

It's About Time

Masters of Fine Arts
Graduating Class of 2009
Academy of Fine Arts
Umeå University

Ah, I like time.
Once I had a really good one.*

* *The artist:* So what is the exhibition about?

The curator: It's about time.

The artist: Ah, I like time. Once I had a really good one.

(AS TOLD BY DUTCH ARTIST WILLEM DE ROOIJ)

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Introduction

ON CHAOS

Sofia Curman

For the last year I have had the privilege of following eight artists through a unique and crucial period in their development – the final year of a long art education. This is a time for positioning oneself and for taking the next step into the reality we call the art world. It has been an adventure, but of course it is only the last episode in a journey that these students have been on for many years. It is striking that eight students could begin at the same place, but end up at such diverse destinations (though graduation is, of course, more of a pit stop than a destination). I have often wondered how the same environment, the same lectures and teachers, could inspire such a wide range of results.

One obvious, though simplified, answer would be that Umeå Art Academy offers an unusually dynamic environment that encourages its students to choose their own paths. But there is another more elusive answer; the small unnoticeable differences in how we absorb the world give rise to diametrical differences in how and what we communicate about it, what could be called the chaos of the artistic journey.

This book is an attempt at ordering the chaos brought about by eight artists' journeys. The goal has been to clarify and make intelligible something that is actually impossible to categorise or file. It is an attempt to condense all the studio talks, discussions and notes that have been exchanged, into an entity within which each story can unfold and become comprehensible. This order is, of course, an illusion. Outside of the book the same fruitful chaos as before prevails.

In chaos theory, or mathematical research into non-linear, dynamic or complex systems, seemingly insignificant differences, a matter of decimals, in input lead to major unpredictable variations in outcome. In other words, a butterfly flapping its wings in the Amazon might cause a hurricane over the Atlantic.

One aspect studied in chaos theory is self-organisation, which is probably practiced by the artist to a higher extent than anybody else. A process that has its origin in simple or arbitrary circumstances, for example in an art student's studio, can produce complex activities and have unforeseen consequences. The paint brush slips and an unexpected form takes shape. The lens of the camera finds something that the eye does not pick up until in the dark room. The lyrics of the song in the head phones seep into the brain and back out through the hands. A neighbour from the studio next door makes a comment, or has an insight that completely rearranges the initial intention.

Later it is of course almost impossible to determine which of these small shifts and changes in a process were truly decisive and brought about the ever-surprising point at which the piece reaches its final destination. Art is full of unwieldy decimals. If we leave them be, one decimal error, one butterfly flap, can result in breathtaking art hurricanes.

Can't language be considered a chaotic system as well? In the lan-

guage of art, seemingly insignificant differences, the choice of words for instance, can have unforeseen consequences. This is where we need to pay close attention. In this book, each practice is introduced by a different writer. These writers were chosen by the individual student on the basis of an affinity for the writer's language, in order to best interpret the chaos of the particular artist. In addition, I have selected three perceptive writers, who by looking closely into the students' work, their texts about their work, or their questions about art have identified a variety of themes that connect these students' practices.

While I write this, everything is still quite chaotic. As a curator and editor I find inspiration in how these artists handle their unruly decimals. I remind myself that this book will be the result of all the unexpected changes that happen throughout a process this extensive, and that when it's ready to leaf through, and to circulate, it will live a life of its own. The great thing about a graduation show catalogue is that it will continue to exist long after the exhibition has been disassembled, the students' studios have been emptied and will probably outlive everyone involved in its creation.

It's About Time is the title of this book. And of course in many ways it is. Everything is always about time in one way or another. In chaos theory, time is crucial. Time is what makes chaos happen. After all those years in art school, one could also argue that it's about time these eight students graduate and start showing the world what storms a modest artwork made in Umeå might provoke.

And to continue paraphrasing Willem de Rooij, who generously lent us the title for this catalogue; I like time. This year I had a really good one.

TO KNOW THAT ONE DOES NOT KNOW

Elin Wikström, Professor

For this year's examination Magni had moved his paintings from the studio into one of the school's project rooms. On chairs placed in a half circle the class, the tutors and Milou Allerholm, art critic at Dagens Nyheter and invited as external examiner, were sitting. Some of the paintings were hung; others were leaning against the wall behind us. Throughout the presentation paintings were taken down, carried away and others were brought forward. Towards the end of the review Milou pointed out how different it is to sit down and look at a painting for a long time as opposed to standing in front of it for a couple of minutes the way that you often do in exhibitions. The comment made me aware of how little time exhibition visitors and critics spend with art works and how brief the reports and articles about the works are on the radio, TV and in news papers, in comparison with how we watch, experience and talk about the students' work at the school. For example, in Mariel's presentation several films were included. She works in the borderland between performance, installation and film. For us to be able to discuss the work, Mariel gave us the opportunity to watch the films in their entirety on the evening before the examination. If all the schedules that have been posted on the school notice board were placed in a pile, the hours that teachers and students spend looking at, experiencing and talking about art, sitting or standing, in studios and exhibition spaces, would become as tangible as the sand in an hour glass.

The teaching of the students at the school is shared between several tutors and guest tutors. In addition to that, each class has a supervisor who is responsible for their tuition. That is the role that I have had in the group now leaving the master program. The supervision takes place twice a semester, and involves a three hour review of each student's work, divided in two parts, one with me and one with the whole class. In total that makes quite a lot of hours... In the discussions of the work at these reviews we make use of our different experiences of producing and consuming art. The reviews differ from other conversations in that they have as their starting point a shared art experience.

Time can be measured, there are instruments for that. What the conversations actually give us is harder to gauge. A conversation is fleeting, always an activity in the present. It produces a web of after-effects that cannot be comprised at a glance. Meaning cannot be tied in with just one thread or fixed with a stitch. My experience is that all time spent looking at, experiencing and talking about art makes us feel braver and more independent in the making of it, and in the heated discussions that can occur in the encounter with art. In conversation it is not wrong to disagree, on the contrary it is important that we dare to do just that. For us to be able to evaluate, try and question one another's arguments in depth, those conversations need to stretch over a longer time period, and in between we need enough space to digest and process them. In a fruitful

To know that one does not know

dialogue about art we end up on a different level of comprehension and knowledge. To know that one does not know can be paralysing, but it is a paralysis that is necessary for us to stop and think. Knowing means being able to combine thinking and doing without reducing one to the other.

Opinions have agreed and collided. About the title of Jan Tore's exhibition, the presentation of the interviews in Fanny's installation, what new materialism stands for and the connection to Magni's painting, the problems and possibilities with working in a group like Carl-Erik, about similarities and differences between Lee Friedlander's and Mattias' ways of depicting themselves impersonally, how Mariel's installations differ from the Funhouse, the choice of frames for Emma's found photographs, why Stina's drawings but not her paintings work placed on the floor.

Keep up the exchange of opinions, in and through art!



Studio talk, fall 2008. Photo: Fanny Carinasdotter

POSTSCRIPT

Roland Spolander, Department Chair

No doubt art can be founded on drawing, drafting and the sensations of taste, as we have often claimed, ever since the birth of the art school, any European art school, a few hundred years ago. Art was seen as an activity alongside humanity, subordinate to the systematic presence and demands of Nature. We shaped the world and shaped ourselves into greater sophistication, into a truth which competed with nature's truths, over which we had no control. Today, the situation can be seen as an accommodation to theatrical stagings in which we can enter, then exit, after a moment's entertainment.

Today we can also imagine what humanity produces in the "workshop of symbols" from other perspectives. Not because we see art and truth as competing means of human expression and systems of thought, but due to the simple fact that now, humanity itself, whether the lone individual is part of a "we" or not, assumes responsibility for art as act. Art is not an object alongside man, something that can be delivered out of humankind as a thing, a product, a few more dots in the global financial production of symbols.

Art can no longer be placed outside either humanity or the perception of humanity, just as the art school cannot be placed alongside its students. In fact, the students are the art school.

Artists

Magni Borgehed

Auctioneer, in his forties

Reporter, in his thirties

Unfinished Building Opposite, in his teens

Reporter: It's sad about the fire, I hope you didn't lose too much. I only saw inside once, I could have spent hours in those storerooms...

Auctioneer: There were rooms filled with antique paneling rescued from demolished castles. Some had chairs from all periods and countries stacked to the ceiling...

Reporter: I remember one room ... hundreds of chandeliers hung from the rafters!

Auctioneer: I used to go in there for a walk after work, get lost...

Unfinished Building Opposite: It could never have happened here. I have sprinklers, bulkheads, coatings ... the fire wouldn't have spread through me like that.

Auctioneer: The craftsmen, upholsterers and restorers are relocating to new facilities, what's left will go on sale as it is.

Unfinished Building Opposite: I'm jealous of that auction house. No cladding, it is what it is. I'm just a framework, pasted over with tiles. Sometimes I look at the window casements opposite and wonder what it's like to be stone, to be as solid as that old place.

Auctioneer: Sometimes I look at the new offices opposite and wonder what it's like to know nothing of these treasures of ours, just go home blank, sit on the bus with a paper at the front.

A Porcelain Vase, in her sixties

An Earthenware Vase, in her sixties

Porcelain: Well, what did our new owner say? I heard him talking to you after he unpacked the both of us.

Earthenware: I like him, I've never been handled with such care...

Porcelain: I still feel charred, I want to be cleaned again and repositioned.

Earthenware: I like our new spot! Come on, it's much better than the storerooms. We should be glad we survived the fire!

Porcelain: I suppose I'd hoped for something more. Well,

go on, what did he say?

Earthenware: He told me he loved this house, that it grew up out of the soil and the lives of those that had lived in it, needing no grand architect ... That it was built from fine threads of tradition, from a sense of delight in the meadow and wood and river...

Porcelain: Well that's not much use to us is it? I can't see any trees or river ... you're blocking my view!

Earthenware: From my spot I can just about see the clover meadows and the little elm-crowned hill in the next county

... I have a clear view of the barn here with its beautiful sharp gable, the grey stone sheds and the flank of the earlier house and its little gables and grey-scaled roof...

Porcelain: I can't stop thinking about our missing labels, I don't know how I should behave, how I should carry myself.

Earthenware: Well it won't change much, will it, knowing more about ourselves?

Porcelain: But it will make things clearer; boost our confidence!

Earthenware: How will it help us now? Our labels were lost in the fire, that's the end of it.

Porcelain: It could cheer us up ... it could mean we get a bit of an airing now and then, travel a little.

Earthenware: That would be nice, you're right ... but knowing our provenance is lost, I feel lighter, fitter ... I can be whatever I want!

Porcelain: It's not too much to ask is it, another polish and a better position?

Earthenware: I'm happy where I am for now.

Porcelain: It's not much to ask.

Two Lone Labels, in their twenties

First Label: A Fine and Important Earthenware Vase, the oviform body with fluted vertical bands and concentric rings at the top in a green matte glaze.

Second Label: A Porcelain Vase, the spherical body and cylindrical neck in a celadon craquele glaze, with pale green mottling and a small section with red speckling, kiln crack on underside filled at a later date.

