

IDENTITY

IDENTITEETI

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Donnini: Estasi di Santa Teresa - 1645-52, marmo - Roma, Santa Maria della Vittoria, Cappella Corsini

IDENTITY IDENTITEETTI

Edited by Dr Michael Petry
with Eliza Bonham-Carter and Pilvi Kalhama

IN MEMORY OF
EVE KOSOFSKY SEDGWICK
1950 - 2009

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Who's on First; What's on Second...

Identity politics was a significant theme in the visual arts of the 1970s and 1980s. That theme shifted in the 1990s and 2000s, becoming identity-as-brand. How is identity treated by visual artists as we begin the second decade of the 21st Century? What further variations will emerge on the theme of identity? This book is an investigation into identity in the visual arts. It brings together images from two exhibitions by professional artists and students of the Royal Academy Schools and the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts, and texts presented at a series of symposia at both Academies and Goldsmiths College. The exhibitions were called *Who's on First?* and *What's on Second?* in reference to an old American radio joke. Two radio commentators are discussing a game of baseball. One asks of the other "Who's on first?" The other replies "Who", since the name of the first player is Who. Misunderstanding the answer as a question ("Who?"), the original commentator repeats his enquiry:

Q: Who's on first?

A: Right, Who's on first.

Q: [by now completely confused...] What?

A: No, What's on second, Who's on first.

And so on they go, around and around, for as long as they can sustain the joke. This crazy conversation about identity is a good metaphor for the overall investigation into the topic.

Who's on First? was held at the Royal Academy Schools Gallery, Hornsey, and included new works by Mara Castilho, Maria Chevska, Jukka Korkeila, Shaheen Merali, Hayley Newman, and Marianna Uutinen. The exhibition was accompanied by a two-day symposium at the Royal Academy and Goldsmiths College.

What's on Second? comprised a two part exhibition of work by students of the Royal Academy Schools and the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts. The students were asked to collaborate in the joint exhibition, but not necessarily to make joint work. The first part of the exhibition was held in London, and the second, the following spring in Helsinki. The exhibitions included new works by Erika Erre, Natsue Ikeda, Eemil Karila, Ida Koitila, Alana Lake, Hanna Marno, Robert Pratt, Topi Ruotsalainen and Catherine Story. The London exhibition included work by Alex Hoda, who could not participate in the Helsinki exhibition, so Joanna Bryniarska participated instead.

In many ways the students were set an odd task: to make work about identity, but to place that work within the context of a group. Then again, that is a task that we face on a day-to-day basis: we are all individuals, but born into and bred by groups (defined by race, geography, religion, etc). Some of us are lucky or willful enough to choose which of those groups we will ultimately identify with, loosening the bonds that stretch back to birth and the culture of parentage, others less so. And the freedom to be one's self, an artistic self, or any other self is a freedom hard won.

'How to be an artist?' is a recurring question that must be faced by each person who attempts such a cultural life. The answer to that question depends, on the one hand, on one's self identification as a maker, and on the other hand, on the relationship between the self and others. Artists might form or be part of a group, but only with great effort and at individual cost. If the possibility of becoming an individual is a gift, then the possibility of becoming an artist is certainly a gift.

The possibility of making art in a capitalist system is a gift few are given and which fewer take advantage of or pass on to others. Indeed, Derrida posited that gifts are ultimately impossible: *For finally, if the gift is another name of the impossible, we still think it, we name it, we desire it. We intend it.*¹ Looking beyond the language of gifts, Derrida instead saw delayed transactions, A gifts to B in expectation of a delayed benefit from B. If that view is correct, then what delayed benefit does the artist owe to others, society and themselves?

One might posit that artists first owe fealty to the self, to the notion of becoming a self. In that case, the gift the student is given is surely time, the time to become self, to find self and the exchange for that time is the act of becoming the self. It might be said that they should take advantage of that gift in order to return the favour with interest by becoming an interesting artist, by becoming an artist with something of interest to impart back into the culture (be it a capitalist one or not). Diaghilev famously told Cocteau to *Astound me!*² Cocteau did so by making one of the first performance art events *Parade*, a true jackpot of a return on a minimal spend (via the gift of sponsorship). It is up to the reader to determine (sadly only from reproductions) whether or not the gift has been repaid, and it is my job as curator to encourage readers to become viewers and see for themselves the actual works of artists. If an artist is true to themselves they have a chance of paying back *the debt* they may owe for the opportunity to be the self.

But self identity remains caught up in group identity, and group identity remains caught up in the identity of the dominant. This book is dedicated to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who spoke at the symposium. Her groundbreaking work *Epistemology of the Closet* looked at the relationship between group identity and the dominant from many perspectives, in particular including group identity based on gender and sexuality. She posited that *From the keepers of a dead canon we hear a rhetorical question – that is to say, a question posed with the arrogant intent of maintaining ignorance. Is there, as Saul Bellow put it, a Tolstoi of the Zulus? Has there been, ask the defenders of a monocultural curriculum, not intending to stay for an answer, has there ever been a Socrates of the Orient, an African-American Proust, a female Shakespeare?*³ She argued for those different from the dominant to be seen for the contributions they have made, *the repayment* of their gifts of self to the culture as a whole. Each artist must find themselves within the context of a complex multi-layered culture of cultures, norms and beliefs. Freeing the self from the closet of the expectation of others is at the core of Sedgwick's project and is applicable to the struggle each artist undertakes.

In the 1970's and the 80's identity politics became a force in the visual arts, with artists like Cindy Sherman and her *Untitled Film Stills* where she *took active control of her own image as she directed herself performing a series of prototypical film noir characters and codified images of femininity for the camera.*⁴ She forced the viewer to consider the gender construct of what it was to be the object of the male gaze. She de- and re-constructed her image as an individual, a self, and showed the fragility of that generalized social construction. Whitney Chadwick states that *The ways that sexual difference is produced and reinforced through representations were central to the work of many women during his period*⁵ and was manifest in the work by artists like Anna Mendieta, Nancy Spero, and Judy Chicago amongst many.

Issues of race and ethnicity came to the fore in the work of artists like Adrian Piper, David Hammonds, Lorna Simpson and Barkley L. Hendricks. *Realness', or the desire to convey authenticity, is rampant in black popular culture. There is a never-ending reevaluation of what constitutes the real in black life. It is within this dialogue that Barkley L. Hendricks' works are period pieces that represent a hybrid of black cultural consciousness and contemporary art practice.*⁶ Glenn Ligon, Nayland Blake and Lyle Ashton-Harris mixed their investigations into race with that of sexuality by also foregrounding

their experiences as black male same-sex lovers. They pointed out the fluidity of identity and identities and the possibility of having many identities at once.

Many of the issues raised by these and other artists of difference were all but swept away in the 1990's with the rush to the market and the spread of global art fairs and biennales that sought to make all artists global citizens of commerce. Damien Hirst personified this stance of making work that was the product of a recognizable brand, a development of Jeff Koon's project. As the boom brought in new collectors from Russia, China and India huge markets for contemporary art emerged and those artists interested in self were once again marginalized if not invisible to the market. Not many newly enriched Chinese business tycoons were interested in the male gaze or talk of colonial representations. They sought and bought the global brands. Even the swift entry of Chinese artists into that circuit had little to do with those collectors as Ai Wei Wei, Yue Minjun and Zhang Xiaogang were until only recently seen as *undesirables* and their success in the west has brought only *some* security at home. Ai Wei Wei says, *what hasn't changed is the Communist Party – it's still wide, still kills today. There's still censorship, there's no freedom of speech, just the same as when I left.*⁷

As globalization and the spread of the virtual has made everyone a subject of many identities (nationality, local, sex, gender, religious affiliation) how does an artist carve out a space to exist in? Where is this possible: on the web; in the gallery or museum; in the public realm? These and many other questions about the nature of identity are now back in vogue as the financial corrections being seen in the art market and near collapse of corporate capitalism are being felt in art schools and dole queues around the world. Younger artists seem to have been re-radicalized and are once again questioning the value of institutions and their sponsors and the players in the global game of art marketing. How complicit were the art institutions in the rush towards cash as king during the heady days of the noughties? Younger artists want more than to be the next Damien (or so they tell me) but if we are to look at his influence on the work of other artists it is almost invisible. Most artists would rather make a living from their work than not, but there seems to be no school of Hirst, and where are the Hirstian children as there are those of Duchamp and Warhol? Perhaps at this point in the artistic cycle we are seeing a return to the self. Perhaps with less money in the system there will be more time for reflection, experimentation and the trading of gifts, and not just artistic one liners.

There have been two great art world recessions in recent memory and perhaps now, the third time, we will be lucky. We might get a return to value over price, worth over cost and a renewed appreciation of the self, and surely that is no laughing matter.

Dr Michael Petry

1 Derrida, Jacques, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, (trans: Peggy Kamuf), The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992, p. 29

2 Steegmuller, Francis, *Cocteau*, Macmillan, London, 1970, p. 87

3 Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, *Epistemology of the Closet*, University of California Press, Berkely, 1990, p. 51

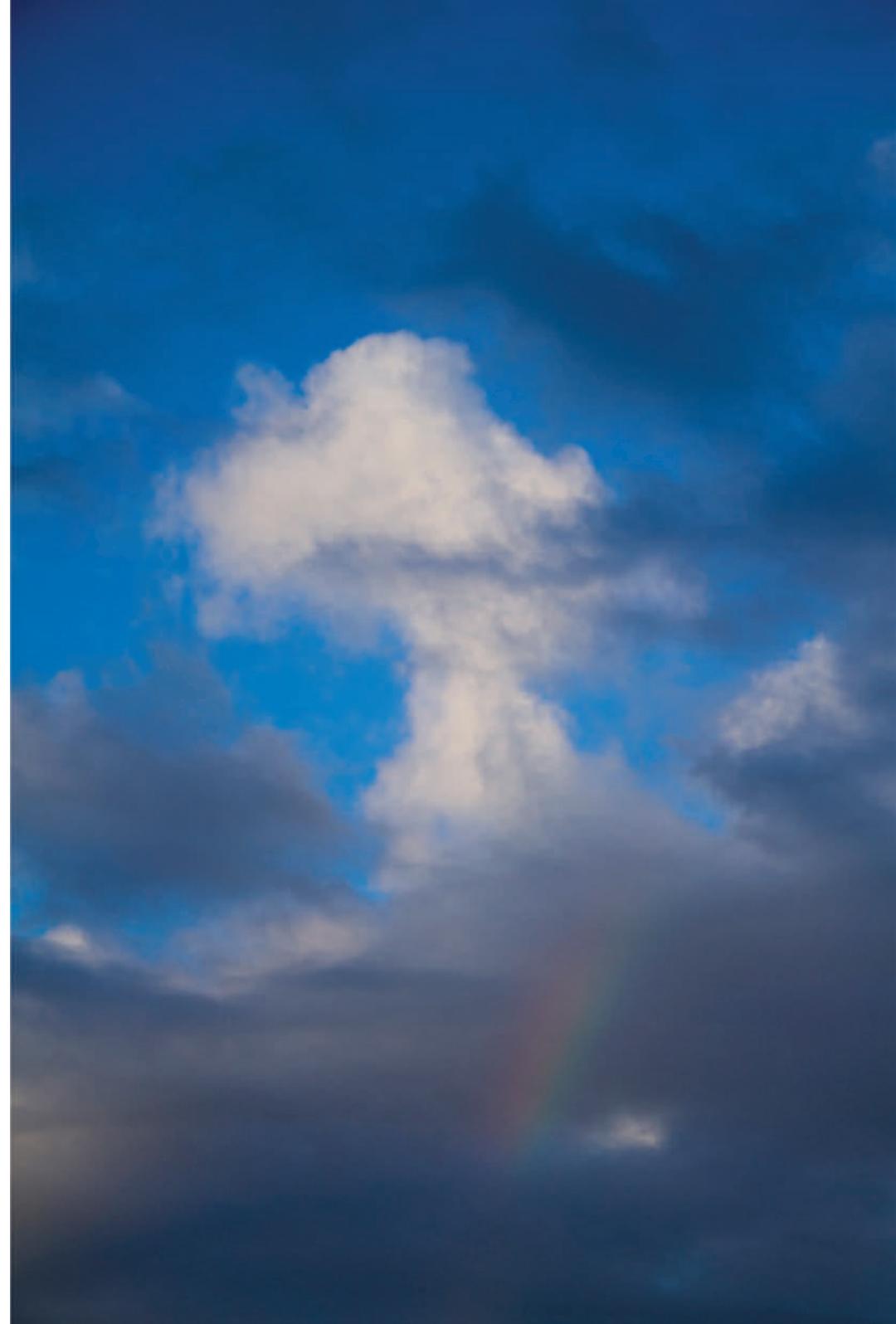
4 Phillips, Lisa, *The American Century*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1999, p. 278

5 Chadwick, Whitney, *Women, Art, and Society*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1990, p. 322

6 Golden, Thelma, *Black Male: Representations of Masculinity in Contemporary American Art*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1994, p. 42

7 Obrist, Hans Ulrich, *Ai Wei Wei*, Phaidon, London, 2009, p. 22

Right: Alana Lake, *Untitled*, 2011, archival digital print, dimensions variable



WHO'S ON FIRST?

ROYAL ACADEMY SCHOOLS GALLERY, HORNSEY
2007

PER CHRISTIAN BROWN
ELLEN CANTOR
MARA CASTILHO
MARIA CHEVSKA
JUKKA KORKEILA
MATTS LEIDERSTAM
SHAHEEN MERALI
HAYLEY NEWMAN
MARIANNA UUTINEN







PER CHRISTIAN BROWN

Painting the Clouds with Sunshine 2, 2006, C-print, 80 x 60 cm



PER CHRISTIAN BROWN

Painting the Clouds with Sunshine 3, 2006, C-print, 80 x 60 cm



ELLEN CANTOR

My Light Blue Chanel Handbag Dream, 2007, mixed media on paper; 8 x 8 ft

Right: detail



MARA CASTILHO

O Rio que nos separa (The River Between Us), 2007, video projection



MARIA CHEVSKA

Idyll, 2007, oil on linen, bar stool



JUKKA KORKEILA

Stigmata, 2007, window installation, vinyl



MATTS LEIDERSTAM

Return, Hampstead Heath, 1997, C-print



SHAHEEN MERALI

It's Cheap to Run, 2000, inflatable plastic, fan and electric cord



HAYLEY NEWMAN

©copying Tourists, September 2004, framed postcard, Rome, 16 x 9.5 cm

A month walking around Rome, reflexively taking photographs as and when other people did. The photographs were printed on this 'smaller than life-size' postcard.



MARIANNA UUTINEN

Durex, 2005, acrylic on canvas, 221 x 100.5 cm

Photo: Jussi Tiainen

Sir John Soane: Installation and Identity in a Regency Collection

Dr Jerzy J. Kierkuc-Bielinski
Exhibitions curator
Sir John Soane's Museum



Sir John Soane RA, Sir Thomas Lawrence RA, oil on canvas, 1828,
© The Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum.

As a self-made man, the architect and collector Sir John Soane R.A. (1753-1837), was aware of the need to project a 'public' artistic identity that was commensurate with his newly acquired social position.

Born in humble surroundings – his father was a bricklayer from Goring-on-Thames – Soane is principally known for two reasons today: his architecture and his Museum at No. 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields. This contains his incomparable collection of classical antiquities, architectural drawings and models as well as being one of the most idiosyncratic museums in Europe. Of his major constructions, few now survive. His seminal work the Bank of England, London, which he worked on from 1788 to 1833, was demolished in the 1920s. Other major projects, such as his rebuilding of Whitehall (1824-1826) along imperial, monumental lines to rival the grand public spaces of Rome and Paris were not executed. Of his major London buildings, barring his house and Museum, only one still stands – Dulwich Picture Gallery. However, his influence on architecture, though at times contested, has been considerable and he has been cited by many postmodern architects. He was unusual for his ability to adapt the strict rules of classical architecture in order to create a style that can truly be described as 'Soaneian'. One of the peculiarities of his style was his ability to use architecture in order to convey an emotional or psychological response. In this paper though, I want to look at another aspect of Soane's work – his role as a 'proto-curator' – whose idiosyncratic installation of art within his Museum was dependent upon the identity Soane wished to project publicly.

In spite of achieving very considerable professional renown, Soane's personal life was not happy. Although it would be inappropriate to undertake an analysis of Soane's personality traits at such a distance he suffered what were termed as his 'fancies' a type of on-going state of nervous panic that plagued him throughout his life.¹ He was also unfortunate in his relationship with his two sons – John Soane Junior (1786-1823) and George (1789-1860). Soane wanted both his sons to follow in his footsteps as architects. Unfortunately his eldest son died of consumption at the age of 37 and his general ill health precluded him from being a success in this field. George proved to be a truly greater disappointment. George was uninterested in architecture having developed a love of literature and the theatre. This lack of interest in his father's chosen field resulted in attrition between the two. It culminated in 1815 when a series of anonymous articles began appearing in a paper of the day – *The Champion* – which derided Soane's architectural style. Eliza, Soane's wife, upon discovering that the author was their son George (who had also just been released from debtors' prison), is reported to have exclaimed: 'George has given me my death blow, I shall never hold up my head again'. She died two months later in November 1815 and Soane blamed his son for her death. As a result of this estrangement, in 1833, Soane set up a special Act of Parliament that transferred the house and its collections to the nation.

