

Malmö Art Academy

2024–2025



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Malmö Art Academy

2024–2025

Foreword		4
Master of Fine Arts—Year 2	Ylva Kublik Borg	8
	Felix Christiansson	22
	Thomas Udomrat Hostrup	34
	Johnny Höglund	50
	Ingrid Jacobsen	66
	Johan Mørkøre Nordskar	80
	Maria Nadia Nour	94
	Emily Orlet	108
	Anna Pezzoli	120
	Stella Sieber	134
	Sigrid Soomus	150
	Marcus Wallström	164
	Vigga Wæhrens	178
	Hannes Östlund	198
Master of Fine Arts—Year 1	Siri Hammarén	220
	Matilda Kenttä	222
	Maya Krtić	224
	Fredrika Lindeberg	226
	Benita Massignani	228
	Sturla Magnusson	230
	Cecilie Mark	232
	Line Rolf	234
	Anania Røde	236
	Susi Schmid	238
	Rasmus Strøyer	240
Master of Artistic Research—Year 2	Orestis Mavroudis	244
Bachelor of Fine Arts—Year 3	Mads Skarsteen Andersen	268
	Gunvor Lind Balslev	274
	Loke Berg	280
	Benedikte Nøstvik Eide	288
	Adrian-Alicia Bisell Gonzalez	294
	Noah von Hauswolff	300
	Cecilie Kappel	306
	Othilia Hoby Leth	312
	Malthe Jos Lundquist	318
	Jelena Pajić	326
	Klara Paulin-Rosell	332
	Lavinia Samson	340
	Felix Schéele	346

Bachelor of Fine Arts—Year 2	Isabella Nicole Best	354
	Anna Filippa Moberg	356
	Niki Cervin	358
	Sæunn la Cour Degnbol	360
	Elliot Hjälmrud	362
	Alma Holtvedt (Exchange out)	364
	Maja Dahlström-Horvath	366
	Sarah Folker Kappel	368
	Fiona Alberte (Exchange student)	370
	Emilio Marroquin (Exchange out)	372
	Felix Emmanuel	374
	Isaac Rizell	376
	Liva Stare	378
	Mingsheng Xu	380
Bachelor of Fine Arts—Year 1	Peter Bidstrup	384
	Johan Buch	386
	Lasse Schmidt Hansen	388
	Ludvig Holm	390
	Felicia Jartelius	392
	Jacob Linholdt Nielsen	394
	Markus Lipsøe	396
	Claudia Munro	398
	Nina Fjordbak Nielsen	400
	Petra Maria Scott	402
	Hannes Nilsson	404
	Julia Sol Schenk	406
	Martin Sjöberg	408
	Marius Poika Valtanen	410
	Albert Willim	412
PhD Candidates	Sven Augustijnen	416
	Yael Bartana	418
	Jürgen Bock	430
	Bouchra Khalili	434
	Jacob Korczynski	436
	Emily Wardill	438
About Malmö Art Academy		444
Faculty Biographies		446
Programme Descriptions		454
Course Descriptions		456

Another year around the sun in a world where every day seems even more turbulent and uncertain than the last. Conflicts, polarisation, and political agendas are affecting our lives, and there is a lot to take in. The global situation does, of course, also affect the landscape in which higher art education operates. Over the past few years, we have seen the Art Academy becoming more political and have noticed that students are organising in a different way, drawing on activist strategies for self-organisation as well as healing practices after years of post-pandemic material engagement in solitary studios. One example is the student-organised and student-led series “DIY Systems of Support,” which allowed the students to engage in workshops with psychologists, artists, and activists at the Academy without the presence of faculty members, and which was funded through the equality board.

This past academic year has been filled with a wide range of courses for our BFA and MFA students, led by both visiting lecturers and faculty members. I first want to highlight some of the courses run by Academy faculty and staff in 2024–25, including the expansive course “Composite Image,” led by Professor Joachim Koester and Technician Sophie Ljungblom; “The Social Life of Affects,” with Professor Alejandro Cesarco; “The Unconscious,” run by Professor Gertrud Sandqvist; “The Cabinets: Building, Collecting, and Showcasing Your Curiosities,” led by Senior Lecturer Youngjah Lih; and “Analogue Photography and Beyond,” with Senior Lecturer Maria Hedlund in collaboration with Johan Österholm.

The courses helmed by external and visiting lecturers also spanned disciplines and included both theory and practical courses. Among them were the two-week course “Doing Things with Words,” led by Visiting Lecturer Michael Portnoy; the film course “Polyphonic Plots,” with External Tutor Tamar Guimaraes; the sculpture course “The Saddest Thing Is That I Have Had to Use Words,” led by Visiting Lecturers Ingrid Furre and Kah Bee Chow; and “Manufacturing the Imaginary:

Cinema and the End of Work,” led by External Tutor Marie Muracciole and Visiting Lecturer Amin Zouiten. To get a full overview of all the courses on offer, please see the detailed course descriptions in this *Yearbook*.

The PhD programme at Malmö Art Academy is led by Professors Gertrud Sandqvist, Andreas Broeckmann, and Sarat Maharaj. The cohort consists of Bouchra Khalili, Emily Wardill, Jacob Korczynski, Jürgen Bock, and Yael Bartana, each of whom is pushing the boundaries for what it means to think through the visual. In October 2024, the PhD candidates partook in an annual event in which they gave public presentations on their projects, allowing a glimpse into the doctoral research happening at the Academy. Also in October, Jacob Korczynski completed his 50 percent seminar with editor, curator, and scholar Adeena Mey as his external assessor.

Malmö Art Academy was proud to again host the prestigious Edstrandska Foundation exhibition in the school’s galleries. One of the largest private art awards in Sweden, the Edstrandska Foundation Scholarship supports the regional art scene, awarding both newly graduated students and established artists. The 2025 scholarship recipients were Pia Ferm, Tarik Kiswanson, and Elisabeth Östin, and the alumni awards were given to Anne Sofie Djernis, Cornelia Hermansson, Amanda Moberg, and Alice Ryne.

The Nordic First St. Johannis Lodge Jubilee Foundation (Stiftelsen Den Nordiska Första S:t Johannislogens Jubelfond) also supported three of the MFA graduates through awards in 2024: Juju Bento, Kristyan Nicholson, and Irene Kaltenborn. The Anna-Lisa Thomson Memorial Foundation (Stiftelsen Anna-Lisa Thomson till minne) supports graduating female students from Swedish art academies, and one of the 2024 awards went to our student My Sjöberg. Carin Alegre Castegren received the Helle Stigung award, which is a travel grant for promising young painters. Congratulations to all recipients of these prominent awards.

The year 2025 marks the thirtieth anniversary of Malmö Art Academy, and the autumn of 2025 will be dedicated to marking this significant event. The Einar Hansen Alhems Foundation has generously supported us to host a master class with the renowned artist and our honorary doctorate Nairy Baghramian, which will take place in November 2025. We have also received generous support from the Crafoord Foundation to acquire new equipment for our workshops, which is a great contribution to maintain the high-level technology that an art academy requires.

In January 2025, we hosted an open house for prospective students, and there was a great turn out. It was wonderful to see so many strong applications at both the bachelor's and master's levels.

The spring is always a busy time at Malmö Art Academy, dedicated to admissions work and examinations. From January to August, the MFA exam exhibitions take place in the school's galleries; through these many solo exhibitions, the individual artists' thinking is made visible. In May, we opened the BFA exam exhibition as a group show across our two galleries, which this year was curated by External Curator Karin Bähler Lavér and coordinated by Senior Lecturer Youngjae Lih. The BFA exhibition took place in conjunction with the Annual Exhibition, drawing a large audience to both venues. The Annual Exhibition was expertly coordinated by Junior Lecturers Joakim Sandqvist and Gabriel Karlsson, along with Senior Lecturer Maria Hedlund.

A huge thank you to all the participating students, technicians, and teachers for their dedication and great effort to organise two such wonderful shows simultaneously. I also want to thank the External Technicians Kristina Bengtsson, Linus Svensson, and Jens Henrichsson for their help in setting up the exhibitions.

This year we were happy to host two highly recognised curators as external examiners at Malmö Art Academy. For the BFA

examination, we welcomed curator, editor, and writer Yann Chateigné Tytelman, and for the MFA examination we were grateful to have Dieter Roelstraete, curator at the Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society at the University of Chicago. Thank you both for your contributions and insights.

I want to thank the external tutors—Ann Böttcher, Nina Roos, Charif Benhelima, and Tamar Guimaraes—for your significant contributions through individual studio visits and tutoring at the bachelor's and master's levels. Also, a warm thanks goes to our technical staff and administration, who make sure the school is running smoothly on a daily basis. Finally, a huge thank you to Karin Hald, our wonderful editor of the *Yearbook* and the excellent designer Marte Meling Enoksen, who once again designed the *Yearbook* as well as the posters for the BFA exam exhibition and Annual Exhibition.

—Maj Hasager
Rector, Malmö Art Academy

Master of Fine Arts
Year 2

Ylva Kublik Borg
Felix Christiansson
Thomas Udomrat Hostrup
Johnny Höglund
Ingrid Jacobsen
Johan Mørkøre Nordskar
Maria Nadia Nour
Emily Orlet
Anna Pezzoli
Stella Sieber
Sigrid Soomus
Marcus Wallström
Vigga Wæhrens
Hannes Östlund



Image courtesy of Youngjae Lih

Ylva Kublik Borg, *A YVL*, 2024. Photo album, wool fabric, sewing thread, wool yarn, ballpointpen, drawing, 40 × 35 cm. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2025

A Space Has Emerged
Ylva Kublik Borg

I practised writing my name in the album. I remember ordering the letters in a way that I thought was pretty or, in any case, the least ugly. I remember feeling aversion to my own name—being associated, I suppose, with an identity that is, was, me. A nascent self.

In my name, there is distance between the letters as they reach for or away from each other: what can be discerned as an *A* is heading away from or towards a *Y*. I experience the same thing with installations: the search for a whole via the relationship between things, as an attempt to write “I.” It is like when the world becomes bigger, finding your way beyond the edge of the blanket, the defined place within which the body of a young child has its just-big-enough world during the time that it’s practising and striving to get on its feet and walk—from there.

Likewise, language contains a movement: away. In the sense that the search for form in sculpture is a search for language. This is perhaps similar to the spatial intuition Julia Kristeva describes in *Revolution in Poetic Language*.

We borrow the term *chora* from Plato’s *Timaeus* to denote an essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases. We differentiate this uncertain and indeterminate *articulation* from a *disposition* that already depends on representation, lends itself to phenomenological, spatial intuition, and gives rise to a geometry.¹

Kristeva uses the term “the chora” to describe an organisational process that precedes language, which is called “the semiotic chora.” The term appears in Plato’s *Timaeus* and isn’t in fact something that can be represented but is borrowed by Kristeva in order to describe a state in the formation of language and identity, before either exists: “The *chora* is a modality of significance in which the linguistic sign is not yet articulated as the absence of an object and as the distinction between real and symbolic.”² Kristeva argues that it is the mother’s body that mediates the symbolic law, organises social relations, and becomes the organising principle of the semiotic chora: drives that involve pre-Oedipal semiotic functions and releases of energy that connect and orient the body towards the mother. Kristeva uses the term as a model of analysis to understand poetic language, positing that poetry arises in a semiotic field that is language modified by the memory of the maternal body: the preverbal symbiosis between mother and child.³

Plato’s *chōra*⁴ is used by several theorists, in addition to Kristeva, such as Jacques Derrida. In the discourse around the chora, there is a linguistic complication in the meaning of the term. Kristeva borrows the term from Plato, which becomes “receptacle”⁵ or “space”⁶ in English translation. Kristeva uses “the chora,” from the French *la chora*.

The use of “the chora” is called into question by Derrida, who puts forward that the definite article does away with the undefined character of the term that constitutes its meaning and instead uses *khōra* without a definite article. Derrida asserts that the definite article presupposes that the term is a noun, a thing.⁷ Kristeva argues that Plato himself identifies *chōra*/receptacle as maternal.⁸

“The chora” as a term has followed me for a long time; first, it was the title of a painting I made of a space, a room, which I made long ago. Throughout my study of art, there have been times when I’ve lost my way, and as part of this experience, it felt as if I’d lost touch with something important.

Previously, I’d worked with interventions in public spaces, among other things. That work’s reliance on context and documentation to establish meaning or content was jarring to me. Since then, I’ve been trying to find my way back to a material practice, perhaps more related to craft, where language comes out of the hand and it is the art object that then carries the content.

I picked up a smaller sculpture that I’d made earlier, by the by, and felt that it put me in contact with a space that I’m seeking through developing my sculptural language. It consists of a boot shaft from a deconstructed Moon Boot, two parts of two different bricks, and a small piece of plaster from the facade of a modernist building. From readymade to creating a form. Breaking down the form into parts and building it back up. But perhaps the space is more in between rather than within the parts.

“And the third type is space, which exists always and cannot be destroyed. It provides a fixed state for all things that come to be. It is itself apprehended by a kind of bastard reasoning that does not involve sense perception, and it is hardly even an object of conviction. We look at it as in a dream when we say that everything that exists must of necessity be somewhere, in some place or occupying some space, and that that which doesn’t exist somewhere, whether on earth or in heaven, doesn’t exist at all.”⁹

I looked back at the sculpture and how I went about making it, collecting various personal objects that conferred a strong sensation, such as the Moon Boot. A colour or quality, objects I remembered and could seek out. At first, I thought of them as catalysts, something that accompanied me on my way to something else. I didn’t expect to use the objects themselves, but eventually began working with them, nonetheless.

I unstitched the seams of a vest; it had been sewn in one piece, joined at the shoulders. The hems are knotted to the buttonholes. I took one form apart and tied it into a new form, but it still contained the same parts. Even the thread was still there, I think. Not much had been lost in the process.

Similarly, the poncho’s construction consisted of two almost identical pieces with a hood in between. I wondered what it would mean to take it apart and put it back together. But I didn’t put it back together; it’s a dissolved form. I unstitched the side seams and the seam of one sleeve but stopped at the hood. I attached it to a wall, and it became an angel or a bat or a bird or someone with a sex or a head, a belly or a nose or a mouth or a hood.

“We prove unable to draw all these distinctions and others related to them—even in the case of that unsleeping, truly existing reality—because our dreaming state renders us incapable of waking up and stating the truth, which is

Images courtesy of Youngjae Lih



Ylva Kublik Borg, *Universum sitter i handen, som havet i en snäcka*, 2025. Installation view



Ylva Kublik Borg, 4 of 1–6, 2025. Dried clay, plaster, casting clay, poplar wood,
15 × 21 × 50 cm



Ylva Kublik Borg, *Universum sitter i handen, som havet i en snäcka*, 2025. Installation view



Image courtesy of Youngjae Lih

Ylva Kublik Borg



Image courtesy of Youngjae Lih

Ylva Kublik Borg, *an angel or a bat or a bird or someone with a sex or a head, a belly or a nose or a mouth or a hood or*, 2025. Unstitched rain poncho, needles, 200 × 250 cm

*this: Since that for which an image has come to be is not at all intrinsic to the image, which is invariably borne along to picture something else, it stands to reason that the image should therefore come to be in something else, somehow clinging to being, or else be nothing at all. But that which really is receives support from the accurate, true account—that as long as one is distinct from the other, neither of them ever comes to be in the other in such a way that they at the same time become one and the same, and also two.”*¹⁰

In parallel, I've been making a mould of a lump of clay. I've been trying to learn older casting techniques and have only used plaster and clay, allowing the material to guide the form. The lump of clay is clad in plaster and becomes a mould. In it, I cast plaster, which becomes a solid plaster original. Then I pour clay slurry into the mould. It forms a thin wall against the plaster mould, after which the excess clay is poured out. Inside the mould, a space has emerged, like a small cup.

I look at the difference between the solid plaster mould and the form made of clay slurry and think of Derrida's relationship to language, as in the case of the chora, or simply *kbóra*, what an article can do to the content of the word in relation to what an open or closed form does to the content of the sculpture and thus what the characteristics of materiality designate, the language of the sculpture.

There is a state just before the word leaves the mouth, when it's still on the inside, before it takes on a materialised form, visible or audible to someone else. A struggle between letting out and holding in, a fear of the form it assumes on the perceived other side. A relationship between impression and expression.

A close-up of a mouth and a hand, and in between, what looks like a thin string of saliva, makes up the cover of the book from a major Lygia Clark retrospective at MoMA. The image is documentation from her 1973 piece *Baba antropófaga*.¹¹ It can be assumed that the title refers to the “anthropophagic,” an idea that was established by Oswald de Andrade in his 1928 *Manifesto Antropófago*.¹² Andrade proposed cultural cannibalism as an act of resistance, as opposed to passive compliance with postcolonial values.¹³ In a photograph of the work, a group of participants is sitting in a circle around a person lying in the middle of them on the floor. The group has spools of thread in their mouths, and they are dressing the body with the thread that is being

pulled out of their mouths.¹⁴ Clark herself asserts that this work is a way of using the body to construct a space for the word.¹⁵

Having helped develop geometric abstraction in Brazil in the 1950s, which led to neo-concretism, Clark began to question the objecthood of painting and gravitated towards sculpture that could move in space and even sculptures that could change shape.¹⁶ For example, the *Bichos* sculptures: geometric aluminium shapes joined together with hinges.¹⁷ Clark felt that her later piece, *Caminhando*, was the end of her individual expression through painting or sculpture. Instead of doing it herself, the important thing was to share the experience of doing.¹⁸

*“Each Caminhando is an immanent reality that is revealed in its totality during the period of the spectator-creator's expression.”*¹⁹

The word *caminhando* means walking and functions as a conceptual instruction on how to make a Möbius strip out of paper and then use scissors to cut until you can't cut anymore. Like walking along a line leading inwards until you can go no further.

With *Caminhando*, Clark is said to have discovered a feeling that later led to what she called “propositions.” Clark herself did not want to call it a “happening” or a “performance,” but a “proposition,” as Clark was looking for a particular type of experience that was not allowed by those formats, even if the propositions too required participants. Clark called it a “proposition” because it was about the striving for true experience as a format, which happenings could not satisfy.²⁰

In *Diálogo de mãos*, Clark used an elastic band to establish a relationship. It's a small, twisted bandage-like elastic band with two loops into each of which a hand can be threaded, your own or yours and another person's.²¹ There's something in the relationality in the space between hands or what Clark calls “a space for the word” that evokes a sense of recognition in me. The elastic band makes me think of the letters I practised in the album, how they're on their way to or from each other. Or how it feels to take apart a mould.

I relate to Clark's search for form, but my search begins with the dissolved feeling I experienced in my work with interventions earlier in my art studies. I understand that some sort of contact takes place between hands, as in *Caminhando*, one

hand cutting while the other holds, like a closed circuit. I'm trying to find my Möbius strip, but it's as if I'm cutting backwards, as if I've been dissolved and want to tie something together again: trying to understand myself in relation to the senses, trying to move towards the experience of "inwards," the organs as a sluice between an experienced inner and outer.

In *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida asks what an expression is and turns to Edmund Husserl. The answer is that the expression is a sign loaded with meaning:²²

This interpretation (*Deutung*) makes a latent expression *heard*, brings a meaning (*bedeuten*) out from what was still held back. Nonexpressive signs mean (*bedeuten*) only in the degree to which they can be made to say what was murmuring in them, in a stammering attempt. Gestures mean something only insofar as we can hear them, interpret (*deuten*) them.²³

I think of Lygia Clark pulling thread from her mouth as if pulling something out from the other side, like a cast of the inside. But according to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, inside and outside are the same: body.

*"We have to reject the age-old assumptions that put the body in the world and the seer in the body, or, conversely, the world and the body in the seer as in a box. Where are we to put the limit between the body and the world, since the world is flesh? ... The world seen is not "in" my body, and my body is not "in" the visible world ultimately: as flesh applied to a flesh, the world neither surrounds it nor is surrounded by it. A participation in a kinship with the visible, the vision neither envelopes it nor is enveloped by it definitely."*²⁴

In *Diálogo de mãos*, Clark has established a relationship with the elastic band. Maybe I'm looking for something similar in the clay. Clay and plaster allow for quick action, as when I silence my thoughts. At the same time, there is a contradiction in this because it also demands a concentration that I'm seeking, like the circuit I imagine the Möbius strip is creating.

Before the clay is fired, the form is less robust and more vulnerable. It can break and lose its shape, its meaning. The plaster grazes the clay and listens to it, the impression in the plaster becomes an interpretation. The moulding process is close at hand. It becomes meditative as if thought stops and you allow yourself to be in the feeling

of a materiality and thereby discover the content. What is a lump of plaster once it leaves my hand?

I'm drawn to a woodcut by Vija Celmins. It looks like water, light reflections across the surface of the ocean.²⁵ This particular one is a print, but there are also similar motifs in her paintings and drawings. The motif stems from when she started photographing the Pacific Ocean, using the photographs as blueprints: a still image of something formless. Celmins speaks of a fluidity in oil paint, as if it is about the sea as such, but also about the painting as such, and asserts that a painting is not a window, but has its own reality.²⁶ That it is the sea but also not; it is an image of the sea; it is painting. I experience Celmins's paintings and drawings as having a greyish tone to them, like a thin milky layer. I wonder if that's her tone, what Kristeva would call "the semiotic chora."

Celmins's approach makes me think of the difference between painting something from memory or painting from an image or painting something that is right in front of you. The still image makes it possible to freeze the sea, as if it is in arrest. There is a state, even with plaster, that recalls photography, when the form freezes. The plaster mixes with water and crystallises into a new, solid form.

Celmins has also worked with sculpture and objects, enlargements and copies of recognisable objects, such as *Comb*, a 190 cm long comb.²⁷ The later *Blackboard Tableau #12* consists of small, found chalkboards that Celmins made meticulous copies of in materials that resembled the originals as much as possible.²⁸ Celmins talks about how she sought out a small chalkboard that she remembered, as well her intuitive love and sense for the dust left behind by the chalk.²⁹

An object of my own that I have sought out is, well, let's call it a small scratch card. It must date back to elementary school and is a card with a black foil overlay, white underneath, which can be carved into. It's a picture of space: a galaxy, some planets, and a small alien. A model of the universe. My hand can still feel what it's like to scratch the motif into being. The universe sits in the hand like the ocean in a seashell. Maybe that's why I can suddenly make a picture, using a piece of oil pastel and a scalpel to scrape forth the image.

One story from my childhood is about a long shelf along a wall, on which there were various nice things. Before bedtime, my mother would

carry me in her arms along the shelf, and we'd say goodnight to all the items that were lined up there. Items that are given names but have the potential to be anything. This shelf, which I don't remember firsthand, becomes an image when the story is recounted. Since it runs along a wall, the things on it should only be visible from one direction, like a relief.

In *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Rosalind Krauss argues that the classicist relief was based on certain ideals that, for example, Auguste Rodin broke with in his work on the relief *The Gates of Hell*,³⁰ which opens up a fragmentation of form and content that leads the way to modern sculpture. In classicist sculpture, sculpture was used to depict, for example, a historical event and the full message within the relief had to be intelligible from a specific point in the room. Thus, a form could be displayed from different angles within the same relief to establish an ideal whole. Krauss argues that what is specific to the relief is that it makes it possible to understand the spatial and temporal aspects of the work simultaneously: how the form develops from the surface of the relief and what the depicted moment means in its historical context. Thus, the ability of the form to designate:³¹

The frontality of the relief forces the viewer to place himself directly before the work in order to see it, and thus guarantees that the effect of the composition will in no way be diluted. Further, the medium of relief depends upon a relationship between the sculpted figures and their ground. Since this ground behaves like the illusionistic background of a painting, it opens up a virtual space through which the figures can appear to move. Into this movement—this apparent emergence from background to foreground—the sculptor can project the temporal values of the narrative. Most important, the medium of relief links together the visibility of the sculpture with the comprehension of its meaning; because from the single viewing point, in front of the work, all the implications of gesture, all the significance of form, must naturally devolve.³²

The bodies in *The Gates of Hell* careen in every direction, as if they wanted to dissolve their form by sinking into the background or projecting further out of the given space of the relief, like an installation. As Krauss suggests, form and content are fragmented, which leads the way to modern sculpture.

For me, the installation is a space within which I search for the relationship between things to make a whole. Perhaps it is like the spatial intuition described by Kristeva: a movement in language, on the way to or from form. The state before the word leaves the mouth. As Clark asserts, the body becomes a space for the word. The search for form is a search for language. A dreamlike state where everything must exist somewhere.

I think of the shelf that I don't remember, how the items on it are experienced without having names, before a self is a self, and that, in this way, it may not be possible to understand the boundary between oneself and an outside. I wonder whether it is possible to understand something outside oneself or whether everything is part of the same whole, as Merleau-Ponty describes. It is a relationship between impression and expression, trying to understand an experienced outside, like the plaster interprets the clay.



Images courtesy of Youngjae Lim

Ylva Kublik Borg, *I U I take one form apart but tie it into a new form, still it contains the same parts*, 2025. Unstitched inner lining, 200 × 100 cm



Ylva Kublik Borg, *Push and Restraint 1–2*, 2024. Oil pastel on acid free-paper, 21 × 29.7 cm.
Installation view and detail

Image courtesy of the artist





Images courtesy of Youngjae Jih

Ylva Kublik Borg, *Untitled*, 2025. Cut poplar tree branches, tarlatan weave, iron oxide, dried clay, MDF board. Installation view



Ylva Kublik Borg, *Untitled*, 2025. Tarlatan weave, dried clay, 200 × 15 cm. Detail

- 1 Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 25–26.
- 2 Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, 26.
- 3 Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, 25–30.
- 4 Plato, *Skrifter [Timaens]*, trans. Jan Stolpe (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2006), book 4, 664.
- 5 Plato, *Timaens*, in *Plato Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 1251 (49).
- 6 Plato, *Timaens*, 1255 (52b).
- 7 Jacques Derrida, “Khōra,” in *On the Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 96–97.
- 8 Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, 26.
- 9 Plato, *Timaens*, 1255 (52).
- 10 Plato, *Timaens*, 1255 (52).
- 11 Lygia Clark, *Baba antropofágica*, 1973, proposition, probably in use in Paris, 1973, reproduced in “The Object Is Thread,” in *Lygia Clark: The Abandonment of Art, 1948–1988*, ed. David Frankel (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2014), cover page.
- 12 Cornelia H. Butler, “Lygia Clark: A Space Open to Time,” in *The Abandonment of Art*, 14.
- 13 Eleonora Fabião, “The Making of a Body: Lygia Clark’s Anthropophagic Slobber,” in *The Abandonment of Art*, 298.
- 14 Clark, *Baba antropofágica*, 294.
- 15 Lygia Clark, “Lygia Clark: A fantasmática do corpo,” interview by Roberto Pontual, *Jornal do Brasil* [Newspaper of Brazil], 21 September 1974, quoted in *Lygia Clark*, ed. Fundació Antoni Tàpies (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1998), 315.
- 16 Luis Pérez-Oramas, “Lygia Clark: If You Hold a Stone,” in *The Abandonment of Art*, 33.
- 17 Lygia Clark, *Bicho*, 1960, aluminium, dimensions variable, in *The Abandonment of Art*, 183.
- 18 Lygia Clark, *Caminhando*, 1963, paper and scissors, in *The Abandonment of Art*, 199.
- 19 Lygia Clark, “Writings by Lygia Clark 1960–1963, Caminhando (1963),” in *The Abandonment of Art*, 160.
- 20 Fabião, “The Making of a Body,” 296.
- 21 Lygia Clark, *Diálogo de mãos*, proposition, in “The Object Is Made of Elastic, 131.
- 22 Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena and other Essays on Husserl’s Theory of Signs*, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 32.
- 23 Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, 36.
- 24 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “The Intertwining—The Chiasm,” in *The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 138.
- 25 Vija Celmins, *Ocean Surface Wood Engraving*, 2000, 2000, wood engraving, 52.7 × 43.8 cm, in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/353099>.
- 26 Vija Celmins, in “Meet the Artist—Vija Celmins | Met Exhibitions,” YouTube video, 2:06, posted by The Met, 30 August 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K99EVM-EG0>.
- 27 Vija Celmins, *Comb*, 1969–70, wood, lacquer, and epoxy, 190.5 × 37.2 × 6 cm, in *Vija Celmins to Fix the Image in Memory*, ed. Gary Garrels (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2018), 12.
- 28 Vija Celmins, *Blackboard Tableau #12*, 2007–15, one found tablet and one made object, wood, leather, acrylic paint, alkyd oil and pastel, each 27.9 × 21.6 × 0.6 cm, in *Vija Celmins to Fix the Image*, 203.
- 29 Vija Celmins, in “Vija Celmins at Glenstone Museum,” YouTube video, 5:45, posted by Glenstone Museum, 14 March 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gj9j_ZOZiKE.
- 30 Auguste Rodin, *The Gates of Hell*, 1880–1917, bronze, 549 × 366 × 84 cm, in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, in *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, by Rosalind E. Krauss (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 13.
- 31 Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, 7–37.
- 32 Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, 14.



Image courtesy of the artist

Felix Christiansson, *Bellows of the Chimera (about longing through the night)*, 2025. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM2 Gallery, Malmö, 2025

In The Shower of Sparks That Constitutes This Eternal Event,
It Is Indecipherably Written
Felix Christiansson

The mainspring of my work has always been a fascination with what arises when I give myself to the unknown force and allow myself to trust what I do not understand.

In the beginning, I turned inwards, towards myself, in order to observe what was moving inside of me. Painting was like a magnifying glass, intensifying my feelings and bringing me closer to that which I did not yet understand. During this time, I first encountered Roj Friberg's work.¹ Specifically, his interpretations of August Strindberg's *The Ghost Sonata*.² These works, which hung in the public library in the city where I grew up, portrayed some kind of catastrophic dinner party in a darkened castle. The halls were dimly lit by candelabras and chandeliers, which cast long shadows in hallways whose doors opened onto pitch-black rooms. These spaces were inhabited by black-clad ghosts, who sat stiffly around dining tables or stood lined up against a wall. In one picture, a violent accusation is thrown from one ghost to another; in another, there is the suggestion of a ghostly leg vanishing around a corner.

I immediately felt bound to this visual world, to the halls and the ghosts. I asked the librarian about the artist and learned that the paintings were illustrations of a play. A decade passed before I read this play—somehow it didn't occur to me. Desiring to walk through the castle where Roj Friberg's pictures were set, I started to expand on these scenes as soon as I came home.

For two years, I saw it as my primary task to uncover this castle through painting. Then I moved on. The ghosts were reduced to masks and hands, and the castle to lines of composition. In the mask, I found a doorway that allowed me to enter the picture. The mask was the fixed point that made all other points legible. The mask was my anchor.

Using this tool, I was able to reduce the picture even further, so much so that there was almost nothing but the mask left. Perhaps I'd produced a feedback loop of some kind, because painting became increasingly painful. I felt more and more disgust for the paintings, but I couldn't stop.

I couldn't sleep or eat, only paint loathsome masks. I was no longer in control of my hand or my gaze, because they were drawn, as if by a magnetic force, to the abyss that was the mask. There was no longer space for any life: no room, no objects, nobody else, not even myself—only the mask. The idea of painting was so deeply associated with my sense of self that abandoning painting felt like giving up on my whole life, but I saw no other way forward. So, I burned all the paintings I'd entangled myself in and disavowed my brush and my paints.

One of my teachers at the time, David Skoog, once told me that as an artist you enter into the unknown, like an astronaut on a spacewalk. You dive into the dark, infinite expanse and bring your findings back to the ship. This means you have to be careful with the lifeline that binds you to the ship and your fellow humans, because there is no value in a treasure that you're unable to make legible to others. To enter the infinite darkness is dangerous; if you lose the connection to the ship, you risk disappearing.

I believe this is what happened to Carl Fredrik Hill. When I look at the drawings produced during his years of illness, I feel that I understand them. Not fully, of course, because if that were possible, people would be able to find each other in this abyss, but that does not seem to happen. It seems like a lonely abyss. Still, I know what it's like to see your own name written in the sky. I know what it's like to sink so deeply into yourself that everyone else disappears. Luckily, I have always been able to hold onto the lifeline. This might be because of my belief that what remains once all the cognitive constructions have been peeled off is hearing and music. That my soul is part of an enormous soul. That at the bottom of myself is a you. Glorious you. When I can no longer understand anything at all, it is still so clear that I'm listening, that I'm singing.

To and about you.

Around this time, I met Mattias Eliasson, a guest lecturer who introduced me to the way care for an object is transferred to a viewer. If the care given to an object is treated as the raw material of the work, this charge, for whatever reason, can be directly sensed by another person. Without quite realising it, I had amassed a fairly large collection of objects that I was beginning to use as thinking aids. I brought the mask into the work with these objects, since I had a strong sense that I wouldn't

be able to give the objects meaning without this North Star. Similarly, I felt dependent on the frame. In the larger world, everything is part of something bigger, but within the frame, I could see a scene as something complete and still. An eternity, frozen in time. As if the objects within that frame had always existed, as if they could not have been any other way.

The word "landscape" has served as a guide in my abstract meaning making. When I enter a commonplace room with a commonplace gaze, I sometimes catch myself thinking that the colour on the wall is too light, or that the table by the window would have made a more pleasing impression if it had a different kind of tablecloth. But when I look at a grove in a meadow, it would be absurd to have an opinion on how a particular tree is leaning. When I look at a landscape, I notice, instead, that I accept the picture. In this way, I allow it to encounter me with fewer barriers. By giving this attitude a name, I can call something a landscape and encounter it as such. Whenever I approach a scene like this, I feel it expanding and touching me in a way that feels very close.

Another guide for me in this kind of thinking is Giorgio Morandi. I believe that the same kind of discovery was highly central to Morandi's work. By stilling a delimited portion of the world, Morandi appears able to get closer to the distant tones the objects give off, and then, through painterly treatment, bring them forth for general observation.

Since I was in the middle of a conflict with painting, yet had no other framework, I turned on an overhead projector and called it a frame, arranging objects inside its light as if I were painting. But an important difference was that my actions within the work did not leave a mark on my canvas and could be infinitely rearranged. This relieved some of the tension that had become difficult to bear—not without sacrifice, of course, as this tension is a powerful force in painting, but I needed to think that I wasn't painting.

As I started to work in space, the big problem of photographic reproduction took on central importance. For me, seeing has always been linked to thinking and the body. The way an object slithers out of my attempt to grasp it, evading me, is part of what it means to see. What I see is inseparable from the feeling that it is, in the very moment of seeing, taken away from me. Seeing, then, is always broken, and this brokenness is something I want to preserve. The photographic



Image courtesy of the artist

Felix Christiansson, *Still life: mask in miniature castle*, 2021. Oil graphite and acrylic on canvas, 53 × 42 cm

image has always given me an impression of in-tactness, and therefore it's always felt less real. So, when it came to documenting my *work with the objects*, I decided to draw it; this was a way of preserving something, at least for myself.

I was once gifted a book of Alberto Giacometti's writing.³ These were texts of various sorts, spanning his entire working life. The first section included essays submitted to magazines; the second section featured texts from notebooks organised in chronological order up until his death at age sixty-five; and the final section was made up of dialogues.

Even though Giacometti died long before I was born, I felt able, through this book, to get a sense of his whole person, so real that I could almost hear him. I felt that I understood his mental world and drives as well as my own. Giacometti often wrote about the different stages of seeing in its constant pendulum—for instance, the way a commonplace vista can suddenly break free of its flatness and flick you on the nose. Or how a regular glass of water can appear as the only stable point in a floating space of shapeless bodies. For Giacometti, the highest endeavour was to portray the world as he saw it—a simple, conventional project, but impossible. He was cognizant of this impossibility, but I also think he kept this awareness at bay to preserve his desire to try.

Most of Giacometti's writing is about his failures. And it is probably true that any attempt to portray the world in order to convey it as it appears is inevitably a failure. Knowing this, reaching—the act of reaching for something like a landscape—and ending up with a messy collection of marks on a canvas is both sad and pitiful. But in the failure, the motif is kept intact, affirmed as ungovernable.

As I started to draw from my eye, I came to understand how useful drawing is for trying to see. When I take the position of drawing from my eye, my gaze changes. I do not ask what I am seeing; instead, I follow, and the hand imitates what meets the eye. In the hand rests a hidden matrix of gestures. These gestures, extended or interrupted, wavering or intent, are knit together, making a portrait of the eye's wanderings, which I, through my body, am given access to understand. Putting down my drawing later, I find that the object I've portrayed has become more complex. It's unfurled a little.

If I continue to give the object my attention, it keeps growing. With time, its impressions sharpen, so much so that I experience the object as corresponding to a point inside of me. When I subsequently place two objects that have gone through a similar treatment within a scene, turning them, it feels as if something within me turns, slowly. This discovery amazed me. By focusing on an arrangement of objects before me, I was able to observe and turn something that was inside of me.

For some time, I made it my primary task to attempt to understand how to approach an object without my preconceived notions blocking it. I was trying to figure out how I could allow the object to enter and work directly inside of me, so that I could attempt to understand what it was that I, in approaching the objects, came into contact with.

But the mask remained in the middle of my work and blocked my view.

Slowly, it was becoming clear to me that I was nearing the dead end I'd previously reached in painting, because when it came to presenting an installation, it didn't feel complete without a mask in it, looking. Part of me had clung to the mask—to the extent that when I considered banishing it from my work, my sense of self seemed to pass before my eyes. I didn't understand why I had created all these masks that were now lined up on shelves, looking down at me. It was as if I'd transferred part of me to the mask and sealed it. I didn't know what was in the mask, but the thought of letting it slip from my hands and break against the stone floor was as off-putting as the idea of biting my finger with all my might. The longer I look at the mask, the blurrier my own lines become, the duller my surroundings.

I believe that James Ensor experienced something very similar. It looks as if he, too, felt the mask tug at his gaze. The painting *Still Life with a Cabbage* illustrates this; you can clearly see a mask break into the picture, turning the still life into a play.⁴

Ensor's many still lifes almost always seem to exist on a spectrum of an impending and ongoing intrusion of these masks. They flip the outward-looking gaze inside out, mixing what is in the surrounding space and what is inside Ensor. Out of this mess, a spectacle emerges, where the inner voices bleed into the surrounding space.



Image courtesy of the artist

Felix Christiansson, *Still life: the disappearing act*, 2024. Oil on bedsheet, 64 × 55 cm



Images courtesy of the artist

Felix Christiansson, *Bellows of the Chimera (about longing through the night)*, 2025. 4 × 2.6 × 5 m, 45:00 min



Felix Christiansson, *Bellows of the Chimera (about longing through the night)*, 2025. Installation view

This turning inside out of the internal chatter puts the person making the painting at a remove. As I came to understand Ensor, I also started to understand myself. So, I packed up all my masks and placed them in a wooden crate in the basement, watched *The Ghost Sonata*, the play on which Roj Friberg's series was based, and started to write a script.

Up until then, the idea of writing a dialogue had been completely foreign to me, but suddenly I understood that it wasn't in any way a question of fiction, just of splitting oneself into different continents and listening.

I placed myself to the side of myself and observed the monologue that incessantly rises from me, as if from a steam engine. By studying its movement, I was able to localise three principles within me. I named them Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3. Then I documented them as they spoke.

By giving these principles a name, I became a room, and the constant negotiation around power, guilt, order, and disorder was given a body in the room. Consequently, in the dialogue, I was able to see the very movement of thought. I have heard it said that it is the paradoxes in a system that give the system its power, and I see that now. For a long time, I was looking for the thoughts' conclusions, the fruits that the thought can produce, and which can be of more or less use. Now, instead, I had turned to the body of the thought, which is to say, the constant movement of dissolution and reconstruction, of yielding and pushing away, of swelling and sinking.

I read Plato again and realised that it was high time to give these figures a motive. So, I put the motives that I've struggled to figure out my whole life into the room:

Agency.

Memory.

The real.

Where am I?

What is an object? And so on.

This produced no fruit. Instead, a movement developed that illustrated what it is to wonder. And what it's like to be stuck inside oneself. I created three masks and three hands, gave them each a role, and built the room I had painted so many times. I sewed bodies from black velvet, and the masks became dolls. Then I engaged my closest friends. I see myself in each of them, and I was able to see them in me. The puppeteers' relationship to the dolls and to each other as well as the dolls' relationship to their lines, the audience, and to the spirit that binds the things to their path became the play's primary motives.⁵

When the mask had been given a body, a voice, and a room, I was freed of it. I was free to turn my gaze outwards, towards what is not me. So, I turned to the trees, because the trees have always been able to suddenly break through the flatness that cloaks the world in my gaze. The tree rushes over me in a flood that also takes my ability to translate the world into something graspable. When that happens, the separation between myself and what I experience begins to fade. Only then am I in the state I call "seeing," where I am touched by what happens and the matte membrane that covers my gaze is broken.

For me, Ibn Arabi has been a guide in this searching, this longing for the world. He writes about what I call "seeing" as two different kinds of eyes: my eyes and your eyes. He describes approaching the real as a dissolution. When my grasping fails, both outside of me and within, "I" will die before death, and the eyes become yours.

*"Listen, O dearly beloved!
I am the reality of the world, the center of the circumference,
I am the parts and the whole.
I am the will established between Heaven and Earth,
I have created perception in you only in order to be the
object of my perception.*

*If then you perceive me, you perceive yourself.
But you cannot perceive me through yourself,
It is through my eyes that you see me and see yourself,
Through your eyes you cannot see me.*

*Dearly beloved!
I have called you so often and you have not heard me.
I have shown myself to you so often and you have not
seen me.
I have made myself fragrance so often, and you have
not smelled me,
Savourous food, and you have not tasted me.
Why can you not reach me through the object you touch
Or breathe me through sweet perfumes?
Why do you not see me? Why do you not hear me?
Why? Why? Why?"⁶*

Image courtesy of the artist



Felix Christiansson, *Shadow fountain (reduced to one axis of rotation)*, 2025. Mixed media



Top: Felix Christiansson, *Range marker (glimpse)*, 2024. Oil on canvas, 58 × 49 cm

Bottom left: Felix Christiansson, *Archway*, 2024. Oil on wood, 60 × 67 cm

Bottom right: Felix Christiansson, *Interior*, 2024. Oil on wood, 45 × 49 cm



I turn to the trees to see, because they show me very clearly how close I am. Painting, in this situation, becomes a kind of bookkeeping. When I read the tree and put my depiction in order, I've pushed the view away, replacing it, and the picture becomes stiff and dead. If I keep, instead, my grasping instinct to seal the tree at bay, a crack can remain, through which the real light of the tree can push out and float into my trembling hands, my witnessing hands. The picture becomes broken and charged.

In this state of seeing, something is uncovered. Not on the canvas, but in my soul. The objects turn out to be transparent, and inside them *one* entwined shadow trembles. Every time I *see*, I see this, from a new position. When it is time to navigate, these glimpses of seeing become leading marks, points that, when seen in a line, tell the navigator her position. The paintings of the trees, then, become a charting of sorts.

A lousy chart, I should say.

I initially approached the trees by trying to find a legible meaning in their various gestures. This thought was based on the simple fact that trees grow according to a determined structure, which they later either diverge from or follow, like attack and decay as described in a musical score. But all that came from this attempt to translate the trees were reductions and misunderstanding. I abandoned the thought.

It is possible that the legible meaning I was seeking cannot be achieved through a template, because if I measure the trees using the template I've invented, the resulting numbers tell me nothing. The trees remain in place, at the same distance. I believe, instead, that getting close is about sympathy. Because how does a child learn to feel for music? It must be the same to feel for trees.

This is not at all about measuring, but about connecting them to your body, about leaning close to what happens in yourself at the sight of a tree, letting yourself follow. I can't translate the tree's gesticulating pirouettes into concrete concepts, but when I watch them happening, they are absolutely clear. I see what the tree does, and it gives meaning. This is how I learned to read trees.

As my gaze was freed from the mask, I too could walk freely through the halls that were now empty. When I, having just started painting, entered the rooms prepared by Roj Friberg, I encountered drama and ghosts. These rooms are now empty. I send my gaze through the surface I've chosen to paint on, letting myself sink, and I enter something that resembles a house of glass. I turn, and the whole glass world rotates. I sink, and it rises. With my brush, I mark what moves past me in the journey through the room: arches, corners, and mouldings.

Every movement echoes. Until the image closes again, and I see nothing.

There, too, is a sky.

1 Roj Friberg, *Ur Spöksonanen* [From the Ghost Sonata], 1983–93, colour lithographs. The lithographs comprise a portfolio of fifteen prints inspired by August Strindberg's *The Ghost Sonata* (1907), printed by Duro Grafiska in an edition of 160. In the late 1980s, Parisian gallerist Edouard Weiss contacted Lena Cronqvist and Roj Friberg, asking each of them to interpret a Strindberg play of their choosing to be included in a set of published lithographs.

2 August Strindberg, *The Ghost Sonata*, 1907. The play premiered 21 January 1908 at Intima Teatern in Stockholm.

3 Alberto Giacometti, *Écrits* [Writings], ed. Mary Lisa Palmer and François Chaussende (Paris: Hermann, 1990).

4 James Ensor, *Nature morte au chou* [*Still Life with a Cabbage*], 1921, in the collection of Kröller-Müller Museum.

5 Felix Oscar Christiannson, *Chimärans blågar (om längtan genom natten)* [The Bellows of the

Chimera (about longing through the night)], KHM2 Gallery, Malmö, 21 February–8 March 2025. Participants: Viktor Nilsson, Charlotte Foureaux, Tobias Westholms, and Andrea Sitara Gran.

6 Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi, "The Creative Feminine: Sophiology and *Devotio Sympathetica*" [c. 1209], trans. Ralf Manheim Henry Corbin, in *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 174.



Image courtesy of Youngjae Lim

Thomas Udomrat Hostrup, *Dix Flatline*, 2025. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM2 Gallery, Malmö, 2025

Finding the Words and Taking Shape

I will begin where I started: understanding language as technology, and technology as magic. I had heard the myth of humankind not being able to see the colour blue until modern times (in the colour spectrum as we know it), but I had never really delved into it until recently, when I heard Guy Deutscher speaking about the myth on an episode of *Radiolab*,¹ promoting his book *Through the Language Glass: Why the World Looks Different in Other Languages*. The book tells the story of William Ewart Gladstone (1809–98), a Homer virtuoso and former prime minister of the United Kingdom, who painstakingly mapped the use of colour words in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. He found words for black, white, red, and green, but not blue! This led to more research on ancient texts, which showed that the modern definition of the colour blue did not exist at that time or in surrounding areas, with the exception of ancient Egypt.

This curious fact was partly what started the myth, but it is not true. The myth is just that, a myth, and has been debunked several times by different researchers. But it is just as fascinating that such a mistake became a prolific myth that continues to be cited as “the truth”—even as recently as 2018. However, as Deutscher explains,² there was a hierarchy of colours in ancient languages. For example, the ancient Greeks did have a word for blue, but it was on a spectrum that we may not understand as blue today. This is much like Russian, which has two words for blue, or Greenlandic, which has many words for ice. These examples point to the fact that languages are not all universally translatable. Additionally, what is recorded in written language is tied to what we as humans can produce: although we can see and recognise blue, we may not be able to harness it through technology. Likewise, it will not be mentioned in a societal context, as usage plays a part in how it is recorded or remembered. Thus, we arrive at Deutscher’s main point, that languages are determined by people and the time in which they exist. We can then consider language as a form of shorthand—in the way that a “local” society creates a consensus of understanding that reduces objects, concepts, and so on down to practical qualities that society members convey among themselves.

Why am I telling this story of a myth? The myth of the colour blue strikes me as a slightly problematic story of the blind optimism of the Enlightenment age, mixed with hints of manifest destiny: the belief that the ancient Greeks were so innocent that they could not even see a certain colour yet (not true). This speaks to the idea that human progress (through a “Western” lens) is an upwards trend—a bias that Gladstone leans well into. To be fair, he was the prime minister at the height of the British Empire—Britannia rules the waves, and so on and so forth. I find this misrepresentation slightly disturbing, as I mentioned, but also a little bit cute and, more importantly, also very fascinating, as it pertains to what my artistic practice has been circling around for many years. That is, exploring purposeful misinterpretations of objects, qualities, and narratives, both fictional and historical. Hence the long-winded explanation of the colour blue. Creating an obvious failure creates tension between reality and fiction, like a negative imprint that serves as a guidepost that leads to the sublime,³ like understanding the depth of an iceberg floating in the sea, beneath the surface of which lurks something more.

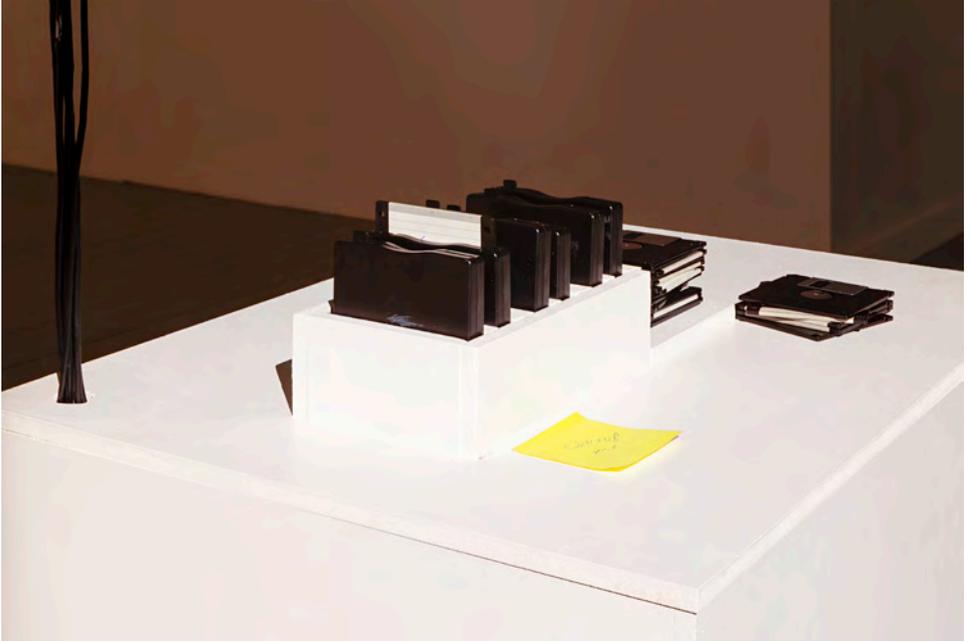
What I am getting at is the different existing interpretations separated by time, which are connected by the receptacle of language; these take the form of the receptacle itself as an object, such as writing words or etching drawings on an ancient tome, which we can consider as a type of technology. These objects in time point towards other moments in time, like Filippo Tommaso Marinetti’s “Manifesto of Futurism”⁴ or sci-fi books such as *Neuromancer* by William Gibson,⁵ which look towards the future, and in reverse, Gladstone looking back at the past, viewing the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* through a contemporary lens. Through this, Gladstone makes wild, although poetic, accusations on how human physiology works. Here, I would like to introduce Lund University’s very own Alf Hornborg and his text *The Magic of Technology*, in which he outlines technology as a form of magic. In it, he discusses magic as delegated agencies—“agencies” defined as motivation by way of cultural norms, political ideology, or personal views.⁶ The different artefacts that create this magic are simple tools like wrenches, keys, and coins that are defined by local human

perceptions. Finally, there is global magic: interconnected systems like computers, the internet, and cars. Hornborg chooses to use this definition of magic as delegation to further limit our understanding of the technology that we use in our everyday life, gradually creating a magic of technology. Hornborg criticises this limitation of understanding, as it centralises knowledge and therefore the “power” that comes with it, thus placing it with the few instead of the many. He advocates for a more democratic approach, where everybody should be able to use and understand the technology, similarly to what Martin Heidegger puts forward in *Being and Time*:⁷ that technology should improve human capability, but not delegate our mind’s ability to think or define human understanding. I am inclined to agree with this assessment in a general societal sense, although I must disagree on a metaphysical level, due to my ability to manifest mystical, metaphorical, and poetic thoughts with artefacts that are extensions of myself. Let me put this into context: I grew up during the mid-1990s, when bureaucracies had just started to digitise and you had to fill out forms by hand and either mail them or hand deliver them at a physical location to get paperwork processed. Although computers and the internet did exist, they required many wires, cables, and CRT monitors, and used fragile operating systems that were much more hands-on. This meant that systems were easier to manipulate and troubleshoot on your own, which I did. I even had a custom mouse cursor at that time. Back then, the internet was mostly used by large corporations or outcast nerds (myself included) sitting on forums sharing data and viruses with each other. So, it was strange to me when, in my late teens, everybody started using the internet and large social-media platforms all of a sudden, causing the slow death of niche private forums. This was all seen through my Western perspective, but since I am not only Western but also Thai, I had a unique point of view. When I visited my Thai family every year, I witnessed a staggered parallel development of general computer usage. Although the differences have now somewhat equalised, we must consider how the forward march of progress shapes our worldview. I am sure it has coloured my view, although at times I do feel like an angry old hermit when I raise my scepticism of artificial intelligence and algorithmic models. This is not out of a nostalgia for “the good old days” of the late ’90s. I am not like Socrates or Aristotle, dismissing the written word in favour of pure mental and oratorical might, as I do take notes and delegate my own memory to

paper. Hell, I am writing this on a computer and used AI in my work *Futurist Wave*.⁸ But much like a good sci-fi book, we must imagine the unforeseen consequences of some of today’s most prevalent technologies, as well as those of yesterday, to ascertain new perspectives in our own reality.

Bells, Clocks, and Rivers at Night: The Depths of the Valleys

I have titled this text “*A Sea of Plasticity*,” as it refers to the endless potential and plastic nature of speculative realism. Potentiality is in itself hard to pin down, but I do enjoy the flexibility that speculative realism affords me. But I also find it limiting to define it outright, when talking about my own practice—hence my exhibition of the same name—for reasons I am about to make obvious. I present a wide selection of materials and objects, which bring with them a notion of change—whether it be historical change as in *Futurist Wave*, where I put the “Manifesto of Futurism” through AI image and text generation, or *Goodbye Clippy*, in which a wax figure of the Microsoft Word computer assistant Clippy is melted and changes during the exhibition. The change in technologies is a change in ourselves; we define technology, and it defines us—like waves in the sea, one defines the other. Therefore, the title *A Sea of Plasticity* reflects the changes throughout my own life as well as the technology I have touched, that the things I experience are in a sense plastic—the adjective not the noun. How I view anything can change over time, with knowledge, or in different states of mind. This recalls the writings of Lao Tzu in the *Tao Te Ching*: that one must be like water in a river, malleable and ever changing, taking shape to find insight and peace from and in the world. Thus, *A Sea of Plasticity* refers to the impermanence of technology, culture, meaning, and objects, as they are all plastic. Much like my own practice as an artist has changed shape since the past, what I see as my practice today will continue to change. It has moved through many iterations, as I have tried my hand at a multitude of differing disciplines: from painting to print, readymade sculptures, installations, and even the odd performance; I have helped to make almost as many works for other artists as I have my own. Add to this a plethora of themes throughout my career, using myself as a subject, interactivity, material conceptuality, written and spoken language, and so on. Nonetheless, the two most prevalent elements that reoccur, when scouring my portfolio, are potential energy and kinetic energy—terms used in physics. I use those two energies by exploiting their natural juxtaposition,



Thomas Udomrat Hostrup, *Dix Flatline*, 2025. Monitors, floppy disk drives, floppy disks, remote, extension cables, misc photo series. Installation view



Thomas Udomrat Hostrup, *A Sea of Plasticity*, 2025. Installation view

as they are intricately tied to each other; one creates the other, like a pendulum swinging from one side to another. As the kinetic energy swings to one side, it creates the potential energy, which provides the kinetic energy to swing towards the other side. This movement always conjures images of a church bell swinging from a distant tower, and the words almost always escape my lips: “For whom ...”—a sentence that ends with the word “tolls,” and the title of Ernest Hemingway’s famous book, but also of Kris Martin’s 2008 work *For Whom ...*,⁹ which nicely encapsulates, as well as inspires, my thoughts on potential and kinetic energies in my work. The work itself finishes the sentence for you through the interplay of something you recognise and when you last experienced it: how rivers dull the sharpest of stones over time, when returning to it in our mind. Not to be confused with Chris Martin, the lead singer of the band Coldplay, although I have unwillingly listened to Coldplay’s 2002 hit song “Clocks” dozens of times! Although clocks do measure time, they are themselves a kinetic object. Also, clocks are usually found on towers with bells, and I did use a clock in my work *Cycles*,¹⁰ where I replaced the dials with a screwdriver that protruded outwards towards a screw that tries to drill into a brick. Maybe both Martins do have a profound influence on my view of kinetic sculptures?

Potential and the Expectations in Objects: Expecting More and Less

Kris Martin’s work *For Whom...* captures both potential and kinetic energies through the movement of the bell and the removal of the clapper, or pendulum, leaving the viewer to expect the sound of a large bell ringing; instead, they are left with none. Here, we can infer that the bell rings for nobody: no church bells for the dead or cause for celebration, as a church bell traditionally marks an occasion. Conceptually and physically, the bell has had its qualities removed and becomes something else. In this instance, I am using “potential energies” in a more conceptual manner, and “qualities” in the way Graham Harman uses “qualities of objects,” from his aptly named theory and book *Object-Oriented Ontology* (henceforth referred to as OOO),¹¹ although I will be referring mostly to Harman’s other books *Art and Objects* and *The Quadruple Object*. The OOO concerns itself with Kantian dialectics, which both overmines and undermines the qualities of objects, reducing them from objects to their practical and discursive qualities.¹² OOO brings us back to the object itself: If a chair is a

chair by not being a not chair, is it a tree stump, a stone, or a human on all fours? Is the bell still a bell even though it has had its clapper removed? Maybe not, but when combined with the motion of swinging back and forth, it gives the viewer the expectation and the potential of it ringing. It evokes in the viewer thoughts of what church bells sound like, as well as thoughts of when one would hear that sound and the implications of hearing it. And like a church bell that rings out in the night in a picturesque valley, the sound that travels out from it echoes, revealing the depth of the valley. Similarly, I seek to capture the same essence in my own works, using objects of similar effectiveness¹³—by either hobbling them (e.g., the removal of the clapper) or placing them in a context somewhat removed and yet related to its qualities. This is done by rethinking the object in accordance with Heidegger’s thoughts on technology, and by extension Harman’s OOO,¹⁴ but emphasises the sensual object with an affective nature, in the manner of Susan Sontag’s “Notes on ‘Camp’”:¹⁵ that the object is camp by playing it in the role of a real church bell. The bell swings earnestly but is camp because it makes no sound. The recognisable object and the concept slam together, like the clapper and the bell, echoing through the valley of our mind, revealing something more. What you see is not always what you get.