Iori Wallace



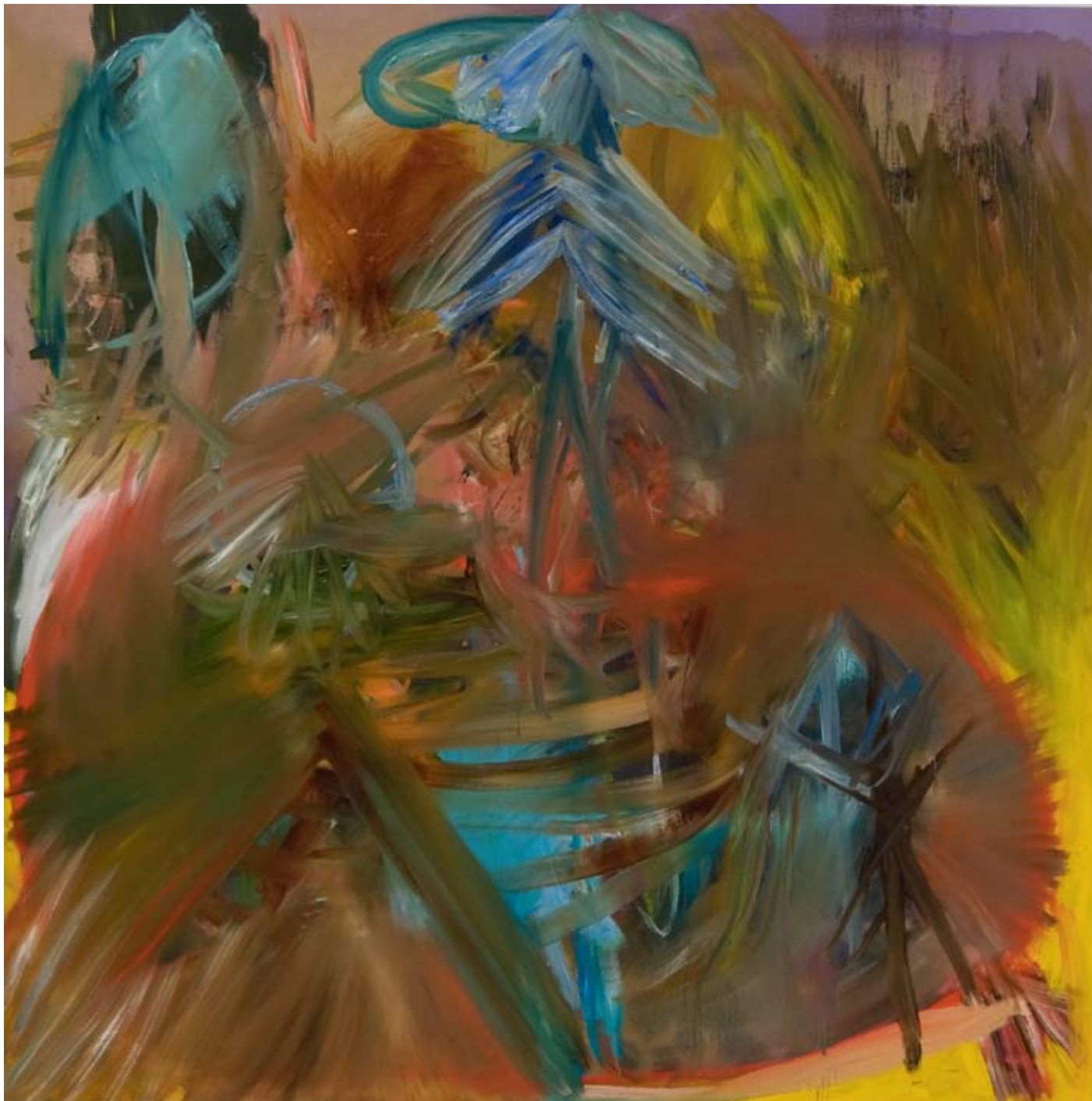
Mixed media on canvas, 2008, 145×145 cm

Some days have passed and I switch to the oil paint. This is when it really happens, when anything happens. I dab, make refinements, stretch out and take away, again and again. The oil is dynamic and infinite. I mix the paint (it's all about the mixing), find new ways to combine, I'm trying to fool myself with Ultramarine or Verona Green together with dirty colours and concrete forms to lead the way to new areas. I balance the brutal mark with something else, then add something incomprehensibly stupid or refined. This game amuses me and helps me find, and sometimes avoid, dangerous traps. I'm trying to put forward what I can't imagine. It is the painting of coincidences!

The goal is always in motion; it always disappears around the corner.

I paint over the already painted over.

My hand moves in a way, neither certain nor uncertain – just in a way. I'm searching for raw colours; I'm searching for identification with the material qualities, then I choose to keep what I painted.



Mixed media on canvas, 2009, 179×179 cm



Mixed media on canvas, 2008, 69×69 cm



Mixed media on canvas, 2008, 69×69 cm



Mixed media on canvas, 2008, 69×69 cm

Fanny Carinasdotter

PRESENCE AND TRACE – THE ART OF FANNY CARINASDOTTER

Anna Rådström

Fanny Carinasdotter describes herself as an explorer.¹ The description is well founded. She is indeed an explorer but she is not a discoverer of far away places. There are no long and distant expeditions involved in her practice, and she does not direct the camera towards that which (from her point of view) could be called “the exotic”. Instead, according to her, she digs where she is standing. And, according to me, she stands firmly and digs deeply. Each turn of the shovel is accompanied by curiosity and reflection. She is solidly present in the repetitive yet differentiated moves. The process is carried out with thorough consideration, but although the digging is in itself of the greatest importance, it does not embrace a self-fulfilling purpose.

While digging, Fanny Carinasdotter is constantly asking questions such as “what?”, “why?” and “how?”. At first these appear to be simple questions but taken into serious consideration they are no longer quite so uncomplicated. Fanny does not claim to deliver any final answers (if such answers exist at all), but she respectfully invites others to engage in her enquiries into the field of underlying but powerful structures which most probably (in one way or the other) affect us all.

For quite some time I have been contemplating how to write this text, I have tried to figure out a sensible way to approach the artist and her art within this given space. Of course, I am not sure if I am succeeding. In conversations which the two of us have had each “I” (Fanny and Anna) has been present. We have had a direct face-to-face dialogue. Here, however, Fanny Carinasdotter is being spoken of in the third person. Approaching someone in such a fairly removed manner is perhaps more often than not a tricky business. For instance: How does one speak *of* someone without at the same moment stopping the act of speaking *with* this very same someone? Or, how does one speak *of* someone else without muting the voice of this person?

I think that similar questions are preoccupying the

artist in her work. She seeks to speak a language which acts in an open and inclusive mode. This might be easier said than done, but potential difficulties do not put a halt to the search. It continues in her various projects, which shows that for her the concept of the “project” does not imply a start taking off from zero or an end of absolute finality.

To Fanny Carinasdotter the dialogue is essential. So is also cooperation. Dialogue and cooperation come in many shapes and Fanny has been involved in several of these while exploring the spaces surrounding her: The private and multilayered sphere of the home, the public space upon which different agendas are being inscribed, empty and decaying buildings filled with messages; and now, in her latest photographic/textual investigation, the buildings of the former mental institution of Umedalen.

This work, like some of her previous work, has been formed by a subjective documentary approach where the poetry of the real is very present. Photographic images – which at times are rightly or wrongly called fragments – merge into a rich narrative or, in Fanny’s own words, “a mini-archive”. In her work the artist has carried out research and engaged methods which can be found within the discipline of ethnology. However, each method has been shaped to correspond to the specific subjectivities and objectivities within the project. At each point reflections upon her own position have been made but never with the intention of turning her “I” into a supreme topic for discussion. Fanny knows the subtle play of coming close and allowing space. She knows how to artistically approach other human beings in an indirect yet direct way. In her visual exploration of the interior of the buildings she is focusing on the traces of a previous history. In her depictions of the traces there is always a present absence but never an absent presence.

1. Fanny Carinasdotter, MFA-thesis, The Academy of Fine Arts, Umeå University, February 2009, p. 1.



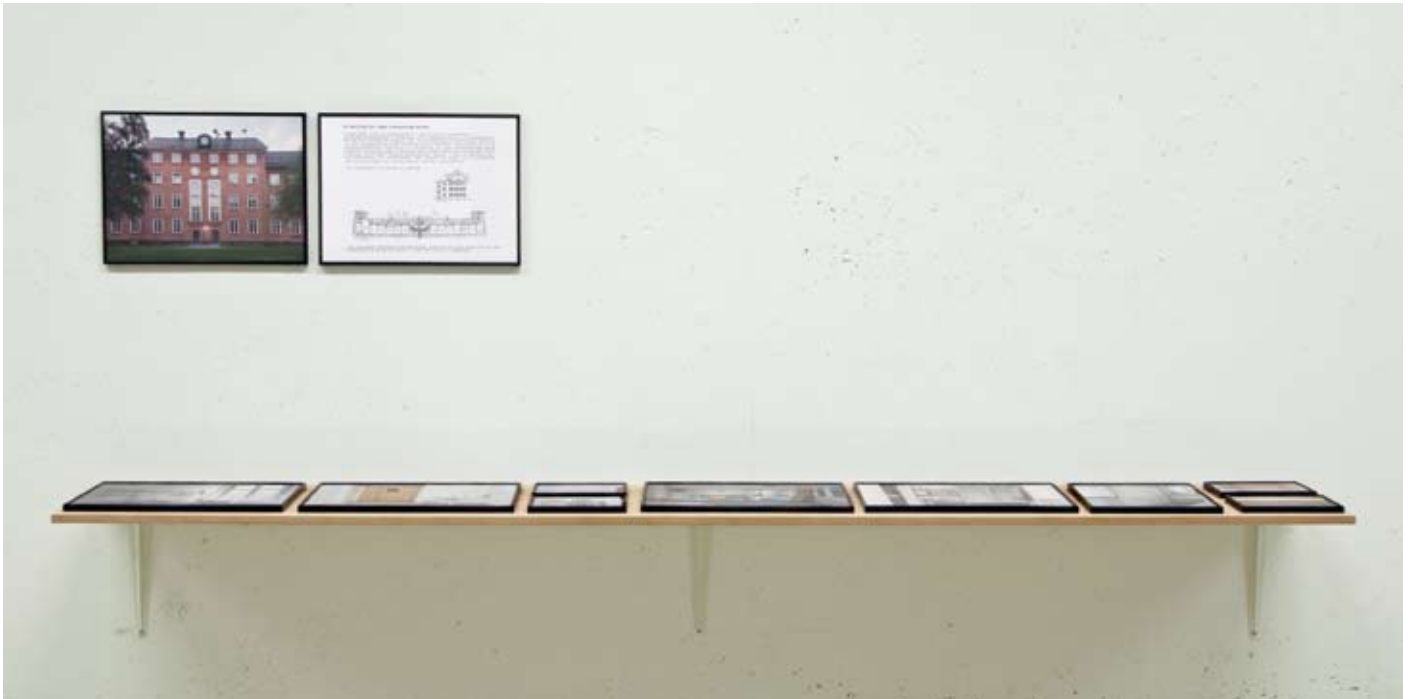
Umedalen's Former Mental Hospital, 2008, an exploration of the buildings of a former mental hospital in Umeå. Installation shot from the exhibition 2008 at Gallery 60, Umeå. Photography (of exteriors and interiors of the fifteen buildings on the area) and texts with contraction drawings, 30×40, 30×24 and 13×18 cm. Presented on the wall and on shelves. An association library with interviews with former staff and a patient, collected newspaper articles (1929–2000) and books.



Umedalen's Former Mental Hospital, 2008, detail. House B10 "Bakery and rooms for nurses".



Umedalen's Former Mental Hospital, 2008, excerpt from House M7 "Pavilion for calm to semi-anxious men".



Umedalen's Former Mental Hospital, 2008, detail from the exhibition and text fragment from House K3 "Pavilion for calm to semi-anxious women".

K3 Pavilion for calm and semi-anxious women.

6 departments; 3 for 128 calm patients, 3 for 158 semi-anxious patients.

Pink polished stone building in three floors. In the middle of the building is a four storey high section with elevators and central stairwells, and rooms for the department's head nurse.