These events are recounted in the documents held in the Museum's extensive archive. Throughout his life, Soane kept a series of journals or note books in which he detailed his day-to-day existence, who he saw on a personal and professional level, how much money he spent and what he did. In his later years he used these notebooks in order to reconstruct important events in his life – most notably the relationship between himself and his two sons John Junior and George and the death of his wife Eliza in 1815. However, the reconstruction of these traumatic events should not be thought of as un-mediated. From the outset of Soane's professional career, the erasure and subsequent re-writing of text became a tool for the architect's projection of his public self. Even his surname was changed; having been born John Soan, he changed his name to 'Soane' on the occasion of his marriage to Eliza in 1784. As his biographer Gillian Darnley points out, '...throughout his life he deliberately avoided all mention of his origins...he added the 'e' to his name and amended every previous reference to John Soan, extinguishing the last vestige of his earlier self'.² Erasure, suppression and re-writing would reappear towards the end of his life, when he put his papers in order. As Sue Palmer notes, Soane returned to his notebooks, as well as those of his wife and their personal cor-



The Dome Area, Sir John Soane's Museum, No. 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Photograph Martin Charles.

respondence, in order to compile a manuscript that covered the traumatic years 1811 to 1829. This was not mere copying³ Soane expanded on certain details and '*... (used) his papers to answer certain questions that arise whilst he writes*'.⁴ This rewriting and amplification of his notebooks was utilised in 1835 when Soane published two pamphlets, printed privately: *Memoirs of Mr John Soane, Mrs Soane, Miss Soane and Captain Chamier...* and *Details respecting the Conduct and Connexions of George Soane... also of Frederick Soane*. Soane explained, in the preface of the second pamphlet, that he undertook the publication in order to state his side of the estrangement between himself and George. If certain texts were rewritten by Soane other texts were expunged. In his journal entry for 31 March 1831, we read: '*At home all day, very wet and dreary alone sorting and destroying papers! Put my house in order for thou shalt surely die*'.⁵ To understand how this process of editing relates to the installations at the Soane, I will turn to another notable collector of Classical antiquities whose former residence, containing these collections, constitutes another house museum in London – Sigmund Freud.

For Freud, writing in 'A Note upon the Mystic Writing Pad', 1925, the 'auxiliary apparatus' of the sheet of paper on which a note has been written acted as an imperfect substitute for memory. Freud saw that human memory was unusual in that it retained a trace of previous memories that were 'wiped clean' and yet had an unlimited receptive capacity. In this respect he likened memory to the child's game of the 'mystic writing pad' where a sheet of protective celluloid covers a slab of wax which becomes receptive to writing. The writing maybe erased when the protective sheet is pulled away from the wax so that new notes maybe taken. Nevertheless a trace of what was once written on the 'mystic writing pad' will remain on the slab of wax. For Freud this formed an analogy of the two layers of the mind, '*...an external protective shield against stimuli whose task it is to diminish excitations coming in, and of a surface behind it which receives the stimuli...*' as he argued.⁶ Soane, of course, did not use a 'mystic writing pad' when compiling his notes however, his archive as an entirety can be seen to function in an analogous way. Notes were written, expunged and rewritten as expanded texts. Through this process of writing Soane attempted to form a 'protective shield' against the traumatic episodes of his wife's death and his estrangement from his son and grandchildren. The interlayered texts within the Museum's archive act as a type of palimpsest of erased and rewritten memories that Freud speaks of in the 'Mystic Writing Pad'.

Public and Private Buildings Executed by Sir John Soane between 1780 and 1815, J. M. Gandy, watercolour, 1818, © The Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum. Soane's design for his family mausoleum can be seen to the left. It is depicted draped with a black pall to mark the death of Eliza Soane in 1815.



How, then does this relate to the installation of objects in the Soane? Soane left instructions in his will that three sealed repositories of documents should not be opened until the 22 November 1866, 1886 and 1896 respectively. All three repositories, the last of which was the sealed bathtub in Soane's bathroom, once opened upon the dates stipulated by Soane, were said contain a jumble of unremarkable papers, calling cards and miscellaneous objects, including false teeth, locks of hair and specimens of wood. None of the documents was contentious in any way. Why then did Soane leave such careful instructions for the unsealing of the unusual repositories with their seemingly random collection of objects? The answer lies I think not so much in a direct, literal reading of the documents or artefacts that were found in 1866, 1886 and 1896 but rather in their ordering. The unlikely juxtaposition of false teeth, calling cards and other ephemera along with the careful posthumous instructions as to the opening of the repositories acts as a protective layer that deflects our gaze – no reading may be attempted from them. Their juxtaposition with each other and with the written material may be likened to the dense juxtaposing of objects and images within the Museum, which also often undertook unusual juxtapositions, such as the inclusion of a mummified cat in the displays alongside clearly 'high-art' objects as Hogarth's 'Rake's Progress' or the alabaster sarcophagus of Seti I. The objects Soane includes in the repositories and by extension those within the Museum, then become an extension of his rewritten archive.

Taken individually they do not shed light on Soane's past, taken as a whole the installation forms a 'text' that can be read as if it were a notebook in Soane's archive. And like the documents contained within the archive, this 'installation' was also subject to constant rewriting. From 1812 to the moment of his death in 1837 Soane constantly reordered the display of his collection at No. 13. And a clear trace of these earlier arrangements of works of art can be seen in the numerous sketches that his students produced recording the rooms over the course of this period and which documented the movement of objects or the changing appearance of specific rooms.

Similarly, his memories contained within his note books were over-written by his later expanded recollections of past events. As with the re-ordering of his papers, this too took on an added urgency when he neared the end of his life. This is most notably the case with a plaster cast of an antique bronze statue of the goddess Nike. It is displayed in the Breakfast Room of No. 13 Lincoln's Inn Field's – a room that held a special resonance for Soane. He considered it to be his favourite interior in the house and its form reproduces in small-scale the Rotunda or the Four Per Cent Office of the Bank of England. He also compared this room to a Roman sepulchre and the funer-

Below left to right: *The Dome Area looking East*, J. M. Gandy, watercolour, 1811, © The Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum. Compare this image with Gandy's view of the same area of the Museum made in 1825 and *The Sepulchral Chamber and the Dome Area above*, J. M. Gandy, watercolour, 8 September 1825, © The Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum.



ary associations are furthered in the clock that was installed on the south side of the room whose form echoes that of the tomb Soane designed for himself, his wife and son John and in which George would never be laid to rest. Soane requested that this statuette be displayed in its present location shortly before his death. Behind it, and partially obscured by the Nike is an architect's rendering of the family tomb. This arrangement is lit by skylights filled with plain yellow glass, bathing the installation in what Soane termed, borrowing from the French architect Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières (1721-1789), a *lumière mystérieuse*. Soane used this type of lighting extensively in his house, notably in the 'Dome' area of No. 13's Museum Corridor; which was used to house the bulk of his antiquities. He also used coloured plain glass in the skylights of the mausoleum at Dulwich Picture Gallery in order to more expressively evoke the sepulchral nature of that building.⁷

Within the context of this emotionally and psychologically charged display the Nike can then be seen to be an analogue of the 'protective shield', which, as Freud argued, acts to '*...diminish the strength of excitations...*' coming into the mind. In this case it was the traumatic memory of the death of Eliza Soane. In this way Soane used the ordering of objects within his Museum – their installation – as not only a way of projecting his 'identity' as an architect and collector but also to deflect the viewers direct gaze from a painful family history, a history which underlay the founding of his Museum in the first instance. Soane intended that the house and the Museum, having been left to the nation, should act as his ultimate monument. His careful staging of the objects within the Museum was designed to display his public identity as one of Britain's most innovative and important architects. Yet, beneath the public image he carefully constructed to shield his posthumous reputation, the traces of earlier trauma can be read.

1 Arthur T. Bolton, *Life and Work a century Ago: An Outline of the Career of Sir John Soane*, London: Sir John Soane's Museum, 1922, p. 4. I am indebted to Sue Palmer, Archivist at Sir John Soane's Museum, for allowing me access to her forthcoming paper 'Sir John Soane: Rewriting a Life' to be published in *Libraries and the Cultural Record* 44:1, February 2009

2 Gillian Darley, *John Soane: An Accidental Romantic*, London and New Haven: Yale University, 1999

3 Palmer, 2009, op. cit.

4 Ibid

5 This process of destruction was repeated on at least three other occasions: 22 January 1832 and the 10 & 25 March 1834

6 Sigmund Freud, 'A Note on the Mystic Writing Pad', in *The Standard edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIX, 1923-1925, The Ego and the Id and Other Works*, London: Vintage Books, 2001, p. 230

7 The focal point of the Gallery was a mausoleum which Soane designed to contain the bodies of Sir Francis Bourgeois and Noel Desenfans who donated the collection to Dulwich College. Soane intended the gloomy light, afforded by the coloured glass skylights, to provoke reflections.

Below left to right: The Breakfast Room, Sir John Soane's Museum, No. 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Photograph Martin Charles and *View of the North and East sides of the Breakfast Room*, C. J. Richardson, watercolour, November 1825, © The Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum.



WHAT'S ON SECOND?

PART I

ROYAL ACADEMY SCHOOLS GALLERY, HORNSEY
2007

ERIKA ERRE
ALEX HODA
NATSUE IKEDA
EEMIL KARILA
IDA SUSANNA KOITILA
ALANA LAKE
HANNA MARNO
ROBERT PRATT
TOPI RUOTSALAINEN
CATHERINE STORY







ERIKA ERRE

The Impregnation, 2007, beans, paint, silicon

Right: detail



ALEX HODA

Armband, 2007, foam, latex, plastic, pva, rubber



NATSUE IKEDA

Academy, 2007, pencil/gauche/pastel on paper; frames

Ten portraits of the artist were drawn by ten different portrait-artists working around London.



EEMIL KARILA

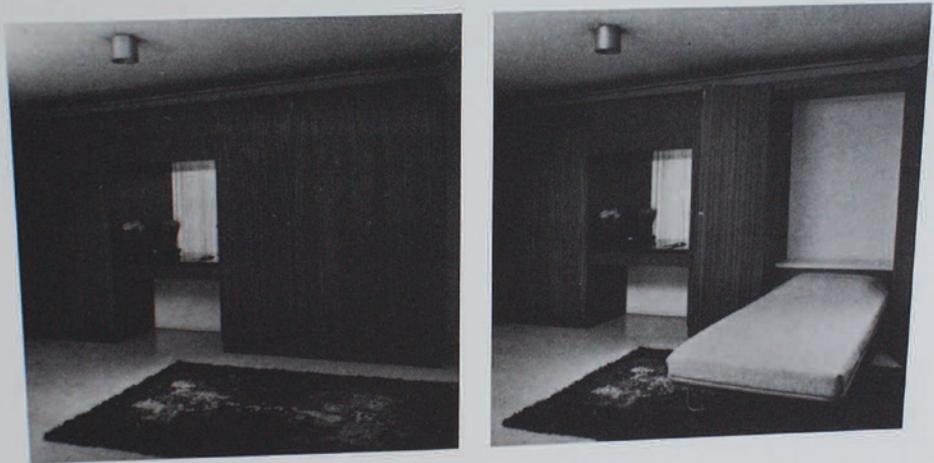
Drink and Think with the Ancient Regime, 2007, digital print, gold paint, 145 x 160 cm



IDA SUSANNA KOITILA

Top: *Accumulation*, 2007, curlers, spray color; cotton sheets, plasticnet, wig, flour; spray foam, silk fabric and bubble wrap, 60 x 60 cm

Bottom: *I'm glad we're not together any more*, 2007, burned biscuits, cotton sheets, paste-board, and a wooden tray, 40 x 50 cm



THE SPACE
BETWEEN
YOUR HEAD
AND MY MOUTH

ALANA LAKE

Above: *Part in Part*, 2007, found image on vinyl

Right: *The Space Between Your Head and my Mouth*, 2007, vinyl lettering



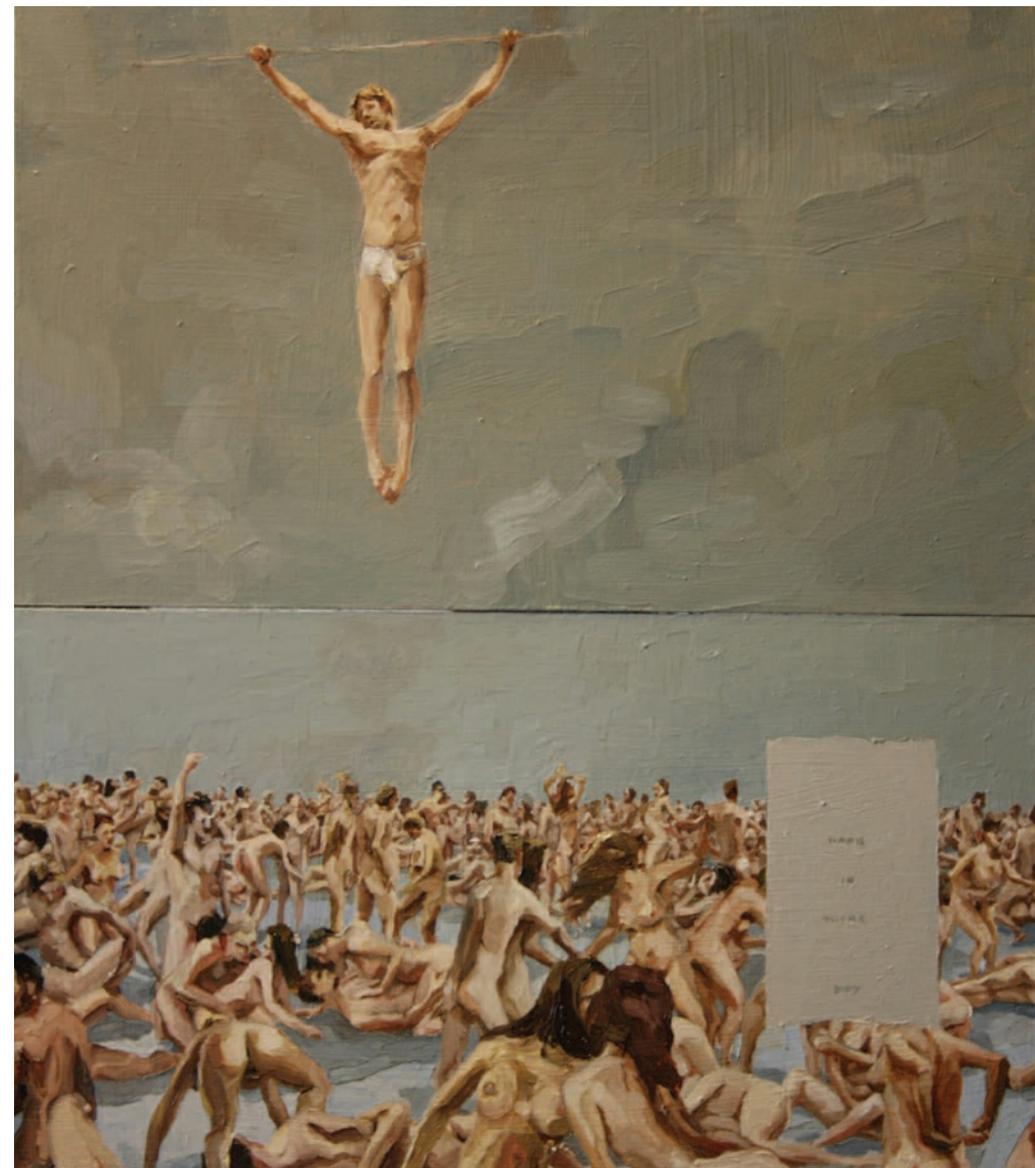
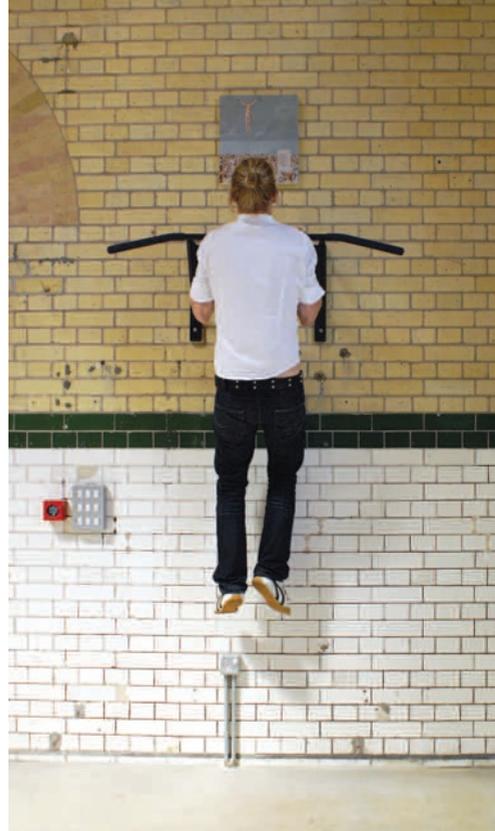
HANNA MARNÓ

Fourth wall, 2007, wood, metal, sand, fluorescent lights, paint, 4 x 2.5 x 2.5 m



ROBERT PRATT

Detpak Ripple-wrap, 2007, wood, steel, glass, plaster and found objects, dimensions variable



TOPI RUOTSALAINEN

Above & right: *Martyr bar*, 2007, pull-up bar, oil on board

"The interactive artwork consists of a small painting (a diptych, oil on board, respectively depicting a crucified man and a group of men and women involved in what seems to be an orgy) and in front of it a pull-up bar – a Gymnasium device. The religious association is emphasised by the physical position of the viewer when he or she in this position, gets a longer or shorter look at the diptych. The viewer's position congenially reflects the one painted. The piece sets the physical culture of the Gymnasium and the orgiastic scene, in a relation to Christian iconography and the idea of the sublime. Lifting yourself up (by gripping the bar in order to see the painting) represents a movement that symbolizes an attempt to reach out for a somewhat ideal world."

Provocative Acts and the Construction of Artistic Identity

Dr Annamari Vänskä is an independent curator and works as a post-doctoral research fellow at the Centre for Fashion Studies at the University of Stockholm in Sweden.

In February 2008 the news headlines of the biggest newspaper in Finland, *Helsingin Sanomat* were screaming:

"Poliisi takavarikoi teoksen galleriasta" (Kivirinta 16.2.08)

"Nykytaidetta, lapsipornoa vai keskustelunavaus?" (Kivirinta 19.2.08)

"Lapsipornoa kritisoinut taideteos yhä esituskinnassa" (Sirén 19.2.08)

"Nettisuodatukseen vauhtia ehkä lainmuutoksella" (Juutilainen 21.2.08)

"Äärimmäisen vakava rikos" (Juutilainen 21.2.08)

"Poliisi takavarikoi Ulla Karttusen tietokoneen" (Kivirinta 23.2.08)

"Police confiscated an artwork from a gallery"

"Contemporary art, child pornography or an attempt to open up a discussion?"

