det kan være en fjerslange (Quetzalcoatl), et væsen du ser i en anden tilstand” [In your being, you have a twin and it can be a snake; it might be a feathered serpent (Quetzalcoatl), a being you see in another frame of mind]. *Frederikke Jul Vedelsby, I dit væsen har du en tvilling* [In your being, you have a twin], 2017, video with Ib Michael.
The stars would be first and then the city would be second, 2018. Detail. Oil pastel on paper, 29.7 x 21 cm. Frederikke Jul Vedelsby
I am taking part in the works, and yet I am not; I always cut myself out from the video footage and you never hear my voice. I want to create spaces for the people I meet and compose outward from there.

Like Emil Westman Hertz’s piece *The Prince’s Garden* (2014)—I experience this as a place from which several of his works emanate. He has drawings, watercolours, and an installation all with titles that have something to do with the “prince’s garden.” As if the prince’s garden were some distinct place, from which several of his works spring forth.

A friend and I created, together, two characters that we acted out. We went on a journey with them, on the trail of their deceased friend who had left traces they wanted to investigate.

For her project *Où et Quand?* (2009), Sophie Calle visited a clairvoyant, who gave her information about the journey she was about to go on. As if the trip already existed as an image. She then went to look for the places and people the clairvoyant mentioned.

I am looking for symbols and pictures, but I cannot plan where and how I will find them. Once I have recognised the rhythm in the air, this can, like the clairvoyant, push me at my back and get me to bump into the right people and the right material from which to extract the images.

The experience is the image and the image exists in advance. Every now and then, a whole episode makes its appearance in the form of an object, such as a conference catalogue from 1994 or a book you might find on the street.

Before the episode unfolds, you have an object as a symbol of what is about to happen. “Just like with your grandmother’s picture and your grandfather’s cup.”

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23 As Hans Belting writes, “Images are neither on the wall nor in the head alone. They do not exist by themselves, but they happen; they take place whether they are moving images or not” (emphasis in the original). Image (to be distinguished from picture) is the outcome of the process of interaction among image, body, and medium, that is, the event in which image emerges. Nicoletta Isar, “Of Ambrosia and Tear, of Life, Death, and Shamanism in Art: A Journey into the Imaginary World of Emil Westman Hertz,” in Hertz, *De Smukke drømmes lagune*, 46.

24 “The basic idea of Mark C. Taylor is that creation is not an additional activity performed by the artist and affixed to the world, but a process deeply ingrained in the world. … Physical and spiritual make one. The oneness is due to the power of imagination, which Taylor explains with the help of the term ‘esemplastic’ … It expresses the interweaving of opposites and the process of molding or figuring into unity. Such is the intertwined nature of the world. … Neither complete nor a fragment … an undivided oneness.” Isar “Of Ambrosia and Tear,” 43.

25 “Certain events of which we have not consciously taken note; they have remained, so to speak, below the threshold of consciousness. They have happened, but they have been absorbed subliminally, without our conscious knowledge. We can become aware of such happenings only in a moment of intuition or by a process of profound thought that leads to a later realization that they must have happened, and though we may have originally ignored their emotional and vital importance, it later wells up from the unconscious as a sort of afterthought.” C.G. Jung, *Man and His Symbols* (New York: Dell, 1968), 5.

26 I am in Berlin. In an antiquarian bookstore. I find a program from the conference the Science of Consciousness from 1994. The conference still takes place every year, this year in Arizona. To attend the conference, I have to present my drawings at the poster session and write an abstract. My abstract is no. 372 and is called “Drawing as a platform, which permits unknown impressions to grow and become visible.” At the poster session, a man comes along and tells me what he thinks the drawings are. “I believe this one is sacred,” he says, facing one of them. “I am afraid that I’m going to burn my hand if I get too close,” he says pointing out another one. At the conference’s after-party, I speak to a man. I see that he is wearing the same ring that I have on. I ask him, “Where did you get that ring?” He responds, “I just bought it last month.” His abstract is called “Honest resonance connection through a coma subject.” The Science of Consciousness, Tucson, Arizona, April 25–30, 2016.

27 There is a box with free books. I pick up *Von chaos und ordnung der seele* [About chaos and order in the soul]. The book opens itself up to page sixty-three, from where a loose photograph from 1987 falls out. It is of a gravestone cut in the shape of a man standing with open arms. The photograph is lying beside a print of a Francesco Clemente painting.

One night in November 2016, I come home late and notice that the picture of my grandmother has fallen down from the wall and that the glass in the frame is broken. I pick up a cup on which “Mesa Verde” is printed. I want to drink from it. It belonged to my grandfather, of them. “I am afraid that I’m going to burn my hand if I get too close,” he says pointing out another one. At the conference’s after-party, I speak to a man. I see that he is wearing the same ring that I have on. I ask him, “Where did you get that ring?” He responds, “I just bought it last month.” His abstract is called “Honest resonance connection through a coma subject.” The Science of Consciousness, Tucson, Arizona, April 25–30, 2016.

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I'm at the Embarcadero. There's a full moon and a man is balancing a coin on the rail. The coin reflects the light and looks like the moon.29

I am looking for something and it's looking for me. I'm looking for the truth30 from my dream;31 I want to touch it.32 I hear the echo of their voices. In a dream, everything is suddenly evident: hovering ethereal figures turn together and fall into place.

Stars and cities meet and change places.33

The first thing we imagine when we die is that we have a body: we are not at all accustomed to not having a body. Even in the Bardo34 we can believe this, said my grandfather.

“We are creating a reality where you are inside the story and I am the one telling it to you.”

I ask storyteller Simon Simonsen if he wants to tell me a story about my grandfather. “You can certainly hear what I'm saying. Right?,” my grandfather asks me in Simonsen's story.35

A new video requires that I make it in a different way than I have made videos until now. I want to film a young man whom I met on the airplane, whose name means “sunshine” and whose family has cast him out. Filming him calls for a respectful focus on details of his personality. The video has to be experienced more than it has to be understood, and alongside the video, I will be drawing in the project with him. I have become friends with the people I have filmed. I would like to undertake days of video and drawing. As Simon Simonsen says, suddenly, you are inside the story and you cannot distinguish it from everything else.
“As when I was looking for the truth, I found out the best way is just to look around—you know—you don’t see anything, just be in the mood for the truth. It is a happy state of mind very, you know, a small happiness, then you stay alert, you don’t see anything but you have to stay alert—and it just comes in to your mind what to do.” Agnes Martin, in With My Back to the World, documentary, directed by Mary Lance (USA: New Deal Films, 2002). Available online at http://www.ubu.com/film/martin_wind.html.

“I dreamt of a pet cemetery—animal, dog cemetery—a couple of years ago I never saw such colours… There were tombstones, but they weren’t the ordinary tombstones—they were jewelled, with the most phenomenal coloured jewels. And dreams like that. Just phenomenal colour. Now, where is that coming from, one wonders” (Fanny telling me about her dream, San Francisco, November 2017).

“To me, sense of touch is not confined to physical contact with objects. There is the touch transmitted by the sight of something—an electric communication with memory; the touch of an idea—or that touch which is the feel of space. Awareness and sense of touch are, to me, synonymous. … To me, the air is a solid, but an elastic solid, comparable to the clay prepared by the modeller before he begins his work.

It is a resilient medium, on which I can imprint my meaning; and beyond that, it has curious electric properties—it carries the intention of this imprint outward, in a kind of telegraphic code.” Angna Enters, On Mime (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1978), 58–59.

“First there was a cityscape, like San Francisco. That was first and then these stars in the galaxy, but that had the flip to it in the right place. ’Cause the stars would be first and then the city would be second, below the stars. So that was a good night. Now, where does all that come from, one wonders” (Fanny telling me about her dream, San Francisco, November 2017).

“After death, according to ’The Tibetan Book of the Dead’, all creatures then spend forty-nine days in the Bardo. And the Bardo isn’t a place, it’s more like a process that lasts forty-nine days as the mind dissolves and, as the Tibetans believe, the consciousness or, let’s say, the energy, prepares to take another life form. … The Tibetans believe that hearing is the last sense to go. So after the heart stops and your brain flat lines and the eyes go dark, the hammers in the ears are still working.” Laurie Anderson, The Withness of the Body (Napoli: arte’m, 2016), 44–46.

My grandfather listened to the music; it allowed him to get in there and rest. It is possible to discover an entrance to something? A part of a whole.

A man comes over to me and tells me that my ancestors are waiting for me up north. I am wondering if they are sitting in the house over the sea.

The house’s bed is a rectangular page on which to draw. People are rectangles.

“You will also forget the camera. But above all, you will forget that this is you. You.”

I find a coat; I put it on and see as you do.

36 At the end of my grandfather’s life, he played his Leonard Cohen CDs so much they did not work anymore. He turned the volume up to maximum and my grandmother asked him to turn it down because of the neighbours, but as soon as she left the house he turned it up to maximum again. As if he could rest in there?

37 “This painting I like, because you can get in there and rest.” Martin, in With My Back to the World.

38 “Most people think that numbers has been invented by people, says Jung. But what if they have, to the same extent, been discovered?” Marie-Louise von Franz, Synkronisitet og spådomskunst [On divination and synchronicity: The psychology of meaningful chance] (Copenhagen: Forlaget politisk revy, 2002), 11.

39 “Världen är en gemensam kropp för alla människor, förändringar i den medför förändringar i alla människors själ som just vetter mot denna del” (The world is a common body for all people. Changes in this entail changes in the souls of all people who are standing and facing this aspect). G.C. Lichtenberg, diary entry from November 5, 1769, kladdböcker [Draft books] (Lund: Peter Handberg, KYKEON, Propexus 1991), 27.

40 “Those born before us, those yet to be born: we respect you. Those born before us, those yet to be born: help us. Those born before us, those yet to be born: we want to do the respectful thing.” Terri-Lynn William Davidson, “Call to the Ancestors,” YouTube video, 4:12, posted by Raven Calling Productions, September 28, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQsjTLaT8Dk.

41 “The Bed (or, if you prefer, the page) is a rectangular space, longer than it is wide, in which, or on which, we normally lie longways.” Georges Perec, Species of Spaces and Other Pieces (London: Penguin Classics, 2008), 16.

42 “You go down to the river/You're just like me/An orange leaf is floating/You're just like me/Then I drew all these rectangles/All the people were like those rectangles/They are just like grass.” Agnes Martin, The Untroubled Mind (Berlin: Hatje Cantz Verlag; Winterthur: Kunstmuseum Winterthur, 1991).

43 Marguerite Duras, Two by Duras (Toronto: Coach House, 1993), 31.
PhD Candidates

Rosa Barba
Alejandro Cesarco
Marion von Osten
Lea Porsager
Andrea Ray
Imogen Stidworthy
Rosa Barba

Rosa Barba lives and works in Berlin. She studied at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne and has been, since the spring of 2013, a PhD candidate in Fine Arts at the Malmö Art Academy. Barba has had residencies at the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten, Amsterdam; Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas; Iaspis, Stockholm; and Art pace, San Antonio, to name a few.


Barba’s work is part of numerous public and private collections and has been widely published, most recently, in the monographic books Rosa Barba: From Source to Poem (2017), Rosa Barba: Time as Perspective (2013), Rosa Barba: White Is an Image (2011), all published by Hatje Cantz, and Rosa Barba: The Color Out of Space (2016), published by MIT List Visual Arts Center/Dancing Foxes. Barba has been awarded various prizes, including the International Prize for Contemporary Art (PIAC) by the Fondation Prince Pierre de Monaco in 2016.
My PhD research engages with the space beyond film, giving substance to a futuristic vision about the condition of cinema.

Likewise, in my installations I explore film and its capacity to simultaneously be 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, or beyond—where the landscape itself forms the screen. Each component becomes a starting point for artworks that expand on the idea of film while exploring its intrinsic attributes.

Mine is a conceptual approach that regards cinema in an architectural sense and as an instrument; where the environment (the space), the screen, and the projection can be combined or pushed forward to create another space beyond, which can exist in interior and exterior space at the same time. Uncertainty and speculation form part of that space.

In this research I am proposing four different modes of enquiry into how this space beyond can be achieved.

The writing is structured within a “fictional library,” which is not meant to be a contained system of chapters but an ever-evolving arrangement of suspended words and themes that dissolve and reappear in different functions. These are keywords with modulating meaning; through my artistic practice, they activate and connect different bodies as interlinked themes of an emerging understanding of a space beyond cinema.

—Rosa Barba on her PhD project
Rosa Barba: From Source to Poem to Rhythm to Reader. Exhibition view, Pirelli HangarBicocca, Milan, 2017. Rosa Barba
Alejandro Cesarco

Under the Sign of Regret

My PhD research, titled “Under the Sign of Regret,” focuses on aesthetically mediated responses to regret. It interrogates the qualities of the feeling of regret and what it produces, as objects and as experiences. The inquiry traces regret as a form of memory and as a way of narrating ourselves (which in some cases may amount to the same thing). My research on regret intervenes in the territory charted by affect theory and psychoanalysis. It thinks about regret as an aesthetic category by approaching the emotion as condensed “interpretations of predicaments.” Regret, in this way, is not easily discernible from other emotions such as worry, anxiety, and melancholy, but rather works together or alongside them to render visible a general state of obstructed agency. I am thinking of the ways in which our imagined self does not align with who we really are and the psychic energy that is used to leverage the difference, as well as questioning the function of regret in navigating between these two selves. I am interested in the narrative structure imposed by the lens of regret and how it may relate to creative strategies and modes of production. The hypothesis involves considering regret as a generative force, as a bittersweet drama of adjustments, and as a way of questioning perspective itself. I am making a distinction between feeling regret and using regret as a methodological drive. Reading through a lens of regret does not mean that the works produced or analysed are about regret or narrate a story of regret, but they help to demonstrate some of the characteristics and modes that emerge from considering regret conceptually. The thesis will develop three particular characteristics of producing under the sign of regret: suspended agency, ghostly haunting, and imagined promise.

— Alejandro Cesarco on his PhD project


Inserts, 2018. Detail. Inter Arts Center, Malmö, 2018. Marion von Osten
Marion von Osten

In the Desert of Modernity. Colonial Planning and After

Dissertation Abstract

The principal aim of my PhD research is to think through practices involved in the making of In the Desert of Modernity. Colonial Planning and After (Berlin, 2008; Casablanca, 2009), which constituted as well as traversed the exhibitions and went beyond. The project developed through a transnational constellation of culture producers, scholars, and activists from Berlin, Zurich, Paris, Delft, and Casablanca. In the process of its experimental study mode, the finding was made that European ideas on architecture and urbanism were projected onto postwar French North African colonies, where they underwent change, modification, and testing before being reprojected back onto architecture and urban planning in France and Switzerland in the late 1950s. It became evident that through the creation of a transnational network, including architects, activists, and local inhabitants from Casablanca, the construction sites of the architectural cases under investigation became sites of anticolonial revolt in 1952 in Morocco. These findings revised existing assumptions by Western scholars and called for the decolonialising of the European episteme on modernist housing and urbanism. Completing the PhD research made me see the project exhibitions of In the Desert of Modernity in Berlin and Casablanca not as endpoints. Instead, this thesis addresses practices as in continuation, rather than completed through events and curatorial methods. The need to establish a mode of thinking that allows constant revision created temporalities and socialites that revealed exhibitions as a too limited frame for analysis and for a decolonialising practice. Instead practices that transcend the “show” are discussed in six chapters, each focusing on a specific site, a document, conceptual thinking, or conversational dialogue. I conclude that the PhD research allowed me to think through my parainstitutional practice that aims to take long-durational, dialogical, and material approaches and local agencies into account. From the perspective of “in the making,” I imagine a new understanding of culture production that also asks for supplements to our existing institutional infrastructures.