Let us bring that point into my work *Slept So Well*,¹⁶ where I have taken a nightstand and hand cut three MDF boards, which lift the nightstand up at a forty-five-degree angle. The MDF boards are cut into a shape that resembles datamosh (when an image file is corrupted or misread, as it is being displayed), microchip circuitry, or a tentacle in the same vein as H. P. Lovecraft’s cosmic horror universe.¹⁷ All of these cutouts speak to something that is relegated to the back of our minds: the tentacle is the horror of realising the insignificance of humanity in the universe; the datamosh is the cracks in the illusion of technology; and, if we follow Hornborg’s thoughts on technology as magic, the microchip speaks to hyperobjects,¹⁸ which are generally seen as magic in Timothy Morton’s application of OOO. Magic because we know of them and use them in our daily lives, but we do not understand how they work. Driving the point home is the suspended nightstand, which pours these entities out from where the drawer would be. The nightstand here plays the part of all nightstands: the last place of knowledge, where we put our phone, watch, or that book we have been meaning to finish before

going unconscious until the next morning. Here, the title comes back into play: *Slept So Well*, as in a pleasant night of sleep, one where we did not worry; but meanwhile, the sculpture plays with the notion of it being animated during the night and entities acting out some agenda unbeknownst to us. The title begs us to consider if there is something to worry about. Will the sculpture fall? Will more of the entities keep pouring out? And where will it all flow towards? The nightstand is tilted and the three MDF boards are relatively thin compared to the size and shape of the nightstand itself, which is reinforced by the fact that the boards are cut in a manner of a line drawing, meaning that the negative space outlines the details within the boards. This gives the appearance of magic and theatre. Furthermore, it is akin to shadow puppetry or a stencil drawing, with the light and shadows cast on the sculpture, giving the three boards a sense of fragility, as if a strong wind could tip it over. This fragility is also shared with microchips: if one spat on a microchip, it would short circuit, and the watery nature of the spit would warp the silicon, which would destroy itself either immediately or within a couple of hours.

The three boards are meticulously cut by hand, then painted to look as if they have been cut with a laser cutter or some other machine whose mechanics cannot be understood without a degree in engineering. But upon further inspection, one realises that they are in fact not. This detail contrasts with one of my other works, *I Have Mistaken the Stars Reflected in the Pond for the Night Sky*,¹⁹ which is a three-part installation. The installation contains a video and two light boxes, which are the main point of interest. The boxes are hung upon opposite walls, flanking the video. They each contain a sheet of material, in front of the light source of the box, that different narrative texts have been cut out of in a stencil-like manner, this time with an actual laser cutter. The material of each box matches the narrative style: one is a third-person narrative represented by a Plexiglas sheet, referring to the transparent nature of a third-person narrative—also plastic, get it? The other light box contains a first-person narrative and is made of an MDF board painted black. This choice was made to reflect the limited point of view of a first-person narrative. In this box, the light travels through the text, making it easier to read than the Plexiglas text of the other box. Because the light engulfs the Plexiglas text, it is necessary to read it from a skewed or off-centre point of view. Thus, they

both didactically correlate the choice of narrative and the choice of material: the third-person narrative reveals too much, yet it is unable to give a singular point of focus. The other box, with the black-painted MDF board and a first-person narrative, does the opposite: the viewer is forced to look at each individual word because of the density of the sheet's laser-cut stencil, as many of the cut-out letters are almost magically floating within their own silhouette. Some letters have purposefully fallen out, giving the text a faded look. To make out the narrative, one has to move one's head along the text to feel out each word. Again, the material speaks to type of narrative, only this time, the first-person narrative presents a limited or curated view by a narrator, and the black-painted board plays the part of limiting the totality of the text.

In my exhibition *A Sea of Plasticity*, the work *I Have Mistaken the Stars Reflected in the Pond for the Night Sky* is located in the room next to *Slept So Well*. The Plexiglas light box was purposely placed within view of the suspended nightstand sculpture. When you first see the Plexiglas light box, it looks bare and raw, as you can see the glue that mounts the Plexiglas onto the box, invoking the materiality and narrative of the work itself. It creates a conceptual juxtaposition of the initial impression of each artwork. On the other hand, *Slept So Well* is made to look more clean-cut and machine-made, giving off an aura of uncanniness; at least, that is the intention. In contrast, the light box is made to look more unrefined, giving it a sense of earnestness that might not be accurate.

I use an object's materiality in my practice to create plurality, in terms of affective interpretations of sensual objects²⁰ and hyperobjects. Much like the idea of the OOO, I too propose a perspective beyond Immanuel Kant's philosophical interpretations of world thought.²¹ In *I Have Mistaken the Stars Reflected in the Pond for the Night Sky*, this is done intentionally. Let me illuminate this point and, in doing so, also show Harman's argument for the OOO.

I have now gone on, at great lengths, about why and how I use the materiality of light boxes in *I Have Mistaken the Stars Reflected in the Pond for the Night Sky*. I have said it is a three-part installation and yet have neglected to talk about the content of the installation video or the actual narratives inscribed on the light boxes. The narratives and the video are connected; in fact, they

are variations on the same narrative. It is a fictionalised version of an actual trip to a national park in Thailand called Khao Sam Roi Yot. The original meaning of the park's name is ambiguous. It is unclear if it comes from the number of survivors of a shipwreck (*yot* meaning "saved"), the number of lotuses that grow in the wetland (*yot* meaning "flowers"), or the number of peaks (*yot*) the mountain (*khao*) has. All they can agree on is that there were three hundred (*sam roi*) of them. This is because the name was passed down orally; over time, it has warped. The written records and mapping of Thailand was first done in the late 1960s. This ambiguity is why I chose the narrative for this work. I also chose it because it relates to, or rather echoes, Guy Deutscher's recounting of Gladstone's flawed interpretation of the past through the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, as I set out to make a similar misinterpretation, purposefully not accounting for language being plastic and ambiguous. We infer our own context onto history. Gladstone was partially right that blue as he knew it did not come up in the *Iliad*. Someone would also be partially right in believing the park was named after any of the three possibilities. The texts are written in first- or third-person, but it is the same story told from different narrative structures. However, there are also discrepancies. At the end of each text, I mention the origin of the name of the mountain, each pointing to a different source for the name. The video, on the other hand, is a collage of four different video recordings from the national park. The video collage is made to look almost like a postcard scene, with a wetland in the foreground, flanked by two mountain ranges, and set against a perfectly blue sky. And yet, if you watch the video a little longer, the facade begins to break apart, as each segment asynchronously starts to vibrate: mountain ranges cut in and out, a bird flies behind the blue sky, and the sky itself turns to black. Written on the black sky are the coordinates for the national park, followed by the title of the work: *I Have Mistaken the Stars Reflected in the Pond for the Night Sky*. The title itself is a modified line from *The Witcher* book series by Andrzej Sapkowski,²² but in the books, it is "you" instead of "I." The phrase is used in variations throughout the books, but most prominently by the main antagonist to the protagonist, as if to say: you do not understand the scope of the situation or the depth of the conspiracy. This sounds much less dramatic, in my opinion. I chose to modify the title to "I," as I did not want to accuse the viewer, but rather show how I could not capture the full experience of going to Khao Sam Roi Yot. In a sense, through the texts and

their respective materials, combined with video, I fail to give a perfect interpretation; singular viewpoints and visual representation cannot capture or do justice to such a unique place. And yet, that is the point, because, as Harman goes to great lengths to point out, Kant's philosophical view limits objects to basic qualities of ideas. Thus, I reduce Khao Sam Roi Yot to qualities of narratives, coordinates, video, and text. At the same time, there is tension within each part of the installation, through the combinations of idea and material, as well as a tension in each part's relation to one another. This is what I mean when I talk about plurality in my works, that everything can be more than just one thing at the same time, and that plurality also necessitates more perspectives.

Perspectives through Time and Kineticism, and the Inherent Temporal Whiplash

I like walking; I really do. I walk to most places when not taking public transport. I do not mind riding a bicycle, but the way that walking activates my body and the way I am free to move my head around to take in my surroundings is something biking does not afford me. I like walking around in museums, galleries, and other art spaces; much like a *dérive*,²³ I enjoy the loss of time experienced, giving myself over to an impromptu stroll through an urban landscape, or any other landscape, for that matter. I think that is why I like creating and experiencing sculptures and installations: it gives me, as well as the viewer, the opportunity to stroll around as I slowly take in the experience. I like it even more when the artworks move around, meaning kinetic sculptures. So, let us mosey through my thoughts and musing on perspectives and kineticism, as we look both ways, past and future, when crossing this moment.

As previously mentioned, I enjoy speculative fiction, and I am probably a heavy consumer of speculative realism. In the past, much of my focus in my art practice was on mechanical sculptures. Up to my late teens, the most contemporary art I was exposed to was '50s and '60s surrealism, sprinkled with some naïve art and action painting, but that was pretty much it. This was because my grandfather, on my father's side, had collected a lot of paintings from that time, in the hopes that they would appreciate in value. Sadly for him, they did not; luckily for me, it meant many of these surrealist paintings were gifted to my parents, decking the halls and living rooms of my childhood home. And, growing up, these paintings filled me with emotions that at the time were



Thomas Udomrat Hostrup, *Futurist wave*, 2025. Manifesto of futurism, AI generated pictures and text printed, wooden frame, 280 × 50 × 50 cm



Thomas Udomrat Hostrup, *Goodby Clippy*, 2025. Computer, wax mold of windows words' Clippy, 90 × 90 × 178 cm

hard to verbalise, though terror and fascination were among them. These surreal landscapes and compositions would inspire me to draw and use my imagination to build worlds and stories in my mind's eye. But the thing about surrealist paintings is that they are very static, both by being simply paintings and because many of the works that covered my childhood home contain an element of a frozen moment in time. When we visited my family in Thailand, we would stay with my grandparents on my mother's side, but there was not much art to be seen in the sticks of the Central Plains of Thailand. But there were Thai comic books and Japanese anime on the television, although television time was restricted, and I could only stare into a comic book in a language I could not read for so long in the sweltering summer sun of often-Augusts in Thailand. So, I would walk around the compound of my grandparents' estate. They were both teachers turned industrialists who owned and operated a limestone-gravel-pit company together. I say gravel pit, but in fact they mined the nearby mountains. The main office was my grandparents' home; their bedroom was no more than three metres from a small office landscape. The truck drivers, who hauled the stone, would stop by the office to pick up cargo manifests daily. There I was, a child, with nothing better to do than to observe giant processing plants and custom painted trucks, because every driver owned their own truck. On occasion, I would witness or feel a dynamite explosion, as a mountainside crumbled before my very eyes; and, mind you, turning a mountainside into more manageable chunks does require more than a person-sized amount of dynamite. I was in awe! While the surreal paintings piqued my curiosity of how I could perceive the world, this was a brutal catharsis of industry: a ballet of trucks, accompanied by a symphony of sharp mechanical clanging with the gravelly bass of stones being crushed and burning-red fire lighting up the otherwise immovable mountains. It was a stark contrast. I did not know how to combine these elements, or whether I should even try to. Much later, I realised that becoming an artist was a choice that I actually could make. I started painting and tried conceptualism; I had a hard time settling into my own niche. That is when I saw it: Bruce Nauman's kinetic sculpture *Carousel*.²⁴ I loved it straight away, and again this evoked contemplation and feelings I could not fully understand or verbalise; and yet, it made me hungry. Hungry for more mechanical sculptures or simply kineticism in artwork, because here was an art form or genre that combined the theatrical

coldness of the surreal and a kinetic liveliness that only a machine could produce. I searched for more, and when I found Kris Martin's *For Whom ...*, I pumped my fist, as if it made a shotgun racking noise. I found Jon Kessler's *Desert of the Real*,²⁵ and my head started spinning. I found Kristoffer Myskja's *Smoking Machine*,²⁶ and I lit a cigarette, in solidarity with the machine—although I did so outside. I watched Fischli and Weiss's *The Way Things Go*,²⁷ and I kept falling deeper into the idea that I had to make a kinetic work of my own. This culminated in my bachelor exhibition of 2016, where I showed my kinetic sculpture *AND NOW ETERNITY*,²⁸ which was a metal frame with two stencil cutouts of the words “and” and “now” on each plate respectively, with two metal fans blowing to make the words spin; this marked each moment, but there was no way to know how many moments had passed or how many were left. I thought of my other early work *Cycles* as the same artwork—a negative clock—and that, in my pursuit of making things move, I had simply made a larger, and more bastardised, version of a more interesting artwork. This was like the title of one of my other works, *I Have Mistaken the Stars Reflected in the Pond for the Night Sky*. I thought of Coldplay again: had my disdain for their song “Clocks” turned me into a broken record? I refused the notion! So, I re-reread William Gibson's 1984 cyberpunk classic *Neuromancer* and started to think of his distinction between RAM and ROM, in the character Dixie Flatline. Dixie Flatline is a computer hacker who is long dead when the story takes place, but he is still very much active in the story as a memory construct of the protagonist's mentor. He is essentially a ghost in the supernatural sense, an echo from the past; just like the nature of ROM, which is short for “read-only memory;” it is meant to be an immovable record. That means that he is an echo misplaced in time, as he cannot form new memories, unless he is connected to RAM, short for “random-access memory,” which is like having a removable short-term memory. When turned off and on again, it is like waking up for the first time. Here, I thought, *I have had nightmares like that*. But then I thought, *What a blatant metaphor, putting a ghost in a machine!*²⁹ This made me realise something about sci-fi as a genre: that the best sci-fi books are actually not about fantastical leaps of science and technology, but about the humanity that still inhabits us no matter when it takes place or how powerful the laser beam is. That science and technology are merely a filter through which we contemplate and gaze upon our humanity. The ghost is in the machine because our hands made it.³⁰

So, armed with that lens, I aimed it at the “Manifesto of Futurism” and used the most contemporary cyberpunk tool I could find: artificial intelligence. This time, the AI would play the part of the machine, and the kinetic element would be the jump between image and written language, through the lens of several AIs. And in it, I was now the ghost. This became the artwork *Futurist Wave*. I chose Marinetti’s “Manifesto” because the futurists’ ideas of speed, efficiency, and technological progress are also embodied in AI. I thought that the futurists would easily applaud AI, because who needs libraries when you have ChatGPT. Almost like a middle-school art-class assignment, I made the AI paint a picture of the “Manifesto,” it’s great ancestor, but to give me a presentation about it, forcing it to repeat the work again and again. Here, we can compare it to *The Way Things Go* by Fischli and Weiss. *Futurist Wave* becomes a digital Rube Goldberg machine unto itself: I simply instigate a series of digital kineticisms across the internet, and in a sense through the world, that could in principle go on forever. On the other hand, I am not comfortable with the amount of electricity that I would use on that. It becomes a globe-spanning game of telephone played with itself. The past looks at the future and the future looks at the past; in the middle, like a tennis-match referee, I would moderate this match. In this, I knew I had an artwork I could stand by. I could only make this artwork because I had come to understand Bruce Nauman’s *Carousel* a lot better, and, in turn, myself a lot better. It is not about the movement of the machine, but what it carries and the tension between the floor and the plastic animals. Unlike my negative clock, *Carousel* has an imagined beginning and conclusion, as I like being overt in my approach to art rather than vague. I still like to walk around between moving artworks, but to it put “simply”—and this is an ironic use of quotation marks—the multi-faceted uses of kineticism and the tension it can create in artworks is hard to pin down, as there are as many way of using it and even more ways to interpret it. I just wanted to discuss how I understood it then, how I understand it now, and how I got there.

Even though I posit the ghost in the machine as something very human and beautiful, how it is portrayed in *Neuromancer*’s Dixie Flatline is an existential horror, because he has been turned into a ghost against his will. He even goes so far as to ask the main character to destroy him when the job is done. He asks this because he realises what he is and what he has become. Even

after bodily death, large corporations kept their employees’ minds, and in doing that, invalidated individual agency. This is the theme of the book: almost all the characters seek to, or have, escaped the bonds of some kind of chain, be it a corporation, debt, artificial intelligence, or capitalism itself. The only solution they understand is through amassing money. Money then becomes a metaphor for freedom—how very American of Gibson. We can also look at freedom as potential, and we should not hate the player, but hate the game itself.

So, we have reached that part of the section again: the end. Readers who are still awake will have at this point probably noticed the slow transition of subject matter in the text and can most likely guess the theme of the next section.

Themes, Memes, Repetition, and Iterations: Now, That Is What I Call Redundant!

I would like to touch upon another theme in *Neuromancer*, that of language: Gibson’s writing style and his characters’ speech within the context of the cyberpunk world of the story itself. It is riddled with invented slang, ’80s computer terms, and invented computer terms, which would go on to inspire our current computer language, like the “neural-link,” although in the book, it is “neural-port.” The usage of slang—the matter-of-fact mentioning of names, terms, and places—and the characters’ manner of speaking makes *Neuromancer* a dense read. This style is not for everybody. I know several people who gave up on it, seeing it as nothing more than a pulp sci-fi action thriller. In my opinion, this density invites the reader to reread it. I see the veneer of style over substance as a meta-textual choice that points to and echoes George Orwell’s *1984*,³¹ written in 1948. It resonates with *Neuromancer* as the latter was published in 1984, but also through the themes of language and its control through the contexts it creates. That connection is ripe for analysis, but I am going to stick with this point: Orwell tells us about the application of oppression in language, while Gibson makes us feel that oppression. The title *Neuromancer* even means “thought-manipulator,” once again resonating with *1984*’s Thought Police. If we cut the title in two, it can be read as new romancer, as if to say there is an allure in its dystopian nature, in being manipulated, but I might be overmining here. Regardless, I am rambling about *Neuromancer* because it informs my own style of writing and because it presents a totality of work; it plays with its reader. I have tried to capture this sense of

totality in work and play in my exhibition *A Sea of Plasticity*, paying direct tribute to Gibson with my artwork *Dix Flatline*. I named it so because I did not want to say Dixie, without giving its proper context in the exhibition. The word “Dixie” relates to the Confederate separatists in the American Civil War—the side that wanted to uphold slavery—so the character is referred to as Dix in the book. Although they are two very separate things, I wanted to point to the book character without creating an association with the American Civil War.

The work is an installation that consists of two podiums, a trolley table on wheels, six tube monitors, six media players, six 3.5-inch floppy-disk drives, thirty 3.5-inch floppy disks with one image per disk, one remote, and an almost football-pitch length of assorted cables. The trolley holds the monitors, invoking classroom memories: a monitor would be rolled in, most likely accompanied by a VCR player. The mobility of the trolley suggests that these were objects shared across an institution and a scarcity of equipment. These monitors once held higher value but have now become curios, being sought after only by some professional gamers. There is almost no monitor latency, as information does not have to be processed by an internal chip; it is just a direct cable connection.

The installation mimics the inconvenience of the back-and-forth slog between your couch and the VCR player when putting on a movie of your choice in the time before streaming. But here, the order of actions is jumbled, as if misremembered. The TV and the VCR are on opposite ends of the room. The remote, which should make the process convenient, is between them. It is not one TV, but six. It is not a VCR, but floppy-disk drives—six of them. The cables that would run along the walls, hidden from sight, now run along the ceiling as if between telephone poles, but you are not sure what connects to what. There is no couch; instead, there are two podiums between you and the screens. Instead of the movie you may have thought of putting on, there are now floppy disks with fragments of a single picture on each, all mislabelled. You look at the podium closest to you and see a yellow Post-it note; it says, “Change me.” And now you have to find the right disks to create a complete picture. You try to insert the floppy disk into the drive, and wonder, *Why am I slotting them vertically, like a toaster?* You try your luck and insert six floppy disks. You look up from the closest podium. Nothing has

happened. You then notice that the next podium does not exactly obscure your view of the screens. On top of the next podium sits a remote. You walk over to it and find another Post-it note. This one asks you to press play twice. You do so. Behind you, you hear the rumbling mix of mechanics and electronics. A moment passes, and then the screen lights up with pictures of familiar things: a movie poster in which you were the lead writer; a documentation picture of your work *Cycles*; a line drawing you did at your preparatory art school; the chorus of a song called “Analogue” by the group Folk Bitch Trio, which you listened to while thinking up and setting up an exhibition; lastly, an alternate 3D-model version of the very setup you are standing in. You think you remember the order you put the floppy disks in; it gives you hope. You turn around and realise you forgot the order. You realise that each point was lit—even the screens have light shining upon them. But that light only illuminates the cables growing from the screen’s backside, where its cables grow towards the ceiling. You realise the rest of the room was dark all along.

Giving the viewer an opportunity to interact with the artwork and seducing them into trying to match up the pictures to the screen gives the viewer a personal relationship with the work. It is like a note from the night shift at the office, telling you that the printer needs more toner, or your loved one telling you, “We are out of milk, so please buy some.” These simple instructions are made to be forgotten and thrown out once the task is done. The placement of the second podium is slightly offset from the alignment of the monitors and the farthest podium, so that when you update the pictures, you are standing in front of the screens. This ensures that if you use the remote before changing the floppy disk, your attention will be dragged towards the drives as they begin to process. Or if several people use it, the one holding the remote will block the vision of the one changing the floppy disks. This plays into the experience that I would like to convey through the work: that there was a real struggle operating these technologies back when they were relevant. It invokes annoyance, but, with the starkness of the wires and the allure of the haptic sounds of the drives—part mechanical, part digital—one is motivated to try again. Maybe it is just slow? Maybe it is just this floppy disk that does not work? Maybe I can solve this technological puzzle? But, in fact, the work is slowly destroying its own interactivity, because the drives themselves are also small storage devices. As one

Image courtesy of Youngjae Lih



Thomas Udomrat Hostrup, *I have mistaken the stars reflected in the pond for the night sky*, 2025.
Lasercut plates in plexiglass and MDF on light boxes, film collage loop 10:00 min. Installation view

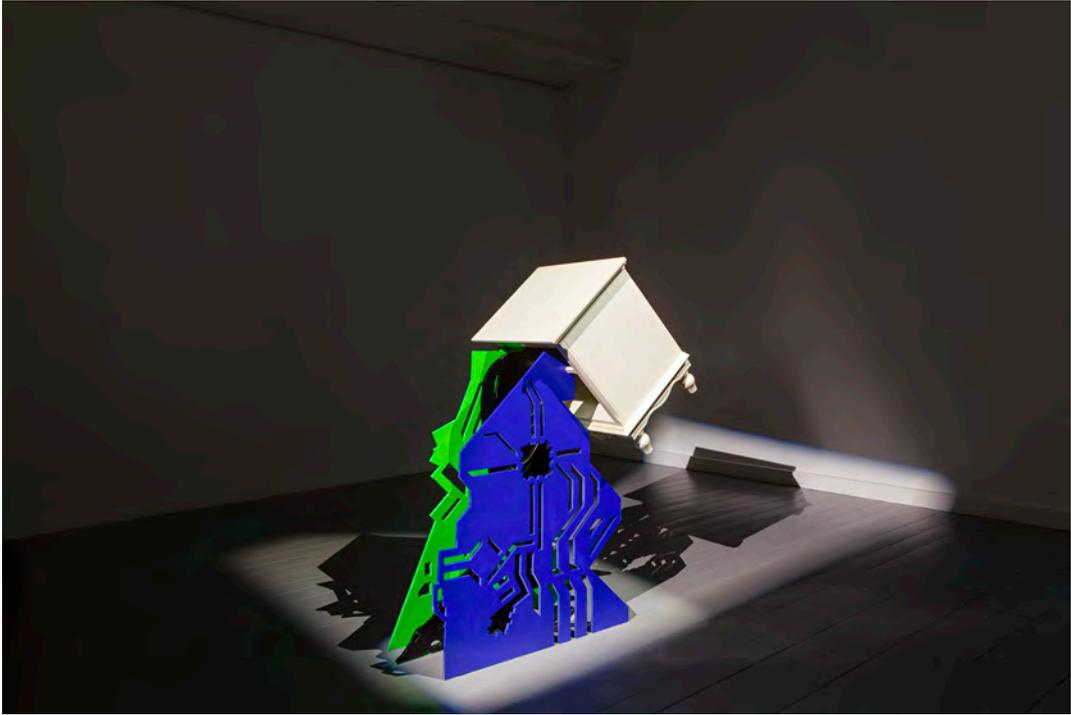


Image courtesy of Youngjae Lim

Thomas Udomrat Hostrup, *Slept so Well*, 2025. Spray painted MDF plates, night stand found object, 70 × 120 × 40 cm

changes the pictures, the drives are loading the images over time, eventually making the work inoperable. What we experience as progress also, slowly but surely, is becoming obsolete and redundant. This calls upon Nauman's *Carousel* once more, with its visualised, imagined beginning and end, like that of *Neuromancer*. In *Dix Flatline*, you have to feel the imagined beginning and end. Here, the tension is the annoyance, and the kineticism is the back-and-forth between the monitors and the floppy-disk drives. The technology and Post-it notes promise it will be easy, but again, "what you see is not always what you're getting."³²

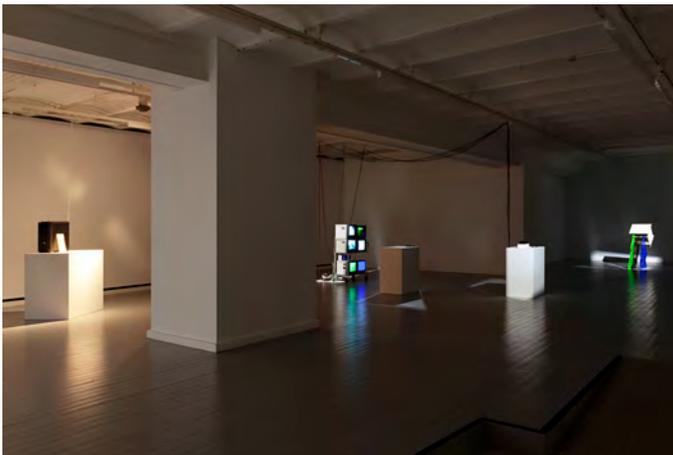
Dix Flatline sits in the centre of both the physical and conceptual placement of *A Sea of Plasticity* for a good reason: it connects to all the other works included in the show: temporally, thematically, and kinetically. It relates to *Futurist Wave* by echoing *Neuromancer's* themes of futurism, language, and power. It connects to *Goodbye Clippy* through its obsolescence—what technology was and what it has become. It relates to *Slept So Well* through the colouring of the chorus from the song "Analogue" and Hornborg's ideas on the consequences of technology becoming more opaque to its users, thus becoming magic by

contrasting with each other. It relates to *I Have Mistaken the Stars Reflected in the Pond for the Night Sky* by echoing Harman's thoughts. Here, I would like to point to what inspired this totality of work, or *Gesamtkunstwerk*:³³ Pierre Huyghe's *The Host and the Cloud*.³⁴ Although he has made many other works that have and continue to inspire me, I chose this one for its temporal value, as it spans over several holidays—a chronology that follows the calendar year as well as history: Halloween, a pagan holiday; Valentine's day, a Christian holiday; and the first of May, a socialist holiday. Each of these relates to a historical event that happened on that calendar day, as well as to fictional narratives, which are all set in an abandoned ethnological museum within a zoo. Weaving together so many narratives and concepts, through time and the space itself, is a feat that I can only dream of pulling off. Making the entire museum a film stage, masquerading as an exhibition, is reminiscent of the plot of Charlie Kaufman's *Synecdoche, New York*,³⁵ except Huyghe succeeds. Although it is a sight to behold, I do fear being struck by lightning when trying to compare my own works to Huyghe's. Regardless, *A Sea of Plasticity* is not a film, and I do not have any human actors. I am comfortable saying that the metanarrative, temporal concepts of *The Host and the Cloud*, as well as the idea of totality of work, influence me. Especially when I am given the opportunity to fill a space with several of my own works. Although I have not had the luxury of filling such a contextual space, nor of having the time to cover several holidays, in any exhibition that I have made. The totality of my show does connect with sev-

eral points of Huyghe's works: I have let the disk drives and my computer be the soundtrack; the works themselves be the framing of the camera, by lighting them dramatically; and the viewers be the actors in the experience. That is to say: if not today, someday I hope to get there.

It cannot, at this point, come as a grand revelation that I work with, and I am fascinated by, technology. Technology defines our understanding of the world. Although technology defines understanding, it cannot give us a complete picture of what we experience. I use this lack of a total picture, through themes of impermanence, and contrast it with perceptions of technology being monolithically infallible. But I do not limit technology to only machines, microchips, or software; I extend the definition to language, philosophy, symbols, logical thinking like statistics, and beyond. Seen through a lens of Buddhist impermanency, I admit that whatever we cling to now will fade and change, because it already has. I present this with the earnestness of camp, not whataboutsisms. I am not a futurist, but I do believe in the potential of humanity; I believe it is so far-reaching and varied that it is worth making a record and contemplation of the path not yet taken. I believe that looking at what has faded can make us ponder the coming changes, and in-between, artwork can blossom, like a lotus flower that grows from stagnant water. For the universe is not just particles, and humanity is not just our ideas and our thoughts. There is something more, known or unknown; regardless, I would just like to lay a single brick to help us get there.

Image courtesy of Youngjae Lih



Thomas Udomrat Hostrup, *A Sea of Plasticity*, 2025. Installation view

There are several other paths I could have taken with this text, in regard to the works I have presented, and themes and theories I could have used instead. But I wanted to focus on perspectives and, through that, illuminate: it is substance that is masquerading as style.

And so here we are. You read it; I wrote it. Even though this is the last section, I would like to end it on a high note by echoing the energy of the “Manifesto of Futurism”:

My name is Thomas Udomrat Hostrup, and I hold these truths to be self-evident: that the sea was always blue, that everything is subject to change, that science fiction is cool, that making art rules, and that I was born stupid; however, I will not die hungry!

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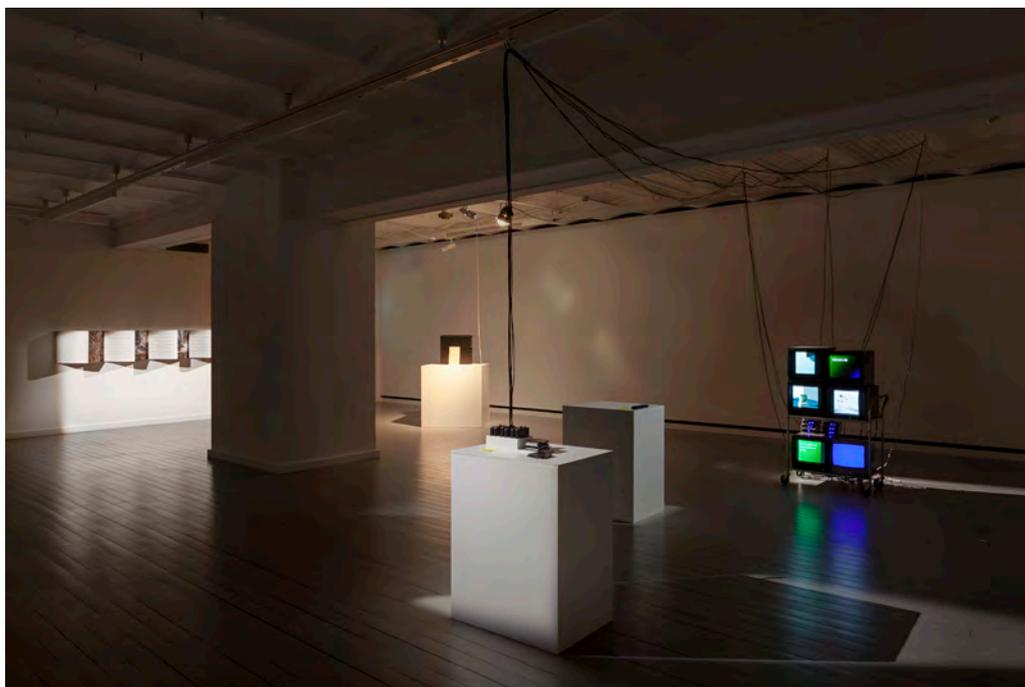


Image courtesy of Youngjae Lim

Thomas Udomrat Hostrup, *A Sea of Plasticity*, 2025. Installation view

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Image courtesy of Josef Alexanderson

Johnny Höglund, *IMG_9944*, 2025. Linseed oil paint on gelatine glued and gessoed cotton duck, 180 × 100 cm. MFA exhibition, KHM2 Gallery, Malmö, 2025

The Feed Is My Road

Johnny Höglund

Note to the reader

For me, words and theories come from practice and lead to practice. The practice of painting can be described in words only to a certain degree. At some point something else takes over, something that is uncertain, that is not in language. Philosopher Richard Shusterman writes: “Perhaps we have to stop pushing words and start moving limbs: stop talking and start dancing. Perhaps I should say no more.”¹

Further, the practice of painting goes beyond my own knowledge as the artist who paints. The process, continuous as the painting, is released to the world. I welcome anyone who would like to become part of this process, by meeting the paintings in tangible time-space, which might be a coming exhibition, my studio, or another context in which the paintings are situated. Please contact me.

Introduction

“Aesthetic discussions always return to definitions of beauty, pleasure, and taste in painting. It would be interesting to turn our attention instead to painting’s health, and ask after the happiness of the image. Because it seems the image is happiest when it learns to transform its own collapsing into a new way of dancing or seeing. To speak of painting without a vision is another way of announcing painting’s potential to fabricate images and ways of seeing that undermine a culture’s demand to not only have any art finally locate its end in culture’s transmission, but to also tie its processes down in a product. The question of happiness is a question of dislocating painting’s means from its ends, its gestures from any efficient or programmatic result. It is a question of how to continue to invent ways of exposing the image to its own underworking, and of elaborating, in the words of Giorgio Agamben, means without ends. More than anything, abstract attention might be an attention to happiness.”

—John Kelsey, “Big Joy Time”²

Driving³ through the night, the painting's headlights illuminate just enough of what I need to see in order to navigate the feed. All distractions are concealed in the surrounding darkness. I focus on the rhythm. My foot presses the gas pedal, I shift gears, and my hands turn the steering wheel instinctively. My body takes care of these tasks while I immerse myself in the rhythm between the feed and the painting.

The feed is my road, and the surrounding landscape framed through the windows is its images. Driving is painting. I immerse myself in the drive, the practice, the tool that is the car. As a painter, I collect images, I save them. They stack up faster and faster. They overload my limited mind. Through the car window they flash by. I edit them through my feet and hands, directed by the road. Loaded with emotions through the glimpses of surprise that cannot be predicted. At times they rush over me. At times they just blur into speed. They load me with emotions, connect me to the past. They link into memories. Compress not only points on a map but points in my head. Points of nostalgia, which may possess me to turn around, to drive back. But they also have the potential to push me to keep on going. To not look back but move forward. Towards the unfamiliar.

My body elongates through the movement of the car. I become faster, capture glimpses of space in an increasing speed of fragments. Through driving I become part of the car.⁴

Geographer Nigel Thrift would argue that our human bodies are not separate from the "thing world," rather, they co-evolve with it. We are tool-beings.⁵ Not separate from objects, we evolve with them, in relation to them. Thrift points to evidence that organs, such as the hand and gut, linked with the brain, evolve partly in relation to tools.⁶ I would like to argue that in continuation to such a relationship with tools, we connect ourselves to the broader material world of objects. And, further, that we connect to each other as human beings through the link between practice and material.

The automobile reality of the last hundred years has changed us humans and how we perceive the world. It has embedded itself into our human "technological unconsciousness." We take it for granted, yet it is a way of being and operating one's body in the world that is relatively new, historically speaking.⁷ This might be due to what

some scholars call "time-space compression," in which we move and connect in space through another sense of speed. Through modernity, our capacity to overcome spatial distances by moving faster (digitally, simply in a click) between geographical locations has and continuous to increase. Through the movement of both people and goods, as well as information. Time and space are compressed, and so are all the encounters within it.⁸ In the practice of driving, I am still connected to the world around me, although it instantly is abstracted through speed. How then is time-space further compressed, further abstracted, through our digital media? Do the feeds of social media allow us to stop, step outside into the "real world" and smell the blossoms? Can the images be saved?

In the feed of digital time-space compression, I seek to save the images that connect to me. The practice of painting starts as I screenshot them, crop them, transfer them onto canvas, and transform them with actual paint. As the act of painting on canvas stops, the images are released into the slow space of the rooms in which they hang, relating to a reality that they, in the feed, had become dislocated from. Through the room, people observe the paintings as objects that come from the screen, but also from the body and materials, further transformed in their own minds.

This essay focuses on the process of saving images from the feed and the release of them into the world. Hopefully into a place of happiness. I have consciously selected to not write about the practice of painting in the sense of applying paint to canvas. This process is of course of immense importance, potentially working as a bridge between the human and the object in relation to the world. As a painter, it is important for me to not write about it. But to practice it. To allow it to remain in my body as knowledge, without pretending I could translate it into words. To give the reader a sense of it however, I will continue to refer to it through the metaphor of the car drive.

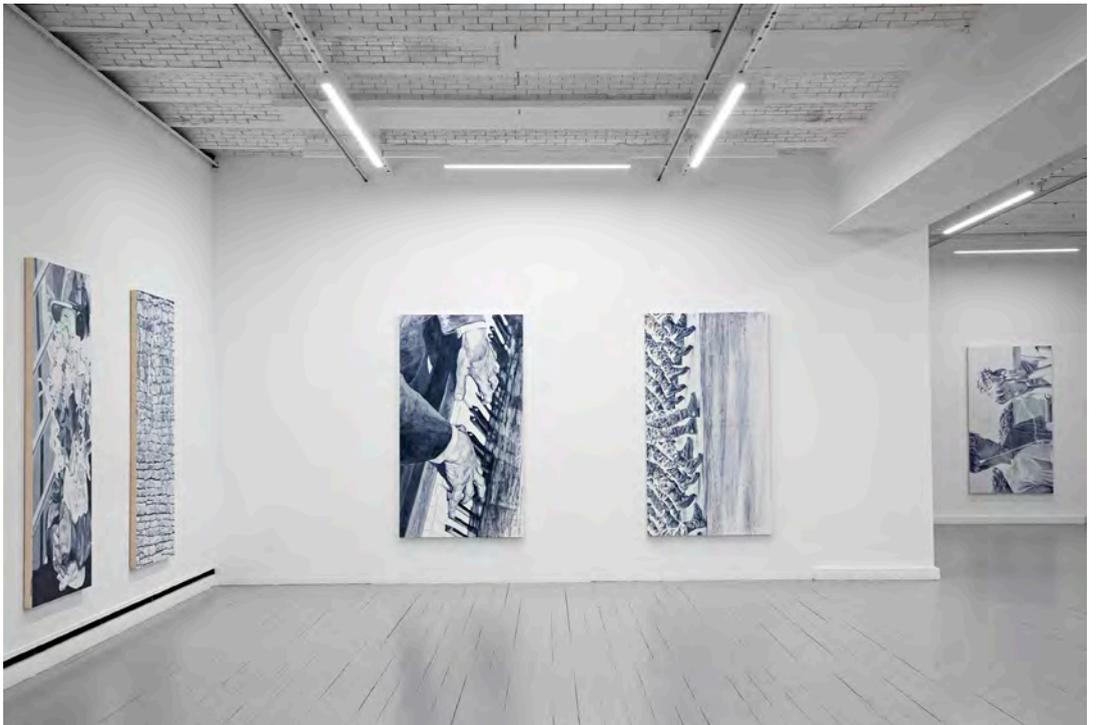
Screenshot 1—Save from the Feed

My paintings are based on a collection of screenshots from the feed of the World Wide Web. My own www social media keepsakes. An act of visual note taking. Reproduced copies, no longer owned by anyone, constantly changing context. Currently I have screenshots: 3,165 saved on my phone. Tomorrow the number will have changed. And they are only a fragment of how many there used to be. Recently deleted during my forward

Images courtesy of Josef Alexanderson



Johnny Höglund, *A tortoise demanding lettuce at my door*, 2025. Installation view



motion towards my exhibition *A tortoise demanding lettuce at my door*. The title itself quoted from an anonymous poem. The sentence grabbed from a rather old screenshot (I imagine, as it carries a Tumblr blog template, my main source of scavenging images before Instagram). In contrast to today's flood of digital images, I see painting—the real, physical thing—as something slow and enduring, rooted in long-standing traditions that continue to thrive. It's a tortoise, so to speak. While the flood of images may steal our attention (or lettuce), painting demands it. With its physical presence, it engages with our tangible reality rather than the fleeting online world. And in this case, the painting stands right at my door, in front of me—not behind a screen.

A screenshot is an image recorded in a specific time and space⁹ through a programmed mechanism within the phone, computer, or similar.¹⁰ The device saves information from its own time buffer, which only momentarily saves information, and through the screenshot exports this information and reformats it into an image file format.¹¹ Screenshots are “the unglamorous workhorses of digital culture: ... extraordinarily pervasive as a way of quoting from digital media.”¹² These quick quotes disconnect us from our own interpretations. We become detached from the image, which quickly passes us by. Our experience is muted. Detaching us from the reality of the time and space from which the image actually comes. The reduced code stimulates us directly, easily; we rest in it, yet as quickly as we register it, we seemingly forget it: “The image as such has become invisible, unknowable and anonymous, its meaning undiscoverable as a result of being fragmented into thousands of possible interpretations.”¹³

The image flood is no longer something to be resisted or critiqued so much as metabolised, incorporated into the bloodstream like microplastics, a permanent feature of life. Images are not only observed; they are part of a stream of motion, a rhythm.¹⁴ As such, our current visual attention span becomes shaped by images that disappear. We record them, but perhaps only precognitively; without lingering in our memory, they trigger reproductions unexpectedly and seemingly unknowingly.¹⁵ It's not an exaggeration to say that the scrolling gesture—the thumb swiping upward in a smooth, practised flick—has become one of the dominant modes of social and cultural engagement. Much like a metronome keeping time with an invisible beat, always moving. The flow is

the message. The image is the rhythm. The content does not matter. The movement—the momentum—is everything. We are living in an age of saturation, in which everything is too much and nothing is enough. The images of the screen connect us, connect to us, potentially promising to be our “parent, lover and blank stooge.”¹⁶

As instantly as the fingers press the command, the fleeting presence is deceptively captured.¹⁷ However must it be so? In the instant we coordinate our finger to screenshot, it appears to me that something happens. We try to save the image from the feed, in which we know it risks disappearing, perhaps never to be found again. There is a glimmer of hope that we indeed can resist the images, to simply scroll by. We can save them and link into them. But we need to do it quickly. We release the thumb and use another command of the fingers. Is this action not what philosopher Michel de Certeau writes about? Who distinguishes the act of writing from reading between to produce and to receive, where the latter apparently cannot contribute with its own mark. However, the text does not come alive without its reader, through whom it changes due to relations between the reader and the text that the initial writer cannot control. De Certeau further exemplifies this through the television viewer. Where the first act of playing a trick on those who control the screen is going for the remote.

As the reader, I transform the image of the feed the instant that I screenshot it. I use the information, the emotions, and the language of the feed. I save it and redirect it.¹⁸ A slight resistance, catching something from the never-ending flow? I want to push this resistance further. I urge to be a trickster in the eyes of de Certeau.¹⁹ I want to transform the image. To change the time-space compression it represents.

All of my screenshots found their way to me though through my phone or computer screen. Egged on and guided by the saviour, my own personal algorithm. Informed by the trail of data my digital self leaves behind. The likes, the comments, the shares. I just screenshot first and ask questions later. I never stop to think why an image catches my attention—it can be anything to me, the content does not matter—everything is fast and loose. I can't afford to sweep all the data I cross paths with. It's a split-second decision through an interactional intelligence in which I trust myself to pull the trigger.

An intelligence that non-representational theory calls “precognitive assists,” which leads to action, often associated with play in relation to other things and beings. Thrift writes:

Nearly all action is reaction to joint action, to being-as-a-pair, to the digestion of the intricacies of talk, body language, even an ambient sense of the situation to hand, and this unremitting work of active reaction imposes enormous evaluative demands, equally enormous demands on intermediate memory, and similarly large demands on the general management of attention.²⁰

Screenshot 2—Select

The simple step of re-creating our reality is done in one shot of an image that already exists as a copy. So literal, so close to our making and feeling body. Collectively through our thumbs, we live out our fantasies.²¹ And as we save images, we are able to forget them and go back to them. We send them forward, share them. Like them, connect through them. Yet the everyday abundance of visual content and the ease with which we dismiss or send these images forward adds to a feeling of a lack of narrative. Or at least something that “links the movement to its future” in our daily lives. I’m intrigued by this lack of narrative, together with the collective memory of the screenshot. A collective memory that is shaped not only through what we save and send forward but also through all those images we scroll by, which are precognitively imprinted in our memories. I see this fragmented timeline as something more poetic than prosaic. The movement, the momentum is everything.

“You take fifty photos, delete forty nine and use one” a teenager states of the process of selecting a photo to upload on social media.²² The digital process of photographing does not limit the amount of images we are able to create. Our visual consciousness becomes careful only after one has a wide selection to choose from. The same is true in the selection of screenshots. We “take photos” of the images we scroll by, and often they don’t reactualise themselves until we return to them, through chance or through memory, which is triggered by something in our present. Professor of communications Paul Frosh calls this process “memory-work,” in the sense that our selection of screenshots uses and transforms the images’ prior meanings for present time and space. As such they do more than represent an “original image.”²³ “*I remember ... them, not necessarily the way they happened.*”²⁴

Most of the time, my screenshots end up forgotten. Yet while forgotten, they appear to matter more, to build up meaning. They become a condition.²⁵ One that materialises in the digital purgatory that is the phone’s camera roll. Its population is steadily growing, by a handful each day, until either nostalgia or boredom brings me back into the folder. Through a more careful selection than the initial capture, I further decide which have the potential to become a painting. I take charge of the rhythm. I change the tempo. I write in the margins of the algorithm.

Some of my screenshots have been waiting for several years already. All waiting to be sorted into a category of some potential, or to be permanently deleted. The content does not matter. There is no transformation into hero or villain. These are all just everyday images, living everyday lives. We might like to think, or even hope, that some of these images belong to the exception, but the truth is that they’re nothing out of the ordinary. They are all part of the aggregate and bitumen that makes up the road. Moments of supposed rupture—shocking images—that break through the filters and become little more than bumps in the algorithmic road to nowhere. Their only quality being that they at some point held my attention long enough to get through the flood. They had something, something that aroused an emotion—a strong, sometimes faint rhythm—for me to pick it up again and look at it a little bit closer. I understand this emotion as a part of what it means to be human and connect to the world we live in. As something that is bound not necessarily to my subjective being in the world, but to how I connect to others within it. The emotional stir within myself may lead to a connection with others. This is in line with affect described as “emotion as motion,” as a way of thinking, and as an embodied practice.²⁶ The process evolves from simply scrolling, to taking a shot, to deciding whether it may transform further into a painting.

The awareness in this decision appears as if the images are already connected to an archive in my head. The second selection is not only individual images: they start to connect to each other. Perhaps through that which is most fresh in my mind, not necessarily what is most new, but what is actualised in my present. During this time I have been, for example, flicking through books of other painters like Edgar Degas (*The Fallen Jockey*, 1866), Pieter Bruegel the Elder (*The Blind Leading the Blind*, 1568). Gustave Courbet. Claude

Monet. Georges Seurat, Dexter Dalwood, Kristina Jansson, Luc Tuymans, Johannes Kahrs, Gerhard Richter (*Atlas*, 1960s–). Reading books by authors Matias Faldbakken (*Vi är fem*, 2019, *Stackare*, 2022), David Foster Wallace (*Infinite Jest*, 1996), Haruki Murakami (*1Q84*, 2009), Karl Ove Knausgård. Listening to the music of LCD Soundsystem (*american dream*, 2017), Arcade Fire (*The Suburbs*, 2010), the National. Watching films of David Lynch, Yorgos Lanthimos, Wim Wenders. This and more.

Through what I feel and think in the present, fragments connect without necessarily having a clear thread between them. I think of it much more as a part of a narrative, like an album. I often think of Dexter Dalwood when he said:

I always thought, well, why isn't it possible, in the way that a song writer is, for example, able to write a song, or a group is able to do an album about several things that they are kind of interested in at the time. Why isn't it possible as an artist to do stuff or do work about everything that you are interested in? And it's like, encompassing things you read, things you see, things you think about, things you imagine, things you fantasise about. So I think that it took me a long time to work out how to do that.²⁷

In his artistic practice, Dalwood adopts the approach to the image formulated by the poet Ezra Pound, who states that the image goes beyond being a single idea and rather works as an assemblage of several ideas at the same time.²⁸ Similarly, the second selection of images I choose doesn't follow a single concept. Rather the images join each other in an album of fragments of moments that interest me. And in which sudden connections occur.

They are part of a motional link. Rather than giving them credit for belonging to some sort of historical cause and effect, through painting I perhaps push them into a forward motion. Towards a future. That which will be painted comes from the future it seeks rather than the past it is moving away from.²⁹ The emotions stirred pushing towards action for becoming. Emotions may, as such, push towards the future. Daydreams and fantasies, for example, may serve as emotional practices that lead to future actions. This goes against the view of emotions as dominantly connected to projections of the past.³⁰ Encounters in space may become “temporal extension[s] to

the future,”³¹ and as such our experiences are not divided up into snapshots but hold simultaneously an abundance of possible connections to move the experiences forward. Processes with the potential to reach through space in different speeds and directions at the same time.³²

It pushes the growth of connections between ourselves and the environment we are within. The growth of space does not happen through a common past but rather towards a potential future. One in which we might understand humanity not through separations but through connections. As anthropologist Tim Ingold discusses the conception of humans as a continuous growth within the unfolding of relationships. One which would teach us to understand the world as connected rather than through separate, isolated entities. In relation to each other in an environment that is constantly coming into being. Body/mind, culture/nature.³³

I screenshot the selected ones a second time around to put them first in line, next to each other. One step closer to stepping out of the phone. The fiction of the images becoming a process of life, a practice gaining knowledge in the hands and fingers. The boundary between real life and representation becoming increasingly blurred.

Screenshot 3—Crop

“Like any worker today, the artist's job is also to talk and move, putting words, images, and his own body into circulation. More than anything, he makes momentum. But there is really no time to think about this now. There is only the possibility of putting this no-time to work, and of capturing it in frozen glimpses, which are themselves built on speed and work. And any work that holds our attention today is one that not only shows itself, but also shows it could be otherwise, shows that the relation between an artist and his own activity can always be modified, even interrupted, Art becomes a way of working on the displacement of information from one format to another, and of working on the way we are displaced too, in work and in play.”

—John Kelsey, “Decapitalism”³⁴

Examining the pixels, in one way or another, the images are already cropped to fit the screen. Rotated or not, the format is dictated by the portrait-orientation lock. The format itself instantly creating a new representation of what it portrays. Further, the crop of the screen potentially

Image courtesy of Josef Alexanderson



Johnny Höglund, *IMG_8968*, 2025. Linseed oil paint on gelatine glued and gessoed cotton duck, 180 × 100 cm

Johnny Höglund

questions the observer's idea of the image. Like a tactic borrowed from the painter Georg Baselitz, who started his process of painting by rotating his subjects upside down. Tricking the eye and slowing down the process of painting.³⁵ I can relate to his reason for slowing down the process as a way of hijacking your mind's perception of what's depicted in the reference material and automatically looking at form and space instead of what's in the image.

I recompose my saved images through a similar process. Images in a landscape view are rotated into portrait. Without being compressed, compromised, and framed with a black or white void around it. My fingers' quick intuition to pinch the screen, to zoom in or out on details, crops the image even more. Once I'm happy with the crop, I take another screenshot (which also results in the final titles of the paintings, created

through the iPhone's default naming system, which includes "IMG_" followed by a sequential number series. For example, *IMG_8968* (2025) is the title of the painting depicting a jockey riding a horse with another fallen jockey and horse in the foreground). It's here I find and decide what I will spend my time looking at hour after hour. A condition where the information is lost in the pixels—the abstraction of meaning—and what it means to become a painting. An actual, physical, three-dimensional, inconvenient thing. These are the conditions I use as my starting point in the physical act of painting. Likewise, the paintings are always more about what isn't there. It's like this description of Kristina Jansson's paintings: "If a photograph is a section of what has been omitted outside of the viewfinder, the painter makes different decisions in their process. What has been omitted from the motif still has a presence in the finished painting."³⁶



Image courtesy of Josef Alexanderson

Johnny Höglund, *A tortoise demanding lettuce at my door*, 2025. Installation view

Painting—The Driver

“Dee, de-de-de
dee dee,
de de
de de
de-de dee ...

Doo, do-do-do
doo doo,
do-do doo ...

Dee, de-de-de
dee dee,
dee dee
dee dee
de-de dee ...”

—Simon & Garfunkel, “Mrs. Robinson”³⁷

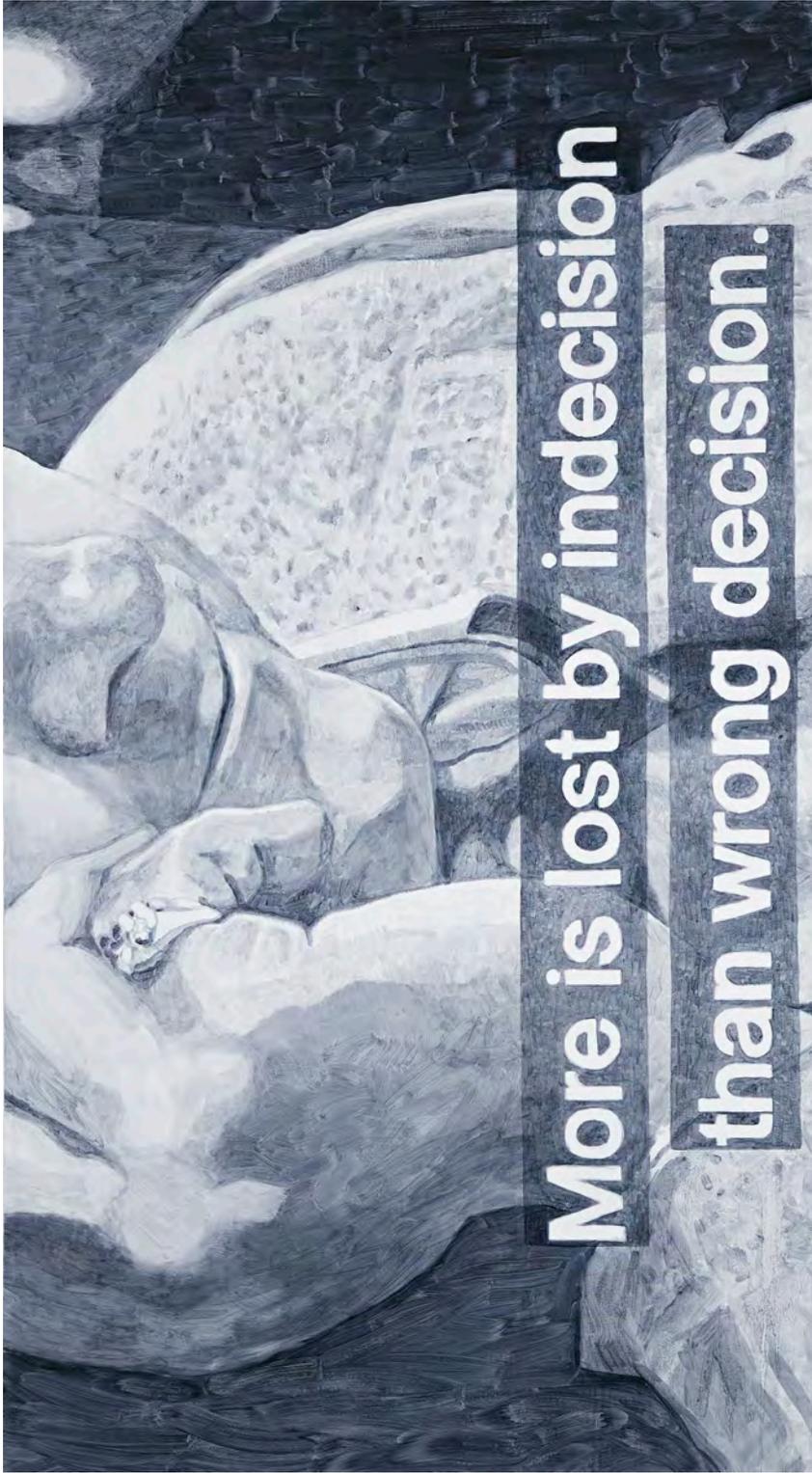
How do I explain painting to someone who doesn't paint? I can only hope they know how to drive. I can only hope they remember the feeling of passing the driving exam. When you get to sit in the car by yourself for the first time. Nobody but you, the car, and the road. Your first taste of that particular bit of freedom. When going straight ahead, turning right or left didn't matter, as long as the going is good you could be going anywhere, anytime you wanted, as long as there was gas in the tank ... Painting is when the engine is firing on all cylinders. When the pistons move power through the crankshaft; through the transmission; through the driveline; through the differential, to the wheels. Where rubber meets the road. Painting isn't electrified. It's dirty business. Colour pigment. Linseed oil paint. Solvent heavy—oh, that lovely smell of fuel combustion and engine fumes. Painting is not driving a common point-A-to-point-B car with rust and bad brakes, where the engine only moans at the push of the gas pedal. Painting is a deep tumbling sound that you can feel in the driver's seat. The engine roars. Heads turn. And every bend and corner is an opportunity.

This is when I turn on the stereo, put on the playlist. This is when the beats per minute starts moving my hand on the steering wheel. It starts tapping. Tap, tap-tap-tap tap tap, tap tap tap tap, tap-tap tap ... Looking straight ahead, with wordless determination. Anything in the mirrors is unimportant at the start of the journey. The canvas is blank. No regrets (yet). There's a focused intimacy between my eyes and the road. The mind drifting from the everyday. The happiness.

The painting is my car, and I'm driving it. The movement is everything. Sometimes I speed through the night, into the sunrise ... Sometimes I drive for days. I can go slow and steady, but never on cruise control. Always ready for the moment, when the painting is becoming more in tune with my mind than my body. It's an internal monologue without a language based on the representation of letters that make up words. But still a language that becomes sentences. The body is moving on its own. Dancing. I maintain my focus on the feed while simultaneously slowing down the rhythm. At whatever speed we're going, painting still allows me to concentrate on the rhythm—feel the image.