"Art work criticising child pornography still in preliminary investigation"

"Internet filtering will possibly be speeded up through law reform"

"Extremely serious crime"

"Police confiscated Ulla Karttunen's computer"

These sensational headlines were created when the artist and researcher Ulla Karttunen's show entitled *Ekstaattisia naisia – kirkon ja pornon pyhät neitsyet* (*Ecstatic women - saint virgins of church and porn*), opened at the Kluuvi art gallery, a part of Helsinki City Art Museum on the 14th January 2008. The day after the opening party, around noon, the police raided the exhibition and confiscated one installation entitled "Neitsythuorakirkko" ("Virgin Whore Church"). The installation consisted of a lightly constructed tent-like garage made of canvas. On its walls and floor Karttunen had installed altogether 288 A4 and A3 size images of young girls and women, named "teen babes", "teen sluts" and "virgin whores" on the Internet. The artist had not manipulated the images in any way, which created outraged reactions: many claimed that the artist should have concealed the identity of the women and girls and not exposed them in the gallery. The artist, on the other hand, had wanted to show the phenomenon in its brutality, or *an sich*, as it were, in order to more accentuate its shock-value. In addition to the images, the walls of the "garage" were decorated with



CATHERINE STORY

Kickmaster, 2007, oil on football

thorns made of barbed wire and with a text written by Ulla Karttunen. In the text Karttunen criticized the existence of this kind of imagery as well as its easy availability. According to her, these kind of images of girls and young women can be looked at, distributed and printed from the Internet without anyone's intervention even though it is forbidden in many societies. In addition to the installation, the exhibition consisted of other images that were hung on the walls of the gallery space. They were not discussed, however, at all in the media or taken into account in the trial.

Even though the artist clearly had an anti-child porn agenda, the police decided to confiscate the work. "Now the police functions as art critic", mused one of the leading art critics Marja-Terttu Kivirinta in *Helsingin Sanomat* (Kivirinta 9.2.2008). The ground for confiscation was that at the opening party, one visitor – the rumour has it that it was a female artist – had reported an offence to the police after having seen and been traumatised by seeing the work (Kivirinta 4.3.2008). However, an hour before the confiscation, the executive group of the City Art Museum had already decided to close down the work in order to investigate whether the work offended the Finnish criminal law. And as we now know: indeed it did. The Police stated that they confiscated the "Neitsyhuorakirkko" installation because it offended two clauses of criminal law: clauses 18 and 19. According to clause 18, the installation offended the law according to which it is criminal to disseminate obscene images of children.¹ The work also offended clause 19, according to which it is criminal to represent and illegal to possess obscene images of children.²

This meant that the police suspected Ulla Karttunen of possessing indecent images, which can lead to a fine or even imprisonment.³ After the news, the debate was heated and many voiced their disgust in the matter. What was striking was that the art world did not take up the issue: the exhibiting museum did not defend Karttunen's exhibition – in fact, the director of the museum declared that the museum would not show the piece before they heard what the police had to say about the work! In other words, the museum trusted the police to have the ability to interpret the installation and its meaning.

The Finnish art world also showed its darker side in the matter: it was striking to see how eager other artists, who have not even seen the exhibition let alone the images in the installation, condemned both the work and the artist. It was as if they did not know how to read it in against the history of modernist art and avant-garde, where these kind of interventions have been rather popular at least since Duchamp's bottle-rack. This is, however, exactly what I want to do today: I want to bring the history of 20th century art to our discussion, and how the notion of artistic identity has been constructed within it.

So, instead of condemning Karttunen let alone her installation – which, by the way, only a precious few were ever able to see before it was closed down and confiscated – I want to situate it in the historical continuum of modernist and avant-garde art. I want to show you how the works of avant-garde have always been expected to provoke and to transgress different kinds of normative boundaries in stirring the status quo.

Or, to put it differently: if the tradition of historical avant-garde, described by Peter Bürger in his classic book from 1974, *Theorie der Avantgarde* (published in English in 1984 as *The theory of avant-garde*) is to be believed, the modernist institution of art and artistic identity has relied heavily on the ideas of transgression and provocation since at least the historical avant-garde of the early 20th century.

In *The theory of avant-garde* Bürger draws a distinction between modernism and avant-garde. According to him, the historical avant-garde was characterised by a critical attitude towards the relative independence that art had been permitted in bourgeois society and by an independence that made it possible for the individual artwork and artist to express ideas and preserve a representation of freedom in a society, which was characterised by means-ends rationality.

The historical avant-garde, as we know, contested the bourgeois principles of autonomous art and expressive artist through an embrace of everyday objects and by showing aesthetic indifference. The aim of historical avant-garde was not only to reposition art in relation to mundane space-time, but also to social practices. Its aim was to *destroy* art as it was and to *integrate* it into life.

Now we know of course that this aim failed and historical avant-garde became quickly institutionalised. Contemporary artists, however, trained at art academies, have – or should have – the discourse of historical avant-garde at hand. Both pre-war and neo-avant-gardes guide them to learn about artistic practices and artistic identities. They have access to the discourse and to the theoretical rigor of the avant-garde, and therefore they also have the possibility to use it in their own thinking and in their construction of their artistic identities. Indeed: artistic identities are constructed, via different kinds of methods.

It is more than easy to find examples of the use of avant-garde methodology both in creative practices as well as in the creation of artistic identities. For example, within Finnish art history such well-known visual artists as Teemu Mäki, Harro Koskinen or theatre makers from the Jumalanteatteri or the famous author Hannu Salama have all used provocation and transgression both in their work and in their process of becoming established – even canonised – artists. And if we think about international artists, artists such as Jeff Koons, Andres Serrano, Robert Mapplethorpe, Tracey Emin, Sarah Lucas, Annie Sprinkle, Carolee Schneemann, Chris Burden or Vienna Actionists come immediately to mind. They have all caused trouble in the public sphere through their provocative artistic actions – and they have all gained fame and established their place as canonised artists exactly through provocation.

Now, over thirty years after its publishing, Bürger's book still continues to frame the intellectual discussions circulating around both historical and more contemporary avant-gardes. Bürger's blind spots have been very well marked. Hal Foster (1994, 5 - 32) has explained, for example, that an artist such as Marcel Duchamp did not *appear* as the rebellious "Duchamp" at the beginning of his artistic career. Neither did Picasso's *Demaiselles d'Avignon* merely "emerge" as the crux of modernist painting in 1907 even though it is nowadays taken to be as such. Foster claims that the status of the artist Duchamp as well as the status of Picasso's painting *Demaiselles d'Avignon* is, in fact, a retroactive effect of countless artistic responses and critical readings of Duchamp and Picasso (Ibid, 11). This is to say that both the artist's and the painting's statuses are results of *performativity*. This means that Duchamp's artistic identity as provocateur and the position of Picasso's painting as the crux of modernism are a result of repetitive doing. The same goes with more contemporary artists: their status as provocateurs is retroactively constructed by gallerists, museums, curators, art critics and art historians. In Ulla Karttunen's case, however, the art world did not want to give this status to the artist. Instead, she was condemned to be a pornographer.

Performativity, a term originally coined by the language philosopher J. L. Austin in his famous book *How to do things with words* (1976), is a semiotic gesture suggesting that what we think of as "being" is actually a result of doing. Doing constitutes being through performativity. For Austin performativity

tives were utterances that constituted the very identities that they claimed to describe. To be effective, the performative had to depend on a densely woven web of social relations that rendered it intelligible, believable, and acceptable.

The Austinian thought has been actively scrutinized within recent post modern or post structural feminist theory. The idea of performativity has especially been fruitful for rethinking of identity. The "mother" of this idea of identity as performativity is the American philosopher Judith Butler. In her book, *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Butler identifies the idea that intelligible bodies and genders are produced through performativity or "specific modality of power as discourse." Argues Butler:

"(I) seek to recast performativity as a specific modality of power as discourse. For discourse to materialize a set of effects, "discourse" itself must be understood as complex and convergent chains in which "effects" are vectors of power: In this sense, what is constituted in discourse is not fixed in or by discourse, but becomes the condition and occasion for further action. This does not mean that any action is possible ---. On the contrary, certain reiterative chains of discursive production are barely legible as reiterations---." (Ibid. 187)

As the argument explains, Butler wants to avoid any misreading of performativity as "wilful" and "arbitrary" by arguing forcefully that the domains of intelligibility are bound with effects. To her mind the historicity of discourse and norms constitute also the power of discourse and give it the ability to enact what it names (Ibid. 187).

It is possible to argue that identity as performativity depends on two things: on reiteration and on exclusion. Similar to J.L. Austin's speech act theory, Butler's theory of the performativity works through a *normative force*, that is, the practice of reiteration. Exclusions, on the other hand, "haunt signification as its abject borders or as that which is strictly foreclosed: the unlivable, the nonnarrativizable, the traumatic" (Ibid. 188). According to Butler, identity categories are troubled by the impossibility to fully establish an identity contingent on both reiteration and exclusion. While Butler sees performativity as a potential, as a possibility to "open the signifiers to new meanings and new possibilities for political resignification", one could also think about her project in relation to the production of artistic identities.

What this means for artistic identity is that avant-garde artists from Duchamp to Picasso to Salvador Dali to Meret Oppenheim have all gained their status as transgressive artistic personas through the iterative and repetitious act of art historical writing. "Duchamp", "Picasso", "Dali" or "Karttunen" have received and will receive their place in the hard-core of art history through iteration.

Within historical avant-garde, the reiteration concerned mostly the transgression of the boundary between "art" and "life". The artist was supposed to transgress this boundary, pure and simple. Bürger's romantic view of the provocative and revolutionist avant-garde artist institutionalised the very concept.

This is to say that in the contemporary art world, the ethos of the avant-garde artist still exists. As we see from Karttunen's case, transgression as an artistic method has not lost its appeal. Transgression still is a valid way of constructing an artistic identity it may even be a strategy through which an artist can brand her/himself in the globalised art market. In the case of Ulla Karttunen,

the aim to question our moral hypocrisy also functions as a way of performing artistic identity as the social consciousness in our contemporary commodity culture.

Epilogue

After the media debate and succeeding trial (21st May, 2008), Ulla Karttunen's installation was judged to be pornographic and the artist was convicted of possessing and distributing child pornography. However, the artist was not fined as the court decided that the offence was only minor.

Ulla Karttunen's exhibition "Ekstaattisia naisia - kirkon ja pornon pyhät neitsyet" was on display at the Kluuvi Gallery in Helsinki, Finland from January 14th to March 2nd 2008.

1 18 § Sukupuolisiveellisyyttä loukkaavan kuvan levittäminen.

<http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1889/18890039001>.

2 19 § Sukupuolisiveellisyyttä loukkaavan lasta esittävän kuvan hallussapito.

<http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1889/18890039001>.

3 After the seminar this was indeed the case. On the 14th March 2008 the prosecutor decided to accuse Karttunen for possessing and disseminating obscene images of children.

Unpublished sources:

"Sukupuolisiveellisyyttä loukkaavan lasta esittävän kuvan hallussapito ja levittäminen". HK 21.5.2008, R 08/2628.

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Helsingin sanomat 23.2.2008.

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WHAT'S ON SECOND?

PART 2

GALLERIA FAFA

(FINNISH ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS GALLERY)

HELSINKI

2008

JOANNA BRYNIARSKA

ERIKA ERRE

NATSUE IKEDA

EEMIL KARILA

IDA SUSANNA KOITILA

ALANA LAKE

HANNA MARNON

ROBERT PRATT

TOPI RUOTSALAINEN





JOANNA BRYNIARSKA
Hello Princess, 2008, gesso and oil on vinyl, 240 × 240 cm



ERIKA ERRE

The Sweetest Thing On Earth, 2008, sugar and burnt sugar

Right: detail



NATSUE IKEDA

Talk to Suomenlinna, 2008, CD player, speakers

One speaker plays sound which was recorded when the artist sent text messages from Finland to her partner in London. The sound of her partner typing messages to her comes out from the other speaker. The two speakers face each other and *talk*.



NATSUE IKEDA

The Tropics, 2008, 20 slides on loop, dimension variable

The furniture in the room was moved around daily during a stay in Finland. The artist slept in the bed in different positions every night and took photographs of the room in mornings.



EEMIL KARILA

Puppy, 2008, digital print on canvas, neon



EEMIL KARILA

Im a Believer, 2008, Turkish coffee cup and saucer, coffee stains and audio clip approximately 17 minutes, stage: 40 x 40 cm

"A Turkish fortune teller read my future based on the coffee stains I left in my cup and saucer. Reading the future from the coffee stains is a strict tradition and contains a lot of rules and canons. Like reading an abstract painting the content is created based on our subjective associations and our knowledge of art history."



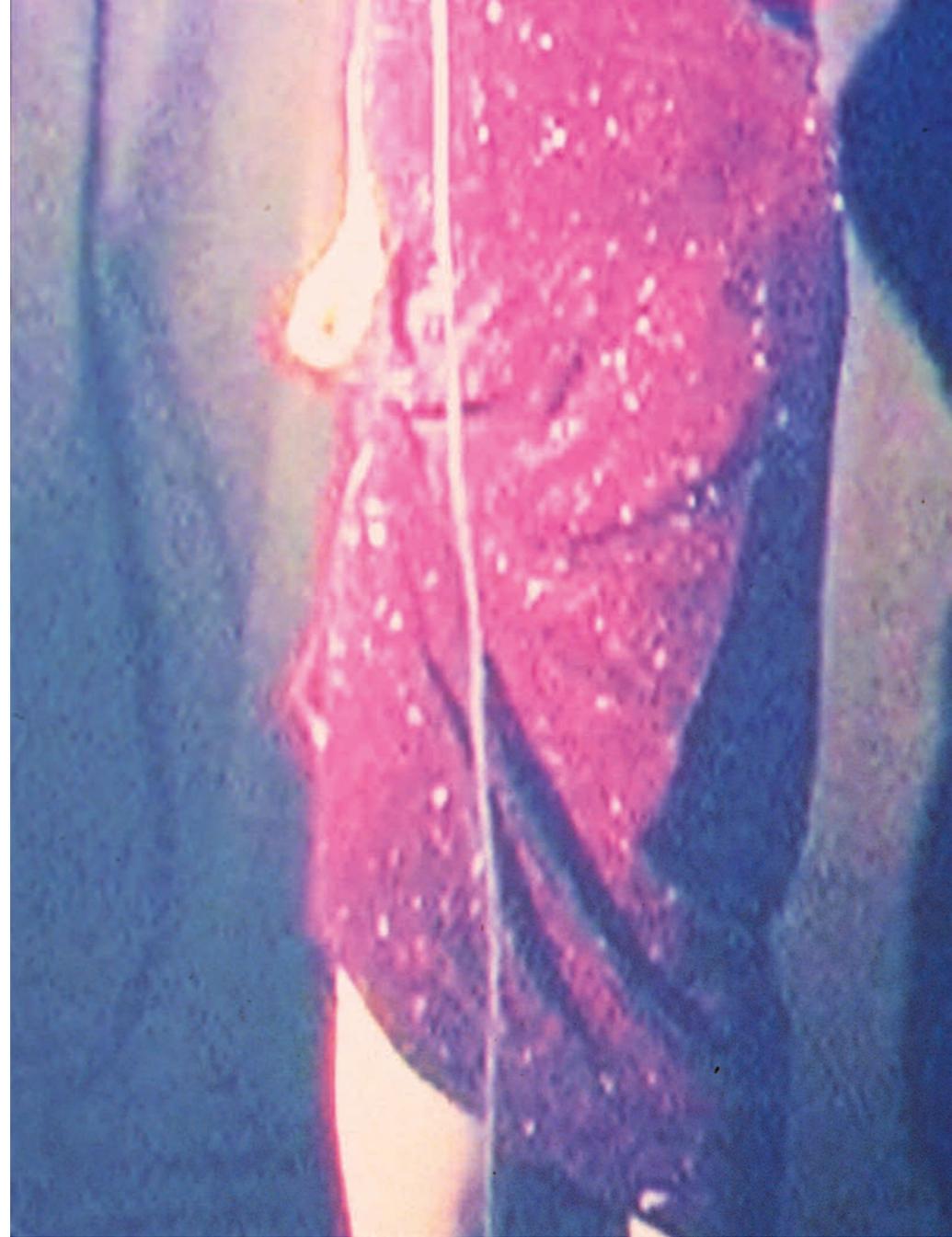
IDA SUSANNA KOITILA

Ten, 2008, ceramic pots, paint, wood, 30 x 15 cm

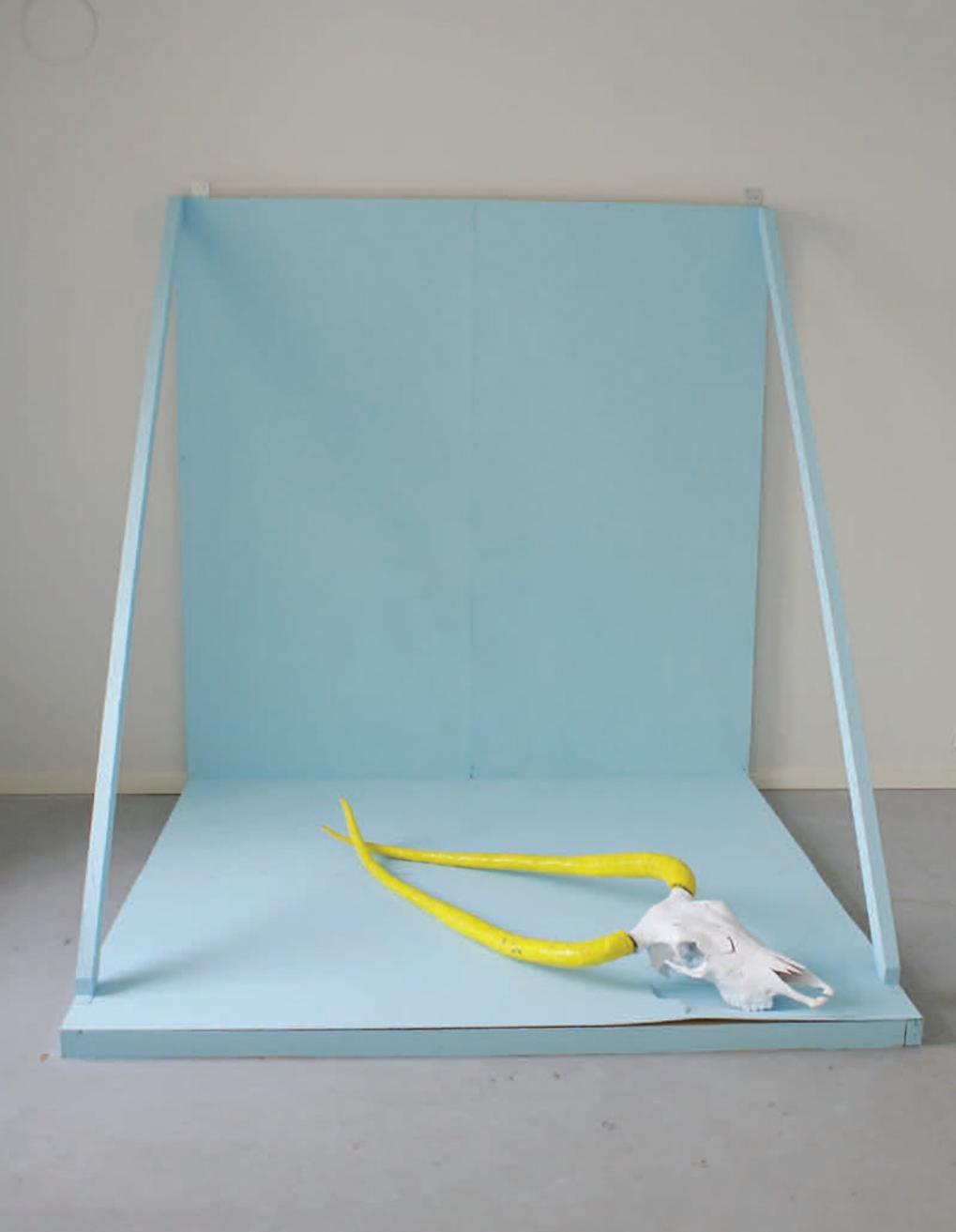


IDA SUSANNA KOITILA

Above: *Dress*, 2008, melted plastic, clothes pegs, 60 cm high
Overleaf: *Silent Speaker*, 2008, plastic, fabric, 150 x 70 cm