—Marion von Osten, 2018
INFRASTRUCTURAL INSERTS AT IAC, INTER ARTS CENTER, MALMÖ

A new announcement board, a research archive, and a researchers’ platform have been installed at the IAC, Inter Arts Center in Malmö. These infrastructural supplements, entitled Inserts, have been developed as open-source design and as the practical part of my PhD project.

The Inserts have a double function: On the one hand they address the IAC as a new model of an art institution supporting long-term projects by visual artists, performers, and musicians. From this perspective, the Inserts are designed to make doctoral research projects by students from the Malmö Faculty of Fine and Performing Arts at Lund University, in process and in final form, visible and publicly accessible. On the other, they argue against the background of my PhD research for different temporalities of research and emphasise the sharing of knowledge within its various processes, stages, involved practices, and outcomes. The central aim of the on-site intervention is to foster cross-disciplinary exchange between researchers in process and beyond final presentation formats.

For the IAC, I proposed a series of supplements to the existing infrastructure: A – an announcement board to present actual projects; B – a research archive to provide access to doctoral theses and donated research materials; C – a researchers’ platform to create a space for interim presentations and intellectual exchange between researchers and the public; and D – a mobile display that can be used at IAC beyond available presentation spaces. In the future, IAC, researchers, and artists will use and program the Inserts.

After my disputation on May 31, 2018, the Inserts were donated to the IAC to become permanent infrastructures of the institution.

—Marion von Osten, 2018

The Inserts as on-site intervention are based on a series of conversations with the IAC organisers. In its name, Inter Arts Center suggests the intersection of the arts, a concept that relates not only to my work but also to my doctoral research. My PhD thesis, “In the Making—Traversing the Project Exhibition: In the Desert of Modernity Colonial Planning and After,” discusses the collective and experimental nature of a multiyear study of colonial planning in working-class neighbourhoods in Morocco and the various forms of resistance against it.

The thesis analyses insights, processes, and practices that transcend the scope of the production and the event character of exhibitions. The practice of exploration does not end with a public event. The doctoral thesis therefore discusses a practice in continuity and constituted by collaboration. The radical criticism of the division of the arts into high and low and applied and non-applied arts by postcolonial artists and writers, expressed in conversations in the research process, shaped both my practice and the intervention on site.
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. In 2016 she became artistic director and curator of the Bauhaus centenary project *the bauhaus idea* (2017-2019) initiated by the Bauhaus Cooperation Weimar Dessau Berlin, Goethe Institute and Haus der Kulturen der Welt Berlin. Von Osten concluded her PhD in Fine Arts at Malmö Art Academy, Lund University, in May 2018.


Publications include *Transcultural Modernisms*, edited by Model House 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 Karakayali (Black Dog, 2010); *Projekt Migration*, edited with Aytac Eryilmaz et al. (Kölnerischer 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*
Inserts, 2018. Installation views, Inter Arts Center, Malmö, 2018. Marion von Osten
My PhD project *Cut-Splice Thought-Forms* looks at the quantum effects of spiritual visions. Situating my research in physicist Karen Barad’s theory of agential realism, I explore how the cut-splicing of seemingly conflicting phenomena—quantum physics, spiritual paradigms, and lubricated feminism—can serve as trailblazers for radical tentacular thinking and practices. In researching the collision between quantum theory and spiritual paradigms, my “case study” and specific field of interest is the theosophical concept of thought-forms. At the moment, I am researching how pioneering insights in quantum mechanics have been used and misused by spiritual systems in very specific ways. Quantum realities have been appropriated by New Age doctrines and become convenient metaphors for transcendental realities in ways that leave the underlying dogmas of these spiritual systems unchallenged. I like to think that my aim with “colliding” science and mysticism is a more challenging one: I am not seeking smooth metaphors—I am looking for something a bit more unruly and lively. What potential for radical (mad, nonviolent) spaces lies in such a collision? What promiscuous but solid thought-forms could materialise in the wake of this (gang)bang? I am trying to excite the aforementioned thought-forms (plural, plural) in the collider through different experiments. Matter, irony, and esoteric doctrines and doings will be cut-spliced with scientific theory to better understand the uncertainty and mercuriality of our thinking-in-form. Misunderstandings and misconceptions are not to be avoided but rather embraced, as they seem to spawn visionary cross-disciplinary abstractions. Seeking a critical discourse that encompasses dreams, meditations, and delirious quantum scientific speculations, the experiments aim to disrupt—not illustrate—fixed or local notions of truth through a practice of radical openness.

—Lea Porsager on her PhD project

Lea Porsager graduated from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen, and the Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main in 2010. She began her studies as a PhD fellow at Malmö Art Academy and Lund University in September 2015. Porsager’s practice interweaves fabulation and speculation with a variety of mediums including film, sculpture, photography, and text. Her works encompass science, politics, feminism, and esotericism.


In 2012, Porsager participated in dOCUMENTA(13) with the Anatta Experiment. She was awarded the Carl Nielsen and Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen Scholarship in 2014. In 2015, Porsager partook in the 14th Istanbul Biennial, *SALTWATER: A Theory of Thought Forms*, as Annie Besant’s “medium,” recreating thirty-six of Besant’s watercolours from the book *Thought Forms* (1905). Porsager’s earthwork and memorial *Gravitational Ripples* was inaugurated in June 2018 in Stockholm, Sweden, commemorating the lives lost in the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.
GRAVITATIONAL RIPPLES

Working-With: Notes on the Process

When I decided to enter a proposal for the Swedish 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami Memorial, I knew that I wanted to approach it in the spirit of working-with, a process that led me far out into cosmos from the very beginning.

As I was undertaking research for my proposal, the news of gravitational waves having been detected by a team of scientists at LIGO—the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory trickled into every news cycle, and I couldn’t get the scientific illustrations out of my mind. Gravitational waves are ripples in the curvature of space-time itself following a collision between two massive celestial bodies. The image of two black holes merging felt like an apparition—imagine an event so powerful that it alters space-time itself. Those who have lived through trauma might be familiar with how one’s experience of time changes. How memories seem to bend time and space, dissolving the borders between here and there, then and now, past, present, and future.

The 2004 tsunami was a brutal reminder of the fragility of our earthbound existence. Situating our experiences in the greater context of the cosmos connects us to notions of infinity, origin, and creation. The scientific illustrations of gravitational waves reminded me of the unconditional beauty and rawness of nature. How, in a frozen moment, the waves formed a double spiral. They resounded with the interconnectedness and complementarity of all phenomena. Somehow, our lives unfold within these strange space-time entanglements. To me, interconnectedness and complementarity are a working method in and of themselves, as has been the case for a while. A gravitational wave situated on a quiet spot outside of Stockholm—a cosmic ripple transformed into an earthly, spiralling cradle.

The Process of Adjusting the Sketch

The proposal for Gravitational Ripples was developed together with a small team of three friends-collaborators-thinkers-makers: Søren Assenholt, Rasmus Strange Thue Tobiasen, and Synnøve B. Brøgger. It was important for me that we developed a concept that was secure enough that it could be flexible. And in our team, we continuously remind ourselves and each other to listen to the material and build from there. I could not imagine a better team—team dynamics mean a lot in the process of working-with, where entanglements themselves are methodological tools. This also goes for my collaborations with the National Property Board of Sweden, Public Art Agency Sweden, architecture firm Nivå, and Royal Djurgården Administration. They have all impacted the work and its evolution. Materialising this work has been a dense and amazing process. To see it grow, to feel its weight, and to see all the different experts at work, both from my own team and from the state agencies. It is also very exciting to see what challenges arise in a process like this, but I have always felt that the project was in good and caring hands. Gravitational Ripples aims to be continually working-with the aftermath of the 2004 event—those touched by the tsunami, their relatives and loved ones—and with nature itself as it unfolds as matter weaving through time.
To Work Together with Nature and Not against It: Protecting What Is and Still Adding Something

At this point, our (Western) denial of our dependence on the (so-called) natural world has become almost impossible to maintain. The deep-rooted Cartesian dualisms that are the companion thought-forms to human exceptionalism and advanced capitalism are being profoundly challenged as we experience—and will continue to experience—the devastating effects of climate change and mass extinctions.

These times call for creativity, radical thinking, passion, and sober ways of connecting. To loosely quote biologist and science theorist Donna Haraway, we are players within a colorful, lively compost pile. We become-with each other or not at all. Again, it’s all about working-and thinking-with. In Gravitational Ripples, the primary use of soil is a very concrete way of working with earthly matter and matters. As we repositioned the double spiral to include the parking lot, we added biodiversity. We planted and sowed flowers and meadow grass. Diversity is not only pleasant to human senses, it nurtures other critters as well—bees, spiders, butter-flies, you name it. Meanwhile, the old trees at Djurgården remain untouched, though in new and fresh company.

I am sure Gravitational Ripples will grow into its own being. Working-with time is to see things grow, to allow nature space to express itself. This is an ongoing process, as new layers and seeds will be added each year, like the crystals in Robert Smithson’s Spiral Jetty (1970). I have been asked if I am inspired by Smithson’s work, and yes, for sure, it has had an impact on me. I walked the Salt Lake spiral in 2006, and it was a profound experience. To me, earthworks differ from other art experiences in that they are unapologetically physical encounters. Most of the earthworks I’ve seen have been located in the United States, made by male artists in remote areas. So, of course, Gravitational Ripples is different. But, what I took from experiencing a work like Lightning Field (1977) by Walter De Maria was this sense of immersion. Being permeated by its atmospheres, its scents, etc. An all-encompassing experience that opens and expands ways of sensing, being and thinking-with the world. My hope is that this memorial can serve as a gentle reminder of the mysterious nature of our existence. And how we—together and in solitude—might find solace in the boundless forces of the universe. The strange and deep forces that bind and unite us.

In December 2017, the team behind the detection of gravitational waves—Rainer Weiss, Kip S. Thorne, and Barry C. Barish—received the Nobel Prize in Physics in Stockholm. After the ceremony, they visited the site of Gravitational Ripples. Weiss writes the following about the memorial:

The sculpture reminds us of two dramatic events in nature. Both are the result of the release of an enormous amount of energy. One is the wave that came from one of the largest earthquakes known, the other, the waves that came from a quake in the structure of space itself. The first generated a tsunami with heights as large as 30 meters. The other came from the collision of two black holes each weighing about 30 times the mass of our sun. The first occurred on Dec 26, 2004 near Indonesia. The other about a billion years ago in a galaxy a billion light years away which was detected as a slight tremor no larger than 1/1000 the size of an atomic nucleus by the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory on September 14, 2015. The detection of these waves are a confirmation of Albert Einstein’s theory of general relativity and an example of our ability to use technology to learn about nature. By coupling these two events the sculpture embodies both our fragility as well as our curiosity of the universe we live in.

—Lea Porsager, 2018
ReCast: LIVE ON-AIR, 2018. Sound installation, audio equipment, copper, sound absorbing curtains, cardboard, paint, acoustically transparent cloth, rugs, lights, seating, dimensions variable, 54:00, looped. Installation view, White Room, Malmö Art Academy, 2018. Andrea Ray
Andrea Ray

Sounding Expanded Affinities: A Polytemporal Approach to Reconceptualizing Egalitarian Social Relations

Andrea Ray was awarded a Doctorate of Fine Arts, after defending her dissertation, *Sounding Elective Affinities: A Polytemporal Approach to Reconceptualizing Egalitarian Social Relations*, publicly on January 26, 2018 at Inter Arts Center, Malmö. Her dissertation opponent was Professor Katy Deepwell and the examination committee included Professor Matts Leiderstam, Professor Åsa Lundqvist, and Dr. Lycia Trouton.

DISSETATION ABSTRACT

My doctoral submission, *Sounding Expanded Affinities*, examines how strides toward gender equality might be made, but it postulates that this is too difficult while marriage remains at the core of our patriarchal value system. This patriarchal system is one that oppresses women by manipulating subjects into its preferred roles often in subtle, chronic ways, using repetition and pairing as its tools. The doctoral submission then formulates a synchronous model of time to critique and disturb the operation of convention, to evaluate alternative forms of relationships, and finally, to propose a new relationship form with egalitarianism as its aim.

I approach the doctoral project as an artistic practitioner first. Therefore, I have extracted a methodology from my sound installation work that I refer to as “polytemporality.” I borrow this musical term to bring together thinking from different historical moments about how women might achieve greater equality. The project focuses on the United States context, specifically the period between the nineteenth century and now. I ultimately build on this research into earlier utopian proposals for gender equality to develop an idea that I call “expanded affinities”: this is a proposal for a more egalitarian form of relationship. The two terms are both method and subject of the artworks, dissertation, and writing that comprise my doctoral submission, *Sounding Expanded Affinities*. I see the two as linked since I believe that gender inequality is reinforced by notions of linear time. “Polytemporality,” which I define as a synchronous sense of the past, present, and future, is therefore meant to disrupt the normative ideas about gender within relationships. The word “polytemporal” further serves as a conscious nod to the politics of polyamory, or, non-monogamy, taken up in this text. The notion of expanded affinities builds on my research into earlier historical attempts to form more egalitarian types of relationships in intentional communities or through experimenting with different modes of relating. It is a concept that contributes to feminist and queer critiques of heteronormative constructs insofar as it decentres marriage and biological kinship and redistributes the state’s economic investments in those forms of belonging to the individual instead of the couple. Expanded affinities is ultimately a way of relating that exceeds present-day restrictions and hierarchies within love relations.
The first two installations that are part of *Sounding Expanded Affinities* are *Utopians Dance* and *A Reeducation*. Together, these two installations take up the initial terms of gender identity, feminism, sexuality, utopian communities, and alternative economics. The third installation includes the radio play *ReCast: LIVE ON-AIR*, in which feminist voices from across two hundred years are brought together in an omnipresent radio station to discuss relationship forms. Polytemporality is not only the method of writing, but the form too, as *ReCast: LIVE ON-AIR* aims to create a hybrid sense of time in the physical and aural space of installation. The dissertation appendix includes reprints of my script and book from the above-mentioned installations.