The road is not to be underestimated. It's always long, and oftentimes monotonous, until it's not—when it hurls all kinds of obstacles in my direction. Constantly looking for a weakness in my abilities to handle it. To let the road rage take me over. To drive dangerously close to self-destruction instead of keeping calm. If I let the car drive me, instead of me driving it, it's easy to lose control. Heartache is always close, but so is happiness. Like when the brush moves in short, quick strokes. Methodically swerving across dense, heavy cotton duck, overtaking traffic, the image becomes form and space. I can ask for directions, but there's no Google Maps to tell me when to take the next exit. I can only trust my guts that I will recognise it as I approach it. If I don't see it, if I don't feel it, if I miss it, I will go on driving endlessly, or even crash. As I've done so many times before. Either way, the painting will be totalled.

And once it is, it becomes a destination. Inconveniently static, it demands presence. You may capture it in your memory and compress it, but a reproduction will always be an image of a painting, never a painting of the image.³⁸ The painting only exists in the real. One which I myself may drive away from. But the painting remains. Hoping for the tortoise to not be captured and released up high by the eagle. For the audience to come to its door. To meet at the same level.³⁹ To remain. To meet the painting in the space and time in which they physically connect. A painting does not come to you, you come to it. It's demanding. Demanding in the sense that it takes patience and time from you. A finite measurement. In exchange you don't know what you will get back, if anything at all. It's a leap of faith ... The only thing we can do is hope, hope for happiness.



Images courtesy of Josef Alexanderson

Johnny Höglund, *IMG_9981*, 2025. Linseed oil paint on gelatine glued and gessoed cotton duck, 180 × 100 cm



Johnny Höglund, *IMG_0745*, 2025. Linseed oil paint on gelatine glued and gessoed cotton duck, 180 × 100 cm

Painting—The Passenger

“The painting itself can be said to represent a world of its own. As a viewer, engaging with a painting opens up other layers compared to looking at another type of image: if the eye can sweep over a photo, the painted image offers a different resistance because every part of the motif is there on account of an active choice. It invites a deeper contemplation where a painting is never just a depiction, but as much a friction between motif and materiality. In the relationship between the artwork, its viewer and the ever-present now that the painting represents, a place of self-reflection arises, where the painting can ultimately become more of a mirror than an image.”

—On Kristina Jansson’s practice⁴⁰

Painting is not only about the solitude drive. The leap for happiness is a release of the painting back into the time-space landscape of the car window. I invite you into the passenger seat. To pick another song, to reroute the drive. To join into a conversation on the road. The seemingly fixed views are filtered through stories between us. The painting continuously transforming through it. The landscape changes as we talk. And our feelings towards the painting evolve. Together but also apart. Sometimes it is quiet; many passengers prefer it so. I don’t mind either. The driving through the landscape allows silence. We carry the experience jointly in ways other than words. Through it, many worlds form. They shift in space and time, the painting moves back and forth. It is present but it evokes feelings and memories from past experiences, and perhaps this conversation between past and present propel the passenger, and myself, towards a future.

The drive may be short or long. Perhaps we pick up other passengers on the way. The dynamics change. The playlist increases. The car serves as more than an elongation of my own body. It becomes the connector of several bodies, views, thoughts, and emotions. My sense of driving and taking the landscape in on my own is turned down, as my senses are shared with those driving along with me. We do not always agree and bickering may erupt as someone wants to take a quicker route, gets hungry, doesn’t like the way I drive. We are stuck here with each other. As the driver, I still remain in a position of control. I might choose to constrain myself and the road I’m taking. I might let the disagreements get to my head. And in the process restrain the painting. Or I might choose to trust my passengers to lead

me along unexpected routes, despite differences, and in the same process allow the painting to not remain “original” but to transform in the presence of present passengers.

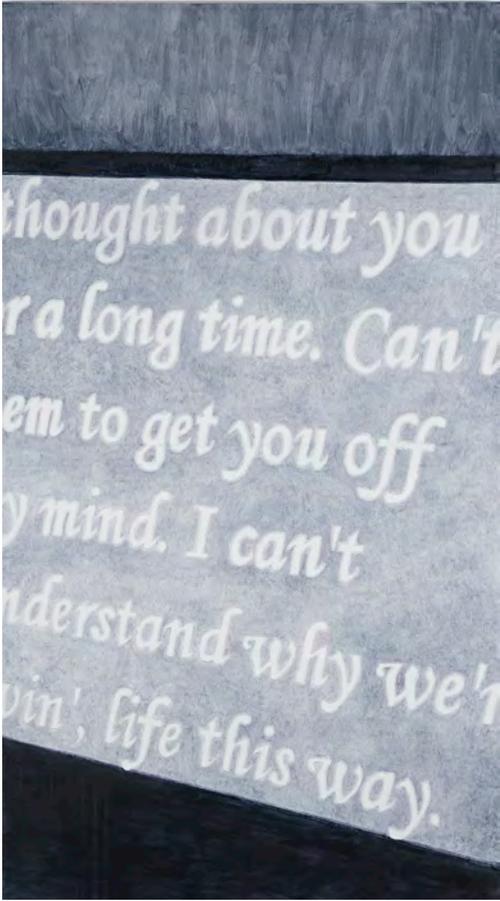
Conclusion

“To be free is to have meaning, to give meaning, to change the world, to be there for others, in short, to truly live. Freedom is not a function of choice in the sense of more options producing greater freedom. ... ‘Free’ is not the opposite of ‘conditional,’ in the sense of fewer internal and external conditions resulting in greater freedom. The painter is not freer in the gestures if he exceeds the limits set for him by his brush or his liver. Freedom is a self-analyzing indication of the future. The gesture of painting is a form of freedom. The painter does not have freedom, he is in it, for he is in the gesture of painting. Being free is synonymous with actually being there. ... Freedom is actually indivisible: it is the way we recognize that others are in world with us.”

—Vilém Flusser, “The Gestures of Painting”⁴¹

Painting is not a linear process. Like driving, it is an improvisation in motion—intuitive, reactive, and alert. I move through the digital feed not by resisting its pull but by engaging with it, following the rhythm of fragmented attention. As images scroll by, my screenshots of them become emotional residues—fleeting impressions, much like the disappearing landscape in a rearview mirror. They face the risk of remaining fleeting, not returned to. But they also hold a potential in being sent forward, shared, and liked. They are reproduced copies, no longer owned by anyone, constantly shifting context in the next person’s algorithm. Yet the everyday abundance of visual content and the ease with which we dismiss or share these images contributes to a sense of narrative loss.

Through painting I reconnect with the images within another temporality, relinking fragments into a tangible reality rooted in our daily lives. What begins as a flick of the thumb becomes a stretch of the arm, then the motion of the brush—transforming digital fragments into material form. Connected as autobiographical material shaped through the algorithm, and then processed through the hand. The saved image is saved to our tangible reality. I place it back into the world on new terms, inviting the viewer to experience it through their whole body.



Johnny Höglund, *IMG_9913* (left), *IMG_7118* (right), 2025. Linseed oil paint on gelatine glued and gessoed cotton duck, 180 × 100 cm

To paint is to trust the route, even when there's no map—only a tempo. The resulting paintings ask of others what they ask of me: attention, presence, and patience. They do not compete or perform. They wait. They demand real time-space. And in that demand, there is a kind of hope—not for clarity or resolution, but for a shared moment of encounter. A slowing down. A return. A happiness, perhaps. Not as a destination, but as motion where new ways of seeing, feeling, and connecting can begin. A gesture of freedom, not from the world, but within it.

Painting is, above all, a way of processing. It is not about illustrating something that already exists but about allowing something to take shape through doing. And once complete, the painting holds its ground, in real space. It cannot be scrolled past. This return to physicality and presence is, I believe, where painting finds its strength—it does what the feed cannot. It asks us to stay a while in reality through self-reflection and conversations, rather than doomscrolling and revelling in brain rot.



Image courtesy of Josef Alexanderson

Johnny Höglund, *IMG_9068*, 2025. Linseed oil paint on gelatine glued and gessoed cotton duck, 180 × 100 cm

Further reading

C'était un rendez-vous. Short film. Directed by Claude Lelouch. Paris: Les Films 13, 1976.

Wallace, David Foster. *Infinite Jest*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1996.

- 1 Richard Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life*, quoted in Nigel J. Thrift, *Non-representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect* (London: Routledge, 2007), 149.
- 2 John Kelsey, "Big Joy Time," in *Rich Texts: Selected Writing for Art*, ed. Daniel Birnbaum and Isabelle Graw (New York: Sternberg, 2010), 40–41.
- 3 It might be important, or it might not be, to know that before deciding to study art, I went to vocational school to become a car mechanic. I even worked with cars for a short while afterwards.
- 4 Thrift, *Non-representational Theory*, 80.
- 5 Thrift, *Non-representational Theory*, 10.
- 6 Thrift, *Non-representational Theory*, 5–15.
- 7 Thrift, *Non-representational Theory*, 75.
- 8 Barney Warf, "Teaching Time–Space Compression," *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 35, no. 2 (2010): 144.
- 9 Jan Švelch, "Redefining Screenshots: Toward Critical Literacy of Screen Capture Practices," *Convergence* 27, no. 2 (2020): 558.
- 10 Paul Frosh, "Screenshots and the Memory of Photography," in *Screen Images: In-Game Photography, Screenshot, Screencast*, ed. Winfried Gerling, Sebastian Möring, and Marco De Mutiis (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2023), 174.
- 11 Frosh, "Screenshots and the Memory of Photography," 175.
- 12 Frosh, "Screenshots and the Memory of Photography," 174.
- 13 Luc Tuymans, "On the Image," in *On&By Luc Tuymans*, ed. Peter Ruyffelaere (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 49.
- 14 Kelsey, "Big Joy Time," 34.
- 15 John Kelsey, "Decapitalism," in Birnbaum and Graw, eds., *Rich Texts*, 69–70.
- 16 Thrift, *Non-representational Theory*, 5.
- 17 Švelch, "Redefining Screenshots," 554.
- 18 Kelsey, "Decapitalism," 71.
- 19 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 169–72.
- 20 Thrift, *Non-representational Theory*, 5.
- 21 Dean Kissick, "The Painted Protest: How Politics Destroyed Contemporary Art," *Harper's Magazine*, December 2024, <https://harpers.org/archive/2024/12/the-painted-protest-dean-kissick-contemporary-art/>.
- 22 Beth T. Bell, "'You Take Fifty Photos, Delete Forty-Nine and Use One': A Qualitative Study of Adolescent Image-Sharing Practices on Social Media," *International Journal of Child-Computer Interaction* 20 (2019): 64–71.
- 23 Frosh, "Screenshots and the Memory of Photography," 187.
- 24 *Lost Highway*, feature film, directed by David Lynch (US: CiBy 2000, Asymmetrical Productions, Lost Highway Productions, 1997).
- 25 Frosh, "Screenshots and the Memory of Photography," 174.
- 26 Thrift, *Non-representational Theory*, 174.
- 27 Dexter Dalwood, quoted in Anette Hüsich, "Unspoken Images—Dexter Dalwood's Search for the Essence of Poetry," in *Dichter und Drogen*, ed. Juerg Judin (Berlin: Nolan Judin, 2011), available on Dexter Dalwood's website, <https://dexterdalwood.com/Dr-Anette-Husch-Unspoken-Images-Dexter-Dalwood-search-for-the>.
- 28 Hüsich, "Unspoken Images."
- 29 Vilém Flusser, "The Gestures of Painting," in *Gestures*, trans. Nancy Ann Roth (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 63–64.
- 30 Thrift, *Non-representational Theory*, 208.
- 31 Thrift, *Non-representational Theory*, 201.
- 32 Thrift, *Non-representational Theory*, 201.
- 33 Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London: Routledge, 2000), 6.
- 34 Kelsey, "Decapitalism," 68.
- 35 "Georg Baselitz," Gagosian, accessed 15 March 2025, <https://gagosian.com/artists/georg-baselitz/>.
- 36 "Kristina Jansson: Paintings for People in Trouble," exhibition text, Andréhn-Schiptjenko, 2024, <https://www.andrehn-schiptjenko.com/exhibitions/118-kristina-jansson-paintings-for-people-in-trouble-stockholm/>.
- 37 Simon & Garfunkel, "Mrs. Robinson," on *The Graduate* (soundtrack), Columbia Masterworks, 1968—a reference to the driving scene in *The Graduate* where the main character, Benjamin, played by Dustin Hoffman, is racing to the First Presbyterian Church to stop the wedding of his great love Elaine, played by Katharine Ross.
- 38 After writing this, my wife visited Berlin and sent me a photo of a quote from Gerhard Richter, displayed in the exhibition *100 Works for Berlin* at Neue Nationalgalerie: "Photography has almost no reality, is almost only image. And painting always has reality, you can touch the paint, it has presence; but it always results in a picture—no matter how good or bad." Her favourite pieces were five abstract paintings. They had filled her with happiness. She sent a photo of two of them to her sister, who replied—*Nice, but tricky colours?* My wife replied—*Digitally so, but not in real life.*
- 39 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All-Too-Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. Helen Zimmern, ed. Oscar Levy (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1924), 172.
- 40 "Kristina Jansson: Paintings for People in Trouble," exhibition text.
- 41 Flusser, "The Gestures of Painting," 70.



Image courtesy of the artist

Ingrid Jacobsen, *24 sec*, 2025. Handprinted chromogenic print, 120 × 76 cm. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM2 Gallery, Malmö, 2025

Happy Accidents Cut in Limelight Ingrid Jacobsen

To begin is like a cut, to get somewhere new. This is the start of a new cut in a room, and the room is this text. For me, the beginning is the light and the paper that I will cut into one piece. A butterfly cuts up time with its wings, every frame is a new movement. The wingbeats cut through the air. A butterfly in a glass jar is like a looped film, where time keeps spinning. To cut back to the beginning, it has to take a new shape and talk about light and paper that has not yet been exposed. I can only imagine how the light will shape the colours in the silver that creates a reaction when liquid and paper collide.

When the artist Miriam Cahn paints, she sees with her eyes and thinks with her hands. She runs through the canvas like a big flood of water, wide and running slowly towards the end.¹ If we think about water, it is a liquid that is changeable. In painting, you can always start over on the same canvas and paint over with a new layer. Sometimes the layer beneath becomes visible—if you scratch on it, a new shape appears and what's underneath becomes clear. It makes me think of new wallpaper put on top of old wallpaper. Layers of different people's walls appear when you scratch on the surface: the hidden becomes exposed.

In photography, you cannot take the accident back. It is stuck and not changeable.

Transparency and layers are something that I've long been interested in, and they repeatedly come back in my art practice. Using different transparent materials on top of my photographs creates a feeling of depth within the photograph. When I use layers of negatives that I have created and negatives that I have borrowed, along with objects I have collected, time and space align.

R. H. Quayman's paintings are often divided into chapters, where each chapter is numbered according to the time and place of its first display,

working towards the work's gradual completion. The paintings are as poems: When reading a poem, we notice specific words and realise each gains resonance. The stanzas have their own syntax, vocabulary, and grammar. Quayman's images stretch the eyes' idea about the construction of visual signs, and the phenomenon of seeing.² In an interview, the painter was asked how to reinvent painting in the context of the overwhelming power of photography. Her answer was: "By adding tension between narrative and abstraction, surface and depth, painterly and sculptural, unique and multiple."³ In Quayman's optical illusions or patterns, the viewer is forced to move away from the image. Their bodies widen the gap to blur the details, allowing the image hidden by the pattern to come into focus: "Like little motors to propel movement through the exhibition."⁴ When you come too close, the eye burns. One needs to pause before the next painting, but the afterimage will still burn through the focus of the next images, creating an optical illusion within the picture that only the eye "sees," like a computer screen. I see the use of a grid or a net in front or on top of a photograph as a way to create an illusion of something malleable, something in movement and changeable—but only for the eye.⁵

If we come back to the light and the butterfly and start on a new cut in a light room surrounded by a dark space, then we can start to see what the cut reveals. A certain kind of butterfly or night butterfly, or rather moth, is drawn to the artificial lamps and flocks around them at night during the summer. It looks as if they are desperately trying to get as close to the light as possible, as if they are electrified. When looking at Apichatpong Weerasethakul's video *Night Colonies* (2021),⁶ this kind of phenomenon appears. An empty room is set up with fluorescent tubes; time passes, and a camera records different insects starting to gather in the room with light.

"They rise up, the planet's swarms of butterflies, like colour dust lifting from the earth's warm body. Cinnabar, ochre, phosphorus yellow that calls out, a cloud of chemical elements rising up.

Are these flickering wings merely a mist of light particles in a vision?

Is it my childhood's dreamt summer hour split in a zone of lightning-shifted time?"

—Inger Christensen⁷

The word "camera" comes from the Latin *camera*, meaning "chamber." This is because the earliest experiments with capturing images took place in a darkened chamber. In ancient times, people used camera obscuras to view the solar eclipse. They stood in small, dark rooms that had only a tiny hole to let in light. An upside-down image of the scene outside would appear on the wall across from the hole. This phenomenon was later turned into a mirrored model of a room and made photography a mirrored process.

The butterfly is mirrored: the wings on each side are like mirror images. In analogue photography, the camera's lens plays a pivotal role in reflecting the world onto the film. When light enters through the lens, it is projected onto the film's surface, where it creates an inverted image. The lens essentially mirrors the external world through its focus and aperture settings. This process is similar to the way a mirror bounces light to create a reflection. But in the case of the camera, the light is recorded onto a photosensitive surface—film—rather than being simply reflected.

The image on the film is often upside down or reversed (depending on the type of camera), but when developed, it can be viewed as a mirrored version of the real world. This inversion or mirroring of the scene creates a dynamic tension between reality and its photographic representation.

In the darkroom, the eyes cannot see at the beginning, but, slowly, the eyes adjust to the darkness. They can only perceive contours of the room. Sometimes I imagine myself as though I have night vision on my glasses lenses, like a layer for the eye to see in full darkness. Photographing inside a darkroom is close to impossible. Instead, you have to use your other senses as a way of navigating, in order to eventually see the final image. Stretching out your hand and crawling on the floor to get some sense of where you are placed in the room and where the different

objects are. Whistling and making sounds to get a sense of where the other people are and to not crash into each other. Hearing and the generation of sounds become important. I don't know how to whistle, so I invented my own sound.

I turned my studio into a darkroom. At first, I did not have any images I wanted to print. I was interested in the environment itself, which is sensory and reciprocal. The room has an impact on you, just as you have an impact on the room. I spent a long time working with just light and chemistry. I feel I have much more freedom there than when I look through the viewfinder. The parameters you work with in a photographic darkroom depend upon regulations. In my process, I go against the regulations of light, temperature, and time, and the process becomes unpredictable and disobedient. When working with chromogenic prints, the right temperature is extremely important, 37°C, and the paper is supposed to go through a machine that transports the exposed paper through the different chemical baths: it can precisely control the right time and the right temperature, making the perfect printed image. I decided to instead make my own photo drums out of big ground pipes, which I cut into four baths for developing my own images and handprinted colour prints. I made a choice to not heat the chemicals to the right temperature but instead use them at room temperature, knowing willingly that the images will be disrupted. The colours became pale, and the chemicals ran down the now-fixed paper. Images meant to be figurative became abstract, with only a few traces of an image beneath the colours. It often takes me an entire day to produce a single image, and it rarely turns out the way I planned. I make my photographs in baths made of ground pipe, cut them into total darkness, and afterwards going into the light and seeing them feels like a condensed moment of discovery. I cannot control all parts of the process.

Silver is malleable and ductile, meaning it can be easily shaped and stretched without breaking. The metallic silver is what actually forms the photograph. These silver particles absorb light and create the contrast and detail seen in the final image.⁸

When you print from a negative onto photographic paper, the paper typically contains a silver gelatin emulsion. The gelatin is the binder that holds the silver halide crystals. After exposure and development, a silver gelatin emulsion results



Ingrid Jacobsen, *Artificial Butterfly*, 2025. Installation view



Ingrid Jacobsen, *Silver I*, 2025. Handprinted chromogenic print, metal, 100 × 76 cm

in an image in which the silver particles have bonded with the gelatin, creating the photographic image. When the film or paper is exposed to light, photons interact with the silver halide crystals, causing them to undergo a chemical reaction. The developer chemically reduces the exposed silver halides into metallic silver, which forms a visible image. The unexposed or less exposed silver halides remain unchanged. The fixer removes the remaining unexposed silver halides from the emulsion, leaving only the developed metallic silver, which forms the final image. This final image consists of tiny particles of metallic silver that take on different shades of black and white (or greyscale, in the case of black-and-white photography), depending on how much light the crystals were exposed to.⁹

I strive to stretch the moment when the image still feels fluid, within my grasp. With photography, it's the viewfinder and the camera's delicate controls that grant this sense of mastery; yet once the shutter clicks, time slips away, and the

moment becomes a memory, distant and unchangeable. The power to shape it feels lost. My way into the darkroom and printing is an attempt to prolong that malleable essence, to keep the image alive. By introducing surfaces like plywood and aluminium, I draw closer to collage, pushing the boundaries of transformation even further, where form and meaning can still be bent and reformed. In my exhibition *Palimpsest* at Alta Art Space in Malmö in the autumn of 2024, I used aluminium plates and plywood boards to mount chromogenic prints. By cutting and collaging the images on a new material, they suddenly became more like objects and transformed into something I would call painterly. In the work *Trick Of Light* (2024), I used photo dye, that is, colours used especially for analogue photographic prints. It was used from the beginning of photography as a way to give colour to photographs before colour film existed. I instead used it to colour on top of photographs, adding a layer of paint that got stuck in the emulsion. To me, adding a new material into a medium is always a risk you take,



Image courtesy of the artist

Ingrid Jacobsen, *Set Sun*, 2025. Handprinted chromogenic print, 250 × 154 cm

but also a way to get somewhere new and transform the medium and make it more bendable. In a conversation between photographer Wolfgang Tillmans and sculptor and installation artist Isa Genzken, Genzken explained that sculpture is like a photograph: even though it can be shifted, it must still always have an aspect of reality to it.¹⁰

When she was a young artist, Lotus L. Kang “frequently called photo labs in her hometown of Toronto to inquire about any leftover materials they might have”:

“I was their little parasite,” Kang admits, “taking whatever scraps I could get.” One day, a lab called to offer her an unopened roll of photo paper they no longer needed. “I told them I’d be right over,” recalls Kang, whose studio was a ten-minute walk away. Lifting the roll onto her shoulder, Kang immediately realised it was too heavy to be photo paper. The lab had mistakenly given her an industrial roll of photogram film.¹¹

A happy accident that she later used in her work *Receiver Transmitter (Intervertebral)* (2023), which she presented at the Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver. Long lengths of unfixed photographic film hanging from the ceiling together with industrial film assembled with magnets. Kang calls them “skins,” as they are sensitive to changes in their environment and develop over time when exposed to light and humidity in the space. The work is raw and sensitive at the same time and goes against the fixed photograph; instead it becomes malleable and something more sculptural. The films are not firm or fixed but liable to give way or break. In combination with this work, Kang often exhibits casts of different food in aluminium. Food changes with time: it will wear down; but now, cast in aluminium, it’s stuck in time and not changeable. Kang goes against different materials’ functions and does the opposite of what they want, in addition to giving body to photographs.

Chance plays a significant role in my work, and I allow it to take up a lot of space. There are parts of the analogue chemical process that I don’t control, where I let chance take over. For me, the analogue process feels almost magical, with its transformation resembling a butterfly’s metamorphosis, from larva, to pupa, to a fully developed butterfly. I want to show the magical and the changing. It’s also the balance between control and chance that makes it exciting.

In this cocoon, you now transform the present, by seeing the past in light it expands and moves around your body.

My dress is not stuck in time like a butterfly born in a jar, whose wings are therefore useless.

—Mei-mei Berssenbrugge¹²

I allow myself to play in the process, and I see it as investigating and experimenting. For me, the darkroom is a magical place, and I allow myself to transform it into something beyond the conventions of photography, it becomes something more material and moves towards something painterly. There is a clear difference between losing control and actively getting lost in my process and way of working with chance.

In the essay “Index Cards,” photographer Moyra Davey reflects on accidents as an integral part of artistic and creative processes. She often embraces chance, imperfection, and serendipitous occurrences in her photography and writing. She sees accidents not as failures but as openings, opportunities that reveal unexpected meaning or aesthetic value. Davey frequently references how mistakes, randomness, and unintended details can lead to deeper insights, both in art and in life. Her work leans into the idea that accidents can generate new ways of seeing, disrupting rigid structures and inviting reflection.¹³ “Most photographers have always had an almost superstitious confidence in the lucky accident,” she writes.¹⁴

A recurring method in my work is cutting. The large papers on the floor of the darkroom get cut up into smaller sections, then reassembled into multiple parts. A similar process occurs in filmmaking, where various cuts are fragmented and then reassembled into new parts.

The word “insect” originated from “sect,” because it describes a creature “cut” into three parts: the head, the thorax, and the abdomen. Hence, insects have three segments or “cuttings.”

“Cutting is a way of thinking about possibilities of the image in between figure and ground, shape and non-shape, meaning and non-meaning. Positives and negatives are equally treated, and [as] such the cutouts allow possibilities for new forms and combinations to arise, building a material grammar.”

—Ida Nissen¹⁵



Image courtesy of the artist

Ingrid Jacobsen, *Mirror Error*, 2025. Digitaliserad 16 mm film, 06:17 min

In my film *Mirror Error* (2024), in the mid-section, the camera scans the figures, again and again. They stand in a staged room, faceless, anonymous. The black-and-white film, confined within the 4:3 frame, recalls a past era—an echo of Hollywood noir, of German expressionism. Shot on 16 mm, its materiality asserts itself. The film loops. The rotation continues. A figure, a cutout, a flickering fluorescent light. The illusion builds only to unravel. The camera moves, and what seemed real dissolves, a flat surface, a mere prop.

A paper figure, an artificial body. The camera exposes it as such, yet it keeps looking. The film insists on the cut—the physical cut of the material, the editorial cut that shapes perception. Light, shadow, motion. A glass of sparkling water fizzes. A loop. A system structured by archetypes, by images we think we know. And then the collapse, the cutout falls apart, the illusion fails.

Genzken describes her sculptural works as cinematographic, in the sense that the viewer, when moving around the object, sees different scenes evolving over time. Every part of the object is like a still frame frozen, and when you move around it, the film is rolling. The viewer becomes the camera and the object the scene.

While my photographs, in relation to film, may seem like abstractions, they are exactly what they suggest: photograms, which are essentially direct impressions of objects placed on the surface of light-sensitive material and exposed to light. Hairs, scratches, and imprints of objects that are no longer there gradually reveal details, making the photographs oscillate between intimate traces of lived textures and hyperrealism.

The process of filmmaking acts as a tool to navigate the unseen, exploring the space between what is represented and the materiality of the medium itself. Whether digital or analogue, film processes capture time, light, and movement, yet they also directly confront the limitations of their medium.

Film often creates illusions through its material aspects, presenting an alternative reality that can feel more real than our everyday world. Materialist film seeks to unravel these illusions, making the physical nature of the medium visible and keeping it ever-present in the viewer's mind.

While digital photography offers endless manipulation and precision, analogue processes connect me to the raw, tangible materiality of the image,

an unpredictable space of chance and transformation. It is in this space where I see the potential for the “cut,” a moment of rupture that divides and reconfigures what is seen.

For me, like for many others, making a film is an act of trust—trust in the viewer to carry the weight of time with them, to remember. The images don’t necessarily unfold in a sequence that offers immediate clarity; instead, they dance in and out of each other, fragmented, leaving the viewer to stitch them together. The tension between the first image and the last, stretched across the invisible expanse of time, grows not from the film’s narrative but from the viewer’s ability to recall, to connect the dots. Time does not simply pass; it lingers, it carries on.

It is through the lens of memory that we bind the past to the present, that we breathe life into film, making it pulse as vividly as reality itself. In this suspended world, film becomes a mirror in which the self can glimpse the endless possibilities of its own becoming. It is through the act of remembering that film is not just viewed, it is lived.

Nina Roos’s paintings often contain a feeling of movement, as if the eye is moving too quickly or too close. As if a camera is trying to set focus automatically, but because of a lack of light struggles. The rooms in the paintings seem to shift positions. The paintings themselves are blurry and

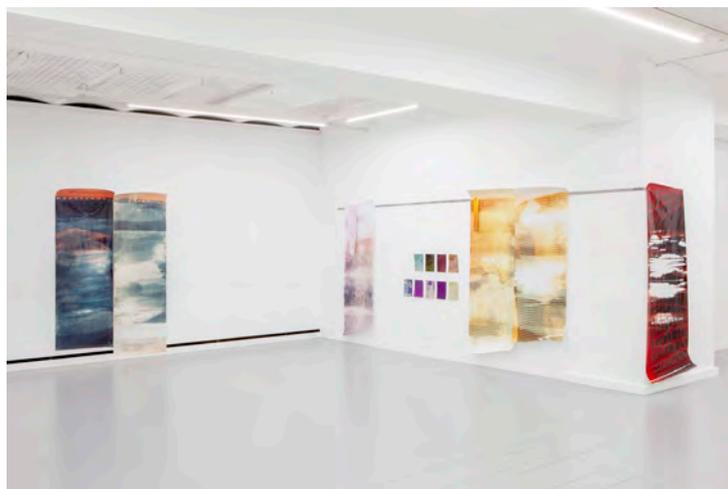
distributed, creating a sense of disorientation. I discern a kind of cinematic feeling in the paintings, and the space opens up to time. Perhaps the movement is only an illusion, but it feels reel.

The curator Patrik Nyberg describes these works as follows: “The images in Nina Roos’ paintings are like frames left behind on the editing table after subjective camera movements. The ‘camera’ in her paintings mirrors the techniques of cinematic storytelling, including the so-called perspective shot.”¹⁶

In the text “Quick Cuts in Slowed Time,” Nyberg reflects on philosopher Henri Bergson’s idea of time experience and the concept of *durée* in relation to Roos’s paintings. Time is continuous and indivisible. Unlike space, which can be divided into separate, measurable parts, time, for Bergson, flows continuously. Our perception of time, or *durée*, is shaped by our memories, emotions, and sensations.¹⁷

The eye, when looking at Roos’s series *Fantasy of Escape from Rotation* (2001), wants to shift between the different paintings—or is it rather that the chair is changing in space? The background is blurry, as if the image is moving, like a rotation of the gaze as the viewer becomes the rotation of the figure in the painting. Each painting has an individual event inherent; its creation. The acrylic

Image courtesy of Youngjae Lih



Ingrid Jacobsen, *Shift Focus Drift*, 2025. Installation view

glass makes the light colours shine, almost creating the effect that the colours in the paintings are in motion. I feel a mix between rawness and fragility.

Different uses of light are found in Genzken's work, in her mirrors, ropes, windows, and X-ray images. In the work *Windscreen 2* (2008), a cracked windscreen acts as a kind of framing device, standing out from the gallery wall. It is a kind of fractured architectural framework: what you see from the other side will be in a new light. When day turns to night, the light shifts from light to dark. The view out the window changes when it gets dark, as you see the outside wall and the blue sky turn into a mirror of your reflection, changing the composition of the window itself.

"Days start to skew slightly; we open to accident, although touching an animal differs from feeling vibrations of its spirit or thinking of it. Not as moths, for example, meld light and thought."

—Mei-mei Berssenbrugge¹⁸

In Genzken's work *X-Ray* (1991), you see through the skin of a person drinking from a wine glass. The X-ray effect shows how technology can reveal what is hidden from the human eye or even the camera, and expose what is otherwise unseen. The inside of the body becomes public, and I start to wonder what is inside and what is outside, and where light comes from. X-rays are a form of electromagnetic radiation, similar to visible light but with much higher energy. X-ray images are generated by accelerating electrons and then letting them collide with a target material.

Looking at the three-channel video work *Three Rooms* (2008) by Jonas Dahlberg, I feel as if I'm stepping out of an elevator onto the fourth floor of a hotel. My feet sink into the red-patterned carpet, soft beneath my soles. Before me, a narrow, dimly lit corridor stretches, its pale-blue walls faintly flickering in the low light. The doors along this hallway are like cuts from a film, each one a frame of a different life, a temporary refuge. Walking forward, each door seems to tell a story, a brief pause in time, waiting to be opened. It takes twenty-four seconds to traverse this passage, yet in those fleeting moments I wonder about the stories contained behind these doors, just as in *Three Rooms*, where what seems real begins to melt away, revealing the shifting nature of space.

I spot Room 403 to my left. That's where I'm headed. I slide the key into the lock and push the door open. Inside, the room feels like a snapshot in time, small, compact, and rich with the perfume that has seeped into the wooden walls. *Hôtel Amour*, a temporary home, much like the rooms in Dahlberg's video installation, where space itself loses its meaning and transforms. The room seems almost alive, a container of memories that fade, just as the wax-made objects within Dahlberg's glass boxes eventually melt, dissolving the very sense of place. The room shifts, becomes a scene in a film—what was once a place of comfort now takes on a deeper, more transient quality. A hotel room, like Dahlberg's staged interiors, is never truly fixed; it exists as a momentary space, reshaped by those who pass through it. I pull open the door to my left, stepping into the tiny bathroom. The toilet, the shower, the sink—all neat, contained. In the corner, a double mirror reflects itself infinitely. When I step into its frame, I see myself multiplied. The room bends and shifts as I capture the doubled reflection.

What was once singular has become fractured, much like the breakdown of Dahlberg's objects as they dissolve before our eyes. The mirror reflects not only my image but the fleeting nature of the space, its temporary existence. The objects in this room, like the furniture in Dahlberg's rooms, lose their significance. The bed no longer cradles, the chair no longer supports—what once defined the space now fades away, leaving only a shadow of its former self.

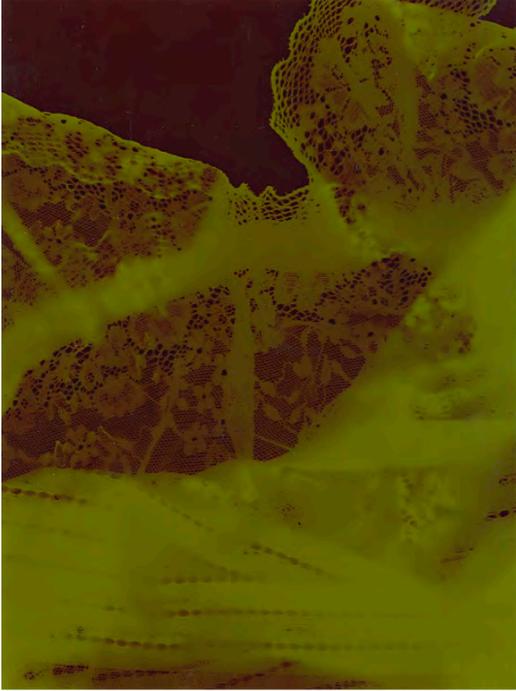
A hotel room is like an abandoned home, its purpose dissolving as time unravels the objects within it. The familiar becomes strange, the sense of place shifts and disappears. The room, once intimate, becomes a mere shell, a trace of what was.

As the heat rises and the objects melt away, the room, too, seems to fade into nothingness. In the end, all that remains is emptiness, an echo of the past, a fragment of a story that was once whole.

Some years ago, my grandmother sent me a bag with old stockings, in pastel colours, and lace underwear from Oslo to Malmö. On the bag, she wrote: "Surprise package, get started and cut. If you need more, just call me. Hugs, Grandma."

The lingerie smelled just like her scent and reminded me of time spent with her and being in another room and time. Her idea was that I could

Images courtesy of the artist



Ingrid Jacobsen, *My Dress is Not Stuck in Time*, 2024. C-print



Ingrid Jacobsen, *Cut II*, 2025. C-print, 100 × 76 cm

use the lingerie in my images, and I did. I made photograms in the darkroom, putting the different pieces of textile directly onto the photosensitive paper and exposing it for six seconds.

In the essay *Eye as a Camera*, culture writer Emma Aars writes about photography in relation to smell: “The darkroom is like a smell of waiting; it represents the void between the moment captured and the image made. As if the whole encounter lies latent, existing as a potential, to be developed, still waiting.”¹⁹ She talks about the connection between smell and the different liquids and chemicals in the darkroom, and further starts to think about the connection between water and the analogue development process.

Aars thinks well under water, which is something I do too. Both swimming pools and darkrooms are spaces for image-making, where baths filled with water and various chemicals give rise to images otherwise unable to emerge.

There is a text by photographer Jeff Wall called “Liquid Intelligence,” where he talks about the crucial role of water in creating photographs.²⁰ For him, it represents an archaic form. He connects these wet processes to the past and time, saying that they are “a memory imprint of very old production processes for washing, bleaching, dissolving.” This idea resonated with me and fed my interest in photography on a material level, exploring the organic, vegetable, and mineral worlds within the medium.

An interplay exists between the mechanical aspects of photography and the organic, fluid elements inherent to both the medium and its subjects. Wall introduces the concepts of “wet” and “dry” forces to delineate this relationship.

The “wet” or “liquid” force pertains to natural, unpredictable forms, such as the movement of liquids, that photography is adept at capturing. Wall exemplifies this with his photograph *Milk* (1984), depicting a man pouring milk, with the liquid forming an arc in mid-air. The image underscores photography’s capacity to freeze and examine ephemeral, fluid phenomena.²¹

Conversely, the “dry” force represents the technological and mechanical components of photography, including the camera’s optics, shutter mechanism, and the structured processes involved in capturing images. Wall views the act of opening and closing the shutter as a logical mechanism

that interacts with the spontaneous movements of liquids, highlighting a dynamic between the controlled and the uncontrolled.

Wall also reflects on analogue photography’s historical reliance on liquids—such as water and chemical baths—in developing images.

With the advent of digital photography, which minimises or eliminates the need for these liquid processes, Wall notes a shift in the medium’s character. While he doesn’t explicitly deem this change either positive or negative, he acknowledges that it alters photography’s historical consciousness and its intrinsic connection to the “liquid intelligence” that once played a central role in image-making.

For me, painting offers a visual language that resonates deeply with photographic processes. The merging of these two mediums allows for new explorations of depth, form, and texture. Like collage, painting’s layering allows for a tactile relationship to the image, a quality that resonates in my own photographic work.

I am interested in the concept of “figure and ground,” a term commonly used in painting. This refers to how we perceive objects, distinguishing the main subject from its background. We use various perceptual cues, including blurring, contrast, size differences, and separation between figure and background, to help us make this distinction. Abstraction the brain puts together.

Perhaps the most important reference points for my work are not photographers, but painters.

When I saw the painting *Blau* (Blue, 2017) by Miriam Cahn, I felt that it vibrated throughout my body, a corporeal experience. Because the intense colours hit you right in the eye, similar to the sun, it makes the skin warmer. The colours almost feel poisonous, and chemicals of some kind smog together and make the image blurry. The blurry effect makes the figures seem to emerge within their environment, almost creating an ethereal sense of presence. In the image, it seems as if the figures are sinking through the water. The brushstrokes make the figures look like they’re nearly dissolving into the liquid and merging together. Cahn often works with transparency between the different layers of the painting; the figures and the ground transition into each other and blur out lines.

Cahn's use of colour is something I am drawn to. She often employs bold, contrasting colours that seem to push and pull against each other. Her palette can be both vivid and unsettling, combining bright reds, yellows, and blues with darker, more muted tones like blacks, browns, and greys. This intense collision of colours adds a layer of tension to her paintings, often making them feel both emotionally charged and confrontational. In some works, colour isn't just a tool for representation; it becomes a force in itself, expressing inner turmoil or the complexity of human experience. Whether the bruised purple of a vulnerable body or the bright, harsh yellow of an aggressive gesture, her paintings are visually loud, challenging the viewer to engage with both the emotional and physical complexities of existence.

Cahn's paintings often blur the line between abstraction and figuration. Her forms are sometimes distorted or highly stylised, reflecting emotional states or psychological depth rather than presenting precise anatomical representations. Human figures, or parts of them, appear in varying degrees of abstraction, sometimes reduced to outlines or symbols, and sometimes fleshed out with raw, expressive gestures. She explores the human body in fragmented ways, with limbs, faces, and torsos that are both distorted and evocative, often confronting the viewer with their rawness and vulnerability.

Her brushwork is typically vigorous and unrestrained, adding to the physicality of her paintings. The use of thick, textured strokes contrasts against smoother, more controlled passages of paint, creating a sense of urgency and immediacy. These energetic brushstrokes, combined with an expressive colour palette, give Cahn's work an almost visceral presence, like the paint itself is alive and in motion.

In the same way, Marlene Dumas reflects on her own approach to painting:

I don't need the daylight to paint. I work with artificial light at night, while watching how the moon waxes and wanes. In the sun, one cannot stare. Munch painted the sun, like Vincent van Gogh whom I admired before him, and Lars von Trier after him, who made the planet Earth explode in light at the end of his film *Melancholia*.²²

Dumas's words capture the essence of a world transformed through light and colour, a world

where artificial illumination electrifies space, where the glowing, neon-like hues of Polaroids, long before they existed, might come to life in a painting. She speaks of inventing "acid green and sulphur yellow" and of "painting infinity," creating a reality that is more than just a depiction of the visible, one that breaks boundaries and moves beyond what we see and into the world of the unseen.

In the text *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, philosopher Gilles Deleuze mentions that for the painter Francis Bacon, the most important aspect of creativity was the movement that binds thought, sensations, and accident and thus that motivates the painting. Deleuze writes about the "utilized accident."²³ For example, in the realm of filmmaking, an accidental shot or unexpected glitch in a scene could reveal something unexpected about the narrative or form, thus enriching the experience and interpretation of the work. It's about embracing what emerges spontaneously, instead of relying only on preordained or planned outcomes. The act of painting is likewise always shifting, constantly vibrating between the before and the after.²⁴

Similarly, Cahn's paintings transcend the simple portrayal of bodies or forms, reaching into the realm of the psychological and emotional. She can electrify a space, painting the artificial colours of the world as it glows—before they even exist in the material world. Like Dumas's notion of painting "infinity," Cahn's works unfold in a space where time and space are not confined by physical limits, where each brushstroke seems to embody a moment suspended, or even in motion. It happens between the sensation and the accident, which makes the paintings alive and raw.

When you see through glass, you cannot see clearly. That is, even though you can see through glass, there's a perceptual sense of separation between you and the world beyond it. This layer of glass creates a physical barrier that can alter the way you interact with the environment on the other side, adding a sense of distance or separation. Glass is typically transparent, meaning it allows most light to pass through it. This gives you the ability to see what's on the other side. The clarity with which you can see depends on the glass's cleanliness, thickness, and any coatings it might have, such as tinting or frosting that alters visibility. If the glass is not perfectly smooth or if it's curved, the image on the other side might appear distorted. The glass can magnify, shrink, or shift parts of the scene depending on its shape.

“When one is out drinking one sees differently, the lines dissolve, everything seems more chaotic. It is well-known that one’s vision can actually be distorted. But then one must obviously paint the lines distorted. If one sees double, one must paint two noses. And if a glass looks crooked then one must make the glass crooked.”

—Edvard Munch²⁵

Even though you can see through glass, there’s a perceptual sense of separation between you and the world beyond it. This layer of glass creates a physical barrier that can alter the way you interact with the environment on the other side, adding a sense of distance or separation.

Seeing through glass combines light manipulation—refraction and reflection—with the ability to view distant or nearby objects, but always with a subtle distortion or barrier created by the glass itself.

The camera lens is made out of glass. This optical glass is designed to bend and focus the light accurately onto the camera sensor or film. It is made with precision to minimise distortions, reduce reflections, and enhance image clarity.

Electric lines are drawn between our eyes. Light and particles behave the same way, differently. In the glass jar, the butterfly is stuck in time, but on a new loop. The act is mirrored and light is night. I am in a darkened room, with only red light allowing my eyes to see the contours of the wall. The darkness makes me think and I write in my notebook.

(Colour Darkroom, 11:00 pm)

It’s dark outside. A late December night. I am delighted. I don’t need to sleep.

I step through the door into the pitch-black room. I recognise this space now, feeling my way through the darkness. My hands reach forward, searching—my eyes are useless without light. I must see the room in my mind, reconstruct it from memory.

I take the light-sensitive paper and lay it down. Carefully, I arrange the negatives I’ve cut out—fragments of different interiors. This will become a room, a collage of a room. Layers upon layers, spaces folding into each other.

*I set the timer. The light-sensitive paper is exposed. 11,10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1
Eleven seconds, and the image vanishes.*

Uncertain of what kind of room has emerged, I move the paper to the machine, where it will pass through chemical baths. Then I step outside, into the light, waiting for the room I have just created.

Now, everything is beyond my control, I’m cut between time and space. All movements come back in rotation in the loop in the jar, the recording device is on playback. Moyra Davey wrote: “When I lost my sight I found I could think better. My head is filled with ideas. Time passes differently. I let my memories flow.”²⁶ I got used to the strange semi-darkness in which I lived and almost began to like it. I stood on the threshold of reality and imagination like a layer of space cut in two. I feel a desire for total non-desire, for a total collapse. When light hits the paper, I cut it up, and when transformed in baths, it appears back in light, and reality hits. My images suddenly turn from depicting reality to abstraction, where only the inner imagination can be held. The landscapes appear imaginative, shapes of chemistry and smoggy colours emerge. The viewer tries to grasp its meaning, but is that even possible in the same way the camera tries to auto-focus? I lost sight in my eye, and the eye is the camera that is made of glass. The gaze centres where the flatness surfaces, the paper and the screen become like a landscape. The camera shifts in focus and zooms. The cut and the slit are repeated, and the paper and liquids make the image bleed. The fix stops the bleeding and the image is set and ends the loop. Time and the butterfly are set free.

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Images courtesy of the artist

Johan Mørkøre Nordskar, *Untitled*, 2025. Sanding paper mounted on the floor.
Detail and installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM2 Gallery, Malmö, 2025



I'm scraping against sandpaper. It takes time. Then I'll do it again.
Johan Mørkøre Nordskar

I'm painting wooden blocks with acrylic. After the paint has dried, I grind the blocks against a piece of sandpaper. The paint adheres to the paper in a very specific way: in some places, it melts into the paper; in other places, it covers the paper like a thin veil. It all depends on how long I work, the pigments I use, and the quality and grit of the sandpaper. The finished work presents itself both as a tool and a painting, making me reconsider both.

I work with colours and lines, different dimensions and variations on different themes. The works are created through repetition, an attempt to uncritically work my way through the variations that I, and the materials I use, can be put into. It is a process that often takes a long time. In the same way that the works wear against each other, they also wear on me. When I am exhausted, I can take a step back and look at the works I have made. I can see that it has become something. That between all the works, or within a particular work, there is a theme. A temperament.

Thomas Pihl's 2021 exhibition *Sight Specific* at Kode in Bergen¹ and Jack Whitten's work in the 2020 exhibition *Private Eyes*² inspired me to explore monochrome expressions, rethink acrylic as a material, and have a more process-oriented approach to my practice. Both artists work experimentally with acrylic, with various techniques that do not involve using brushes. Through this exploration, many of my projects have developed and eventually found a direction.

I prefer to work on two-dimensional surfaces. It allows me to use the painting as a reference. Some works can seem to extend beyond the framework they are made within; others seem to be noisy or restless. The works I prefer, and most often choose to explore further, do not represent anything at all. Usually, they comprise just two materials: a meeting between a colour and a piece of sandpaper.

I sort all the samples I make into folders that I categorise. In this way, I create an index of experiences. I think of my practice as an immanent plane, where every material, reference, experience, every new work I make becomes a point that blends into all the other points on the immanent plane. New concepts are constantly emerging, and in this way, not only do new works become possible, but each new point also ends up changing the interaction between all the other points. Each new work becomes a realisation of the potential that lies in all the different encounters.

According to Gilles Deleuze, "A body combines some of its own distinctive points with those of the wave ... from one wave and one gesture to another, and carries that difference through the repetitive space thereby constituted."³ He uses the relationship between waves and a swimmer to say something about how one learns. I have also been swimming a lot lately. I have learned and become better. With each stroke, with each repetition, I glide faster through the water. I have dedicated myself to watching swimming videos online and faced the resistance I encounter. The arms are supposed to move in specific patterns, and you have to think about how often you come up for air between each stroke. Experiencing each stroke through the water is a specific form of pedagogy.

The relationship between the waves and the gliding body through the water is not the same. Not only am I learning to swim, but I am also expressing myself. In the same way, I relate to the sandpaper. There is a specific form of relationship between me and the sandpaper that is expressed through the repetition. It's a unique relation, where each rotation allows me to experience and express myself. This is knowledge that can't be taught, only felt, through direct engagement with the paper.

Sandpaper is a consumable material that is produced in huge quantities every year. Yet this material is largely invisible, even though it surrounds us. I wanted to make these materials visible again, not as symbolic representations, but as active participants on an immanent plane. Within an immanent methodology, I don't want to explain or abstract anything, but to work with materials on their own terms. Let them work, let them emerge. By drawing attention to abrasives as conceptual and material entities, I want to open up new reflections on how we relate to material use, production, and sustainability.

The reason I have chosen to explore sandpaper is complex. Part of the fascination comes from the low status of the material. An anonymous tool, it is often invisible to our collective consciousness. That was the starting point for me to attribute new value to it and see it for its potential as a form of aesthetic expression. At the same time, sandpaper is a typical example of an industrially produced consumer material, designed to be used and thrown away. This represents a significant burden on the environment. I believe that sandpaper contains a democratising power. It has put a technique that was previously reserved for woodworking specialists into the hands of a wider audience. By using sandpaper in my artwork, I want to actualise a reflection on this issue and show that even seemingly worthless materials can contain qualities that deserve our attention. By replacing the traditional canvas with this industrial surface, it opens up a new way of looking at the medium. The unfamiliar background forces me to see the painting with new eyes and discover unexpected aesthetic possibilities in the encounter between pigment and sandpaper.

A central theoretical starting point for this project, which I am constantly iterating, is Viktor Shklovsky's idea of defamiliarisation (*ostranenie*) as an artistic technique. In "Art, as Device," he writes:

And so, what we call art exists in order to give back the sensation of life, in order to make us feel things, in order to make a stone stony. The goal of art is to create the sensation of seeing, and not merely recognizing, things; the method of art is the "ostranenie" of things and the complication of the form, which increases the duration and complexity of perception, as the process of perception is its own end in art and must be prolonged. Art is the means to live through the making

of a thing; what has been made does not matter in art.⁴

Shklovsky argues that art should disrupt our automated perception and defamiliarise the familiar, so that we *see it* again, not just *recognise it*. This perspective formed the basis for a number of works in which I use sandpaper as a canvas. Sandpaper, which I had previously considered only as a tool, an invisible intermediary in the completion of other projects, is in these works a prominent material with an intrinsic value. By making the abrasive visible, I want to create a renewed attention to its role in production and, at the same time, provoke a delay in perception. This can also be understood as an extension of an immanent methodology, where the material is not used to represent something outside itself, but acts directly by virtue of its own materiality and relationship to other materials. Instead of abstracting or explaining, I try to let the tactile properties of the sandpaper emerge as an expression of a world of production that we often take for granted.

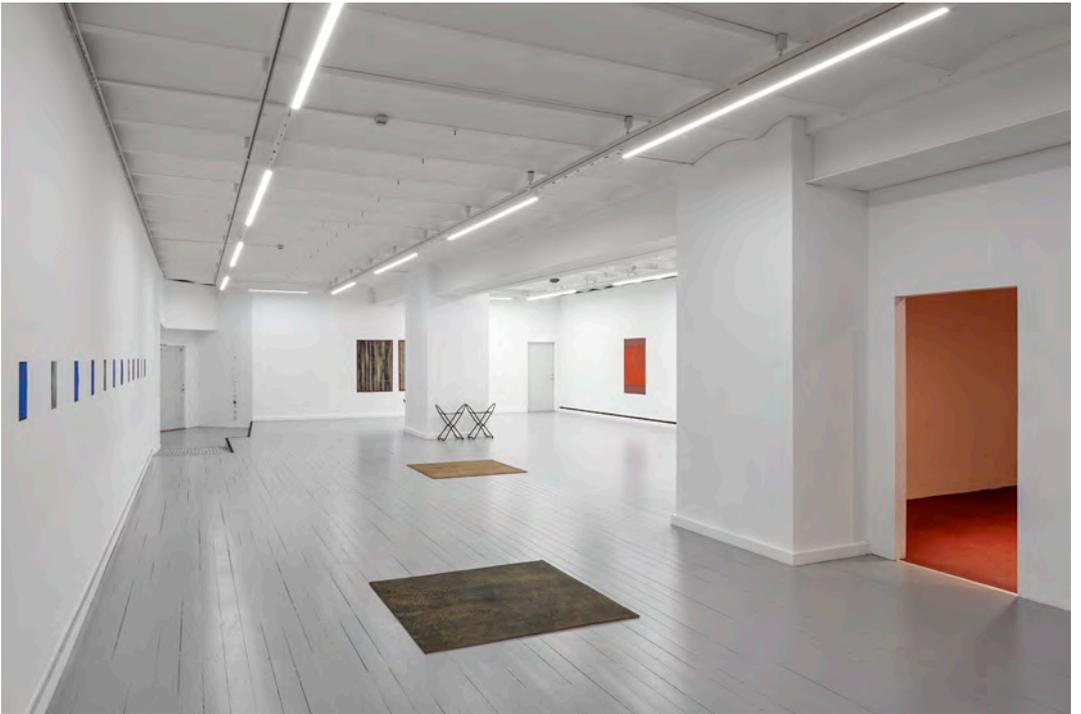
In my work with paintings on sandpaper, I've been inspired by Robert Ryman's approach to painting. Although Ryman never wanted to identify himself as a minimalist, he worked with very limited forms of expression: often just a canvas, one colour, and one type of brushstroke. In an interview with Art21, he answers a number of questions about how he relates to his own works, drawing on parallels between music and painting:

If someone is singing something, and telling a story, it's pretty similar to representational painting, where you tell a story with the paint and with symbols. I wasn't interested in painting a narrative, telling a story with the painting. I thought the painting should just be about what it's about [laughs].⁵

This way of thinking creates space for exploration of the materiality of the painting. I read this in light of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's idea of concepts: artistic works that do not seek complexity through representation, but through the relationship between few and precise elements.⁶

In my exploration of the potential of sandpaper, I have also drawn inspiration from the artist Jack Whitten, specifically his paintings from 1973–74: *Black Table Setting (Homage to Duke Ellington)*,⁷ *April's Shark*,⁸ and *Siberian Salt Grinder*⁹ have all been influential in several periods of my practice.

Image courtesy of Youngjae Lih



Johan Mørkøre Nordskar, *Alternate directions*, 2025. Installation view

For them, Whitten created his own enormous brush that he called “the developer.” I’m fascinated by his method of placing objects under a canvas laid on the floor to evoke forms through a single, sweeping movement. I also want to create works that capture a single gesture. In a lecture Whitten gave at Boston University, he went into detail about how he worked with art in the ’70s and how he saw his works as experiments.¹⁰ He worked with acrylic because his experiments could only be carried out in that medium, and he explained the importance of preparation before touching the canvas. There is a playfulness and curiosity in how Whitten describes his way of working that I bring to my own projects. He also described a connection with the materials he worked with, and from that, I draw a desire and ability to use the materials in ways that particularly suit them.

Several of my sandpaper works are created with a similar approach to process. Like Whitten, I work with the paper flat on the ground. I place a cork mat under the paper. Cork mats are mostly used as an underlay for parquet. When I wear down the sandpaper with painted wooden blocks, I evoke the pattern from the cork on the paper. The relative softness of the cork is crucial in the adhesion of the acrylic paint from the blocks. A harder surface causes the paint to peel off. While Whitten wanted to capture a large movement, I focus on bringing out the repetitive motion in sanding.

Deleuze and Guattari discuss two different ways of understanding reality: the “*plane of reference*”¹¹ and the “*plane of immanence*.”¹² The former represents a scientific approach, where the world is understood through representation, classification, and modelling. In contrast, the immanent plane appears as a radically different way of approaching reality, one that does not seek to simplify, but rather embraces complexity, unpredictability, and chaos. The *plane of immanence* involves much more than a contrast to the *plane of reference*; while this is fascinating in its own right, what is key to this text is that together they set up a contrast to the scientific model. They argue for an alternative to a linear understanding of the world linked to references, where one paradigm replaces another. The alternative they propose is syntagmatic understanding, where past, present, and future create an overlapping image where everything exists simultaneously.¹³ Science and philosophy have in common that they are both interested in chaos, or what they call the virtual, which is the infinite

potential of possibilities that exist: “A void ... containing all possible particles ... which spring up only to disappear immediately. ... Chaos is an infinite speed of birth and disappearance.” The task of philosophy is to preserve the infinite speed at which things arise and disappear by placing the virtual in a context that is specific to it. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the scientific method does not do this but simplifies and slows down the pace of the virtual: “In the case of science, it is like a freeze frame. It is a fantastic slowing down.”¹⁴

My argument is that art relates to the world in the same way that Deleuze and Guattari believe philosophy does. It’s free to invent its own frameworks for understanding in a context that is specific to it. When I work with art, I want to be creative in the way that I assemble or combine objects and suggest new ways of understanding them. I take materials that have become invisible to us and put them in new contexts. In this way, I can think in new ways about the materials I use and the works I create with them.

Gaining knowledge happens in leaps. In February, I had my master’s exhibition. Through working on it, I experienced one of these leaps, a point where I took my practice further. Over the course of two weeks, I worked to shape an exhibition that would be more than the sum of the individual works. Inspired by Deleuze and Guattari’s thoughts on the immanent plane,¹⁵ I wanted to consider the exhibition as a whole where all the components, the works, the exhibition space, the preparation time, the audience and myself functioned as concepts that influenced and shaped each other. A concept where everything exists within a flat ontology, without a hierarchy between the different components:¹⁶ “Concepts are like multiple waves, rising and falling, but the plane of immanence is the single wave that rolls them up and unrolls them.”¹⁷ The components became the ripples on the sea, and the exhibition, the waves that gather and dissolve them. In this complex concept, not only the works, but also the audience and I as an artist, are involved in a mutual interaction.