ALANA LAKE
Julie Glitter, 2007/8, video (5 minute loop), film still



HANNA MARNO

Yours Forever Coyote II, 2008, wood, paint, TX longhorn skull, fiberglass, car paint,
5 x 2.5 x 2.5 m



TOPI RUOTSALAINEN

Spectators, 2008, oil on canvas, 205 x 295 cm



ROBERT PRATT

I'm Surprised You Stayed, 2008, pipe, sound recording (5 minute loop) and plaster board, dimensions variable



ROBERT PRATT

Forum, 2008, outdoor speakers and sound recording (56 minute loop), dimensions variable

On the Construction of an Artistic Identity through Diverse Practice

Richard Dyer

The notion of 'specialisation', of being confined to one form of artistic practice, is not only unnecessarily restrictive to true creativity but also goes against the whole history of 'the artist'. As has been true for many centuries artists normally produce work in many forms and draw from different disciplines and methodologies. My practice encompasses art criticism, poetry, fiction, painting, photography, constructions, text installation and music.

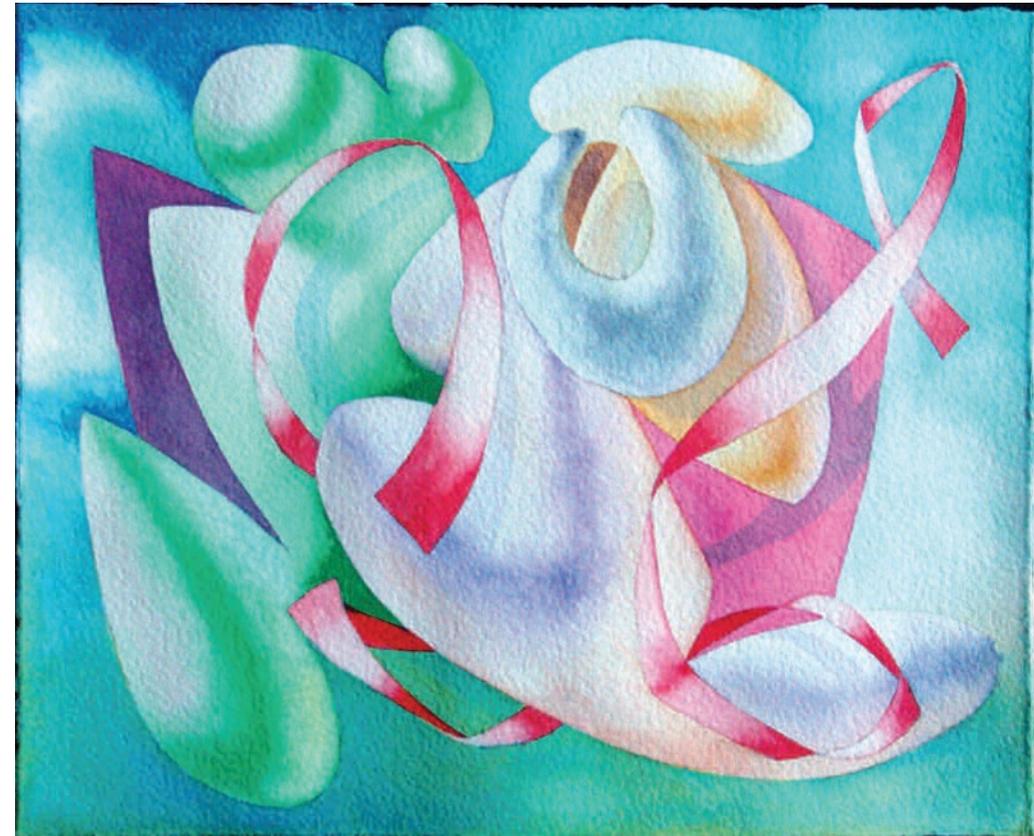
I do not see any problem or contradiction in being a visual artist and at the same time an art critic. Indeed, I would not presume to write a critique of the work of other artists unless I had myself had years of studio practice. The notion of criticising work from a purely academic, theoretical or art historical context goes against my every instinct and is indeed counter-productive to the production of 'true art criticism'. What then is 'true art criticism'? For me it must be a form of writing that is informed not only by the history of art, theoretical ideas about aesthetics, politics, philosophy and society, but also by literature, poetry, fiction and the essay. The form we are dealing with, after all, is 'writing', not scientific analysis.

My art criticism is therefore always informed by my other forms of written expression: poetry, fiction, anecdote and essay. Most people read about art without ever seeing the original artwork. Such is the proliferation of the photographic image in the contemporary world that art tends to exist for the viewer in only two forms; first as photographic reproduction and second through the accompanying text. With various contemporary art forms, such as film and video, installation and sculpture the photographic image is wholly inadequate in conveying any real notion of the work, and so it is left to the text to enlighten the reader as to the true nature of the work in question. It therefore falls to the writer to engage the reader in ways other than the purely theoretical or academic, in fine, the text must be engaging in and of itself. It should exist in the realm of the written word with the same strength and independence as literature, the novel or a poem for instance.

Let me give an example of an article which was reproduced in a mainstream art magazine but with which I nevertheless attempted to move the text beyond the usual limitations of 'art journalism', 'art criticism' and 'theoretical discourse'. This is an extract from a feature on the photographer Adam Fuss:

A cow's liver, all the slippery, lazy, wet weight of it, settling onto the photographic paper, leaching chemical chroma, painting its own portrait in death-stain; not light, but silver chlorides interacting and reacting with leaking biological fluids, oozing ferrous secretions. The wet spectre of an absent beast; the radiological paint-smear of a leaching organ, like a photograph of the birth of stars, told in a mottled, variegated story of infrared and ultraviolet. In this chemical liver-print of dead matter we eye-drink an echo of the life it once carried, a Kirlian lumen signature, like the electrical discharge of a short-circuited cellular system. In a threnody of stars, a stellar choke of chalk-dust story-boards the tail-dance of a brush-less snake. Strange how the random spasm of a serpent's thrash makes William Morris wallpaper tessellations. Intricacies of intaglio filigree rising above a cloud-bank of beating wings, winged serpents churning a de-focussed dust-cloud into monochrome alchemical chimera; birthing androgyny, aquainting a delirious phylogeny of serpent-hood.¹

Richard Dyer, *Easy Veronese, Easy!*, 2010, watercolour on T H Saunders paper, 210 x 260 mm



It can be seen from the above that the manner of the text's construction is far closer to the practice of poetry than it is to the conventions of art criticism. The reason is simple: I am a poet, and was one before I started to write art criticism. The following poem demonstrates the overlap between these seemingly discrete forms of textual production. This is a poem written about the work of the painter Jim Kavanagh who is based in the west of Ireland:

The Poetics of Space

Connemara

The plush velvet of a purple sky at dusk,
the crush of clouds against the edge of darkness
at the dawn; the sun's blush, a comet's streak against
the vacuum of the night, the rush of light, the glaze,
the harvest of the night. An inner sense of indigo,
invisible in red, the canvas, a fabric cauldron
for the colours of the curdled clouds, a bed.

A sense of place, a sense of moment, melting,
spent, the incremental reconfiguration rent
by sudden shifts of mist; the surging of the elements,
a fist, gripped tight and pulled to twist the canopy
of fragile molecules into a memory of the earth beneath,
the country in the sky; mirage, illusion, shadow-play and lie.
Horizon's crease folds sky to landscape down, a Rorschach stain,
a sacred wound, bound black and flecked in sundown's golden crown.

The canvas lays flat on the studio floor; a gout of honeyed light
aches through space to lace it with a tracery of
Venice turpentine, stand oil and siccativ; into this
liquid territory a violet underpainting firms and
structures space. Later layers of transparent colour cool
and warm the raw imprimatura to fix a final vision
of the landscape – Croagh Patrick, Connemara – and
the deserts of Arizona, Utah and Nevada.²



Richard Dyer; *Zurbarán's Turbaran*, 2009, watercolour on T H Saunders paper, 210 × 260 mm

The poem in fact started life as a catalogue essay and at some point spontaneously transformed into a poem. This fluid shape shifting between different matrices of textual expression allows for an uninterrupted engagement with the subject, one not restricted by language, but on the contrary opened up by it.

I always find that travelling causes a heightening of the poetic impulse, and most of my travelling is connected with the artworld: going to art fairs, travelling to review exhibitions abroad, etc. When I went to Artforum Berlin I found myself soaking in the bath of a resplendent room in a five star hotel, courtesy of the organisers. The shift of location, the unaccustomed luxury of the surroundings and a foreboding sense of intense melancholy brought on by the recent loss of love moved me to write a poem right there and then, from beginning to end, without a break, onto my voice recorder; the only occasion so far in which I have worked this way:

Minus One

Grand Hyatt Berlin

All the marble splendour
aquamarine strata stacked
from bath to ceiling, lights
icy and perfect, chrome
polished to perfection, the
water green with the amber
acquiescence of luxury
towels so clean they hurt
in the light, wood waxed
to within an inch of its
beginning.

Time over, and out, time
stops still for a moment
a moment that lasts forever.
There could be nothing outside
of those curtains, I could
draw them back and there
would be just black, and
nothing more, as if this
room were a box, floating
in the outer reaches of deep
dark space.

Imagine, a perfect box
a perfect room, spinning
through space, making its
own gravity, making a
place where you want to
stay, forever. Imagine,
when you twist the handle
of the door it goes round,
and round and round, like
the box through space,
like the room always turning
but always in the same place.

Imagine, you pull back
the curtains, and instead
of looking into the sparkling
dazzle of a neon-lit night

in Berlin on the Marlene-
Dietrich-Platz you look instead
into nothing, into utter
blackness, into the deep
rich velvety crunch of zero,
into a place where the only
numbers are nought,
and minus one.

You are minus one. You
remember the one you are
minus, now spinning in this
perfect, marbled, carpeted
wood-lined, cotton-soft cube
spinning through space, to
a place where you will find
the reflection of your minus
one, a glyph that shimmers
in the mirror, on the surface of
the water, in the sweet curl of
melting ice at the bottom of the
glass, in the hiss of your breath
on the mirror which you smudge
into a shape which takes the form
of the face of your minus one,
without which you are zero.³

And again, this time at the Venice
Biennale:

Venice

The funerary gondolas
ferrying their morbid cargo
of rigor mortis tourists
across the thin green skin
of the Grand Canal.

The plangent splash of vaporetto
spumato masking the beat
of my heart. Your face, haloed
in the planished tangle of your
golden hair, floating in the
lapis lazuli light of the liquid air,
follows me, everywhere.



Richard Dyer; *You Have Stripped Me Naked*, text installation, Braziers International Artist's Workshop
Oxfordshire, UK, 2006

Sometimes the words spill out of the page, migrating to walls, windows, paintings, photographs and other surfaces. In an attempt to 'set the text free' to liberate the word from the constrictions and rules of the page I create text installations which take the written word directly into the environment, stimulating a different relationship between the word and the reader. The physicality of words and even individual letters becomes manifest; font, scale, colour, line spacing and other formal aspects of the typewritten word now become as significant in the work as the actual meaning of a word or the content of a sentence.

The artworld, perhaps unlike any other professional field, has always known how to party. There is the special preview, the private view, the dinner, the after-party and finally the *after-after-party*, the latter usually taking place at some exclusive, secret or very new nightclub. My series of Soho photographic portraits have been taken over several years at these final club parties, usually in and around this very special part of London. Mostly photography is forbidden in these venues, and forbidden fruit *does* taste sweeter. They are instant, furtive, of the moment; eyes are left red, especially if they match a mood – and an iridescent jacket. These well-lubricated revels often give rise to poetic as well as photographic production:

Alcohol

I'm drunk, I'm drunk,
I have imbibed some substance
that I should have shied away from.
I'm drunk, even though I have contrived
to stay upright I'm tighter than a fight
between two rectangles, and I am wrecked,
and my thoughts are in a tangle.

Each time I reached for my whisky glass
it was full, no matter how much I drank,
and I drank, the hotch-potch of ice and scotch
was always brim-kissing the glass rim,
a merry meniscus of honeyed joy,
then I snatched it quickly, slyly
and drained it in one, at last the ice
slid towards my lips like a school of crystal fish.

While all around me were losing their heads
I was already growing my second
a head with a pint of its own.

A bleary sea-faring drunk,
I battled against a force ten gale
that no-one else could feel.
I railed against invisible tormentors
who pre-empted my every effort
to negotiate the increasingly turbulent
tar-black sea of the road, suddenly full
of the glaring lights of slow-motion
tug-boat Cortinas, bearing down on the small
canoe of the slip-shod mess of my consciousness
bleating their fog-horns furiously – as if I could
change direction that quickly in a rough sea such
as this.

The geography of the journey home from club
steps to front door
was a smear that started there and ended here,
the key slid into the lock first time, cool,
but the wrong key in the wrong door:

It is strange that it is my own painting that I find so hard to talk about. An ongoing series of watercolours explores the flora and fauna of a parallel universe, one encountered on the border between sleep and wakefulness, dreams and reality; in deep states of meditation; gazing into the ganzfeld while adrift in a sea of white noise; under the influence of a pulsating 'brain machine'.⁴ I endeavour to hold the imagery in a state exactly between figuration and abstraction, reality and unreality.

Writing about abstract painting is one of the most challenging engagements from a critical perspective. Not wishing to fall into the trap of a Greenbergian rhetoric I try to find other ways of opening up avenues into the work. Talking of the paintings of Vanessa Jackson:

There are four orders of existence in this universe of two-dimensional matter; but they are not always discrete, not always complete, in and of themselves. The ground, inscribed with the 'genetic code' of the final painting, only interacts with the other layers of polychrome marquetry by leaching its morphological echo into the more concretised elements of the work. However, at the next level – the lines which double-back against themselves, impacting on invisible barriers, bisecting their own paths, time-travelling through space to their previous place, looping-the-loop, like pre-Euclidian flies – sometimes curl around the more turgid and venous ropes of the next zone of articulation, those albumenic ovals, like geometric alembics, taut with their own metaphysical tautology. And these, in turn, physic the open orifice of succulent space, within the solid face of an arcade of falling arches, a collapsing deck of cards, half as hard as Le Corbusier's concrete, twice as soft as the ache of an ocular portal, easing into a parallel universe of paint.⁵

Or Alf Löhr:

The rhizome trellis of a layer-down, under-circled, paper-soaking matrix is dotted and scintillated by luminous nodes of cadmium light-stain, graphing the branchwork like the chromosomal trace of a gene-print, the alluvial matter coalescing at the fractal nexus of the fluvial syntagm. Löhr, hoarding the benthos from the end of painting, the detritus from the death of the authorial plexus, restates the mark, and its constituency, as a new model of visual praxis; painting as a cybernetic system; regulated – gnomonically, reproductive – autographically, evolutionary – mythopoetically.⁶

Language, like art, like poetry, in the end, must be freed from the shackles of its own praxis, it must be allowed to transect new realms of possibility, shrugging off the mantle of history and theory, protocol and the academy, fashion and the market. It makes its freshest insights, its most thrilling leaps of imagination when it is cut free from its moorings and allowed to submit to unseen currents of intuition and sudden tornadoes of unconscious energy.

Richard Dyer © 2009

1 Richard Dyer; Adam Fuss: The Alchemy of Loss, *Contemporary* 21, issue 67, 2004, pp 38–41

2 Richard Dyer and Jim Kavanagh, *A Western Journey*, Arlen House, 2006

3 Richard Dyer; Minus One: Grand Hayatt, Berlin, *Ambit*, no 187, (special issue on Freud), winter 2007, from a suite of poems published with photographs by Zoë Petersen, pp 36–43

4 'Ganzfeld' is a German word meaning 'whole field' or 'total field'. Made by wearing the halves of a ping pong ball over the eyes with light shone through them, or more sophisticatedly a curved sheet of electroluminescent plastic, and listening to 'white noise' – a signal which contains all the frequencies adjusted to the same level and sounds somewhat like the static between radio stations, or rain on grass lawns – the mind is transported to different levels of altered consciousness where new imagery rises to the surface. Brain machines use pulsed sound and flickering light to 'entrain' the brain to certain frequencies of brain waves, particularly those associated with altered states of consciousness, or ASCs, namely Alpha and Theta waves.