I use the polytemporal method in my dissertation as well. Chapter one introduces the concept, and chapter two offers a historical analysis of the patriarchal nature of marriage that also identifies the residual asymmetrical power structures from the past that still exist today. The third chapter evaluates the egalitarian potential of ethical non-monogamies for women, in part by examining earlier historical communities where non-monogamy was practiced in order to create more egalitarian modes of relating. The fourth chapter introduces the concept of expanded affinities as my alternative to ethical non-monogamy, which is intended to be a more inclusive and more equal relationship form.

Together, the concept of expanded affinities and polytemporality allow the personal register to speak across time to create bonds beyond the constraints of the present, of the couple, and of gender roles. The installations provide an element of embodiment and performativity; the dissertation offers analysis and scholarship; and the artistic writings contain fractured narratives. It is my hope that such an interdisciplinary approach to form and expression will work to forward the frames within which feminist art and discourse can take place today.

― Andrea Ray, 2018
ReCast: LIVE ON-AIR, 2018. Sound installation, audio equipment, copper, sound absorbing curtains, cardboard, paint, acoustically transparent cloth, rugs, lights, seating, dimensions variable, 54:00, looped. Installation view, White Room, Malmö Art Academy, 2018. Andrea Ray
SOUND WORK AND EXHIBITION:  
ReCast: LIVE ON-AIR takes the shape of a live studio discussion that is broadcast from a fictive radio station in which people from across more than two hundred years have come together to share their intimate experiences and perspectives on gender and non-monogamy. This group of spectres and futuristics hash out the separation of love from pleasure, and debate the liberatory possibilities of various forms of caring such as free love, polyamory, and complex marriage. They also express future forms such as the notion I call “expanded affinities” and another term I have coined, “compasionned expression.” One radio guest is a nineteenth-century free love commune member, who appears in the studio to share the continued relevance of their community’s free love practices; another is a twentieth-century essentialist feminist, who is unable to let go of the gender binary; others speak from a future where neither gendered subjectivities nor singular forms of relationships exist. The voices are inspired by people like queer theorist Paul B. Preciado, French novelist Anaïs Nin, and Tirzah Miller, who was a member of the nineteenth-century non-monogamous group the Oneida Community.

The audio is installed in such a way that the voice of each “radio guest” plays back through an individual speaker within the main elliptical curtain. Two speakers outside the curtained area play the callers or spectres of the station as well as environmental tracks—one of chants from the Women’s March of 1970, the other a bucolic walk through the grasses while humming a hymn. Spectators are able to commune with the disembodied voices in a listening space that evokes both a nineteenth-century séance parlour and a futuristic radio station. The voices confer in an ever-present loop on WPPF Radio, and thus create a type of utopian futurity.  

ReCast: LIVE ON-AIR is produced from a sense of longing to be free from the here and now. The spectres from the past, present, and future are summoned to confer and to release us from the immediate constraints of society, law, and culture in order to make way for a utopian future. Sounding like voices from an outer ring of space, the relationship radicals reject the charmed circle and the linearity of the relationship escalator that ascends from dating, to love, to marriage, and then children. The installation works to resist forms of “straight time.”

—Andrea Ray, 2018

BIO Andrea Ray completed the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program, received a MFA from the Cranbrook Academy of Art, Michigan, and earned a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design. Ray is a part-time assistant professor at Parsons, the New School in New York and teaches online for the School of the Art Institute of Chicago’s Low-Residency MFA. Ray completed her PhD in Fine Arts at the Malmö Art Academy of Lund University in January, 2018.

Solo exhibitions include those at Zilkha Gallery, Wesleyan University, Connecticut; Open Source, Suite 106, and Cuchifritos, all in New York; and Yalo Gallery, Mississippi. Group exhibitions include Sculpture Center, Apex Art, P.S.1 Clocktower Gallery, and White Columns in New York; Skissernas Museum and Wanås Foundation in Sweden; and 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 P.S.1 MoMA, New York; MacDowell Colony, New Hampshire; Cité des Arts, Paris; and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, New York. Ray’s work has been included in the publications Artforum, BOMB Magazine, Zing Magazine, New York Times, and ARTnews.
ReCast: LIVE ON-AIR, 2018. Sound installation, audio equipment, copper, sound absorbing curtains, cardboard, paint, acoustically transparent cloth, rugs, lights, seating, dimensions variable, 54:00, looped. Installation view, White Room, Malmö Art Academy, 2018. Andrea Ray
“And he realised that this [face] here, is the same as that there.”

Phoebe Caldwell, Settle, Yorkshire, February 2016.

Video stills from research footage. Imogen Stidworthy
In encounters between people who do not share a language, languages are revealed in new ways. In order to communicate we have to adapt language, or put it to one side; to clear the airwaves for forms of voicing and silence which demand entirely different kinds of listening. Voicing is the sounding of the voice to connect with others or inwardly with oneself, encompassing all forms of language and communication from the linguistic, to the non-verbal, to the near-intangible dimensions of relationship.

With these thoughts in mind my research engages with dialogues on the borders of language: between “me” who speaks and people whose voicing has quite a different relationship with language. This includes people affected by physical or neurological conditions, such as aphasia, or by the effects of life experiences. I focus in particular on non-verbal autism, which figures here as a limit condition of being with no practice of language. In this sense, non-verbal autism challenges the identificatory basis on which the notion of difference is built.

What happens to language in encounters with voicing that is unfamiliar, unknowable even, and in the face of not “understanding”? What other forms of meaning and being emerge in the spaces between languages, on a personal level as well as socially and politically?

I take up these central questions of my PhD research through a number of voices, among which three have a special place as go-betweens with non-verbal being. Their work or experience is broadly situated on one of three levels: the social, the interpersonal and the personal. The pedagogue, filmmaker and writer Fernand Deligny developed an experimental network for living with non-verbal autistic children in the Cévennes, France, from 1967 until the late 1980s. Phoebe Caldwell, from the United Kingdom, is a therapist who specialises in non-verbal communication using a mirroring method known as Intensive Interaction. The Swedish therapist and writer Iris Johansson is autistic and was entirely non-verbal as a child; she now specialises in working with groups using her method, Primary Thinking Work.

Iris Johansson, Sweden, early 1940s aged around three, from *A Different Childhood*, Iris Johansson (Inkwell Productions, 2012)
These voices report back on their experiences of non-verbal relationship. Between them new listening positions emerge for sounding the borders of language. In my fieldwork and material research I listen by engaging in dialogue or being-with; working with sound, space, body and the visual image; and the technologies of filmmaking and installation.

The adults in Deligny’s project developed a practice of mapping the movements of the children on layers of tracing paper, repeatedly, over hours or days, to reveal changes over time. Mapping embodied an indirect yet highly sensitised form of attention towards the children. The distance implied is characteristic of Deligny’s insistence on respecting their difference, 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 are physical traces of this relationship-in-the-making. I see them as proto-cinema. The mapping happened in parallel with photography and filmmaking: Deligny produced three films about the Network, which were part of a wider reflection on the image, discussed at length in his writings. He also inspired the artistic and financial support of Chris Marker and François Truffaut, who was fascinated by the wild landscape of the Cévennes and the enigmatic first child of the Network, Janmari, which inspired and shaped his vision for the film L’Enfant sauvage.

Phoebe Caldwell uses Intensive Interaction to make contact with non-verbal people on their own terms. She states, “Attention needs to be totally in other.”¹ She gets herself “out of the way” and, through intimate attention, “listening with all the senses,” she tunes into the other person and all aspects of their behaviour. Divining which of all of their sounds or gestures is meaningful to them, she plays them back through echoing or mirroring in an improvisational game of call and response. Recalling Deligny’s refusal to interpret the children, Caldwell accepts a sound or gesture as meaningful in itself—less “content” than contact, as subtle as a tiny change in the pattern of breathing. Mutual recognition of contact is all that is needed to produce “the oneness that comes out of self/other.”² Caldwell produces training videos to share her knowledge and the technique of Intensive Interaction. On another level, the footage provides an external and predominantly visual record of the interactions. It captures indicators that she may have missed in her immersion in a dynamic flow of interrelation, in all the dimensions of sound, visual appearance, movement, rhythm, utterance or gesture.

¹ Phoebe Caldwell, email correspondence with the author, February 25, 2016.
² Caldwell, email correspondence, February 25, 2016.
Iris Johansson, Dahab, South Sinai, February 2018. Video stills from research footage. Imogen Stidworthy
Iris Johannsson 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 a prolonged and evolved form of preverbal being, and a non-linguistic relationship with words. She moved between two worlds; the Ordinary ‘reality’ and Out, or the Real, where she could leave behind the often painful and chaotic sensations of a body and mind in sensory overwhelm. In Out she could move freely, unbounded, swooping high into the air or down into the earth as an immaterial being. Her experience confounds dualistic concepts of in/out, self/other, or here/there. She seems to inhabit all, or none:

> 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 behaviour. Then I could see how it was in reality.³

As a young woman, Iris used the cinema to study social behaviour. She chose her role models and learned their phrases and characteristic gestures, practising meticulously in front of the mirror. In this way she scripted herself to fit in with social expectations, driven by her desire to connect with the social world. Eventually cinema became a tool in her therapeutic work, which now she uses to “help people get in touch with the Primary.”

Each of the go-betweens of non-verbal being I have described above has developed a body of cinematic thinking, in relation to which my own practice offers a meta-cinematic position. From here I develop a reflection on their work and practices and on what is produced through thinking between them. I work with tools and methods evolved through artistic research in the making of an installation form in which the spaces between the elements—sounds, images, spatial relationships, technologies—could be compared to non-diegetic space (outside the frame of a film), both literally and figuratively speaking. An image of human relationship cannot be shown but it happens between the elements; in the spaces between what has been captured or traced.

> —Imogen Stidworthy on her PhD project

Iris Johansson watching *The Good Doctor*, HBO TV series in which the central role is Shaun Murphy (played by British actor Freddie Highmore), a young surgeon in a general hospital, who is autistic. Through his role the series frames autism in terms of the ‘savant’ who sees and speaks truths: the realities that neurotypicals are blind to, or avoid. *The Good Doctor* is one of Johansson’s favourite TV programmes. Video still from research footage. Imogen Stidworthy
Jamie, Newlands Hey Special School, Huyton, UK. ‘But I’m different to you guys!’ Jamie, who is non-verbal, live-mixes Disney cartoons, looping selected scenes and words and manipulating playback speed as a way to ‘speak’. Video still from research footage. Imogen Stidworthy
Imogen Stidworthy’s work focuses on the voice as a sculptural material in 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 overwhelming experiences. 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.


Stidworthy curated the group exhibitions BLACKOUT!, 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.

Stidworthy’s work is represented by Matt’s Gallery, London, and AKINCI, Amsterdam.
Photo ID. Iris Johansson, Dahab, South Sinai, February 2018. Video stills from research footage. Imogen Stidworthy
Iris Johansson and Ramy Nagy, Dahab, South Sinai, February 2018. Video stills from research footage. Imogen Stidworthy
Iris Johansson at Bedouin camp, Dahab, South Sinai, February 2018. Video stills from research footage. Imogen Stidworthy
**Selected Activities**

*Practise Practice*

at Skånes konstförening

Annual Study Trip, MFA1

Movement Workshop

Critical & Pedagogical Studies
—Study Trip to Berlin

16mm Film—the Fundamentals

Photography—Creative Perspectives

Ceramics Course

Welding Course

Moulding Course:
Bronze/Aluminium/Silicone

Plastic Course

Kinaesthetic Audio
Practise Practice

Skånes konstförening

February 13–15, 2018
For more than a decade, “artistic research” has been a buzzword in the art world. Doctoral programs have been created and several international conferences and seminars have been conducted to map the terminology and the different positions that artists can take in relation to research-based practice, discussing notions of “artistic knowledge” and “thinking through the visual.”

From October 2017 to February 2018, fifteen master’s students at Malmö Art Academy examined the concept of artistic research as part of the course “Practise Practice,” conducted by Professor Matts Leiderstam and Senior Lecturer Maj Hasager. The students worked with different projects based on their own artistic practices, in collaboration or individually, and at the same time, they critically investigated “artistic knowledge” and “artistic research” in a wider sense.

In January, the course moved its activities to Skånes konstförening (Skåne’s Art Association). With the move, “artistic knowledge” and “thinking through the visual” became situated in the space of Skånes konstförening, and the participants made use of its various rooms to test different modes of artistic practices.

“Practise Practice” came to a head on February 13–15, 2018, with a programme of events open to the public. What visitors found was not an exhibition —rather it was as the students formulated it in their statement: You are about to encounter the traces of multiple art practices developing in one space.

Participating students:
Ursula Beck, Sanna Blennow, Clifford Charles, Marta Gil, Marija Giniuk, Anna Skov Hassing, Rebecka Holmström, Alexandra Hunts, Rannveig Jonsdottir, Cecilia Jonsson, Rune Elkjaer Rasmussen, Karoline Sætre, David Torstensson, Aya Maria Urhammer, Nanna Ylönen.
Installation view, Skånes konstförening, 2018. Practise Practice exhibition and events were made collectively.
Dear Visitor,

You are about to encounter the traces of multiple art practices developing in one space. Spatially and temporally, these practices weave in and out of the gallery and each other—experimenting. In this process, countless questions have arisen, but no singular answers. Together we’ve wondered … How do we make collective decisions without consensus becoming an authoritative demand? How do we create space for the many, merging, manifold, and conflicting among us? To what extent do we build theoretical lines within the space and among ourselves? To what extent do we allow our practices to emerge organically?

We, the artists, have chosen to surrender singular authorship to explore an anonymous (or rather multiplicitous) practice and presence in the space. One claimed by many authors, voices, and views. We’ve inhabited the gallery testing ideas and processes, playing with collectivity, meeting each week for dinner, as we’ve worked to navigate the gallery and our practices within it. Thus, you will find practices: pieces and ideas in process, fragments of research and experiments, and temporary structures for discussion and coexistence. Samples, scores, and documents from our time and practices have accumulated in boxes we’ve crafted within the space. These are intended as archive and publication—traces of and testimonies to our thinking through the visual.

—Practise Practice
Programme

--- Tuesday, February 13

*Experimental Hit & Run*—Exploring sound as touch. For thirty minutes each day during exhibition hours, the untamable sound moves based on predetermined frameworks. You can arrive, stay, and move around as you wish.

*The Antifascists*—Screening of the documentary film *The Antifascists* (2017), by Emil Ramos and Patrik Öberg, followed by a discussion with the audience. *The Antifascists* takes us behind the masks of antifascists militant groups in Sweden and Greece. We meet key figures who explain their views on their radical politics but also question the level of their own violence and militancy.

--- Wednesday, February 14

*It Always Goes Full Circle*—A reading circle where you as an audience are invited to participate in a reading of a manuscript in progress. Together we dive into the world of au pairs, affective labour, and global chains of service. The session will take around twenty minutes.

*Ghost Clinic*—A participatory artwork inviting the public to share their experiences and encounters with the supernatural. In the piece, visitors of the clinic will be interviewed in a tent setting—reminiscent of ghost stories told by campfires. *Ghost Clinic* aims to collect and archive the intimate stories concerning paranormal and unexplained events and acts as a space for expressing these stories.