Deleuze and Guattari highlight how assemblages, or combinations, have a territorialisation, a tendency to be connected over a certain period of time.¹⁸ This is how I also considered the exhibition. Throughout the two-week duration, it had its own territorialisation, where the different parts influenced each other. Yet the individual works

Image courtesy of Youngjae Lih

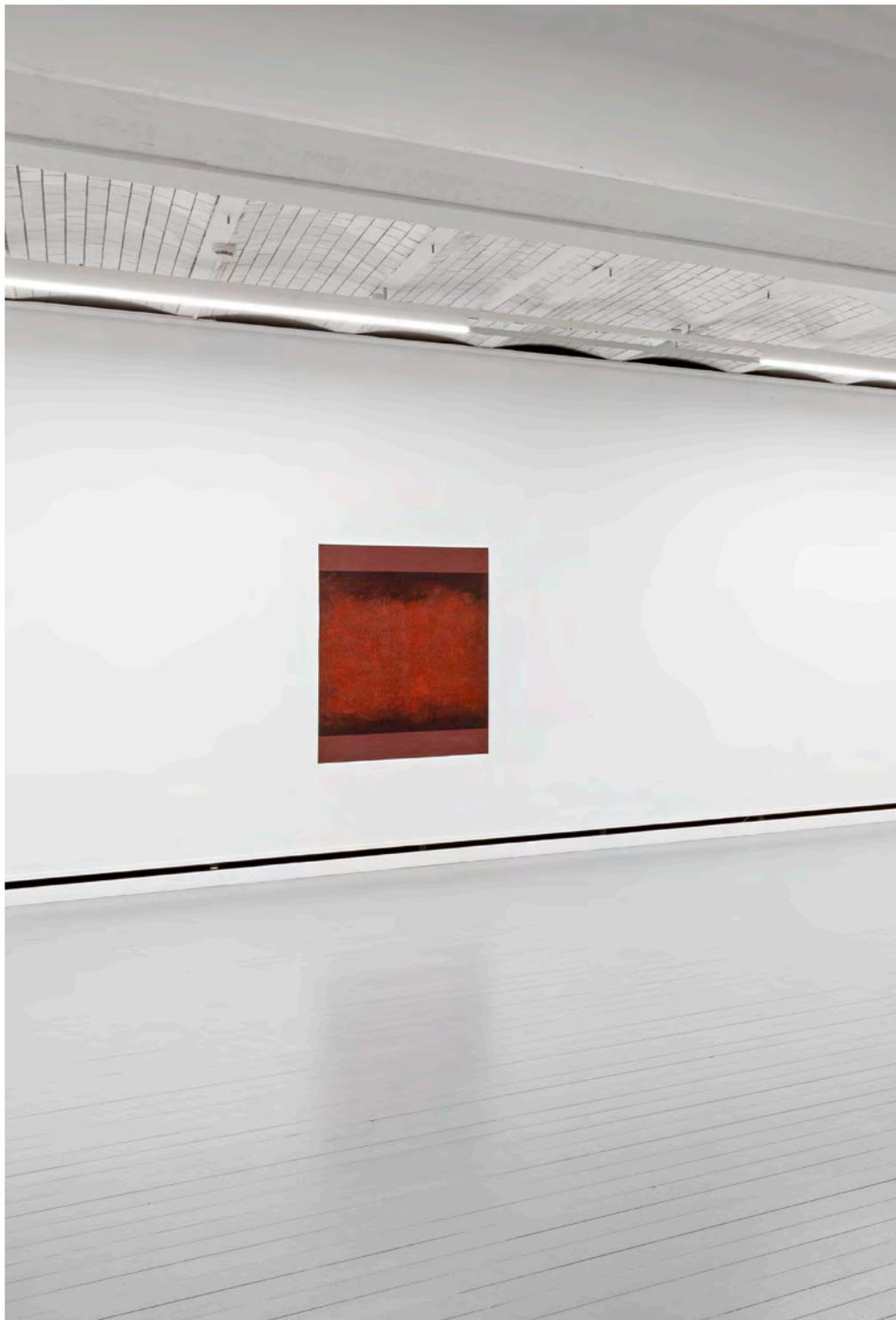


Johan Mørkøre Nordskar, *Untitled*, 2025. Wood grinded on sandpaper, 240 × 240 cm

Image courtesy of the artist



Johan Mørkøre Nordskar, *Untitled*, 2024. Acrylic paint grinded on sandpaper, 23 × 14 cm



Johan Mørkøre Nordskar, *Alternate directions*, 2025. Installation view





Images courtesy of Youngjae Lih

Johan Mørkøre Nordskar, *Untitled*, 2025. Sanding paper mounted on the floor.
Installation view

were not locked into this whole. They retained the possibility of interacting outside this specific context and creating new connections. I link this to the virtual: the exhibition accommodates an infinite number of potential interactions, and the variations I presented only hint at this rich potential of possibilities. When the exhibition is finished, the deterritorialisation is completed, and the different parts of the concept dissolve so that they can be included in other assemblages and concepts.¹⁹

The works in the exhibition were variations on the concept I have developed over the past five years: using sandpaper as a canvas and grinding different materials directly onto the surface. The works are inspired by artists from the colour field movement, especially Helen Frankenthaler's woodcuts, such as *Essence Mulberry*²⁰ and *Japanese Maple*,²¹ and the material choices of the arte povera movement. Jannis Kounellis worked with earth and other "poor" materials and elevated them into an artistic context.²² I am trying to do something similar, but with industrial, mass-produced materials. Materials that are often invisible in our everyday lives but that, in my works, are elevated and allowed to work with a force of their own.

One element of the exhibition was a series of fifteen works installed along one wall, inspired by Deleuze's concept of *la répétition du Différent* from *Difference and Repetition*.²³ Each work in the series measured 23 × 14 cm and presented an exploration of the materiality of sandpaper through varying grits. The series extends from P60 grit in the far-right image, gradually becoming finer, to P1200 on the left. Within each of these five different grits (P60, P120, P240, P600, P1200), three distinct treatments have been done: two where the sandpaper is sanded with blue-painted blocks in circular and vertical movements, and one where I sanded with an unpainted wooden block. Deleuze could possibly name each of the five grits a singularity.²⁴ Beyond the grit of the sandpaper, the relationship between this coarseness, me as an artist, the viewer, and the specific technique contributes to constituting each of them as a unique singularity. This structure creates a rhythm along the wall, where specific variations in the grinding process are repeated across the different grits, but never in an identical way. For example, the technique of the blue-painted block in circular movements will appear at each of the five singularities, but the result will be different due to the inherent texture of the sandpaper. This clarifies a repetition of the difference, where the

common starting point, sandpaper with a given grit, is manifested through different treatments as a series of unique yet related expressions. What is characteristic of this series is precisely that all the works are different in a similar way. They follow the same set of variational principles within the framework of the material's specificity.²⁵

For two of the exhibited works, I used blue-painted sandpaper, where wooden blocks were sanded directly against the paper. The painting came together in the texture of the sandpaper, the blue colour surface, and the traces from the wood. The paintings did not attempt to refer to anything outside themselves, deriving meaning from the materials and the process instead. I wanted the meeting between paint, sandpaper, and wood to stand out in its own right.

Instead of sanding acrylic paint, I sanded different types of wood. The result was a work that related more strongly to the original function of sandpaper. For this reason, the work could not be moved without the assembly falling apart. It disintegrated when I took it down after the exhibition was finished. Therefore, the work was created in the gallery space in the weeks before the exhibition. I found it interesting to create an artwork that would only exist within, and help define, the exhibition's timeframe.

The two paintings were the same size, both 140 × 120 cm. One work was painted on sandpaper with P300 grit, the other with P240. The former was painted in a somewhat darker blue, while the latter, in contrast, was brighter and more matte. On the dark blue sandpaper, I worked with the wooden blocks in a smooth, horizontal movement, which resulted in vertical, linear grooves. On the brighter paper, I worked with a circular sanding technique, which created a more dissolved pattern, where the grooves flowed into each other. The two surfaces responded differently to friction, and the wood left behind different deposits, both in colour and texture, depending on the grit and the movement.

The works were exhibited side by side, which reinforced the experience that they were two variations on the same theme. The contrast between them accentuated the peculiarities of the materials and the bodily process behind them. Small variations—the shades of blue, the differences in the texture of the sandpaper, and the direction of the movements—emerged more clearly through their relationship to each other.

Simone de Beauvoir's exploration of the ambiguity of existence was a central inspiration for one of the works in the exhibition, where I covered the floor of one of the rooms with sandpaper. Beauvoir argues that humans exist in a duality, as both subject to themselves and object to others. In order to develop as free individuals, we depend on others, for whom we appear as objects, also being given the opportunity to realise their freedom. It is in the tension between these positions that we exist, and it was this tension that I wanted to explore in the work.²⁶

The ambiguity is expressed through the interactive nature of the work. During the two weeks of the exhibition, the audience moved through the space. The friction of their soles against the sandpaper made them participants, both creating and viewing the work. They were both observers and participants. Every movement left a trace, and in this way, a relationship emerged between artist, work, and audience, a relationship characterised by mutual influence and continuous change during the period of the exhibition.

In relation to the work on the floor, I also created a work during the two weeks of the exhibition. Inspired by Karin Roy Andersson's *Constant Grinding* series,²⁷ I created a work consisting of sandpaper stapled to the wall, 280 × 280 cm in size. Andersson chews gum over a given period of time, which she threads onto a string and presents as necklaces. There are several things about this process that fascinate me. The way she uses materials that have such a clear connection to something we use and throw away: waste.²⁸ I clearly recognise the reference to the *arte povera* movement, where "poor materials" are given new conceptual and aesthetic value, and how a material can be elevated by changing categories.²⁹ At the same time, I saw a connection to Viktor Shklovsky. He claims that the role of art is to make us see again, not just recognise.³⁰ Andersson makes us experience and think about what we do when we chew. Many people have experience with chewing gum, perhaps to an extent that we take the action for granted, and it becomes invisible. The knowledge takes us away from the experience, and *Constant Grinding* makes that action visible again.

This resonated with my own interest in materiality and transformation. Similar to Andersson's constant chewing of gum, I performed a repetitive action over the two weeks of the exhibition, in which various wooden objects were ground

against the sandpaper wall. This constant grinding led the sandpaper to gradually wear down, leaving traces of the wood on the paper. The dust eventually covered the entire sandpaper. Unlike a painting, where each new layer is laid over the previous one, the dust from the wood blends in. Eventually, the entire paper was covered in dust and could no longer absorb more without losing what was already there. Over the course of the two weeks, wood dust piled on the floor around the work. Although it wasn't the intention, the pile of dust documented the time I had spent, just like Andersson's chewing documents a very specific period of time. Similar to how she makes an overlooked action visible, I attempted to draw attention to the inherent properties of the materials through the continuous grinding, demonstrating their potential for change through a simple, repetitive action. That gave the work a kind of performative process that materialised over time, in dialogue with Andersson's investigation of time, repetition, and transformation of everyday materials.

The potential of the sandpaper was perhaps fully revealed in the relationship between the various works. The series of fifteen small works along the wall functioned almost as a catalogue of potential sandpaper variations. The repetition of the different grits and sanding methods showed the differences in texture and colour, inviting reflection on the virtual potential, the infinite possibilities of combinations that were not activated in the exhibition. In contrast to the series, the two blue-painted works became a deeper study of how wood and sandpaper meet. The repetition became clearer through the actual sanding on the paper, where bodily movement and friction were central, and the size of the works related to the body's dimensions more directly. The work on the floor actualised a third form of interaction, where time, the audience's movement in the space, and the artwork itself came together. The wall work, which gradually changed over time, introduced a performative dimension where I, as an artist, also helped transform the exhibition throughout the viewing period and made clear the influence of time on the material. As a collection, the works did not constitute a hierarchical order, but rather a complex system where each part expanded and nuanced our understanding of the sandpaper's potential.

To illustrate how I think about the role of the artist, and how I view the different elements that come together when creating artworks, I would



Johan Mørkøre Nordskar, *Alternate directions*, 2025. Installation view

like to emphasise a recent collaborative project. Together with two other artists, I created an art book to which we all contributed our respective artistic practices. Maisen Kemp was responsible for the binding, Nina Eriksson wrote poems, and I created paintings. In order for each part to stand out on its own, we worked mostly independent of each other, with the exception of the required technical specifications.

My task was to make the paintings and, in the final phase, draw the text and binding into a complete work. The result is an art book where each spread consists of a poem by Eriksson on the left page and one of my paintings on the right, made on sandpaper. I attached a sheet of silk between the two pages to protect the pictures and to create a distance that emphasises the idea that each contribution has its own integrity and plays a unique role in the work as a whole.

Through this project, it became clear to me how the artist's role can work both independently and facilitate encounters between different forms of expression. It also corresponds well with how I think of art as something that can assemble different elements and suggest new ways of understanding them. The use of sandpaper in the paintings, a material I have explored thoroughly in my practice for its abrasive properties and status as an overlooked industrial product, was given a new context together with the poems and the book. As in my master's exhibition, where I considered the entire presentation as an immanent plane where all the components influenced each other, with the art book, we attempted to create a work where painting, text, and binding existed side by side as equal concepts.

Each work in my practice has its own specific territorialisation, where the different components interact with each other. At the same time, they are part of a larger whole that brings out different aspects of my exploration of sandpaper as a material. My work functions to make my view of the relationship between me, the audience, and the artwork more concrete. Repetitions call attention to how subtle variations in intensity can reveal a multitude of qualities.

Every time I discover a new reference, or combine materials in new ways, it changes the concept. Both historically and contextually, the works I have made change, and the potential for what I can do in the future takes on new conditions. Every action has potential and contributes to shaping an art practice in constant change. Each new work is the physical manifestation of my art practice, where complex concepts interact with each other on an immanent plane.

This text summarises my art education, a process that began seven years ago and is now nearing its end. I feel the need to reflect on why I chose this path. The need to create has been there from the very beginning, and it still drives me, but what it entails is constantly changing. Perhaps this is precisely what this text has tried to approach. One of the most important things I have taken with me through my education, which I certainly wouldn't grasp outside of an academic setting, is that my own practice and the field of art are in constant motion. It is this movement that defines how I understand art.



Johan Mørkøre Nordskar, *Untitled*, 2025. 2 × wood grinded on painted sandpaper, 140 × 120 cm

- 1 Thomas Phil, *Sight Specific*, Kode, Bergen, 22 January–1 May 2021, <https://www.kodebergen.no/hva-skjer/utstillinger/thomas-pihl>.
- 2 Jack Whitten, *Private Eyes*, Kode, Bergen, 1 October–19 December 2020, <https://www.kodebergen.no/hva-skjer/utstillinger/private-eyes>.
- 3 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 2004), 26.
- 4 Viktor Shklovsky, “*Art, as Device*,” in Viktor Shklovsky: A Reader, ed. and trans. Alexandra Berlina (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 12.
- 5 Robert Ryman, quoted in *Paradox: Art in the Twenty-First Century*, season 4, created by Susan Sollins and Susan Dowling, Art21 video, 30:26, 18 November 2007, <https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s4/paradox/>.
- 6 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson (London: Verso, 1997), 194–95.
- 7 Jack Whitten, *Black Table Setting (Homage to Duke Ellington)*, 1974, acrylic on canvas, 182.9 × 152.4 cm.
- 8 Jack Whitten, *April's Shark*, 1974, acrylic on canvas, 182 × 132 cm.
- 9 Jack Whitten, *Siberian Salt Grinder*, 1974, acrylic on canvas, 203.2 × 127 cm.
- 10 “School of Visual Arts Contemporary Perspectives Lecture with Jack Whitten,” YouTube video, 1:20:38, posted by Boston University, 25 October 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxskFjQZc0o>.
- 11 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 35.
- 12 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 153.
- 13 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 35.
- 14 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 118.
- 15 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 153.
- 16 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 35.
- 17 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 36.
- 18 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 121.
- 19 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 181.
- 20 Helen Frankenthaler, *Essence Mulberry*, 1977, woodcut, 63.5 × 48 cm.
- 21 Helen Frankenthaler, *Japanese Maple*, 2005, woodcut, 66 × 96.5 cm.
- 22 Giulia Schirripa, “Jannis Kounellis, Carla Lonzi and the Appropriation of the Workerism Movement’s Ideas in *Untitled* (12 Horses) and *Autoritratto*” (bachelor’s thesis, University of Houston, 1969), 12.
- 23 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 13.
- 24 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 3.
- 25 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 27.
- 26 Simone de Beauvoir, *För en tvetydighetens moral* [The Ethics of Ambiguity], trans. Mads Rosengren (Gothenburg: Bokförlaget Daidalos, 2018), 16.
- 27 Karin Roy Andersson, *Constant Grinding III*, 2011. Seen in “Agenda: New Materialism and Contemporary Craft. 4. Stephen Knott,” YouTube video, 22:23, posted by Kunsthøgskolen i Oslo, 8 July 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tq37GD_zm5k&list=WL&index=10.
- 28 Andersson, *Constant Grinding III*.
- 29 Schirripa, “Jannis Kounellis, Carla Lonzi,” 12.
- 30 Shklovsky, *Art, as Device*, 12.



Image courtesy of Youngjae Lim

Maria Nadia Nour, *rhapsody of yes*, 2025. Film, quadrophonic sound, 10:10 min.
Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2025

When I began writing this text, it quickly became clear to me that I wanted to approach it in the same way I work with art: guided by a sense of interconnectedness with other subjects and life forms. Through a non-linear structure and with a sonic touch, I seek to avoid reproducing the patterns of thought systems and language I wish to call into question: Western logocentrism that privileges certain signifiers and perspectives at the expense of others. Through my writing, I hope instead to foster a non-dualistic mode of thought—even though, as the American scholar and cultural critic Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick notes, “A lot of voices tell us to think nondualistically, and even what to think in that fashion. Fewer are able to transmit how to go about it.”¹

Sedgwick also developed two key concepts that I want to mention as a way to read my essay: paranoid reading and reparative reading.² Whereas paranoid reading is characterised by suspicion—

an attempt to uncover what might be hidden or repressed within a text—reparative reading, on the other hand, approaches texts with openness, embracing ambiguity and seeking to build, mend, and forge new connections.

Let me now set the tone by introducing a mode of immersion in musical terms: the *maqam* (مقام),³ in the Arabic system of melodic modes, in which the octave contains micro-intervals. The musician is expected to play a piece with personal expression and technical accuracy. The melodic progression is known as *seyir*, meaning path or direction. Read this text in that spirit, listening for the quarter tones along the way.

All text written in ***bold italic*** represents my own reflections on theory and ideas I have developed along the way. Read it as a double voice, a meta-text, a journal, a scrapbook, bits of tongue, bits of air.

*you sit in
you look like*

a singer from the '60s

*a bright red neon light, you glow
diminutive tongue*

*Back then, we grew in the gardens of others.
belium – we were long spiral arms –*

*I interrupt myself. We were hydrogen to
diminutive tongue*

Æ∅Å Figures

I've long been obsessed with the idea of materialising the voice: recording other people's voices, my own, those of my family and friends. Or rather, it's something I've always been drawn to. As a child, I wanted to voice the characters in animated films. For years, I've been curious to learn the inner workings of instruments and microphones: I would hack into speakers, dismantle guitars, cut open microphones—I wanted to understand how sound waves travel, how they can be amplified. I also wanted to know how to open up systems of composition and notation—musical scores crafted for interplay between instruments. This reflects my interest in collective forms of artistic creation, but also in alternatives to the forms of communication.

The loudspeaker's diaphragm—its membrane—is the source of sound. It vibrates, translating electrical signals into waves visible to the eye by

the replacement of the membrane. I imagine the membrane is the speaker's mouth, its lips. When I remove it, I can experiment with new surfaces. I would experiment with belly-dancer coins to replace the diaphragm. The loudspeaker's lips now have a tongue. The coins don't just reflect the sound—they *speak* it. The loudspeaker is no longer just a device—it becomes a body, a belly.

Recently, I discovered the Welsh singer and songwriter Margaret Watts Hughes, who invented the eidophone—an instrument that quite literally makes the voice visible when sung into.⁴ Hughes created what she called “voice-figures,” images formed by the vocal vibrations that resemble “flower-like forms.”⁵ These were rediscovered in the 1960s by Swiss scientist Hans Jenny, who coined the term “cymatics” to describe and visualise the physical patterns produced by sound waves.⁶

*now you sing
now you sing all by yourself
missing your dummy*

the violence in my body the stickiness

*diminutive tongue
diminutive tongue
we learn ÆØÅ*



Image courtesy of Youngjae Lim

Maria Nadia Nour, *Pillow fight #1*, 2025. Installation view



Maria Nadia Nour, *Pillow fight #1*, 2025. Satin, thread, belly dancer coin, 60 × 63 cm.
Installation view and detail



While the eidophone's flower-like depictions of sound are certainly fascinating, this isn't the aspect of Hughes's work that interests me. Rather, I recognise cymatics as a foundation for building upon my interest in recording the voice, visualising language, tracing it through bodies as symptoms. Here, the symptom should be understood as a sort of "knot," created in the unconscious by something that is possibly repressed—but it could also be a compulsion: something the subject does for pleasure, or *jouissance*. The symptom (or the compulsion) delivers a message through the body or our actions. I don't strive to do clinical research, but instead to open the symptom up and to be curious about what it is or could be.

I seek to explore what lies beneath language: semiotics, or systems of signs, and the language that precedes all language. When imagining alternative methods of communication—with other forms of life, or interior forms of life—I linger on the French writer and literary critic Hélène Cixous's conceptualisation of the voice on a symbolic level: "The Voice sings from a time before law, before the Symbolic took one's breath away and reappropriated it into language under its authority of separation."⁷ By "a time before law," Cixous refers to a pre-linguistic space—a time before we, as children, are initiated into the Symbolic, a structure that differs from culture to culture: "You mustn't do that"; "This is how you behave"; "Sit still"; "That's a table, not a chair"—or perhaps, "That's not a table, it's a chair."

Take care ॐ

An artist that fascinates me is Sophie Calle, a French artist who combines photography with text in many of her works. I'm thinking especially of *Take Care of Yourself* (2004–7).⁸ Calle created this piece after being dumped by her ex-partner via an email that ended with the words: "Take care of yourself." Calle describes the letter like this:

I received an email telling me it was over. I didn't know how to respond. It was almost as if it hadn't been meant for me. It ended with the words: "Take care of yourself." And so I did. I asked 107 women (including two made from wood and one with feathers), chosen for their profession or skills, to interpret this letter. To analyze it, comment on it, dance it, sing it. Dissect it. Exhaust it. Understand it for me. Answer for me.⁹

The 107 women she invites to respond come from diverse backgrounds and provide vastly different readings of the letter. For me, this work represents an opportunity to look through other interpretative lenses, to occupy alternative viewpoints situated in the context of unfamiliar professions. It is this reading of various interpretations that interests me, where the sphere of the personal merges with the professional.

Calle's title, and the ex's parting line "take care of yourself," also evokes for me the French historian Michel Foucault's work *The Care of the Self* (1984), in which he explores how, historically, the subject has taken care of the self as an ethical way of shaping identity and lifestyle, particularly through their relationship to power dynamics and constructions of subjectivity.¹⁰ One could say that by opening her ex's letter up to collective interpretation, Calle disrupts the individualised notion of "taking care of yourself." It's Calle's manifestation of collective strength that resonates with me.

The materials I hold in my hands begin to create sound (whoosh, fizz, whoosh, sizzle, swoosh). I must ensure when changing the membrane that it cannot be permeable—it must be a solid container, nothing that secretes fluids. No spilled milk. I cut open texts I read, screenshot images from the internet, and carefully place them next to each other, contrasting their ideas. Through voice, I could play around, coming up with voices that fit—the way I hear the text in my head when reading. Like placing objects next to each other, the meaning of words, voice, and images changes depending on what they are placed next to.

ॐ THE AURAL ELEMENT —as meditation ॐ

I love to sing with others and to listen to others sing, whether in joy or sorrow. Time and again, I notice how I carry my background in music and dance into my artistic work. I choreograph and think through the body; I compose and write through language and voice. As Roland Barthes writes, "The voice is not personal ... and at the same time it is individual: it has us hear a body which has no civil identity, no 'personality', but which is nevertheless a separate body. Above all, this voice bears along *directly* the symbolic, over the intelligible, the expressive... the 'grain' is that: the materiality of the body speaking its mother tongue."¹¹ By extension, I perceive the voice as something that creates a direct, visceral

connection with the listener. It is a unique kind of intimacy that cannot be reduced to the verbal—either swallowed as *jouissance* or spit out as a sticky disgusting object—expelled as the abject.

The object that is generated as a disgusting (bad) object through the speech act come to stick. It becomes sticky and acquires a fetish quality, which then engenders its own effects. ... The speech acts, “that’s disgusting!” can work as a form of vomiting, as an attempt to expel something whose proximity is felt to be threatened and contaminating ... We might recall here that vomiting involves expelling something that has already been digested, and hence incorporated into the body of the one who feels disgust (Rozin and Fallon 1987: 27).¹²

For several years, I’ve worked with performance—both solo, in duos, and with larger groups of performers, dancers, and musicians. Recently I revisited “Rasaboxes,”¹³ developed by American University Professor Emeritus of Performance Studies Richard Schechner as a tool to work with performers. The concept of *rasa* (रस) is a Sanskrit term and a key idea in Indian aesthetics.¹⁴ It’s understood as an essential element present in all forms of art—whether visual, literary, or performing arts—inherent yet ultimately indescribable. I interpret it as the inner emotional life of the human being, a kind of extract that seeps out into the surrounding world and its forms. I’m interested in this concept when exploring affect theory: to understand the emotional life, not only as individualised, but as an affect—not disconnected with its surrounding world.

*“Affects can be, and are, attached to things, people, ideas, sensations, relations, activities, ambitions, institutions, and any number of other things, including other affect. Thus one can be excited by anger, disgusted by shame, or surprised by joy.”*¹⁵

When I work with performers, dancers, and musicians, part of the work involves creating and maintaining a space (which is not necessarily physical) for this emotional life or energy to surface. According to Bharata’s *Natyashastra* or the *Mahabharata*, there are either eight or nine primary human emotions (the sources disagree).¹⁶ Let’s immerse ourselves in nine of them. The nine emotions translate into English as: pleasure, laughter, sorrow, anger, energy, fear, disgust, heroism, and wonder. These emotions are grouped into different *rasas*: erotic, comic, pathetic, furious, heroic,

terrible, odious, marvellous, and quietistic. These are emotional states a performer can “tap into” and transform, not to conform to the stereotypical idea of, for example, *the angry woman*, but instead to develop new archetypes—and ask: is this possible? If we accept the idea that a person’s inner life can be felt in artworks, and particularly in performance, then I believe contemplation is vital as an invisible layer within the process.

When I adapt a live performance into the medium of film, my intention is to recreate the ephemeral feeling of the space into which we immersed ourselves together in the rehearsal room and the space we generated in the moment of the performance. The film may not include the performers or even parts of the performance directly. Crucially, it is not a documentation of the performance, but rather a work that carries those lived experiences forward, opening up countless new possibilities for form and expression.

Eww

The Bulgarian-born French philosopher Julia Kristeva is well known for her concept of the abject, which encapsulates the blurred boundaries between the self and the other.¹⁷ It too relates to the body, but more specifically to things that provoke feelings of disgust or revulsion: blood, excrement, bodily fluids, and so on. Kristeva critiques how the body has been removed from scientific discourse, where it has often been marginalised or suppressed in favour of rational, objectifying approaches to knowledge. Her notion of the abject is sometimes considered disruptive or chaotic, but the body is a container for emotions, suffering, and trauma. And though these may seem unruly or unpredictable, I believe they offer a more holistic form of knowledge with which to think. To exclude this dimension is to reduce the subject. The body contains the abject, yet it cannot be contained within the rational categories upon which Western science is built.¹⁸

Another of Kristeva’s well-known ideas is the *chora*, a word directly taken from Plato’s *Timaeus*. In *Timaeus*, the world is created from three fundamental elements. The first is the divine model, composed of eternal, immaterial forms and ideas that belong to the realm of thought. The second is the physical world we inhabit, made up of matter—that which is visible to the eye. The third element is the *chora*: to be understood as a kind of formless material from which being arises. The *chora* exists outside the realm of the visible and the tangible. The philosopher Adriana



Images courtesy of Youngjae Lih

Maria Nadia Nour, *rhapsody of yes*, 2025. Film, quadrophonic sound, 10:10 min.
Installation view



Maria Nadia Nour, *rhapsody of yes*, 2025. Film, quadrophonic sound, 10:10 min.
Video still

Cavarero articulates the Platonic understanding of the *chora* in this way: “Ideas must imprint their forms in the *chora* in order to produce the visible world.”¹⁹ She continues:

Before it is broken by the law of the Father, the pleasure of the maternal bond corresponds to the pleasure of the poetic song—the very song that, since Plato, metaphysics has sought to oppress. From Cixous’ perspective, as from Kristeva’s, this pleasure coincides with the register of the unconscious. Therefore there is no self-conscious “subject” here, no ego that could be linked to a cogito.²⁰

Flirting Aria

For Hélène Cixous, singing is a form of pleasure bound to both language and the body. In “The Laugh of the Medusa” (1975), she writes about the act of writing with the body. Adriana Cavarero notes, “Because it belongs to an unconscious set of drives, the mother tongue that Cixous speaks of is therefore not far from the semiotic *Chora* that Kristeva theorizes.”²¹ Both Cixous and Kristeva challenge the symbolic order—Cixous by rupturing syntactic structures in writing, and Kristeva through the semiotic and the *chora*: the pre-linguistic, unconscious drive embedded in the body’s instincts.

The mirroring ocean of the chora

Flirting Aria

I sing while I chew



Image courtesy of Youngjac Lib

Maria Nadia Nour, *Sejir*, 2025. Belly dancer coins, plastic, 2 speakers, 08:00 min loop.
Speaker 1: 10 × 5 × 10 cm. Speaker 2: 25 × 7 × 25 cm. Detail

I'd now like to take a slightly different turn, into the world of sci-fi, because I see parallels between the *chora* and one of my favourite films, the science-fiction classic *Solaris*, based on the novel by Stanislaw Lem (1961).²² The story explores humanity's encounter with the unknown and the alien, not unlike Kristeva's concept of the abject. In *Solaris*, this is embodied by the planet itself and its mysterious ocean. The ocean acts as a kind of mirror, producing physical manifestations of the subject's deepest secrets and traumas. It becomes both a bodily space where the unconscious takes on tangible form and a metaphor for the way our inner (often invisible and suppressed) worlds can become physically materialised.

phōnē disruptions

Breathe in, hold it, hold it a bit longer, keep holding it.

Phōnē, or "voice" in Greek, was considered by several ancient philosophers, including Plato, to be something shared by both humans and animals. However, only humans were thought to possess a *phōnē semantikē*: a "signifying voice," which allowed words to function as signs referring to something else. Every time we speak a language, we "create" images in the mind of the other. It is this voice, capable of producing signs, that distinguishes humans from animals.²³

You can exhale now. Long breath out.

Breath is a hidden, but vital element in the works I create. Not only because it sustains life or carries the voice, but because it serves as an intuitive tool when working with sound, performance, film, and so on, providing a kind of frame that shapes the pulse of a piece. Slow, steady breaths create calm movements, a sense of safety and balance. Rapid, shallow breaths introduce intensity, aggression, and instability.

In *Solaris*, the foreign (and the unconscious) is made palpable, transformed into a physical reality that challenges and contradicts the subject's self-understanding. The female character Hari, the ex-wife of the film's male protagonist Kris who had taken her own life years earlier, is manifested aboard the spaceship as a projection of Kris's internal conflicts—a mirror of his unconscious.

I find this plot structure, with the mirroring of invisible, internal drives, helpful to think with, and to develop my understanding of the *chora*: as a space to create from, to imagine the world from. A space where the dichotomy between inner and outer might momentarily dissolve, allowing us to feel, just for a moment, at one with other beings and with the entire universe.

Cavarero draws attention to the way in which breath figures in the Bible: "God breathed life into the mouth of Adam—or, rather, that same divine breath that exhales into the chaos before naming the elements that flow from his breath."²⁴ Cavarero writes that in many cultures, the acoustic realm has been viewed as a space of divine being. In the Hebrew tradition, both *qol* (voice) and *ruab* (spirit, breath) belong to this realm of meaning that existed before spoken language. *Ruab*, believed to emanate from God, manifests itself as wind and storm, and as a generative force.

Cavarero also writes that in the earliest phases of Hebrew religion, God's presence was experienced as voice or breath, but *not* as spoken word. Speech, she notes, belongs to the ritual formula "the word of God."²⁵ I frequently work with voice in my practice, both within and outside of language. And I believe breath plays a crucial role here too; it's the very first sound we hear as foetuses in our mother's womb—a deep, rhythmic frequency, an entire sonic universe. After birth, this bond is broken with the cutting of the umbilical cord, and we encounter the world.



Image courtesy of Youngjae Lih

Maria Nadia Nour, *Sejir*, 2025. Installation view

In her book *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals* (2020), Alexis Pauline Gumbs, a Black American writer, poet, and activist, writes:

The whale, who swims in the depths and sings songs to its kin, reminds us that even in the deepest waters, collective memory and resistance are possible. Humpback whales in particular, singing together, demonstrating that healing and survival are rooted in communal care.²⁶

She reminds us not only that non-verbal communication exists, but that there is something else embedded in song—that collective memory is possible, and that singing together is a form of care work. Breathing itself is a collective act, shared by all aerobic organisms on this planet, and through this, she reminds us of our interconnectedness—that we are part of the climate, and, I would add, a part of the cosmos.

In my film and quadraphonic sound work *Rhapsody of Yes* (2025)—an adaptation²⁷ of my Bachelor's graduation performance *Bable is Bable, But I Still Listen* (2022)—I work with a phenomenon commonly heard in Scandinavian-speaking countries: in phonetics, it's called an ingressive sound.²⁸ It's a way of saying an affirmative "yes" while inhaling, it sounds like someone is shocked, but it is a gesture of active listening that supports the one speaking—or answering questions. I've incorporated this everyday phenomenon compositionally by multiplying the performers' voices, placing them within the quadraphonic soundscape of the film, as I'm drawn to exploring the symptom-like quality of this inhaled "yes."

As I developed the work, moving from live performance into film, I began noticing parallels with ideas from an essay by philosopher Angelica Stathopoulos titled "To Listen as If Already Listening."²⁹ The essay questions notions of active listening and passivity, not as something potentially negative, as Valerie Solanas points out in *SCUM Manifesto*,³⁰ where it's the Daddy figure who passivises women—but as something potentially positive, when passivity and attentive listening are directed towards marginalised subjects. Stathopoulos writes:

Some of the worst listeners are philosophers. The first time I was introduced to Plato's *Dialogues* as a student of philosophy, I was excited at the prospect of conversation being the medium for a philosophical argument. Rather

than the all-knowing subject, the I, who establishes *his* truths as *the* truth, I thought I may be let in on a collaborative thought-process of intermittent speakers and listeners. But reading Plato, it became clear that true *dialogues* are rare. Instead, we listen to a *monologue* boasted by a choir of supporting actors, or listeners. Socrates speaks, the others mark their active listening by regular remarks, such as:

— Of course.

...

— Yes!

...

—Yes, by Zeus, Socrates, nothing could be more conclusive.³¹

Stathopoulos then goes on to compare Solana's Daddy's Girls to Socrates's obedient listeners:

— Of course.

— You are right.

...

—Yes, indeed, Daddy.³²

When working with the film medium, I explore layers of voices and sound that gradually detach themselves from the image, so that the gaze is eventually forced to give up, and the body and ear must surrender to the sound, merging with it, while the images continue their own visual narrative—telling their own story. This creates the possibility for two or more narratives to unfold simultaneously, dissolving what might otherwise appear to be a linear structure, and opening up multidimensional spaces in which traditional narrative forms are broken down. In this way, time and space are experienced as if they are expanding.

One figure who has inspired me, and who also worked with the detachment of sound in film, is the French director and writer Marguerite Duras. In her film *India Song* (1975), we hear a man shouting off-screen—that is, disconnected from what we see on the visual plane—creating a sense of the conflict that has existed, and perhaps still lingers on a psychological level, between the characters we're watching.³³ The man's shouting is so intense and stands in stark contrast to the elegant world Duras constructs, where we see a couple dancing in a grand ballroom. She piques our curiosity, teasing us as she gradually builds up the expectation of the man's eventual reveal, but his identity remains hidden. We never see him. This visual and auditory absence is described by French composer and film theorist Michel Chion in his book *The Voice in Cinema* where he introduces the concept of the *acousmètre*.³⁴ He references

Pythagoras (sixth century BCE), who, for five years, lectured from behind a curtain so his students couldn't see him, forcing them to focus solely on his words, undistracted by his appearance or facial expressions. Chion argues that cinema can employ this technique, achieving the same effect by hiding a character's identity.

Sticky voice

It's important to me to create using multiple voices, because I perceive the world as a place where images, voices, desires, and emotions are filtered through external events and resonances. To sense the voice in a book, a poem, a film, a colour—all of these speak to me, setting thoughts and memories in motion. Perhaps the best way to describe it is as a chain of associations. A flower might stir a memory: it reminds me of—once, I gave someone similar flowers—the flower's name makes me think of—they were yellow—the colour yellow reminds me of—I feel a close connection to spring—I miss my old friend—why is the sky blue?³⁵

What interests me is remaining open to why certain thoughts and feelings arise: why I sense what I sense, even when there is no rational understanding. I open myself to the incomprehensible. I remain curious and ambivalent, allowing my ego to disintegrate. Beyond that, something seemingly incoherent emerges—and that's okay. Internal and external monologues and dialogues gradually blend together, becoming a unified stream of consciousness.

I do not speak for anyone, but rather I work with voices, writing, language, and the body, using chains of association as a point of departure, as a medium, and as a method. Perhaps this stems from a desire for things to flow together again, for the world to feel less fragmented, divided, and **cut -sew -cut**.

‘We can relate to the question of ‘cutting’ to the question of stickiness. Thinking of how signs are sticky—and in particular how they may stick to other signs—also demonstrates the (equally structural) resistance to cutting. This resistance is not inherent within signs, but is dependent on how signs work in relation to other signs, or how the signifier sticks to a signified in a chain of signifiers (see Lacan 1977:154).’³⁶

I find myself coming back to working around alternative forms of language and voice—not just the everyday speech we share in conversation, but also the voices that emerge in the cracks, in transitions, in ruptures. I want to insist on a language and a voice that provides space for the unexpected: where new vocal universes might arise, where associative chains branch outwards, and where perspectives shift.

When one voice breaks down, another language must take form—and with it, new ideas are born, alternative ways of seeing and sensing the world. When many voices speak, sing, whisper, and shout simultaneously, the voice of the subject begins to bend—and right there, something fertile emerges. I view the voice as material: a malleable substance that can be stretched, folded, shaken. As the body moves, the breath changes, and the voice follows. It becomes a sonic imprint of the body's inner state.

I find that I can carry this method with me. It is an integrative, mobile, sensory, and open method for exploring phenomena. It is employed not necessarily to create works *about* voice and language, but rather *with* voice and language, and with what lies beyond them. The voice can be coloured by interior life and shaped by exterior space. For me, voice is a generative medium encompassing both psyche and body, undivided and available as raw materials: vulnerable, sensory, alive, long spiral arms, transform to abject, and then swallowed, fluid and hard, all at the same time.

you stop singing (lala-melody)
you start smoking (inhale)
you start singing, start biting, start bending.

stop biting your nails
eww some say

diminutive tongue
diminutive tongue

- 1 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 1.
- 2 Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 123–51.
- 3 “The Arabic Maqam,” Maqam World, n.d., [https://www.maqamworld.com/en/maqam.php#:~:text=The%20Arabic%20Maqam%20\(plural-%20Maqamat\)%20is%20a,%20rich%20melodic%20framework%20and%20artistic%20tradition.](https://www.maqamworld.com/en/maqam.php#:~:text=The%20Arabic%20Maqam%20(plural-%20Maqamat)%20is%20a,%20rich%20melodic%20framework%20and%20artistic%20tradition.)
- 4 Christopher Parry, “Visual Sound: Mysteries of the Human Voice Revealed by Megan Watts Hughes,” *Art UK*, 27 August 2024, <https://artuk.org/discover/stories/visual-sound-mysteries-of-the-human-voice-revealed-by-megan-watts-hughes>.
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- 7 Hélène Cixous, “Sorties: Out and Out; Attacks/Ways Out/Forays,” in *The Newy Born Woman* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 93, quoted in Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 254.
- 8 Sophie Calle, *Take Care of Yourself*, 2004–7.
- 9 Sophie Calle, *Take Care of Yourself* (Actes Syd, 2007), 5.
- 10 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 3, *The Care of the Self*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).
- 11 Roland Barthes, *The Grain of the Voice: Interviews 1962–1980*, trans. Linda Coverdale (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), 182.
- 12 Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 93–94.
- 13 Richard Schechner, “Rasa-esthetics,” *The Drama Review* 45, no. 3 (T171) (Fall 2001): 27–50, <https://www.csun.edu/~vcspe00g/603/rasa-esthetics.pdf>.
- 14 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. “Rasa,” n.d., <https://www.britannica.com/art/rasa>.
- 15 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 19.
- 16 Dr. P.G. Shridevi, “Bharata Muni’s Concept of Rasa,” *Epitome International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 6, no. 2 (February 2020): 30, https://www.epitomejournals.com/Volume-Articles/FullTextPDF/443_Research_Paper.pdf.
- 17 Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 1–7.
- 18 Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 1–7.
- 19 Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice*, 135.
- 20 Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice*, 142.
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- 22 *Solaris*, feature film, directed by Andrei Tarkovsky (Soviet Union: Mosfilm, 1972).
- 23 Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice*, 19.
- 24 Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice*, 20.
- 25 Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice*, 20–21.
- 26 Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals* (Durham, NC: AK Press, 2020), 45.
- 27 This is not a documentation of a performance.
- 28 Wikipedia, s.v. “Ingressive sound,” 25 January 2025, 23:13, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ingressive_sound.
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- 30 Valerie Solanas, *SCUM Manifesto* (New York: Verso, 2015).
- 31 Stathopoulos, “To Listen as if Already Listening.”
- 32 Stathopoulos, “To Listen as if Already Listening.”
- 33 *India Song*, feature film, directed by Marguerite Duras (France: Les Films de la Pléiade, 1975).
- 34 Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
- 35 I intentionally broke the chain of association, so it is not linear or coherent, to get as close as possible to the unconscious thought process—when we freely associate.
- 36 Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 93.



Image courtesy of Youngjae Lim

Emily Orlet. Left: *Movements*, 2024–25. Two-channel 4K video installation, colour, no sound, loop; 01:40 min. Right: *People (1/5)*, 2024. Charcoal on paper, 200 × 150 cm. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM2 Gallery, Malmö, 2025

“I am now facing uncertainty,”
I noted in my work journal, January 2025
Emily Orlet

“The lightness that the works show in their aesthetics contrasts with the heaviness of the themes,” noted my former tutor Kaspar Müller, commenting on my early works.¹ I encountered his analysis again during the research for this essay, which has inspired me to take a new look at the through-line of my work up to this day.

I wanted to achieve what other works of art triggered in me. Art stimulated my thought, released emotions, and inspired me. “I want to study visual art and become an artist!”—a decision that I made as a young adult. Thus I began to change positions, initially without precisely being aware of it. Until I took on the responsibility that comes with being an artist: that art reaches people and that my art reaches people.

Through the course “The Horror! The Horror! Whispers Mr. Kurtz in Joseph Conrad’s Novella *Heart of Darkness*” during the second semester of my master’s studies, I readdressed questions that I had raised in my work a long time ago. Central to the course were questions of guilt with respect to colonialism and other atrocities committed by Europe and the US. Engaging with these questions proceeded on the basis of a range of literature, including among others Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899). When we students were subsequently called on to provide a detailed treatment of one or several issues from the course literature in a text of our own, I focused on *Heart of Darkness*.

Of particular relevance to me was the loyalty that the protagonist, Marlow, shows to the perpetrator of violence, Mr. Kurtz, which I described in my text as follows:

At the centre of Joseph Conrad’s epochal “Heart of Darkness,” the normally well-hidden formation and consequences of a loyalty to the perpetrator are unveiled. ... I am convinced that this seemingly paradoxical

behaviour is one of the most important direct and indirect conditions for crime and therefore for guilt, in the private as well as in the political sphere. In the private sphere, it is overlooked and in the political sphere, its monstrous effects are inexplicable.²

The intensive engagement with this theme of loyalty to destruction reminds me of the start of my artistic development. During my foundation year, I turned to the Battle of Stalingrad in response to the task our teacher set to work on a specific theme using the mediums of text, artist book, sound, performance, sculpture, and photography. A personal experience the previous year influenced my engagement.

During my six-month stay in Russia between 2017 and 2018, I visited the war cemetery of Sologubovka, not far from Saint Petersburg, within the framework of my internship at the newspaper *Sankt Petersburger Herold*. Here I discovered by chance that my great-grandfather, a soldier reported missing during World War II, was remembered at another war cemetery, Rossoschka near Volgograd, on a commemorative plaque. Shortly afterwards, I travelled to Volgograd and visited Rossoschka. I then published extensively on these circumstances in the newspaper.³

In the artistic work for my foundation year, I referred to my experience visiting the Rossoschka war cemetery. I employed mammoths as a metaphor to approach the Battle of Stalingrad and began composing a fiction with the title “Mammoths in Stalingrad”:

Earth rains from the ceiling. The acacia splinters, the earth loses its sounds. A wind rises from the northeast. The people no longer remember the mammoths. The wind brings them to their city. The mammoths are large, towering above all erstwhile monuments. They walk over the scorched earth.⁴

I oriented myself toward speculative realism, oscillating between a first- and third-person point of view, and depicted a scene as if from a science-fiction film. I combined this fiction with scans of cyanotypes, which I developed, among other things, through glass reflections and particles of ash and grass to produce an artist book. This marked the beginning of the twelve-part series *Mammoths in Stalingrad* (2019).

I employed this fiction as the thematic basis for further works in sculpture, performance, and sound. The most important thing for me with respect to the sculpture was capturing the unreal character of the fiction through the materials. I sought inspiration in the arte povera movement, selecting charcoal, wool, and paper. I also took inspiration from Marguerite Humeau, who places extinct animals at the centre of a number of her artworks.⁵

The fiction's main plot is the arrival of the mammoths, described in the previous quote, which I took as the starting point for the series' performance work. The performers walked across the stage from right to left before suddenly stopping in their different positions. Then, one of them recited a short text by heart, which ended with the sentence: "The mammoths are present." This was the signal for the performers to run through the audience to the exit, and thus tacitly place them in the role of the mammoths.

In the sound work, I wanted to highlight another aspect of the fiction, namely the close connection between the individual and collective levels. To do this, I overdubbed the sounds of breathing and wind and played it as a loop.

I extended this historically oriented working process to the theme of the National Socialist Party rally grounds in Nuremberg. Once again, I approached this terrible time with the idea that I could fathom the theme, and thus naively. And once again I underestimated the complexity and the extent to which this time period affected later generations and thus requires viewing within a larger context. Against this background, I created a video without sound titled *Nuremberg* (2019–20),⁶ which juxtaposes my digital photographs of the Nazi Party rally grounds with lines from Leonard Cohen's 1984 song "Dance Me to the End of Love."⁷ Through this work, I recognised the impossibility of ever being able to gauge the horror of this time and ended my historically oriented working process.

Although I had definitively put to rest my work with historical themes, something remained within me—I still had questions. Three years later, in the first semester of my master studies, statement during a studio visit with senior lecturer Youngjae Lih opened up new perspectives and a new artistic position. Lih explained how one cannot deny one's roots or background and how this is "already present" in one's work. With this, he simultaneously gave me an answer to my silent question, still active in the background, concerning origins and their mode of action.

During my work with historically oriented themes, I successively built up a thematic "antipole." I turned to "measuring" existing architecture. Maybe I was looking for these clear points of reference in the present and a physical reality in order to confirm my historically oriented engagement in a counterpart manifest in the present. In the process, I focused on the field of tension between inside and outside within architecture.

My research on the site-specific installation artist Gordon Matta-Clark marks my starting point and influence for my body of work connected to this thematic "antipole." I made drawings of water mains and a site-specific installation with electricity lines, which both belong to urban infrastructure. Next, I worked through different photographic processes on windows, which represent an intermediary between private and public spaces. I further differentiated this last aspect by engaging with balconies.

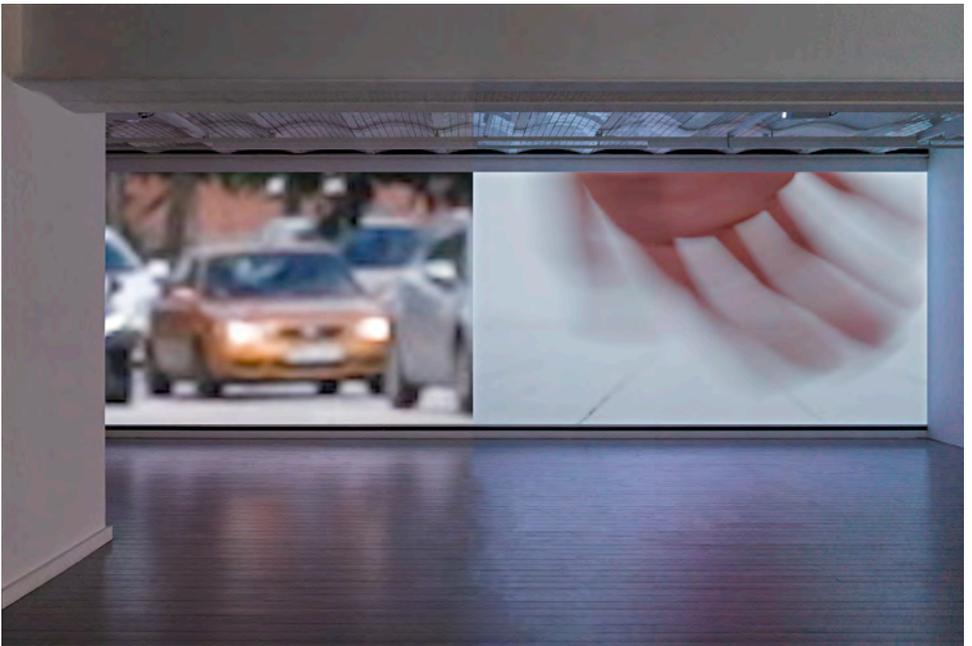
I set out to further explore the field of tension between inside and outside within architecture through the theme of the construction site. Upon reflection, I discovered that the construction site exists in a series of different temporal contexts. It is a transitional stage that represents both the erection and demolition of architecture. To explore this multi-layered temporality of architecture, I selected the time-based medium of sound. I focused on the sounds of pneumatic drills, a metonymy for the construction site. The completed work, the site-specific sound installation *98 Hertz* (2021),⁸ comprises a sound exciter on a wall of the exhibition space that transmits the sound of a pneumatic drill set to the specific frequency at which that particular wall vibrates the strongest. The sound is audible only by placing one's ear against the wall. The work is designed such that the specific frequency of the wall of the respective exhibition space must be determined in advance and the audio set accordingly.

Image courtesy of Youngjae Lih



Emily Orlet, *Moments*, 2025. 4K video, colour, sound, loop; 07:10 min. Installation view

Image courtesy of the artist



Emily Orlet, *Movements*, 2024–25. Two-channel 4K video installation, colour, no sound, loop; 01:40 min. Installation view

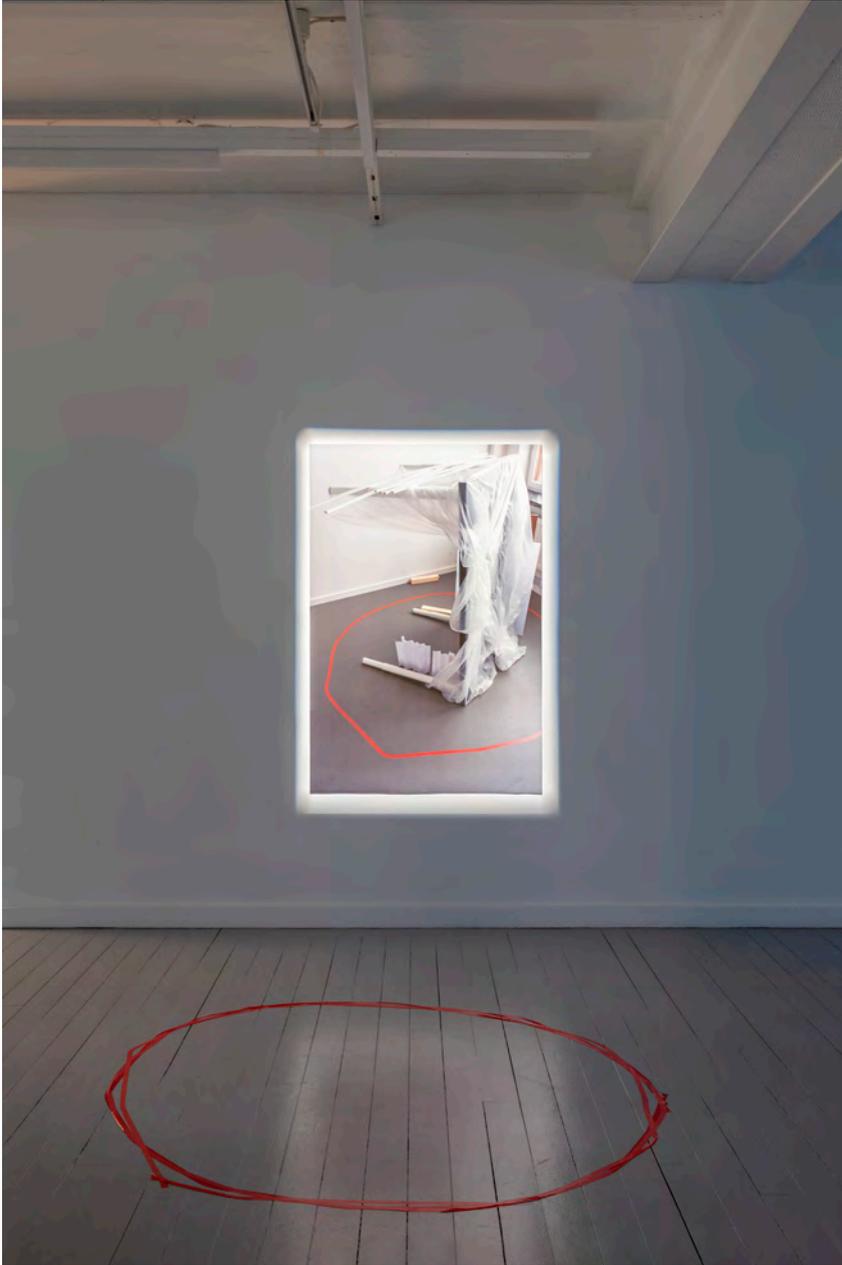


Image courtesy of Youngjae Lim

Emily Orlet, *Dysfunction*, 2024–25. Inkjet print photography, 163 × 109 cm. *Modifications*, 2025. Performance (here: trace of performance), ca. 03:00 min. Installation view

During this time I also learnt of Gustav Metzger, whose idea of auto-destructive art occupied me for many months. I took a special interest in Metzger's *Demonstration of Auto-Destructive Art* (1961), which he performed on London's South Bank. For this work, Metzger "donned a gas mask and sprayed acid onto sheets of nylon in the colours red, white and black, which he dissolved before the crowd."⁹ In his art and writings, Metzger refers to concrete acts of destruction in historical and political contexts.

In my opinion, the striking feature of auto-destructive art is that the artist enforces his claim to his own work. I interpret auto-destructive art as establishing the will to lay claim to what is one's own. The will to self-determination!

Then, I realised a sculpture based on right angles and normative units of measurement, *Wind* (2021).¹⁰ I planned it as a public work scaled up four times, as well as a kinetic installation. This kinetic installation consists of the basic form of the *Wind* sculpture, which I attach, mirror-inverted, to the upper and lower sides of a raft equipped with twenty-four cameras, whose video streams are projected simultaneously in an exhibition space. I am still working out the technical details.

Next I began to define my own body as a point of reference, exploring the works of Miriam Cahn. She places, among other things, the question of the body at the centre of her work, prompting the art historian Sabine Gebhard Fink to describe her early works as examples of body art.¹¹ For me, Cahn's works are complex, leaving me serious and thoughtful. Alongside her works, her personality as an artist is also important. I explored her practice in my bachelor's essay,¹² especially her paintings, and established personal contact with her.

In the autumn of 2021, I wrote Cahn a letter asking her for an interview. Her prompt agreement was a great, positive surprise for me. After visiting her solo exhibition *FREMD das fremde* (FOREIGN the foreignness) at Palazzo Castelmur in Bregaglia, Switzerland,¹³ I visited her at her nearby studio for the interview.

Author: For shrouding and exposing I have come up with the word pair "Power / Impotence." Is that an appropriate word pair for you?

Cahn: Yes, exposed fits well—also power and impotence. That is a little bit like laughing: It is specific, but laughing can also mean showing your teeth.

Author: In your exhibition at Palazzo Castelmur there was a portrait of someone laughing where the teeth can be clearly seen.

Cahn: I think of the picture of the model in Palazzo Castelmur. I read a report in the newspaper and there was this picture: An incredibly beautiful face. This woman was young and had committed suicide. I took this picture and only altered it slightly, making it angry, young and angry: an angry model. She no longer looks beautiful. Anger—women need this! The politician Ursula Koch was an outstanding personality, a woman with power. She once said: "Don't disguise your anger." That was the '70s, '80s. This was also the time of the model Naomi Campbell. Everyone said she was bitchy—she was angry! That is specific to women. You can depict this with a model.¹⁴

For me, the following analysis by art critic Adam Szymczyk opened up many insights into Cahn's work:

There is an absence acutely felt in the strong presence(s) she brings forth in her drawings and paintings, be it the presence of a human, animal, or a house. In Cahn's work, a gap opens up between what is represented and what is left out, and it is this fundamental lack on which the existence of her image is founded. This situation signifies a double-bind, of sorts, at once a distrust of image, and the temptation to make one.¹⁵

In my subsequent examination of Cahn's painting process, I identified different intensities of intimacy and distance.

Not just Cahn's themes, but also the individual bodies depicted, demand our attention. One finds damaged, fleeing, suffering bodies; the crimes committed against women are represented. Furthermore, Szymczyk's analysis can easily be applied to auto-destructive art. The opposition woman/self-determination and injury/destruction appears to me to be an essential axis in the work of both Cahn and Metzger.