5 Adventures in Flatland: Richard Dyer on Vanessa Jackson, *Contemporary*, issue 75, 2005, p 46

6 Richard Dyer; Alf Löhr's Quixotic Taxonomy of the Circle: A New Phylogeny of the Painted Mark, in *Alf Löhr: Abstraction*, Firstsite, Colchester; catalogues to an exhibition curated by Felicity Lunn, 2002

Below left to right: *Galen at Cargo After Party*, A3 Cibachrome print, edition of five, two artists proofs, 2008, and Zoë, *Colony Room Club Corridor*, A3 Cibachrome print, edition of five, two artists proofs, 2008



YET

Maria Chevaska

Gallery Kalhama & Piippo Contemporary, Helsinki
2008

In her exhibition *Yet* Maria Chevaska built installations, which included paintings and other elements that connected the paintings to the physical world: chairs, tape, pigmet. The paintings, that were placed next to the found objects, became part of the space holding the disparate objects together formally. There was a repetition of basic and ideal modernist forms, that related within the installation and to the surrounding architectural space.

Chevaska's paintings consist of texts, and layered paint – which often suggest interior spaces – over which may be set an area of loosened, improvised brushwork.



Above: *Is it up to me?*, 2008, oil on linen, detail

Page 78: *Please be calm*, 2008, oil on linen, chair

Page 79: *But it might get late*, 2008, oil on linen, wood stool



Mental Maps

(complete with missing parts)

N Alice Challinor

The self 's a dancer
The innermost self, its stage
Its viewers, the senses.
Sivasutra, Vasugupta
(8-9th Century, Kashmir)



Frank Heron is an artist complete with missing parts. What does this mean? In a period where trash is redefined as precious and the precious is re-formulated as trash, some artistic practices succeed in reviving our interest in art. I know this is a vague rather overblown claim in a world that desperately needs to evaluate and curate its own trash but of late this interest in art has been flagging. But when challenged, I can't really say what it is about Frank Heron, the artist who first appeared in the late 1970s and has now been collected in a new publication called 'The Critical Heron'. Is it the Big World themes, the skip along the wall of, or the deep dive into, cosmography and cosmology? Not a pretentious theme in Heron though, for have we not finally got it into our thick skulls? "Neither nakedness, nor entangled hair, nor uncleanness, nor fasting, nor sleeping on the ground, nor covering the body with ashes, nor over-squatting, can purify a man who is not pure from doubts and desires."

The Dhammapada is a chance clue; any Indian or Persian reference is a chance clue for an artist like Frank Heron out to construct and at the same time deconstruct his identity within his own artistic practice. Heron enjoys structuring doubt and drift. Here is an attractive poetics, an artistic practice desperately needing to acknowledge the peripheral in us all. To redeem, then, not the truth of myths but the translated processes in our imperfect knowledge, in our incomplete being, in our *Umbilicus Mundi!* With the next exhibition, I have a hunch that Frank Heron's work will step up a gear.

I imagine too that finance and art, so shaky, so irresponsible in the last decade or so, needs its comeuppance. For what maps did the last decades offer us? Do we need maps for this undoing when the undoing of the past has 'undone' the maps themselves? Are we really to ask of art to slip

us back into a reality, an artistic discipline we struggle with? This is unnecessary. The *axis mundi* has changed to the *imago mundi* and, whether Foucault's Pendulum allows us to crack the code of codes, whether we access computer craft or ancient dignity and myth, the work of Frank Heron looks as if he is getting it right.

The discipline of Heron's work is as mystically precise as the conceptual seduction is fascinating. Take his *Raincoat* exhibition. Cartographical, alchemical and cosmological, there is never a complete totality. Heron allows us to understand that any unachieved totality is only a trap if we step too hastily within the scheme. Heron maps his art and installations from literary ideas, identifying an artistic practice that floats. Mostly fragments and flotsam, these works invite us as all maps do to become the reader-redeemer. They encourage us to believe that the map is however not the territory. For the territory is our inner world, climbed into, where we create or dream up graphic constructions of the way we read the world, our identities.

However partial our readings of the world are, these constitute our mental maps. Reflectively, we then map back onto ourselves an image of our personal worlds. To find ourselves to remain lost: Lorca, Laing or Krishnamurti? Once through the door, over that threshold, there's no looking back. Poetry is precise about this. Each Heron piece comes to rest where the single fixed point will dislodge itself carefully, whether you - the viewer; the reader - remain static or not. Redemption is not assured.

If, I repeat, this revives an interest in artistic practice then I'm all for it. I can imagine Heron's work in The New Opera House or any President's Residence in any country in the world. Instead of the museums of established art these buildings threaten to house the sound of an *umbilicus mundi* quietly altering the perpetual *imago mundi* of the viewer's inner world, with computer and monitor - what could be more Foucauldian than this in any President's Residence; in the eccentric centre of any peripheral society?

Societies, it is said, get the buildings and art they deserve, get the artists they can identify and the discourses favoured, especially in uninspiring epochs. Why only in uninspiring eras? It is too early to say but Heron has produced so far - in all his works - something deserved and deserving of the significance of the peripheral and doubt. The strength of Heron's work is cultural doubt and ambivalence. It refuses to be identified, thereby seeks another identity. For the periphery of all artistic practice is defined by the centre of which it partakes, eccentrically. Let's hope this doubt, questioning and undoing tilts the bagatelle. Imagine artistic practice as a flipper machine, flicked onto to newer agendas, newer contents, newer constructs. Frank Heron's work then invites us to read a map of a partial truth complete with missing parts. The paradox is precision amidst this partial world. It warns us elegantly of the 'undoing' going on all around. Keep up: Computer literate! Fall back: Brain-dead!



Black-coloured water; never seeing the bottom, illusory depth or the raincoat buried under a catafalque of salt; the depth of the myths we make of ourselves? Those howling skulls, a water mirror, a salt page, a rehearsal of death and drift? Undoing and remaking the world through an unraveled electronic and cartographic image of itself, this is Heron's plagiarised and adapted umbilicus mundi. It is the next best thing to taking a rickshaw through Calcutta to the Howth Bridge and looking up at the engineering. But only after noticing the developed over-worked calf muscles of the young rickshawallah about to die in front of you from strenuous over-effort.

And the stray Persian reference returns to haunt our legitimation and identification of this artist. For Frank Heron, as for many with whom we identify with so conveniently, we recall the words of Jalaluddin Rumi from the 13th century: "I died mineral and turned plant. Died a plant to turn sentient. Died a beast to wear human clothes. So when by dying did I grow less? Again from manhood I must die, and once again released, soar through the sky. And here as well I must lose place. Everything passes. But His face."

N Alice Challinor, 2009



- i Gunner Ekelof, Selected Poems, Penguin, 1971, p.97.
- ii For another approach to (machine) romanticism see Kai Wartainen's interpretation, Living Machine I and The Return of Machine Romanticism, Arkkitehti, Helsinki, 1/1990.
- iii Curtis.op.cit.p.10.

Frank Heron Biography:

FRANK HERON was born without realising it, in Rockferry, Wirral, England; he attended Rockferry Grammar School & then went on to study Anthropology at Oxford (Jesus College). Leaving England for the Baltic States in the early 1970's, Heron then taught English as a foreign language in Estonia and Finland and became a translator of Estonian and Finnish Poetry. After being awarded a scholarship by The Finnish Ministry of Education for art and cultural study in the Theatre Academy in Warsaw, Heron began his lifelong pre-paration of lectures, seminars, reports and writings on art, architecture and culture: the first example of what became later Frank Heron's *Artscripts*.



After a stint as visiting guest lecturer in Vilnius University (Comparative Literature Department) and Jyväskylä University, Finland (Department of Art Education) Heron moved to Paris in the mid-1970s. There, living on Rue Vieille de Temple, he studied modern dance and flamenco, frequented the cafe La Tartine on Rue de Rivoli along with the group of artists that became known as the Rivalists. This led to him later creating, scripting and producing the choreographies *KALEVA*, *SHONA*, and *THE WHEEL & THE BUTTERFLY*. The latter, co-produced with Sirkka Gripenbeg, was performed in Helsinki and Tallinn by The Oxygen Rolo Dance Theatre and televised by YLE, the Finnish Broadcasting Company. Heron's life then gets murky, as it does in different periods throughout his life, as if years drop out, pass by and remain lost.



In 1983 Heron was the Keynote Speaker at The International Semiotics Congress, University of Riga where he delivered his seminal paper: *The Rhetorics of Choreographic Form*. Later in this decade he was to become Lecturer in Special Studies in Riga and in Helsinki and also led courses and workshops at The Estonian National Broadcasting Company. Though Heron specialised in Communications, Media Theory, Photography, Architecture and Advertising, it seems his special talent was moving inbetween these disciplines and delightfully – to go by many of his archived notes – never coming to rest in any one of them. It was during this time too that Heron began his work as a solo artist with his first exhibition *The Seven Famous Raincoats & a Moygashel* (The Cellar Gallery, Helsinki, Les Fous de l'Île Galerie, Paris, April, 1984, and Pinacotheca Fine Arts Gallery, Jyväskylä February 1985). Heron's exhibition texts were later published in *Contemporary Writing 1985* (Helsinki). *Don't Go So fast, You'll crash into Martin Wagstaff* was Heron's second exhibition at Helsinki Konsthall (1985). Heron then appears to have left the Baltics and spent five years in India as a free lance artist and designer taking up a brief role as a visiting professor at Jamia Millia Islamia University, Delhi in the Mass Communications Research (film, video, scriptwriting, photography, photo-journalism) in 1988. Whilst in India, Heron also taught Exhibition Art, Design and Implementation (The Trade Fair Authority of India, New Delhi) and – 1986 being a particularly productive year – designed, co-designed and produced another series of exhibitions: *Space & The Act of Space* (KHAM) Ravindra Bhavan Gallery, New Delhi IGNCAs; Satish Gujral Four Decades, Ravindra Bhavan, New Delhi. In this year he also became the Visiting Special Lecturer in Design & Product Semantics and Communication Theory at The National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, India where he produced his first collaborative art exhibition and series of artscripts called *Nexus* (1987) Environmental Installations on a Traffic Roundabout, Ahmedabad, India. A workshop course in product design, interior design and architecture resulted in an urban intervention, the first of its kind in India. From a brief to participate and intervene at a traffic roundabout for an event of three days, this took on heron to co-design and produced *Shelter: a place to live, installations for Hudco*, also in Ravindra Bhavan, Delhi.

There is no trace at present, however, of Heron's activity, life and work between the years 1988 and 1994. But from the sketchy records available, it seems Heron went on to deliver the Flat Stanley Lecture at Vilnius: Museum of Contemporary Art, (Lithuania in 1994) on *Postmodernism - From Anarchy to Cultural Perspective* and was the Keynote speaker at the Kaurismaki Film Festival: (*The Cinema of the Brothers Kaurismaki*, Finland) Vilnius, Lithuania. More lectures followed and Heron was the invited speaker at the International Graphics Conference: *The Mood/Mode of Contemporary Graphics: designing for complexity*. It was also possible to trace Heron as an International Advisor for MECCA, Middle European Colony of Contemporary Arts, Terezin, Czech Republic where in fact he met up, by chance, with Will Challinor; my father. It is rumored here Heron also met Vaclav Havel but no further record exists of this entry in one his unfinished almanacs.

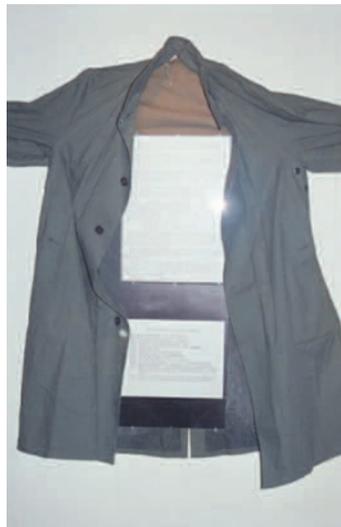
It was in the 1990's that Heron found himself once more in the Baltics and in Sweden where perhaps upon an introduction through my father and mother he began his collaboration with The Rocket Girls (Raketa) described herein. Heron also conducted *Critical Self* workshops from 1998 onwards at art academies around the world. An artsript called *(Zen and) The Art of The Fluorescent Tube* dated 1998-2000 for an art installation, in Villa Medici in Rome has been found within *The Collection of a Thousand Projects*. There is no record of whether this project was ever completed. This is all I have been able to construct so far of Frank Heron's life prior to his collaboration with The Rocket Girls and my own particular field of interest. Clearly he continued his artsripts before disappearing and his collaboration with my father Will Challinor is all the more interesting considering my father's own interest in graphic art and his own writing. In fact my father's graphic experience seems to criss-cross with Heron's as they were both involved at times on editorial work, design, layout, typography, computer graphic interfaces, marketing and distribution concerns. I am however still to research the links between Heron and my father, Will Challinor and these will form part of the next section of my research.

N Alice Challinor, Stockholm 2020

N Alice Challinor Biography:

N Alice Challinor is the daughter of the writer and professor Will Challinor who spent a brief time in Stockholm at the Royal School on Skeppsholmen. Born 1995, she is now researching for her doctorate in Fine Art History specialising on the work of Frank Heron. N Alice Challinor is also known for her pioneering work in A.D.D. Art and its cognitive deceptions; she is the writer of an early book called *Super Art, Super Funding, Super Ficial* (2018, Konjak Press) and is currently working on expanding her research into the artist's documents for a definitive volume on Heron, called *The Critical Heron*. After a recent trip to Peshawar on the Afghan border, where she seems to have traced the last days of Frank Heron, her current headache however is what to do with all her father's archives and how to separate them from the work of Frank Heron. She is currently preparing the second volume in this series called *Alternative Geographies*.

N Alice Challinor has no time for hobbies or to hug Kafka.



ARTIST PORTFOLIOS

PER CHRISTIAN BROWN
JOANNA BRYNIARSKA
ELLEN CANTOR
MARA CASTILHO
MARIA CHEVSKA
ERIKA ERRE
SUNIL GUPTA
ALEX HODA
NATSUE IKEDA
EEMIL KARILA
IDA SUSANNA KOITILA
JUKKA KORKEILA
ALANA LAKE
MATTS LEIDERSTAM
HANNA MARNO
SHAHEEN MERALI
HAYLEY NEWMAN
ROBERT PRATT
TOPI RUOTSALAINEN
CATHERINE STORY
MARIANNA UUTINEN

PER CHRISTIAN BROWN



JOANNA BRYNIARSKA

Below: *Deer Hoof*, 2008, digital print on aluminium, 40 x 60 cm

Overleaf: *Motion Of The Flesh, Path Of The Fibre, Course Of The Blood*, 2009, framed digital print on foamcore, 240 x 164 cm



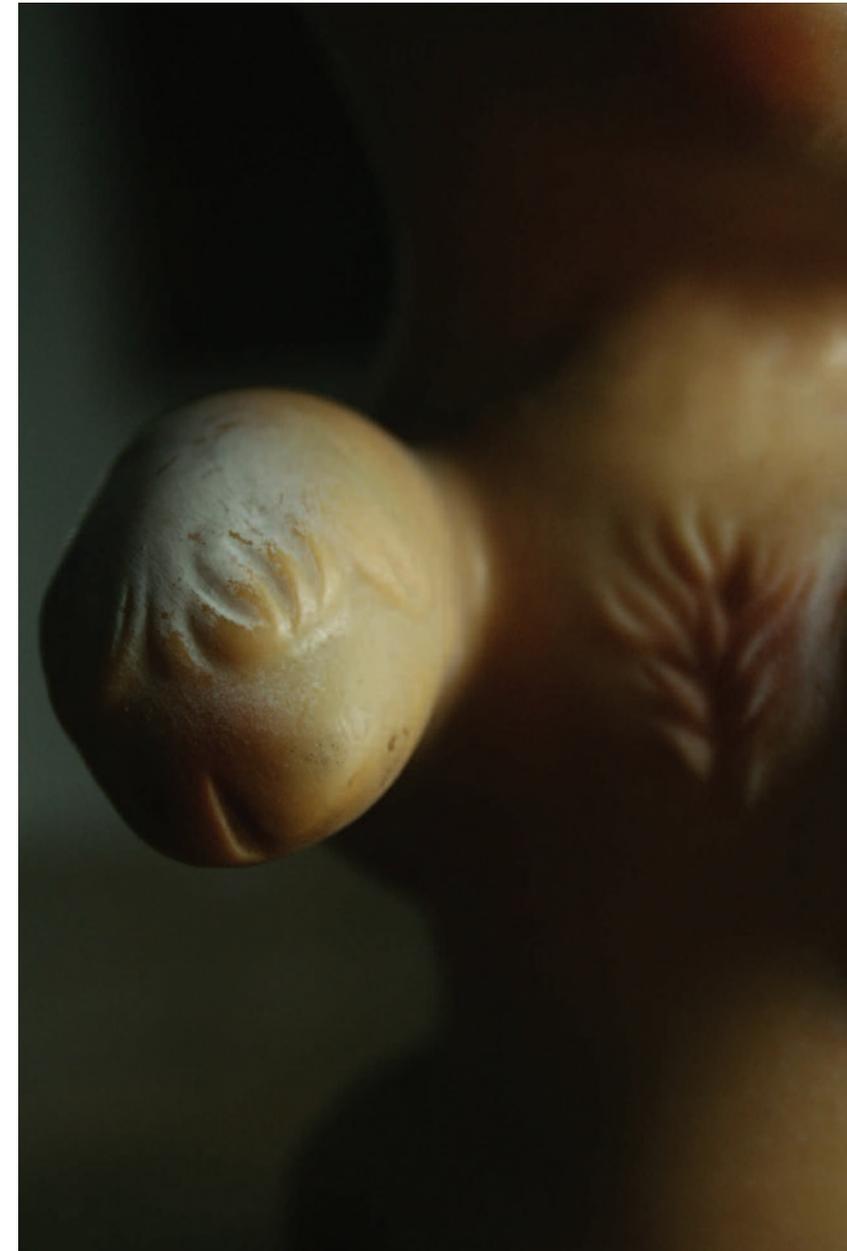
Above: *Nacht der langen Messer 3*, 2009, C-print, 120 x 100 cm

Page 86: *Power Play 1*, 2008, C-print, 100 x 80 cm

Page 87:

Top: *Nacht der langen Messer 2*, 2009, C-print, 120 x 100 cm

Bottom: *Nacht der langen Messer 1*, 2009, C-print, 120 x 100 cm



MARA CASTILHO

Castilho began her career in dance and theatre. She currently works in video, photography, installation and performance. Emptiness and loss haunt her works, drawing on themes of loneliness, femininity, suffering, loss, life and death; the complexity and duality of the human condition.