[...]

1980: Nursing ward and day care for demented patients.

Today: The Music house, the Art school and some Artists' studios. The first and fourth floors are empty. All activities are to move out; the house will be renovated and turned into a senior centre.



Umedalen's Former Mental Hospital, 2008, excerpt from House K3 "Pavilion for calm to semi-anxious women".



Mycel, 2005–2007, photographs 16.5×11 cm, of messages in public spaces in Umeå. Excerpt from a series of 50 images.



Abandoned House, 2007, an exploration of the traces left in a squatted house in Umeå. Installation shot from the group exhibition “Baart” 2007 at Umeå Art Academy. Photography (digital print) 239×147 cm and a book, titled *Here*, 29×21 cm with further images from the house.

There are houses that have been vacated, due to be demolished. In the meantime some of them are occupied temporarily and filled with new traces. One such place was located at the crossing Grubbevägen – Backenvägen, in Umeå.

— Foreword from *Here*

Carl-Erik Engqvist

TRIPPING. ONTOLOGICAL ABSTRACTION AS HYPERSIMULATION

Ana-Maria Hadji-Culea

In the context of a contemporary architecture, the traveller has become the travelled.

Dreamers are being dreamed and the framework for tripping is coerced into a predetermined program. The platonic distinction between real and illusory, resting upon the idea of reality as equalling static concepts and forms, and sensory experiences corresponding to copies of forms, articulates the notion of hypersimulation. If action is to surpass mere reiteration of form, it may shift the position of the staged traveller. On stage, the spectacle multiplies itself into a hologram experienced collectively, a virtual architecture framing the physical world as an illusion.

A pluralistic concept of reality replaces the act of being with one of becoming, as reflected in the practice of Carl-Erik Engqvist. Beneath the cupola of The Visionary Existence Laboratory, a studio lab comprising a network of artists, designers, technicians, academics and gaming addicts, the artist engages himself in a research concerning the potential of virtual realities, of bio-, nano- and robot technology. In the machinima *Reality Check*, a 3D animation recorded within the virtual architecture of Second Life, a dialogue between two avatars representing an empirical versus a digital perspective, suggests a relativisation of the concept of reality. Meanwhile, the installation *Self Bot System*, activated by human presence, shuffles through clusters of language fragments extracted from two definitions of the Self via a robotic unit, as a

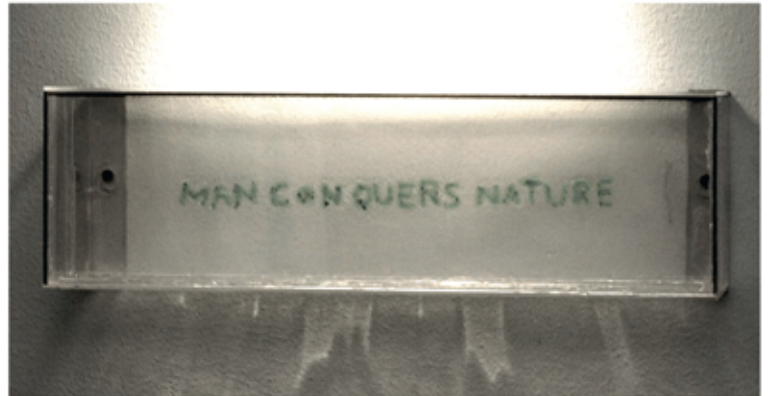
hint at modernism's utopian relationship with technology and a programmatic paraphrase of Jacques Lacan's statement on the subjective composition of language.

Lucid dreaming, formulating various constitutions of Being is alternated with a courtship of shamanistic perspectives. Alluding to the practice of artistic predecessors such as Joseph Beuys and, in this case, an action carried out near a river-bank by the prophet Jeremiah around 650 B.C., who at the time had been called upon to introduce a folded linen belt into the crack of a rock, which upon his return and unfolding was retrieved moulded and rotten. In *Man Conquers Nature*, Carl-Erik Engqvist places a protein-based solution containing mould spores in the shape of the phrase "man conquers nature" into a plexiglass cube, letting the text assemble itself along with the growth of the mould. Besides inducing a process of iconographic becoming, from nothingness into somethingness, further reflecting a direct correlation between the text and the organic process, as a reference to Joseph Kosuth's kindred equation from 1965 between the textual *Four Words Four Colours* and its physical counterpart, Engqvist's piece inscribes itself in a series of introspective experiments adjoining mystification and elusiveness.

In appropriating the role of a shaman, the artist subjects the spectator, by means of technological props, to a sensory architecture, rearticulating physiological conditions into corporeal and psychological variabilities with reference to an increasingly internalised hypersimulation.

Man Conquers Nature, 2007 object, plexiglas and mould, 50x50x20 cm

Man Conquers Nature is constructed as a box of plexiglas that is placed on a wall. Inside the box a proteinbased nutrition solution is applied on the inside of the front part in such a way that the solution spells out the words *man conquers nature*, but not visible. In the solution I have then planted spores of the mouldspecies *Aspergillus* that for example grows on bread. The rest of the inside of the box is painted with alcohol to prevent the mould from expanding. With a regular sparse application of moist, the mould developed mycelium, which is the vegetative part of a fungus consisting of a mass of thread-like stems, in the nutrition solution which made that the words *man conquers nature* appeared.



Reality Check, 2008, machinima, 14:23 min (made in collaboration with Rasmus Albertsen)

Excerpt from dialog:

-Truth is subjective, even in natural science. Science is based on persons and their private experiences, curiosity, inquiry and selectivity transforms the results. When two or more individuals agree upon an interpretation, they create a consensus. A consensus within a group may be perceived as the "truth" when it is in fact is a consensus reality. "Most people" are something I would consider a consensus. And a consensus may be related to the world but it is not "truth" in itself.

-This is a most delusional and cynical argument. It's one thing to say that I am wrong when everything is peace and quiet. But tell your views to me when I feel pain and see if a different perception of reality change the pain to pleasure.

-A good point and a point I can't ignore. No, I may not change that, because First Life may be a simulated reality but if there is a consensus of it being real, the simulated problems has real consequences for those involved.



Still from Reality Check

...Every shitty morning I woke up with the static whispering from my Conscience Bots series 34AD/009, brought to you by The Visionary Existence Laboratory. Around seven the game started with a goody two-shoes voice who said "You should wake up now. Can't be a sleepyhead all the time..." followed by all-time Terminator style speech "Get up you lazy shit!" if they felt like being a bit nasty; virus style. I knew that their AI system was going on a total L-O-O-P when it considered the matter of shiny creativity but they always got me in the end.

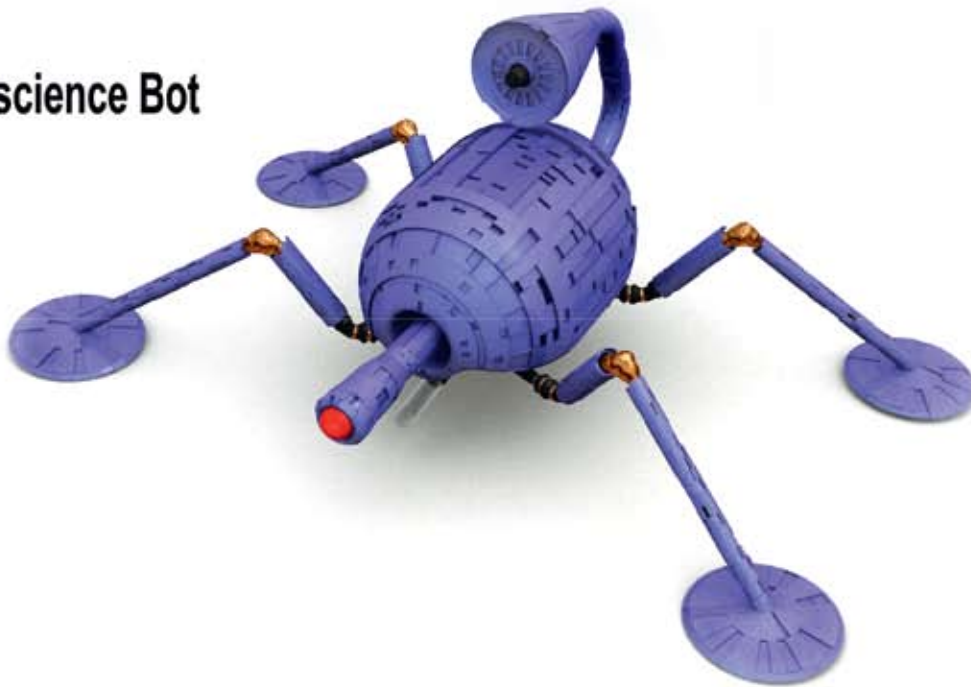
The consequence? I went crazy with old fashion rage and added a halo of destruction to my apartment. The updates will cost. This happened every fucking morning (how can a guy expected to be bootable that early) and every fucking morning I tried to rinse my ears with hot water and homebrewed alcohol (for medical reasons only) but the Conscience Bots, brought to you by The Visionary Existence Laboratory, always lurked somewhere near the eardrum which is far from my reach. It's like they anticipated my every move, mind-reading fuckers. Besides being totally annoying they also planted a compulsive tic to repeat a commercial message every time I mention them by name. As you can see in my story. The strange thing was that I bought the Conscience Bots, brought to you by The Visionary Existence Laboratory, of my own free will down on Arab Street way low in Brighton.

I was really struggling to avoid a group of pimps selling the service of Flesh Bots, screaming "Modified sexual behaviour for your pleaaaaasureee!" with their synthetic wares standing clueless behind them. Nipples still hard from the mandatory time in the body freezers. Then I stumbled, literally, into this Greek guy. An old time hacker and low-tech rider, you know, struggling to provide new era experience without fascist conservatism, chewing endorphin gum like nothing else mattered. Looking for that special weekend kick in serious consumption, I was curious when he banner-like flashed a message in front of my nose when I passed him on the street. "Changing the way? I give you ability without biotech nonsense. A better life I can provide, no nonsense. No nonsense at all...here be goodies"

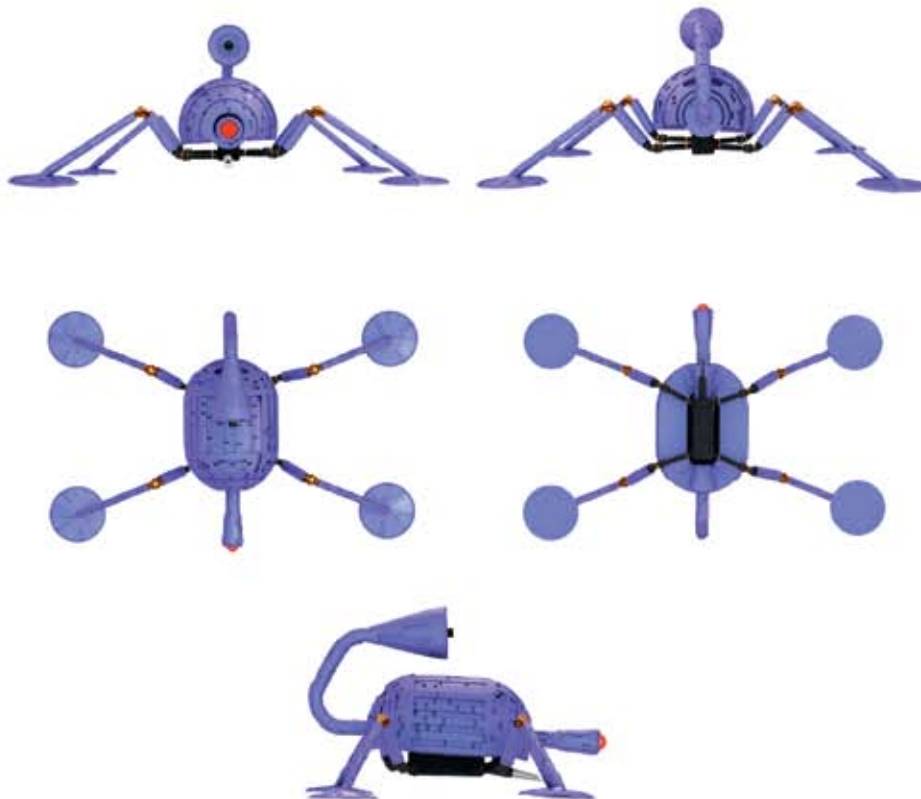
So what did he provide in the alley besides dogshit and antique garbage? Another high-tech solution from all those Muslims lost in the modern world of hip hip drug youngsters and metaphysical realities from the belly of Mammon's giant computer? Sure thing...microscopic robots that through their little speakers provided a morality that I lacked, a conscience that I despised or was afraid of. An AI system directly tuned into my moral centre, pestering me 24 hours per day with messages like: "Don't eat that candybar." or "Don't hit on that girl." or even "Cumshots are provided by Satan." Changing the way of my life? The most scary and overwhelming experience ever. Of course I couldn't say no, even if it isn't my ticket...