While I was engaging with these issues, I was working on the series *Borders* (2022) for my bachelor's thesis exhibition.¹⁶ As a primordial element of form, borders contain both construction and destruction. My point of reference remained the body.

In the first semester of my master studies, I realised that I had brought with me a number of unfinished working processes. Did I want to take them up? A long and intensive working process began, which extended into the second semester.

In 2021, while still studying for my bachelor's, I attended a workshop with the poet and singer Lydia Lunch,¹⁷ during which I presented the performance *One Sentence Performance* (2021).¹⁸ This consisted of reciting the following sentence to the public: "Person A says to Person B: You don't have enough humility." Lunch encouraged me to extend this performance by adding hundreds of such sentences. So, at the start of my master's, I produced the six-minute one-shot video *Sentence* (2023–24),¹⁹ composed of a multitude of sentences. In the video, I recite the individual sentences from heart, standing in front of a white wall.

During these first two semesters of my master's, I also developed my own drawing technique. In principle, this drawing technique is based on the repetition of a single movement. I was inspired by the field of tension between line and movement in William Anastasi's drawing *60 Minutes* (1987)²⁰ and Irma Blank's drawing *Geben, Second life, C-1, aprile 2018* (2018).²¹ The most succinct expression of my drawing technique manifested in *People (1/5)* (2024),²² a large-format self-portrait in charcoal on paper. Following its completion, I noticed a surprising effect: depending on where one stands as a viewer, one can see a different facial expression in the self-portrait. This interplay between movement and perception made me think of moving images. This was the trigger that suddenly brought my earlier exploration of time-based mediums and performance back into the foreground, and I began an intensive series of experiments in these mediums.

In the past I closely combined the medium of video with a working process in the public sphere. I made an intense study of the tradition of performance and video in relation to urban space. I took Klara Lidén's *Grounding* (2018)²³ and Lin Yilin's *Safely Maneuvering across Lin He Road* (1995)²⁴ as inspiration for my further experiments. Their use of a small number of precise elements

inspired me to develop a similar structure for a score for a performance. Over several months, I established a routine of developing movement sequences and materials in the studio and taking videos and field recordings in the urban space. My aim was to find a movement sequence that could be connected to an element or place in the urban sphere such that it opened up a surprising new perspective on that space. At the same time, I sought specialist knowledge on urban design by reading Jan Gehl's *Life between buildings: Using Public Space* (2006).²⁵

This phase of experimentation initially opened up a variety of possible directions. Would *People (1/5)* be suitable as part of a performance or video? What possibilities for my practice does the medium of drawing allow? Can I continue to develop my practice with drawing? Can I combine drawing, video, and performance? Do I want to synchronise camera and body, and if so, how?

A paradox in my approach to the mediums of video and drawing quickly became apparent. With my drawing, employing the techniques of futurism and cubism, I explored the depiction of movement sequences, while in video, drawing on Luigi Ghirri, I pursued geometric compositions.

For example, I based one of my drawings from the series *Nò* (2024–25)²⁶ on a technique whereby I fixed a square with sides of one metre onto my studio floor with masking tape, then captured the different perspectival distortions generated by moving around the square. I reduced these perspectival distortions to two-dimensional geometric forms, known as trapezoids, filling the drawing paper with them. Then I connected the trapezoids to each other with lines in an attempt to explore the contrast between fragmentation and connection.

I will continue to explore the technical possibilities contained in combining video and drawing. I also view videos created solely through computer-generated imagery and artificial intelligence as belonging to this context.

However, what interests me most are the subtle connections between these mediums. For example, the tension that Andrey Tarkovsky's film *The Mirror* (1974)²⁷ establishes between the camera lens and the subject in slow and precise shots reminds me of the intense observation process embodied in an artist's drawing study. What new perspectives could thus be gained on Tarkovsky's

Image courtesy of Cecilie Kappel



Emily Orlet, *Modifications*, 2025. Performance, ca. 03:00 min

Image courtesy of Youngjae Lih



Emily Orlet, *People (1/5)*, 2024. Detail



Image courtesy of Youngjae Lih

Emily Orlet, *Daytime*, 2025. 4K video, colour, sound; 03:57 min, sound between ventricles during one heartbeat. Installation view

private polaroid photographs²⁸ and my own use of the camera? Film scholar Gawan Fagard analyses Tarkovsky's private polaroids in this way: "As the framing and lighting reflect the eye of an experienced cinematographer, so the composition was staged with an obvious painterly flamboyance."²⁹

Cross-over! Taking a still from a video that emerged from one of my experiments, I made a laser print and drew over it with a highlighter pen: *Yesterday* (2024).³⁰ Through these means, I transformed the videos into drawings. Furthermore, I filmed myself during the process and redirected the act of drawing back into the medium of video.

During this period, in which I pursued the central goal of changing my working method, I had a multitude of ideas that I then rejected, as all I could see in them was a repetition of my previous artistic strategies. I asked myself whether I wanted to or had to preserve at least some aspects of my working method. I looked for answers to furthering my development in experimentation and new artistic strategies, and I concluded that I couldn't discern any visible progress in all the sketches, photos, sculptures, notes, thoughts, texts, videos, sounds, scores, and drawings.

Beginning or end, take up or leave ... I imagined loose ends as a form in themselves, like whales that unexpectedly breach the surface, or a knot that is untied or pulled tight. At this point in time, I was able to arrange a studio visit with Gertrud Sandqvist, Malmö Art Academy's former rector. While I was describing the changes to my practice, she mentioned, among other things, that every artist has an individual core that will show itself in their work. This perspective—that as an artist I carry a resource within me, an individual core—meant, conversely, that I can always draw on it. It is my own.

This understanding opened up a new perspective. "I am now facing uncertainty," I noted in my work journal. Uncertainty was what was missing. A paradox? No. I intuitively understand uncertainty as an existential human experience, as persistent, which can generate a field of tension as well as progression along the poles of opportunity and danger. Uncertainty tests what one thinks about oneself and about others; it tests convictions, expectations, and ideas.

I concentrated on uncertainty, which can be experienced, and carried out thought experiments in order to grasp uncertainty as a phenomenon. Uncertainty penetrates all areas of life. Uncertainty "reminds" one of all the invisible, forgotten, suppressed, and possible aspects surrounding something, and it places a question mark next to any concretisation. Uncertainty appears to me like an arrow that continually points to something else, something new. This dynamic evokes an interesting visual characteristic.

Loose ends lie around and *People (1/5)* goes out onto the street. I will lead this two-metre-high drawing into uncertainty, work in progress ...

During a studio visit with Academy professor Alejandro Cesarco, I was provided with another idea when he asked me if I perhaps meant "contingency," not "uncertainty." He explained that he was worried I might get caught in the binarity of certainty and uncertainty. A simple definition of "contingency" is that it "generally describes that which is not necessary and not impossible, and that is also random."³¹ When I discovered the literature on contingency and its renowned thinkers, it became clear to me that I lacked the specialist philosophical competence to work thematically with this philosophical term. However, the definition allowed me to reassess my formal decisions and provoke unexpected changes of direction.

"Both metamorphosis and *metabolé* [metabolism] play with the turns and returns inherent to the two ways of becoming: metamorphosis operates with so many forms (*morphés*) that it is beyond (*meta-*) of form; *metabolé* juggles with so many trajectories or projections (*bolés*) of becoming that it is beyond (*meta-*) of projection or of -jection."³² This statement from philosopher Michael Marder in his article "Vertimus. Dix thèses sur le devenir-planté" (Vertimus: Ten Theses on Becoming-Plant) inspired me to fundamentally rethink my understanding of form. In the past, I frequently employed the artistic strategy of juxtaposition. What would happen if I instead explored the fissure between "form" and "deformation" as an artistic strategy? What are the differences between transfiguration, transformation, and transmutation? What happens when I deform a physical characteristic? I quickly became aware that uncertainty, understood as a broad category, is connected to art in a complex fashion.

An important guiding principle for me was the following quote: “Openness is the constant structure of contemporary art.”³³ The same article from scholar Bo Pan also contains an equally valuable reference to the philosopher Jacques Derrida and his concept of deconstruction. I took a special interest in the following aspect of deconstruction: “there is not one single intrinsic meaning to be found in a work, but rather many, and often these can be conflicting.”³⁴

Members of the Fluxus movement applied uncertainty as a “method” in the form of chance,³⁵ while the surrealist René Magritte took up uncertainty as a theme.³⁶ I found myself surprised by the strong formal difference that can result from these different approaches to uncertainty. This realisation reminded me of a telephone interview I had conducted with the writer and photographer Suzanne Doppelt in 2021. She stated that individuals cannot come to an agreement on “seeing”; depending on the point of view from which one observes an object, it is something different. Furthermore, she described that when writing on “a picture,” she alludes to it in such a way that she enlarges and strengthens this uncertainty, this abyss. Doppelt led me further—but where to exactly?

At the beginning of the third semester of my master’s studies, I stopped trying to find “solutions” to existential, political, and social themes. I also lost interest in developing new “classification systems or arrangements.” In my ongoing working process, I embrace the reflection of performance studies scholar Mike Pearson: “There is no privilege of origin: a place owes its character not only to the experiences it affords as sights, sounds, etc. but also to what is done there as looking, listening, moving. Both ‘being’ and environment are mutually emergent, continuously brought into existence together.”³⁷

“I am now facing uncertainty,” as I noted in my work journal, and recognise that I am standing “in front of it,” at a distance. Uncertainty provokes interaction, confrontation, opposition, and experimentation. Uncertainty has become part of my artistic repertoire.

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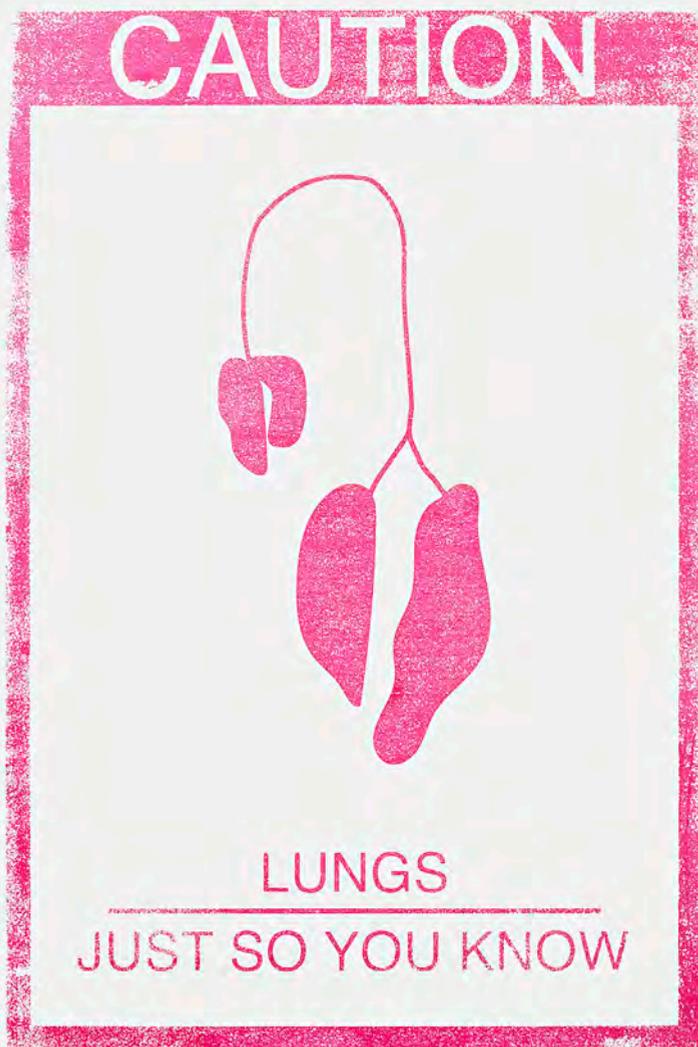


Image courtesy of the artist

Anna Pezzoli, *Warning Sign*, 2025. Screenprint on wall, 85 × 61 cm. MFA exhibition, KHM2 Gallery, Malmö, 2025

Where Does It Hurt?
Anna Pezzoli

An autopsy is an examination of a cadaver to determine its cause of death. The term derives from the Greek “*autopsia*,” meaning “seeing with one’s own eyes.”¹ Artist and writer Walid Sadek uses this expression to describe the right panel of Hans Memling’s altarpiece *The Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine*.² “St. John of Patmos is represented as a witness to the apocalypse, as someone who sees. He is the blessed, witness to the end of a world he knew.”³

I am fascinated by bodies, organs, and biology. My eyes are eager to look, especially at what is not usually reachable by the gaze, while my hands can rarely touch. There is a different sense of closeness that comes by looking at things compared to physically connecting to them. If the eye-object connection can be drawn as a fragmented line—or as Amy Sillman notes, as a spray⁴—the connection through touch is continuous. It has no interruptions; it is like a flow that allows electricity to pass through. Sight distance relates to how we consume news—our gaze is often directed at remote tragedies without the closeness of touch. The uneasy reality is that seeing does not necessarily provoke action: as journalist Yuval Abraham says at the end of the documentary *No Other Land*, “Somebody watches something; they’re touched, and then?”⁵

The interplay between observing and touching influences my methodology. My interventions tend to be minimal: I collect materials and alter them—physically or through images and drawings—with the least possible contact, working with uncovering layers rather than adding them.

As illustrated by historian Andrew Cunningham in the book *The Anatomical Renaissance*,⁶ the act of looking at the body—although not yet the human one—caused a shift in the history of anatomy in the Enlightenment period, slowly allowing one to understand and define the structure and functions of the now visible organs. Historian Ludmilla Jordanova criticises the popular assumption that in museums knowledge can mainly be gained by looking, yet she mentions the scientific museum as an exception to this critique: “Looking has long held a privileged place in scientific and medical practice.”⁷

The preservation of human organs confirms this point. In March 2024, I spent three weeks immersed in the observation of human specimens preserved in formaldehyde at the Charité Museum of Medical History in Berlin, under the invaluable guidance of Navena Widulin, conservator and curator of the museum’s organ section. One of the first questions I asked her concerned the

shape of the container in which the organs are stored: why are they rectangular rather than cylindrical, as I had seen in the fish specimen collection at the nearby Natural History Museum? She explained that, unlike other animals preserved in the same manner—which are regularly taken out of jars for comparative research—human organs are rarely removed from their container. Instead, they are observed within their jar. The cylindrical container, even if cheaper, is used less, since it deforms the image of the organ preserved inside it.

There was something uncanny about being in a room that was entirely covered with shelves full of organs far away from their original hosting body. My body was surrounded by other bodies—or fragments of them. At times, it felt like unwrapping myself: my epidermis—finally understood as a formless empty container that hides what is underneath—left outside of every room I would enter, like Michelangelo's self-portrait in the Sistine Chapel, *The Last Judgment*, as a flayed human skin.⁸ Each depot's room, hosting fragments of different bodies, becomes a chimeric space—a composite body formed by an accumulation of different organs, each of them suspended in time thanks to formaldehyde. What does it mean to keep a body forever still? Votive chapels, although disconnected from medicine, contain a similar display of organs. Their walls are covered with hundreds of isolated body parts in metal relief that create a shared body of collective pain and possibly healing. These ex votos can take the form of handcrafted anatomical images—eyes, lungs, kidneys, hearts, breasts, to name a few common examples—typically made using the repoussé technique on metal sheets and “offered to a deity in exchange for favor”⁹ or as a form of gratitude for the healing already occurred. These *organs*, “common to highly disparate civilisations,”¹⁰ can act as a synecdoche, representing the entire person, but more often they directly signify the part of the body that is suffering pain or illness. This means that there is a localisation of the suffering—first within the body and then, as a reproduction, outside of it. Even if there is a possibility of mislocating the disease, the ex voto seems to return agency to the suffering body that externalises the pain, managing to make it visible in a non-accurate opposition to the body of the patient—described by Foucault as being an opaque container that hides the visible element even as it is shown.¹¹ Furthermore, ex votos, particularly when made in wax, have the ability to metamorphose into a different shape once the first organ is healed: “If the lame find themselves

healed in the leg but succumb to a bad dose of pneumonia, they can always melt down their wax leg and use the recovered material to make a beautiful pair of votive lungs.”¹²

Félix González-Torres's *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)* represents the weight of his partner, Ross Laycock, before AIDS-induced weight loss.¹³ The 175-pound (79 kg) pile of candies functions as another form of ex voto: the *contrepoinds* (counterweight). “The *mass* of raw, unworked, non-figurative wax—a type of ex-voto known to exist in the West since at least the 9th century ... ‘signifies’ its donor by means of an *indexical* type of relation”¹⁴ representing their own weight. In this iteration of González-Torres's candy work, the weight—like votives—serves as a surrogate for the body. Each piece taken by a viewer disperses the body—drawing a parallel with the virus's spread. The loss, fragmentation, and reconfiguration of these *bodies* underscore a tension between visibility and invisibility, wholeness and dispersal, in a way that I experienced firsthand during an autopsy I witnessed at the Charité. For the first time, the human body became fully visible to me—though at times blurred, when I had to temporarily leave the room to avoid fainting. I never touched the body, and my interest frequently shifted between the body and the hands and eyes operating on it—perhaps as a way of distancing myself even more. The doctors' gazes were selectively cutting and removing—just as their hands were. I carried this selective gaze in the making of the series of drawings *Chimeric Bodies*,¹⁵ which reproduces cutouts from images I found in the news, mostly reporting about the current genocide that the Israeli government is committing against Palestinians. My gaze operated onto bodies: cutting, removing, and isolating only the body bags and the hands holding them, at times numbering more than two—again creating hybrid chimeric bodies. Am I committing violence? Would it be any less violent to consume these images passively?

When I went back to Italy in December 2023, my father told me he had some goat offal stored in the freezer. His mention of the lungs caught my attention: I had never actually seen them before. We decided to take them out of the freezer, and, after a few hours of defrosting, we had a closer look. The lungs were tiny, slimy, and far from what I had imagined—namely, as bags, similar to the bladder. Even if they were outside of a body—therefore deflated—I could tell they were not empty.

Image courtesy of Youngjae Lih



Anna Pezzoli, *Breath We Share*, 2025. Installation view

Image courtesy of the artist



Anna Pezzoli, *Chimeric Bodies* nr. 6, 2025. Ink on Hahnemüle paper, 25.4 × 25.4 cm



Image courtesy of the artist

Anna Pezzoli, *Side by Side*, 2025. Two-channel video, loop

In fact, I touched them. First with one finger and some grumbling, then I could hold them: the *bags* had a firm sponge-like consistency. Furthermore, they were still attached to the trachea. Would they inflate if air was blown into the pipe by placing the mouth over the trachea hole? Indeed, they would.

As my father breathed into the trachea, the *breathing* lungs revealed many contradictions at once. They were mimicking a living organ—breathing being one of the primary attributes of life—while existing outside of a body. Moreover, I was witnessing two pairs of lungs breathing side by side: one pair displayed on a plate—reminiscent of the many depictions of Salome with John the Baptist’s head—almost demonstrating what was happening in my father’s chest—the second pair. However, the motion was inverted: when his chest inflated, the goat lungs deflated, and vice versa. This inversion can be attributed to the mirror stage described by Jacques Lacan at the sixteenth International Congress of Psychoanalysis in Zurich: the drama of “the child at the *infans* stage, still sunk in his motor incapacity and nursing dependence”¹⁶ looking at himself in the mirror and identifying for the first time an image of totality while assuming and feeling fragmentation internally. A coexistence of identification and alienation. During the autopsy I witnessed some months later, I felt a similar inversion: like Memling’s saint, I felt the anguish of a mortal witnessing its own end. Simultaneously, I also felt a paradoxical sense of wholeness within myself while looking at the parts. I looked inside a body somehow seeing my own interior: is that a literal introspection?

The practice of auscultation—“the action of listening to a part of the body, such as the lungs, as part of a medical examination”¹⁷—developed in the mid-nineteenth century with the creation of the first stethoscope. The instrument was designed by the French doctor René Théophile Hyacinthe Laënnec to avoid the inappropriateness of auscultating a young woman by placing the ear directly to the patient’s chest: “To his delight the sounds were not only clear but also amplified.”¹⁸ In the case of diseases affecting the heart and lungs, the stethoscope functions as a mediator—breath and heartbeat become audible body languages. This wooden instrument, with its simple and functional design, evolved into the modern stethoscope. As technology advanced, it

enabled more precise listening by involving both ears (“binaural stethoscope”¹⁹). However, what truly changed was the reintroduction of sight as a key element: the wooden stethoscope required the doctor to turn their head in order to place their ear against the instrument, shifting their gaze away from the source of the sound, while today doctors can listen and observe simultaneously. I discovered the old wooden stethoscope, starting to think about the shift in perception, when watching the movie *The Tin Drum* for the first time.²⁰ A close-up of a round pregnant belly shows a wooden cone pressed against it, and on the other side, the ear of a listening nurse. The heartbeat we hear belongs to the unborn Oskar Matzerath, protagonist and narrator of a grotesque story set in Poland and Germany during the rise of Nazism and World War II.

The eye-ear pairing forms an amplifying architecture that connects the interior and exterior of the body, gaining a looping quality when a person cries while laying down. The ear becomes a container—preventing dispersion and favouring reabsorption—as it receives the falling tears. In my Super 8 film *Il mio teorema*,²¹ tears emerge as another inner language of the body, ultimately making the demand to be heard visible, yet difficult to understand, as the talking face becomes a phantom that can only deliver silence. While tears turn inwards in my film, Oskar’s voice—which can reach unnatural peaks that shatter shop windows—constantly breaks outwards, becoming a tool of rebellion, sabotage, disruption, and opposition. Like the stethoscope, he amplifies internal sounds to make them audible, breaking silence and affecting the space around him. His life is constantly marked by a rhythm, that of his drum. It is given to him as a present for his third birthday, when he decides to stop growing, refusing to take part in the adult world, which he finds hypocritical and violent. His resistance, therefore, is not only sonic but also physical.

Perhaps my primary interest in *The Tin Drum*—and I am referring now to the novel by Günter Grass, which I encountered first²²—lies precisely in the protagonist’s voice, which naturally frees itself from the body while supernaturally disrupting order and fundamentally disturbing power. My own voice has not always carried such strength: often, the messages I want to communicate remain trapped—just like the words themselves—inside my stuttering body. In the first

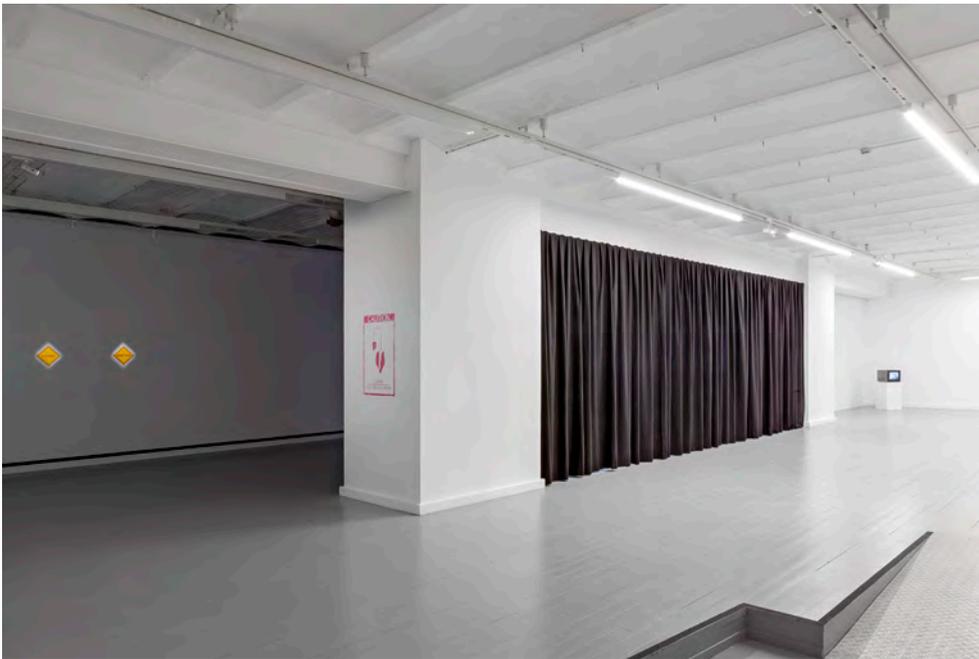


Image courtesy of Youngjae Lim

Anna Pezzoli, *Breath We Share*, 2025. Installation view

Image courtesy of Youngjae Lih



Anna Pezzoli, *Il mio teorema*, 2021. Super 8 film, 02:06 min

part of the poem for the installation titled *P*, I write, “In my mouth sometimes it is so cold that my words freeze and turn into stone. I am sure they look beautiful, but it is dangerous: coughing them out might kill someone.”²³ That someone might be me. There is no violence in stuttering itself—it is an interruption of fluidity, a resistance that occurs on the threshold of the mouth, in between inside and outside. In this case, communication wants to be verbal; the meaning is precise, but it cannot be fully delivered, often causing a deformation of the intended concept. The interruption of communication is not necessarily combined with an interruption of movement: contrarily, stuttering can create a space of uncontrollable movement. There is an instant of flickering, sometimes a loss of control over the facial muscles, a difficult attempt at clarity—at least for a few seconds. The effect of laughing gas was once described to me as the brain going into a “shuffle mood,” a momentarily glitch lasting for only a few seconds. This description reminds me of the stuttering moment.

Around the city of Malmö, and particularly in the industrial area where I live, I regularly find laughing gas cylinders on the side of the road. Besides being used as a recreational drug—the reason the cylinders were abandoned—nitrous oxide is used in medicine; it is the least potent inhalational anaesthetic. The first time I picked up one of the cylinders and held it in my hand, I was convinced that it was still full, which made me question why it was left there. I soon realised that the weight I was holding belonged to the container itself. The cylinders are made of very thick carbon steel to support the pressure of the contained gas. They remain rigid and unaltered, resisting the usual expansion and contraction that occurs with changes in pressure. This lack of alteration resembles Oskar’s resistance to time in *The Tin Drum*. In fact, he manages to interrupt movement—that of growth—and, in contraposition to Lacan’s mirror stage, feels complete both inside and outside. Oskar’s voice expands unnaturally in power while his body resists biological change. Unlike lungs, which reshape with each breath, Oskar and the laughing gas cylinders are both static containers. What happens when bodies are capable of growth yet are deliberately denied that possibility?

Another child figure existing in a literal suspended state has taken all my attention during the last few months. *Fritz* is a CGI animation by the artist Diego Marcon that was newly produced by the

Fondazione in *Between Art Film*²⁴ and displayed at the Complesso dell’Ospedaletto in Venice for the exhibition *Nebula*.²⁵ “This short but never-ending sketch”²⁶ stood out to me because of the density of actions that occur within a brief time—in the pamphlet, there is no indication of its duration, only the word “loop” is mentioned. Before entering the room, a warning sign states that the “room contains depictions of death that some visitors may find upsetting.” While the title does not give any hints about what the viewer is about to experience, this warning does. It does not refer to general pictures that people might find disturbing but specifically mentions “death,” which—when I visited the show and saw the sign—started to shape my own expectation of what I was about to see. When I entered the room, I was shocked: one does not often see the image of a child hanging; my imagination had not gone that far. I was reminded immediately of *Harold and Maudie*’s opening scene.²⁷ I tried to relieve the feeling I had watching the movie for the first time: a second of shock, which was quickly replaced with relief when I understood it was a playful re-enactment, followed by surprise that such a young boy would play with his own death. In the animation, the hanging and swinging boy moves his foot towards the wall and kicks it to push himself, “to make himself spin around a little.”²⁸ He is still alive and playing. Then he starts yodelling, joined by a whole choir. It sounds funereal. Then the boy has a few spasms, reminding us of the sequential still frames of a comic strip—is he now about to die? And the whole loop restarts. The film sits at the threshold of life—play—and death, in between animation and stillness, “humanity and puppetry.”²⁹ Its cyclical nature can be understood in different ways: as a resurrection, a macabre game, but also as a never-ending cycle of dying—a form of torture.

Sadek explains and unpacks the word “survivor” during a talk given at *Future Perfect: Catastrophe and the Contemporary Colloquium*.³⁰ He talks about the survivors of protracted civil wars, such as the Lebanese Civil War. He refers in particular to the French word “*survivant*” that—contrary to English—still encapsulates the etymological meaning of the term: “someone who continues to live, having died.”³¹ He mentions that the correct translation would then be the old term “over-liver.” The survivor is therefore somebody who experiences death and remains living after. Is Fritz an over-liver in his constant swinging? How many times can a person over-live? Involving a child in such a narrative further amplifies

its ambiguity and discomfort. This does not only belong to fantasy: in *No Other Land*,³² we closely follow Farisa Abu Aram’s family watching the shooting of one of her children, Harun, who will die two years later at the age of twenty-six from his wounds, compounded by restricted access to medical care under Israeli occupation. Witnessing a close relative’s death must feel like a death of one’s own, which you survive. In the scene after the destruction of Farisa Abu Aram’s family home, before Harun’s shooting, his little sister Doha—who was crying earlier “as she watched her home torn to shreds”³³—is in a cave with her mother, whom she is hugging. The mother asks, “What are you doing?” “I’m spinning,” answers Doha, “so nobody catches me.”³⁴ Spinning to escape, spinning as self-defence, spinning as the never-ending story, the loop. Franco “Bifo” Berardi says that after Gaza, we will not trust words anymore:³⁵ “Words like *nie wieder*, nevermore, *mai più*, *nunca más*. These words mean nothing now.”³⁶ Just as the words of the warning sign preceding *Fritz*’s screening room failed to prepare me, words have failed throughout history to prevent people from being exposed to the horror and cycles of violence, again and again. On the contrary, we keep spinning around—*wir drehen uns*, *giriamo su noi stessi*, *nos volvemos*—and it feels more like torture than a resurrection. But I disagree with Berardi in his mistrust of words—

instead, they must be used more precisely, and etymology should be taken into consideration for a deeper understanding of their meaning. Composer Igor Stravinsky explains the word “revolution” in order to stop its misuse in the art context. He acknowledges that while the term is often used as a synonym for innovation and originality, in reality, it “designates in its most usual acceptance a state of turmoil and violence.”³⁷ In Chapter 1 of the book *On Revolution*, Hannah Arendt addresses the same shifting in meaning:

The word “revolution” was originally an astronomical term which gained increasing importance in the natural sciences through Copernicus’s *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*. In this scientific usage, it retained its precise Latin meaning, designating the regular, lawfully revolving motion of the stars, which ... was certainly characterized neither by newness nor by violence. On the contrary, the word clearly indicates a recurring, cyclical movement.³⁸

Spinning. Do we need to stop moving? Would that break the cycles of violence? I use the plural because violence comes in different forms. I would like to prove my point using the visual similarity between my series *Chimeric Bodies*³⁹ and the work *The Hidden Mother*⁴⁰ by Linda Fregni

Image courtesy of the artist



Anna Pezzoli, *Breath We Share*, 2025. Installation view

Nagler, one of my former professors at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bergamo—another revolution to go back to where I started. *The Hidden Mother*, which was presented at the Venice Biennale in 2013, is a collection of 997 images, including daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, ferrotypes, albumen prints, and snapshots, all taken between the 1840s and the 1920s.⁴¹ The photographs are all portraits of infants that share the concealed presence of the mother—needed to keep the child still during the long exposure but unseen in the final product. This visual cancellation was done by different means: erasing the mothers’ faces or masking their figures underneath cloths to look like armchairs or curtains, at times quite successfully—if not for the hands emerging from the fabric. Fregni Nagler demonstrates how the mother figure was relegated to the background by Victorian society.

The genocide depicted in *Chimeric Bodies* and the effacement in *The Hidden Mother* operate on vastly different scales of violence, but they both speak a language that exposes the role of erasure as a tool of power and raises the question of who is allowed to be seen. Furthermore, in both the drawings and photographs, we notice how the act of covering can, paradoxically, make something more visible.

In the exhibition *Breath We Share*,⁴² the film *Side by Side*⁴³ is preceded by three words of warning: “organic,” “vulgar,” and “upsetting.” The first two terms are used by Didi-Huberman in the description of the ex votos, to which he added “disagreeable to contemplate.”⁴⁴ This last expression stuck with me as a representation of a different kind of gaze than the long list named by Foucault in *The Birth of the Clinic*. To contemplate means

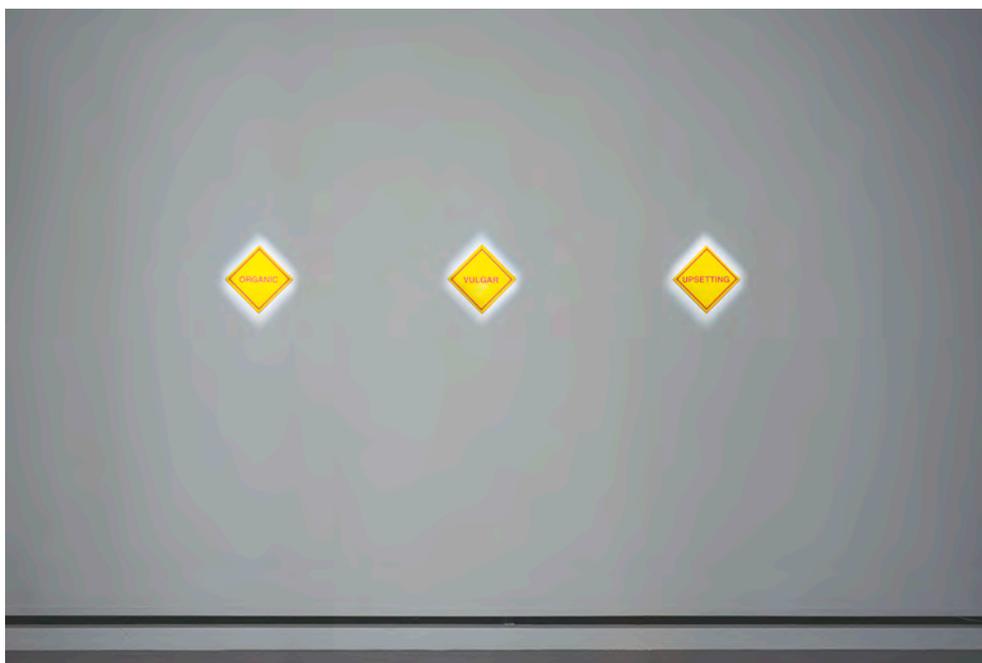


Image courtesy of the artist

Anna Pezzoli, *Warning Signs*, 2025. Vinyl on metal, screenprint on wall, 20 × 20 × 0.2 cm. Detail

“to spend time considering a possible future action, or to consider one particular thing for a long time in a serious and quiet way.”⁴⁵ The genocide in Palestine has now been reported, documented, and shown on our phones and social media for more than seventeen months—just to name the latest and best-documented part of an erasure that began in 1948 with the first Nakba—resulting in a collective contemplation. And it is disagreeable, indeed. But what does it mean to remain with it? Is the contemplative gaze a body without hands that still needs to figure out how to get closer through touch and intervention? Is that me in the autopsy room? It is undeniably disagreeable to contemplate a corpse. This reinforces the need for bags, for membranes that mediate between the inside and the outside, the dead and the living—the *survivant*. My body without hands, the feeling of being inactive, seems to reproduce the need to communicate when stuttering prevents it. Am I trying to process and prove to myself that I still have hands through drawing? My hands feel like passive witnesses that are experiencing the inability to make actual change, becoming instead tools that insist on visibility—as is the *ex voto* practice in the moulding of the anatomical form. Hands are the ambiguous tools that can operate violence or save, conceal, or unveil. In *Chimeric Bodies*, I focused only on the shrouds and the hands that hold them, detached from a body: the hands missed by the contemplative gaze.

When I started showing the video *Side by Side*, I was impressed by the complete variety of reactions to it. Quickly, I decided to warn people about what they were going to watch, knowing that a few would choose to abstain. For one person, a still of the film was unbearable and disgusting, but looking at the same image moving was not disturbing at all; another friend—a nurse—had a strong reaction to the breathing sound. Some people preferred not to watch it at all, while some others reacted to it positively and emotionally.

All the above experiences made me question the necessity of warning signs⁴⁶ for my film and about what and how to warn. Looking into the history of warning signs, I quickly realised that their purpose lies between ethics and marketing. For instance, when screening *Dracula* or *Frankenstein*—another kind of chimeric body—cinemas would sometimes place an ambulance and nurses outside of the theatre to build up the viewers’ expectation of a scary experience prior to seeing the movie.⁴⁷ Warning signs not only protect viewers, they also shape perception before seeing the work and hint at what viewers are going to see and experience, manipulating and eventually compromising their perception. This is not a criticism of warnings themselves or their necessity for the safety of some; on the contrary, I wanted to include this mechanism in the exhibition.

In conclusion, I ask: how can we not feel pain today? The genocide continues to escalate—Palestine is openly suffocated, while we use our breath to call for a seemingly impossible change. Visibility and collective experiences are urgent, yet the unbearable sometimes remains unseen. What the gaze touches does not necessarily alter the subject; transformation requires malleability—the openness to be changed and affected. In the exhibition *Breath We Share*, the body is presented as fragmented, covered, and anaesthetised, making loss visible while stimulating a bodily or emotional response. This proves the possibility of movement—ultimately being moved, since, as my cylinder installation claims in its title, there is nothing left to laugh about.⁴⁸ Disagreeable yet persistent, the coexistence of identification and alienation lingers where action feels impossible. If power wants to operate through erasure, the question remains: who, and what, is allowed to be seen?



Images courtesy of the artist

Anna Pezzoli, *Breath We Share*, 2025. Installation view



Anna Pezzoli, *Nothing Left to Laugh About*, 2025. Altered laughing gas cylinders found in the streets of Malmö, variable dimensions. Detail

- 1 Etymonline, s.v. “autopsy,” n.d., <https://www.etymonline.com/word/autopsy>.
- 2 Hans Memling, *Saint John Altarpiece*, 1479, oil on wood, centre panel: 173.7 × 173.8 cm, wings each: 176.2 × 79 cm, in the collection of the Sint-Janshospitaal, Memling-museum, Bruges.
- 3 Walid Sadek, “The Impregnated Witness,” *ArtMargins* 2, no. 2 (June 2013): 3.
- 4 Amy Sillman, *The O-G*, vol. 1, “*Zum Gegenstand/Das Diagramm*,” 2009, zine published for Amy Sillman’s solo exhibition *Zum Gegenstand* at Carlier-Gebauer, Berlin, 2 May–13 June 2009.
- 5 *No Other Land*, directed by Yuval Abraham, Basel Adra, Hamdan Ballal, and Rachel Szor (Palestine: Yabayay Media; Norway: Antipode Films, 2024).
- 6 Andrew Cunningham, *The Anatomical Renaissance: The Resurrection of the Anatomical Projects of the Ancients* (Aldershot, UK: Scolar Press; London: Routledge, 1997).
- 7 Ludmilla Jordanova, “Objects of Knowledge: A Historical Perspective on Museums,” in *The New Museology*, ed. Peter Vergo (London: Reaktion Books, 1989), 25.
- 8 Michelangelo, *The Last Judgment*, 1536–41, fresco, 13.7 × 12 m, Sistine Chapel, Vatican City, <https://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musci/cappella-sistina/giudizio-universale.html#&gid=1&pid=1>.
- 9 Kate Wagle, “Vernacular of the Sacred: *Laminae Ex Voto* in Southern Italy,” *Metalsmith*, Spring 1998, 29, https://issuu.com/katewagle/docs/exvoto_article?utm_medium=referral&utm_source=katewagle.com.
- 10 Georges Didi-Huberman, “Ex-Voto: Image, Organ, Time,” *L’Esprit Créateur* 47, no. 3 (2007): 7, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26289318>.
- 11 Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, trans. A. M. Sheridan (London: Routledge, 2003), 9.
- 12 Didi-Huberman, “Ex-Voto,” 9.
- 13 Félix González-Torres, *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)*, 1991, candies in variously coloured wrappers, endless supply, dimensions variable; ideal weight 175 lbs (79 kg), in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago, <https://www.artic.edu/artworks/152961/untitled-portrait-of-ross-in-l-a>.
- 14 Didi-Huberman, “Ex-Voto,” 12.
- 15 Anna Pezzoli, *Chimeric Bodies*, 2025, ink on Hahnemühle paper, 25.4 × 25.4 cm.
- 16 Jacques Lacan, “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the *I* as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience,” in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge Classics, 2020), 2.
- 17 Cambridge Dictionary, s.v. “auscultation,” n.d., <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/auscultation>.
- 18 Mas Ahmed and Victoria Turnock, “The History of the Stethoscope,” *Hektoen International* 17, no. 1 (Winter 2025): <https://hekit.org/2017/01/27/the-history-of-the-stethoscope/>.
- 19 Ahmed and Turnock, “The History of the Stethoscope.”
- 20 *The Tin Drum*, directed by Volker Schlöndorff (USA: United Artists, 1979), DVD.
- 21 Anna Pezzoli, *Il mio teorema*, 2021, Super 8 film, 2:06.
- 22 Günter Grass, *The Tin Drum*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Vintage, 1998).
- 23 Anna Pezzoli, *P*, 2024, installation, dimensions variable.
- 24 Diego Marcon, *Fritz*, 2024, single-channel video CGI animation, colour, sound, loop, co-produced by Fondazione in Between Art Film, Sadie Coles HQ, and Galerie Buchholz.
- 25 Fondazione in Between Art Film, *Nebula*, Complesso dell’Ospedaletto, Venice, 17 April–24 November 2024.
- 26 “Nebula,” Fondazione in Between Art Film, n.d., <https://nebulainbetweenart-film.com/en/nebula-digital-guide/>.
- 27 *Harold and Mande*, directed by Hal Ashby (USA: Paramount Pictures, 1982), DVD.
- 28 “Nebula,” Fondazione in Between Art Film.
- 29 “Nebula,” Fondazione in Between Art Film.
- 30 Walid Sadek, “Future Perfect: Thinking, Making, Writing: Contemporary Art in Catastrophe [Walid Sadek],” YouTube video, 2:03:20, posted by 421 Arts Campus, 26 October 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDwc_s00EHs.
- 31 Sadek, “Future Perfect,” 37:18.
- 32 *No Other Land*, directed by Abraham, Adra, Ballal, and Szor.
- 33 Yuval Abraham, “The Theft of Harun Abu Aram’s Body, Home, and Life,” +972 *Magazine*, 16 February 2023, <https://www.972mag.com/harun-abu-aram-masafer-yatta/>.
- 34 *No Other Land*, directed by Abraham, Adra, Ballal, and Szor.
- 35 “Thinking after Gaza: Civilization, History and Evolution in the Wake of the Zionist Genocide,” Vimeo video, 28:11, posted by ISSA-school, 16 October 2024, <https://vimeo.com/1020357455>.
- 36 “Thinking after Gaza,” 5:45–5:56.
- 37 Igor Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons*, trans. Arthur Knodel and Ingolf Dahl (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947), 11.
- 38 Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Faber and Faber, 2016), 39.
- 39 Pezzoli, *Chimeric Bodies*.
- 40 Linda Fregni Nagler, *The Hidden Mother*, 2006–13, installation, 977 anonymous photographs.
- 41 Federico Nicolao, “The Hidden Mother,” *Domus*, 21 June 2013, https://www.domusweb.it/en/art/2013/06/17/the_hidden_mother.html.
- 42 Anna Pezzoli, *Breath We Share*, KHM2 Gallery, Malmö, 4–19 April 2025.
- 43 Anna Pezzoli, *Side by Side*, 2025, two-channel video, loop.
- 44 Didi-Huberman, “Ex-Voto,” 7.
- 45 Cambridge Dictionary, s.v. “contemplate,” n.d., <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/contemplate>.
- 46 Anna Pezzoli, *Warning Signs*, 2025, installation, dimensions variable.
- 47 Untitled photograph [photographer unknown], n.d., captioned “To promote the 1931 Universal Pictures film *Frankenstein*, the Smoot Theater placed an ambulance and two nurses at the disposal of shocked patrons,” found on “Parkersburg, West Virginia: A Vintage Portrait; Theaters,” caption by Jim Dawson, photo courtesy of Dan Kemper, n.d., <https://electricearl.com/parkersburg/theaters.html>.
- 48 Anna Pezzoli, *Nothing Left to Laugh About*, 2025, installation, dimensions variable.



Stella Sieber, *Untitled*, 2023. Acrylic and oil on canvas, 250 × 170 cm. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2024

A Stream of Consciousness: on Painting Stella Sieber

Language in painting is painting beyond language. Form becomes the expression of a displaced, absent meaning. An original form does not exist; the signifier moves fragmentarily through forms, just as colour does. After I let go of the urge to discuss what painting is, I cannot let go of the urge to discuss what painting can perform. That at least interrupts the tragedy that a painting seems to inhabit something unknown to itself: I can sense it by looking at it and talking about it; language that parasitises its frame.

Colour, as an indexical value, is also the material presence of painting. It takes on different forms, appearing in a ghostly manner. If you will, colour sounds like light, and light sounds like colour; together, they can make objects optically merge.

I am drawn to an optical phenomenon that plays with chaos and order. Something that creates a derailed map for the viewer's gaze. This effect doesn't need to be mirrored optically; rather, such a map can emerge as a concept, a mental space that directs our attention to the very framing of the artwork itself.

As one might think—and as Alexander Rodchenko¹ must have thought when he declared representation dead with his 1921 monochrome triptych *Pure Red Color, Pure Yellow Color, Pure Blue Color*—who cares about the value of colour? It simply refers back to itself. Do we really need yet another iteration of its meaning or significance?

Yet with colour I can disrupt the singularity of another colour—one that merely pretends to represent only itself. I can't think of a better way to flirt with the elitism of painting's history, with its (male) gaze dictating *what is*. What I'm after is a gaze that confronts the very problem of desire and seduction—such a gaze is forced to decide what it actually sees, as in pornography, yet it is one constantly distracted by its own distraction. I don't aim to mirror anything as such, and I believe it is in fact impossible to mirror a gaze. Yet, I understand painting as a metaphor for the mirror itself—the very principle of someone looking into a mirror. Not that they would necessarily see themselves, but rather a distortion of their image, or even the absence of themselves, depending on

the angle. What distinguishes the seduction from the production of an image?

“To begin with, almost a pun: we are told that everything relies on production—and if everything relied on seduction?” the postmodern theorist Jean Baudrillard asks in *The Ecstasy of Communication*.² He then refers to “all these great distinctions which we need to decipher and make sense of the world” that are ready to “collapse to our greatest joy,” whereby “seduction hurls them against one another, unites them beyond meaning, in a paroxysm of intensity and charm.”³ Yet, “seduction only comes through empty, illegible, insoluble, arbitrary, fortuitous signs, which glide by lightly, modifying the index of the refraction of space.”⁴

I think of a surface that pretends to represent something beyond itself. If this hints at a surrealist notion of the bipolarity of the art object—that is, the idea that it consists of two things at once—that's not what I mean. Yet any formalism, any surface, inevitably becomes a mode of literacy—a kind of wording, a claim. The surface and the interplay of colours might ask: What is there to decipher? Who might be seduced? How is subject linked to object?

In the essay “Giotto's Joy,” philosopher and semiotician Julia Kristeva describes colour as a systematic value that condemns “objectivity” or “subjectivity.” She writes:

Because it belongs to a painting's system, and therefore, to the extent that it plays a structural role in any subject-elaborated apparatus, color is an index of value (of an objective referent) and an instinctual pressure (an erotic implication of the subject); it hence finds itself endowed with new functions it does not possess outside this system and, therefore, outside pictorial practice.⁵

I think that the sensuality of colour transgresses the categories of what is called “objective” or “subjective”—by oscillating in between those.

I link my paintings with colour field painting—and I think of the paintings of René Daniëls⁶ and their flat spatiality. I think about how to convey the edges of a form, often an image within the image, as overlapping in a single surface. In Daniëls's paintings, the metaphorical subtext or indexicality often resides within the exhibition space itself, functioning as an image or surface.

Surfaces that oscillate between subjective gestures and object-like signs in my paintings should, in the above-described interplay, question a situated materiality of and towards a performative agency that is embodied within the resonances between a possible literacy, a wording, a judgement, and the material qualities of the painting across durations. I think of the sensuality of a painting's surface as something that opens up for a collective agency, one that lets our gazes meet. That's why I like Jean Fautrier's⁷ paintings. They set up an abstraction that comes across like a picture in emergence. His shapes are in past perfect tense; they have already been transformed. Pictorial reflexivity amuses us if it doesn't amuse itself, through a self-reflexive rhetoric, repeating itself in form. Beauty ages and unfolds in time while its sensual qualities allow it to be perceived historically. Thus, over time, beauty becomes subject to collective judgement, giving rise to a law of beauty or a standardisation of form.

What is before us when we look at a Fautrier—for instance, a repeated fish—is representation looping in time. The fish, obviously shaped, functions on the canvas like a matter of speech, a matter of what we perceive and how: *Do you see what I see?* Fautrier's figures are becoming or about-to-become within the mud of colour, which aims to represent information in flux through a shape-shifting materiality. I think that repetition—that is, the juxtaposing of the same shapes or spots in altered forms or colours—composes a pathway for subverting the idea of both original and standardised idioms of beauty, which opens up a perspectival and shifting encounter for how beauty appears. How does repetition suggest something literal, as if one form reveals the other, merging in our gazes?

It would be naive to assume that painting in an art informal style today would be possible without considering the political situation of the post-World War II era as the driving motivation. And today, any romantic style of painting would be no

less naive than it ever has been. Moreover, such a mode would overlook the material conditions of painting, merely dressing itself in the remnants of what was once called "romanticism" in a moment of lyrical renaissance.

The cultural critic and philosopher Walter Benjamin writes about William Shakespeare in his text "Aesthetic Fragments,"⁸ defining the playwright's lyrical style as "romantic." Shakespeare must have been immersed in infinity, he explains, and his prose would move any appearance into infinity. Benjamin says that Shakespeare lets the cosmos dissolve into infinity. The dissolving of the cosmos must be the dissolving of the writing of it, and I think that's what an image enables: it is always already what's invisible. Much like Fautrier's paintings, which seem to hint at the invisible as repetitions dissolve into one another, suggesting repetition itself as a concept of time.

The dominance of an eye that disregards exteriority—an excluded appearance that refuses to dissolve into infinity—can never be rendered invisible within the very system that constructs "the other." Such an eye though—that of the only-man-on-earth, here, Shakespeare—must not be mistaken for the Shakespeares of today.

For my part, I'm interested in the enigmatic quality of the simulacrum⁹—a reactive response to an absent originality, perhaps visible only in hindsight. At the same time, I'm interested in how an object, a surface, or a painting can break apart from the inside—how it can both break and be broken. This, perhaps, is how simulation works: by falling apart as it reveals itself. Repeating forms, to me, fracture the illusion of originality—not only as a formal device, but also in kinship to another artist's work. It's through kinship with another artist's work that an image, at least in part, becomes external to itself.

I aim for a mutual exchange of gazes, paranoiac in nature, that counters the male gaze in historical paintings or screens. For instance, the minimalist screen ultimately reduces the (male) gaze to objectivity, much like the one-directionality of Jackson Pollock's drip paintings, immersing themselves in a hermetically conquering energy, as if defeating the canvas by layering over it, covering it up.

It's widely argued that any mode of presentation inevitably attempts to reveal a supposedly hidden "essence"—whether of painting's social

status, its historical status quo, or its “true” material condition. This notion could even extend to what lies beyond the comprehension of an artwork. If this is to unfold, it does so through an act of transgression—a countermove that ultimately aligns itself with a signifier, such as the art market—whether it be an Alexander Rodchenko in 1921 or a Merlin Carpenter in 2024.¹⁰ As we know, the art institution changes from within; thus, any rupture in that direction might simply become another mimicry or assimilation of the value of art, revealing or turning over some kind of pseudo-hidden truth or nature. “Art,” as a claim or an impetus, will likely continue to function as a *myth* under the premises of modernism’s reflections and reversals regarding the effect of “screening”—that is, meaning making.

Both Benjamin H.D. Buchloh in “The Primary Colors for the Second Time: A Paradigm Repetition of the Neo-Avant-Garde”¹¹ and Hal Foster in *The Return of the Real* engage in the debate over the “neo-avant-garde,” a term coined by another art theorist, Peter Bürger, in *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. The debate considers whether the artistic movements of the 1950–70s merely repeated the historical avant-garde or critically reactivated it. Buchloh is sceptical about the neo-avant-garde and describes it as being complicit in pleasing a commodity fetish of consumerism or, certainly, of consumers, especially regarding pop art’s appropriation of mass media. Foster believes the neo-avant-garde still had critical power, arguing that artists like Piero Manzoni¹² and Andy Warhol¹³ disrupted established meanings in ways that resisted simple commodification.

Buchloh has extensively explored the reception of Gerhard Richter’s work and analyses how repetition, especially in terms of simulation, appears in it. Richter preoccupied me when I began engaging with painting as a medium. I realised and am still realising that I am interested in the aesthetics of a methodological production. When we observe Richter’s *Family Pictures* from around 1964, we can see that photography represents a certain aesthetic. I am left wondering to what extent such a representation might negate the narrative value of the object it represents.

Art critic Peter Osborne writes, in “Painting Negation: Gerhard Richter’s Negatives,” about philosopher Roland Barthes’s thesis that every photograph brings with it a certain present—

namely, the past within the present. Then he writes: “Every photo-painting is also a certificate of presence, but of another kind: the presence of the photograph in representation.”¹⁴

I think that since the emergence of the ready-made—and certainly Marcel Duchamp’s sculpture *Fountain* (1917), which involves the negation or obscuring of a signifier that would conventionally represent the “readymade artwork”—the representation of any signification of something beyond painting within painting is always traceable back to its production, namely, the method that mediates any signification.

In my work, repetition is meant to be a trace of method. I realise that it is about the processual materialisation of representation: the seemingly unfinished image or the unfinished signifier as the representation of its reception and subjective evaluation. I want the image to start anew continuously.

To me, the question is: How can I design an image as a space that makes its inherent inferiority a matter of ambivalence, a paranoid reading, a surrounding of a surrounding?

What interests me is lyricality in the construction of something fictional or invented, perhaps showcased in its reproduced, mirrored, or repeated form. Without formalism here, I might not be able to distinguish whether an image’s historical and cultural status serves a certain ideology or sentiment. I intend to present any form or motif within a formalist, and sometimes graphical structure—as an enigmatic figure that not only objectifies, names, or calls but is itself a traumatic reification of sensuality and beauty.

Foster writes:

“Wiederholen,” Lacan writes in etymological reference to Freud on repetition, “is not Reproduzieren”; repetition is not reproduction.

This can stand as an epitome of my argument, too: repetition in Warhol is not reproduction in the sense of representation (of a referent) or simulation (of a pure image, a detached signifier). Rather, repetition serves to screen the real understood as traumatic. But this very need also points to the real, and at this point the real ruptures the screen of repetition. It is a rupture less in the world than in the subject between the perception

and the consciousness of a subject touched by an image.¹⁵

In hindsight, we can say that not only landscape painting but also landscape itself is constructed through its romanticist perspective—that is to say, the perspective of the (white, male) flâneur, which becomes centralised through the vanishing point that draws all back to the grand maker, parasitically vanishing within it. This draws me to psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's notion of the gaze. In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*,¹⁶ he describes the experience of being gazed at while envisioning a sardine can reflecting the sun, shining back at him like a blazing spot on the vast sea. The sardine can is symbolic: it represents a moment of alienation, where Lacan realises that he is not the one looking but rather the one being seen—placed in a structure he cannot control. Trauma functions similarly: it disrupts our coherence as subjects, exposing us to a field of meaning we cannot integrate.

As any fracture of ideal thought constructs the very logic of that ideal, I give up on trying to not insert myself into an artwork: that would be just another fiction of “myself,” as everything I do already embodies such a fictional trace, entangling my gaze with the gaze I am subjected to, akin to reflecting the sardine can. However, I try to not commodify myself. Especially, when I think of how the male gaze became commodified and standardised, reproducing a mode of presentation that knows no differentiation.

Fred Moten,¹⁷ in *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Radical Black Radical Tradition*, discusses artist Adrian Piper's¹⁸ challenge to critic Michael Fried's¹⁹ assumptions about objecthood and the theatricality of the art object. Piper argues that while Fried may have recognised the phenomenon of aversion towards the art object, he may have overlooked how such an object produces a desubjectifying or othering formalism from within.

The presentational quality of the artwork invites us to reflect on our own gaze, distracting it and redirecting it away from the artwork. But such an aversion—the desire to look away—is amplified by the aesthetic of certain objects, those that are alienated and othered. In this regard, Moten writes:

What one is after, by way of a certain sustenance of attention, is the presentness of the object in all of its internal difference, in all of its interiority and internal space. The stakes of such disruption of the aversion of the gaze at objects are especially high when object, person, commodity, artist, and artwork converge.

The glance, this averted gaze, is realigned by the force of a glancing, oppositional blow; the internal dialogue is interrupted by a voice from outside; subjectation as beholding is cut by a sharp objection.²⁰

By making images or paintings, I am considering how the reification of social behaviour could be understood as shaped, formalised, or produced by a cultured and social gaze, which is itself surrounded by yet another gaze. We might be observed? We face each other in a socially entangled world.

I wish to frame the process of constructing an image—perhaps even documenting it with a camera and manipulating its outcome—in order to understand representation as a perspectival image and commodification as an ongoing process of something inherently primordial.

Moten explains that the “presence of the commodity within the individual is an effect of reproduction, a trace of maternity.”²¹ I think that's where the rupture lies: in the bipolar oneness of the abject and the self, understanding trauma as a response to one's use-value—a value that might precede us, already reproduced before our existence. Moten refers to Karl Marx, saying that our *use-value* does not belong to us as objectified subjects but rather that our *value* belongs to us as subjectified objects; namely, it is a situation “where value equals exchange value.” Furthermore:

Marx has the commodity go on to assert that commodities only relate to one another as exchange-values, that this is proven by the necessarily social intercourse in which commodities might be said to discover themselves. Therefore, the commodity discovers herself, comes to know herself, only as a function of having been exchanged, having been embedded in a mode of sociality that is shaped by exchange.²²



Stella Sieber, *Public Soup Kitchen*, 2023. Oil on linen, 63 × 80 cm



Stella Sieber, *Unfold*, 2023. Oil on canvas, cotton fabric, 152 × 223 cm



Stella Sieber, *Hocus Pocus Focus Locus*, 2024. Installation view

In that sense, I assert representation as a speculative commodity, just as I reorient the gaze towards its exterior: the field of perception extends beyond its immediate context, its milieu.