"The work for this exhibition *The River Between Us*, was made over many journeys across the former Yugoslavia after it collapsed in civil war. *The River Between Us* is part of several art works made during this journey. To explain the work I have to go back to the roots of my childhood. Born into a politically active left wing family, I was passionate about the socialist utopian ideal of a "perfect" society, which I believed existed in the former Yugoslavia. Later I was horrified by the way the disintegration of the country was done and how religion and ethnicity could legitimize genocide. I was a teenager when the war started in Yugoslavia and I was shocked by the images of young women like me, being raped and murdered by their own friends and neighbours. This was modern Europe at the end of the 20th century, and it has haunted me. A few years later I married a Muslim man from the former Yugoslavia. Our relationship broke down because of my own religious background. I am not a religious person, I am not baptised, I am an agnostic, but my family background is Catholic, and I cannot escape from that. Therefore in this specific work there are personal marks of a marriage broken by religious conflict. How can a faith, a religion - kill love, friendship, compassion...? I traveled numerous times around the former Yugoslavia obsessively looking for answers. The perplexity is pain carved in the chest. Here, the emptiness and the abandonment have the shape of a female body. For the work I gave my own body to all Catholic, Muslim and Orthodox women raped and murdered during this war. The river where I floated divides Muslims and Catholics. A wedding dress represents the eternal bride waiting for her lover. All these elements are aesthetic materials used through a personal journey, to explore universal issues, such as intolerance, indifference, loss, pain and love."





Above: *The Art Dealer*, 2008, video installation, dvd, glass box and water; 20 x 50 cm
Page 91: *Baby inside you*, 2008, video installation, dvd, glass bowl and water; 20 x 30 cm
Right: *The Common Girl*, 2008, video installation, dvd, glass box & water; 20 x 50 cm





ELLEN CANTOR

Pinochet Porn!

The dictator and his maid!

The aggrieved wife (*how could he do this to me?*)

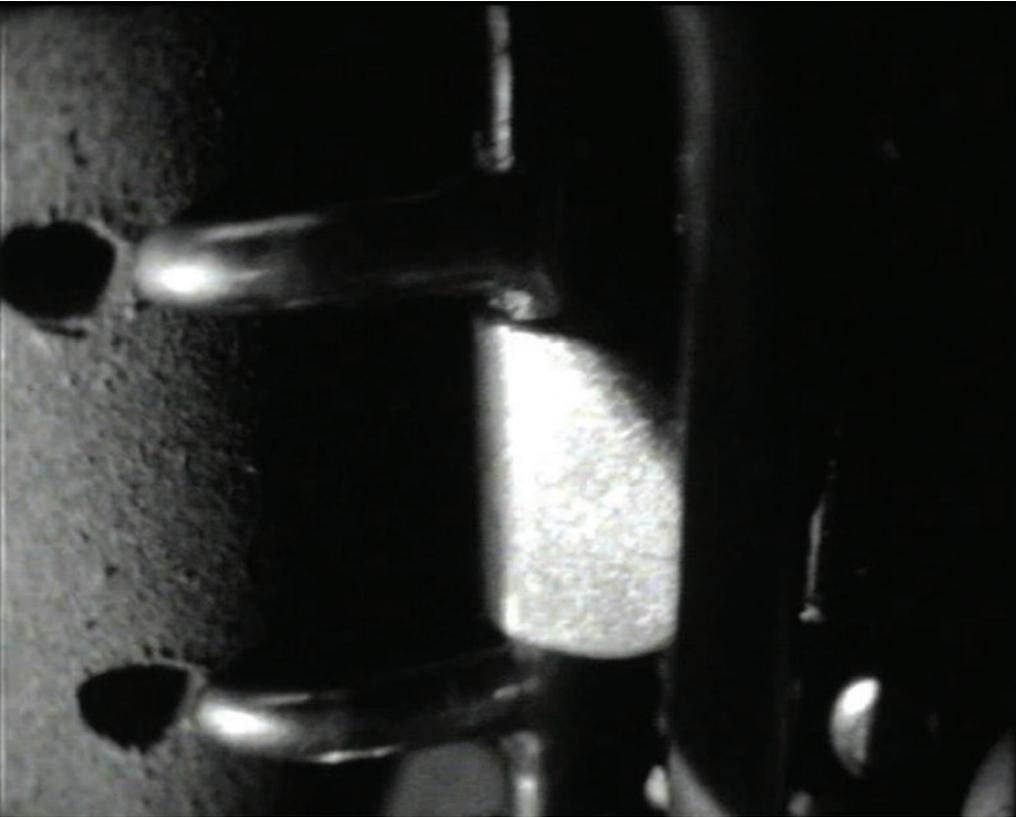
The identical sisters (and their toy boys)
Who grow up to share the same husband

A story of true love!!
and real loss

See the revealing tale of Paloma and her seven husbands!
A story of passion, betrayal, revenge and ultimate catastrophe

Is tragedy a choice??

Pinochet Porn, the saga of the seventeen year repressive regime, a reign of terror upheld by the United States of America, United Kingdom and the Pope himself.



“Pinochet Porn” is an epic soap opera about five children growing up during the pinochet regime, and their subsequent development into adulthood. This film is being created directly from an 83 page hand drawn story/film script “Circus lives from hell”.

Circus lives from hell, while disclosing the intertwined lives of five characters from childhood to adulthood, also reveals its nature as a microcosm of surrounding political discord, cycles of destruction, and mounting violence. The story is at once tragic and comedic, historically overarching and highly detailed in its specificity about actual things occurring in the lives of its characters, all obliquely revolving around the Pinochet regime in Chile. Although never explicitly stated in the drawings, segments of a particular history are made observable through circumstances of the individual lives depicted (unlike through a newspaper, particularly because a newspaper history of American supported dictatorships did not exist in the US). Within this story of circus life—complete with princesses and identical sisters, a boy who dresses like a clown, unicycles—childhood fantasy is permeated by structures of annihilation, which the characters later create in their own lives as adults. The story ends with the question: Is tragedy a choice? Lia Gangitano, Participant Inc, NYC.



Directed by: Ellen Cantor
Director of Photography: John Brattin
Art Director: Jay Kinney
Executive Producer: John Maybury

Narrated by: Pablo Leon de la Barra

Starring: Lia Gangitano, Michel Auder; Patrick Blumer; Ellen Cantor; Jim Fletcher; Andrew Haynes, Tristan Hughes-Freeland, Jay Kinney, Rosalie Knox, Harri Kupiainen, Danny McDonald, Brandon Olson, Annabel Sexton, Spencer Sweeney, John Thomson, Sofia Elisabeth Von Herrlich, Stephen Ward

with special guest Star appearances: Kerry Davis, Francesca Gangitano, Cate Giordano, Malcom Hamilton, Ryan Harman, Mateo Kamzelas, Nuutti Kataja, Debbi Martini, Carmel McMahon, Jo Murray, Emma Nilsson, Arturo Carlo Samperi Malagnino, Shandi Sullivan and more to come...

Assistant Editor: Simon Popper; Nikos Pantazopoulos
Camera Assistance: Cate Giordano
Copy Editor: Nikos Dimitros
Creative Production Assistance: Jill Herman
Technical Assistance: Clinton Curtis, Glen Fogel

MARIA CHEVSKA



Above: *head over heels and away*, 2009, mixed media

Right: *So tough and sultry*, 2009, oil on canvas

Page 100:

Top: *eye of the blackbird*, installation view at Tank (gallery), 2011, paintings: oil on linen, 31 x 26 cm, chairs, cobblestones, painted wall-text

Bottom: detail, oil paint on cobblestones, 2011, each approximately 23 x 12 cm





ERIKA ERRE

The Impregnation
(2007, beans, paint, silicon, Royal Academy Schools Gallery)

"With my semen, I stake a claim for arable land for my cluster of seeds, for my eggs that I lay. It is the excretion that seeps out and conquers the surrounding space. I'm the machinery that produces, delivers, gives birth to something, for our offspring, for posterity. My secretion brews and after the gestation period something will hatch, something viable. My identity is a process, a timeline, it is not just now, it is something that has been inside of me, and is outside of me, and my output will exist in the future as well.

This work had a second coming in June 2008 (Tennis Palace Art Museum, Helsinki, Graduation exhibition of Academy of Fine Arts) when I presented the same idea but on a bigger scale; the central work was about 3m high but it was also dispersed around Helsinki. What started in RAS Gallery in Hornsey, grew and escalated out of the gallery space and into the public space. The work was retitled: *Conceived By The Holy Spirit*.

One seed, one egg, one word, one truth
germinates, sprouts, hatches, grows,
multiplies itself into a mass,
conquers and spreads
sneaks, hides in holes and shadowy places.
Until it suppresses all others.
For good or evil!"

The Sweetest Thing On Earth
(2008, sugar, burnt sugar, FAFA Gallery, Helsinki)

"The abominable sweetness thrives and rises, melting into climax until it burns. The accelerated process feeds itself, eats itself, destroys itself. The sweetest thing on earth becomes ruined; for a lack of boundaries, for exorbitance, for being too much. The changed substance permeates the mass. Cavities increase.

I also presented this work in my solo exhibition in Helsinki (in KUVA's Kasarmikatu Gallery, 2009) but this time in a darkened room; here it was not so obvious what the material was, the focus was on the holes and the visitors had to come closer and wonder were the holes just painted, are they coming outward from the mass or going inwards? Some saw them as rats or cockroaches crawling and some as wounds, blood."





Above and right: *Conceived By The Holy Spirit*, 2008, beans, paint, silicon, mixed media
Page 104: *The Princess*, 2009, human hair; hair color; glue, mixed media



SUNIL GUPTA

Pre-Raphaelites Re-Visited: narratives of a gay life.

Sunil Gupta's series of 10 images titled 'The Pre-Raphaelites' has been produced in response to Autograph Director Mark Sealy's commission on work related to the Human Rights' Agenda with reference to India.

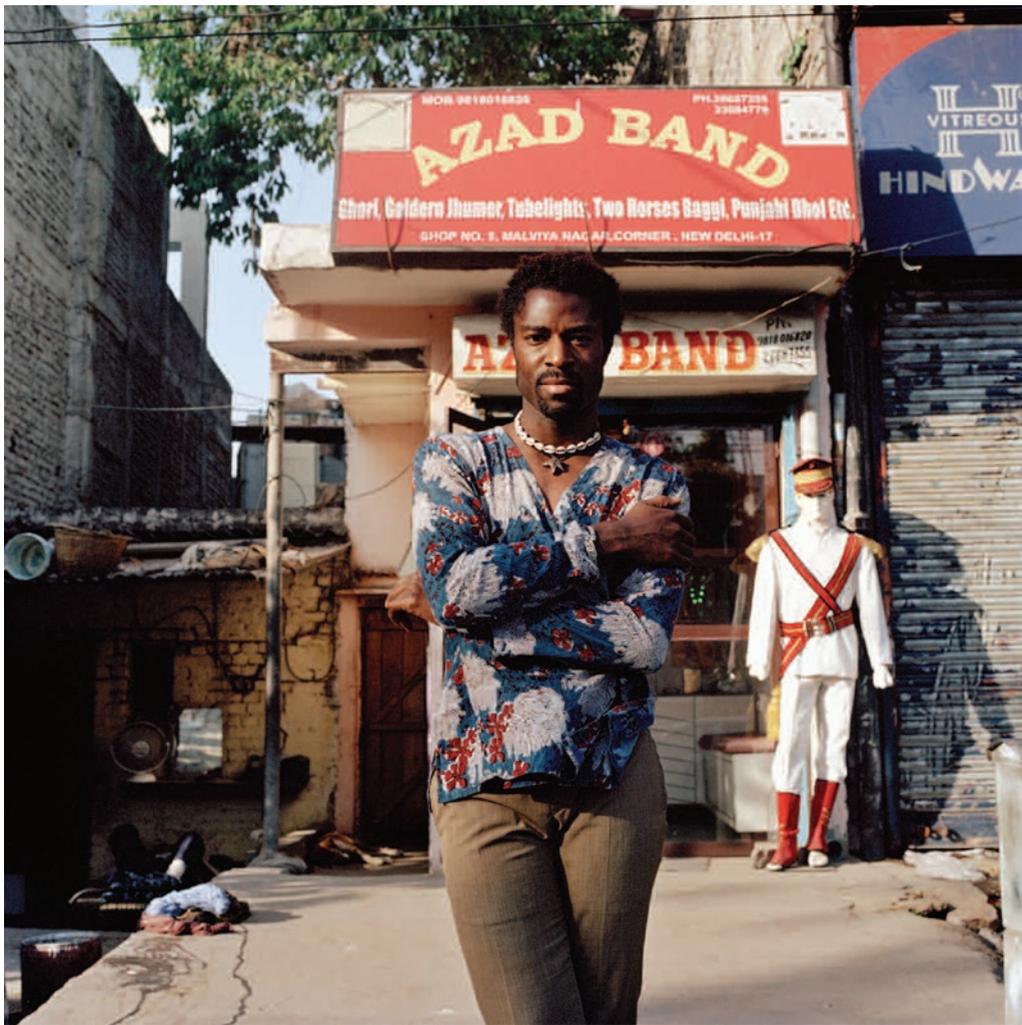
Currently under constitutional challenge at the Delhi High Court, section 377 of the India Penal Code is an archaic law instituted by the British in 1860 that criminalizes homosexuality. Also referred to as the Anti-Sodomy Law, section 377 has continually led to the arbitrary arrest and exploitation of large sections of Indians, mostly gays, bisexuals, and transsexuals. Inevitably this has led to a closet culture where alternate sexuality has been pushed underground making it very difficult to research and treat serious medical problems such as STDs and HIV/AIDS. The movement to repeal section 377 has been led by the Naz Foundation India Trust, an activist group concerned with restoring constitutional rights to this invisible group.

Sunil Gupta's photographic work over the last 30 years is an autobiographical documentation of a life's debate with issues of gender, sexuality, displacement and, since the diagnosis in 1995, HIV/AIDS. Sunil's direct, tight images have forced viewers to confront the hypocritical juxtaposition of accepted normative structures within alternate social realities. Sunil has photographed what he knows best, from the gut, and both his books are a testimony to that faith, the transparent interplay of private and public.

Sunil has been in the forefront of the gay rights' movement in India since his return. Within the last 4 years his activism has been the most compelling face in the media and the arts space in India. He is out there in the middle of the debate on section 377, speaking openly about his sexuality and empowering others to do the same. This dramatic moment had to find powerful representation and Sunil turned to the Pre-Raphaelites for inspiration when commissioned to make a series of images on a current contentious human rights issue.

The Pre-Raphaelites stood for a reformation of art, for attention to near-photographic detail and colour, the brilliance of which was meant to wipe out the "unstable areas of muddy darkness" that characterised the hypocrisy of the classical Victorian pose. The Brotherhood spoke out against the frivolous pomp of the 18th century, and meant to bring the arts back to sharply focused observation of the "truths of nature".

Sunil Gupta's series of 10 images deals with the 'truths' of posturing gay couples, single men and women, and families posing romantically between the cutting edge of desire and passion. An unwieldy combination of symbolism and realism, the photographs are filled with the intense luminosity of mythology while concentrating on models (real people) who occupy the spaces of criminal intent within the lines of section 377. Exotically coloured backdrops highlight brilliant costumes, and sometimes nude bodies with a precise devotion to detail that is magnetic. By his own admission, Sunil has evolved into working with the entire gender canvas to include those other protagonists of this struggle. The women portrayed in this series are living in the shadows of the gay movement, free of the criminality of sodomy, but hunted down by society and even burnt alive by their families who would rather bury them than face ostracism.



The implicit ideal of romanticism, of freedom being inseparable from responsibility, has always run a slender thread through Sunil's entire work. This time it has woven itself a tapestry of storytelling, as compelling as Tennyson's poem, the 'Lady of Shallot'.

Each 'new' Pre-Raphaelite image refers specifically to an original painting by one of the masters, for example John Everett Millais's 'The Bridesmaid', and 'Mariana' are clearly visible in two of Gupta's portraits.

Radhika Singh, New Delhi, November 2008

Epilogue

Delhi's High Court decriminalized homosexuality in India's capital, on July 2, 2009. The ruling can still be challenged by the Government in their Supreme Court but has yet to, despite serious religious pressure.