*Experimental Hit & Run*—Exploring sound as touch. For thirty minutes each day during exhibition hours, the untamable sound moves based on predetermined frameworks. You can arrive, stay, and move around as you wish.

*Faith in Something*—A selection of tracks touching on the concept of God will be played in the bar.

--- Thursday, February 15

*Experimental Hit & Run*—Exploring sound as touch. For thirty minutes each day during exhibition hours, the untamable sound moves based on predetermined frameworks. You can arrive, stay, and move around as you wish.

*Last Dinner*—Free dinner for everyone will be served at Skånes konstförening.

*Back to Carbon*—Bonfire outside Skånes konstförening’s entrance.

*The Entity Appears*—A performance illustrating experimental body sketches created in situ during the “Practise Practice” course at Skånes konstförening. The performance explores the concept of “an entity”—a fusion of an odd creature and an unknown organism.

*Readings by the Fire*
For many years, Malmö Art Academy has had close ties to the art scene and cultural life of Lisbon. This connection largely stems from our ongoing collaboration with the Maumaus School. Additionally, since our new professor Emily Wardill lives and works there, we had two good reasons for choosing Lisbon as our destination for the annual study trip with the MFA1 students.

Our program included visits to galleries and art institutions such as the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, where artist Sara Bichão gave a talk in relation to her exhibition, *Find me, I kill you*; Atelier-Museu Júlio Pomar and the exhibition *CHAMA*, which included artists Júlio Pomar, Rita Ferreira, and Sara Bichão; Galeria Avenida da India and the exhibition *Urban Now: City Life in Congo* by Filip De Boeck and Sammy Baloji; Culturgest for the Michael Snow exhibition *The Sound of Snow*; Kunsthalle Lissabon, where Director Luís Silva presented the curatorial approach and historical and political background of the institution; Maumaus, where Director Jürgen Bock gave a lecture on its Independent Study Programme and exhibition space Lumiar Cité. We also went on a half-day trip to the ANIM Department of the Cinemateca Portuguesa, generously led by director and film historian Tiago Batista.

On top of this, artists André Guedes, Salomé Lamas, and Ana Rebordão, one of our former students, invited us for studio visits, film screenings, and talks.

—Margot Edström and Maria Hedlund
Introduction to ANIM Department at the Cinemateca Portuguesa by Tiago Batista, April 2018
Still images from video documentation of performer and dancer Siri Wolthoorn, filmed during the workshop. Malmö Art Academy, 2018
This one-day workshop was open to anybody interested in movement. It was conceived to be used as an exploration for our individual “passion to move,” or as a means to develop tools for directing, developing, and working with “characters” in performance or video.

This was addressed in two “Gaga” sessions led by performer and dancer Siri Wolthoorn. “Gaga” is a system of free bodily improvisation based on imagery and somatic experience. Through exercises, images, and instructions provided by Wolthoorn, we developed new movement patterns and possibilities.

**Participating students:**
Linn Hvid, Albin Skaghammar, Elisabet Anna Kristjandottir, Muyeong Kim, Filip Vest, Mariella Ottosson, Samaneh Roghani, Tine Maria Damgaard, Majse Vilstrup, Mads Kristian Frøslev, Sean-Francios Krebs, Therese Bülow Jørgensen.
Documentation of *Invitations to Unlearn: Art Education and Critical Pedagogy*, a presentation by students of Critical & Pedagogical Studies MFA programme at Haus der Kulturen der Welt, June 13, 2018
Critical & Pedagogical Studies—Study Trip to Berlin

Schools of Tomorrow
Haus der Kulturen der Welt

June 9–14, 2018

Study Trip Overview:

In June, the Critical & Pedagogical Studies group travelled to Berlin for an intense week of visiting artists and exhibitions while preparing to give a collective presentation as part of the project Schools of Tomorrow: Test Run for the School of the Future on June 13–14 at Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW). Our first visit was to ifa-Galerie for Coalitions Facing White Innocence: Performance, Activism and Afropean Decoloniality, an event curated by Alanna Lockward as part of Be.Bop 2018. The following day, we took a guided tour of the Berlin Biennale, with mediation by Nora-Saida Hogrefe. Jeremiah Day and Fred Dewey organised a site walk to Nordbahnhof Park, where we partook in an outdoor reading and group discussion. At the invitation of artists Cristina Gómez Barrio and Wolfgang Mayer, we attended a presentation by artist-researcher Ursula Rogg on her research and audio project about the German educational system at Discoteca Flaming Star’s studio, where we also met with students from the Body, Theory and Poetics of the Performative (KTPP) MFA programme at Stuttgart State Academy of Art and Design. Between all these sessions, the students used the Academy’s apartment in Berlin as a rehearsal space to prepare for their Schools of Tomorrow presentation. For the two-hour presentation, the group collectively worked with choreographic and score techniques to present an interactive listening experience. Our attendance at Schools of Tomorrow concluded with a panel discussion featuring Robert Behrendt, Catherine Burke, Keri Facer, Silvia Fehrmann, Luis Armando Gandin, Maj Hasager, Robert Pfützner, Marie-Therese Rudolph.
Documentation of Invitations to Unlearn: Art Education and Critical Pedagogy, a presentation by students of Critical & Pedagogical Studies MFA programme at Haus der Kulturen der Welt, June 13, 2018
CPS Students’ HKW presentation description:

*Invitations to Unlearn: Art Education and Critical Pedagogy*

By students of the Critical & Pedagogical Studies MFA Programme, Malmö Art Academy, under the direction of Maj Hasager and Laura Hatfield.

How would students or artists organise learning? What role do art and education play in developing new forms of acting and thinking? And how can they contribute to shaping a desirable society?

A group of students has been developing new meeting points between art and education. Together with Maj Hasager and Laura Hatfield, they have looked at concepts such as radical and critical pedagogy, pedagogies of the senses, and feminist art education. The workshop will offer insights into what possibilities may be found in opening up the field through artistic practices. A listening space will reflect current questions and thoughts by pedagogical art practitioners in the making. By working with score techniques and collectively decided dogmas, they will explore potential intersections between art and education.

In this experimental space, the workshop participants are invited to slow down and focus, or drift away.

Hand out, *Invitations to Unlearn: Art Education and Critical Pedagogy*, a presentation by students of Critical & Pedagogical Studies MFA programme at Haus der Kulturen der Welt, June 13, 2018
Schools of Tomorrow panel discussion, “How Do Schools Create the Future”, with Robert Behrendt, Catherine Burke, Keri Facer, Silvia Fehrmann, Luis Armando Gandin, Maj Hasager, Robert Pfützner, and Marie-Therese Rudolph at Haus der Kulturen der Welt, June 13, 2018
Presentation by artist-researcher Ursula Rogg at Discoteca Flaming Star's studio together with students from the Body, Theory and Poetics of the Performative, MFA programme at Stuttgart State Academy of Art and Design.
Site-walk at Nordbahnhof Park with Jeremiah Day and Fred Dewey, June 2018
Guided tour of the Berlin Biennale with mediation by Nora-Saida Hogrefe, June 2018
16mm Film
—the Fundamentals

Teachers
Professor Joachim Koester
Technician Sophie Ljungblom

In collaboration with Ulrik Heltoft, Associate Professor,
and The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts

See course description p. 505
Photography
—Creative Perspectives

Teacher  Senior Lecturer
Maria Hedlund

Guest Teacher  Johan Österholm

See course description p. 507
Ceramics Course

Teacher  Senior Lecturer
P-O Persson

Guest Teacher  Margit Brundin

See course description p. 507
Welding Course

Selected Activities

Teacher   Senior Lecturer
P-O Persson

Guest Teachers Robert Cassland
Ariel Alaniz

See course description p. 507
Moulding Course:
Bronze/Aluminium/Silicone
Teacher: P-O Persson
Guest Teacher: Robert Cassland

See course description p. 513
Plastic Course

Teacher   Senior Lecturer
P-O Persson

Guest Teacher  David Nilsson

See course description p. 513
Guest Teacher  Tim Bishop

See course description p. 514
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, and most recently she authored Estragon, a monograph on the Norwegian painter Olav Christopher Jenssen, published in 2018. In 2010 she was the co-curator of the Moderna-ställningen at Moderna Museet, Stockholm. She co-curated, together with Sarat Maharaj, Dorothee Albrecht, and Stina Edblom, the Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art 2011. Furthermore, she recently curated Siksi—The Nordic Miracle Revisited at Galleri F 15, Moss, Norway, 2015; Red Dawn at HISK, Ghent, Belgium, 2014; Channeled, which showed contemporary artists alongside Hilma af Klint, at Lunds Konsthall, 2013; and Against Method for Generali Foundation, Vienna, 2013.

Sarat Maharaj was born in South Africa and educated there as well as in the UK. Dr. Maharaj is a writer and curator. He was a co-curator of documenta11 and he curated retinal. optical. visual.conceptual … at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, in 2002, with Richard Hamilton and Ecke Bonk. Dr. Maharaj was also co-curator of Farewell to Postcolonialism, Guangzhou, in 2008, and Art, Knowledge and Politics, at the 29th São Paulo Biennale in 2010. He was Chief Curator of the 2011 Gothenburg Biennale, Pandemonium: Art in a Time of Creativity Fever, and a peer advisor to the Sharjah Biennial 11 in 2013.

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 also the first Rudolf Arnheim Professor, Humboldt University, Berlin (2001–02) and Research Fellow at the Jan Van Eyck Akademie, Maastricht (1999–2001).

Dr. Maharaj is 2018 Visiting Fellow at RKD—Netherlands Institute for Art History, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, and the University of Amsterdam (UvA), in which role he gave lectures such as "Cultural Studies: Towards a Theory/Practice Approach" as well as presented a reconstruction/re-enactment of The Apartheid-era Art History Room, Salisbury Island, Durban, South Africa (circa 1971) with students from UvA and the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, at the Stedelijk Museum, in May and June 2018.

Dr. Maharaj is furthermore currently working on two art research projects: "Repristinating London: Knowledge Mecca, Sandwich Street, Bloomsbury" and "The Apartheid Art History Room, Durban, Salisbury Island," which involves sounding art practice as a mode of non-knowledge or "Ignorantitis sapiens."

His specialist research and publications focus on Marcel Duchamp, James Joyce, and Richard Hamilton, and his writing covers: Monkeydoodle—"thinking through art practice," visual art as know-how and no-how, textiles, xeno-sonics and xeno-epistemics—"thinking the other and other ways of thinking," cultural translation, "dirty cosmopolitanism," North/South divisions of work, manufacture, and "creative labour."

Recent publications include Elemental Scatterings: The Sarat Maharaj Reader (Shanghai People’s Publishing House, 2013); "Small Change of the Universal," British Journal of Sociology 61, no. 3 (2010); Hungry Clouds Swag on the Deep:
Joachim Koester
Professor of Fine Arts

Joachim Koester is a Danish artist based in Copenhagen. His work has been shown at Documenta X, Kassel; 2nd Johannesburg Biennale; Gwangju Biennale 1995; 54th Venice Biennale; Busan Biennale 2006; Manifesta 7, Trento; Tate Triennal 2009, London; and Taipei Biennale 2012, as well as in solo shows at Bergen Kunsthall, Norway; Camden Arts Centre, London; 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; Gallery Jan Mot, Brussels; and Camden Arts Centre, London.

Koester’s work can be found in the following museums and collections: Louisiana Museum, Humlebæk; 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 Bibliotekets Fotografiske Samling, Copenhagen; Fonds national d’art contemporain, Paris; Søren Kunstmuseum, Denmark; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Malmö Konstmuseum; Sammlung Hoffmann, Berlin; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; MAC’s, Grand-Hornu; Kadist Art Foundation, Paris; FRAC Le Plateau, Institut d’art contemporain, Villeurbanne; Generali Foundation, Vienna; Sammlung Verbund, Vienna; and Museum Sztuki, Łódź.

Publications on his work include Joachim Koester, maybe one must begin with some particular places (Guayaba Press, 2015); Joachim Koester: Of Spirits and Empty Spaces (Mousse Publishing, 2014), Joachim Koester: I Myself am only a receiving apparatus (Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, 2011); Joachim Koester: Message from the Unseen (Lunds Konsthall, 2006); Joachim Koester: Nordenskiöld and the Ice Cap (Space Poetry, 2006), and Joachim Koester: Message from Andrée (Lukas & Sternberg and Pork Salad Press, 2005).

Dr. Matts Leiderstam
Professor of Fine Art

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; Salon MoCAB—Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade; Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe; Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz; and Magasin III, Stockholm.
Selected group shows include Tensta Konsthall, Stockholm; the 11th Shanghai Biennale; National Gallery Prague; Henie Onstad Kunstsenters, Kvikodden, Norway; Fondazione Prada, Milan; 8th Berlin Biennale; Gasworks, London; Museo Tamayo, Mexico City; Witte de With, Rotterdam; Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art 2010; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; and 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).

Fredrik Værslev

Fredrik Værslev is a Norwegian artist based in Drøbak, Norway, with a focus on conceptual painting.


Værslev is Director of the artist-run project space Landings in Vestfossen, Norway, which he founded in 2008. The organization also produces Landings Journal, published once a year.

Publications on his work include Fredrik Værslev as I Imagine Him (JRP|Ringier, 2018); Tan Lines (Sternberg Press, 2018); The Constant Gardener (Hatje Cantz, 2016); All Around Amateur, vols. 1 and 2 (Sternberg Press, 2016); Reality Bites (Mousse Publishing, 2015); East Bound and Down (Power Station, 2016); and Fredrik Værslev: The rich man’s breakfast, the shopkeeper’s lunch, the poor man’s supper (STANDARD (BOOKS), 2012).

Værslev’s work is found in the collections of Centre Pompidou, Paris; Le Consortium, Dijon; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Malmö Konstmuseum; Nasjonalmuseet, Oslo; and Astrup Fearnley, Oslo.

Emily Wardill

Emily Wardill is a British artist based in Lisbon, Portugal, and Malmö, Sweden.

She has had solo exhibitions at the Bergen Kunsthall, 2017; Gulbenkian Project Spaces, Lisbon, 2017; Index, Stockholm, 2014; 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 and 19th Sydney Biennale, as well as in group exhibitions at the Biennale of Moving Images, Geneva; Serpentine Gallery, London; Showroom Gallery London; Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow; MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA; Institute of Contemporary Arts, London; Hayward Gallery, London; Witte de With, Rotterdam; mumok, Vienna; and Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami.
Wardill was the recipient of the Jarman Award in 2010 and the Leverhulme Award in 2011. Some of the international collections that hold Wardill’s work are Tate Britain, London; mumok, Vienna; Gulbenkian Art Museum, Lisbon; Fonds Municipal d’Art Contemporain de la Ville de Genève; and Arts Council Collection, UK, as well as numerous private collections. She is represented by carlier | gebauer, Berlin; STANDARD (OSLO); and Altman Siegal, 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 and dialogically based, and she works predominantly with text, sound, video, and photography.