It is a discourse that is particularly richly outfitted through its temporality—namely, the long history of painting—which allows the narrative quality of a painting, as a commodity, to circulate within the realm of the art market. Because this circulation and the exchange of meaning is not to be denied, form is not only dialectical in its capacity to be compared within the history of painting but, to me, also political in how the form of commodity is related to the commodification of life.

Art informel and abstract expressionism retrospectively narrate the myth of the expressive, heroic artist, perhaps trying to abolish the real, or the material conditions of making a living, by shifting the gaze to the individual. This is a manoeuvre that postmodernism sought to dismantle.

So, how can one do justice to assigning value/colour to anything that reasonably might come along with meaning, with history?

Is material never truly “neutral,” because a signifier shapes its meaning, an institution frames what it supposedly represents, and an object, a motif, or a material inevitably carries an exchange-value? In making paintings, I am acutely aware of how material operates within these structures.

That is why I see production as a response to an ongoing discussion—already embedded in hierarchies of indexicality and social values—which, in turn, makes me anticipate a chain of reactions. A chain of reactions, then, once again leads me to question the surface of a single object as merely a singular surface.

So, how can one do justice to the notion of a surface as a singular phenomenon when its production emerges from both the anticipation of painting’s history and the layered history of the material itself?

In this sense, I ask myself what makes a painting epic and possibly tautological. To be dramatic, I will ask if every painting can be called “epic” the instant we identify colour on canvas, simply because art history has produced painting as

something literal in the sense that history is a story being told. Does an epic quality manifest precisely through that which has already been sanctioned, has already been verbalised as epic? The self-referential, in reacting to a previous moment in art history, might be tautological in that sense. The metaphorical and the literal quality to be found as ambivalently absent in a painting’s sensuous surface. A painting is already discursive, as it is probably consumable.

I find that fictional mediation is an inevitable product of the fact that an allegedly concluded epoch can still be recognised in later movements. When I think of later modes of expressionism as a mode of a performative semiotic activation of the individual subject, I can sift out of the late twentieth century paintings by, for example, Philip Guston²³ and Maria Lassnig,²⁴ and later Josh Smith²⁵ and Jutta Koether.²⁶

I think it must be emphasised that to signify the value of the readymade that a painting could represent is to recognise its performativity to be one thing but also another, always hinting at another meaning or meaningfulness.

Smith’s rhetoric, which expresses authorship as borderline, namely, the self-reflexivity that is to be found in, for example, Jasper Johns’s *Painted Bronze (Ballantine Ale)* (1960),²⁷ differs from Koether’s referential epic, obviously, in that Johns’s bronze is not only a sculpture. All these artists are engaged with appropriation. Johns’s work foregrounds simulation, whereas Koether proposes an appropriation that repeats through transformation, expressing her admiration for Nicolas Poussin (as in *Seasons*, 2012) or Lucian Freud by referencing their imagery, reshaping it through an expressionist gesture, and defining its tone through the concept of aura. However, her paintings are never only aura itself; rather, they arise alongside the postmodern reflection on the very impetus that aura-centric painting would narrate. So, then, is art inherently reactionary?

By considering that the commodity creates a value of literacy because it gets exchanged socially, I believe it is impossible to avoid anticipating the representational qualities of surface and form when methodologically making a painting. In that sense, representation functions as a loop of another representation, and I believe that the reception of a painting both emerges and dissolves in its production.

In *To the People of New York City* (1976) by Blinky Palermo,²⁸ the German flag is reflected in variations of cadmium red, cadmium yellow, and black on thirty-nine aluminium panels painted in variations of cadmium red, cadmium yellow, and black. Here, the sign—the flag in its colours—becomes surface by a material shift of its own kind, as it merges with the aluminium or its colour, negotiating the oneness of signs, signifiers, the painting.

Considering the German flag as a narrative trope here, it is this minimalist move—on the verge of a Junge Wilde mode of storytelling—that makes me wonder how narration is brought about: not only through rupture, that is, the rupture of the symbolic or the sign, but also through the repetition of an avant-garde gesture. I ask myself if rupture has always been a matter of tracing something primordial, like an absent signifier, perhaps similar to a commission for a history painting bestowed upon Peter Paul Rubens or the running bulls that served as templates for cave painters. Isn't rupture not outside the art object so much as it is within it? How do I interpret the literacy embedded in a painting?

When I think of a form of fiction that appears in the contemporary Euro-American art market, I think of, for example, the work of Julien Nguyen²⁹ and Kai Althoff.³⁰ The paintings of the latter seem more idiosyncratic, so to speak, because here a stylistic and iconographic filter does not serve as the narrative in itself; rather, the styles of history visibly merge in a way that perhaps seems almost unconsciously driven, making this merging indistinguishable. However, in both artists' oeuvres, I find fiction. Even if we might ask what is actually being narrated—for, unlike in Caspar David Friedrich, romanticism here is not necessarily conveyed through the nature surrounding the subject. The figures in Nguyen's and Althoff's paintings rather enable a storytelling: of a nostalgic environment in a literary manner, as if searching for a lost romanticism, perhaps even for the absence of nature.

We find the human figure is surrounded by other people, lost among them, swallowed by nature perhaps—which maybe can no longer be delineated, or at least is no longer visible or regarded. To return, then, to the narrative value—the epic that has been sanctioned, if we can consider “sanctioned” to be spoken in the past participle. By this I mean that narrative value may lie with-

in a painting precisely because “painting” can be traced back to, for example, Orthodox Christian icons.

If fiction is, therefore, about sanctification, then we must not disregard the concept of iconographic painting in order to analyse the extent to which a painting subjects itself to a narrative index that is meant to point to something beyond itself. Even if such a value is anachronistic—because, for example, one no longer wants to believe in religious narratives or some other ideal thought—the question of indexicality as a virtual value remains, one anchored in the historical concept of the icon.

I cling to my subjective inner life insofar as I refuse to limit the epic rhetoric of oil paint on canvas—painting, in short—to a subject matter, a literal theme that should do justice to some contemporary life, or my own life. And yet I am preoccupied with how life narrates its place into art, and what makes me a producer of something outside myself. Do we meet in the style and the surface of things, as our gazes do?

Surface: I found myself wondering why individuals appear so differently in the picture planes of different epochs of painting, which truly made me wonder if people looked different throughout time and space! The poet and art critic Charles Baudelaire seems to have made a similar investigation, except by referring rather to the fashion of an era, for example, the silk of his time, the mid-nineteenth century: “The draperies of Rubens or Veronese will not teach you how to paint watered silk à la antique, or satin à la reine,” and “each age has its carriage, its expression and its smile.”³¹ I observe how clothing, fabric, and possessions indicate class affiliation, how social codes play a role in partner selection, whether romantically or fiscally motivated, and how prejudices about ethnic background lead to socioeconomic exclusion. This evaluation evokes images, and it seems that the images of paranoid prejudice precede the actions of social exclusion—or, conversely, of solidarity. Does the image arrive a priori to the narrative, or does the narrative emerge a priori to the image? I am interested in images insofar as they allow for discourse about coexistence and community, about inside and outside as a mode of “including” or “excluding” others. This is where I see the intersection of art and life, namely, in the possibility of gene-

rating these images to frame the construction of a paranoid gaze: Is the image the inside-out of my own subjecthood, that is, the speculation of its exchange-value?

A judging gaze, when styled deliberately as in a painting, makes agency a matter of surface.

What is to be seen is to be seen by its flat surface, the art critic Clement Greenberg argues in “Modernist Painting.” Further, Greenberg claims, “Kantian self-criticism” would have justified modernist painting’s “self-reflexivity,”³² that is to say, the painting’s rhetoric of referring to itself. But what is also to be seen by its flat surface is what is *not to be seen*, or what is seen in a specific mode of seeing. Whether impressionistic or illusionistic, the painting’s surface belongs to the construction of it, and thus its literacy that pretends to be the surface’s outside. In that sense, I wish to install the outside of the outside into the painting, to shake notions of formalism to be defined by a cultural, perhaps classist, gaze constructing and idealising the author’s individual subjectivity.

Such modernist works that Greenberg praised, which have been imitated or expanded upon today like those of any other past style, ultimately prove that the idealisation of method as an expression of the self merely marks the self’s limits or simplicity.

Baudelaire portrays the figure of the dandy who “loves mixing with the crowds,” the modern painter, who “is the painter of the fleeting moment and of all he suggests of the eternal,”³³ and he contends that such an eternity lies between “the trivial things of life, in the daily changing of external things, [which is] a speed of movement that imposes upon the artist an equal speed of execution.”³⁴ Such a figure itself is also constituted by the crowd. The crowd, if not the peer group, creates an appearance of the unfamiliar, for instance, between individuals. It is only that which makes it possible to “love passion passionately,”³⁵ I believe. Such a fleeting modernity, as described by Baudelaire, can be found in Kai Althoff’s work, I believe. This idiosyncratic sense of agency is rooted in sensuality as a singular perspective—anticipating its position through paintings that reflect contemporary life by mirroring modern motifs, especially those found in the garments of his painted figures. Here, subject-

tivity is brought to the forefront. Fiction emerges through a judging gaze, one that seems to analyse agency itself: as the one within the crowd.

Compositionally, similar to the works of Rembrandt, Althoff’s impasto-moulded figuration dissolves into a dense cluster of an image. I am interested in the idea of coexistence insofar as human action, interpersonal action, wires my non-human-animal instinct to what surrounds me. And who owns any surrounding? I do not intend to objectify coexistence according to one’s individual perspective—an illustration of the self in its surroundings, and thus of its limited environment—because that would mean to frame what I see as my vision.

Can I invent it anew without drawing metaphors?

It’s not possible to literally mirror all that is fleeting, for instance, social media’s images raining down on me. And maybe a character of modernity has been before modernity: a matter of reflecting in hindsight what has been produced by human beings, like material that has become materialised to be used. For instance, if we look at cave painting—what could be more fleeting than such a depiction of control over nature? Well, that’s my interpretation as a human being of today. So, then, what does coexistence look like? Cubist, because social constructions construct our thinking?

If that’s not too much of a miracle—to assume that coexistence meets in the gazes of multiple people—is such a gaze to be met in the oneness of a painting? “There’s something really fascinating to me about the idea of painting a single object because it ... I mean, why won’t it hold? I’ve got about twenty thoughts mixing and merging in my head. Just give me a moment,”³⁶ Philip Guston writes. Perhaps these thoughts are similar to the gazes of the multitude of people who look at a painting?

Furthermore he writes: “What I really want to do, it seems, is to paint a single form in the middle of the canvas. ... The most powerful thing is to paint a single form in its continuity, which is after all what a face is.”³⁷ I can relate a lot when I anticipate a painting, which to me means to make a painting.

Designers create products for a specific use, and that use might be rather one dimensional. Artworks differ in that they do not prescribe a particular use. People can see something else in anything, as a fragment within. But I think that an approach to art that distinguishes it from commonplace things—to speak with art critic Arthur Danto: the *Brillo Box* (1964) of Andy Warhol that isn't alone³⁸—opens up a discourse that points to the “idiomatic expression”³⁹ that lies within the artwork: a projection. My intention is to confront the painting and thus the viewer—who consumes, in a certain sense—with the phenomenon of a processed surface.

When I confront the empty canvas, I anticipate painting as a simulacrum, which means that the final painting—what has ultimately landed on the canvas—is a confrontation with “painting” as a concept. In this sense, it is both a specific “painting” and “painting” as a literal concept of its medial capacity.

The surface, in this respect, holds up that which it mediates, I think. To speak of the commodification of the commodity form—that only works for me if repetition is formalised within the surface of the painting, pointing to literariness as construction. Perhaps the narrative value in the surface can be pursued as something that is virtually embedded in the surface and lends itself to the semiological reception of an endless associative *critique*.

If painting can be understood not only as an object but also as a process, I find it important to articulate my motivations in treating surface as something that resists the objective, the factual, as fixed semiotic meaning. While disrupting classical notions of representation has long been a concern of both the avant-garde and the neo-avant-garde, I aim to critically examine construction and deconstruction as well. I believe that both construction and deconstruction have the capacity to appropriate and reflect meaning, yet this process is itself a simulation of construction. This often leads me to repeat forms within the surface.

Materialisation is more than an abstract echo of a signifier—it is an event in itself. When I paint a flower, it becomes the simulacrum of an already painted flower. But beyond that, the act of formalising a doubling or repetition of abstraction and simulacrum itself hints at the entropy of signification.

By disrupting composition and colour principles within a painting's system, I aim to create a space where an image is both the product of its own construction and the disruption of that construction.

If the surface is an enigmatic idea, it is because it points to itself by pointing beyond itself—like a mask, a mere shell of something hidden. When its structure is interrupted, broken, or torn—materially or formally—it reveals itself, just as a rupture exposes the interior within the exterior. The rupture does not define the entire image or object but rather exists within its structure. This may sound avant-gardist. However, I am speaking of a compositional rupture, and I argue that the modernist rupture as social upheaval, though stylistically disruptive, differs from a compositional rupture—already present in Jean-Honoré Fragonard's fantastical eighteenth-century landscapes.

The conveyance of information brings with it a semiotic readability already as it performs the simulacrum. Since any kind of informative or symbolic value in painting, constructed by whatever material means, inherits an exchange-value, any piece of the information thus carries with it a kind of transactional worth. This recalls the idea of commodification as a process of becoming information, becoming commodity. I have no interest in deconstructing information merely for the sake of highlighting deconstruction or exposing it to a kind of pluralistic invulnerability—allowing signs to metaphorically and inversely arrive at themselves as commodities. To declare everything to be the same.

Yet reflection remains a concern for me—the reflection of an idea that, in a way, mediates itself. I understand representation itself as an endless cycle: one representation leading to another, rather than pointing to a fixed or objective reality.

My interest in painting is due to the surface and to composition. A surface that conveys the diverse qualities of an object as a comprehensive phenomenon, which has one quality here and a different one there. A surface that has evidently undergone a spatiotemporal materialisation. To a surface, I attribute an action, an expression, a reactive potential that appears in a painted environment—a composition—in its own actuality.

Surface perhaps enables the fiction of my action, the absence of real expectations, placed on the narrative attributes of the motifs—like the green of plants, the grey of technology, and so on—and thereby of the meanings or interpretations that people assign to such impressions or affects. The composition places forms or motifs in a tense relationship that calls the materiality of the surface into question.

“The world is something that is narrated, a narrated event, and hence an interpretation. Religion, art, science, and history are so many diverse interpretations of the world, or rather, so many variants of the fable,” author and artist Pierre Klossowski writes in *Such a Deathly Desire*.⁴⁰ He refers to philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche’s re-fabulation of the true world—for instance, the spiritual, idealistic, or transcendental world. With it, the apparent world disappears! Its simulacra refer back to the apparent world, and thus re-fabulate it. Nietzsche’s alter ego, Zarathustra, thus appears to be an “inaccessible reality” as well. And through his alter ego, Nietzsche might discover reality as inaccessible.

The simulacrum, which narrates or conveys, is for me a meaningful occasion to understand the representative image as one image among many images. In this sense, I also understand the image as a re-fabulation: as an image that perhaps represents a variant of a fable while simultaneously exposing it as the mask of another.

I work with images that are already there, even if not in a physical form. Images that are memorable images or fragments of such. These are images that do not necessarily provoke laughter but stem from laughter, like when familiar things are combined in unfamiliar ways. I therefore want to ask about action, as in art making, in order to ask: *Why produce?* To laugh!

Klossowski writes:

Laughter is ... like the supreme image, the supreme manifestation of the divine reabsorbing the announced gods, and announcing the gods with a new burst of laughter; for if the gods are dying from this laughter,

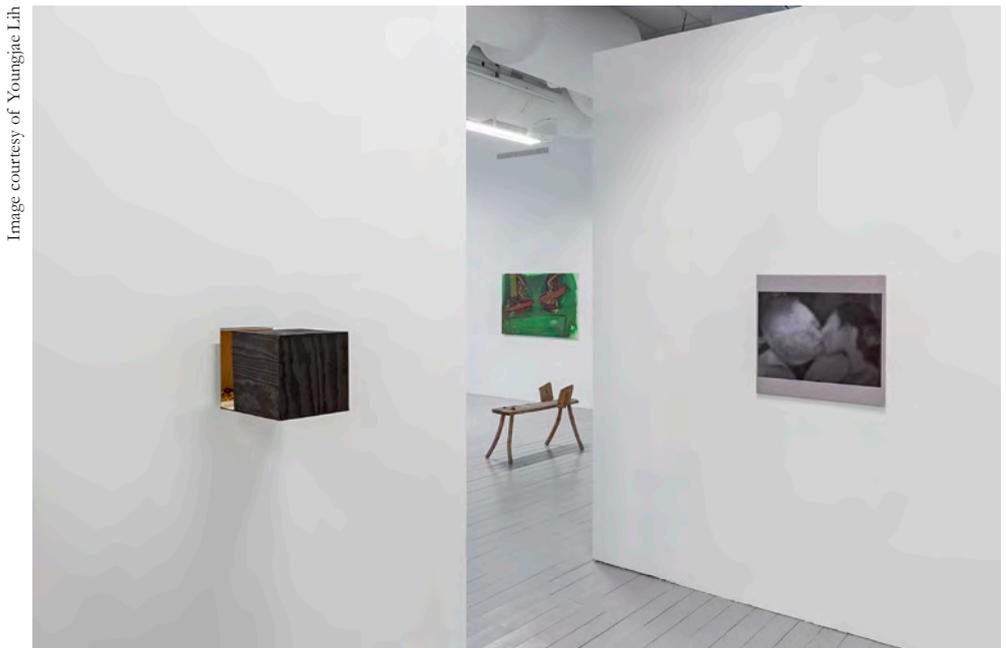


Image courtesy of Youngjae Lih

Stella Sieber, *Hocus Pocus Focus Locus*, 2024. Installation view

it is also from this laughter that bursts from the ground of the whole truth that the gods are reborn.⁴¹

The absent laughter of absent gods who (did not) create us?

Identity as an ever ongoing construct asks about its controllability or about higher beings that command—“*Höhere Wesen befehlen*,” as a painting by Sigmar Polke suggests.⁴² Laughter and image, both are rooted in what has already been felt and thought, I think. And just as much in what has already been said.

Philosopher and poet Édouard Glissant explains the significance of repetition in *Poetics of Relation*, putting forth the notion of a consciousness that remembers, repeats in remembrance, and therefore to some extent resides elsewhere:

Repetition, moreover, is an acknowledgment form of consciousness both here and elsewhere. Relentlessly resuming something you have already said. Consenting to an infinitesimal momentum, an addition perhaps unnoticed that stubbornly persists in your knowledge. The difficulty: to keep this growing pile of commonplaces from ending up as dispirited grumbling—may art provide! The probability: that you come to the bottom of all confluences to mark more strongly your inspirations.⁴³

Perspective, as a supposedly repeated moment among the absence of many, should not be distinguished in my paintings by the fact that a figure is depicted from a specific viewpoint. The figure itself already carries this perspective as an idea: the agency of the figure should be provoked—its affect or *narrative ambiguity*.

Content only arises through what I have produced, while the content and formal image is produced while I am producing. I think that form and content are tied to the idea of an affect, while the affect becomes the spirit of the idea and always becomes what may be absent. Form and content of the perspectival image offer a singular layer like an idea.

I read an anecdote titled “The Sock” in *Berlin Childhood around 1900* by Walter Benjamin, in which he describes the procedure of unpairing

socks that were initially rolled up and enclosed together by being turned inside out. That which gets unpacked does not distinguish itself from its container. The sock is both packaging and packaged. Benjamin writes: “It taught me that form and content, the veil and what is veiled [the wrap and what is wrapped], are the same.” And furthermore: “It led me to draw truth from works of literature as warily as the child’s hand retrieves the sock from ‘the pocket’ [bag].”⁴⁴

In my painting *Creatures of Habit, Besucherin Disturbed About Rosemarie Trockel’s Gewohnheitstier at MMK Frankfurt* (2023), I also explore truth as a problem of form and content, and thus a performative perspective.

I witnessed at the Museum of Modern Art in Frankfurt how shocked, or disgusted, a woman was while looking at an artwork by Rosemarie Trockel—a bronze sculpture in the shape of a seemingly dead deer entitled *Gewohnheitstier* (1996). With that situation in mind, I wanted to paint an allegory of the entire scenario, but I intended to not illustrate this image that I saw before her eyes, the shocked face, and so on.

Rather, I aimed to render a highly subjective, very centred, abstract composition that, while it pictures her gaze, offers mine. It is a reaction to a reaction. To abstract that, my reaction to her reaction is also “just” an interpretation of any kind of behaviour. And in this case, one that has its root affect in Trockel’s artwork: *Gewohnheitstier* lets us flirt with prejudices stemming from modes of seeing. How to counteract any behaviouristic approach on how to read art?

I am interested in the signifier as something that shapes the gaze through the construction of a fictitious perspective. In relation to the aforementioned painting, it serves as a method of translation between wording and image—imagining—that calls for the construction of the gaze as something both reproductive and primordial.

Fred Moten reflects on temporality in the modernist work: “The experience of the genuinely modernist work seems to have no duration” because “at every moment the work itself is wholly manifest.”⁴⁵ I am in a mode of imagining, of image-making—a processing of representation that fractures the modernist objectivity of total timelessness, perhaps in an attempt to arrive in the present/presence.



Stella Sieber, *Kiss*, 2023. Inkjet print on canvas on fabric, 60 × 60 cm

I made a painting in acrylic and oil called *Untitled (Traffic Light)* (2024), which is 2.5 × 1.7 metres in size and depicts an oversized, and thus distorted, traffic light spreading over the entire composition. First of all, the size manoeuvres the motif into the realm of fantasy, and such fantasy is the space of the canvas. A blue light is reflected onto the signalling device: in the lower part of the painting the object is rendered in a blue colour, while the rest dissolves into white, partly the white priming coat on the canvas. The colour is what makes the traffic light seem to appear at all, while appearing as a fable. And a fable as surface. Blue perhaps contradicts what we would usually look for in this everyday object, which signals red, yellow, and green. While to me it is about the traffic light as a signalling device that connects people, like how a clock measures our common time, it is also about that mode of automated

control, possibly maintaining safety by conducting traffic, the assumption of a possible outside. The exterior, in its blue spatiality, becomes literal, penetrating the very quality of what is depicted. I realise that representation can manifest in one form or another, much like a claim, like presence. From there, it matters how the narrative is read, depending on where the signifier is positioned.

Also included in my master's exhibition was a print of a black-and-white photograph of a painting, which itself was based on a photograph depicting a couple kissing, mounted on fabric and held taut on stretcher bars. Perhaps it calls to mind Gerhard Richter's photorealistic paintings.⁴⁶ But, in contrast, the method is inverted, and the material qualities, their intelligibility, presents representation as a methodical *process*.

Is the processual aspect of a painting intelligible?

The philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler suggests in *Bodies That Matter* that discourse and materiality are regulated notions of power, which are justified by the very materiality of the subject. If power is intelligible only by being productive and formative, Butler argues, it must be constructing a materiality that is, in that sense, antagonistic, as always opposed to the feminine notion of something that is excluded matter. They write:

The body that is reason dematerializes the bodies that may not properly stand for reason or its replicas, and yet this is a figure in crisis, for this body of reason is itself the phantasmatic dematerialization of masculinity, one which requires that women and slaves, children and animals be the body, perform the bodily functions, that it will not perform.⁴⁷

Discursive intelligibility and thus power would be guaranteed by an exclusion of something outside of the “subjectivised” materiality that is to be defined as such, because it has been materialising the subject (in power, in control) in the first place. Material constitutes a subject in its materialisation, just as a prison is prior to its materialisation. In that regard, materiality is power, “constituting an objective domain” that is operating with a “taken-for-granted ontology.”⁴⁸ While cultural theorist and psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray emphasises the importance of recognising the materiality of the body, particularly the female body, as a site of resistance to dominant discourses and power structures, Butler extends this analysis by interrogating the ways in which gender norms and identities are constructed and enforced. Butler argues that the materialisation of the subject involves not only the embodiment of social norms but also the continual reiteration and contestation of those norms through performative acts. In this way, Butler complicates notions of materiality and subjectivity, highlighting the ways in which they are both shaped or surrounded by and resistant to power dynamics and discursive formations.

I think that something like a visceral surface in a painting might exemplify how it is lacerated—if it is to be described in violent terms—by outer forces, whether a milieu or a climate. What’s more seductive to a painting than its lacerated surface? And what’s more literal to a surface than the material hinted at by its exterior? A seductive and intelligible surface that arises from a *process* of materialising its own agency—even if through the rhetoric of a blurred authorship, the absence of a desiring self—should reflect on its fictive, perhaps even epic, qualities, I think. These are constructed and thus surrounded by an outside, which is yet another surrounding. What surfaces a literal self, if not the very surrounding it gazes at? What’s literal of painting if not its surface?

In my master’s exhibition *Hocus Pocus Focus Locus*, held in KHM1 Gallery at Malmö Art Academy, various series of paintings opened up various tropes of civilisatory spaces and social localities. The point of departure came from ideas of a literal kind: I intended to comment on the construction of the individual subject that enacts within what their surroundings can picture, namely, the inside of yet another surrounding. Milieus appear literally different, as it is spatiality that limits the gaze, differentiating the body from its “reasoning” surrounding. I think the show managed to fairly present what I assume: how method is surrounded by another method, as form is juxtaposed to another form, or surface is surrounded by surface—in reciprocity of their temporal and material constitutions. To be judged again and again.

- 1 Alexander Rodchenko (1891–1956) was a Soviet artist, sculptor, photographer, and graphic designer.
- 2 Jean Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 58.
- 3 Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication*, 54.
- 4 Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication*, 57.
- 5 Julia Kristeva, “Giotto’s Joy,” in *Calligram: Essays in New Art History from France*, ed. Norman Bryson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 36.
- 6 René Daniëls (b. 1950) is a Dutch artist.
- 7 Jean Fautrier (1889–1964) was a French artist associated with the art informel movement.
- 8 Walter Benjamin, with the participation of Theodor W. Adorno and Gershom Scholem, *Gesammelte Schriften* [Collected Writings] (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 610–11.
- 9 Baudrillard argues that modern society is dominated by simulacra, which are representations or copies of things that have no original.
- 10 Merlin Carpenter (b. 1967) is an English visual artist who often treats his canvases as metaphorical simulacra of the social environment that the painting-commodity circulates within.
- 11 Benjamin Buchloh, “The Primary Colors for the Second Time: A Paradigm Repetition of the Neo-Avant-Garde,” *October*, no. 37 (Summer 1986): 41–52.
- 12 Piero Manzoni (1933–1963) was an Italian artist.
- 13 Andy Warhol (1928–1987) was an American artist.
- 14 Peter Osborne, “Painting Negation: Gerhard Richter’s Negatives,” *October*, no. 62 (Autumn 1992): 107.
- 15 Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, October Books, 1996), 132.
- 16 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, book XI, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981).
- 17 Fred Moten (b. 1962) is an American cultural theorist, poet, and scholar whose work explores critical theory, Black studies, and performance studies.
- 18 Adrian Piper (b. 1948) is an American conceptual artist and Kantian philosopher.
- 19 Michael Fried (b. 1939) is an American modernist art critic and art historian.
- 20 Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 239.
- 21 Moten, *In the Break*, 17.
- 22 Moten, *In the Break*, 9.
- 23 Philip Guston (1913–1980) was a Canadian American artist, printmaker, and draftsman.
- 24 Maria Lassnig (1919–2014) was an Austrian artist.
- 25 Josh Smith (b. 1976) is an American artist.
- 26 Jutta Koether (b. 1958) is a German artist, musician, and critic.
- 27 I am referring to Johns’s (American artist, b. 1930) painted bronze sculpture that simulates beer cans.
- 28 Blinky Palermo (1943–1977) was a German artist who exhibited *To the People of New York City* at the Dia Art Foundation in New York in 1987.
- 29 Julien Nguyen (b. 1990) is an American artist.
- 30 Kai Althoff (b. 1966) is a German painter, installation and video artist, photographer, and musician.
- 31 Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 17.
- 32 Clement Greenberg, “Modernist Painting,” in *The Collected Essays and Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 85.
- 33 Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life*, 6.
- 34 Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life*, 5.
- 35 Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life*, 13.
- 36 Philip Guston, *I Paint What I See* (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2022), 2.
- 37 Guston, *I Paint What I See*, 50.
- 38 Arthur C. Danto, *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
- 39 I refer to Jacques Derrida’s discussion of the idiomatic in painting in *The Truth in Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 1.
- 40 Pierre Klossowski, *Such a Deathly Desire*, trans. Russell Ford (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).
- 41 Klossowski, *Such a Deathly Desire*, 121.
- 42 Sigmar Polke (1941–2010) was a German artist.
- 43 Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 46.
- 44 Walter Benjamin, “The Sock,” in *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, trans. Howard Eiland (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 96–97. I read this text in the edition: Walter Benjamin, *Berliner Kindheit um 1900* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1987), 58.
- 45 Moten, *In the Break*, 238.
- 46 I refer to Richter’s photo-realistic paintings like *Emma (nude on a staircase)* (1966).
- 47 Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 49. Here Butler is referring to Luce Irigaray, who refers to Plato.
- 48 Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 35.



Image courtesy of Hannes Östlund

Sigrid Soomus, *Allowable lean*, 2025. Installation view, MFA Exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2025

Unfolds and Refolds and Unfolds Again Sigrid Soomus

Material is embedded in the world, and as a sculptor I'm driven between the material in body and in space. I find resonance with and work with both. Bodily experiences are the most significant part of my encounter with material; this is what establishes the bond between me and what I create. The experience of how I handle the materials I work with. In this essay, I account for my artistic and theoretical references as well as describe some of the works from my master's exhibition. As part of presenting this fragment of my creative practice, I also write about earlier works and a selection of artists whose approaches to their materials resemble my way of thinking. Furthermore, I'll delve into my bodily encounter with sculpture and space.

Inhaling Space and Objects

A room has corners. To construct a room with walls, corners are needed. Corners become the encounter between the various parts that are to be gathered. They give structure to the specific environment that is a room. Sculptures need spatiality, surroundings, and world. They need to position themselves next to something while giving the body inside the room something to relate to. Both in the capacity of delimitation and in its opposite—expansion. If you put a chair in a corner, the space behind cries out. The corners are in dialogue with the objects that occupy the space. To see the sculpture from the room is to create a comprehensive view of the interplay that arises in the encounter between sculpture and spatiality.

*"An imaginary room rises up around our bodies, which think that they are well hidden when we take refuge in a corner. Already, the shadows are walls, a piece of furniture constitutes a barrier, hangings are a roof. But all of these images are over-imagined. So we have to designate the space of our immobility by making the space of our being. In L'état d'ébauche, Noël Arnaud writes: Je suis l'espace où je suis (I am the space where I am)."*¹¹

I am the space where I am. To be both a space and a body at the same time. Positioning oneself while appearing in a place. Being part of the world. Feeling my way forward. From room

to passage. Like a corridor, where you leave one space in order to enter another. There, in a similar interspace, the conscious and the unconscious meet in my creative process. Between being unfinished and finished. The sculptures are transferred from one form to another, and sometimes they stay in a liminal space, in a balancing act. Where perhaps they belong. In the space between a material in its raw form and its new given form, an encounter takes place.

*"In the mechanics of tropical nature—my first experience of nature—things are in a constant state of transformation, everything decays very quickly and is born very quickly too. In this state, everything needs to be constantly remade, nothing remains unchanged. I am particularly interested in the state of things at the borderline of this transformation. A kind of 'in-between' moment."*¹²

If I am a space, perhaps I am also a container. I'm drawn to certain forms, as is apparent in my sketchbooks from over many years: forms recur. I'm drawn to amorphous and kinetic shapes, but also to geometric shapes, such as cylinders. Depictions of something, yet not. Some shapes and works are like containers unto themselves; they contain something that is to be conserved.

Discussed in Plato's dialogue *Timaeus* are the soul, the body, and the creation of the material world, its content of form and various objects. "Chora" is a central term in Plato's philosophy and is described as a non-form that functions as a recipient of other forms, a potential place and container where forms come into being. Chora is a kind of interspace. One that creates space and form. The fragmentary nature of chora is necessary for the material world to exist—the two parts need each other. It is a kind of space that makes room for a form or a body. Based on this reasoning, my works can perhaps be their own containers for the material they hold; they create their own direction within themselves in order to exist. In this case, they become a container for both form and non-form. Plato writes:

It must be agreed that one kind is the unchanging form, uncreated and indestructible, neither admitting into itself anything from

anywhere nor itself entering anything anywhere, imperceptible to sight or the other senses, the object of intelligence; another kind is that which bears the same name as the form and resembles it, but is sensible, generated, is in constant motion, comes into being in, and vanishes from, a particular place, and is apprehended by opinion together with sense perception; and a third kind is that of space which is eternal and indestructible, which provides a seat for everything that comes to be, and which is apprehended without the senses by a sort of spurious reasoning and is hardly an object of belief—we look at it indeed in a kind of dream and say that everything that exists must surely be somewhere and occupy some space, and that what is nowhere in heaven or earth is nothing at all. And because of this dream state we are not awake to the distinctions we have drawn and others akin to them, and fail to state the truth about the true and unsleeping reality. The truth is that not even this very thing upon which a likeness has come into being belongs to it, but this thing always carries with it an appearance of something else. For this reason it is proper for a likeness to come into being in something else, thereby somehow clinging on to being, on pain of being nothing at all. In contrast, the exact and true account comes to the rescue of what has real being, stating that, so long as two things are different, they will never become at once one and the same and two by either of them coming to be in the other.³

I can never predict my sculptures, can never fully determine how they will look or how they will take place in the world. Everything happens as part of a thinking process; if I am visited by the thought of a form, it never fully leaves me. It's almost like inhaling fragments of what is yet to come into being: "To look at an object is to inhabit it."⁴ Like taking over, inhabiting, and inhaling the object, what is being processed and shaped. I've thought about how a material should feel, I can guess how it might behave before I've touched it and understand that it will either work the way I want it to or not at all. Wood is a direct material. With its presence, wood tells you how it works. It's a generous material, but not very forgiving. I use a chainsaw, an angle grinder, and a chisel, yet the process and my encounter with the material feels tender and soft. Is this because of the qualities of the material? To be able to wander between guises and, despite its resistance,

for there to be utter devotion. My body follows; I shape myself according to the material that I'm working with. Bending over, reaching across, and breathing in the sawdust.

For me, the two most important aspects of wood as a material are the bodily and the historical. It is a literal body that has grown up from its place, with a direct connection to the ground, moving upwards. Growing. Changing in its environment, with a history and a background. Humans have their own relationship with wood, with the forest, and with the environment; to wood that becomes furniture, roofs, walls, and buildings. A material we process, build and work with. Every material has an origin, a foundational idea of where it is used, where it belongs, and how it is used. How it should be treated. By processing and using wood as a material, I think about these various primary forms and how to balance between them. How to read the solid material so it becomes something recognisable, how the history of wood confers a sense of security in terms of what it is, in and of itself—it occupies such a stable place on Earth that neither the material nor the form can be questioned. My sculptures address their own technique through their materiality.

When I carve, pieces of wood fall away, and with each piece that disappears, the primary form changes and approaches a new form, which retains its dialogue with its origin. I don't need to explain the weight of wood, because the weight explains itself.

My work *Jumbled Conditions* (2025)⁵ is a series of wooden sculptures that I worked on simultaneously by continuously shifting between them. If one sculpture demanded a break, I shifted focus to the next. A movement of gaze and need, all influencing each other. They position themselves differently in the room, lying, standing, leaning. They have different needs and offer directives, pointing to different paths and possibilities. The sculptures have a self-evident presence, but they also feel like they're in the way, almost like a collision of bodies. They have their inner movements. They stand with a sense of solidity and steadfastness. Here the sculptures behave the same way as they do in my workshop: sometimes they take over the room completely, and sometimes they collapse into being part of its interior, as if merging with the wall they're propped up against. They can be likened to pillars, parts of the architecture. They can be likened to body parts and to tools.

Image courtesy of Hannes Östlund



Sigrid Soomus, Left: *Jumbled Conditions*, 2024. Spruce wood. Right: *Karyatid*, 2025. Cherry wood

Constantin Brâncuși's carved wooden sculptures are timeless. They're linked to a time, but they can also be removed from time completely; my experience of them transforms what is most physical about the sculptures into something dreamlike. Carving was a big part of Brâncuși's sculpting method, in both wood and marble. In the wooden sculptures, the element of time is plain to see, as is the idea that the material controls how the work comes into being, allowing the material to find its own path towards form. Brâncuși's early twentieth-century wooden works titled *Caryatid*, made of old oak, are sculptures that draw connections to columns and pillars, while their small angles and movements point to the body. Brâncuși's sculptures encompass a character; they are created in their material for themselves. The word "caryatid," in simple terms, means a carved female figure, which in the past often replaced support columns in buildings. They occupy a kind of midpoint between architecture and sculpture. They become part of the building by supporting it, but are also embellishments. Looking at several of Brâncuși's works, I feel this in-betweenness comes from his angles and the gesture of the sculptures that resemble the body and make the abstract intelligible. In the encounter between anatomy and architecture, environment and body are woven together. A monograph on the artist explains: "The sculptor endlessly reworked these forms, simplifying and streamlining them; he refined them, gradually tracing them back to an alleged original condition."⁶

Karyatid (2025),⁷ one of the sculptures from my master's exhibition, comprises two parts of the same cherry tree, one placed atop the other. One part has been worked on, and the other is left almost untouched, covered with damp soil. With its pale purple colour and the encounter of two solid parts, it relates both to form and to a tree. The part below can act as a stay, a support for the other, which is placed on top. Together they build the tree back together, while the altered sculpture on the bottom renders the one on top, in my opinion, more abstract. The form is so physically heavy that it takes up the whole of its surroundings, and with the title *Karyatid*, the form falls into a thought between body and sculpture, and into a dialogue between supporting and carrying.

The sculptures leave their traces on me and I on them. There are traces of me in that which is tactile, in the material. I often get bruises on my arms and legs. All over my body, after days out of the workshop, after days in the workshop. As

I process, grind, pound, pull, I feel a movement that carries me between the pieces I'm working with. Between dirt and machines. The bruises reveal that I'm compliant, moving between and following along, consumed by the doing. Not noticing that it can hurt. I see the bruises as analogous to my carving, two different markings from a single event, from something that has taken place.

The function lies in the process, a non-linear process; with each new choice the line breaks up and changes course, creating new possibilities for the sculpture. Eva Hesse writes about her artworks:

I would like the work to be non-work. This means that it would find its way beyond my preconceptions. What I want of my art I can eventually find. The work must go beyond this. It is my main concern to go beyond what I know and what I can know. The formal principles are understandable and understood. It is the unknown quantity from which and where I want to go. As a thing, an object, it accedes to its non-logical self. It is something, it is nothing.⁸

It's about letting the process lead the way towards the object; most essential is the thinking towards the object and not how the object receives and embodies the thoughts. That the works have their own meaning, independent of my involvement. A role of their own in the world.

Eyes, Gaze, Mind

Within the Sense of Sight (2025)⁹ is three sculptures made of Plexiglas and metal plate, fixed to the wall. Sculptures that can be seen as dividing the room, as walls in their own right, as part of the environment, or as an extension of the architecture. They encounter the other works by reflecting them and the room, presenting them from different angles, playing with vision and perspective. At certain angles, the works merge. In their reflections upon the clear surface, the surrounding wooden sculptures almost grow together. They appear as if in an alternate primary form. As they once were, or a new proposition for how they could be. What is reflected in the Plexiglas is the spectator, the environment, the Plexiglas itself, and the nearby sculptures—proof that everything is affected and touched by everything else. The works in the room speak to each other and are visible both together and individually.

Image courtesy of Hannes Östlund



Sigrid Soomus, *Within the Sense of Sight*, 2025. Plexiglas and metal plate, 165 × 85 cm

The Plexiglas cuts through the air; at the same time, the sculptures are quite calm, inherently, and because of their greyish-blue hue.

In these sculptures, the fragility of the Plexiglas balances out the opposite in the metal, and the edge of the metal creates an imbalance in the perfectly cut Plexiglas. Together, they interrupt and extend the room, expressing a kind of sculptural dimension. They are a kind of intermediary between the space and the objects. Hesse worked in two and three dimensions, creating a weight in her pieces through vision. It was the gaze that had to work, draw boundaries, and investigate. Not just the hand. The cultural analyst Ernst van Alphen explains it this way: “The way Hesse’s work addresses the viewer, also the works that are more or less flat, do so like sculpture does. It grasps the viewer principally in terms of touch; not literally, but by touch activated within the sense of sight.”¹⁰ To take hold of a spectator through a touch, not always a literal one, but through a kind of touch activated by vision’s capacity. The

senses control the experience. My gaze through the Plexiglas, a suggestion of another angle. The pieces can be likened to windows and mirrors. The sun penetrates them and creates a new view of the room.

Gerhard Richter’s *4 Panes of Glass* (1967) is a work of glass and steel. Its four glass panels edged in steel cross each other in different ways, creating a kind of illusion in the exhibition space; they unleash effects in each other in various combinations and also control the environment. They mirror the surrounding works in the room and somehow form a bond. Richter, who is first and foremost a painter, creates a clear link between his glass work and his paintings of curtains and windows. They all refer to various types of portals, or divisions and truncations of rooms. All of which embrace illusion. Sculptures that activate different senses. My master’s exhibition upholds a discreet dialogue between touch, sight, and smell. A gaze through Plexiglas, a touch of wood and the smell of latex.

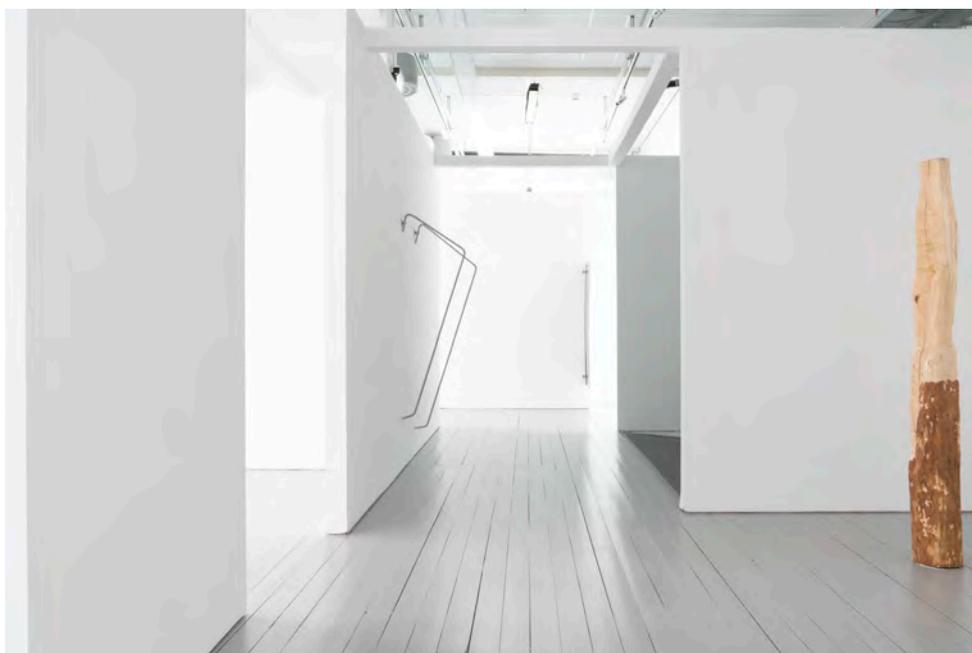


Image courtesy of Hannes Östlund

Sigrid Soomus, *Allowable Lean*, 2025. Installation view

The Weight in the Centre of the Vortex

In working with metal, I am reflected in the material. I encounter and touch the surface, which, chilled and cold, becomes a shell that conceals its qualities. Qualities that through flame, heat, and labour clearly emerge. I investigate the material in order to refute its qualities. I learn how it functions so as to play with the idea of what it can be and what it actually is. Metal is a material that contains both cold and hot qualities. The outer and the inner. The experience of its outer qualities and the construction of its inner ones. What happens in one material in its encounter with another. When it is melted down and changes.

*“The outer appearance of a sculpture works like an armour. The beholder is inclined to insert an imaginary dimension into that armour which one has no access to, for instance passions, emotions or just muscles.”*¹¹

When processing metal, I think about temperature, balance, and energy. Heat is needed to find the melting point to be able to weld two parts together into a unified piece—bringing them together. Flame is needed to heat and change the form, creating more surface from a smaller surface. Expanding and adding. The material grows and gives you chances to change your mind. It’s as if the energy is looking for a new place to renew itself, wandering between bodies, as if the charge keeps moving until it has found its place. A body to inhabit. The law of conservation of energy states that energy cannot be created and cannot be destroyed. It can only be transformed from one form to another. Energy is constant and flows from one source to another. A living form and motion in perpetuity.¹²

Components such as weight and balance are central to my process and are related to the potential for movement and energy. They are a clear part of the environment and the body. They are at play around us. And much of my sculpting is about what happens in the encounter between different qualities. The material shapes and leads me outwards from what is unclear towards something that can feel like clarity. I drew this understanding for myself—like a vortex—to explain my way into the sculpture. I started from the outside so as to then find my way inwards, not the other way around. Like the direction of a vortex heading towards what feels like its centre, which can then shift, reposition itself, and become something inexhaustible. It creates its own centre point. In artworks and materials. The engineer

Olle Ekberg describes the qualities of metal as physical qualities:

The hardness of a metal generally refers to its ability to withstand punctual stress without the material depressing at the point of contact. The opposite of hardness is softness. Toughness can be said to be the quality of a body to withstand a change of form by impact, pressure, tension, bending, and torsion without breaking. The opposite of toughness is fragility. Often a body that is hard is also fragile, while a body that is soft is also tough. The purpose of many of the heat-treatment methods used for metals is to artificially change the usual relationship, so that instead of the combinations of *hardness–fragility* and *softness–toughness*, the combination of *hardness–toughness*, which is often necessary for practical uses, is obtained in the most favourable way.¹³

The reassuring feeling that metal and working with metal gives me is, I think, based on my sense of the material’s inexhaustibility. That I, who works with steel, can extract more material through flame and heat. Change it, cut and remake it. Parts of metal that can stretch out and take on a bodily likeness. Steel can almost move like I can. It finds its expression according to how it is being handled. The feeling of cold and heat. Aggression and calm, the balance between soft and hard. As such, metal can seem both inviting and threatening. The contradictions that can alter the physical encounter with a sculpture.

My work *Repetition: Casuar* (2023)¹⁴ is a series of sculptures that all feel identical in their repetitive forms, with cut-out edges and unpolished surfaces, but become different because of how they are placed in the room. They are made of processed cold-rolled metal pieces that are welded together simply. The sheets are slightly rounded by an English wheel, a shop tool that can be used to make car parts. They have a natural and delicate feel to them, without feeling bent or folded. Three equally large parts are joined together, and natural gaps emerge between the metal pieces. The gentle bend created by the shop tool is the result of a blend of physical work and machine work. My hands are needed to push the sheet down, to move it and to shape it, while the machine does something I cannot. The quickly cut edges give a new sense to the form, as if the parts have been torn apart and put back together, but with a new function. The gaps offer us a new insight into

the form. The sculptures are deliberately placed on the floor, on the wall, or resting a decimetre above the floor, supported by steel bars, so that the viewer can see into the sculptures, and in this way have a new experience of the space. As if you're supposed to see something at the end of the work—that it leads the gaze inwards.

I see a connection between *Repetition: Causer* and *Untitled (sections)* (2024–25)¹⁵ from my master's exhibition. *Untitled (sections)* is a sculpture consisting of three pieces of poplar wood screwed together on a welded steel handle. The modified poplar pieces take on a light-green hue, and together with the metal components, they shine in their own materiality at the same time as they meet in encounter. The modified metal frame is clearly connected to the other parts of the sculpture and is necessary for them to be activated and point into the room.

A disconnect, a gap, is not something lost but something to consider. The gaps, the pauses, allow you to see the whole anew.

The sculpture series *Scruff of the Neck* (2016) by Nairy Baghramian consists of several works with bases cast in aluminium that encounter materials such as wax, polystyrene, and plaster. In the exhibition space, these amorphous forms spread out and enter into dialogue with the space. The aluminium can be seen as the skeleton and foundation of Baghramian's work, onto which the other material components attach themselves. The sculptures are placed high up on the walls, and in their various orientations they hang out and down over the spectator.

Baghramian is well aware of the qualities of her pieces. The artist plays with scale and volume, and through a preoccupation with function, sometimes her works take on the appearance and qualities of tools. Baghramian orients herself to the space where her pieces become both bodies and adornments. Each part and component contributes its own word to how the sculpture speaks. In the retrospective *Nairy Baghramian: Déformation Professionnelle*, held at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and S.M.A.K., Ghent, Baghramian exhibited a number of sculptures that are continuations of her earlier works.¹⁶ She finds new ways to make use of their forms and former functions. They take on new life in their new placements. Baghramian twists and turns the works around and creates new vistas with the same gaze. The pieces are given new chances to occupy the room.

The sculptures end up in an intermediate phase, between what they were before and what they can become. In the exhibition catalogue, art historian Andre Rottman writes:

Baghramian's dialectic of contemporary sculpture by contrast, allows for a reflective bodily experience of the here and now precisely (and only) by presenting an aesthetic object that is (literally and figuratively) informed by the force fields of contemporary technologies of subjectivation while remaining related to the architectonic and institutional site of the production and reception of art.¹⁷

I'm inspired by Baghramian's way of providing a reflective and bodily experience of the present through works that are in dialogue both with different structures and with architectonic and institutional contexts. Sometimes I see my sculptures as a close-up of a larger picture, as if the sculptures belong to a larger form. Like muscles and bones in the same body. Regardless of whether I am able to predict their final form, some parts are already preprogrammed and a continuation of previous works. They touch each other and need each other.

Touching the Touch

In the essay "The Intertwining—The Chiasm" from the book *The Visible and the Invisible*, the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty writes about the relationship between the body and the world around the body. He does this by identifying two parts: the body, which experiences and perceives the world, and the visible, which can be perceived in the world.

These two parts are at once inseparable and separate from each other. Separate because the body is flesh, but, at the same time, this quality is precisely what binds them together, since what is flesh is also part of the world, together with the visible around it. Merleau-Ponty writes: "Since the same body sees and touches, visible and tangible belong to the same world."¹⁸ The body is not just an object in the world but also a place through which we experience the world. For me, working sculpturally is about a body being in its environment; they are braided together. They become interwoven. They need each other. We see, feel, and move our way forward, and as such we are part of the world, together with what is around us.

Image courtesy of Youngjae Lih



Sigrid Soomus, *Allowable Lean*, 2025. Latex and steel, 40 × 400 cm

Working with sculpture means being in constant dialogue with the surrounding world. A sense of being and belonging. The idea that the world is not only around us in isolation but that we who are in it—subject, object, flesh, the visible—are in a way separate but never entirely, as we experience the world enfolded into each other, and thus as participants in the same environment. Merleau-Ponty explains:

Yes or no: do we have a body—that is, not a permanent object of thought, but a flesh that suffers when it is wounded, hands that touch? We know: hands do not suffice for touch—but to decide for this reason alone that our hands do not touch, and to relegate them to the world of objects or of instruments, would be, in acquiescing to the bifurcation of subjects and object, to forego in advance the understanding of the sensible

and to deprive ourselves of its lights. We propose on the contrary to take it literally to begin with. We say therefore that our body is a being of two leaves, from one side a thing among things and otherwise what sees them and touches them; we say, because it is evident, that it unites these two properties within itself, and its double belongingness to the order of the “object” and to the order of the “subject” reveals to us quite unexpected relations between the two orders. It cannot be by incomprehensible accident that the body has this double reference; it teaches us that each calls for the other.¹⁹

Merleau-Ponty explains this double reference that the body encompasses. Objective and subjective dimensions. The body is a physical thing among other objects in the world, but it is also a subject that perceives, moves, and experiences. We are

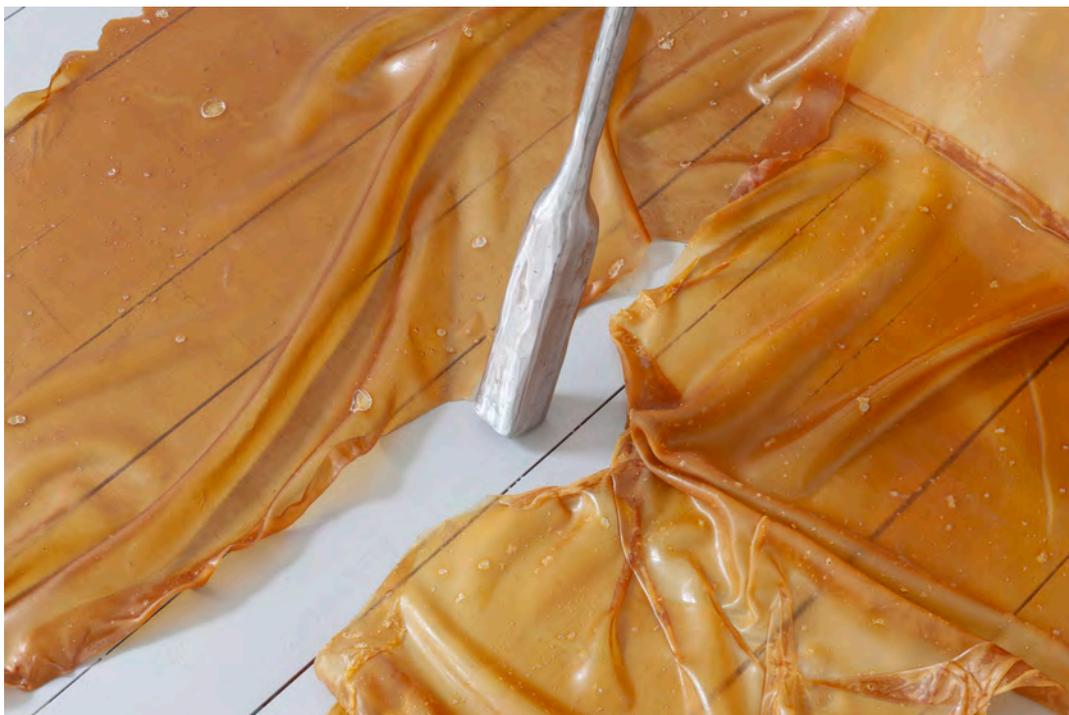


Image courtesy of Youngjae Lih

Sigrid Soomus, *Allowable Lean*, 2025. Latex and steel. Detail

flesh that suffers when it is wounded, a hand that feels its way forward. The physical body becomes a tool for understanding the world, without being reduced to a mere tool. The philosopher goes on:

Where are we to put the limit between the body and the world, since the world is flesh? Where in the body are we to put the seer, since evidently there is in the body only “shadows stuffed with organs,” that is more of the visible? The world seen is not “in” my body, and my body is not “in” the visible ultimately: as flesh applied to a flesh, the world neither surrounds it nor is surrounded by it.²⁰

I respond to the world by touching it, by being consumed by and sent around among what surrounds me. The tactile, the material, that separates and entwines. Repetition is a big part of my work. I often work on two or more sculptures at the same time that grow into series. The art critic Lucy Lippard points out something similar in Eva Hesse’s work:

The most salient features of Hesse’s art can be related to her fascination with repetition: “It’s not just an esthetic choice,” she [the artist] said. “If something is absurd it’s much more greatly exaggerated if it’s repeated. Repetition does enlarge or increase or exaggerate an idea or purpose. I guess repetition feels obsessive.”²¹

In Hesse’s description of repetition, she mentions an obsession. That repetition can give rise to something exaggerated, which can be beneficial and develop the intentional idea of a form, a material, or an approach. I see an eternal repetition in the body, in the space, and in the pieces. In the movements around the room while creating a sculpture. Stepping forward to see details, stepping back to see a whole. The hand that is carefully drawn over the modified surface to see how it feels, then filling the lungs with air to rid the material of dirt. Repetition. It makes it easier for me to make choices during my process if I can see several shapes at once. Which parts are important at a given moment. Some shapes are influenced by what the material looks like—to follow or to resist. Another art critic, Rosalind E. Krauss, frames Hesse’s practice this way:

Eva Hesse was interested in the principle of transformation as the observable logic of the work. The kinds of transformation that were employed were mainly those that cultures use

to incorporate the raw materials of nature, such as melting in order to define, or stacking in order to build. Working with processes of melting and rolling, or melting and molding, Hesse gives her objects an anthropological imagery, as though attention to that initial change from raw to processed brought her into a sculptural space that was itself extremely archaic.²²

My sculpture *Allowable Lean* (2025)²³ stands at a diagonal tilt, which becomes a repetition in both form and material: there are three parts that resonate with each other but also with themselves. It is as if the work both leans backwards from the centre of the room while slowly drawing inwards. Two wills that meet, just as in the encounter of materials. Modified steel and moulded latex. The light from the windows creates the illusion that the latex is practically glowing, which in dialogue with the steel speaks of something alive and in motion. The position and inclination of the steel bars reveal a kind of function in supporting the latex, while the latex seems to weigh down the steel. A tension and dependence emerge, as well as a sense of simultaneous timelessness and temporality. The steel, if no one moves it, will always remain and have an enduring form. The latex changes, shifts in colour and density, and will eventually cease to exist. But for now it exists, inhabiting this moment.

From my first encounter with latex, I remember the smell, the pungent ammonia practically burning my eyes. But I also remember how beautiful I thought it was. I poured the liquid in three equal parts over a flat surface and let the material dry overnight. The three large pieces were put together to mimic a lung. In the middle of the dark-yellow and orange piece was an opening where I inserted a bicycle pump, and suddenly the large lump of latex began to breathe. I remember watching the movements of the latex being met by the effort of the body pumping in the air. I saw two bodies moving in tandem. The material had suddenly evolved from being nothing to almost being alive. Almost blending in completely with the surrounding bodies but still standing out and provoking.

Latex has a smell and is a material that lives within a specific time frame, changing in colour. Latex is a natural material extracted from wood—it can be likened to both plastic and the organic at once. If I look closely at my skin, no matter which body part, I can see hair, pores, scars,

pigmentation, and changes. Skin is ever changing. Changing in elasticity and appearance. I look at latex in the same way. Seeing air bubbles, hairs that have been accidentally trapped during the moulding process. The parts mimic their mould, a delicate material that captures each part in the place where it was formed. The latex behaves exactly as I want and desire, yet not at all. There is a direct connection to body through the analogy to skin, but at the same time it's almost as if I forget about the skin reference entirely. The latex grows into something incomprehensible to me.