Above: *Mr. Malhotra's Party-Kaushiki*, 2007, archival ink jet print, 42 X 42"

Left: *Mr. Malhotra's Party-Diepiriye*, 2007, archival ink jet print, 42 X 42"

Page 108: *The New Pre-Raphaelites-Untitled #10*, 2008, archival ink jet print, 40 X 26.7"

Page 109: *The New Pre-Raphaelites-Untitled #11*, 2008, archival ink jet print, 40 X 26.7"



ALEX HODA

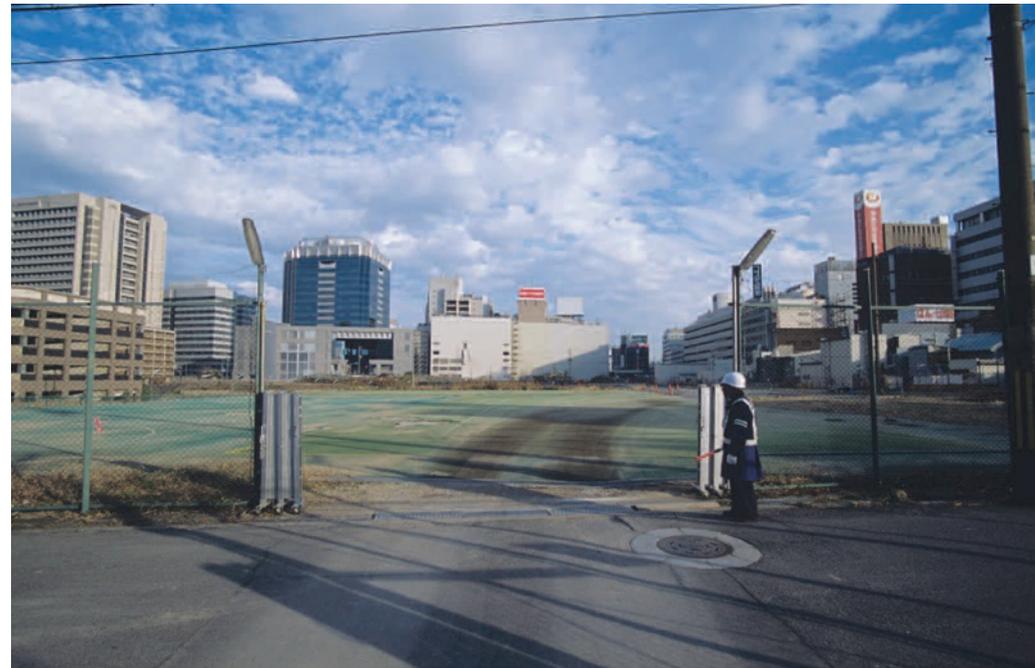
Below: *Shoehorn*, 2008, fiberglass, foam, latex, plastic, pva, resin, rubber
Right: *Pileup*, 2008, fiberglass, foam, latex, plastic, pva, resin, rubber



NATSUE IKEDA

The Disciple, video 8:51 (loop), 2009, dvd

"These photographs of a security guard standing by a gate at a wasteland in Japan were taken over a period of time. The photographs are then presented as still-image video. *The Disciple* is an ongoing series of works involving other subjects."



EEMIL KARILA

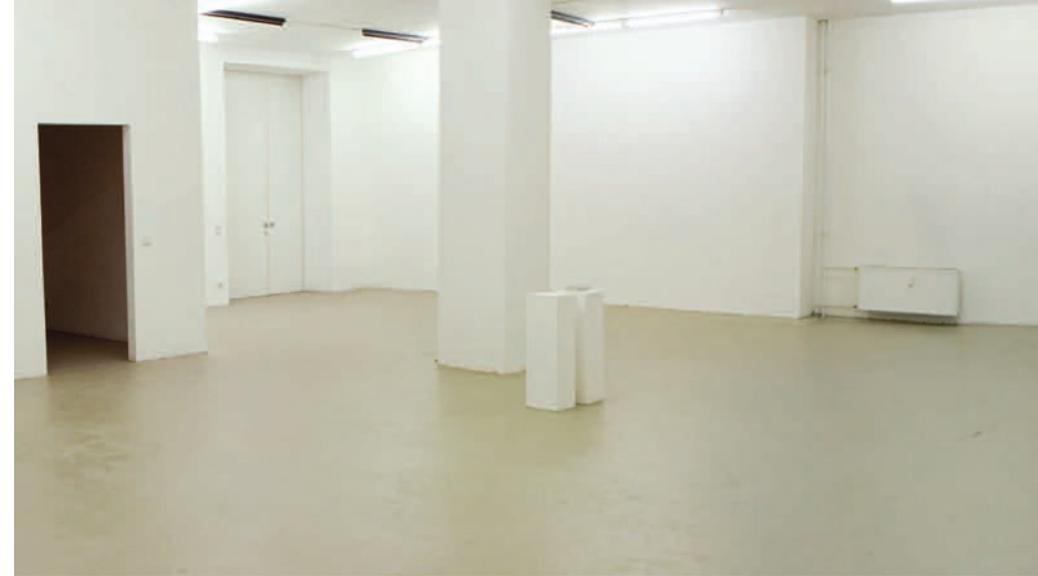


Surface Values

Program Gallery, Berlin, 2009

“The work was created in collaboration with Ludmila, the Ukrainian cleaning woman who cleans at the Program Galley. Uv-ink was added to her cleaning liquid which made her work visual under the uv-lights, which were set in the space. The normal lights switched on when the uv-lights turned on as they were connected to a timer: She didn't want her photograph to be archived on the internet, since her husband does not know that she is working in Berlin as a cleaner; and believes she works as a nurse.”

Photographs by Eemil Karila



IDA SUSANNA KOITILA

"We naturally associate one thing with another. While being awake our thoughts wander between phenomena that feels comfortable to combine because they follow the path of logic. But while dreaming or fantasizing, we emerge into a flow of associations based on intuition. By combining visual languages, techniques and materials I am constructing platforms for creative thinking. Portals into multilayered and paradoxical narrations. Complexity, narration and fantasy, are all central parts of my artistic practice.

In *Earthly delights* ("Who am I now when I'm dead", 2007, Gallery Fafa, Helsinki) I explored the desperate mind of a dishwasher, and the gap between the imaginary world and the reality. Later on in my works *Accumulation* and *I'm glad we're not together any more* ("What's on Second?", 2007, Royal academy Schools Gallery) the same theme returns, this time through the distracted mind of a housewife and her everyday life."

Below and right: *Taxi Driver*, 2008, installation view, mixed media, 680 x 800 cm





JUKKA KORKEILA

Remove the flying testicles.

Painting is a crying chameleon. Painting is a cake left out in the rain. Painting can be and become almost like anything. Painting is the most flexible medium of all. Painting is a still medium and a silent object, which only needs space and light. Painting is a time and space related medium per se.

One of my main concerns, as a visual artist, who uses painting as a medium, is the use of the spacial potential through painting. This interest is being directed especially by the use of wall painting. This process takes painting closer to the concept of installation. My work considers architecture. There are no bad spaces, only interesting challenges. The space around the painting is integrated to the work, as a part of the work, as a part of the totality, that surrounds the viewer. Wall painting is a continuation of the traditional easel painting and it can also be seen as a return to the roots of painting, going all the way down to the core of the beginnings: to the early cave paintings. Painting is a classic among the site specific arts.

Site specific work can also be seen as a strategy or a way for how painting can maintain it's vitality in the field of contemporary art. Most often the nature of the site specific works, especially, when I talk about my work, is impermanent. This quality erodes the persistant objectification of painting as a medium. With my work I want to show some openness and honesty on a personal and general level. This means a display of the matters, that matter to me. It is a monologue, an act of communication, that takes place on a stage in front of the society. As an artist, I believe, that my truth is more important than the truth of the others. My truth talks about my otherness, my personality and how they collide against the values of the society and the art world and what this all can result. Sometimes I find myself mapping the terrains of acceptability. Sometimes I can even find myself crossing the borderlines, with my work, only to find out, that I have transported my work into the land of censorship and denial. Even though these detours, I am still trying to push my work on, even harder. It is a serious process, but it can be loads of fun too. This is the life line of my art.

Flesh Memory Service was shown as a part of the "Painting, Space and Society" show at Gothenburg Konsthall, in the Swedish summer of 2007. It was again a collection of different notions revolving around painting and male sexuality. One of the starting points for my work was a true story, that I had heard from a friend, who was dating a man with two assholes. I was fascinated about the idea of two rectums. I decided to use the idea in a verbal form. I painted the words: "Think about a man with two assholes!" on a painting of a melting popsicle. Maybe the combination of the words and the image can work as a kind of spark plug for evoking the feelings of compassion.

Another idea was to use the classic black square and then to add some masturbatory images next to it. I placed *Mao's Red Moon* next to the black square. A guest at the opening of the show stated, that this is Korova Milk Bar, which is the famous bar from *Clockwork Orange*. The floor was lined with white wall-to-wall carpet, that would become dirty during the course of time. It would also be revealing the motions of the public. The ideas, the paintings and moments, as a whole, were put together and placed in the same room and this resulted in the show.

Above: *Dishwashers Delight*, 2007, washing-up crate, cables, textile colour, plastic dolphins, rag carpets, 48 x 48 cm



Cómo se Llega a Ser Lo Que se Es? was a solo show at Sala Luis Miro Quesada Garland in Lima. The Spanish title translates as "How to be what one is?" and it is the famous quotation by Friedrich Nietzsche. The sentence is still relevant and it is a difficult task to be what one is.

The wall painting installation consisted of four larger wall paintings and a set of works completed before the show in Helsinki. While I was preparing for this show, I was interested in the absence of the colours. So, my choice was to work with only black and white: black ink on white paper. Black is the colour of the imagination. Darkness imploding in the symbolical space of the black colour. Black also represents the darkness of the future, the dark side of the blinding speed of the progress and that of the market economy. In the Western societies the black colour is usually associated with death.

So, the works in the show are related to themes like death, sexuality, fragility of life ect. The central figure of the show was a kind of broken down superman: "El Superhombre". The show was built up intuitively and loosely, work by work around the idea of a mutating and the sexualized body of El Superhombre. As a whole, the show was a collection of different painterly means in a particularly playful atmosphere of Lima. The show was an experiment and a work in process with more loosely defined frames of actions, that eventually resulted in the show, that was rising from the moments in the hot summer of Peru.

There was a blank book for the comments of the public at the show. There we can see many different reflections about the show, that were basically addressed to me. To put it simply, there was love and hate in the air. The show created strong reactions from the public of Lima. There were recommendations to seek out psychiatric help: "I think you were raped, as a little girl, that is why you have this strange obsession with the penises! Go and get help for yourself! You need it!". On the other hand, there was one rather perceptive comment, that stated beautifully: "You are looking for your own truth in front of the society, do not care what the others say, your truth is more important!"

Jukka Korkelia



Above: *El Superhombre*, 2006, The 1st at Moderna, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, wall painting installation, photo: Jukka Korkeila
 Left: *Flesh Memory Service*, 2007, Gothenburg Konsthall, Gothenburg, wall painting installation, photo: Dorota Lukianska



Above: *Kahden maailman välissä*, 2011, oil on canvas, 30 x 30 cm, photo: Jussi Tiainen
Left: *Cómo se Llega a Ser Lo Que se Es?*, 2006, Sala Luis Miro Quesada Garland, Lima, wall painting installation, photo: Jukka Korkeila

ALANA LAKE

Thai Massage is a typology of massage parlours completed whilst in Helsinki. I was in Helsinki for a month taking part in The Construction of Identity in Artistic Practice. During my stay I explored the city and became intrigued by the district of Khalio. That is where these photographs were taken. I have used the title *Thai Massage*, even though all of the parlours are not Thai, as I like what the title conjures. This for me is a promise of the exotic. Themes replicated in the various shop fronts that give very basic information, but are enticing never the less. All of the images were taken from the same distance, to give uniformity. This distance and cropping replicates my own line of vision, giving subjectivity to the work. This also adds a sense of desire, as I am looking but not touching the object/subject of the work.

Below: *Thai Massage*, 2008, photographic series



Too much make-up. She mumbles as her hands twist slowly in her lap. She is Always On Time and very directional. "and turn". This is the shot. Ford Cortina, faux tan leather interior; radio chart rundown, sweat, grease, blood spots. She's up on the balcony smiling down to you - then she is the 40 foot wide grin on a billboard, her glossy lips don't complain and they won't ask for a second helping. Always in the distance. "Yes, they looked at your portfolio" - not sure whether to put it straight in the bin or on the notice board for a laugh. Expectant eyes, his hands are her loving restraints, I'm crying in the night did I let you down again. There she is, laughing this time - a little bit older and who's that in the background? "Can you keep your head still love, don't smile like that it makes your eyes wrinkle" A moment of grotesque clarity that cannot be made sweet. Look at her arch upwards, a natural, big full breasts. He still thinks I'm a good girl. I am a good girl aren't I? I want to grab her by the hair and pull her down, force her to take it. "Could you lift up your arm and toss back your hair". I keep looking at her; someone else's daughter and wondering if this is right. She's asking if I can open the window, she's not my problem, don't want her number anyway she's just a slag. It's not right, it's ok, she's got potential.

Alana Lake

Above: *She's Got Potential*, 2009, collaborative project with Fayann Smith, found image with text

Somehow we were left behind. No endless credit, no online order instant home comforts. No Weekend God. "I want you to dress for me, be available, don't look at me" We pace in scarlet solitude, pressed up against the enclosure glass, endlessly smiling, dulled. We exist hidden beyond our pantied promises and groans of fraudulent ecstasy. You cannot buy our real secret. Stood in doorways, nylon pantyhose, parted lips; precious cattle who didn't make it to the cool grass of suburbia, we wait for you. "Don't look at me" His hand explores the softness of her throat, an uncomfortable pressure. She is limp, he is hard, the night is flat, everything dead. A little girl hovers behind her mother's legs. This was centuries ago. Stage right I can see another dancer, the awkward ballerina now a sideshow to be feared or adored. It's a bitter clique. She is made-up. She is made up. Fictional? Too close not to be real.



MATTS LEIDERSTAM

See and Seen

The viewer/spectator of today may be of a new kind; globalization has accelerated the extension of the mobile phone to now becoming a viewing aid; our familiarity with the reach of modern surveillance technologies, the World Wide Web, the travel industry, and the American cultural hegemony through the apparatus of global mass media, together compels us towards a common gaze.

There are, and always have been, however; eyes/I's outside this hegemony. In contemporary art there have been class, racial, ethnic, queer and feminist positions as well as those challenges from the margins that read against the colonial enterprise that we find commonly embodied in representations. With these eyes/I's are where I locate my practice: to propose a gaze, perhaps of resistance or parallel to, yet different.

All my projects grow out of to my personal seeing experiences, my fantasies and desires. What interests me the most is how history leaks into the conceptions of the present.

My artistic method proceeds from two different traditions about how to approach an historical painting, namely the artist's and the scholar's. I should point out here that it is those conventions that identify and give meaning to the artists and art historians I refer to, for these terms are utilized in my work as two 'routines' to consider when approaching painting. The first routine is that of the artist who remakes the picture in a desire to learn about its coming into being; the other is that of the art historian who reveals the subject by analysing and gathering information about it and its context.

My method involves an attempt to find a form of complexity within historical representations, through a schematic, clear, lucid presentation in my installations – simultaneously providing me with the possibility of changing the focus and the narrator. With this method, I found that the gay man's gaze paradoxically mimics the amateur's love for paintings in a museum, as well as the art historian's research, all of which intersect in my installations in the exhibition space.

I have often tried to create images of the negotiation process that constructs the way we perceive pictures in art history. I use the original paintings as a starting point since they often relate to an existing canon within the history of, in this case, Western art, that is, the designated masterpiece as style and norm, a formula that I would like the viewer of my installations to scrutinize.

I would also like to say that my exhibitions, for example *Grand Tour* (1997-2007), also become a kind of portrait of me; all is established in relation to the embodiment of my gaze: the scale of the objects, the way the objects are spread on the tables, the height of objects in relation to my own height. In fact the supports, such as benches and chairs, are there to help the viewer to see from where I see. I know that I can never know what the viewer sees; however, in the exhibitions system, I have seen myself seeing, a kind of spectre of me appears when the viewers are in my installation, and when I install the work I am also imagining the viewer leaning over my tables, looking into my field scopes. I am, then, there with the unknown.

Matts Leiderstam

Pages 128/129: *Selbstbildnis*, 2002, cibacrome photo



Above: *The Female Enclosure (What she Thought she Wanted)*, 2009, collaborative project with Fayann Smith, flyers left in the men's toilets at Clifford Chance law offices, London



HANNA MARNO

Below and overleaf: *Yours forever coyote/My imaginary childhood in China*, 2008, Art Museum, Tennispalatsi, Helsinki City, plastic cast, fiberglass, acrylic glass, wood, alkyd paint, car paint and cold cathode lights



Top: Installation view, *Grand Tour*, 1997-2007
Bottom: *Grand Tour*, detail





Above: *Tragedy in coral*, 2008, plastic cast, painted and lacquered with car paint, size 5

Global Fictions.

It seems that the realm of humane action has been gradually subtracted from the role of the scientist, the politician and the economist; the historically trusted elective body that had been academically and politically resourced to act as the custodians of freedom and well-being. This concern, on the other hand, in the post-war period of the twentieth century, has been vigilantly guarded and envisioned by a lesser-resourced body of the arts and humanities, that may be considered less academically stringent, whilst its meandering language has maintained a rigorous dialogue with notions of freedom. This language is, of course, for the discursive arts, a seemingly pointless series of notations and wandering proposals that oscillates between the studied object and effect. It ruptures the hypocritical societal hold with naive combustions and enlightened pathways that divert the gaze back to the casual and causalities of our contemporary condition.

Post-war twentieth century history has been riddled with, guilt-ridden abstinence and conservative misappropriations by political scientists and economic philanderers which have led to the holocaust of people and inhumane actions, as punctuation marks in its corpus. This very sense of space, time and its effects has not escaped the politicized sensitivity of the arts nor of its artists; fine recollections can be gleaned by examining the works of the German expressionists, Georg Grotz or Max Beckmann, or the more recent evaluations of Thomas Hirschhorn and Alfredo Jaar which are further reflected in the facile writings of Hannah Arendt and the phantasmagorical salutations of Jean Baudrillard. The right to live in freedom and peace has been evoked in their works and most importantly has remained foremost in their thinking realities. Such ambitions seem to be vacuous in comparison to the scientific and economic invention of cluster bombs or the surveillance technology that so pervasively haunts our daily movements, or, to take a less extreme example, genetically modified food or plastic surgery—two lucrative methodologies with peculiarly dangerous side effects and toxic consequences for the masses constitution. This situation can be explained in the manner that particular factions of thinking and inventive intelligence have been appropriated into the consummation of knowledge by industry and areas of governance.