She has exhibited her work internationally in events and at institutions such as Lunds Konsthall; Fondazione Pastificio Cerere, Rome; Critical Distance, Toronto; GL STRAND, Copenhagen; Galleri Image, Aarhus, Denmark; FOKUS video art festival, Nikolaj Kunsthall, Copenhagen; Moderna Museet, Malmö; Cleveland Institute of Art; Red Barn Gallery, Belfast; Laznia Centre for Contemporary Art, Gdansk; Liverpool Biennial; Al-Hoash Gallery, Jerusalem; Al-Kahf Gallery, Bethlehem; Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center; Ramallah; Overgaden Institute of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen; and Guangzhou Triennial.

Hasager is the recipient of several international residencies and fellowships, most recently at 18th Street Arts Center, Los Angeles. She has been awarded grants in support of her work from Edstrandska, Danish Arts Council, Danish Arts Foundation, Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (Beirut), Artschool Palestine. Additionally, Hasager is a guest lecturer at the International Academy of Art Palestine; Dar al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture, Bethlehem; Barbados Community College, Bridgetown; Sacramento State University; and University of Ulster, Belfast. She occasionally writes essays, catalogue texts, and articles.

Maria Hedlund
Senior Lecturer in Fine Arts

Maria Hedlund is a Swedish artist based in Berlin. She graduated from the Photography Department at the University of Gothenburg in 1993.

In her latest ongoing works, she uses objects, plants, and smaller collections. They are mostly found or given to her. What they all have in common is that they are in a state of transition and of being outside their original context. This specific interest has formed works such as *Life at Hyttödammen* (2006–), *Dissolve* (2011), and *Some Kind of Knowledge* (2014–).

In *Some Kind of Knowledge*, the title refers to an ambivalent condition that always needs to be renegotiated and rephrased as new objects come into play. The “collection” is in a state of constant evolution. Sometimes there is a clear direction, which a while later might be forgotten, followed by a new one. The objects and plants appear in other works as well.

Hedlund’s works have recently been displayed at Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Onomatopee, Eindhoven; and KRETS, Malmö, where the poet Ida Börjel performed a reading related to one Hedlund’s works. At the moment, she is working on a public commission for the Tranströmer Library, in Medborgarhuset, Stockholm, which will be ready for the library’s reopening in 2020. Additionally, she is producing new works for a group show curated by Anders Kreuger at Kohta, Helsinki.
Per Olof Persson  
Senior Lecturer in Fine Arts


Margot Edström  
Junior Lecturer in Fine Arts

Margot Edström is specialised in video and digital media (2D and 3D animation, 3D printing, digital imaging, and postproduction). She graduated from Malmö Art Academy in 1997. Her artistic background is in performance-based video and animation. Group exhibitions include the National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur; Galleri Stefan Andersson, Umeå, Sweden; and International Performance Festival, Tampere, Finland.

Laura Hatfield  
Junior Lecturer and Programme Coordinator for Critical & Pedagogical Studies (MFA)

Laura Hatfield is an artist whose work involves exhibition making, painting, writing, independent music, and museological experimentation. She holds a Master of International Museum Studies from the University of Gothenburg and a Master of Fine Arts from Valand Academy, Gothenburg, where she also completed a postgraduate Independent Study in Fine Arts with Pedagogic Application. Hatfield has performed and exhibited internationally and collaborated with many art museums and artist-run spaces. She is currently on the board of Skånes konstforening and is part of the editorial group at Paletten Art Journal.

Viktor Kopp  
Junior Lecturer in Fine Arts

Viktor Kopp is a Swedish artist based in Stockholm. He 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; 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; Ystad Konstmuseum, Ystad, Sweden.

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 guest professor at the Higher Institute for Fine Arts (HISK), Ghent.

Recent solo exhibitions include 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, New York; and Künstlerhaus Bethanien GmbH, Berlin, among others.

Benhelima recently participated at the Lubumbashi Biennale, DR Congo, 2015; Beaufort, Triennial of Contemporary Art by the Sea, Belgium, 2015; Marrakech Biennale 5; International Biennial of Photography, 2010 and 2012, Houston; and in group exhibitions at the Musee 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 a Contemporanea Della Spezia, Italy; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Buenos Aires; Witte de With, Rotterdam; EMST—National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens; Jewish Cultural Quarter, Amsterdam; and Lunds Konsthall.

Andreas Eriksson is a visual artist based in Medelplana, Sweden. He graduated from the Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm, in 1998.

Eriksson’s artistic practice is highly expansive, encompassing a wide range of media, including painting, photography, sculpture, and installation. His work hovers enigmatically between the abstract and the figurative, creating a window onto the outside world, which is simultaneously familiar and mysterious. The emotional intensity with which Eriksson imbues his work is the result of a sustained investigation into charting his own reactions to the natural world that surrounds him.

In 2014–15, he was the subject of a major solo exhibition that toured from Bonniers Konsthall in Stockholm to Trondheim Kunstmuseum in Norway, Centre PasquArt in Biel, Switzerland, and Reykjavik Art Museum in Iceland.


Eriksson’s works are included in collections internationally, including the Gothenburg Museum of Art; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Skövde Art Museum, Sweden; National Public Art Council, Sweden; Sundsvall Museum, Sweden; Uppsala Art Museum, Sweden; mumok, Vienna; FRAC, Auvergne, France; Centre Geroges Pompidou, Paris, France; and Nasjonalmuseet, Oslo, Norway.
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 Saint-Gervais Genève; and Voox, Montreal, and in group shows at the 4th Biennale de Montreal; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Seattle Art Museum; Justina Barnicke Gallery; University of Toronto; Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel; Vancouver Art Gallery; Centro José Guerrero in Granada; MARCO, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Vigo, Spain; Museum of Contemporary Art, Oslo; and Bergen Art Museum. Her work features in the collections of, among others, the Centre Georges Pompidou, Malmo Art Museum, and Vancouver Art Gallery.

João Penalva
External Visiting Lecturer in Fine Arts
João Penalva is a Portuguese artist who since 1976 has been living and working in London, where he also studied at Chelsea School of Art. He has been External Visiting Lecturer 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; Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon; Brandts Kunsthallen, Odense; Trondheim Kunstmuseum, Norway; LOGE, Berlin; Musée d’Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg; and Culturgest, Porto.

Group exhibitions include, among others Haus der Kunst, Munich; Museum Folkwang, Essen; K20 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf; Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden; Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart; Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne; National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul; Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, Taiwan; Tramway, Glasgow; Wellcome Collection, London; South London Gallery; Lunds Konsthall; Hayward Gallery, London; and Tate Modern, London.

Penalva was awarded the DAAD Berlin Artist’s Residency in 2003 and the Bryan Robertson Award, London, in 2009. He is represented by Simon Lee Gallery, London, Hong Kong, New York; Galerie Thomas Schulte, Berlin; Barbara Gross Galerie, Munich; and Galeria Filomena Soares, Lisbon. He has had numerous exhibitions with these galleries.

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 Forsblom, Helsinki; Galerie Francois Mansart, Paris; Galleri K, Oslo; Kunsthernes Hus, Oslo; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Malmö Konsthall; Kiasma, Helsinki; and Brandts Klaedefabrik, Odense.

Selected group exhibitions include the MuHKA, Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp; Kiasma, Helsinki; Galleri F15, Moss, Norway; Espoo Museum of Modern Art, Finland; Artipelag, Stockholm; Lunds Konsthall; Carnegie Art
Award touring exhibition (first prize 2004); KUMU Art Museum, Tallinn; Kunstverein München; Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki; 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.

Roos's works are included in collections internationally, including the Amos Anderson Art Museum, Helsinki; Apoteket AB, Stockholm; ArtPace, San Antonio; Gothenburg Art Museum; Helsinki City Art Museum; Kiasma, Helsinki; Malmö Art Museum; and Moderna Museet, Stockholm, among others.

Christine Ödlund is a Swedish artist and composer living and working in Stockholm.


Recent shows include the group exhibition *The Great Escape* at CFHILL, Stockholm, in 2018 and the large solo exhibition *Aether & Einstein* at Magasin III—Museum & Foundation for Contemporary Art, Stockholm, in 2016, alongside which the monograph of the same name, featuring a text by Linda Darlymple Henderson, was published by Magasin III and Skira.

Other exhibitions include Galleri Riis, Stockholm, 2016, and Trondheim Museum of Art, 2015. Ödlund’s work has been shown in group exhibitions such as the 8th Momentum Nordic Biennale, Moss, Norway, 2015; Marrakech Biennale 6, 2014; Magasin III, Stockholm; Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam; Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; Moderna Museet, Stockholm and Malmö; Nationalmuseum, Stockholm; and Lunds Konsthall.

Her work is included in the public collections of Moderna Museet; Magasin III, Stockholm; Public Art Agency Sweden; Museum of Sketches, Lund; Statoil Collection, Oslo; and Trondheim Museum of Art.
The following pages present a selection of recent works by several of the teaching artists on the faculty. Please see Faculty Biographies for more information and for the complete list of professors and lecturers.
Emily Wardill
Professor of Fine Arts

No Trace of Accelerator, 2017. Film installation. Installation view, Bergen Kunsthall, 2017. Emily Wardill
I gave my love a cherry that had no stone, 2016. Film installation. Installation view, Centre d’Art Contemporain Genève, 2016. Emily Wardill
The dissonance of memory (chapter I), 2017. 6 textile banners with print of archival material, 90 x 290 cm each. Installation view, Eutopia International Festival, Gellerup, DK, 2017. Maj Hasager
The dissonance of memory (chapter IV), 2018. Still images. Montage film, 21:00 min. Maj Hasager
Some kind of knowledge, 2014–. B/W silver gelatin prints, 24 x 30 cm each. Maria Hedlund
#63 Some kind of knowledge, 2014—. B/W silver gelatin print, 24 x 30 cm. Maria Hedlund
João Penalva
External Visiting Lecturer in Fine Arts

Exhibition views, João Penalva, Mudam Luxembourg, 2018
Nina Roos
External Visiting Lecturer in Fine Arts

A thin line cuts the space 2, 2015–16. Oil on canvas, 240 x 200 cm. Nina Roos
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 wide 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.

Documentation and texts from this year’s graduating students are available in this Yearbook.

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. Malmö Art Academy’s internationally active professors work in a range of artistic fields. This leads to important and diverse interaction at the Academy and also gives the students the opportunity to choose courses that reflect their artistic intentions.

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 studio practice and completion of courses are awarded a Bachelor of Fine Arts. Students must also participate in a group exhibition at the Academy’s gallery and write a short text (approx. five pages) based on their artistic position. Professors at the 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, offering more specialised artistic training through individual studio practice and courses in art and various related disciplines. During the first year, students begin their advanced artistic work, with continuous discussions in teacher-led seminars as well as a study trip. Students organise their own curriculum, choosing from a wide range of technical and theoretical courses, many of which are taught by internationally recognised 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 degree projects, which includes writing an essay (approx. ten pages) about their artistic practice and presenting a solo exhibition at the Academy’s gallery. 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.
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 seeks to encourage applied thinking within the artistic field, investigating 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. 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. Theory is viewed as a practice, and practice is theorised. Key issues and topics of discussion include pedagogical strategies such as artists teaching artists and the artist's role in mediating to a public. This is combined with critical thinking on artistic production and an openness toward learning and experimenting. 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. Past participants have also proposed their own self-organised course and have positively influenced the programme structure from within. CPS's focus is on how artists discuss, produce, educate, and communicate, as it aims to encourage students to be critical of how educational structures operate, in relation both to the programme itself and to an educational practice.

An important facet of CPS is the development of each student's 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 position within an art school, museum, or other relevant institution. The final steps towards completion of the degree bridge theory and practice through individual exam projects and a written thesis. The Academy provides the participants with a collective workspace in addition to access to the rest of the premises, including the library and workshops. The programme facilitators have also developed 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 Berlin, London, Gothenburg, Graz, and Scotland. The programme is conducted in English.

Find more information about admission requirements, the selection process, and tuition fees at khm.lu.se/en/studies/application.
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 of Fine Arts 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. The 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 application process, funding and financing

Read more about PhD studies at Lund University at https://www.lunduniversity.lu.se/international-admissions/phd-studies.
Close Up

Teacher: Professor Emily Wardill

Credits: 9

Participating students: Albin Skaghammar, Simen Stenberg, Muyeong Kim, Nadja Ericsson, Oskar Persson, Carl-Oskar Jonsson, Karl Eivind Jørgensen, Elisabeth Östín, Anna Andersson, Louise Hammer, Rasmus Ramô Streith

This course comprises a series of close readings of a variety of artworks embodying very different practices.

Looking at actual pieces of art rather than working from a theoretical foundation will allow us to probe the works themselves rather than using them as illustrations of ideas. We will be investigating their form, their histories, their context, the artist’s intent, and our own relationship towards the works.

“Close Up” will allow us to investigate work in a way that is both analytical and inventive, to acknowledge that writing and speaking are creative acts that run in tandem to the artwork and respect the artwork as a form of communication. Each work chosen may also be a portal from which to investigate time and place—economically, historically, and politically and a point from which a young artist recognises their own concerns and interpretations.

The course will be structured around a series of lectures and discussions. Invited speakers will come to expand upon a work of their choice. These invited speakers will also give studio visits with the students.

Students will be asked to choose their own key works to research and present—developing skills in public speaking, in research, and in applying a rigorous critique towards work. “Close Up” aims to build up a knowledge of art practice from a deep involvement in making, in thinking, and in presenting.

Invited Speakers
Charlotte Laubard is a French Swiss art historian and independent curator. She has been a professor at HEAD—Haute École d’Art et de Design, Geneva, since 2013, and Dean of its Visual Arts Department starting in September 2017. In 2014, she co-founded Société Suisse des Nouveaux Comman- ditaires (New Patrons) under the patronage of the Fondation de France. She worked with significant international institutions such as MoMA PS1, New York (1999–2000) and Castello di Rivoli Museo d’Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Torino (2002–05) before becoming the director of CAPC musée d’art contemporain de Bordeaux (2006–13). She was nominated Artistic Director of the October 2017 Nuit Blanche in Paris.

Charlie Fox is a writer who lives in London. His work has appeared in Frieze, Artforum, Sight & Sound, and many other publications. His book of essays, This Young Monster, was published in 2017 by Fitzcarraldo Editions.

Mike Sperling is co-founder and Assistant Director of LUX, London (since 2002), an agency for artists working with the moving image, which holds the largest collection of films and videos by artists in Europe. Sperling has written for several magazines and journals including Art Monthly, Afterall, Frieze, and Radical Philosophy, as well as numerous exhibition catalogues. He is the editor of the books Afterthought: New Writing on Conceptual Art (Rachmaninoffs, 2005) and Kinomuseum: Towards an Artists’ Cinema (Waithier Koenig, 2008). He recently curated the exhibition Marianne Wex: »Female« and »Male« Body Language as a Result of Patriarchal Structures, Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe (2012), which was the first large-scale exhibition of Wex’s photographic collages in Germany since the 1970s.