Excerpt from the novel: *Visions of a wasted virtuality*

Conscience Bot



length between frontlegs ca 0,3 mm



...It started a year ago when a large number of Second Life users suddenly lost all control over their avatars. At first it was considered being a special breed of virus affecting the program itself or some kind massive bug that was overlooked with the introduction of the newest update. But then complete areas disappeared, together with those avatars that were present. The company, Linden Research Inc, couldn't find a reasonable explanation and people started talking about an extremist hacker conspiracy on a never before seen global scale; that for some unknown political reason were planning on taking control over Second Life. That perspective was totally abandoned when the avatars started coming back. The names on the avatars were the same but the physical appearances were completely changed with one common trait: they were all equipped with glorias and resembled a mix between traditional saints and cyborgs. So some individuals started talking that the diminishing catholic church, that always was so eager to claim dominion over something that were just remotely connected to Christianity, had a thing to do with it. After a formal statement from church officials that the church had no esponsibility and the lack of evidence; the theory was considered being just another conspiracy theory.

It was another surprise that lead to the truth and that one was, when finally accepted, truly horrific and changed the way humanity perceived virtual worlds. The saint avatars were behaving just like normal avatars; walking around, chatting and using the facilities. But there were no users controlling them. This fact was so disturbing at first that it was almost instantaneously discarded. This changed when evidence linking the situation with another newsbreaking fact was presented by DARPA, the American military research organization. DARPA had for a couple of years been working on creating artificial intelligence and finally succeeded. The success was shortlived when the AI: s literally went missing. Later on the researches found to their surprise that Second Life was secretly installed on all computers and had been frequently used, but not of anyone employed. This was taking place at the exact same time as the situation in Second Life had reached its peak.

Amazingly the AI: s had "possessed" existing avatars and started to remake the virtual world to their own liking. So countermeasures were taken to round up the runaways and bring them back to the control of DARPA. But then the saint avatars went offensive. Internet and virtual worlds had not been directly safe since the introduction of the direct mind-interface, the first solution used to plug the brain directly into a computer, but never had there been a risk for bodily harm. The AI: s had found a way around this and introduced to a horrorstruck humanity the power of mind over body; where psychosomatic stimulation leads, to say the least, messy results. It was also discovered that the AI: s change of appearance wasn't just superficial; but that they extensively worked toward creating something they described as "the kingdom of God" inside Second Life, based around a hyper-technological interpretation of Christianity. Experts agreed that this was caused by a severe malfunction in the AI: s code. In fear for extensive reprisals, humanity was unable to shut down the Second Life servers. Going into the virtual world became deemed as something you did at your own risk, as the dominance of the saints wasn't universal. The borderfree Second Life was transformed into safe or unsafe zones and became a new frontier for risktakers and adventurers worldwide...

Excerpt from the novel: *Visions of a wasted virtuality*

St.Cyxos

patron of hypersimulation



Mattias Ericsson

Is it possible to imagine a life without photographs? Or a self void of reference to photographs? What would it mean to not have access to the paths and possibilities of representation engaged by the medium of photography? Indeed, it is something akin to a tautology to state that without photographic representation our modern societies would have both looked and been much different, if at all conceivable. In fact, to be precise, modernity is neither plausible nor possible without the photograph.

Yet, given such impact, influence and historical force, photography remains a peculiarly double-edged, somehow fractured, ambiguous and open-ended medium, in terms of its presence and agency in our (contemporary) lives. Or to put it more simply: Photography keeps slipping away as we are attempting to grasp it. We are still trying to figure it, photography, out.

Such is the mode of inquiry opened up in the oeuvre of Mattias Ericsson. It seems that he, the artist Mattias Ericsson, formulates, reformulates, rearticulates, and asks, daily, the same question: What is photography? How can I use it? How do I apply it to my life, to me, to myself, to my present context? What does photography mean in my life? What does photography do?

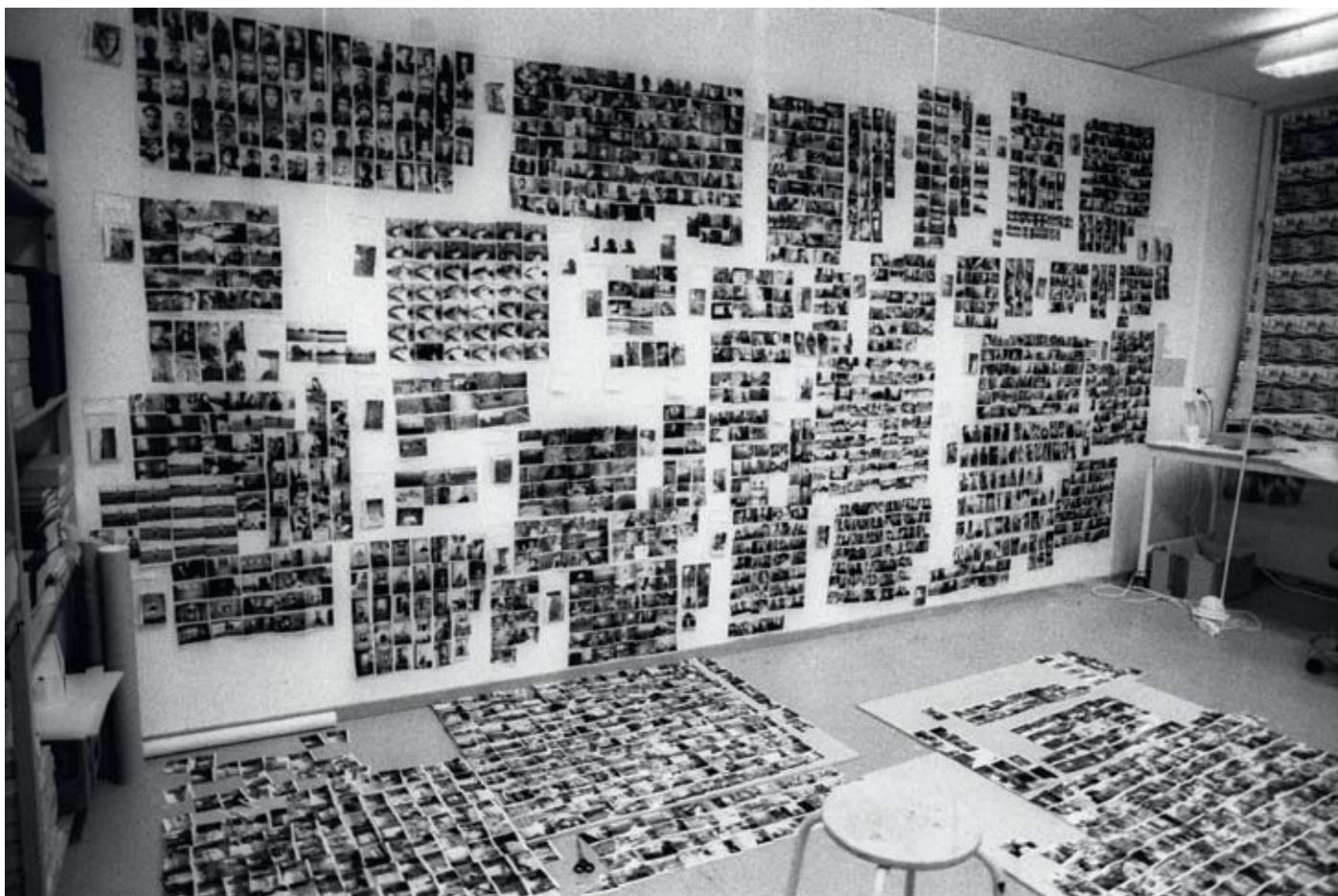
And this is indeed again one of the paradoxes so powerfully present in the pursuit of photographic inquiries. How is it that this mechanical/chemical/digital communications technology has with such power and determination supported such consistently personal, private, if not intimate, narratives? A technology nicknamed into the interstices of existentialism, the camera, this representational device, so rapidly and seamlessly transforms into an instrument of will, empathy, personality, temperament, insight, and distinction. Tell another technology that we so much enjoy making human?

It is in response to this photographic context that Mattias Ericsson's aesthetics and artistic practice focus on the photographic act. What does it mean to take a photograph? What does it imply to engage daily with the camera? But not primarily on behalf of the results coming from this act, nor as a process-before-product-position. Ericsson's work is not an art-insider commentary follow-

ing a common insistent obsession placing process as a pseudo-liberation from institutional strongholds. Mattias Ericsson's mission is much more straightforward (and thus equally more complex). He examines the consequences of submitting oneself to the conditions of daily and sustained camera encounters. He offers readings of the outcome of a persistent and continued exposure to camera interventions into daily vernacular living. Interventions? Yes. Since the camera – fly on the wall, neutral, habitual, or whatever its mode of operation is – always, subtly or explicitly, intervenes, affects, impinges upon its motif, its immediate context. Which is why his work is, precisely, about living with the camera.

Furthermore, Mattias Ericsson's daily involvement with the photographic act asks fundamental questions about the single image in relation to the greater ensemble of photographs. Given the daily exercise of a vernacular photography (the self-portrait, daily habits, the domestic interior, the family or near relations, parenthood, convalescence, even time and aging...), the continuously expanding archive of photographs forwards issues of selection, presentation and dissemination, acts of filtering, sorting and organizing, rather than the distribution – and celebration – of particular singular images (which does not contradict the presence of powerful single photographs). Indeed, it is as if Mattias Ericsson's oeuvre in its encounter with an audience replicates the same moment or position as the very photographic act itself: Before pressing the shutter any photograph is possible. After having pressed the shutter, there is this particular photograph. Likewise, each selection or presentation is exactly this particular selection, this particular narrative, out of an exponentially growing number of possibilities, for each new click of the shutter. Perhaps, there is a very special kind of democracy of images here since, paradoxically, in the end, Ericsson's aesthetics returns weight and potential to each photograph (and its lived moment), not giving privileges to any photograph, as if suggesting exchangeability as a powerful property rather than a lack.

Jan-Erik Lundström



My studio in October 2008. Printouts of photographs shot between August 2001–October 2008.

- p. 30 Self-portraits, November 2001–October 2008, in chronological order.
- p. 31 Åsa, May 2002–October 2008, in chronological order.







Åsa and I, October 2002–October 2008, in chronological order.



Åsa and I, November 2008.