The world in the twenty-first century seems to be continually and perpetually spiralling into global chaos, its attention fixated by the forthcoming lack of energy sources, the eminent destruction of our natural resources and similar insurmountable of fecundity. This summation has been termed by Zygmunt Bauman as a liquid-modern phase, an apt term relevant for the emerging and unleashed urban migration pattern that is consuming cities and nation states and the paradigmatic shift in the ways mega-cities are acting as dumping grounds for the tribulations associated with globalization and global migration. The liquid-modern phase reminds one of the symbolic substrata in the science fiction film *Barbarella*, where the sub terrain, like a water table exuded a power that controlled the corporeal desire of the subjects; similar to the capitalist mode of gain on others' pain which seems to have constructed a hypocritical mode of operating. In essence, the world of *Barbarella*, the dystopia where human desires are exploited and controlled, and, as in the real world, the controlling substance is not found in the sub terrain, but in the shock of chaos as Naomi Klein writes, "minds seem like clean slates upon which we can write".

Key accented moments in the war on terror seem to provide the most caustic evidence of this shocking hypocritical bias. The invasion of Iraq and the continual struggle for a strategic hold on Afghanistan have been the most obvious examples of the scale that hypocrisy can reach as an institutional pogrom. War, it seems to be, is now a noun that enables one to think through the inequities and inequalities in which provide others some perverted sense of fulfilment. The illogical means with which we abuse our natural resources and our merciless displacement of refugees, for example, can all be accredited to the ways that we have become so abusive and irrational in our



Above: *Thanks to a Fine Secretary*, 2008, a ready-made mug, with a chip that was filled with putty-mix then painted with car and enamel paint

treatment of anything which remains "Othered" by our insatiable desires to own, to be pleased, and to be sustained. Yet, we are neither settled with our lot nor are we drawn into that particular secure zone that is called society. Amongst all the ills that have been inflicted upon our normal lives, from food shortages to the enormity of the credit crunch, we are caught further off guard by the growing pains of religiosity; a religiosity that preys on human insecurities and hypocritically uses it as an opiate as well as a holding pen for afflicting violence towards divisive ends. A recent poll by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has concurred with the widespread belief that faith has become the new social evil of the 21st century. From a list drawn up by the Quaker Foundation came the surprising result elicited from a survey of a group of 3,500 people who responded, in somewhat dismaying terms, that religion was a divisive framework that fuelled intolerance and spawned "irrational" education and other questionable policies.

If faith inspires hatred and prejudices throughout the world, as is evident in the manner with which religion is used as a guiding principle for the persecution of women, gays and the "unbelievers" (an umbrella term which includes people who believe in other faiths from the one to which the questioner adheres) then could we add to the ever growing list, religion, as another "scourge of humanity;" a hypocritical industrialised means to an end alongside slavery, human trafficking and gambling.

Slavery, together with the whole gamut of other social evils, has provided a subject matter with which the history of art, from William Hogarth's prints to Keith Piper's digital works, has dealt, in an evocative yet tempered way in recognizing its role in the gamble for modernity and colonialism.

A number of artists works provide multiple entry points into that which is absolutely complex, unconditionally a quotidian of the oppressed and, rather than make the audience feel guilty, their brave notations help us to manage complex information, often historical but also from realms that seem to be remote or even removed from our ethical base. These are also important in the way, some artist's works give a voice to the subaltern, whilst engendering a space in which to evaluate the extent of depravity that has become a daily reality in their lives. The growing mass of subalterns, live as they do, precariously, without shelter, land or food, the "finality" of their circumstance analogous to rape, maiming and killing inflicted during the conflicts such as Darfur, Rwanda, Gujarat or the Congo. In analysing such depravity, artists enable a wider community, the audience, not only in bringing to their space of exhibiting a further much needed description of the series of events, but allow for a desperately needed re-evaluation from that which we have not been able to escape – the consistent rancour, the affliction of global fight, the incessant prejudice against ageing, poverty and crime, and yet, these conditions remain an absolute, even indexically linked in terms of caste, religion, tribalism and the tireless race for the promotion of majority thinking.

A majority of contemporary artists, who have considered such brave endeavours from Dihn Q. Le to the Chapmann Brothers, have respectively used the visual plane to act as vortexes that spin in and around the axis of religious or national iconography and iconoclasm within the contemporary, exploring the fundamentals of hypocrisy. These works present invaluable insights into both the presence and power of the various fundamentals within our cosmopolitan cultures – triggering further thoughts about their role in tropes used to create separation as an aspect of polity, history and violence. Such individual and succinct statements are invaluable in a time when so much is done and said in the name of religion, nation building or state security yet so much remains painful and awful about a world that we still cannot call our own. Artists can produce art, but thinkers can produce definite statements in an invaluable, accessible manner; for us to be able to evaluate our contemporary crisis and to visualise the plight of others and systems in a manner that can only be termed as metarendering.

Living as we are in times of war; war in the east, war in the west, war inside and outside ourselves, it has become apparent that we are either surviving the pathos and unilateral triumphalism while constantly enduring the bombardment of the media or reacting in a detached manner that can best be described as having fragmented our humanity. In neglecting the reality of our times, we have lost contact with the notions of resistance and struggle that have created the current form of civilization which we today call society. The lack of regard towards Iraq and Afghanistan, the meaninglessness of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, and the murderous tribulations of border control are not far from the crying shame that we call Kashmir or the tedious bloodletting that continues to happen in Darfur.

Africa and Asia have become a battlefield, continents in which the traumatic butchery of its citizens from within and without continues into the new millennium. Incendiary devices have replaced cash crops and a mix of stagnated policies of change, growth and peace has been replaced by hate mongering and machismo. The media, consistently focusing on the enormous scale of international catastrophes, is absent in reporting the continuing abattoir that we have learned to call independent nations, because as Klein refers, that to "control the adversary's will, perceptions and understanding and literally make an adversary impotent to act or react" justifies the sham of silence and of the refusal to make judgment. In psychology, hypocritical behaviour is closely related to the fundamental attribution error; individuals are more likely to explain their own actions by their environment, yet they attribute the actions of others to 'innate characteristics', thus leading towards judging others while justifying their own actions. This has replaced any strength and conviction, including the invaluable potential for mediation and for the education of its audience that such honest opinions afford. Artists, filmmakers, and writers have found fertile ground in which to express their despair not only about the loss of lives, but also about the loss of voice in our current, tumultuous hypocritical times.

We have learned to live in this state of hypocrisy, where the hypocritical oath has replaced the Hippocratic oath normally taken by doctors. Meanwhile, politicians, government workers and policy makers are acting within the verge that can only be described as duplicitous. The Hippocratic oath had been a guiding principle in salvaging life and guarding against human loss, a philosophical space that imbues the goodness of humanity and its efforts to help those in dire straits. Under this guise of hope, humanity has established and worked within codes of practice that has allowed the basic concerns of the other to be met.

The history of art is indebted to those fragmentary, but explicit statements that have been made at times of political and social hypocrisy and widespread war and genocide, from Goya to Hogarth to Picasso to Heartfield. They all embody a great statement made by Hannah Arndt, "Never Again". Yet, here we are, seemingly resourcing and feeding the largest accumulation of weaponry and killing machines ever designed. Artists have been invaluable in recording such turbulent acrostic contiguities and are able to then seize on that moment to the absolute in its vindication. Without the work of such visionaries, we would remain acquitted of the Holocausts and genocides that surround us. As one of the soldiers at Abu Ghraib said, "if it wasn't for the photographs, we would not have known of the existence of Abu Ghraib". So images are key, even if they are images that have been leaked, in allowing us to understand the real construction of our times. The question remains: will we ever acknowledge that it is us who are committing these atrocities, these unspeakable acts of misogyny and horror? Or will it always be someone else? The "Other" who so conveniently and silently bears the untold consequences of our hurried and hypocritical accusations.

Shaheen Merali © 2009

Pages 138/144: *Tribute to Donald Rodney*, 2009
Image credit: Nadine Dinter









HAYLEY NEWMAN

MKVH (Milton Keynes Vertical Horizontal)
Milton Keynes, 29 March 2006 - 1 April, 2006

"MKVH (Milton Keynes Vertical Horizontal) was a one day road trip in which a group of volunteers were driven around the Milton Keynes road grid until their coach ran out of diesel. On the coach, passengers formed relationships, their roles and characters developing over the 38 hour period of our journey. These relationships were further explored in MKVH (The Screenplay) at the Milton Keynes Gallery, 2008. Written in the form of a film script and based on the original *Easy Rider* screenplay, MKVH (The Screenplay) included transcripts of conversations, photos, drawings and diary entries made on our journey."



TOPI RUOTSALAINEN

“In my recent paintings I have depicted everyday motifs, capturing moments where a seemingly random assemblage of characters are brought together to form what seems almost like a group portrait, often viewed from behind. The gaze of the many pictorial figures is turned away from the viewer rendering them as outsiders.

I am fascinated by the early German Romantics and their determination to romanticise all that is familiar and everyday, to show it in a new light. I try to incorporate into all my work an element of the unexpected, the non-existent even. I seek to depict the invisible action, the tension and the hierarchies that arise between people, the way people inhabit their own bodies and their responses to other bodies around them. It is as though the figures are striking a pose – not for the painter but rather at and in relation to each other. Indeed, it is the relationships and dynamics between the figures that give rise to the action in my paintings. With their turned backs, the figures are of course also a reflection on the very act of viewing art. Like the spectators, the viewer is left to search for meaning and to create their own personal relationship with what they are seeing.”



Above: *School trip*, 2008, oil on canvas, 75 x 140 cm
Left: *Queue*, 2008, oil on canvas, 65 x 89 cm





Above: *In summer clothes*, 2008, oil on canvas, 66 x 66 cm



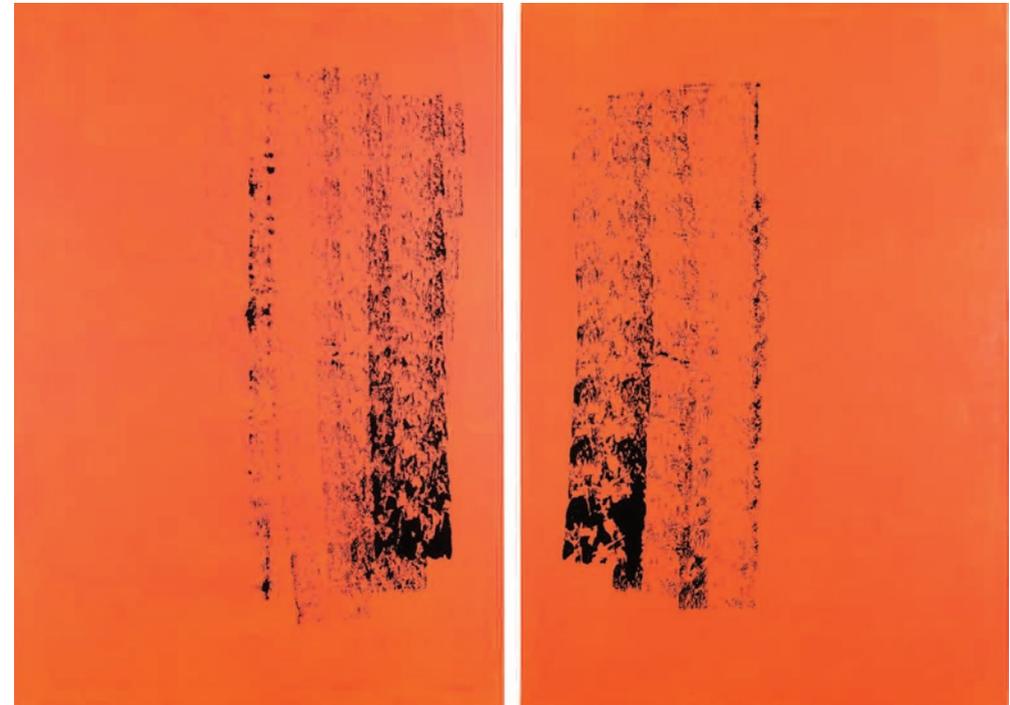
Above: *Camouflagers*, 2008, oil on canvas, 200 x 170 cm

CATHERINE STORY

Dog (I), March 2008, archival digital print, Valtteri flea market, Helsinki



MARIANNA UUTINEN





Above: *Boy*, 2006, acrylic on canvas, 195 x 254.5 cm
Previous page: *Idiot*, 2005, diptych, acrylic on canvas, 230 x 330 cm
Right: *Memoryfun*, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 240 x 200 cm
All photos by Jussi Tiainen

State of Boredom: Art and Identity Construction

Pilvi Kalhama

My task is to summarize two symposiums, the first of which began in London (July 2008) with an interesting speech by Irit Rogoff, researcher of visual cultures at Goldsmiths university. After her talk there were more more than a dozen interesting speeches from artists and researchers, fascinating shows springing from this thinking, as well as a three-week workshop on the topic. After London came the last artistic investment of this kind, another workshop for the participants in our laboratory, and a final exhibition. I believe we amassed plenty of quality material. My purpose is not to make a summary of the talks but instead I wish to end the project by summing up something general and to perhaps open up new thoughts from here on.

I will try to analyze identity construction from the point of view of the artist as well as the experiencer/recipient. Perhaps these cannot be completely separated from each other; but I think it is important to understand that identity construction not only concerns the creating artist. I believe that the fundamental character of art in the forms it manifests itself today is located in its ability to move something in the minds and identities of us spectators. Therefore I think that artistic production, the sub-theme of our laboratory, is something that continues in the receiver of the art after the actual work is ready.

So I will close the circle of two theoretical symposiums by making some final comments on Irit Rogoff's interesting thoughts, our starting point. For example, she made a remark on the relationship of the analytical and the imaginary. She summed up this idea by saying that philosophy and theory – that is to say thinking – assume their visual form in the artistic gesture. To me the most noteworthy thing about this definition is its important set-up: the origins of art are seen in thinking and not necessarily in the visual culture as such. Generally in art history people talk about how art blends into and takes its material from the visual culture. I think that this tells only a partial truth

about contemporary art, which deals with identities and constructing them visually. For me it seems very black and white that current theoretical analyses often explain art through its visual merits and forms. I will go as far as to assert that art cannot compete solely with its visual merits in today's visual reality. This is a hard claim, but let me clarify my ideas a bit.

When we look at young artists or converse with them in a teaching situation, at least I as a theoretician and researcher usually stress the mental aspect of art in particular: without thought there is no work, only a formally organized visual presentation. This tends to be a hard fact for young creators, because of course it is very easy to go along and produce more material into our common visual reality. But the question is: does that suffice for artishood, and is that enough to capture the recipient of art? I claim that generally speaking we are already up to our ears with all kinds of easily watchable and recognizable visual material. Therefore just overloading the world with another flood of images cannot be the function of art.

In this visual world, art should rather assume a critical position in relation to all the visuality, it has to fight for living space, and take its place on some other sector. If I compare art and theory, this is the pattern: when it comes to theory, we first find an interesting topic, then phrase the question and only after this the research takes its final form. Correspondingly in art, thinking comes first and only through content can we define the visual realization of each work. The manifestation of art is not only something exterior, taken from the outside – something that looks like something. The visual means come from within. For this reason research (as well as art today) is to the highest degree that what the author – the artist – is as a personality and an identity.

In today's visual world we are used to a flood of images flowing by with increasing speed. Art does not fit in this mould. On the contrary, art demands calming down, concentrating, processing and pondering. Boring? Perhaps this sounds tedious and dull to people who seek a fast flow of images. That is why we cannot consider art as a part of our mundane visual world and the general public that consumes it. The audience of art is elsewhere. The slow processing of art – its tediousness – is its power. In this form it appears liberating to those who want to make a critical comment regarding existing in the world. It is liberating to the audience, whose capacity to receive information visually is exceeded during a working day, at school and in free time in the contexts of our medialised culture.

Art is a place where individuals are invited as they are, and as themselves; maker and experiencer alike. Art still remains a place in our culture where there is space for thinking – in a critical way. Art is a place where we have a chance to produce reality freely. It means to produce reality and not only represent it.

Where is artistic production situated? In the maker or in the experiencer? Rogoff suggested that we should "rethink over the notion of site specific art". I share this thought with her: Site specificity, which is abundantly talked about and theorized in art theory right now, for me does not only mean the site of the work's physical presence, but the site of the interpretations of the work and the experiences derived from it. Thus art is situated in individuals – in the interpretation and narration of an individual. And it goes without saying that the experiences in art are also the recipient's – not just the maker's – experiences.

What kind of a process is it to encounter art? What kind of a personal inhabitation is art and how is identity/self constructed through the slow processes of art?

As Rogoff notes, the experience of the experiencer of art can be characterized as “a sense of being here.” Experience is in relation to the inhabitation of the work. Receiving art is usually understood as interpreting art, but it refers to observation that is somehow detached and objective. It is more to the point to talk about translating art, because the research and study of art demands a temporal location. Most importantly, translating art is linked to a subject. Rogoff talked about experiencing art in the present tense and of art as a temporal thing: art’s contemporaneity means the position where you locate your mind. In the moment of translating, the work becomes identified. Thus the experiencer of art – the artist or recipient – inhabits the space of the work. The translation of art cannot be understood as a study of an object. It is rather a question of translating the position/location of art, or “understanding art in your own words.”

Understanding in your own words has a key position in art. Over the whole of this project we heard many talks about constructing identity and equally heard many interpretations of the topic. Art is a place where there are options and room for thinking differently. It suggests something to us, but does not require us to take the suggestion literally. Art is not like a straightforward advertisement. Therefore even provocative art does not claim to state the truth about identity, but gives a viewpoint to the discussion, something to think about, material for processing our own identity. Through personal inhabitation we construct our respective viewpoint to the art we have seen and experienced.

Thus art requires thinking also from the recipient – in addition to direct experiencing. In this sense art is a slow instrument. You cannot just consume it with accelerating experiences; indeed art demands that the experiencer, too, has time to pause in front of it. The history of art is full of examples of how a process instigated by art is comprehended much later, after years or decades. Art’s task is not to compete on the increasing and overheated “image market” but to capture the experiencer by other means. Is the slowness of art thus a state of dullness? Not at all, since art is a place for conversation and dialogue that can be difficult and complex when it hits a right and important topic. It is like an analogue to the word “identity”. Identity is an area that we construct slowly throughout our lives. Art functions in the same area, and with the same slow mechanism. However slow and exasperating it may be at times, it is a necessity and an endless passion to us human beings.

Pilvi Kalhama



IDENTITY IDENTITEETTI

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