16 mm Film—The Fundamentals

Teachers: Professor Joachim Koester

Technician: Sophie Ljungblom

Credits: 6

In collaboration with Associate Professor Ulrik Heltoft and the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Schools of Visual Arts

Participating students: Filip Vest, Maxime Hourani, Eli Maria Lundgaard, Samaneh Roghani, Mads Kristian Frosliev, Karin Lindsten, Lynn Anjou, Elisabet Kristjansdottir, Tine Maria Damgaard, Sebastião Borges, Carolina Sandvik, as well as students from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Schools of Visual Arts

This course is designed as an introduction to the fundamental skills involved in making 16 mm film. Students will learn how to use a 16 mm camera, how to measure and set lights, and 16 mm film editing, including how to cut and splice the film and use a Steenbeck editing table.

In the first part of the course we will go through a series of hands-on exercises with the camera in the studio or on location. The exercises will be structured as scenes, which will become a collaboratively made film. Additionally, each student will be given three films and the opportunity to shoot a film of their own and receive feedback and technical and artistic advice on this.

When we meet again the students will be introduced to working on a Steenbeck editing table. This will be done through collective and individual exercises. We will edit the film material we made together and the participants will be able to edit their individual films as well.

As part of the course we will also discuss media archaeology and media theory—the history of images and film in relation to new digital media.

Finally and concluding the course we will have a premiere of all the films at the Malmö cinema space Panora.
Module 2 first deals with conceptual creations, including the legal view on conceptual creations and the legal possibilities for packaging conceptual creations. Then the focus will turn to contracts and agreements, including the legal rules and other considerations surrounding these. Finally, we will look at contracts and agreements regarding intellectual property, copyright, and other intellectual property rights, as well as contracts and agreements as tools in artistry.

Module 3 focuses on different types of associations, looking at the different kinds of associations that can be used and what advantages and disadvantages each has. This will be followed by accounting: What are the demands? And where can assistance be obtained?

Guest Teacher
Christina Wainikka, JD (Juris Doctor), MBA (Master of Business Administration).

Mini Seminar for Painters

Teacher
Junior Lecturer  Viktor Kopp

Guest Teachers
Alfred Boman
Elisabeth Friberg
Paul Fägerskjöld

Credits  6

Participating students: Jessica Floyd, Mathias Höglund, Helen Haskakis, Oskar Persson, Elisabeth Östín, Anna Andersson, Joana Pereira

This mini seminar for painters is a chance to present ongoing or finished works to the group and a guest teacher. It provides an opportunity to discuss different aspects of your work: concept, method, thought process, inspiration, or what have you in an informal setting among fellow painters. The choice is yours what you want to show and bring to discussion, whether matters of ongoing, unfinished, or even problematic work or works that you regard as finished. Regardless of the focus you choose for your presentation, I want you to install the work in the teaching studio, to separate it from the work space of your studio, and allow for the possibility of shedding new light on how it is possible to think about your work. I also leave it up to you if you want to talk a lot about your work or if you feel at a loss and would rather listen to what the rest of us have to say, as long as you are willing to engage in the ensuing discussion.
Photography — Creative Perspectives

Teacher  Senior Lecturer
Maria Hedlund

Guest Teacher  Johan Österholm

Credits  9

Participating students: Karin Lindsten, Lynn Anjou, Elisabet Anna Kristjansdottir, Cecilia Jonsson, Carolina Sandvik

This is a course for those who want to begin, develop, extend, and deepen individual photography projects. A possibility to try out ideas and to see and discover what might come out.

We will go through cameras, light setting, scanning, analogue and digital printing, and other things, depending on what’s required. There will be possibilities for both individual tutorials and group discussions. If someone has a problem knowing where to start, we will help out.

You will be preparing and presenting your own work and giving feedback on the work of others. We will also visit one or two exhibitions.

Johan Österholm, who graduated with an MFA from the Academy in 2016, will show and talk about his work.

Ceramics

Teacher  Senior Lecturer
P-O Persson

Guest Teacher  Margit Brundin

Credits  6

Participating students: Clara Reeh, Madeleine Noraas, Jessica Floyd, Ellinor Lager, Karou Calamy, Eli Maria Lundgaard, Louise Hammer Moritzen

The course is intended as an introduction to pottery using ceramics and to 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 will consist of glazing and final firing.

An information meeting will be held by P-O Persson well in advance of the start of the course.

On the Invaluable

Guest Teachers  Tobias Sjöberg
Iris Johansson

Credits  3

Participating students: Karou Calamy, Carl Östberg, Madeleine Noraas

"On the Invaluable" is a three-day workshop with artist Tobias Sjöberg, produced in collaboration with communicator in primary behaviour Iris Johansson. The workshop focuses on artistic concerns related to our common value and the concept of the "invaluable."

Can something be worth more or less than something else? What do you consider to be invaluable? What does it mean to value something, or to be valued? Who values what? What happens when your own values conflict with the values of others? How do you relate to critique? What does our academic tradition of ideas and critique mean to you, and to your artistic work?

Along with Iris Johansson and her colleagues Malin Haraldsson (artist) and Lukas Sålby (poet), we will discuss and address a variety of important questions through individual work in a group setting: What does it mean to fully trust in your own ability? What does it mean to discover the completeness or incompleteness of your life? Is it possible to love life as it is? Do we need to have a set of common values? These have all proven to be vital issues, which affect everybody alive today.

The workshop is structured as a series of primary workshops, social exercises, and artistic exercises.

Guest Teachers

Iris Johansson has autism and bases her work as a tutor, teacher, and writer on her own experiences. Johansson has written several books, including the highly acclaimed En annorlunda barndom (A different childhood) and Ett annor-lunda liv (A different life), both of which address her life and time growing up. Her method involves what she refers to as "primary exercises." These are based on being present in what exists in the absence of everything else.

Tobias Sjöberg is an artist based in Stockholm. His work often involves the intersections of body and spirit: material and immaterial states, creation and transformation. Over the last few years, Sjöberg has mainly worked on art for public spaces, for institutions such as the City of Stockholm and Konstfrämjandet.

Welding

Teacher  Senior Lecturer
P-O Persson

Guest Teachers  Robert Cassland
Ariel Alaniz

Credits  6

Participating students: Clara Reeh, Karin Lindsten, Carl Östberg, Muyeong Kim, Mathias Höglund, Samaneh Roghani, Karl Eivind Jorgensen, Rannevig Jonsdottir, Mariella Ottosson, Lynn Anjou

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.
Basic 3D—Make a 3D Scan of a Real Object, Learn to Light, Shade, and Render, Make a 3D Print

Teacher  Junior Lecturer  Margot Edström
Credits  6

Participating students: Theis Madsen, Anders S. Solberg, Karou Calamy, Dag Kewenter, Gabriel Karlsson, Sisse Mark, Tine Maria Damgaard

This course provides the skills needed to use the main functions in the 3D software Maya 2018 for modelling, animation, and visual effects on a basic level. We will concentrate on object creation (using photoscanmetry), texturing, shading, light setting, rendering, and 3D printing.

3D computer graphics is a comprehensive and complex topic, so we will also look at some different types of procedural effects and advanced object creation techniques, including dynamic simulations. This will largely consist of introductions, and then we further examine the techniques and methods relevant to the individual projects being carried out during the course. We will also have the possibility to experience the 3D models (in a jointly created scene) in VR using a Vive headset.

Course preparation: Plan for a 3D project (what would you like to scan, print, or visualise?) to be finished during the course.

Topics
• How to set up a successful photoscanmetry project.
• Understanding the software (Maya) interface and workflow.
• Camera animation. Optimising polygon models to be printed.
• Rendering. Compositing and finalising a short animation in After Effects.

Power Trip
Guest Teacher  Ieva Misvičiūtė
Credits  6

Participating students: Filip Vest, Carl Østberg, Muyeong Kim, Louise Hammer, Karl Elvind Jørgensen, Madeleine Noraas, Julie Koldby, Cecilia Jonsson, Jessica Floyd, Anna Skov Hassing

“There is no good and evil—there is only POWER.”
—Lord Voldemort, in Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone

“Power Trip” is built as a flow of movements set to guided imagery to offer a high-energy workshop. It offers a unique vocabulary of movements and a method of training based on Japanese style bodywork.

I am fascinated with uniting various disciplines and developing movement methods, that is, constantly shape-shifting and mind-bending. I call it Power Trip—as it is an intense and invigorating physical and mental experience. You plunge into the depths of your body and imagination coming out with tonnes of brilliant and very individual insights.

The workshop will provide a taste of different traditions of physical training, through the principles of bioenergetics and core energetics. It is based on butoh (Japanese physical theatre) and incorporates elements of boxing, ballet, Egyptian belly dance, Action Theater, burlesque, clowning, and improvisation.

This unique training is beneficial to anyone interested in enhancing their energetic presence and creativity through physical work.

Guest Teacher  Ieva Misvičiūtė  is a New York–based Slow Loris, working in both visual arts and theatre. Her practice combines physical theatre, dance, stand-up, Butoh, perverted academic language, and sculptural work. She holds a research MA in Cultural Analysis and an MA in Political Studies from the University of Amsterdam.

Misvičiūtė has presented her work at Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; SculptureCenter, New York; Swiss Institute, New York (as part of Performa 09); MoMa PS1, New York; dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel (with Michael Portnoy); Hauser & Wirth, Zürich; Time-Based Art Festival, Portland, OR; De Appel, Amsterdam; Cabaret Voltaire, London; Playground Festival, STUK, Leuven, Belgium; Beursschouwburg, Brussels; Western Front, Vancouver; Swiss Sculpture Exhibition, Biel-Bienne, Switzerland; and Contemporary Art Centre (CAC), Vilnius, among others.

She co-curated Mindaugas Triennial—the 11th Baltic Triennial of International Art at CAC, Vilnius, and curated a night of performances titled Alligators! at De Appel, Amsterdam. Her most recent solo production, Tongue PhD, premiered at Playground Festival, STUK, Leuven, Arts Printing House/CAC, Vilnius, and the Kitchen, New York.
## MFA Fine Art Courses

### The Societal Analysis of Refugees

**Teacher**  Professor  Gertrud Sandqvist  
**Credits**  9


Critical theory is a concept. Using this enormously powerful tool for analysis and reflection on society, culture, and politics, we understand the world.

This approach—critical, bold, hypothetical—was developed under the heaviest political and human pressure imaginable. Its main agents, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Erich Fromm, Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse, were persecuted in Germany and subsequently fled to the US as refugees during the world’s worst war so far.

During this course, we will study central texts from the Frankfurt School, but also try to understand how their concept of “dialectical thinking” worked and practise applying it. We will test, in our own era, the primary thesis of the Frankfurt School: that the culture industry of capitalism gets us to desire oppression, with its words, to become sadomasochists of power.

### Analysing Your Own Artistic Work

**Teacher**  Professor  Gertrud Sandqvist  
**Credits**  7.5

Participating students: Ellinor Lager, Eli Maria Lundgaard, Emil Palmköld, Joana Pereira, Jonna Hägg, Nils Ekman

This course offers a model for analysing your own work and training in analysing images. Students analyse works by other students, and listen when their own work is analysed by the others. The course serves as an introduction to the analytical component of the MFA exam.

The course offers close analysis of the students’ own work in group seminars. The method is simple. It aims at giving students tools for thorough analysis of individual works and an understanding of how viewers understand their work. If it is relevant and if the participants wish, we will also read image theory that might be applicable to the students’ work.

### Practise Practice: Thinking through the Visual

**Teachers**  Professor  Mats Leiderstam  
**Senior Lecturer**  Maj Hasager  
**Credits**  12

Participating students: Ursula Beck, Sanna Blennow, Clifford Charles, Rune Elkjær Rasmussen, Marta Gil, Maria Griniuk, Rebecka Holmström, David Torstensson, Alexandra Hunts, Karoline Sætre, Anna Skov Hassing, Rannevig Jonsdottr, Cecilia Jonsson

“Practise Practice: Thinking through the Visual” is a practice-led course on research-based art practices led by Mats Leiderstam and Maj Hasager.

For a decade or more, “artistic research” has been a buzzword: practice-led PhD programmes keep popping up around the globe, numerous conferences aim to map the field, and ongoing discussions investigate the terminology. How do we as artists position ourselves in relation to this highly debated approach or methodology?

In the course “Practise Practice,” we look at artistic knowledge and the broad term “artistic research” from the perspective of an artistic practice. We will discuss different modes of research and long-term perspectives and strategies in art practices. We will also look at differences between working inside the academic world and working with art institutions, and the potential instrumentalisation of artists.

The course will be a mix of excursions, readings, lectures, peer-to-peer feedback, and presentations—anchored in the participants’ own artistic practices. The course will run for three days every month between November and February, ending with an exhibition of the projects the participants developed during the course.

## MFA Critical & Pedagogical Studies Courses

### Weird Charisma

**Guest Teachers**  Hannah Jickling  
**Helen Reed**  
**Credits**  6

Participating students: Ursula Beck, Sanna Blennow, Clifford Charles, Rune Elkjær Rasmussen, Marta Gil, Maria Griniuk, Rebecka Holmström, David Torstensson

The condensed course “Weird Charisma” will survey artworks produced and experienced alongside children, both inside and outside institutional learning environments. Together we will explore perspectives on childhood, hierarchies of taste, power, and cultural capital through readings, discussions, exercises, and lectures. Drawing on questions derived from the instructors’ practice, our conversations together will circulate around the following questions:

- How can we engage children as both sophisticated agents and feral collaborators? In what ways can they provide reorientation to perceived limits and critical openings within our own practice/s?
- What are the possibilities for reclaiming conceptual art practice away from Western origins of expansion, development, and “sophistication” so that we might have more honest and equitable interactions across the adult/kid divide?
- How are the ethical and aesthetic conditions of collaborative work with children reverberating within the current climate of contemporary art production, as well as within kid-defined spaces?
- How are artists expanding pedagogical perspectives, cultivating audiences, and innovating the dissemination of their works?

Through a mini research project at International Fritids program in Lund, the course aims to cultivate delight in unexpected exchanges with children and access to “kid knowledge” that may not otherwise be recognised. Borrowing from educational models and participatory methodologies, “Weird Charisma” is a course for students looking to explore atypical contexts and embedded approaches to art making.

### Course Material

Darren O’Donnell; Ben Sadler; Jack Halberstam; Claire Bishop; David Osa Amadasun; Shannon Jackson; Allison James; Zoe Chan; Tim Gill; Lisa Delpe; Robin DiAngelo; Helen Reed and Pablo Helguera; Hannah Jickling and Henna Paunu.
Guest Teachers
Helen Reed and Hannah Jickling have been collaborating since 2007. They are currently based in Vancouver, Canada, on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations. Their projects take shape as public installations, social situations, and events that circulate as photographs, videos, printed matter, and artists’ multiples. They are currently fascinated with the “contact high” intrinsic to collaborative work, especially in their recent projects with children. Giant vegetable growers, orienteers, and therian teens also feature in their work. Reed and Jickling have exhibited and performed internationally, with both individual and collaborative work appearing in such venues as the Portland Art Museum; Dunlop Art Gallery, Regina, SK; Smack Mellon, New York; Yukon Arts Centre Gallery, Whitehorse; yyz Artists’ Outlet, Toronto; Carleton University Art Gallery, Ottawa; Dalhousie University Art Gallery, Halifax, NS; Vancouver Art Gallery; Power Plant, Toronto; and the first issue of not by Flat Time House, London. They currently teach at Emily Carr University of Art + Design in Vancouver, where they received the 2016 Ian Wallace Award for Teaching Excellence.