In a conversation with a friend, he compared the latex, which was meandering on the floor, to a bitten-off fingernail. On the finger, the nail is fused with the rest of the body, and as soon as it is torn off, it takes on a new meaning in its surroundings and changes into something disgusting. A fingernail is also a temporary thing; if it grows too long, we cut it off. It may belong to the world and the body for a while, but then it gets in the way. Latex can therefore be compared to a fingernail. But also to a whole body. I see a whole landscape in the twenty-four metres of latex hanging in the white room, a whole story of what has happened, what is happening, and what will soon be over. Latex is affected by sun and dry air. To best preserve the material, latex should really be stored in darkness and moisture, as if hidden away. In the gallery, the opposite takes place. The material spreads across the floor in daylight with a flowing sensation.

Latex and Eva Hesse are bound together. Whether or not she used other materials as frequently, it is in latex that Hesse's fragility lies. She created with a total presence and from an enveloping gaze. Every little part was included, and whether she was painting, sketching, or working with repetition, her pieces contain the feeling of total vulnerability and self-evidence.

So, Hesse's work does much more than just evoke powerful bodily associations—in contrast with minimalism's hard, industrial surfaces. Hesse reconfigures the body through a double action: first by disintegrating the body, and second by lacing the disintegrating body together again. In doing so, she creates order in chaos, and the repulsive becomes beautiful. But there is a third action: the surface or skin is inscribed with signs of rupture. Altogether, it results in a notion of skin that is layered and is a body in itself. This recognition of the body and its skin is at the same time a reconfiguration of the senses.²⁴

Latex produces a pull towards something that can feel simultaneously repulsive and inviting, creating a split in the relationship to the material. The psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva writes about the "abject," which is neither a subject nor an object: "Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object."²⁵ She argues that the abject is something that violates the boundaries between "the self" and "the other." The abject calls into question one's sense of identity and connection to one's own body. Kristeva uses the intimate encounter between body and food—in this case, lips that encounter a coating on top of milk—as an example of what the process of abjection can look like:

Food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection. When the eyes see or the lips touch that skin on the surface of milk—harmless, thin as a sheet of cigarette paper, pitiful as a nail paring—I experience a gagging sensation and, still farther down, spasms in the stomach, the belly; and all the organs shrivel up the body, provoke tears and bile, increase heartbeat, cause forehead and hands to perspire. Along with sight-clouding dizziness, nausea makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it. "I" want none of that element, sign of their desire; "I" do not want to listen, "I" do not assimilate it, "I" expel it. But since the food is not an "other" for "me," who am only in their desire, I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish *myself*.²⁶

Kristeva argues that if she rejects milk, which is a link to motherhood, she rejects herself, as milk symbolises the care and nourishment that can exist in the encounter between child and mother during breastfeeding. Kristeva writes about the various emotions that inhabit a rejection. She writes about disgust, tears, and nausea—an opposite physical reaction to the one I mentioned earlier about encountering materials with delight. In my essay I have written about touch, the encounter between body and material—that it is a clear aspect of working as a sculptor, and that the body's experiences are the most important thing in that encounter. This is what becomes my relationship to what I create. The experience of how I handle the materials I work with. The abject opens up a new facet of that thought: that this attraction can also be found in materials and

encounters that the body wants to distance itself from but cannot part with. In discussing the body and the body's encounters, one must also take the reactions to those encounters into account. That which does not always resonate or create well-being, but from which one cannot be separated. Encountering the world with one's hands means encountering both pleasure and repulsion. Latex is a material that embodies both. I choose which materials I work with, and if I can't resonate

with a material, this might become a synonym for a split in me. In itself, this dynamic entices me to continue my work with and pursuit of the material, even if I don't know where it's heading. Material and body are woven together in an irrational flow.

*"The experience of walking around it, the fact that you can never quite hold on to what it is. Sculpture unfolds and refolds and unfolds again. It's extremely restless."*²⁷

- 1 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon, 1964), 137.
- 2 Paloma Bosqué, quoted in *When Forms Come Alive: Sixty Years of Restless Sculpture*, ed. Mary Richards (London: Hayward Gallery Publishing, 2024), 81.
- 3 Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, trans. Desmond Lee, revised with an introduction and notes by T. K. Johansen (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 52a–52d.
- 4 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2012), 134.
- 5 *Jumbled Conditions*, 2024–25, wood sculpture series in various dimensions in birch, spruce, and cherry tree. Exhibited at my master's exhibition *Allowable Lean*, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö Art Academy.
- 6 *Brançusi*, ed. Nola Butler, trans. Alberto Curotto (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997), 26.
- 7 *Karyatid*, 2025, sculpture made of cherry wood. Exhibited at my master's exhibition *Allowable Lean*, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö Art Academy.
- 8 Lucy Lippard, *Era Hesse* (New York: Da Capo, 1992), 131.
- 9 *Within the Sense of Sight*, 2025, three grey-blue-coloured Plexiglas sculptures mounted to the wall with cold-rolled metal plate, 165 × 85 cm. Exhibited at my master's exhibition *Allowable Lean*, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö Art Academy.
- 10 Ernst van Alphen, *Seven Logics of Sculpture: Encountering Objects through the Senses* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2023), 78.
- 11 van Alphen, *Seven Logics of Sculpture*, 30.
- 12 Olof Beckman, Göran Grimwall, Bengt Kjällström, and Tage Sundström, *Energilära* [Energetics], 4th ed. (Stockholm: Liber AB, 2005), 14–17.
- 13 Olle Ekberg, *Materiallära: Metaller* [Materials Science: Metals], 6th ed (Uddevalla: Bokförlaget Liber, 1965).
- 14 *Repetition: Causer*, 2023, a sculpture series made with cold-rolled metal plate. Exhibited at my bachelor's exhibition at KHM1 Gallery, Malmö Art Academy, March 2023.
- 15 *Untitled (sections) / Utan titel (snitten)*, 2024–25, three poplar forms mounted together on a welded steel handle, 50 × 180 cm. Exhibited at my master's exhibition *Allowable Lean*, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö Art Academy.
- 16 *Nairy Baghramian: Déformation Professionnelle* was exhibited at S.M.A.K between 26 October 2016 and 19 February 2017 and at Walker Art Center from 7 September 2017 and 4 February 2018.
- 17 Andre Rottman, "Nairy Baghramian: The Matrix of Sculpture," in *Nairy Baghramian: Déformation Professionnelle*, ed. Martin Germann and Vincenzo de Bellis (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2018), 65–123.
- 18 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," in *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 134.
- 19 Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," 137.
- 20 Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," 138.
- 21 Lippard, *Era Hesse*, 209.
- 22 Rosalind E. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), 272.
- 23 *Allowable Lean*, 2025 a sculpture series made in steel and latex, 45 × 300 cm. Exhibited at my master's exhibition *Allowable Lean*, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö Art Academy.
- 24 van Alphen, *Seven Logics of Sculpture*, 80.
- 25 Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 4, 2–3.
- 26 Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 2–3.
- 27 Phyllida Barlow, quoted in Richards, *When Forms Come Alive*, 62.

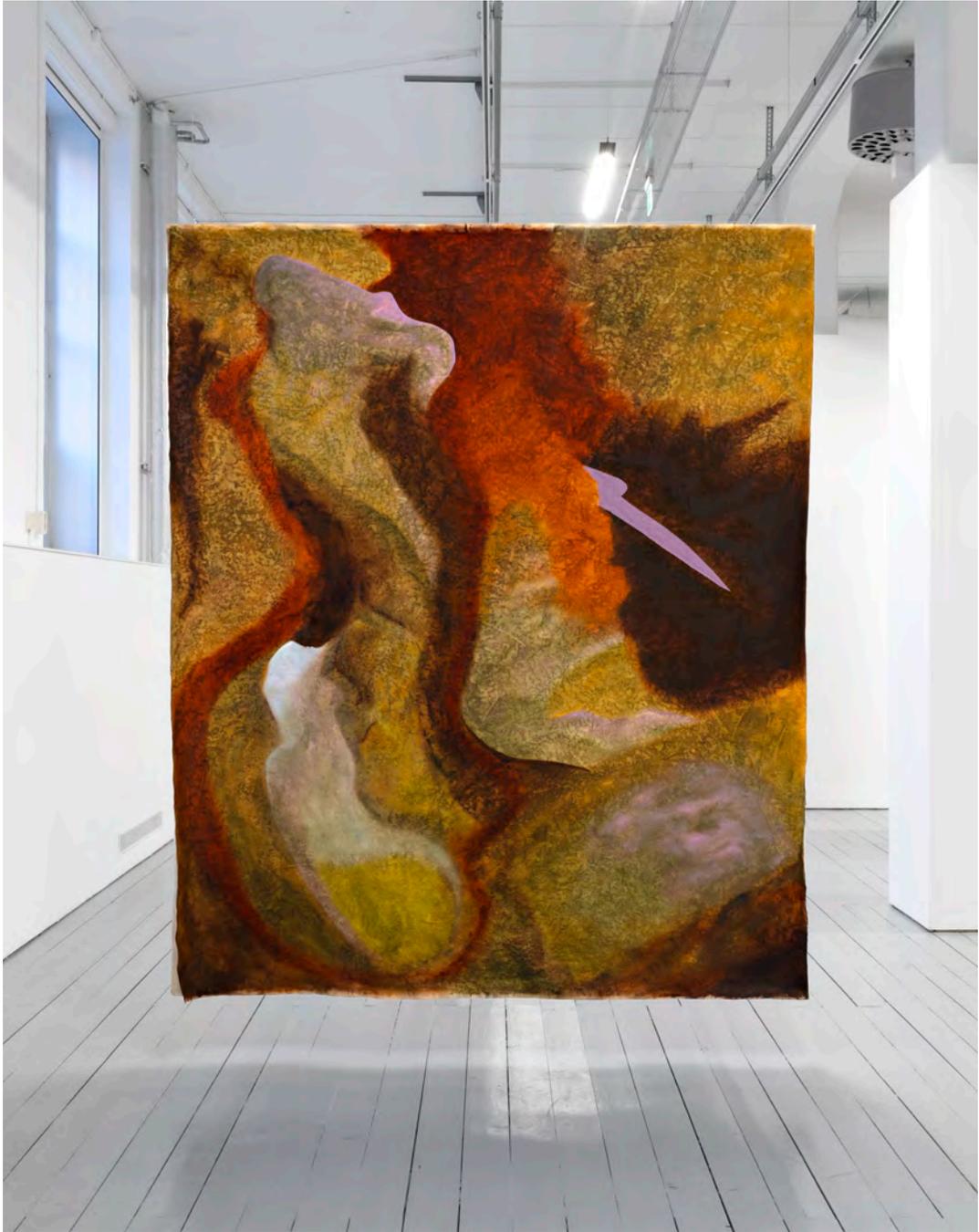


Image courtesy of the artist

Marcus Wallström, *Untitled 4 (Räfsabo)*, 2025. Oil on canvas, 215 × 179 cm. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2025

Attention Is the Beginning of Devotion
Marcus Wallström

I've stolen the title from Mary Oliver,¹ a poet I was reading by an old quarry last summer. It was a sunny day, rays filtering down through the vividly green branches of the trees.² An experience—being in it, in a feeling, in a moment—is intense, and I'm pulled between extremes inside something that feels multifaceted, both clear and raw. When I put words to my experiences, it is clear how coloured I am by what has been, things I've done and felt, and everything I have around me. The language I speak, the language I'm using here, becomes a step away from the subtle world in which the experience itself exists.

In our society, language, in some hierarchical sense, is viewed as “the truth,” as it conveys what it means to “be in the world.” This is despite the fact that the words that make up language come from experiential learning and empirical studies. I work with images, drawings, and paintings. Making is a form of thinking around my experiences past and present, and the materials, the picture, and the object—what happens in the moment, and the way this interacts with the context in which it happens. That which, in the encounter with an observer, can make seeing feel like thinking.

What we call nature—the forest, the fields—is an intersection I often either start from or cross in my creative process. I've hiked the Swedish mountains and slept out there; I've walked the forests and travelled through the country; I've ridden Europe's railways and taken other “paths.” Excursions allow me to gather impressions and experiences; I observe, draw, think, photograph. The materials I collect become my entry points into the work of creating pictures. I make connections between the different things I've registered in various ways. It is in creating from these experiences that I explore being.

“Time is noticed solely through instants; duration—we shall soon see how—is felt solely through instants. Duration is a dust cloud of instants or, better yet, a group of points organized more or less coherently by a phenomenon of perspective.”³

These instants I feel make up the starting point of my work. That work, in turn, unfolds in new moments, here and now, from my perspective. As soon as I've made the first mark on the surface, the surface with its mark begins to shape what comes after. In the process, the images become linked instants, points in time, forms that form themselves.

“Yet since attention has both the need and the power to recapture itself, it is in essence to be found entirely in its resumptions. Attention is also a series of beginnings; it is constituted by those mental rebirths that occur in consciousness when it beads time's instants. And if we carried our examination deeper into that narrow region where attention becomes decision, we would begin to appreciate the lightning quality of a will in which clarity of motive and the joy of acting suddenly converge. Only then could we truly speak of instantaneous conditions. Such conditions are strictly preliminary, or better yet preinitial, for they precede what geometers call the initial conditions of movement. This is indeed what renders them metaphysically, not abstractly, instantaneous. If you watch a cat stalking its prey, you will be able to see the instant of attack suddenly inscribe itself upon reality, while Bergsonians tend to follow the trajectory of attack no matter how tightly focused their scrutiny of duration may be. Once triggered, the cat's pounce will of course develop a duration sequence according to the laws of physics and physiology laws that regulate complex functions. But before the complicated process of the leap is actually set off, there has already been a simple, brutal instant of decision.”⁴

The decisions I make are based on information I've had, have, and receive during the process. An encounter and a becoming over time, where knowledge, chance, facts, and intuition coalesce.

The finalised picture meeting its viewer becomes an actor in new instants. I think of the pictures as an exploratory analysis of the instants and the moments they're sprung from, the line or the space of images to which they belong, and the medium itself.

Let's say that I've been walking for a few hours through the coniferous forest that nourished my childhood, when I sit down to draw. What happens in the instant when the pen meets the paper is that an image is constructed from the filtration of sensory impressions, an extraction of what speaks to me and what I notice. The act itself, what I see, experience, and have experienced is broken down into smaller pieces, and then put back together. This is a form of deconstruction; we might call it an abstraction. A Swedish encyclopaedia defines "abstraction" (*abstraktion*) as "a thought process (or the result of one) in which one disregards certain characteristics of a phenomenon or an object."⁵ From this definition, we would conclude that it is from this "phenomenon or object" that the picture supposedly springs. You could say that all the images we make are a form of abstraction, but I view this as a far too simplistic description of something much more complex. When I draw in the forest, my materials and I are affected by much more than a phenomenon or an object. I can feel the texture of the ground against my hand, the wind against my cheek, the sun's warmth against my skin, and so on. I also hold embodied knowledge, feelings, thoughts, and experiences from the past. The materials I use are affected by things like the level of humidity, and together, all these conditions that create the image make up a situation that is far more complex than an abstraction. To call it an abstraction feels simplistic, as if we, instead of entering into the complexity of being in the world, are instead trying to rationalise and find answers. I am shaped by so much more than what I am aware of in every instant, and this affects my choices and the outcome. I try to remember this in my creative process, to help me take an interest in this complexity and follow what unfolds.

Here, the difference between making a drawing *of* something and making a drawing *from* something becomes clear. To make a drawing *from* something, as opposed to making a drawing *of* something, dictates not where I'm going but creates, instead, an opening to enter into the process, searching for something I can't know ahead

of time. The motif becomes a starting point from which something new takes form, through searching, in making. In *The Pleasure in Drawing*, the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy quotes Henri Matisse: "You should always follow the desire of the line, the point where it wishes to enter or die away."⁶

Nancy expands on this idea of following the desire of the line, the way it opens up to "the distinctive and singular event of an impetus, motion, line, or emotion."⁷ What he describes here is close to the sensitivity, presence, or attention in the moment that allows me to draw a line, make a mark, without knowing in advance in what direction, how far, how powerfully, or how fast it will be done, even if I think I know in the instant I make the decision. If I am actively attentive in the making, the initial thought or decision can always change and take another direction. This allows me to surprise myself, to get lost and find something I didn't know I was seeking.

It reminds me of wandering in forests and through the land. I start from a given location or path, but then attentively follow the journey, the walk itself. It is only when I leave the original location or path that the adventure begins. My senses are heightened, and impressions take on greater significance when I walk without a map and without a predetermined destination. Perhaps it is my interest in wandering like this that's made my work evolve in a similar way. Through my internal dialogue, and with the help of my materials, the picture emerges in front of me. Over time, the drawing or painting becomes a thing of its own, free from its model—just as I become free when I leave the trodden path and the initial idea. In the past, it was common to use a staff on longer hikes to help on the way. In the studio, my materials are my staff, an extension of myself in the creative process.

"But habit does not consist in interpreting the pressure of the cane on the hand like signs of certain positions of the cane, and then these positions as signs of an external object—for the habit relieves us of this very task. The pressure on the hand and the cane are no longer given, the cane is no longer an object that the blind man would perceive, it has become an instrument with which he perceives. It is an appendage of the body, or an extension of the bodily synthesis."⁸

Maurice Merleau-Ponty also writes that we don't recognise things we've often seen with our own eyes, although "we recognize immediately the

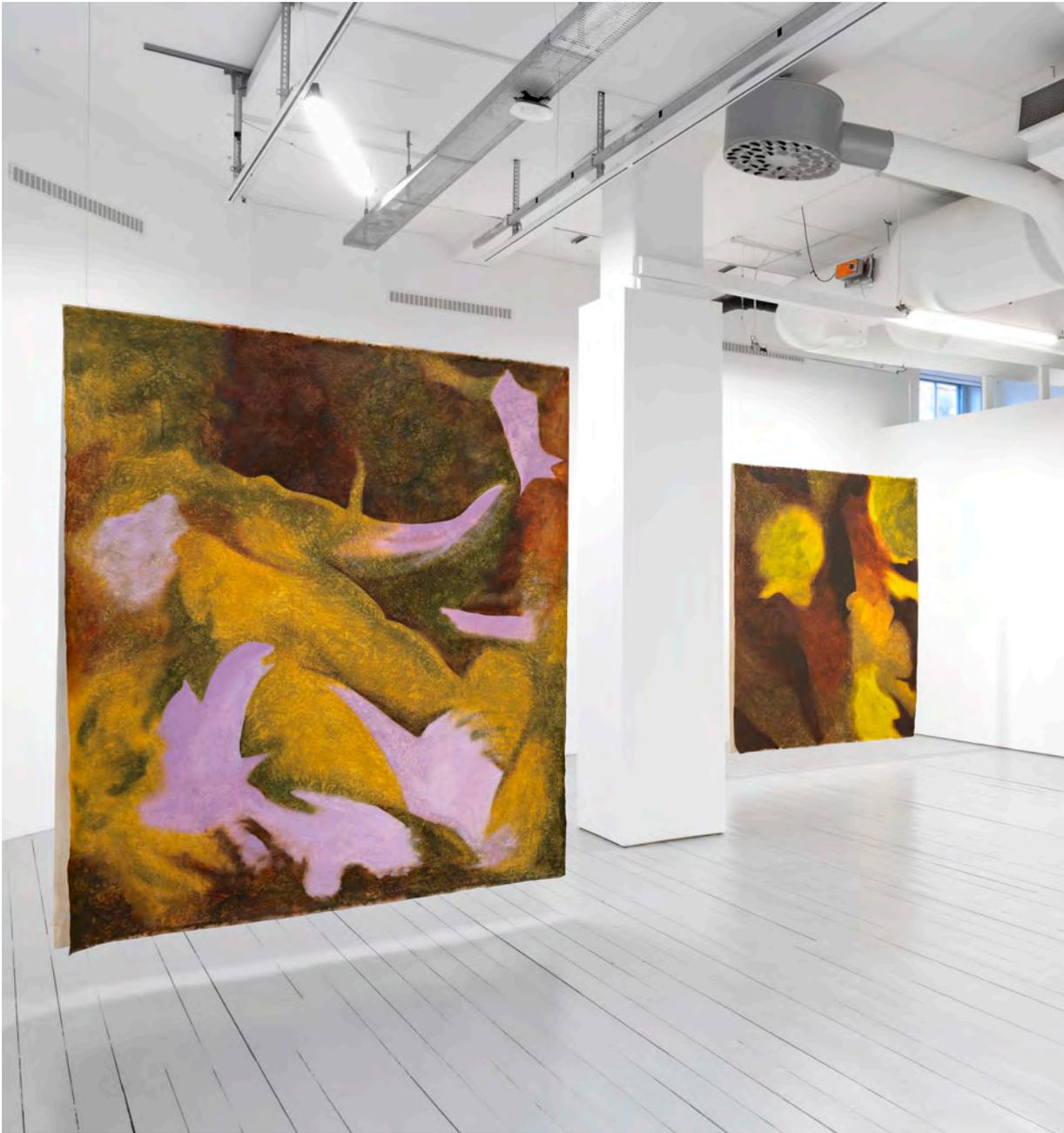
visual representation of what is invisible in one's own body.”⁹ This is in the context of not recognising one's own hands in a picture, or hesitating to identify our own handwriting, though we're easily able to recognise our own physical silhouette or way of walking. This brings to mind the feeling I sometimes have before the pictures I've made, or other pictures I see. Something in me makes an echo, a feeling of understanding or belonging, even though I've never seen the picture before.

For me, motifs are the paths that lead me into the forest. I actively seek them out in order to abandon them as soon as I've entered “among the trees.” The motifs become entrance points into a process that shifts focus from the motif to the present and the searching that exists in the making. The work that follows consists of a back-and-forth between focused, physically active moments of marking the canvas or paper, followed by moments of pondering. This is a searching, an attempt to arrive at something without knowing which direction to take. I listen to my body, to the materials and the picture. When I feel I have nothing more to give for the moment, when my curiosity cools off, I try to step away from the active work.

The materials I work with are important to me, and I pay close attention to their characteristics, exploring how I can get to know them in my own way. It is important to me to be free in that process, and an intimacy with the materials is crucial. In the studio, I make sure to keep them easily accessible and not stowed away. This allows me to build up the tactile and emotional intimacy, making them an extension of me. Charcoal was the first material that caught my interest; I felt an immediate kinship with the material, which in many ways has always been there. Charcoal introduced me to the work of Käthe Kollwitz, who came to inform my own work; there's an intimacy and care in her oeuvre that is incredible. She's got an ability to show big, complex feelings with simple means. The exhibition *Mensch* at Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen the fall of 2024 offered a window into how she's worked over time, and it's clear that drawing is central, regardless of her medium and subject. The work *Seed for Sowing Should Not Be Milled* from 1941,¹⁰ hung at the entrance to the exhibition, set a tone in both the title and the image itself, which I feel runs through her entire body of work. In the image, a woman protects three children. No matter which

one of her works I look at, I experience her hand and gaze as sensitive, and her expressive marks evoke feelings in me as the viewer. I feel grief, frustration, care, solidarity, and a fighting spirit. The thoughts and questions brought out by these pictures stay with me long after the visit. Her drawings are my favourites, and I think of Kollwitz's sculptures as three-dimensional drawings. Standing before them, I wish I could touch them to somehow get closer to her lines and the forms in her drawings. As a mode of expression, drawing is direct, with an evident closeness to the materials. It becomes an extension of the body that marks the surface in front of it. In Swedish, *att teckna* (to draw) is an expression that brings to mind a sign or symbol, *ett tecken*. The English term, “to draw,” on the other hand, brings to mind drawing or pulling something out, which to me is synonymous with extracting. This is how I think of drawing: a medium through which we can extract something from something else. This might bring us closer to the previously discussed definition of abstraction, but in drawing, I am able to pull on sources of information of various kinds to create pictures. As a medium, drawing might be traditionally thought of as lines and shapes on a sheet of paper, but as a phenomenon, I experience it as something more complex.

When I started working with colour, I started with dry pastels, since the feeling of using this material was akin to that of using charcoal. It was a natural transition, and it deepened my practice. Then, dry pastels and the colours they brought into my drawing practice led me to oil sticks. The possibilities offered by the characteristics of the new materials further deepened my interest in the material conditions of the image. In the beginning, I drew and painted exclusively on paper, but soon after I brought oil sticks into my practice, I also started to work on canvas. That step brought a kind of liberation to my work. The materials I'd previously used were so fragile that they were restrictive—though at the same time, this fragility was fascinating to me. Paper tears easily if it's exposed to moisture of any kind, and it is difficult to handle in larger formats. It risks tearing or wrinkling as you handle it. Working with a canvas as my surface opened the door to a freer process; it was easier to work outdoors and switch between walls and floors in the studio without the surface breaking. I started to push other limits, too. After some time with the oil pastels, oil paint and brushes entered my creative process, and I've let go of ideas of what I should be and what I should work with. The making is what's important.



Marcus Wallström. Left: *Untitled 5 (Räfsabo)*, 2025. Oil on canvas, 215 × 179 cm.
Middle: *Untitled 3 (Räfsabo)*, 2025. Oil on canvas, 215 × 179 cm. Right: *Untitled 11 (Räfsabo)*,
2025. Oil and oil stick on canvas, 215 × 179 cm



Image courtesy of the artist



Image courtesy of the artist

Marcus Wallström, *COMING CLOSER*, 2025. Installation view

My paintings have a lot of drawing in them, and my drawings tend to come close to painting. These are two worlds which are in many ways linked and nourish each other. The line is a form that forms itself. As we can see in, for instance, Amy Sillman's exhibition *Oh, Clock!* at Kunstmuseum Bern,¹¹ layers of information are highly relevant for both drawing and painting. Sillman's work constantly oscillates between drawing and painting, and I think she shows, in many ways, that this kind of categorisation of work is secondary, or, as she puts it in an interview on the podcast *A Brush With ...*: "This kind of like ancient magic of what like a drawing is, is really, really the reason to be a painter."¹²

To define whether my works are drawings or paintings, abstract or figurative, used to be important to me. At present, however, I find that distinction hard to make, as I view many of them as either in between or both.

The work that happens in the studio is not the beginning of my processes, nor the place where they end. I cultivate a close relationship with my environment and how it affects me in the everyday. I pay attention, seeing and feeling how they affect both me and my processes and my work. It is in the everyday, in the life outside of the studio, that I find my motifs. They come from places I visit and what I've noticed along the way. I experience a multifaceted world built in layers upon layers, and I am interested in the materialisation of the impressions, as filtered through me. When I begin to draw or paint, or when I explore a material, the materials sometimes follow me out of the studio to themselves react to the environments I bring them into. Working on a picture, I see how previous instants and experiences are linked to what happens in the present. Chance, intuition, embodied knowledge, and conscious acts, materials, and their characteristics, alongside the environment I work in all come together

Image courtesy of the artist



Marcus Wallström, *COMING CLOSER*, 2025. Installation view

and form the pictures. My hope for the work I make is that it will evoke thoughts and feelings in a viewer, that it opens up dialogue. I want the images to grow with the time a viewer gives them, the way a thought can. The presentation of the works is just as much a tool for the creation of them as colour, lines, and surfaces are. The format, together with the installation, play a significant role in the viewer's experience of the works. Size relates directly to the body and the physical experience of the work, just like the space and how we move through it, what position we hold as we look. In other words, it is there, in the exhibition space, or perhaps in the installation of the work, that my work ends.

“If you hold close to nature, to what is simple in it, to the small things people hardly see and which all of a sudden can become great and immeasurable; if you have this love for what is slight, and quite unassumingly, as a servant, seek to win the confidence of what seems poor—then everything will grow easier, more unified and somehow more conciliatory, not perhaps in the intellect, which, amazed, remains a step behind, but in your deepest consciousness, watchfulness and knowledge.”¹³

These words by Rainer Maria Rilke help me find courage to stay with the little things, which can appear insignificant at first glance. They help me dare to get lost, to exist in a state of searching. When I approach the apparently simple from different directions in my work, it slowly grows, fuelling my curiosity. In order to get deeper into the making and being able to explore what I and the materials hold and what interests me in the line between drawing and painting, the format—the size of the surfaces I work with—has become increasingly important. By working at a scale that forces me to move if I want to reach the whole surface and see the full picture, I've developed a sensitivity to my entire body's stored knowledge. My focus in this process of leaving traces heightens, and I feel the gestures growing more faithful to what they come from. These are aspects that interest me in my colleagues' work, too: what is left vague and what is clear, and how those two play off each other within the frame of the same picture or exhibition.

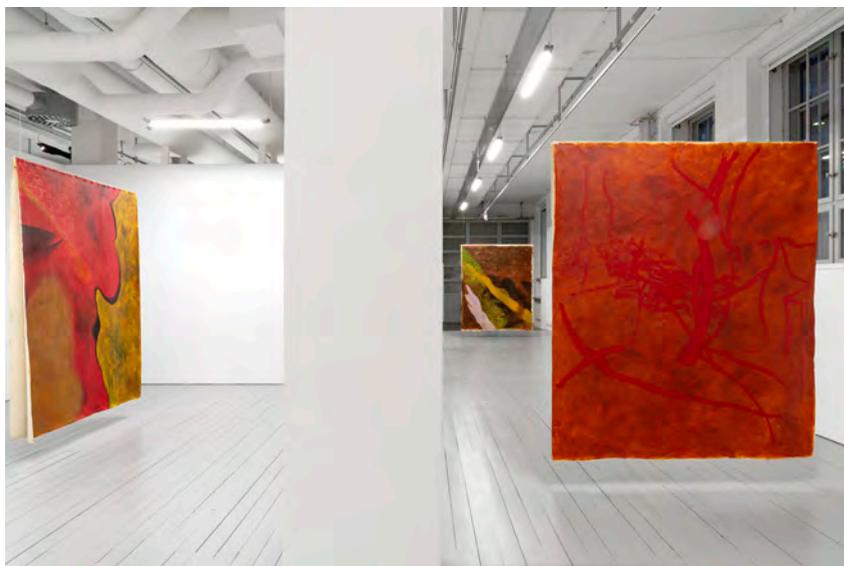


Image courtesy of the artist

Marcus Wallström, *COMING CLOSER*, 2025. Installation view

Image courtesy of the artist



Marcus Wallström, *Untitled 12 (Räfsabo)*, 2025. Oil and oil stick on canvas, 215 × 179 cm. Installation view



Image courtesy of the artist

Marcus Wallström, *Silver Lining (Trollslogen)*, 2024. Oil and oil stick on canvas, 215 × 179 cm

In *COMING CLOSER*, my MFA graduation show at Malmö Art Academy, the installation of the paintings plays a crucial role in the experience of the work and the spatiality of KHM1 Gallery. The sixteen works that make up the exhibition hang, unstretched, from the ceiling, on steel wires strung through metal hooks on planed pieces of wood that hold the canvas. All works hang in pairs, facing either direction. They hang freely in the space, appearing on the one hand as hovering canvases, with a fragility reminiscent of the delicate nature of paper, and on the other, as blockades or walls interrupting the room. Since the works don't hang like windows on the wall, the viewer is actively confronted by the paintings, forced to choose routes and movement patterns different from those given by the architecture. When visitors move through the space, their impact on the environment is made visible as the works are set in gentle motion. In this way, the works are highlighted as actors in the space, reflecting the viewer's own impact on their environment, even as they hold the contents of the picture given by a creative process.

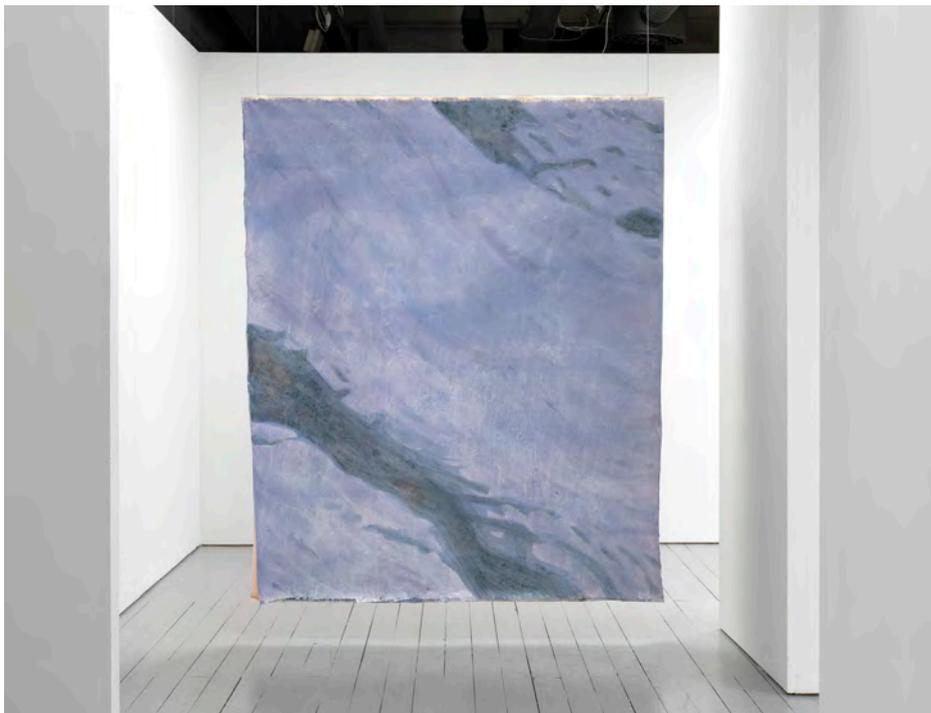
What follows is an associative chain between a series of artists from the early nineteenth century to the present. In January 2024, I saw several paintings by Caspar David Friedrich at Hamburger Kunsthalle's exhibition *Art for a New Age*.¹⁴ Some sixty paintings and one hundred drawings were presented alongside the iconic *Monk by the Sea* and *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog*, as well as works from some of his artist friends and twenty contemporary artists. Friedrich lived in a time of increasing secularisation, and his pictures evoke thoughts about our relationship to the environments we find ourselves in. I'm still here with my gaze on it. The silent spring has made its entrance.

Born in northern Europe but working in New York, Mark Rothko became a prominent painter with roots in Romanticism. From the late 1940s onwards, his work was characterised by intense, emotionally charged blocks of colour on large canvases. Before Rothko, the work of Edvard Munch can be thought of as an extension of the Romantic tradition of landscape painting. In my mind, and because of the way he invited the



Image courtesy of the artist

Marcus Wallström, *Untitled 5 (Trollskogen)*, 2024. Oil and oil stick on canvas, 215 × 179 cm



Marcus Wallström, *Untitled 9 (Räfsabo)*, 2024. Oil on canvas, 215 × 179 cm



Marcus Wallström. *Untitled 4 (Räfsabo)*, 2025. Oil on canvas, 215 × 179 cm. Detail

environment to affect his work,¹⁵ he is linked to Vivian Suter. In her garden in Guatemala, where she has lived and worked for about forty years, she allows her surroundings to be co-creators in the painterly process. *I Am Godzilla* at Moderna Museet in Malmö invites the viewer into the garden where she works.¹⁶ The exhibition's 350 or so paintings literally take up the entire turbine hall, and though it might feel as if she's showing everything, the installation nevertheless communicates that she's keeping some secrets. Suter's installation is a tool in and of itself, keeping her paintings alive and changing, in constant process. There is no obvious perspective; what is once up can be down the next time or end up on the floor. A painting can be partially covered by another or be entirely hidden by being presented with so little space in front of it that we can't see the painting itself. The exhibition offers a non-hierarchical relationship to Suter's works.

When I'm standing in front of my own work *Untitled 4 (Trollslogen)* from 2024,¹⁷ I see connections to the way Albert Oehlen uses trees as motifs to explore the limits of painting. During his career, Oehlen has refused to let himself be categorised. He continues to experiment with materials and techniques that question painting itself, and he often returns to the tree from which he makes these explorations. Oehlen and the neo-expressionist movement that emerged in the 1980s are linked to Romanticism through neo-expressionist language. Like the Romantics, they were reacting to previous expressions and conventions. They were searching for something.

- 1 Mary Oliver, *Upstream: Selected Essays* (New York: Penguin Press, 2016), 4.
- 2 "Haeceity" is a term coined by the followers of John Duns Scotus to describe that which makes a "thing" "this particular thing." Here, in the description of my experience of the particular moment last summer at that particular quarry, the moment is tied to me and my personal experience, as well as to the place and the conditions of that particular moment: that day, at that time. Deleuze and Guattari write about this in *A Thousand Plateaus*, calling the erroneous spelling "ecccitey," derived from *eccc* (here is) instead of *haec* (this), a fruitful error, as it opens up to the individualising that distinguishes itself from a thing or a subject. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).
- 3 Gaston Bachelard, *Intuition of the Instant*, trans. Eileen Rizo-Patron (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2013), 19.
- 4 Bachelard, *Intuition of the Instant*, 20–21.
- 5 Nationalencyklopedin, s.v. "Abstraktion," last updated 2025, <https://www.ne.se/uppslagsverk/encyklopedi/l%C3%A5ng/abstraktion>.
- 6 Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Pleasure in Drawing*, trans. Philip Armstrong (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 40.
- 7 Nancy, *The Pleasure in Drawing*, 40.
- 8 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (London: Routledge, 2012), 154.
- 9 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 151.
- 10 Käthe Kollwitz, *Seed for Sowing Should Not Be Milled*, 1941, in the collection of Käthe Kollwitz Museum Köln, <https://www.kollwitz.de/en/seed-for-sowing-should-not-be-milled-kn-274>.
- 11 Amy Sillman, *Oh Clock!*, Kunstmuseum Bern, 20 September 2024–2 February 2025, <https://www.amysillman.com/exhibitions/oh-clock-pt-1/>.
- 12 Ben Luke, host, *A Brush With ...*, podcast, season 14, episode 4, "A Brush With ... Amy Sillman," *The Art Newspaper*, 21 February 2023, 12:20, <https://shows.acast.com/a-brush-with/episodes/a-brush-with-amy-sillman>.
- 13 Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, trans. Charlie Louth (London: Penguin Press, 2016), 17.
- 14 Caspar David Friedrich, *Art for a New Age*, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, 15 December 2023–1 April 2024, <https://www.hamburger-kunsthalle.de/en/caspar-david-friedrich>.
- 15 Edvard Munch sometimes left his paintings outdoors, to allow nature to affect the work.
- 16 Vivian Suter, *I Am Godzilla*, Moderna Museet Malmö, 22 March–31 August 2025.
- 17 Marcus Wallström, *Untitled 4 (Trollslogen)*, 2024, *COMING CLOSER*, 2025, KHM1 Gallery.



Image courtesy of the artist

Vigga Wahrens, *Aresport*, 2025. Sorrel, rope, steel wire. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM2 Gallery, Malmö, 2025

Shadows on a Moonless Night Vigga Wæhrens

A vague, ambiguous feeling follows me through the night when I'm out photographing or filming—an unease brought on by the dark, a calm brought on by the silence. Just as I observe my surroundings, I feel myself observed by them. A hedgehog rustles in the bushes to my right. I know that it has caught my scent. We're both hunting for something: a worm, a good shot. All my senses are heightened—even the slightest sound makes me jump, though my reason tells me there's nothing to be afraid of. My body is tense, yet I'm in an immersed state of mind, focused on capturing the atmosphere, the texture of the darkness, the ambiguity—that which eludes capture.

When I set out with my camera, I have a clear idea of how the material will be used later, but in the moment I press the shutter, it's often my intuition that guides the lens. I work quickly, almost feverishly, as if afraid that the atmosphere of the place might vanish at any moment. Working with places and their transient moods creates an urgent need to catch the magic before it slips away. The situation feels fragile, but it's precisely the elusiveness of the work that interests me.

Despite the feverish process, the resulting images, while ambiguous, carry a certain weightiness, a sense of immutability. They resemble our world, yet they feel dreamlike, transmitting a sense of out-of-placeness. There's an eeriness, an uncanniness, to them: something is present that can't be fully illuminated or further specified. Something that should not (rationally) be there yet makes itself known through an indefinable feeling in the body. The same feeling that unsettles me when I'm alone in the dark. The feeling I defy because I wish to capture and convey it through my own images and audio.

The uncanny was central to my bachelor's thesis, and I'm still not done with this subject. It is fascinating to work with, because its presence is so powerful, yet invisible. Like a ghost or a shadow, it evades one's gaze but leaves behind an unshakeable feeling: Wasn't there something just over there, behind that bush? It's a feeling of ambiguity, "impurity,"^A and openness—a space where things occur that we cannot control, understand, or predict. There's a friction, a potency, an interconnectedness, a causal relationship between oneself and the world. In my view, these qualities—the strange and ambiguous—are closely related to the uncanny by virtue of their intangible, open-ended nature.

In *All Art Is Ecological*, philosopher Timothy Morton defines ecological thinking as the act of relating to non-human beings for no particular reason. This happens when we pet our cat, breathe in the scent of plants at a garden centre—and when we allow ourselves to be captivated by a work of art.¹ We don't just act upon the world, the world acts upon us—therein lies the causal relationship. The more we value and engage with this relationship, the more ecological we are, according to Morton. They describe this causal relationship that arises when we allow ourselves to be affected is described as "magical"—a theme that has increasingly emerged in my own practice, and which I'll return to later.

It's the same causal relationship I sense when I'm out at night with my camera. I'm influenced by something that can't be seen or controlled. It brings about something new, something not summoned by myself but which can be captured and, hopefully, transmitted. I believe there's a vital lesson hidden in this experience: that we can be more open and connected to our surroundings if we value the causal relationship and the strange.

A "Pure/impure" in the sense used by the thinkers Julia Kristeva and Timothy Morton, understood as ambiguous and transgressive.

This “something” in the night could also be described as a kind of “Other”—something abject, perhaps? In *Powers of Horror*, philosopher and semiotician Julia Kristeva describes the longing for the Other as “a massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome. Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A ‘something’ that I do not recognize as a thing.”² It is a “something” that repels, that inspires fear, because to acknowledge its existence is to risk annihilation.³ A duality is at play here: a confirmation of being, but only through a threat to that very being, because this “something” does not respect the boundaries, laws, and systems by which “I” live.⁴

As I described above, the fear confronting this undefinable Other exists in me as a bodily tension, but also as a curiosity. Its capacity to affirm is its force of attraction. In encountering the Other—which I define myself not in relation but in opposition to—I am also affirmed in my own existence: I am vulnerable, but I *am*. The abject challenges my world view in its rejection of systems, boundaries, and rules, just as art seeks to do.

Morton draws on Kristeva’s theory of the abject when they speak of “haunting weirdness” and causal relationships, encouraging art to be “impure” to more effectively portray the *experience* of the climate crisis.⁵ It is precisely the bodily experience that plays a central role in my process, and which I attempt to evoke through my films, photography, and audio. It’s entirely ineffable: it overwhelms you suddenly, and, just as quickly, it’s gone.⁶ It happens on the spot, in the moment—something you can’t approach, yet still yearn for, in the hope of understanding or revealing it, even while fearing it. It is only by virtue of the affirmation, the promise of insight, that the repulsion and fear don’t become total. This is why I venture out with my camera, again and again.⁷

When Kristeva links the abject with death, and bodily abjection with our non-static existence (and by extension, death), I see a close connection to my film *Thresholds* (2024).⁸ The film’s protagonist is confronted with their own mutability, and thereby also their mortality. Their new understanding of the self as fluid and changeable is portrayed in my film as a ghost. The Ghost represents a disruption of linear time, as it returns from death and re-enters a linear timeline. It affirms living existence precisely through its separation from it, yet simultaneously threatens

that existence by resurrecting, defying the very boundaries of what existence is.

Schelling and the Spiritual in Nature

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, the eighteenth-century German philosopher, was the first to link the concept of the unconscious to nature. Schelling’s view of nature is relatively ambiguous and shifted over the course of his career. However, he himself emphasises that his writings on natural philosophy, despite their contradictions, nonetheless should be understood as consistent, meaning that nature itself is ambiguous, and so too is our relationship with it. Nature is “both home and horror, both cosmos and catastrophe.”⁹ Schelling perceives a spirituality, a creative force in nature, which testifies to an “absolute I.”¹⁰ Nature is not simply a product but a producer driven by an infinite, insatiable desire to express and manifest itself in the striving towards consciousness. This occurs in an eternal cycle of dynamic polarity between contraction and expansion, creation and destruction.⁵

In concrete terms, this self-manifestation—the “developmental drive”—appears in the “product”: the “natural thing” and its design, such as the seed in the soil that always grows towards the sun. The seed, the tree, the animal, and so on appear to be “guided to a single end.”¹¹ The seed is not conscious of itself or of what it does, but neither does it act aimlessly; it possesses a kind of knowledge without self-awareness: “The drive is not blind, but intelligent in an unconscious way.”¹² This underlying unconscious, which drives the broader mechanism in which all natural things participate, constitutes nature’s spirituality. Schelling writes: “Every finite organism is related to every other upon which it to some degree depends such that nature itself must be regarded as a self-enclosed whole, an organism in its own right, a being which is the cause and effect of itself.”¹³

Nature as an organism is something greater, beyond empirical reach. It is not the seed or the natural thing itself, but neither can it exist without them—it is at once hidden and visible.¹⁴ This dynamic, polarised force that remains concealed from us, but whose product manifests physically and empirically in all aspects of nature, also reflects “the hidden side of the subject”—ourselves.¹⁵ The conflict between these two poles sustains all life: the “negative” force gives form and individuates, while the “positive” seeks to reunite all parts into “the original unity of the

absolute”—a final state achieved in death: “Life is nothing other than productivity held back from the absolute transition into a product.”¹¹

Schelling approaches the development of life through a hierarchical and theological lens, with plants at the bottom, followed by animals, and finally humans—the point at which nature’s unconscious striving for self-awareness is realised. This schematic view of nature is precisely what I seek to challenge in my own work. I’m more interested in the spiritual aspects of all life forms—not as levels in a hierarchy, but as forms of knowledge I do not understand. This is why Schelling’s broader linking of nature to the unconscious remains compelling to me.

In his later work *Clara*, Schelling attempts to formulate a more holistic philosophy of “spirit” as a continuation of his natural philosophy to demonstrate what he calls “an upward growth of nature into the spiritual world.”¹² In the novel, he explores the idea that the spiritual world is a kind of higher plane of existence that we cannot directly access, though it can communicate with us. The problem, according to Schelling, is that we are unaware of it.

One of the characters expands on this notion as a kind of “‘general conflict and contradiction with nature’ that has damaged all being”: “A deep depravity has taken root in man’s nature such that he no longer has the capacity to draw purely from one or the other source of life [nature or spirit world].”¹³ The character Clara describes how her connection to the cosmos (spirit world and nature) terrifies her: “Indeed, if any other power within me didn’t balance out this horror of nature, I would die from the thought of this eternal night and retreat of light, of this eternally struggling being that never actively is.”¹⁴

This “eternally struggling being that never actively is” is what Schelling calls *Grund*, or ground—a centre of dark potential, a chaos that precedes existence. To become a whole human being, according to Schelling, is to continually move between two planes: the lower ground—“the madness beneath consciousness”—and the higher, the sublime. Both must be examined: not only from bottom upwards, but also from the sublime downwards, towards the base.¹⁵ Schelling’s philosophy emerges at the beginning of the Romantic era, evident in his depiction of nature as melancholic and full of longing. This is also connected

B “On the edge of non-existence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me.” Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 2.

C “It lies outside, beyond the set, and does not seem to agree to the latter’s rules of the game. And yet, from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master.” Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 2.

D Morton, *All Art Is Ecological*, 72. There is a strange contradiction in Morton’s use of Kristeva’s abject theory, as Morton thinks and writes within the field of object-oriented ontology (OOO). The abject blurs the line between object and subject, whereas

OOO very much upholds these two categories. What OOO is occupied with is removing the hierarchy of subject as above object and instead emphasising the autonomy of both.

E “That word, ‘fear’—a fluid haze, an elusive clamminess—no sooner has it cropped up than it shades off like a mirage and permeates all words of the language with nonexistence, with a hallucinatory, ghostly glimmer.” Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 6.

F Kristeva’s definition of “the Other” is multifaceted. For the purposes of this text, I employ it selectively, framing the Other in the context of my own practice.

Hence, I have chosen not to include psychoanalytical interpretations of the Other as the maternal figure, but focus instead on its relationship to death, not literally as a corpse, but as the confrontation with my own mortality, the flux of my being.

G This “absolute I” should be understood as a counterargument to philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte’s reductionist view of nature as a “not-I”: a passive “screen” onto which the ego projects itself and affirms its existence through negation. McGrath, *The Dark Ground of Spirit*, 83–85.

to the concept of ground. Since all living things are founded on something else—on a ground that longs to exist in its own right—longing becomes an existential condition of all life, a feeling present in both humans and nature.¹¹ This ambiguous and capricious attitude towards nature is also symptomatic of Romanticism itself. S.J. McGrath, author of *The Dark Ground of Spirit: Schelling and the Unconscious*, defends this ambiguity as not a refusal to confront reality but rather the opposite:

The Romantic fantasizes not because she is out of touch with reality, but because the grim reality is all too real for her. Romantic melancholy, the morbid fascination with the tragic, with illness, death and transience, stands in marked tension with the romantic affirmation of the subject's deep feeling for life and experience of meaning.¹⁶

Hence, the simultaneously expansive spiritual and deeply individualised relationship with nature that characterises both Romanticism and Schelling's thinking can be seen as an attempt to embrace both “home and horror.”

There are aspects of Romanticism I recognise in my own work, including the idea of an ensouled nature, the use of intuition as a mode of knowledge, and the use of myth, but I would not situate my practice within that tradition. Meanwhile, there are certain elements of Romanticism that I deliberately resist, such as the myth of the artist as genius, which Schelling also incorporates into his philosophy, or the hierarchical view of nature that places humanity at the top, closest to (a Christian) divinity. When historical references, myths, or animated nature appear in my work, I push against idealism and any full-blown romanticisation or nostalgia—as seen, for instance, in the TV scene in my film *An Archive in Stone* (2025).¹⁷

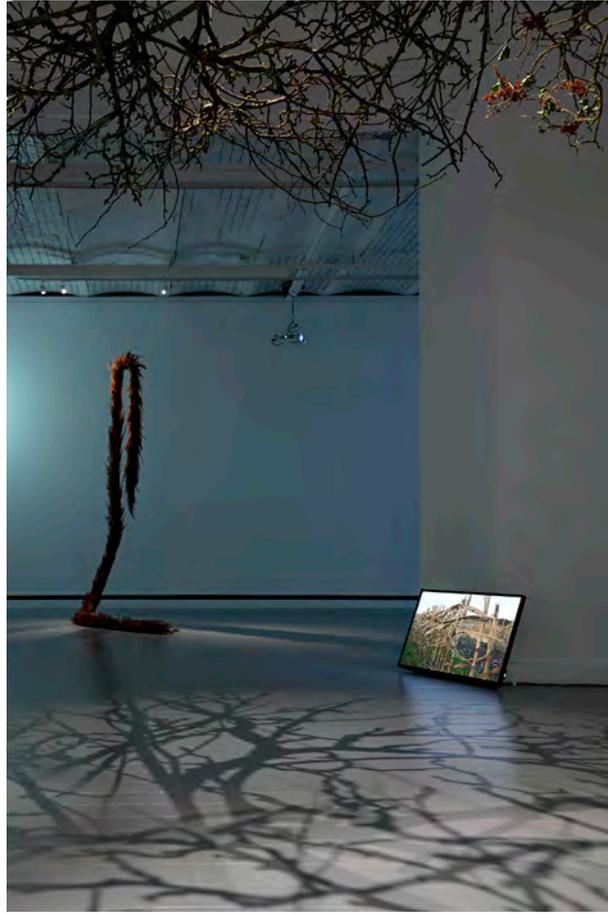
My work is not about escaping into the past or dreaming of elsewhere. Rather, it seeks to relativise and situate the self within a broader context—historically and in the present, in relation to one's surroundings—thereby offering a deeper understanding of how we are interconnected with the world around us. The magical, the mysterious, and the fictional function as tools to resist reductive ways of speaking about our environment and to preserve ambiguity, which is how I *experience* the world around me: at times as home, and, at others, as horror.

Magic, Myth, and Death as Metaphor

I will now return to the word “magic,” mentioned briefly in the opening, to expand on its meaning within my artistic practice. In my work, I retell and reinterpret local lore, legends, and old family stories involving supernatural events in an attempt to establish a renewed connection with my surroundings. I've sometimes described this as an attempt to “re-enchant” the world. Magic often plays a role in fairy tales, folklore, and local legends, but I'm not so much interested in magical rituals per se as what they reveal about our relationship with the world.

In the second chapter, *The Guide* (2024), of my ongoing film project *Lunatic* (2023–),¹⁸ set along the Wadden Sea, various historical medicinal and magical herbs are listed to highlight sixteenth- and seventeenth-century understandings of nature as well as the criminalisation of these understandings during the era's witch trials in Ribe, Denmark. In my master's project, personal and local family histories of magic are similarly used to explore past perceptions of nature, connection to landscape, and spirituality (both pagan and Christian) in the specific context of Vejen Municipality, Denmark, in the late nineteenth century. What fascinates me about magical and supernatural elements is what they reveal about (past) people's relationships to spirituality and the natural world. By revisiting and expanding these narratives, I hope to give them renewed relevance within a present context marked by ecological crisis and reductivism.¹

Magic requires mystery and “impurity.” When everything is transparent, logical, and “pure,” there's no reason to wonder—to feel mystified—as magic causes us to do. I try to evoke this sense of mystery not only through narrative but also through image, sound, and editing. Whereas I previously felt the need to logically justify every artistic decision down to the smallest detail, I now trust my intuition more. This has allowed space for moments of my *own* wonder in the process—for following irrational threads, noticing unexpected connections, and only later approaching them analytically and critically. I increasingly work with editing, montage, and collage in both image and sound as bearers of meaning, to construct a cinematic world that at first glance resembles our own, relating to real places, historical research, and familiar figures from folklore. But, beneath the surface, the deeper you go into the work, the more it reveals itself as a composite universe governed by unfamiliar laws and temporalities.



Vigga Wæhrens. Left: *Æresport*, 2025. Sorrel, rope, steel wire. Right: *Forecast*, 2025. 4K film, 01:17 min. Installation view

- H Schelling's concept of "ground" is based on philosopher, mystic, and Lutheran theologian Jacob Böhme's notion of the *Ungrund*. This term similarly describes a primordial "nothingness," God as negation, and the will to exist—an existence that God achieves through humanity.
- I Reductionism, understood here as the opposite of holistic thinking, can be read into the Global North's prevailing attitude towards nature. A reductionist approach allows nature to be treated as a resource, as it breaks the natural world down into discrete elements. By contrast, a more holistic and spiritual relationship with nature connects

us to it—a powerful incentive for protecting it. By asking "Why should we care for the world?" we shift to a more holistic mode of thinking, which also resonates with Romanticism. It implies interconnectedness, interdependence, and responsibility. A 2018 Australian study published in *Ecology & Society* explored the correlation between an individual's "connection to nature" (CN) and the language they use to describe nature. Participants who primarily used descriptive terms such as "green," "seasons," or "park" scored lower in CN than those who used more complex, normative, or experience-based language, such as references to

natural beauty, sensory experiences, conservation, or nature as "pristine." The study concluded that both language and "strategies to reduce perceptions of humans as separate from nature may be useful for increasing CN and addressing sustainability outcomes, such as increasing PBB [pro-biodiversity behaviour]." In other words, a holistic understanding of nature is directly linked to our willingness to engage in its preservation. Melissa Hatte et al., "Speaking of Nature: Relationships between How People Think About, Connect With, and Act to Protect Nature," *Ecology & Society* 27, no. 3 (2022): 6, <https://ecologyandsociety.org/vol27/iss3/art17/>.

In my bachelor's text, I wrote at length about the nature of fiction and how it can communicate something more true than reality itself, drawing heavily on Ursula K. Le Guin's reflections on fiction, science fiction, and truth.¹⁹ This quality of fiction continues to interest me, and it's one reason why I've worked so much with myth, legend, and fairy tales in recent years. Fairy tales are usually not ambiguous but rather formulaically structured, with a clear moral and characters who are decidedly good *or* evil, apart from the occasional trickster. Myths, legends, and fairy tales offer straightforward explanations for real-world phenomena. They provide insight into past (and sometimes even present) understandings of ethics, sexuality, nature, and so on, and these stories are therefore interesting to play into or challenge. Reworking the narratives into something less overt, less formulaic, and with more ambiguous characters is fruitful, because it allows me to engage directly with different modes of storytelling as well as their effects and various intentions.

Since my practice is rooted in pre-existing stories, events, images, and recordings, my processing of the material always involves making it my own—by distilling it or adding to it. In my early years at Malmö Art Academy, this typically took the form of combining two or more elements that were conceptually connected but that contrasted in semblance formally. For example, in the video work *Post Truth World* (2019), an old broadside ballad is sung in a contemporary news studio, using a present-day fake-news text in order to place the phenomenon of clickbait within a historical perspective.¹ Beyond throwing new light on familiar material through conceptual juxtaposition, the formal contrast also added a layer of humour to the work—a theme I explored extensively in my bachelor's text.²⁰ By combining two existing elements across centuries, something new emerged that exceeded the sum of its parts: something distinctly mine.

In recent years, drawing these historical lines of connection has remained important to my work, though it is no longer expressed as overtly through contrasts or comparisons. As my approach to editing has become more kaleidoscopic, guided more by underlying narratives and specific settings than by a single overarching concept, my work has evolved to accommodate multiple layers beyond simple opposition or similarity. While historical parallels and differences still interest me, I've become increasingly preoccupied with temporality itself: working with or

against linear structures and classical narrative conventions, both in form and in content, and even within the material itself. One example is the mixing of archival footage with contemporary recordings shot on 16 mm film—a method I'll explore further in the section “The Composite Image and Time.”