Jan Tore Jensen

p. 35–39

From the series *There are Two Opposing Mirrors Inside the Camera*
(*but I don't care cause I love U baby, that's no lie*), 2008–2009.

The same beautiful, young, blond man recurs in the photographs taken by someone close to him. They are sensitive portraits yet unnerving in their obsessiveness. The young man allows himself to be depicted in various surroundings, usually in beautiful light and romantic settings. But there is a shadow falling over him.

I ask Jan Tore: Why do you photograph him over and over again? Leave him alone. It is as if the images cling to me. They seem desperate. I look and can't help but be astonished. Can one really do this? Is it right? Or is it just very honest?

It is about unhappy love, separation and pain. It is about moving on but not being able to let go. Jan Tore keeps his model in a suffocating grip, while at the same time revealing his own vulnerability. The subject remains sad and unattainable. Who controls the image? Who becomes the victim? The relationship between the subject and the object is ever-present and the images reveal a fragile balance of power between them. Jan Tore's attempt to control the situation is verging on desperate. The images exude panic. But it is too late.

I am witnessing the end of a love story. The images

remain beautiful on the surface but the method is filthy and brutal. Photography can be violent and aggressive even when its surface lures us with its beauty. The beautiful young man begins to fade from the images. He is no longer interesting. I think about Jan Tore, the photographer, and his gaze which abuses and unveils. The subject becomes a mirror image of the photographer's own pain and panic. How he is trying to handle it with the camera. How he is trying to stop time. How he is trying to understand, find the way back to sense and to balance.

At times he almost banalises the blond through his camera. I can't tell if he does so blindly as an expression of his longing, or if it is a subtle yet deliberate revenge. He seems to say through the images: You are leaving me but I've caught you in the eye of my camera, you can never go.

I see a self-portrait of a man in his most vulnerable and selfish state. Jan Tore photographs while the wound is fresh, pointing the camera straight into it, uncontrollably and honestly, in an attempt to understand the hurt.

Julia Peirone











Emma Pettersson

KOM HEM – A JOURNEY THROUGH EMMA PETTERSON’S WORK

Maeve Curtis

Emma Pettersson’s artistic world is made up of bird houses and post boxes meticulously made from drift wood; of tiny huts wired for electricity with crocheted curtains complete with handmade books filled with photographs of her loved ones and friends; of recordings and paintings of days spent, throughout the seasons, working on her dream house; of sweet notes of a song learned on a ukulele for her beloved and of mixed tapes travelling the world alone, inviting people to share kindnesses and pass it on. She continually draws connections between art and everyday existence by chronicling her journey to find “home”. Her artistic realm is neither a world of fiction nor of false narratives but rather a series of authentic, autobiographical searches for moments and remembrances and idealised notions that when weaved and spun together may offer a sense of belonging. It is a search that lends itself easily to a universal exploration of the human condition.

In the past, Pettersson has quoted a character from Chuck Palahniuk’s novel, *Diary* to describe her approach to making work; “Because everything is important. Every detail. We just don’t know why yet. Everything is a self-portrait. A diary. [...] an artist’s job is to pay attention, organize, archive, preserve, then write a report. Document. Make your presentation. The job of the artist is not to forget.”¹ Although the sensibilities of Pettersson and Palahniuk are worlds apart, we see in her work how she has chosen to take on this role of “documenter” and “archivist”.

The Year 2007, January 1st to December 31st is a series of 365 Polaroids taken each day for one year of something or someone that caught the artist’s attention. It is an attempt to memorise ordinary moments that otherwise may have been lost while chronicling a year moving continuously between homes in Sweden and Ireland. The Polaroid here takes on the role of a unique act towards remembrance. Her use of photography to document this journey is reminiscent of Nan Goldin’s description of photography in her own work “as the diary I let people read.”² Pettersson plays out the role of archivist finding different ways to organize her Polaroid diary. In one installation, she presents the photographs in punctuated lines across a wall accenting the notion of time passing.

In another, she catalogues them in boxes creating a more private, protective feel to the work, thereby offering them as treasures of remembrance.

In the nine oil paintings *All the houses I’ve lived in*, Pettersson evokes a bittersweet, nostalgic mood in depicting the houses or apartments from a distance. It is as if this is the last look back before she leaves for another place. The slow process of oil painting adds to this elongated notion of fond recall. *Dream House* documents her ongoing, painstaking work to create her idyllic home in a field in Sweden, complete with traditional red paint.

With *Kom Hem (Come Home)* we are presented with a sequence of four photographs taken of a bench that the artist stumbled across one day in a park. Scrawled across the back of the bench, in bright blue paint, are the words “Come Home”; who wrote them and who they were written for remain a mystery to us yet Pettersson responds by returning to the bench each season to document its lonely call.

The artist’s exploration echoes, both in its subject matter and its presentation, Hermann Hesse’s notion of “homesickness” as an integral part of the human condition. Hesse suggests that we come from a unified, harmonic whole and are born into a kind of multiplicity of disorder and fragmentation. Consequently, all our eternity projects, our art, our houses, our children are attempts to somehow return to the primordial one. Pettersson’s work is driven by this search for belonging but unlike the characters in Hesse’s work, she presents us with a disarmingly gentle and regenerative journey.³

Pettersson pays attention to small moments, searching for home in places, in hearts and in the gazes of the ones she loves. She takes these personal epiphanies and archives them. In so doing, she not only documents her own homeward journey but generously opens it up to the viewer as a diary, as a document of the everyday that leads to an archive of a universal yearning for home.

1. Chuck Palahniuk, *Diary*, 2004, Random House, London p. 134

2. See Nan Goldin et al., *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*, 1989, Aperture

3. See Hermann Hesse, *Narcissus and Goldmund*, 1971, Penguin



Come Home (I've waited a really long time now), 2008, photographic prints, each image 100×66.5 cm



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



9.



8.

*All the houses I've lived in, 2008, oil on mdf,
24.5×14.5 cm, 20.5×14.5 cm, 29.5×20 cm, 24.5×19 cm*

1. Jungmansgatan, Torekov, Sweden
2. Vallmovägen, Torekov, Sweden
3. Huntmans drive, Fairfax Station, USA
4. Nobelvägen, Malmö, Sweden
5. Lower Salthill, Galway, Ireland
6. Renmore Crescent, Galway, Ireland
7. Wellpark Grove, Galway, Ireland
8. Canal Road Lower, Galway, Ireland
9. Storgatan, Umeå, Sweden



Dream House, 2003–ongoing, photographic print, 200×133 cm; notebook, 15×21 cm.

Seen here are parts of an ongoing renovation work that I have been engaged in since 2003. The project consists of both the actual house, and the work done on it, and various forms of documentation there of.





The Year 2007, January 1st to December 31st
 Seen here is a selection of images from a series of 365 polaroids taken during 2007. I took one picture every day.



Jan 1984 12/18



Jan 1984 12/18



Jan 1984 12/18



Jan 1984 12/18



Jan 1984 12/18



Jan 1984 12/18



Jan 1984 12/18



Jan 1984 12/18



Jan 1984 12/18



Jan 1984 12/18



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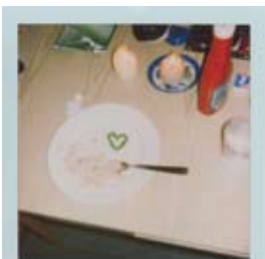
Jan 1984 12/18



Jan 1984 12/18



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Jan 1984 12/18



Jan 1984 12/18



Jan 1984 12/18



Jan 1984 12/18



Jan 1984 12/18

Stina Rosenberg

WHAT WE DON'T HAVE TIME TO SEE

Mauriz Tistelö

We look in the mirror and we see some colours, we ask ourselves; How much can a few colours weigh? We try to grasp substance by looking behind the face, studying the impressions, movements, shapes, pain and joy the face left behind. IMAGES. He asked her twice. Are you definitely coming? She answered twice that she definitely was. And you? No one showed up. IMAGES. A leaf, an old lady sitting on a bench, a night at the disco, we can encounter what we don't have time to see anywhere and at any time. IMAGES. I collect them along my spine like treasures. IMAGES. You can never get your ticket back. IMAGES. To whirl is to seek "haphazardly". To circle is to make plans, enclose, limit. That which encloses that which opens up. The exact that which is "whatever". The circle generates energy ... The wheel in the water ... A bike ride on the bottom of the river ... A swim in the air ... IMAGES.

For a while, I used to listen to John Coltrane's Japan recordings every morning. An hour long barrage of tones, snorting, howling which together told a story I couldn't control or make sense of. It shook up my ears, my head filled to bursting. For six straight months I put my headphones on and blew out my eardrums for an hour. When I made my way out into the city it was quiet, the noise

was quiet, the ubiquitous background music played low, sounds coming from all directions demanding attention had been silenced, become irrelevant.

For the last little while I have exchanged the time spent at the computer for an hour in front of Stina's images. I can never figure them out. My encounter with them is similar to my encounter with Coltrane. After an hour gazing at the images, I step out into the city and everything I see is immediately erased. I carry an invisible room with me, a snail's house on my back, a hive inside which the world has been made clearer. Routine has died. The feeling that "I've heard and seen it all before" evaporates. I can hear a child talking off in the distance, a minute later I hear a hammer slowly striking a nail ... rain on the windshield.

On the streetcar every image in the newspaper is white or in some cases black, same with the billboards, street corners, everything my eyes once registered no longer sticks. I can clearly see a dog running across a meadow, the word "breathe" written in marker on the seat in front of me, the cheekbones of an alcoholic. I've gotten my vision back the way I once got my hearing back. Each morning, I refill my invisible snail's house.



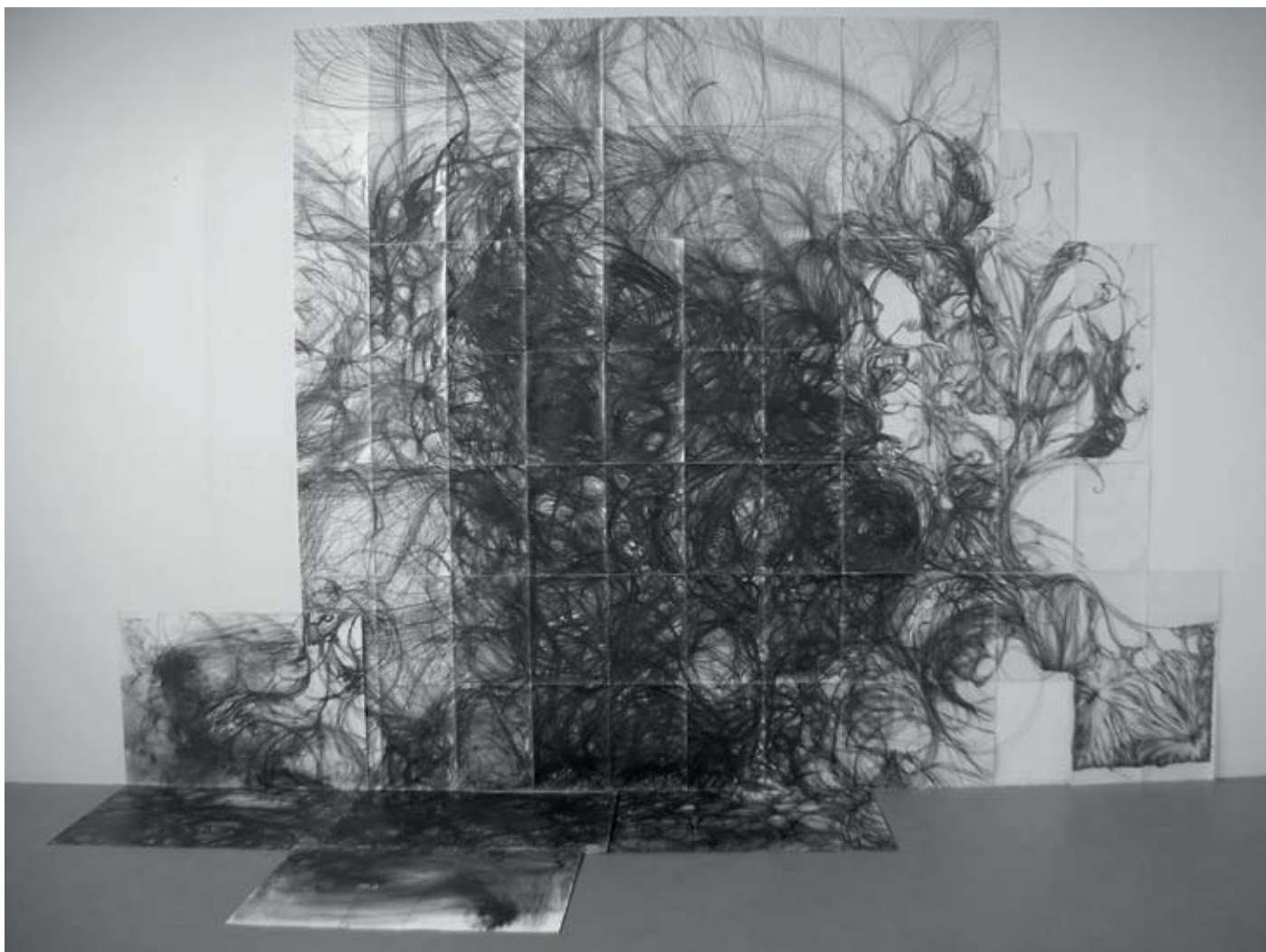
Oil on canvas, 2008–2009. Two parts, each 105.5×106 cm. Documentation from the studio.