### After Critique—Perspectives and Genealogies from Critical Theory

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<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Hans Carlsson</th>
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<th>Diana Mulinari</th>
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<td>Gertrud Sandqvist</td>
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**Credits**

7

**Participating students:** Ursula Beck, Sanna Blennow, Clifford Charles, Rune Elkjær Rasmussen, Marta Gil, Maria Griniuk, Rebecka Holmström, David Torstensson, Maxime Hourani, Simen Stenberg

The course will introduce perspectives from the development of critical theory, including perspectives drawn from the foundation of the discipline in the context of the 1930s Frankfurt School as well as from different fragmentations of the discourse of today. Fragmentations allowing for a constantly renewed critique of constructions of class, gender, and race as well as an ongoing debate on the epistemological foundations of theory itself. At large, critical theory could be argued to be a tradition of thought that has tried to decentralise power by questioning its economic, social, and political fundamentals from different positions and perspectives. The course places a certain emphasis on the relations and use of critical theory within art practices, art institutions, and art’s role in society.

The course takes the shape of reading seminars with assigned readings and a writing assignment. It also includes lectures introducing different perspectives on critical theory.

The participants are asked to hand in a two- to three-page review of an exhibition or ongoing art project in Malmö. The text should draw from the different critical perspectives introduced in the course and could, for example, analyse the production of art from an institutional perspective, the reception of a specific exhibition in the media and elsewhere, the mediation strategies of one or several art institutions, or the artist’s role produced in media around a specific art event. The text could also situate the art presented in an exhibition (art) historically, socially, and politically and critically evaluate these different contexts.

To enable a constructive discussion, the participants are also asked to prepare three questions based on the assigned texts, to present to or ask the group during each reading seminar. The questions should be of a type that open up a discussion to what each text (or the subject matter of the text) achieves and fails to achieve, in terms of their critique of power and established norms.

**Course Material**

Walter Benjamin; Theodor Adorno; Susan Buck-Morss; Max Horkheimer; Sigmund Freud; Karl Marx; Friedrich Nietzsche; Aimé Césaire; Michel Foucault; Bruno Latour; Isabelle Stengers; James Voorhies; Hannah Black; Silvia Federici; Suzanna Danuta Walters; Chandra Talpade Mohanty.

**Bios and Abstracts**

**Silvia Federici** is an Italian American scholar, teacher, and activist from the radical autonomist feminist Marxist tradition. She is Professor Emerita and Teaching Fellow at Hofstra University in Hempstead, NY, where she from 1987 to 2005 taught international studies, women studies, and political philosophy courses. In 1972, she was one of the co-founders of the International Feminist Collective, the organisation that launched the international campaign for Wages for Housework (WFH). In the 1990s, after a period of teaching and research in Nigeria, she was active in the anti-globalisation movement and the US anti–death penalty movement. Federici has written books and essays on philosophy and feminist theory, women's history, education, culture, and more recently the worldwide struggle against capitalist globalisation and for a feminist reconstruction of the commons. Among her published works Revolution At Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, And Feminist Struggle (2012) and Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation (2004) could be mentioned.

In her lecture, Federici presents some of the themes that are recurrent in her writings and theories, as they have developed since the 1970s. For example: the connections and differences that exist between the analyses of domestic unpaid labour, and the descriptions of a world economy where globalisation creates zones of free labour and constant oppressive structures. Federici will talk about how she has worked within a Marxist context—continuously criticising its fundamentals and widening its critique.

**Diana Mulinari** is Professor of Gender Studies at Lund University. Her work is located within the tradition of black, Chicano, and postcolonial and decolonial feminist theory with particular focus on analysis of racism, gender, and the field of the political.
In her lecture, Mulinari will draw on the core of feminist scholars’ and activists’ reading of the social. The concept has been contended and translated through diverse frameworks. In the Swedish and Scandinavian context, the term was introduced aiming to challenge forms of banal nationalism and to illuminate the centrality of racial regimes for the construction of diverse forms of femininity and masculinity.

Gertrud Sandqvist is Professor in Art Theory and History of Ideas and Rector at Malmö Art Academy.

In her lecture, Sandqvist will talk about how one of the fundamental pillars of the MFA programme in Critical & Pedagogical Studies at Malmö Art Academy is critical theory. Today, this is a relatively wide concept, but it stems from critical theory as it was developed at the Institut für Sozialforschung in Frankfurt and later in New York from the mid-1920s onwards. Critical theory is an attempt to understand the world beyond its appearance, historically, politically, and psychologically. Central to critical theory is the dialectical image, as it was developed by two of the Frankfurt School’s leading theorists, Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno. Together with Max Horkheimer, Erich Fromm, and Herbert Marcuse, they developed something called the dialectics of enlightenment. In the book of the same title, Adorno and Horkheimer show how the one-sided emphasis on the Enlightenment is drawn to and eaten up by its shadow: barbarity. This same barbarism forced Benjamin to suicide and the rest of the institution’s members to flee to the United States during World War II. Almost all members of the institute were German Jewish intellectuals, which contributed to the disastrous situation they faced.

Institut für Sozialforschung attempted to understand the great problems of its time by means of neo-Marxism and psychoanalysis, primarily the emergence of fascism and Nazism and the inability of the German working class to start a revolution. But the analysis of the institute has been important far beyond this sphere, not least culturally and philosophically.

Fredrik Svensk is a critic, educator, researcher, editor, and curator. He holds a position as Lecturer in Art Theory at Valand Academy, University of Gothenburg, and is Editor-in-Chief of Paletten art journal. In his research and teaching he specialises in the biopolitics of art. He has been guest lecturer in many art academies since 2002 all around Europe and he writes art criticism for Artforum, Kunstkritikk, and Aftonbladet Kultur and his essay writing has been published in many books and anthologies. In 2017, he curated the Bosnia and Herzegovina Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale.

In his lecture, Svensk will discuss the genealogy of critique in contemporary art in light of current debates on both non-anthropocentrism and alt-right appropriation of critical strategies associated with left avant-gardism as well as feminist and postcolonial struggles.

Hans Carlsson was Interim Project Coordinator of Critical & Pedagogical Studies (CPS) programme at Malmö Art Academy in 2016–17. Carlsson is an artist, writer, and curator based in Malmö. He has an MFA from both CPS at Malmö Art Academy and from Konstfack—University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, Stockholm. His artistic and curatorial work is focused on archival practices, often with references to knowledge- and culture-producing institutions such as libraries and museums and their relationship to technological and industrial development.

**Enrolling the Unknown, Part I (seminar)**

**Teachers**  
Senior Lecturer Maj Hasager  
Junior Lecturer Laura Hatfield, and invited Guest Teachers

**Credits**  
7

**Participating students:** Ursula Beck, Sanna Blennow, Clifford Charles, Rune Elkjær Rasmussen, Marta Gil, Maria Griniuk, Rebecka Holmström, David Torstenson

“Enrolling the Unknown” is an in-depth course investigating key theories in pedagogy as they relate to artistic practice. We will look at a variety of approaches to art and pedagogy, problematising the current discourse around the topic through a series of text seminars, guest lectures, and a written assignment. Students will undertake several excursions to art institutions to examine their pedagogical processes and to artists’ projects that engage with pedagogy, including an overnight excursion to the SixtyEight Art Institute, Copenhagen; lecture by Joseph del Pesco at Signal Galleri, Malmö; participation in Sisters Academy at Den Frie, Copenhagen; tour and talk with Ana María Bernee Ujueta; movement workshop with Atossa Farahmand at Moderna Museet, Malmö; and excursion with Lisa Nyberg.

The course aims to broaden discussions that started at the inaugural Schools of Tomorrow conference at Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, this past spring, by including students in seminars that may address the following questions raised during the conference: How would student-artists organise learning? How will schools become laboratories of democracy? What role does the arts play in developing new forms of acting and thinking? What kind of society do we want and how can schools contribute to shaping it?

We will discuss these questions during course seminars in relation to key texts by pedagogical theorists with the aim of exploring how art and pedagogy intersect in theory and as practice. The seminars are meant for students to develop comprehensive reading techniques and to form a critical dialogue. Detailed textual analysis will be followed by group discussions. Participants will guide a seminar on an assigned text during the semester. Students will write critical texts that examine these topics and will aim to strengthen their research skills and form an analysis of their position in relation to the field.

“Enrolling the Unknown” will lead to preparations for a presentation by the Critical & Pedagogical Studies group at the concluding event of Schools of Tomorrow at Haus der Kulturen der Welt in the spring of 2018.

**Guest Teachers and activities**

Excursion and lecture by Sarat Maharaj at SixtyEight Art Institute, Copenhagen; talk by Joseph del Pesco at Signal Galleri, Malmö; participation in Sisters Academy at Den Frie, Copenhagen; lecture by Jakob Jakobsen; tour and talk with Ana María Bernee Ujueta; movement workshop with Atossa Farahmand at Moderna Museet, Malmö; and excursion with Lisa Nyberg.
Enrolling the Unknown,
Part II (written assignment)

Teacher: Junior Lecturer
Laura Hatfield

Guest Teacher: Matthew Rana

Credits: 4

Participating students: Ursula Beck, Sanna Blennow, Clifford Charles, Rune Elkjær Rasmussen, Marta Gil, Maria Griniuk, Rebecka Holmström, David Torstensson

As part of the course "Enrolling the Unknown," students will write critical texts that examine meeting points between art and critical pedagogy. In the process, course participants will strengthen their research skills while forming an analysis of their position in relation to the field.

Assignment requirements

Write a research paper that relates to discussions undertaken this term on intersections between artistic methods, critical theory, and pedagogy. Identify at least one artist’s project that connects art practice with pedagogy and conduct an analysis of said project(s) in relation to course readings, excursions, and guest lectures. Additional research beyond course readings may be required, depending on the topic of choice. Papers should present a brief description of the project(s) in question as well as a critical analysis of its strengths and/or possible flaws in terms of educational goals and artistic aims.

Some questions to consider when developing your analysis:

- How is learning organised within this project? What models and methods are employed and to what effect?
- What are the pedagogical aims of the project? What are the artistic aims of the project? Do they complement one another? How might they be similar or different?
- When and where does the project take place? How does it relate to this context, and how might this impact its goals and outcomes?
- Who are the parties involved and what are their respective roles (institutions, artists, participants, groups, etc.)?
- How is this project situated alongside relevant histories of art and education?

Participants will have opportunity to discuss the development of their texts with the instructors.

All quotations and reference materials must be cited using footnotes according to Chicago Manual of Style guidelines. An exemplary paper will have a clearly defined structure including an introduction, thesis statement, supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion.

Length: 2000–3000 words

Guest Teacher

Matthew Rana is an artist and writer living in Malmö. He is the author of The Theory of the Square (Torpedo Press, 2014) and Holiday Poems (Varv Varv, 2015). His writing on contemporary art and poetry has appeared in Art Agenda, OEI, and Frieze, as well as in several anthologies, artist's publications, and catalogues. He is a regular contributor to the online platform Kunstritikk.
BFA Fine Art Courses

Moulding:
Bronze/Aluminium/Silicone
Teacher  Senior Lecturer  P-O Persson
Guest Teacher  David Nilsson
Credits  3
Participating students: Viktor Strand, Rannevig Jonsdottir, Anders S. Solberg, Majse Vilstrup, Victor Andersson, Sisse Mark, Rebecca Larsson, Erlund Rødsten, Nadja Ericsson, Lynn Anjou

The course will provide basic knowledge in silicone and cire-perdue casting. With the help of moulds and silicone, students will produce objects and moulds in wax, which they will cast bronze and aluminium in.

In light of today’s neoliberalism and neo-conservatism, we will discuss questions situated in relation to the notion in Édouard Glissant’s philosophy-poetry of a permanent becoming through engagement with the other, a trembling with the world, the symptoms of an apparently sick society, and to what extent capitalist realism (Mark Fisher) is constructing our notion of the real.

We will try to understand the time before the postmodern, digging into notions of the modern ( Zygmunt Bauman), the postmodern shift (Jean-François Lyotard and Jürgen Habermas) and possible relationships of modernism and capitalism (Daniel Bell).

We will hopefully make use of insights gained from studies by thinkers from over forty years ago in order to engage with contemporary thinkers, mainly from the English-speaking world, in response to recent phenomena in the US and Great Britain, studying to what extent they are representative of a zeitgeist of the West.

Course material
Rosalind Krauss; Daniel Bell; Jean-François Lyotard; Jürgen Habermas.

During the seminar we will watch and discuss films by Manthia Diawara and Adam Curtis. Depending on the outcome of our discussion, we might further engage with texts and interviews by Angela Nagle, Nick Land, and Mark Fisher.

Guest Teacher  Jürgen Bock is a curator, writer, and critic. He directs the Maumaus Independent Study Program and the attached exhibition space Luminari Cité in Lisbon. His exhibitions include Peter Friedl, Teatro Popular, and Sarat Maharaj, A4H Room, both Luminari Cité, 2017; Allan Sekula The Dockers’ Museum, La Criée, Rennes, 2012, and Johann Jacobs Museum, Zürich, 2014; Heimo Zobernig, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, 2012; Ángela Ferreira, Maison Tropicale, Portuguese Pavilion, 52nd Venice Biennale, 2007; Andreas Siekmann, India Triennale, New Delhi, 2005; and the CCB Project Room, Centro Cultural de Belém, Lisbon, including Eleanor Antin, Nathan Coley, and Renée Green, 2000–01. In 2003, he curated the Harun Farocki Film Retrospective at Video-Lisboa. He produced Manthia Diawara’s film An Opera of the World (2017) and the Portuguese versions of Harun Farocki’s films and video installations I Thought I Was Seeing Convicts (Pensai que Estava a Ver Prisoneiros, 2000) and The Silver and the Cross (A Cruz e a Prata, 2011). He is responsible for the organization and coordination of numerous international conferences.

In a time when everybody seeks pleasure and self-fulfilment to the detriment of societal consensus, questions are raised on where and artists can position themselves in a world where apparently everybody is an author and is finally becoming an artist.

Unless otherwise stated, BFA Fine Art Courses are open to students of all levels.
Power Trip II
Guest Teacher: Ieva Misevičiūtė
Credits: 6

Participating students: Therese Bülow Jørgensen, Ivan Nylander, Tjelle Esrom Raunkjær, Elisabeth Anna Kristjansdottir, Clara Reeh, Tine Maria Damgaard, Muyeong Kim, Frederikke Jul Vedelsby, Jean-Francois Krebs, and KUNO students.

In “Power Trip,” we are interested in rewiring the mind through a high-energy physical work. It is a two-hour class built as a flow of movements that plunges you into a strong visual imaginarium. It may feel like someone is shooting a film in your head and streaming it live through your body. We will incorporate Japanese style bodywork with training techniques from the fields of dance, theatre, and comedy.

As artists, we are so dependent on our ability to think outside the box that I believe it is necessary to get out of our heads first, dive deep into our bodies, and then return to a fresh palette of thoughts.

The class introduces students to the basics of different traditions of bodywork, with an emphasis on Eastern physical theatre methodologies (butoh, Noh, kabuki). We will work on expanding movement vocabulary, all of which is in service of finding new avenues to heighten imagination and energetic presence.

Guest Teacher:

Ieva Misevičiūtė is a New York–based Slow Loris, working in both visual arts and theatre. Her practice combines physical theatre, dance, stand-up, Butoh, perverted theatre. Her practice combines physical language, and sculptural work.

She co-curated Mindaugas Triennial—the 11th Baltic Triennial of International Art at CAC, Vilnius, and curated a night of performances titled Alligators! at De Appel, Amsterdam. Her most recent solo production, Tongue PhD, premiered at Playground Festival, STUK, Leuven, Arts Printing House/CAC, Vilnius, and the Kitchen, New York.

Kinaesthetic Audio
Guest Teacher: Tim Bishop
Credits: 3

Participating students: Linn Hvid, Lynn Anjou, Karou Calamy, Karl Eivind Jørgensen, Muyeong Kim, Rannveig Jonsdottir, Mariella Ottosson, Carolina Sandvik, Anders Solberg, Simen Stenberg, Carl Östberg, Jonna Hägg, Eli Maria Lundgaard, Rasmus Ramö Streith, Max Popov

This course is aimed at providing students with practical knowledge of techniques and technology to produce high-quality sound for various contexts, from immersive sound installation to sound for video. The course will provide an introduction to the aesthetic possibilities of working with sound through various recording, editing, and playback techniques.

Specifically, the course will focus on the artistic use of sound and workflows for maximising creative potential. Topics addressed include recording with specialist microphone techniques (e.g., binaural, contact microphones, hydrophones, induction coil pickups, ambisonic microphones), editing and exporting audio using the REAPER digital audio workstation, spatial and immersive audio workflows, and playback solutions for multichannel speaker arrays and headphone listening.

The course will consist primarily of practical work with talks on key topics and listening to relevant case studies. Students will learn the basics of digital audio, gain a basic understanding of REAPER for importing, manipulating, mixing, and delivering audio material and knowledge of specific microphone and playback techniques for creating bespoke audio content for specific contexts.

Students will be encouraged to focus on the act of listening and develop an understanding of the importance of sound in creating affective, engaging, and immersive experiences. The course will culminate with students presenting an individual audio piece developed over the week using their choice of techniques covered in the course.

Guest Teacher:

Tim Bishop is a British sound artist working in performance, installation, and video. Bishop holds a BA in Drama from Bristol University. In 2016, he curated Mono Festival of One-to-One Performance, a collaboration with Lunds Konsthall.

The Aesthetics of Resistance: Europe—Art, Literature, Theatre
Guest Teachers: Ulf Peter Hallberg, Gunilla Palmstierna-Weiss
Credits: 3

Participating students: Tjelle Esrom Raunkjær, Dag Kewenter, Anna Andersson, Mads Kristian Fröslev, Moa Sjöstrand, Albin Skaghammar, Carl-Oskar Jonsson, Mariella Ottosson, Carl Östberg, Majse Vilstrup

"The Aesthetics of Resistance: Europe—Art, Literature, Theatre" consists of a series of mini lectures, dialogues, discussion, and seminar assignments with the author Ulf Peter Hallberg and the artist and set designer Gunilla Palmstierna-Weiss.

Topics include Berlin-Paris-Stockholm, a new cosmopolitanism, time and space; artist and set designer Gunilla Palmstierna-Weiss; author, painter, and filmmaker Peter Weiss; Marat/Sade; film, form, and colour.
**MFA Critical & Pedagogical Studies Courses**

**Working with Materials**

*Guest Teacher*  Simryn Gill  
*Credits*  6

Participating students: Rebecca Larsson, Erlend Rødøstien, Emil Sandström, Louise Hammer, Mathias Höglund, Karl Elvind Jørgensen, Julie Koldby, Elisabet Anna Kristjansdottir, Madeleine Noraas, Max Popov, Clara Reeh, Filip Vest, Nadja Ericsson, Frederikke Jul Vedelsby, Sisse Mark, Karoline Sætre, Joana Pereira, Therese Bülow Jørgensen

A workshop to think about material and materials to make substitutions, stand-ins, facsimiles, and records. Key concepts include the object, situation, reality, being “remade,” and the substance of rendering.

In proposing this workshop, I hope to create situations where matter or stuff (even actions) and its physicality leads the direction of making and decision-making rather than language or concept. Further, we will need to consider the inherent properties and identity of the substance(s) being used, how they can by physically and otherwise manipulated, and the etiquette required in their handling (violations, misreadings, renamings).

**Guest Teacher**  Simryn Gill  is a Singaporean artist who lives and works in Sydney, Australia, and Port Dickenson, Malaysia. Gill works in sculpture, photography, drawing, and writing. She is known for her collecting and has produced many works synthesis- ing ephemera that she has collected.

She has had numerous solo exhibitions, including shows at Galeri Petronas, Kuala Lumpur; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; Berkeley Art Museum, California; Tate Modern, London; Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian, Washington, DC; Tracy Williams, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai; Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne; Breespace, Sydney; Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne; and AnnaElle Gallery, Stockholm. Notable group exhibitions include the Singapore Biennial (2006), documenta 12 and 13, 12th Istanbul Biennial, and the 2013 Venice Biennale, where she represented Australia.

**Rethink, Undo, Remake, Let Go: Towards a Decolonial Praxis**

*Guest Teacher*  Temi Odumosu  
*Credits*  5

Participating students: Ursula Beck, Sanna Biennow, Clifford Charles, Rune Elkjær Rasmussen, Marta Gil, Maria Griniuk, Rebecka Holmström, David Torstensson, Tjelle Esrom Raunkjær

“Rethink, Undo, Remake, Let Go: Towards a Decolonial Praxis” is a course composed as montage and a space for dialogue and co-production. It will combine mixed media seminar and workshop formats that also make room for moving the body, sketching, and reflecting. The course will take place predominantly on site with a field trip to a local arts or cultural heritage institution in Malmö.

It is fair to say that the world of images and signs has reached a tipping point. On the one hand, over seventy million Instagram photographs are uploaded every day, adding to a vast bank of global digital data that produces the double effect of super-abundance and entitlement to “capture”—arguably a renewed expression of coloniality.

At the same time, public space is haunted by a backlog of signs (remains) from contested histories, which include monuments to colonial and genocidal representatives that are increasingly difficult to live with. Some have already been forcibly destroyed. Amidst these polarities of image making and breaking, data exhaustion and absence, artists, cultural producers, and institutions continue to wrestle with their roles (their legitimacy) as communicators and custodians. So, how are we going to ethically deal with all these representations, on- and offline? What kind of mind set is required to honour and reconcile with histories that are unfinished? Could we listen, feel, or speculate our way into alternative futures, with and without images? Through mixed media workshop and seminar sessions, this course will explore these questions in order to envisage new possibilities for decolonial practices in arts and education.

Course participants will be required to create a respectful, open, and inclusive discursive space for one another. The selected readings are important for critically engaged participation. Finally, I ask that participants submit a short response statement to the course (max. 2,000 words) by the final session, which can also be presented in another format (video or recorded sound).

**Course materials**  
Tina Campt; Achille Mbembe; Marianne Hirsch; Eve Tuck and C. Ree; Junot Diaz.

**Guest Teacher**  Temi Odumosu  is an art historian, creative educator, and postdoctoral researcher for the Living Archives research project at Malmö University. Her international research and curatorial practice is concerned with the visual politics of slavery and colonialism, Afro-diaspora aesthetics, decolonial praxis, archival re-enactment(s), critical use of locative media technologies (AR/MR), and more broadly exploring how art mediates social transformation and healing. Recent curative interventions in Scandinavia include *What Lies Unspoken: Sounding the Colonial Archive*, National Gallery and Royal Library of Denmark, Copenhagen, 2017–18; *Milk & Honey*, Botkyrka Konsthall, Tumba, Sweden, 2017; and *Possession: Art, Power & Black Womanhood*, New Shelter Plan, Copenhagen, 2014. Her historical monograph *Africans in English Caricature 1769–1819: Black Jokes, White Humour* is published by Brepols (2017).
Track Changes 2.0: Collective Editorial Processes

Teacher: Laura Hatfield
Guest Teacher: Matthew Rana
Credits: 6

Participating students: Ursula Beck, Sanna Blennow, Clifford Charles, Rune Elkjær Rasmussen, Marta Gil, Maria Griniuk, Rebecka Holmström, David Torstensson

This course in collective editorial processes will approach writing as a multimodal form of practice while emphasising the social dimensions inherent to the production of text in a broader sense. Artists’ writings will serve as the practical basis for workshop sessions where we will examine different approaches to the use of voice, tone, and structure. Pedagogical skills such as annotating texts and giving and incorporating feedback will be integral to the course activities.

Course participants will produce a critical-theoretical text in response to concerns situated within their artistic practice. Through a series of group discussions, student texts will be developed from first drafts to finished papers. Working both independently and collectively, participants will track the development of each other’s work from inception to completion.

Objectives
Participants will develop historical, theoretical, and practical perspectives on different approaches to critical writing and a heightened awareness regarding the role that 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.

Course materials
Agnes Martin; Coco Fusco; Renée Green; Amy Sillman; Felix Bernstein; Roland Barthes; T. J. Clark; Critical Art Ensemble; Robert Filliou; Andrea Fraser; Dan Graham; Donald Judd; Mary Kelly; Sol LeWitt; Adrian Piper; Hito Steyerl; Gilda Williams.

Guest Teacher
Matthew Rana is an artist and writer living in Malmö. He is the author of *The Theory of the Square* (Torpedo Press, 2014) and *Holiday Poems* (Narv Varv, 2015). His writing on contemporary art and poetry has appeared in *Art Agenda*, *OEI*, and *Frieze*, as well as in several anthologies, artist’s publications, and catalogues. He is a regular contributor to the online platform *Kunstritikk*.

Outlines and Movements—CPS Course and Open Lectures

Teacher: Maj Hasager and Guest Lecturers
Credits: 4

Participating students: Ursula Beck, Sanna Blennow, Clifford Charles, Rune Elkjær Rasmussen, Marta Gil, Maria Griniuk, Rebecka Holmström, David Torstensson

“Outlines and Movements” is a series of lectures and discussions on art, education, movements, and critical practices.

The lectures will span historical overviews of the field of pedagogy, nomadic encounters with art and art education, and holistic approaches to knowledge production, to mention just some of the strands running through the gatherings. Guest lecturers include Mikkel Bolt, Johanne Legstrup, Sarat Maharaj and Tim Smith.

The course is meant to give students a broad introduction to current discussions in the field of art and education. Student participation will be followed up with group discussions regarding topics addressed in the lectures.

Schools of Tomorrow—Study Trip, Berlin

Teachers: Maj Hasager and Laura Hatfield, and invited guests
Credits: 4

Participating students: Ursula Beck, Sanna Blennow, Clifford Charles, Rune Elkjær Rasmussen, Marta Gil, Maria Griniuk, Rebecka Holmström, David Torstensson

The study trip for Critical & Pedagogical Studies in 2018 is to Berlin, Germany. The purpose of the trip is to participate in the *Schools of Tomorrow* concluding events at Haus der Kulturen der Welt.

During the 2018 spring semester, students will prepare to give a presentation at *Schools of Tomorrow* that will demonstrate their position in relation to the field of art and education. Drawing from their previous and current course work, students may work towards delivering, for example, a workshop, a publication, or a panel discussion. Meetings with the course supervisors will be scheduled to discuss and prepare for our group involvement in the event.

While in Germany, we will also attend the Berlin Biennale, titled *We don’t need another hero*, and visit artists’ studios and collectives.
Current and graduating students

**Bachelor of Fine Arts — Year 1**
- Viktor Andersson
- Therese Bülow Jørgensen
- Linn Hvid
- Rebecca Larsson
- Ivan Nylander
- Tjelle Esrom Raunkjær
- Erlend Rødsten
- Emil Sandström
- Viktor Strand
- Erik Uddén
- Majse Vilstrup
- Amund Öhrnell

**Bachelor of Fine Arts — Year 2**
- Lynn Anjou
- Karou Calamy
- Louise Hammer Moritzen
- Mathias Höglund
- Karl Eivind Jørgensen
- Dag Kewenter
- Julie Sophie Koldby
- Elisabet Anna Kristjansdottir
- Karin Lindstén
- Madeleine Noraas
- Max Popov exchange student
- Clara Reeh
- Filip Vest

**Bachelor of Fine Arts — Year 3**
- Anna Andersson
- Tine Maria Damgaard
- Nadja Ericsson
- Mads Kristian Frøslev
- Helen Haskakis
- Inka Hiltunen
- Muyeong Kim exchange student
- Theis Madsen
- Oskar Persson
- Samaneh Roghani
- Moa Sjöstrand
- Albin Skaghammar
- Frederikke Jul Vedelsby

**Master of Fine Arts — Year 1**
- Andreas Amble
- Rannveig Jónsdóttir
- Carl-Oskar Jonsson
- Cecilia Jonsson
- Gabriel Karlsson
- Jean-François Krebs exchange student
- Sisse Mark
- Stephan Möller
- Mariella Ottosson
- Carolina Sandvik
- Anders Solberg
- Simen Stenberg
- Karoline Sætre
- Carl Østberg
- Elisabeth Östin

**Master of Fine Arts — Year 2**
- Sebastião Borges
- Axel Burendahl
- Nils Ekman
- Daniel Fleur
- Martine Flor
- Anna Skov Hassing
- Maxime Hourani
- Alexandra Hunts
- Jonna Hägg
- Ellinor Lager
- Eli Maria Lundgaard
- Emil Palmsköld
- Joana Pereira
- Rasmus Ramö Streith
- Joakim Sandqvist

**Critical & Pedagogical Studies — MFA**
- Ursula Beck
- Sanna Blennow
- Karen Bohøj
- Clifford Charles
- Rune Elkjær Rasmussen
- Marta Gil
- Maria Griniuk
- Rebecka Holmström
- David Torstensson
- Aya Maria Urhammer
- Nanna Ylönen

**PhD candidates**
- Rosa Barba
- Matthew Buckingham
- Alejandro Cesarco
- Marion von Osten
- Lea Porsager
- Andrea Ray
- Imogen Stidworthy