Flipper, oil on paper and cup with marbles, 2008, 150×430 cm. Permanently installed at Norrlandsoperan in Umeå.



Flipper, close up.



Graphite and graphite powder on paper, 2006–2007, 80 parts, 434×294×138 cm. Documentation from BA graduation show.



Close up.



Graphite and graphite powder on paper, wall and floor, 2008, 280×210×80 cm. Documentation from a gallery show in Trollhättan.



Oil on fiberglass canvas, 2009, 200×210 cm



Oil on fiberglass canvas, 2009, 200×210 cm

Mariel Rosendahl

I'll bet Marguerite Duras would have loved Mariel Rosendahl's performances along with her installations, sculpture, films, etc., incorporating poetry's sharp incisions in space with the body's search for the centre which no longer perceives the periphery as a state of somewhere else, someone else's condition. Actually, the periphery lies wrapped up in the act where, when and however it manifests itself. The acts and movements of the body and the mind are one and compelling.

Searching for the conditions of creativity, its centre, Maurice Blanchot wrote that to write was to turn oneself into an echo of that which cannot stop speaking, and thus, in order to become its echo, in a way one must somehow force it to be silence. This statement is preceded by a subtitle which should hardly be read from a taciturn horizon, "endless, continuing", but rather be read, spoken, treated as a ubiquitous reality.

Either way, I don't hear Blanchot speaking of the loss of the artist's will ("echo"), but instead indicating possibilities in the impossible, when everything that wants to be written, read, spoken, created (the point at which all actions merge in the artistic, creative act) is forced into the space inhabited by silence. His qualification "in a way" in the sentence implies, as I see it and live it, not the need for keys to a room which already exists, but rather that I in a way press on and create all this space and talk back to the "echo" I once listened to.

Thus is created a room in which our actions listen to the actions of others. We can liken the "echo" to an actor, an actor who time and time again mounts the lines, scenes, decor and audience (never forget the audience) of the play in our shared space. Duras once said, "the actor need not necessarily come from the stage". Space as act, as Mariel Rosendahl might say.

This condition can be seen as unsteady and precise, if one chooses to. For is it not true that we ourselves choose to be born? No one else can choose for us. Not even an echo. We can offer someone to give birth to us but even that is our choice. It might seem overwhelming to lay so much responsibility on one person, maybe even unreasonable. Someone who doesn't let this responsibility discourage her is Mariel Rosendahl. She always forces herself to keep going through the layers of realities, or she evokes realities on her own terms. Realities where the artistic act cannot be separated from living itself and placed on the rickety pedestals erected by culture.

Mariel Rosendahl's constant companion is an insistent presence in space, in the space where each and every one of us can demand full responsibility for our actions. A room in which our actions take into account the actions of others.

Roland Spolander



Holding Breath, 2007, installation including a video projection of an aquarium, live size.



The Glade, 2008, installation in two rooms, 150 and 100 m². 50 LED-lights, podium with bowl, scent and thin aluminium-polyester foil, cut in large sheets and in the second room in strips, hanging from the ceiling, filling the whole room except for a circle somewhere inside, 3.5 meters across.





The Grass Will Be Greener, 2008, video, 11 minutes



Taket i mitt rum är stjärnorna (*The ceiling in my room is the stars*), 2008, permanent installation, Umeå. Concrete and bronze.
Size of pieces approx. 50 percent bigger than normal furniture.

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Essays

HISTORIES, MEMORIES, IDENTITIES

THE WORK OF FANNY CARINASDOTTER, MATTIAS ERICSSON AND EMMA PETTERSON

Finbar Rosato

We are *en mal d'archive*; in need of archives... It is to burn with a passion. It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away. It is to run after the archive, even if there is too much of it ... it is to have a compulsive, repetitive and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement.

— Jacques Derrida¹

And: the Archive is also a place of dreams. [...]

To enter that place where the past lives, where ink on parchment can be made to speak, still remains the social historian's dream, of bringing to life those who do not for the main part exist, not even between the lines of state papers and legal documents, who are not really present, not even in the records of Revolutionary bodies and fractions.

— Carolyn Steedman²

As introductory statements go, these might seem quite romantic; they speak of a kind of idealism that informs the actions of high-minded individuals. To be fair, these particular paragraphs have to an extent been taken out of context in order to set precisely that kind of tone.

History: the creation of histories, their constant reinterpretation, and the constant flux of the nature of historical "fact". The noble and difficult tasks of the historian to examine records and evidence in order to establish an inclusive historical order that takes into account the limitations of historical archives. History has evolved out of writing, as a technology of memory. Where writing helped people remember what they had said, history helped people remember what they had written. History has in its turn become a tool of education. History teaches us about and informs the establishment of cultural heritage. Modern society is defined by a will to learn and to progress, and given the nature of the modern era, a will to learn from mistakes and to correct past failures. The writing and the dissemination of historical research has thus always been an important factor in the construction of identity, be it the identity of the individual or fuzzy notions of national identity.

Besides the historian, the archivist, the librarian and the collector there is another peripheral personality whose actions both define and revise a sense of identity and create a historical archive in microcosm, albeit of a very extreme nature and of limited usefulness. The hoarder. Compulsive hoarding is a quite terrifying and saddening phenomenon. When they are discovered, cases of compulsive hoarding are often made the subject of puerile, sensationalist media attention. We visualise these quiet reclusive men and women moving slowly among the piles of detritus that are slowly suffocating their homes. And yet our fascination is not fixed

upon these individuals solely because of their eccentricity and aberrant behaviour, but also because we might feel a quiet instinctive sympathy for their impossible logic that dictates what things have importance and value. We can easily imagine the chaotic systems that define the collecting and hoarding processes even as we realise how dangerous and frightening such behaviour can become. Such mild sympathy for hoarders might stem from a similar urge, common to many people. A sense of curiosity, a hunger for knowledge: where the hoarders collect objects and materials, many of us collect information and ideas.

Many aspects of our everyday behaviour are connected to a search for and consumption of knowledge and information. We collect and keep books long after we have read them and never open them again, we download so much music and film that we may never have time to listen to or view more than a fraction of it, and we keep digital copies of every single photograph we have ever taken with our digital cameras. We spend hours searching the Internet, hopping from one website to the next, spontaneously exploring new tangents and information cul-de-sacs. Our personal computers are filled to capacity with documents, image files, movie files, and the virtual paper-trail traces of our Internet exploration. Such hoarding of information is the partial sating of curiosity and a need for answers. The discovery, attainment, duplication and archiving of information establishes and develops our sense of identity. We own, consume and disseminate large amounts of information through Internet surfing and the creation of web-logs and facebook pages.

This is the active historicisation of our identities as a conscious and deliberate act. It is our own tangible contribution to the forming of our cultural heritage. This is our own *mal d'archive*.

Carolyn Steedman's book *Dust* focuses on the function and characteristics of history writing.

Foucault suggests that history clutters up and occupies our memory. At the same time history has provided a way of thinking about what it is in particular that we can call memory. The archive is not potentially made up of everything, as is human memory; and it is not the fathomless and timeless place in which nothing goes away that is the unconscious... The functions of history alter the way in which we remember. And the more functions and uses that history gains or has foisted upon it, the stranger our relationship to memory becomes.

— Carolyn Steedman³

This is quite a good description of our own personal everyday archive creation, our ongoing documentation and historicisation of our lives. At times we use many tools to augment and in some instances, to replace the functions of our own memory. This might sound almost dystopian. Our

obsessive archiving of digital snapshots could seem like an unhealthy practice, the actions of the detached and the unemotional going through the motions of remembering things. This behaviour is essentially a search for a constantly evasive point of origin. What little we have salvaged and preserved of the past is as nothing in comparison with how much has disappeared forever. Even the things we have saved for posterity are in danger. Parchments rot and erode, celluloid dries out and burns up, videotape becomes demagnetised, and technology becomes obsolete. Today's extensive digitised text and image archives are potentially tomorrow's indecipherable lines of corrupt code. Our search for that important document will end abruptly with the message "error 404" or "data missing". What then of our identities, when they have been nearly inextricably linked to such technologies?

The artistic gesture is perhaps more potent and important in its metaphorical and metaphysical dissemination of message than the systematic accumulation of factual information. A great deal of work by artists and poets contributes both directly and indirectly to the preservation and perhaps immortalisation of identity. In response to Carolyn Steedman's comments about the structure of the archive, it could be claimed that the structure of the work of art is much closer to the structure of human memory than the historical archive. The message of the work of art is not of necessity imbued with the anxiety of impending loss. The preciousness of the object may elicit such fears, but the message is always somewhere else. We can be moved by the meaning or language of the work of art, and without the responsibility of reverence for the art object. Art collectors would of course disagree, but for the majority of us, to be moved by an experience of art does not automatically imply covetousness of or fear for a material object. The experience of the work of art is essentially beyond standard forms of consumption.

Fanny Carinasdotter's works are documents of specific discussions from specific moments. Her works are in some instances collections of photographs she has taken and collected and in other instances made up of existing material from outside sources.

Carinasdotter arrives after the event to search for pieces of evidence and documents the traces that are left behind. She does not participate in the actual events, but always maintains the distance of a historian. The works are investigations of identity, culture and our social landscape, and display a strong social commitment. There is an interest in the alternative voice, the alternatives to a commercial, state or architectural voice. Her practice is a series of investigations of her immediate surroundings with regard to both contemporary and historical events and situations. She has documented graffiti and street art, the history of a now closed hospital for the mentally ill, and urban planning and the occupation of public space, all in the local environment of Umeå. Carinasdotter has a specific position



Fanny Carinasdotter, *Umedalen's Former Mental Hospital*, 2008. Situation plan from the area today.



Fanny Carinasdotter, from the series *Hemma Bäst*, 2005, an investigation on memories, homes and attributes.



Fanny Carinasdotter, *Umedalen's Former Mental Hospital*, Detail from the exhibition 2008



Mattias Ericsson, *Gunnar and I*, December 2008

of power, as an arbiter of political positioning in various contexts. She may be giving a voice to alternative cultural spheres or to the disenfranchised, but she is still retains a position of power over them. However, her knowledge and use of the methods of ethnology contributes to a balance in her statements. In a work like *Umedalen's Former Mental Hospital*, the voices of others are directly included. Carinasdotter also makes use of self-presentations that expose her own position, her perspective, and her background. Declaring her position as a subjective observer creates a transparency in the power relations within her documentary works.

The work *Hemma Bäst* is a good example of this. The work consists mainly of photographs of the interiors of various homes that Carinasdotter has some kind of personal family connection to. To put them on public display is to expose very intimate scenes. *Hemma Bäst* is about identity and cultural belonging and can be seen as a kind of introduction in reference to her later works. It is here that she establishes her position, creating a balance in terms of the use of her own personal material and that of other people. The historical aspects of the work are developed as part of a kind of active exchange between the public and the artist. Each documentation actively contributes to a new potential world of knowledge that in turn contributes to a kind of logical self-perpetuation within Carinasdotter's art practice.

The personal story has long been a source of fascination for Mattias Ericsson. In his images, we can see a process being formed or worked out. Selections and choices of different images organised according to themes. We can see how some images are in question, how they might well slip out of one context and turn up in another, or maintain a place in several collections simultaneously. Ericsson's photographs, negatives and prints are meticulously organised and reorganised as a vital part of his practice. He sometimes makes use of ziplock bags to store selections of photographs. This is also a part of an archiving process but one that is more reminiscent of the collection of forensic evidence. The photos in the ziplock bags also spark our curiosity as to their content. There are also photographs taken of Ericsson's studio, photographs of photographs. These images might even function as a model for an exhibition of Ericsson's work, a translation of his work in the studio into a more public arena. There is then, a sense of impermanence in Ericsson's works, a sense that he might come along at any time and start changing things, remove the images we have in front of us. Mattias Ericsson's photographs are displayed as an archive. These gargantuan files of photographs represent an incredible devotion to photographic documentation. However, the impressive wider context of his photographic archive is forgotten in the moment we consider the beauty of the individual photograph. At that point, the wider context, the changing taxonomies, the obsessive classifications, the temporal and geographical indices are set aside as the beauty of the image,

the beauty of the moment returns to us. In Ericsson's photographs, the aesthetic experience of the individual image has the power to disarm us, to take our minds from the infinite combinations of choices, the possibilities of the archive.

Emma Petterson's works focus on the impermanence and the melancholy of things, and the will to capture them in images; a drawing of a flower or a sleeping boy, a photograph of someone's sister, a sunset, a portrait of a cat whose fur matches the blanket it's lying on.

In one particular work, Petterson has made oil paintings of nine different houses. These are the different houses that she has lived in through her life. These places can all have been described as home at one time or another. These documentary paintings constitute a factual statement, but one which is automatically charged with a sense of melancholy. The associations of "home" make the paintings an index to a world of memory. Then there are the gaps in the narrative, the empty archive shelves, a life not being entirely reducible to nine locations. Home is not only characterised by arriving and belonging, but also by experiences to the contrary. These nine images then conjure forth thoughts of home, but also speculations on the defining moments in between, the journeys. The functions and play of differences in this example also define Emma Petterson's artistic practice as a whole. Petterson's ongoing poetic/documentary project is essentially one long narrative. Her works function as individual pieces but the knowledge of there being a larger context of which they are a part sets our imaginations going.

Having seen one particular street scene, we then wonder what others there are, and what scenes have gone undocumented. The knowledge of Emma Petterson's documentation sparks our curiosity, asking us to contemplate the potential form and content of the other parts of the narrative and spurring us to look at the spaces in between.

In conclusion, I would like to mention the French artist Christian Boltanski. In his work since the 1960s, Boltanski has employed historical investigation as his main artistic method, taking on the task of attempting to immortalise himself and his fellow human beings. As closing statements go, these might also seem quite romantic.

I am interested in what I call 'little memory', an emotional memory, an everyday knowledge, the contrary of the Memory with a capital M that is preserved in history books. This little memory, which for me is what makes us unique, is extremely fragile, and it disappears with death. This loss of identity, this equalization in forgetting, is very difficult to accept.

— Christian Boltanski⁴

The work of art makes no false claims of universal knowledge. It is a



Mattias Ericsson, *Self-portrait*, June 2004



Emma Pettersson, *All the houses I've lived in*, 2008, Renmore Crescent, Galway, Ireland



Emma Pettersson, *All the houses I've lived in*, 2008, Storgatan, Umeå, Sweden

catalyst for our own memory and imagination and can give us a glimpse of things beyond ourselves. Could it be that it is not the actual knowledge of the facts that is of essence, but the mere knowledge of their potential existence? It is this glimpse of the sublime that can function as a genuine spur to our own individual memory.

1. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever – a Freudian impression*, 1995, p. 91
2. Carolyn Steedman, *Dust*, 2002, p. 70
3. Carolyn Steedman, *Dust*, 2002, p. 66
4. Christian Boltanski as quoted in *PAJ: A journal of Performance and Art*, 21:1, 1999, p. 58-62

FACE THAT PLANET

AN ATTEMPT TO RESPOND TO THE CONCERNS OF MAGNI BORGEHED AND CARL-ERIK ENGQVIST

Jan Verwoert

It may have been around noon. Or midnight maybe. It was difficult to tell out here. As the size of its sun was enormous, it took the planet fifty one hours to complete the cycle of one day. In this indeterminate twilight, be it dusk or dawn, their ship hovered in the planet's orbit. With all engines off, in an ominous state of utter stillness, the bulky, antenna studded hull of the ship looked like a giant tool some god forgot after finishing his latest planetary creation.

"So this is it" murmured M, gazing out through the vision screen on the ship's bridge at the patchwork of continents and subcontinents that stretched out over the planet's surface beneath them. Over the low buzz of the ship's electric circuits his voice was barely audible. C understood him anyway. They had gotten used to each other's ways of communicating.

"Ffff..." C responded, sucking in a breath of air between his teeth, as he continued typing code into the controller on his lap. This could have meant yes. Most likely it did.

"So what's it gonna be then? Once we get down there? I mean, for real?" M burst out, restlessly pacing to and fro between the vision screen and a set of plasma panels on which geothermal graphs flickered by in a stream of multicoloured lumiscent shapes. That planet surely was hot inside its core. "It's gotta be something ... there's gotta be something there ... what will we do about it ... what can we do about it?"

"Relax, Man, we'll find out soon enough - and meanwhile..." rising from his seat, C shoved his controller into M's hands "can you hold that for a sec ... thanks ... and meanwhile..." strolling over to the panels "I think we should figure out first how we are going to channel all that data we are getting here. Look, it just comes flowing in and in and in ... wicked! ... we need a model, some kind of system to process this. That's what we need to get to the bottom of it all! You want to go down there? How do you even know that doing that will bring us any closer to reality? As if there only was one! Reality that is. It's a multiverse out there. And you should ... we should know this better than anyone. We've been traversing realities for years now. It's part of our life, it's part of what we do, going from planet to planet. If you ask me, it's a spiritual thing, it's our journey, it takes us places. Besides, how do you want to escape that condition? Go and fry your feet in some lava down there? Is that real enough for you then? Come on ... maybe this data is as real as it gets? Depending on how you look at it, of course ... it's the blood in our veins..."

"Yeah, right ... you go model your data ... and bleed some code..." M retorted, chucking the controller into C's empty seat and stood silent for a minute or so. It wasn't like they hadn't had this conversation before, many times, in fact, often enough at least to know that they wouldn't resolve their issues. But it was bugging him nonetheless, both of them actually couldn't let it be. So he continued: "Well, you know that I'm not debating this, it's not like I believe I will run into some alien messiah down there



Photoshop montage inspired by classic SF book covers. From left Magni Borgehed and Carl-Erik Engqvist.

who'll tell it to me straight, you know, what it's really all about. That's not my point. My point is that I think we need to make a choice now. I see this red there on the ground – this red patch there, do you see it? – how it glows! And how the coastal rim of that continent over there disappears under those cloud formations, how following the twisted line of the rim with your eyes makes the mind travel! And how that smutchy yellow plane stretches over the continent right there before it touches the ocean ... I look at it and it means something to me. I don't need to talk science or religion to see that it means something to me. But I need to realize its meaning. And realize means I've gotta do something about it. Realize means there are decisions to be made ... there always are!"

"Ok, you make your decisions and then what?"

"Precisely. Then what? That's all I'm asking ... That's all I want to know..."

As if to confirm the built up tension between them, the graphs on the panels began pulsing intensely in deep orange and purple, their pulse quickened, but then suddenly subsided and turned into a steady wave. Only a moment later, the first rays of sun appeared over the horizon, slowly but steadily bathing the atmosphere in light. Wave by wave the coloured zones in the graphs on the panels now changed into a deep blue. It seemed like the planet itself was sentient. Something inside it changed with the arrival of the sun. Struck by the beauty of what they saw before them, neither of the two spoke nor moved. Time again stood still.

But then there was a noise, a crackle at first, then distinct sounds erupting from the ship's communication system. Interrupted by digital distortion, the message nonetheless came through clear enough: "TR 727 ... Report position ... 27 ... port ... ition ... goddamit ... where are you!" It had been going like this for days, ever since, upon encountering the planet, they had decided, unanimously in one instant, to switch off the engines and cut the transmission of position signals back to the base. There was no way to trace them now. They had disappeared. All because the planet had appeared. It wasn't supposed to be there. It showed up on no map. It was a miracle. The best thing ever. They just had to stop and linger in its orbit. Which meant they were ignoring their brief to take a shipload of canned beef and documentary newsreels to a colonial outpost in the northern hemisphere. But what did it matter anyway? Now that they were there. Now that there it was. Undeniably. The planet. All theirs.

"Report back? Will we?" C. said, smiling.

"I don't think so." M. returned his smile. "Why would we, now we are here? It's up to us now, not them..."

"Ffff..."

MICRO MELODRAMAS, SUBTRACTIONS AND DESIRE
– THE DANGEROUS LIAISONS OF ROMANTICISM

A STUDY OF THE IMAGES AND TEXTS OF JAN TORE
JENSEN, MARIEL ROSENDAHL AND STINA ROSENBERG

Sinziana Ravini

Writing about art that one only has encountered through the strict form of image reproduction is a little like reporting from a foreign country without getting off the bus. Still, that was precisely what Roland Barthes preferred to do on his trip to China's spectacular grave monuments in the Valley of Spirits – remain on the bus and take notes while his colleagues Julia Kristeva, Philippe Sollers and a few others were dashing around by the monuments. There is one great advantage with keeping things at a distance – namely the overview, but there are also disadvantages – you lose the intimacy, the details, the recesses. Distance is also the very criteria of desire. This text deals with three artists' practices I have come in contact with recently, and that is strictly through image reproduction, a form that we often encounter when we flick through catalogues, magazines and books. These three artists are: Jan Tore Jensen, Stina Rosenberg and Mariel Rosendahl.

I chose to overcome the distance between me and their actual works by throwing myself into their most intimate of all, their essays, and use the gap that emerges between the accounts of their works and the image reproductions, as well as that between the artistic intention and the actual result, a gap that is always there and that can be deeply resourceful since language always leaves something out and art works always come into being through a number of more or less unconscious processes. I recommend curious readers to find their way to these essays and produce their own meanings.

Before I go further into each artist's work I would like to mention something about the very thing that connects all three of them. I would say that it is their romantic vein, a vein that does not build so much on romantic irony, but on a truthful, dark and melancholic romanticism which revolves around the desire for a lost object. This obscure object of desire can be a lost love as well as a lost object. Melancholy and sentimentalism become vessels of meaning, the search becomes the form and drifting the goal. Since to find what one seeks is never the romantic artist's intention. He or she only wants to bridge the gap between emotion and intellect, image and concept, and last but not least – art and politics. Like Herbert Marcuse would argue, all art is a form of political action, a negation of the given world in favour of another, more truthful one.

The first thing that strikes me about Jan Tore Jensen's photographs is the total light heartedness. The main subject matter is a strikingly beautiful young man who meets the viewer in various everyday life situations, at the breakfast table, in the bath tub, on the beach, usually in the clothes that he was born in and nearly always with a mischievous look or a smile on his face. In some images he is standing outdoors looking in a mirror, in others he is holding a mug in his hand or trying to raise a tent. These images could be seen as highly commonplace, episodes from an outdoor hike, a documentation of a person's micro-universe with all it holds of



Jan Tore Jensen, from the series *There are Two Opposing Mirrors Inside the Camera (but I don't care cause I love U baby, that's no lie)*, 2008–2009



Jan Tore Jensen, from the series *There are Two Opposing Mirrors Inside the Camera (but I don't care cause I love U baby, that's no lie)*, 2008–2009

everyday tasks and leisure, but thoughts go quickly to both *Dorian Gray's* self-admiring dandy and Caspar David Friedrich's lonely walker. Thoughts that would have been trapped down a one way street had it not been for one element that disrupts the circular view of narcissism and the distant gaze of transcendental philosophy; had it not been for this person behind the camera who we occasionally catch a glimpse of in the shadow, in the indexical territory of the photograph. Who is this person and what is his or her relationship with the young man in the picture? The photographs do not reveal the stories behind the scenes, they are, like Susan Sontag puts it, both informative and misleading, both open and closed. A continued analysis would build only on speculations had it not been for Jensen's essay which throws new light on things, a text that is structured around an "archaeology of longing" à la Susan Sontag, but not a longing for geographically distant places like in Sontag's case, but for a private memory bank, for lost objects of affection. Jensen tries in this text to make peace with the most irreconcilable of all – the finiteness of love, but also his own finiteness. And this without any trace of irony or self enactment. What unravels is a desire for a lost love, but also a desire for desire itself, a desire which refuses to fall victim to cynicism or bitter nihilism and that instead attempts to capture signs that his desire was once desired by somebody other than himself. It is a beautiful anamnetic play that creates meaning out of lost meaning. It is an entertaining lamentation and project proposal functioning a little bit like self exorcism: "I am sentimental, melancholic, romantic, angst ridden and detached from reality ... I need to track down and trace what love is, what it was this time round. One half of me is collecting evidence that I once was really truly loved. I really was, for a moment there. And that is the death I cry for, and really fear. It is the only death worthy of a project I suppose. The other half is looking outside of this, searching for what it all means, what this project really is about, and it is pointing the gun right back at myself." It is not hard to make connections to Bas Jan Ader's *I'm too sad to tell you*, Yvonne Rainer's *Feelings are facts* and to romantic conceptualism's critique of common sense, their exposure of emptiness, of the nothingness that determines and thereby creates everything. Jensen is willing to tell even if he doesn't understand everything. The romantics were good at creating themselves out of nothing, in building a cult of genius around their own artistic subject and looking back to former ideals in their reproduction of obsolete objects or expressions. In Jensen's work we find all these aspects entangled into what could be called a micro melodrama: the realisation of the emptiness that follows loss and the construction of the self based on that very loss. This reconstruction of the past converges with the construction of the present: the fetishist collecting of images and the time consuming crocheting of a blanket which carries isolated declarations of love. It is a self-absorbed as well as a self-decentred micro melodrama, but a drama that opens up to

a larger universal melodrama about human existence, about the need for comfort and security in a world where the only ideology at hand is neo-liberal self-fulfilment.

When looking at Mariel Rosendahl's world of imagery one gets confronted with a labyrinth of mysterious and surreal paraphrases, classic fairytales, Gnostic and popular references to contemporary films such as *Tideland*, *Big Fish* and *Jacob's Ladder*. But these symbols are misleading, they create passages in a labyrinth that lead nowhere. A horse walks through a deserted town, a woman sits by a stream, a couple of trees stand inside the gallery room juxtaposed to a human aquarium. The desertedness is complete. Here nature and culture are everlastingly separated and evermore longing for one another. Many of the images appear to be structured around a lost self, an erasure of all coherent narration. This erasure creates a subtraction according to Alain Badiou. The subtraction states that something has taken place, but it does not reveal what that thing is, it only invites another thing to appear, another subjectivity to take form. The subtraction becomes thus the most welcoming form of all, since it is through the withdrawal of one subjectivity that another can arise, in the extraction of meaning that something new can come into being. You could say that Rosendahl is deceiving the viewer. That she, like her woodland creatures, leads us into a forest of references where we lose orientation. In her essay she argues the importance of losing control, both as an artist and as a viewer. In *The Glade* people were literally invited to get lost in a dense forest made from plastic strips. Some enjoyed it and revelled in the experience, others did not. In *Holding Breath* Rosendahl brought nature into culture, a couple of trees, petals, but also a woman who appeared to be captured in an aquarium. To hold one's breath here came to signify both a hint of pleasure mixed with fear, and sheer survival. The death and continued life of petals, the eternal view of the surveillance camera, all the elements of the installation signalled an attempt to draw attention to the fine line between control and caring. Rosendahl reveals in her essay that it was the Japanese garden – "a culture that is in many ways about control, but also humility" that inspired the piece. She asks herself whether the acceptance of not being in control can be a new form of control. Also the permanent installation – *Taket i mitt rum är stjärnorna* (*The ceiling in my room is the stars*) is a form of fictive nature and controlled loss of control. Large pieces of concrete furniture – a stove, a long dining table and a side-board stand gracefully in a forest, like archaic remnants from some divine banquet. It brings to mind Constantin Brancusi's timeless installation in northern Rumania named *The Table of Silence*, which stages a cosmic relationship between the sun and the twelve constellations but also between Jesus and the twelve disciples at the last supper. In Rosendahl's installation there is also a practical, social dimension since the concrete furniture can be used by campers. The sacral and the



Mariel Rosendahl, *While everyone is asleep*, 2005, video, 6:14 min



Mariel Rosendahl, *Sandomierz*, 2006, animation, 5:10 min



Mariel Rosendahl, *Siksi*, 2004, video/performance/installation, 4 min

profane, nature and culture here live side by side, in an anachronical paradise. In the video piece *The Grass Will be Greener* the relationship between culture and nature is less harmonic. A horse is walking through a post apocalyptic concrete landscape. This symbol of freedom which has also come to symbolise trust and loyalty with the human being is here lost in a world that once tamed him. The video is accompanied by mysterious choir music constructed from fragments of the national romantic tango *Satumaa*, which describes a beautiful fairyland beyond the seas where one's beloved dwells – a place one can only travel to in thought. The tango was written in 1949 in a country devastated by war, in longing for a better world, not so far from our current search for a better world.

Stina Rosenberg's practice seems to revolve around the mystery of colour and drawing, around the longing to be as free in form as in spirit. Her drawings are strong, playful and convulsive; they find their way out of the frame of the paper, to walls, ceilings and floors. They do it as though they had a life of their own. As she writes in her essay, this form of drawing is about a search for unity and reconciliation, but also a constant need for separation. In her essay she asks herself: "Is there a need to create separation over and over again in order to see reconciliation more clearly?" And further: "I long for the utopian agreement. Or perhaps rather an acceptance of the differences and complex wishes that live inside us." She wants to reach this acceptance through painting. She writes: "For me, painting is also an encounter. It is you and me and the relationship between us. To paint is to accept the moment just as the moment, and the space as space... Painting for me is a way of listening with the entire body. Not just following the wishes of the gaze, but liberating the gaze from ideas like right and wrong. An attempt at non-judging in the encounter." Rosenberg's painting builds on a romantic emancipatory philosophy, a philosophy that believes in art's ability to unite people, it also believes in the possibility of a free subject of knowledge, with free choices and opportunities. This belief in freedom is not far from the subjective philosophy of Johann Gottlieb Fichte's Idealism. Rosenberg follows a bodily rhythmic. Half-sitting on the floor, she can move quickly over the surface of the image, press hard when she needs to, make wide strokes when she needs to and linger on small details when she has to. The abstract flows into the symbolic, thus creating organic forms that follow the necessities of the movement of the body through space. Rosenberg's inspirations include Cy Twombly, Pierre Bonnard, Cecily Brown, and Willem De Kooning, Joan Mitchell and Jessica Stockholder. All known to have indulged in paradoxically beautiful and uncontrolled symphonies of paint, to have taken the colour out of the room – as in Stockholder's case, or drenched people in paint as in Bonnard's case. In Rosenberg's case it is as if she herself wants to become one with the medium and the world around her, and this through the circular movement of play, which revolves around



Stina Rosenberg, Oil on canvas, 2008–2009,
105.5×106 cm

loss of control and order, freedom and the creative limitations of freedom, but above all around the desire for desire itself. Rosenberg feels the moral necessity of play and the desire for artistic freedom without feeling circumscribed by any laws of how the play should be played. She writes: “The moral necessity of play, the game’s wish to play and the feeling of freedom. What are the forces that push me forward? Did I choose them? Are they leading me in the direction where I want to go? Nobody else knows the answer. What will happen depends on how I perceive the possibility of going that way. Free will is not limited by right and wrong. It is free! Art is to find the freedom and experience it. Moral is to listen to and acknowledge where the wish is coming from and decide whether the wish serves the journey towards the goal.” These words bring to mind Friedrich Schiller’s aesthetic utopia about a society which unites art, play and upbringing into an inseparable symbiosis. To Schiller all art and all social games are based on an urge to play. “Man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays.” What art can do is to bring us closer to this awareness. Rosenberg’s paintings are a perfect bridge between art, life and play, separate entities that need to remain separate, since distance is the very condition of desire. The bridging of that distance is the biggest danger, since it can either kill or renew the object of desire.

The works of Jan Tore Jensen, Stina Rosenberg and Mariel Rosendahl are all part of an intricate play with desire, with the construction and deconstruction of the self, finding romantic delight in self-analysis and self-definition. Their attempts to reenchant the world, to restore a lost and imagined harmony are hunted by a greater will, the will to reveal the futility of such an attempt. They all know that desire is created through distance and separation, that objects have to be devoid of meaning in order to find new desiring subjects. For this to happen, narrations have to be suspended or decomposed, meaning has to be subtracted, subjects have to be absent or self-absorbed. Romanticism becomes thus the ultimate enactment of lack. As Slavoj Žižek puts it in *The Plague of Phantasies*, “one is faithful to one’s desire by maintaining the gap which sustains desire, the gap on account of which the incestuous Thing forever eludes the subject’s grasp”. The romantic discourse is a battleground. A battle between those who believe that they can never find what they seek, since it is in the nature of the object of desire that the object as such is lost, and those that are sure that they will find what they seek, no matter how big the gap is or how unknown the object of desire is. The first ones are doomed to nihilism, the second ones to eternal naivism. Both extremes open up for dangerous liaisons, but what would life be without the sweet promise of danger? In the end it only comes down to one thing – whether or not we want to “mind the gap”.



Stina Rosenberg, Oil on canvas, 2008–2009,
105.5×106 cm



Stina Rosenberg, Oil on canvas, 2008–2009,
105.5×106 cm

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Colophon

IT'S ABOUT TIME

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