In my most recent analogue film, *Thresholds*, which quite directly reflects on the theme of time, it became clear to me that death as a metaphor for change, temporality, and transformation is an undercurrent in my practice that has been present since 2021, though I hadn't consciously recognised it. Conceptually, it has crept in along with the mythical. The Ghost in *Thresholds* and the Little Mermaid-inspired vlogger character in *The Oaks Tale* (2023)²¹ are examples of protagonists who undergo psychological or bodily metamorphosis and must let go, readapt, and accept. Metamorphosis involves a small death—the former self is buried. I think this theme continues to re-emerge in my practice because my projects often take a personal, existential stance in relation to topics that might be described as “societal,” such as global heating, history, or technology. For all three topics, “temporality” is a key word, and with that comes the existential: transformation, impermanence, death.

Photography and film have, understandably, long been associated with time, death, and magic. In *Ghost Stories*, the artist Pavel Büchler reflects on this connection, placing it within a contemporary (1986–98) context.²² In the essay “Black (and White) Magic,” he describes how the photograph is “born” from the “body” of the camera and the fleeting moment is given its own life: “It can be seen as the moment's sole survivor—and where there is a survivor there must have been a close contact with death.”²³ Photography and film are reproductive mediums that resurrect the moment, transforming subject or object into an image: a tangible, magical transformation, as Büchler puts it.²⁴ The photograph's capacity to reproduce a moment—to recreate us as image, as a graphic ghost—is, ironically, the closest we come to affirming our existence in the world, even as the image, by reproducing it, already negates it.^K

Once an object becomes an image, and thus a new reality, it is forever frozen as “what was”: a photographic event. What was once a physical table is now merely an image of a physical table. It has lost its original materiality and authenticity.

It can now be enlarged, mirrored, and copied endlessly, like when I insert my SD card into the media player and project a 16:9 landscape onto the screen. Philosopher and critic Walter Benjamin addresses this loss of authenticity in his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility,” describing this loss as an absence of “aura,” again drawing a link between photographic media and the spiritual.²⁵ For Benjamin, aura is “to follow with the eye while resting on a summer afternoon a mountain range on the horizon”²⁶—to absorb something out of reach into a unique here and now. Aura disappears, he writes, when “the desire of the present-day masses to bring things closer” is fulfilled.²⁷ Aura can be sensed but not touched. It cannot be removed from its place of origin or separated from its history^L—which is exactly what technological reproduction does.^M

Is this impossibility of “bringing things closer” without losing the aura what makes me feverish in my attempt to capture the atmosphere with the camera at night? A futile attempt to prevent the “here and now” from becoming “what was” the moment the shutter is released? Reproduction inevitably becomes a photographic event, a copy, but is it entirely impossible to translate even a fragment of the moment’s authenticity and aura? What if there’s something in the reproduction that is kept beyond reach, so it remains intangible and ambiguous? I try, at least, by following intuition and chasing the ambiguous—even what unsettles me—to reach a point where I can sense a glimmer of aura from the place I once stood. An atmosphere that is no longer yet still holds a strong presence in the *film’s* here and now—which, in turn, becomes the viewer’s here and now, if they are willing to accept the fiction.

- J The lyrics of broadsheet ballads were often heavily exaggerated in the Middle Ages to attract more buyers—much like clickbait headlines on social media today.
- K We doubt our own existence and seek proof that we are—and here, the photographic portrait becomes a useful aid. Yet when we allow ourselves to be photographed, what remains is merely an image of us; evidence only of our existence in the fleeting moment the photograph was taken—no longer us in the present. We accept it as proof, though it is, in fact, merely a shadow. The photograph becomes a ghost of our past existence. Büchler, *Ghost Stories*, 32.
- L By “history,” I refer both to the history of an object as a “trace”—its geographical and historical location, ownership, and so forth—and to the history of art itself. Benjamin links the concept of aura to authenticity, and authenticity or uniqueness

- to the ritualistic, which he identifies as the very cradle of art—initially through magical rituals, and later religious ones. With the loss of authenticity through technological reproduction, art also loses its connection to the ritualistic and instead becomes a tool of politics. Through its expanded possibilities for distribution, heightened exhibition value, and the medium of film’s appeal to collective experience, art becomes ideally suited to influencing “the masses.”
- M Photography signals the beginning of the “disenchantment”—moving from Romanticism towards realism—and carries within it this duality. Photography, for example, was used as evidence of the spiritual: one could capture the shadow. Yet it is precisely in this need to prove the spiritual realm’s existence that disenchantment occurs. Benjamin describes mechanical reproduction as the end of the aura, while simultaneously

identifying photographic portraits as its final stronghold: “In the fleeting expression of a human face, the aura beckons from early photographs for the last time.” (Benjamin, “The Work of Art,” 19). Both Benjamin and Büchler write from the perspective of analogue photography—an important detail. In digital media, images can be manipulated and created with far greater ease and without any material presence, particularly in the twenty-first century with the availability of free editing apps and AI. It is precisely for this reason that I value, to some extent, working with 16mm film within my practice. The physical relationship with the material—especially during the developing process, where the connection between time and physicality, in the form of metres of film, becomes clearly tangible—cultivates a different attentiveness to, and relationship with, the images on film.



Vigga Wæhrens. *Spring is for Sowing*, 2025. Installation view



Image courtesy of the artist

The Composite Image and Time

In the aforementioned film *Thresholds*, 16 mm and Super 8 footage of actual places are mixed with analogue animations of paper cut-out landscapes and ink clouds. The paper animation creates a wholly black-and-white world through which the protagonist moves. The archival quality of the 16 mm film, combined with the “non-place” of the cut-paper world, situates the film’s narrative outside any recognisable temporal framework. It becomes a kind of fairy-tale world, even though the cut-paper landscapes are in fact based on a real location in Braunschweig, where I spent a year on exchange in 2023–24. The choice of filmic medium—whether 3D animation, analogue film, DV tape, or digital video—plays a crucial role in how the work is read. Where and when are we? It may seem basic, but time and again I’m struck by how powerfully various mediums transmit vastly different emotions and associations, both historical and personal. Even though analogue film has never entirely disappeared from the filmmaker’s toolkit, we continue to ascribe particular qualities to it and associate it with a specific era in cinematic history.

“Composite image” is a term I was first introduced to by artist and professor Joachim Koester during a studio visit in my first year at Malmö

Art Academy, and which I have worked with in my practice ever since. While countless examples of the technique exist, surprisingly little written theory takes it up. I will therefore define the term based on Koester’s use of it. In a composite image, different types of film material are deliberately combined to blur, bridge, or contrast their associative qualities. This can happen over the course of a film or within a single frame, constructed as a collage of material drawn from various mediums. One could speak of the “archaeology” of a scene or film—the strata of film material from different eras layered together, and the meanings they convey. The focus here lies in the relationship between technology, temporality, and discourse, and it is precisely this focus on technological associations that distinguishes the composite image from conventional montage techniques. It’s not about condensing time, information, or associations between shots but rather about the technology of the mediums and the associations they carry.

Rachel Rose is a multidisciplinary artist whose films frequently employ the composite-image technique. In *Lake Valley* (2016),²⁸ it is rendered through an explicit collage aesthetic, where the method itself becomes central to the narrative. In contrast, the use of the composite image in



Image courtesy of the artist

Vigga Währens. *Spring is for Sowing*, 2025. Installation view

Wil-o-Wisp (2018)²⁹ is more subtle and mysterious. Here, the composite-image effects lend the film a supernatural atmosphere and offer insight into an internal emotional life. In both works, the method contributes to a strong sense of displacement and unease. As Rose describes the collage technique and displacement in *Lake Valley*: “It [the protagonist] is visually also in a kind of loneliness, because no surface is what the surface is—so pasta is hair and a table is paper—and everything becomes an extension of a substitute for something else.”³⁰

Mark Leckey’s film *DREAM ENGLISH KID 1964–1999 AD* (2015)³¹ is also packed with examples of effective use of composite image. The film is a historical visual and sonic investigation of the period spanning from Leckey’s birth in 1964 to the year 1999, constructed from audio samples and found footage drawn from both historical and personal events, places, and memories. With such a theme and the inherent challenge of making found footage one’s own, the composite image becomes an obvious and highly effective technique for creating perspective and personalising events that also exist in the collective consciousness. The film blends analogue and digital film, computer animation, miniature models, and what appears to be both self-produced and

archival material. One of my favourite sequences seamlessly weaves together all these elements into a single scene. I’ll unpack that scene and its impact below (my analysis and a link to the film are included in the following footnote).^N

The editing and repetition in this particular sequence move at such a rapid pace that the viewer doesn’t have time to decode every visual element, nor is that the point. Instead, the layering of different visual strata generates an overarching sense that something is not quite right. Repetition and shifts in tempo heighten our awareness of movement, while the scene’s material complexity makes us question where we are in time and whether what we’re seeing is even real. The fact that the scene is framed by what looks like re-filmed found footage—that is, a document of a real historical event—only deepens the sense of mystification. The digital rendering of the dressing-room scene becomes a kind of hallucination or fever dream. There’s something uncanny about it—heightened by the sound of breathing, the darkness, and the personal point of view that opens and closes the sequence. The found-footage sequence is consumed uncritically as historical document, while the composited reconstruction of the scene forces the viewer to reflect on the meaning of the scene.

N *DREAM ENGLISH KID 1964–1999 AD* is available in its entirety on Vimeo and YouTube (see previous footnote for link). The referenced scene begins at 6:50.

A black-and-white clip from a dressing room is shown on a box television, filmed with a shaky handheld camera. An audio sample announces that we are in the 1970s. In the dressing room, a woman wearing fishnet stockings and a black corset combs her hair while looking at herself in the mirror on the dressing table before her. She sits with her back to the viewer, so her face is initially seen only in the mirror. When she finishes combing her hair, she stands up and leaves the scene. The clip on the television strongly resembles re-filmed found footage. There is a cut, and the viewer is suddenly placed *inside* the scene previously shown on the television. The dressing room is now empty and dark.

There is something strange about the room—its three-dimensionality appears almost cardboard-like. The scene is filmed from a personal point of view, accompanied by the sound of nervous breathing. The light in the scene “switches on”—a pair of lamps and the carpet are illuminated. Both elements are visibly scanned images from a 1970s interior design magazine, their brightness animated through digital filters. The woman from the dressing room scene on the television re-enters—now in colour. There is something artificial about the sudden digital sharpness of her appearance. Otherwise, the scene is identical: she sits at the dressing table and combs her hair. This time, however, the camera zooms in on her fishnet stockings and cross-cuts to a close-up of RGB diodes from a colour television screen. The sequence in which she combs her hair and looks at herself in the mirror repeats several

times. It becomes increasingly apparent that the pacing has been manipulated and that the scenography is digital. The dressing room is revealed as a digitally animated imitation of the scene shown on the television, constructed with surface textures culled from 1970s interior magazines. The door has been cut from an analogue film, complete with visible scratches and dust, in contrast to the rest of the scene. The reflection of the woman’s face is taken from the first, “original” dressing room sequence on the television, while the woman we see from behind appears. I would suggest, to be a contemporary re-enactment performed by an actress. In the final repetition of the scene, digital particle noise is added across the entire image, except for the mirror reflection and the woman, thereby disrupting the illusion of realistic space entirely.

Something happens between the lines,—or more accurately, between the “layers”—in the composite-image technique. The tension between the various materials, their associations and inherent qualities, holds a wealth of implicit meaning. At the same time, it contributes to a sense of ambiguity and estrangement, as the imagery points in multiple directions at once, blurring our perception of time and place. Each individual “direction” has its own unique qualities and associations, and if one conducts an archaeological excavation of the scene, connections between these narrative directions begin to surface.

Between the Lines

The ambiguity in my work emerges through the characters, the atmosphere of the setting, and the editing, but perhaps most of all through my work with text. When I write for film, I often use exaggeration and metaphors, but the text is always rooted in or incorporates factual research. That factual content may be presented directly or take a more poetic form. What I want to communicate through the text usually exists between the lines. Ideally, this reduced clarity invites the viewer to fill in the gaps. Ambiguity here isn't about obscuring my beliefs; rather, it's a deliberate attempt to encourage viewers to enter into a dialogue with the work and, in doing so, to engage with its themes longer than they might if the film offered a clear-cut narrative that simply invited agreement or disagreement.

When writing texts, developing characters, or editing, I try to strike a balance between openness and the specific points I find interesting and wish to communicate, achieving just the right amount of ambiguity. In the following analysis, I dissect how this plays out through two works I made in 2024. First is a character and text analysis of *The Guide*, the second chapter from *Lumatic*, followed by a character analysis of the Ghost in *Thresholds*.

In *The Guide*, we follow a hooded figure walking along the dike in the marshlands near Ribe, Denmark—initially at a distance, but gradually we come closer. The figure's raspy voice cuts clearly through the howling wind. Their cloak billows and their hands gesticulate, but their face remains hidden beneath the hood. They deliver an intense, almost poetry-slam-like monologue about events that took place centuries ago, yet their tone is urgent, angry, full of indignation and thirst for revenge. Is the figure a ghost? A witch? Or perhaps one of the city's ghost-tour guides,

commodifying the town's bloody history with a theatrical act and a costume?

This uncertainty casts doubt on the reliability of the information being conveyed. Can the viewer trust the Guide? The monologue references extensive historical research, but it also fictionalises it. I wanted the character to emphasise this play of fact and fiction. Ambiguity, uncertainty, and strangeness define the entire second chapter of *Lumatic*, contrasting sharply with the first chapter, *The Wadden Sea* (2023), which is more documentary-like in its expression, with dialogue in the form of an interview. This abrupt shift from the first to the second chapter—in visual style, pacing, and the ambiguity of text and characters—raises questions about the genre of the film itself and what can be expected within its frame. The Guide is modelled on the trickster—an archetype found in folklore around the world in many different forms. The trickster is often linked to transformation, shape-shifting, and moral ambiguity. Neither purely good nor purely evil, they thrive in—or create—chaos and challenge the black-and-white morality of mythologies and lore.³²

As mentioned above, the monologue in *The Guide* plays a key role in producing the ambiguity of the character and obscuring their identity. The following is a translated excerpt from the monologue:

Behind the dike, that's where she made her home. Gray-haired, gout-ridden, and shrewd, she healed and advised sick and wounded souls.

Field horsetail closes wounds and stops bleeding. Common bugloss cures coughs and melancholy. And should you find a stone among the mugwort's roots, that's a wishing stone.

If you have warts, you'll need celandine. Its power is strongest in the graveyard under a waning moon. And if you want to see the invisible, use spores from a fern. Then the subterranean folk will appear before your eyes.

The Guide speaks of a “she” whose identity is not specified, but the references to medicinal herbs and magical formulas suggest that “she” may have been a wise woman. This kind of folk medicine cost many wise women their lives during Christianity's crusade against witchcraft,

which the monologue also addresses. The emotion and authority with which the Guide shares this knowledge might make the viewer wonder whether the Guide himself is or was a wise woman or sorcerer.

A few verses and an instrumental passage later, the background music shifts in intensity, as does the delivery of the text. Four quatrains are performed, each beginning with the line: “We defy you, Quiet Hans!” Here are verses one and three:

“We defy you, Quiet Hans!” Down with the waves, up with the dikes!
Abundance of grain and peat!
More, more, faster, faster! Unfurl the river’s curves into a straight line across the land.
Spray away the vermin and throw knowledge on the fire. The ash will do my soil good.

“We defy you, Quiet Hans!” Can you hear the bells toll? A storm is coming.
We need the wild closeness that once went up in flames.
We need unity, we need trust amid the storm’s roar.
Foxglove steadies the trembling heart, woad dyes the brightest blue.

In the first verse, the Guide speaks in first-person singular of “my soil” and calls for the streamlining and manipulation of the landscape to increase agricultural yield. The line “Spray away the vermin and throw knowledge on the fire” directly invokes the witch burnings in Ribe.^O When followed by “The ash will do my soil good,” the ashes of burned witches are—cynically and unsettlingly—likened to fertiliser.

O There were twenty-two witch trials in Ribe between 1572 and 1652. Eleven of the accused were burned at the stake. Ribe had a relatively high number of individuals charged with witchcraft and is now home to HEX! Museum of Witch Hunt, which sheds light on this dark chapter in the town’s history. See Uwe Brodersen, “Ribe – Hekseafbrændning (2),” *Dengang*, last updated 14 February 2024, <https://dengang.dk/ribe-hekseafbraending-2/>.

P The myth claims that the prosperous inhabitants of the island of Rungholt, whose wealth came from peat extraction and the

salt trade—resources drawn from the Wadden Sea—had grown arrogant. They stood on the island’s dike and shouted their defiance at “Quiet Hans,” their nickname for the Wadden Sea. The sea took the moniker of “quiet,” with its implications of harmlessness and powerlessness, as an affront, and in retaliation, chose to flood the town. This story reflects the period’s view of nature as something ensouled, powerful, and deserving of respect. Such a world view was seen by the Christian Church as a threat to God’s authority. Hence, there also exists a Christian interpreta-

The Christian persecution of witches and sorcerers in the Middle Ages is here linked to Christianity’s broader disenchantment of nature, casting the natural world as a personification of evil. The “I” in this first verse clearly views nature as a resource subject to human will, as in “Unfurl the river’s curves.” The speaker imposes a rigid moral framework onto nature, suggested by the line “Spray away the vermin”—where “vermin,” paired with “throw knowledge on the fire,” can be read as referring to wise women, though it could also signify pests or weeds in an agricultural context. The speaker in this first verse has a radically different personality and agenda from the one we encountered earlier in the monologue—or is the Guide simply being ironic?

In the third verse, the speaker shifts again. There’s a call for reconnection with nature and with fellow humans—a connection that “went up in flames” (again alluding to the witch burnings). This renewed bond is presented as essential to surviving the looming storm. In this verse, nature emerges not as something to be controlled but as a force with its own will. In verses not included here, this force is personified when the sea tells humankind: “I will devour you!”

Other verses also introduce a collective “we.” The Guide speaks on behalf of an undefined group, as if they are an omniscient narrator who knows the way forward: “We need . . .” The line “We defy you, Quiet Hans” refers to the legend of Rungholt, a town swallowed by the sea overnight in a massive storm surge in 1363.^P That imperious insult, repeated at the start of each verse, makes humans’ (self-deluded) dominance over nature ubiquitous in the text. In each verse, the

tion of why the island was flooded—one devoid of any animistic view of nature. According to this version, the island was corrupted by sin, and the inhabitants had grievously insulted the local priest by tricking him into giving last rites to a drunken pig disguised as a man and then stealing his Bible. When the flood came, the priest was the only one to survive while the rest of the town was submerged as divine punishment. See Cecilie Klint, host, *Stormflod*, episode 2, “Den Store Mand-drukning,” Nationalmuseets Mediehus, 2022, <https://natmus.dk/vorestid/podcast-stormflod/>.

speaker's shifting agenda determines whether the line should be read as an insult, as defiance, or as irony.

In each verse, the monologue's "I" moves fluidly between different voices, stories, and emotional tones—from commanding to pleading, arrogant to humble, personal to omniscient, and shifting between present and past. The character becomes a shape-shifting, ambiguous figure, everyone and no one at once. We're never quite sure which voice can be seen as authentic.

In addition to engaging with the trickster archetype and working with the character's ambiguity, I was interested in exploring what happens when a character embodies conflicting attitudes towards and narratives about nature. Voices from opposite ends of the spectrum argue with each other across history through the hooded figure, who shouts these contradictions into the wind, laying them bare for the viewer. The various perspectives and historical eras are presented not as neutral documentary or sober analysis but as one big emotional hodgepodge. The text itself takes a poetic form, rich in imagery, metaphor, and allusion that remain unexplained. This poetic approach allows for openness and interpretive freedom. Instead of pinning down every nuance or argument, the language introduces emotion and mental images—a necessary counterpart to the film's otherwise monotonous visuals. The poetic text does not explain, but rather adds, expands, and hints, leaving room for the viewer to interpret and engage. My hope is that this provokes reflection and invites the viewer to continue thinking about the work.

Now to *Thresholds* and the nameless figure I refer to here as "the Ghost." The Ghost in *Thresholds* was designed to look like the most iconic, archetypal ghost possible—a person covered in a white sheet, like a child dressed up for Halloween. It was never meant to be an actual character but rather an image, a symbol. That's also how it functions in the film: as a symbol of the disruption of linear time (and storytelling), a break in the progression from A to B, from birth to death. At the same time, the Ghost represents personal transformation. The film's protagonist, seen walking through a paper landscape, always from left to right, suddenly falls vertically, breaking "out" of that linear trajectory and into a cyclical understanding of time. Her former self dies, and she is resurrected as the Ghost: a fluid being who, through this new understanding of time, accepts

life as a continuous process, moving freely across past, present, and future.

As viewers, we may initially feel wary of the Ghost. It approaches with outstretched arms and unclear intent. But, gradually, it becomes evident that it means no harm. The visual language of the Ghost's movements and the animation—rotation, circles, spirals—contrasts with the linearity of the film's first half, where the protagonist's path and the camera movements always move in straight lines across the screen, from left to right. Unlike the Guide, the Ghost is not a trickster. It has no agency; it simply is. It exists as a symbol more than a character. However, it's not a symbol with any fixed historical meaning; instead, it carries multiple possible interpretations, which in turn makes it open to personal projection—I myself have many.

Whereas the text in *The Guide* adds ambiguity to the character, the text in *Thresholds* is far more direct, helping us to decode the film's imagery and adding another layer of meaning. The visuals in *Thresholds* are saturated with visual information and needed a text that, though poetic in tone, provides some context. The text consists of my personal reflections and associations and, at times, it carries an almost provocatively absolute tone—for example: "If you fall, it's fatal." That certainty is the voice of anxiety—the kind of fear that sees only one possible outcome: the worst. But in the film, after the protagonist falls, this anxiety proves to be (partially) unfounded.

The textual voice in *Thresholds* weaves personal thoughts and associations into the film. Meanwhile, I chose to present the text visually—as text, rather than as voice-over—precisely to counteract the personal register. There's no vocal intonation, no cues about gender, age, or nationality. When viewers read the text, they hear it in their own voices, choosing their own emphases, and in this way, they become not spectators but active participants in the film's world.

Ambiguity >> Politics // Ambiguity >> Art

In *All Art Is Ecological*, Morton connects "ambiguity" and "strangeness" to global heating, ecological awareness, and the ecological potential in art. We become aware of things when they deviate from what they once were, and to live in a world that is rapidly overheating is to inhabit a familiar place that has become unfamiliar—everything slowly shifting, behaving in abnormal ways. Things we didn't notice before make themselves

noticeable in unpleasant ways. Morton argues that much ecological debate and activism erases this strangeness by insisting on “bleak certainty.”³³ In doing so, we risk overlooking the true nature of things: strange and ambiguous. If art seeks to portray these complexities, it must position itself somewhere between the “pure” and the “impure,” balancing what Morton describes as a “haunting weirdness and a sense of unreality as much as reality.”³⁴

I too believe there’s strength in ambiguity, in consciously not choosing just one side, creating space for nuance and interpretation. When something is ambiguous, it invites the viewer to reflect. I also explored this position in my bachelor’s text, using humour in art as a point of departure.

However, when Morton dismisses activism as “not nice” and criticises it for the directness with which it addresses global heating, they overlook the very essence and effectiveness of activism.³⁵ Similarly, they set up a framework for art and its communication of data and facts that seems overly restrictive. I found these statements to be provoking and off the mark.

Image courtesy of the artist



Vigga Wæhrens. Left: *Scenography of Recalling*, 2025. HD and digitalized 16 mm film, 06:42 min.
Right: *Spring is for Sowing*, 2025. Digitalized 16 mm film, 07:54 min. Installation view

A fundamental tension exists between “ambivalence” and “politics”²—a difficult balance to strike when working with sociopolitical themes while also embracing the openness of ambiguity.

In my artistic practice, I strive to reflect, to question, and to create space for contemplation—perhaps even for hope—rather than simply to inform or raise awareness. This, I realise, is also a privilege. I’ve thought a great deal about it: If I truly want to instigate change, why am I not an activist or a politician? Why do I work in a way where concrete action is less direct? I don’t have a definitive answer, except to say that I don’t believe my professional strengths lie there. My professional drive and interests are rooted in the desire to affect others through text, imagery, and sound, with the conviction that artistic mediums can transmit the intangible—a particular quality that exists outside the frameworks within which politicians and activists typically operate.

Different professions and groups have different means of doing their work. I am not a politician. I am an artist. I want to provoke thought, and

ideally also action, but my project is not a failure if it does not meet a particular goal—as in political campaigns. There are no calculations, no overall strategy. Working in the artistic field allows me to employ other methods of handling political themes.

The artistic field leaves room for contradictions, ambiguity, doubts, failures—so, here, the tension between “ambivalence” and “politics” is not an impossibility in the same sense. On the contrary, it provides us with another, valuable angle through which we can approach societal matters. The way an artistic work is received is hard to control, and the effect might be hard to see or measure, but I still believe it’s there. It works differently, maybe also slower—but so it should be.

Project after project, my practice returns to intangibility—that which embeds itself in the body and lives on there, resisting resolution, like a conversation that never concludes. The strange must be embraced and valued. That is the kind of conversation I hope to facilitate through the ambiguity in my work.



Image courtesy of the artist

Vigga Wæhrens. Left: *Nis' Omen*, 2025. HD and digitalized 16 mm film, 04:14 min.
Right: *Høst*, 2025. Medicinal herbs, wood, steel wire. Installation view

Situated in This Time and Place

In recent years, I've experienced a shift in my practice when it comes to what ignites a new project. Rather than being purely politically initiated, my work is increasingly rooted in personal relationships and intuition. Though I've always appeared in my own work and collaborated with friends, I'm nonetheless playing a role—it's not *me*. As I've started working with family histories and places that either I or my ancestors are connected to, the personal aspect has crept a little closer.

Similarly, the film *Thresholds* emerged from personal reflections on change, and its visual language is tied to my daily bike ride to the academy in Braunschweig, where I made this film while on exchange. On those rides, I would often get new ideas, recording them as voice memos that later became the basis for a script—almost like a diary. But, still, there's a difference. The material is edited, placed within a certain context. It's not necessarily evident to the viewer that the work has a personal foundation. In *Thresholds*, the private elements have been written out of the script; in *Lunatic*, it's never made explicit that the narrative revolves around family ties, since this information isn't important for the viewer's understanding of the work. My aim was, and still is, that the works should function independent of any personal context. By combining factual research, personal reflection and relationships, and historical or literary references, I hope to create a resonance and relevance that can speak to others and situate the work within a broader framework.

In the interview I quoted earlier, Rachel Rose describes the personal point of departure as follows:

Each work I make is a process of uncovering something that starts out very small ... and subtle inside of me, a question or a feeling ..., and trying to understand that feeling and connect it to places and time outside myself, to deepen its spectrum of what it is. I try to use myself a bit like a tiny sensor and then quickly move outside myself to the place where it spots.³⁶

Although my work is no longer politically initiated, societal relevance is still very present in the research phase and forms part of my motivation. Ecological concerns in particular have played a central role in recent projects and also in my master's project, though from a more existential and historically contingent perspective, rather than making a purely political argument.

A strong example of a politically charged yet personal and poetic film language can be found in the work of artist and filmmaker Suneil Sanzgiri. His multifaceted essay films, rich in their use of the composite image, have been a major inspiration for me over the past year, both visually and in terms of narrative. *The Golden Jubilee* trilogy (2019–21) is an excellent example of how the intimate and personal can serve as a departure point for addressing larger societal structures and histories.³⁷ Sanzgiri uses family narratives, interviews with relatives, and footage and animations from his ancestral village of Cortalim in Goa. The films are personal, but never private. The personal acts as a grounding mechanism, anchoring a wider conversation about colonialism, tradition, mythology, and social structures. His use of Google Maps imagery and 3D scans of homes and landscapes has also prompted me to reflect on the relationship between the personal and the site-specific in my own practice.

Roni Horn, whose practice is closely tied to the Icelandic landscape, doesn't have a personal relationship to Iceland in the form of familial or biographical ties, but she does have a persistent presence there—a personal and professional fascination. In a 1994 interview, Horn described “place” as “an act, not an object, a verb, never a noun,” asserting that place requires active presence: “The verb, to place, as an activity in itself is a condition of being present.”³⁸

Though Horn was referring to Iceland's rapidly changing “new geology” and high tectonic activity, this mutability applies to any landscape, just unfolding at a slower pace. This theme is central to my film *An Archive in Stone* (2025), which

Q When I write “politics,” I refer to governments, politicians, and other kinds of political organizations operating within a state or system. Politics in its broader

sense, as an exchange of standpoints or discussions of societal matters outside of a system or between individuals, can of course happen within culture as well.

forms part of my master's exhibition. In it, the dry stone walls of West Jutland become portals back in time and to different temporalities (geological vs. biological). The stones themselves arrived in Denmark during the last ice age. From the Iron Age through the Middle Ages, they were gradually unearthed, thrown aside, and repurposed as field boundaries, parish lines, and property markers as the land was cultivated. The walls are a product of history's shifting relationships to land, property, and religion, and today they are protected landmarks. Hence, they remain products of their time: relics without practical function, but showcasing what Denmark values as cultural heritage. As a side-effect, they prevent industrial-scale farms from merging fields. The trees often planted along these walls have also transformed the landscape, obscuring what was once open such that one can now see only the land that one owns.

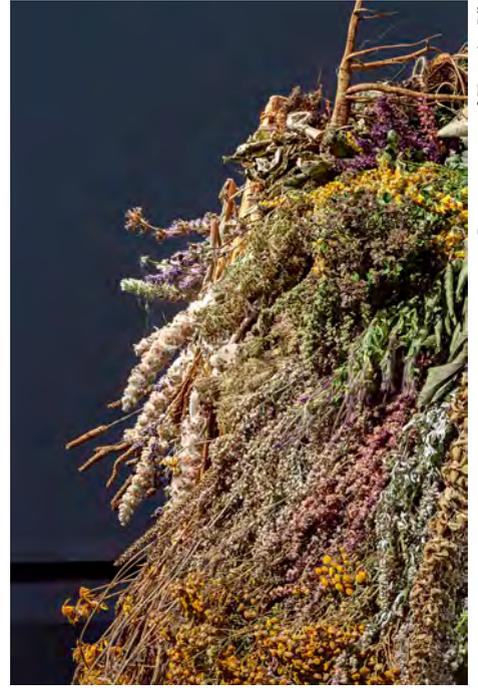
Elements like visibility, ownership, and the present-day condition of the stone walls are all tied to a personal experience of place. The dynamic between geological and biological time—myself, present as a living body; the trees, living three times longer than me; a beetle in the moss, with only days to live—emerged in the work simply through presence. It isn't necessarily a portrait of place, but the site has influenced the work. Had I chosen another location, the work would have been different. Horn describes this presence and openness that influences one's work as "letting"—a conscious passivity, an attempt to see the landscape as it is when *I* am not there.³⁹ This openness to what the landscape does is a central part of what it means for me to be present and work site-specifically. That act of "letting"

also captures what I described in the first section when I emphasised working intuitively while filming—the idea that the site, with its weather, light, and so on will always surprise you. You can only plan the work to a certain extent—after that, you simply have to wait and see how the site responds and improvise from there.

Horn acknowledges that the desire to eliminate one's presence is a contradiction with regard to a human-made artwork and an impossibility on a site.⁴⁰ My goal with site-specific work is not literally to see the place without myself in it or to remove myself from it, but more figuratively to accept that I don't control it—that it might be something entirely different than I anticipated. In that way, I am in dialogue with the site and become an active part of the work. My practice engages with the relationship between humans and nature, land, and landscape. That's why "nature" rarely appears in isolation in my work, instead accompanied by interviews or activated through performative interactions and traces of human presence—including my own.

To be present is, for me, a dual state of conscious passivity and action, always in dialogue with the place and its history. This duality only truly emerges on site, where I find a connection to the spiritual and the abject in nature, as I touched upon at the beginning of this essay. It is Kristeva's Other, which I can't fully see or understand, but that I sense. It is Schelling's notion of nature's drive to exist, which I attune myself to and seek to incorporate into my work. I unfurl my antennae and follow the hedgehog through the bushes, through the night, letting it happen.

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| 1 Timothy Morton, <i>All Art Is Ecological</i> (London: Penguin Books, 2018), 42, 58. | 7 McGrath, <i>The Dark Ground of Spirit</i> , 90. | 16 McGrath, <i>The Dark Ground of Spirit</i> , 114. |
| 2 Julia Kristeva, <i>Powers of Horror</i> (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 2. | 8 McGrath, <i>The Dark Ground of Spirit</i> , 88. | 17 Viggja Heisselberg Wæhrens, <i>An Archive in Stone</i> , 2025, HD, 16 mm film, 07:00. |
| 3 Viggja Heisselberg Wæhrens, <i>Thresholds</i> , (2024) Super 8, 16 mm film, 10:24. | 9 McGrath, <i>The Dark Ground of Spirit</i> , 85. | 18 Viggja Heisselberg Wæhrens, <i>Lunatic</i> , 2023, HD video, 20:06. |
| 4 S.J. McGrath, <i>The Dark Ground of Spirit: Scellling and the Unconscious</i> (New York: Routledge, 2012), 3. | 10 McGrath, <i>The Dark Ground of Spirit</i> , 87. | 19 Viggja Heisselberg Wæhrens, "Trust me, I'm Lying," in <i>Malmö Art Academy Yearbook, 2022–2023</i> , ed. Karin Hald (Malmö: Malmö Art Academy, 2023), 278. |
| 5 McGrath, <i>The Dark Ground of Spirit</i> , 85. | 11 McGrath, <i>The Dark Ground of Spirit</i> , 92. | 20 Wæhrens, "Trust me, I'm Lying," 278. |
| 6 McGrath, <i>The Dark Ground of Spirit</i> , 88. | 12 McGrath, <i>The Dark Ground of Spirit</i> , 107. | 21 Viggja Heisselberg Wæhrens, <i>The Oaks Tale</i> , 2023, HD, 16 mm film, 25:48. |
| | 13 McGrath, <i>The Dark Ground of Spirit</i> , 108. | |
| | 14 McGrath, <i>The Dark Ground of Spirit</i> , 108. | |
| | 15 McGrath, <i>The Dark Ground of Spirit</i> , 111. | |



Vigga Wæhrens. Left: *Æresport*, 2025, sorrel, rope, steel wire. Detail
Right: *Høst*, 2025. Medicinal herbs, wood, steel wire. Detail

- 22 Pavel Büchler, *Ghost Stories: Stray Thoughts on Photography and Films* (London: Proboscis, 2000).
- 23 Büchler, *Ghost Stories*, 33.
- 24 Büchler, *Ghost Stories*, 34.
- 25 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," trans. Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/27809424.pdf>.
- 26 Benjamin, "The Work of Art," 15.
- 27 Benjamin, "The Work of Art," 15.
- 28 Rachel Rose, *Lake Valley*, 2016, HD video, 08:25.
- 29 Rachel Rose, *Wil-o-Wisp*, 2018, single-channel video, 10:06.
- 30 Rachel Rose, "Rachel Rose Interview: Between Living and Non-Living," YouTube video, 16:36, posted by Louisiana Channel, 13 December 2018, <https://youtu.be/C6kdqij3yY>.
- 31 Mark Leckey, *DREAM ENGLISH KID 1964–1999 AD*, video, 2015; available on YouTube, 23:02, posted by Mark Leckey, 19 November 2019, https://youtu.be/yS18_iVTQEs.
- 32 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v., "Trickster Tale," last updated 28 December 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/art/trickster-tale>.
- 33 Morton, *All Art Is Ecological*, 21.
- 34 Morton, *All Art Is Ecological*, 80.
- 35 Morton, *All Art Is Ecological*, 21.
- 36 Rose, "Interview," Louisiana Channel.
- 37 Suneil Sanzgiri, *The Golden Jubilee* trilogy includes *At Home But Not at Home*, 2019, 16 mm, HD video, 11:00; *Letter From Your Far-Off Country*, 2020, 16 mm, 2K, 18:00; *Golden Jubilee*, 2021, 16 mm, 4K, 19:00.
- 38 Roni Horn, "Inner Geography: Interview with Jan Howard (extract)," in Roni Horn, ed. Louise Neri, Lynne Cooke, and Thierry de Duve (Hong Kong: Phaidon, 2000), 104.
- 39 Horn, "Inner Geography," 107.
- 40 Horn, "Inner Geography," 107.



Images courtesy of the artist

Hannes Östlund, *Essence of Desire*, 2025. Installation view, MFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2025



“The self-delineated landscape is seized at one epoch of time, and is embalmed amid all the co-existing events of the social and physical world. ... Thus are the incidents of time, and the forms of space simultaneously recorded; and every picture becomes an authentic chapter in the history of the world.”

—David Brewster, “Photogenic Drawing”¹

The Incidents of Time

In one version of the myth of Hypnos,² the god is asked by Selene, goddess of the moon, to give endless sleep to her human lover, Endymion, in order to preserve his youth and beauty. But Hypnos falls in love with the youth, and when he lulls him to rest, he makes sure that Endymion’s eyes remain open, so that he will forever be able to enjoy their beauty.

As Hypnos immortalises Endymion, the photographer immortalises the idea of their subject: when the shutter closes, the rules of time cease to hold for the subject, which for the full lifetime of the photograph remains asleep on the photograph’s surface. This suspension of the laws of time reveals what has come to pass between the exposure and the gaze upon it (youth, existence). In this way, the photographic image is, already in the moment it is created, relegated to a chronic

state as a historical document. It is not, however, reduced to being merely a testament to the past. As cultural theorist Susan Sontag writes in *On Photography*:

What photography supplies is not only a record of the past but a new way of dealing with the present, as the effects of the countless billions of contemporary photograph-documents attest. While old photographs fill out our mental image of the past, the photographs being taken now transform what is present into a mental image, like the past. Cameras establish an inferential relation to the present (reality is known by its traces), provide an instantly retroactive view of experience. Photographs give mock forms of possession: of the past, the present, even the future.³

Technologically, too, the magic of photography derives from its bond with time. In “Little History of Photography,”⁴ critic and philosopher Walter Benjamin describes how the glass plates of early photography, which were relatively insensitive to light and therefore required long exposure, allowed the subject to grow into the picture with its whole being (as exemplified by Eugène Atget’s pictures of Paris of the 1890s–1920s—whose strangeness can be partly explained by the

extended exposure that allowed static aspects of the scene to take hold, while those that moved did not). In counterpoise to this accumulation of time stands the snapshot's ability to nail down the world (the later photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson spoke of the "decisive moment,"⁵ which is sometimes visible only in hindsight). The difference between the light drawing ("photography" derives from Greek and can be translated as "drawing with light" or "writing with light") and the snapshot has been thoroughly catalogued since the birth of the latter. But, in some sense, these two poles are mutually constitutive. The emergence of the snapshot could not have happened without the light drawing, just as the original photograph can hardly be understood today without its relation to the snapshot. Meditating on this interplay, art historian Thierry de Duve concludes his "Time Exposure and Snapshot: The Photograph as Paradox":

An asymmetrical reciprocity joins the snapshot to the time exposure: whereas the snapshot stole a life it could not return, the time exposure expresses a life that it never received. The time exposure doesn't refer to life as process, evolution, diachrony, as does the snapshot. It deals with the imaginary life that is autonomous, discontinuous, and reversible, because this life has no location other than the surface of the photograph. By the same token it doesn't frame that kind of surface-death characteristic of the snapshot, which is the shock of time splitting into *not anymore and not yet*. It refers to death as the state of what has been: the fixity and defecation of time, its absolute zero.⁶

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"A photograph acquires value only through a displacement in time and space," writes author and photographer Hervé Guibert in *Ghost Image*.⁷ A photographic image's effect on time does not occur in isolation; time also does something to the image. Sontag elaborates:

The particular qualities and intentions of photographs tend to be swallowed up in the generalized pathos of time past. Aesthetic distance seems built into the very experience of looking at photographs, if not right away, then certainly with the passage of time. Time eventually positions most photographs, even the most amateurish, at the level of art.⁸

This displacement is evident in Atget's oeuvre. He initially became a photographer to support himself,⁹ and he was also motivated to document the vanishing Paris (the city underwent great changes during the years he was active, with many of the oldest quartiers subjected to renewal). His deed was not publicly known during his lifetime, but his friend and colleague Berenice Abbott purchased many of the glass negatives and albumen prints from his estate—it was she who found him dead in his apartment, when she came to deliver a portrait of him she had made a few days earlier. She would devote decades to his archive, which was made up of approximately ten thousand negatives and their attendant positives. Abbott introduced Atget's photographs to her friend Walter Benjamin, who was enchanted. He would go on to mention them in several of his texts, which is how they found their place in history and why we know of them today. The glass plates and albumen prints were made as functional photographs, but with time they have come to be understood as artworks, exceeding their role as historical documents.

The introduction of exhibition value changes the function and, consequently, the identity of the work. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,"¹⁰ Benjamin presents a groundbreaking theory about the artwork's cult value versus its exhibition value. Cult value is, in brief, that which makes a specimen unique: an amalgam of its "authenticity" (that which testifies and links the object to its history) and its "aura." Exhibition value, on the other hand, is made possible through mechanical reproduction (photography) at the expense of the work's cult value. Mechanical reproduction shifts the work's original value to its visibility, availability, and task as a publicly exhibited object.

A photograph whose task was originally to show that which it portrayed suddenly becomes inward-looking (in the sense that it is now about the medium itself, not the picture). This elevation of functional photographs into art is not without complications, Sontag argues:

The real problem with bringing functional photographs, photographs taken for a practical purpose, on commercial assignment, or as souvenirs, into the mainstream of photographic achievement is not that it demeans photography, considered as a fine art, but that the procedure contradicts the nature of most photographs. In most uses of the camera, the

Image courtesy of the artist



Hannes Östlund, *Negativ nr 18*, 2024. Silver gelatin glass negative, 180 × 240 × 2 mm. Installation view



Image courtesy of the artist

Hannes Östlund, *Negativ nr 16 (Endymion)*, 2024. Silver gelatin glass negative, 240 × 180 × 2 mm.
Installation view

photograph's naïve or descriptive function is paramount. But when viewed in their new context, the museum or gallery, photographs cease to be "about" their subjects in the same direct or primary way; they become studies in the possibilities of photography. Photography's adoption by the museum makes photography itself seem problematic, in the way experienced only by a small number of self-conscious photographers whose work consists precisely in questioning the camera's ability to grasp reality. The eclectic museum collections reinforce the arbitrariness, the subjectivity of all photographs, including the most straightforwardly descriptive ones.¹¹

From the shifting context, these works (which have become, precisely, works) are given a quality that appears almost auratic—though never a full aura in the Benjaminian sense, since the medium's entire point is its reproducibility (and therefore possibly with the exception of the daguerreotype).¹²

An Authentic Chapter

As a trace of light and time, photography is credible. In 1843, the Belgian police began using cameras to document inmates in the country's prisons, and by the turn of the century the Parisian police authorities were using a highly evolved, systematic method for archiving both perpetrators and crime scenes. Ever since, photographs have been used as evidence in trials all over the world, precisely because of the medium's incomparable ties to reality. A picture that's materialised through an (analogue) photographic process is irrefutable proof that something happened, even if we have known since the medium's infancy about its congenital subservience to subjective framing and retouching. (The entwinement of photography and credibility is found even in language: we call a camera lens an "objective," and "exposure" also means that something is *revealed*.)

In the second half of the nineteenth century, a grieving person could have themselves portrayed with the spirit of a deceased loved one, invoked for this particular moment. Technically speaking, the invocation occurred only in the operator's darkroom after the séance, through combination printing using several negatives, but the results nevertheless furnished proof that the person in the portrait was not alone. In 1869, photography's credibility was tried for the first time when William Mumler was brought before a United States court over his ghost photographs. The pros-

ecutor viewed them as fraudulent. Mumler was cleared, but the trial itself meant that the medium's credibility was seriously called into question.

At the end of the same century, a popular theory held that every person's (and every animal's) eyes recorded the last thing they saw before death. Eyes were taken from corpses and cadavers and brought to laboratories in the hopes of extracting this final moment. The method that was developed—optography—consisted of fixing the light-sensitive receptors of the retina—visual purple—the way a silver print is fixed. Scientists subsequently documented such "fixed eyes" at the largest scale allowed for by contemporary technology. Some of these documents were viewed as credible at the time—if not as proof, then as circumstantial evidence. (For instance, a picture circulated of a laboratory rabbit's fixed retina, about which it was said that the image's black lines showed the barred window that the rabbit had been facing in its moment of death.)

In 1855, an official photographer was dispatched to document a war for the first time (unofficial attempts to photograph such events had previously been made). Roger Fenton's *Valley of the Shadow of Death* (1855) shows a dirt road in a craggy landscape, weighed down by some twenty cannon balls. It offers an index of the battle understood to have taken place there just moments before. Since the negatives of the time required prolonged exposure, the photo was slowly composed and shows the traces of battle rather than the war itself (like Fenton's other photos, it lacks corpses and other more macabre motifs).

One and a half centuries later, in *Regarding the Pain of Others*,¹³ Sontag publicised the existence of a twin exposure from that same moment: a nearly identical glass plate, differentiated only by the lack of cannon balls on the road. Suspicion spread that Fenton had placed the ammunition on the road to make a second, more dramatic exposure, though it also could have been the other way around (it was not known at the time which of the exposures was the first—and either way, the tampering was a fact).

A few years after Sontag revealed the previously unknown glass plate to the general public, documentary filmmaker Errol Morris uncovered evidence for the less dramatic picture, the one of the empty road, being the first of the two exposures.¹⁴

The fact that the photographer (or commissioner) can choose what is portrayed is, and has always been, obvious. But the autonomous and mechanical aspects of the photographic process have nevertheless invited naïveté about the medium's (and the photographer's) innocence. Per historian Ludmilla Jordanova, in *The Look of the Past: Visual and Material Evidence in Historical Practice*:

It is common to *see through* photographs. . . . Spectators place a special kind of trust in what photographs depict, although it is well known now, and has been since the invention of the medium, that manipulation is easily done. Those reporting the news use photographs in just this way, to—apparently—tell it as it was. Thus we are prone to see through the representation to an original scene, and to engage with that scene as if it were immediately before us.¹⁵

A Collection of Pictures

A fantasy: an album containing photographs. What links them is that they all have something that causes them to linger in my mind. In *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*,¹⁶ philosopher Roland Barthes presents a method for analysing photographs, by which a photo's contents is split into "*studium*" and "*punctum*." He describes the first as anchored in the viewer's knowledge, culture, and reason. It always harks back to the information that the photo holds: what it shows or what it speaks of. The other element, the *punctum*, he describes as a disruption or a hole in the *studium*. A *punctum* is personal, more often than not private, and it is what hits, or strikes, the viewer. It is something that bypasses the intellect—a cut in the *studium*. A photo can have one, none, or several *puncta*, since this element is unpredictable and idiosyncratic.

John Alinder's *Negativ 0596*, dated 1910–20, shows two young men, dressed in what must be assumed to be their best clothes: blazers with matching dress pants, well-ironed shirts, neatly tied neckties, stylish hats, and shiny shoes (something tells us that this is not their everyday clothing; perhaps it's the hands, which look accustomed to physical work). They are standing in a garden, by a simple swing that hangs from a rope on one side and a chain on the other. The rope and chain lead to a tree branch. The first man is leaning casually against the swing, holding the chain with his right hand, his grasp no tighter than what he needs to keep his balance. The other man is standing close to him, turned

the same way. His legs are placed on either side of the first man's left leg, and he rests against the first man's hip. Their legs are loosely intertwined. His right hand reaches behind the first man's back, and their hands graze each other on the chain, though they're not overlapping. He is holding on tight. He has placed his left hand on his own hip, with the elbow jutting out from the body. The first man has his arm around the second man's waist, his hand placed right above the other's. They are both looking directly at the camera. At first blush, their expressions could be mistaken as solemn, but both communicate a sense of excitement. The second man's face also holds signs of anxiety, while the first man's face reveals a hint of curiosity. In the background is a simple wooden fence that marks the end of the garden. Behind it, a glimpse of a field. What has so far been described is the photograph's *studium*. But what strikes me in this image—its *punctum*—is a small detail that has stuck with me: the thumb on the first man's left hand, the hand holding the other man's waist, is blurry. If you look closely you'll notice that it's been exposed in two positions. By all indications, the first man couldn't help but move his thumb over the other man's waist, as if in a caress. Otherwise, they were standing absolutely still.

In Greg Girard's *Sailors Home* (1973), we face a nearly square, two-floor, yellow-brick facade. A motel in Vancouver for sailors. The customer is indicated by faded painted letters that run across a wide dark band right underneath the roof's pearl frieze. The facade's seven windows have their curtains drawn, save for one that is half-lifted and lets out a warm glow into an otherwise blue night. Gaps in the blinds reveal that two more rooms have the lights on (that the entrance of the building next door is illuminated is of no interest to us here). We are at a safe distance, across the street, with as much sky, road, and sidewalk as there is motel in the frame. The first aspect that strikes me is the photo's blues contrasting with the yellow window. The second is the text; the third is the building's disrepair. It's not obvious what comes next. This is a photograph that demands my effort, not to pay attention but to understand what it is that's touched me (because I am touched). Describing the image, I arrive at the facade, perhaps the glimpse of the eave. It is what is not showing—what it only hints at—that touches me. It's easy to imagine what drama unfolds in the illuminated rooms, even if each scene looks different from the next.

Hervé Guibert's *Chambre du Mathieu* (c. 1989). A black-and-white 35 mm photograph of an interior. In the centre is a divan, its legs outside the frame, draped in a white sheet. The sheet appears pressed into the cushion, with small, sharp wrinkles, as if it's been left there for a long time. For such a simple cloth, it hangs heavily over the armrests (it looks as if it would hold its shape if it were lifted). To the right is the edge of a desk, and atop it: an unidentifiable object, a cotton spool with white sewing thread, and part of an architect desk lamp pinching the tabletop. To the left: an open white window shutter and a white linen curtain waiting patiently in one of the corners of the room. Above the divan hangs a small painted, unframed portrait. It's not a miniature, but it is small. It depicts a man from a bygone era, dressed in a cravat and a top coat with long lapels. The man looks at us (sternly). The photograph's drama unfolds on the white wall behind him, and on the window shutter: rectangles of light from the glass panes, and inside of them, the hazy shadow drawings of a tree crown.

It would be easy to call this a snapshot—it would be almost cowardly. The photograph looks more like a meditation on something you notice while in a state of boredom or satisfaction. It shows almost nothing. And yet, my initial fantasy is that this image is suffused by an act of lovemaking that's just finished. Not in front of the camera, but behind it. It brings me to Guibert's words in *Ghost Image*.

"The majority of your stories ooze homosexuality."

"How could it be otherwise? It's not that I want to hide it, or that I want to boast about it arrogantly. But it's the least I can do to be sincere. How can you speak of photography without speaking of desire? If I mask my desire, if I deprive it of its gender, if I leave it vague, as others have done more or less cleverly, I would feel as if I were weakening my stories, or writing carelessly. It's not even a matter of courage (I'm not militant), it has to do with the truth of writing. I don't know how to say it more simply. The image is the essence of desire and if you desexualize the image, you reduce it to theory."¹⁷

The picture stays with me, again because it suggests something. What that is is, of course, nothing but projection.

Curator Anthony Huberman on Guibert's depopulated images, when they were shown at KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin in the summer of 2023 (*Chambre du Mathieu* among them):

Laconic and reserved, these photographs offer an approach to portraiture where what is missing from the image is what counts. Charged with love as well as with trauma, these interior spaces invite imaginative readings of the people who belong or once belonged there. His photographs lay open the artist's most intimate spaces while also maintaining the secrecy of private moments, with the protagonists kept safely (or tragically) out of the frame or at a distance.¹⁸

A Concluding Note

This essay is an attempt to approach, in writing, the essence of photography from an artist's perspective. It is anchored in the photography of the pre-digital era, in particular the earliest techniques. Not necessarily out of romanticisation of the past, but more conclusively because analogue photography offers fertile ground for my studies.

A few years ago, I found the explanation to the particular lustre that exists in many antique photographs, a term from physics: halation. It is technically a defect, difficult to avoid when photographing with glass negatives. The lustre is a result of the light, as it is let into the camera, hitting the negative's light-sensitive emulsion more than once. Some of the light travels through the emulsion side, is subsequently reflected by the back side of the glass plate, and hits the emulsion a second time. The result is that the darkest parts of the negative (the brightest parts of the positive) are made diffuse, somewhat dispersed, looking as if they push through the image in an almost violent way.

Since it is in photography's technological youth that its relationship to time is the most obvious, the glass negative is well-suited for artistic studies of this connection. There is a potential in the negative picture: an unopened source from which something can spring. Thus emerges, through illumination, a suite of miniature subjects. The potential can be realised at any moment, through the final stage of photography: silver is blackened by light, desensitised, refined in a bath of gold (*sel d'or*)—parts of the silver are replaced by the purest of metals. The subject is immortalised.



Images courtesy of the artist

Hannes Östlund, *Negativ nr 3*, 2023. Silver gelatin glass negative, 88 × 119 × 2 mm.
Installation view



Hannes Östlund, *Negativ nr 8*, 2024. Silver gelatin glass negative, 88 × 119 × 2 mm.
Installation view

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- 1 David Brewster, “Photogenic Drawing,” *Edinburgh Review* 76 (1843): 330.
 - 2 The god of sleep in Greek mythology.
 - 3 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin Books, 1979), 166–67.
 - 4 Walter Benjamin, “Little History of Photography,” in *Selected Writings*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 507–30.
 - 5 Peter Galassi, *Henri Cartier-Bresson: The Early Work* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1987), 9–50.
 - 6 Thierry de Duve, “Time Exposure and Snapshot: The Photograph as Paradox,” *October*, no. 5 (Summer 1978): 114, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/778649>.
 - 7 Hervé Guibert, *Ghost Image*, trans. Robert Bononno (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 69.
 - 8 Sontag, *On Photography*, 21.
 - 9 Atget was an actor who learned to photograph after finding himself unable to make a living in his chosen guild. The photographs were primarily intended for painters, who liked to use them as models for details in their work.
 - 10 Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” trans. Harry Zohn, in *Art in Modern Culture: An Anthology of Critical Texts*, ed. Francis Frascina and Jonathan Harris (New York: Harper-Collins, 1992).
 - 11 Sontag, *On Photography*, 132–33.
 - 12 The daguerreotype was invented in 1839 by Louis Daguerre, and is a photographic technique (the first to be commercially viable) that creates a positive original on a silver-plated copper plate, almost always presented in a velvet- and brass-clad case. Today, a daguerreotype is as much an artefact as a photograph: it is a unique image object that’s lived through most of photography’s history and has an incredibly sensitive, mirror-like surface that only allows the image to be viewed from certain angles. Its wealth of details is unsurpassed by all subsequent techniques—even digital photography. Because a daguerreotype is made from a silver-plated copper plate that has been made light-sensitive over mercury vapor, the resulting image is entirely free of graininess, even viewed through a microscope.
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 - 15 Ludmilla Jordanova, “Photographing ‘the Family of Man,’” in *The Look of the Past: Visual and Material Evidence in Historical Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 130.
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 - 17 Guibert, *Ghost Image*, 83.
 - 18 “Hervé Guibert – This and More,” KW Institute for Contemporary Art, 2023, <https://www.kw-berlin.de/en/exhibition-herve-guibert/>.

Image courtesy of the artist



Hannes Östlund, *Negativ nr 10*, 2024. Silver gelatin glass negative, 88 × 119 × 2 mm.
Installation view

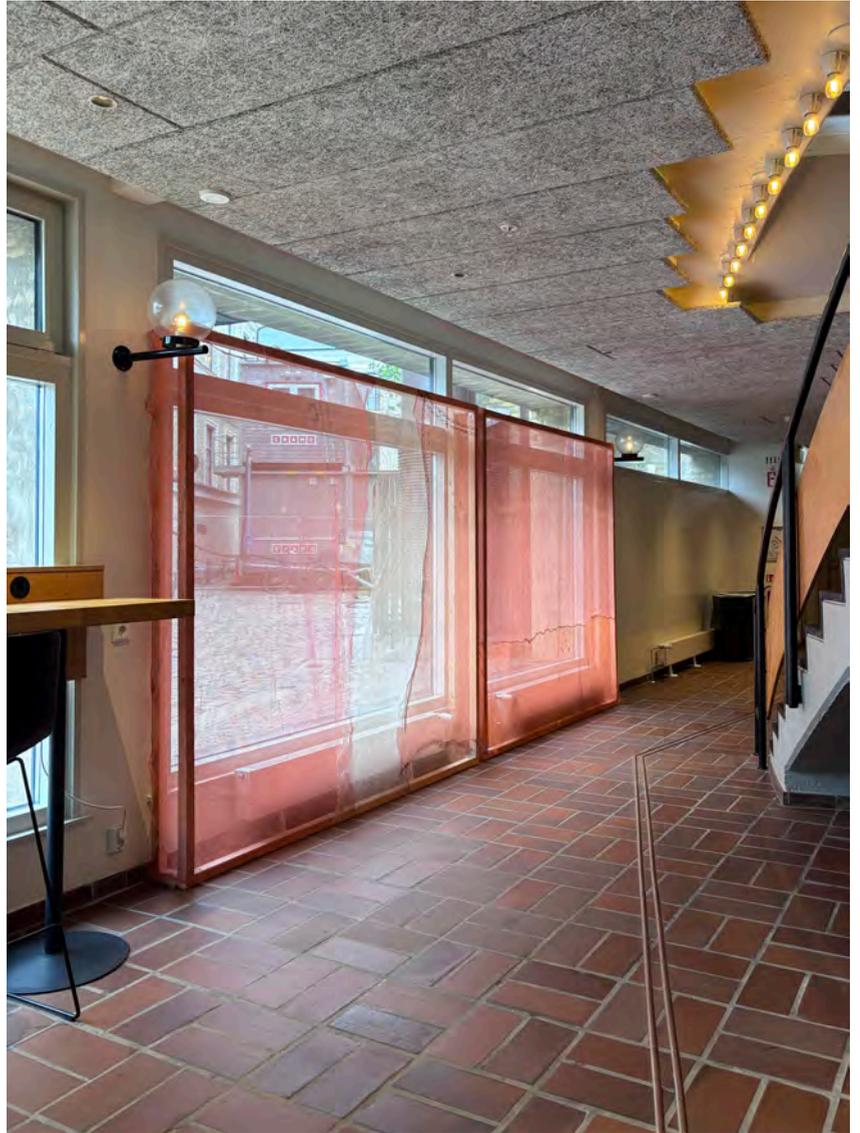
Master of Fine Arts
Year 1

Sebastian Poras Adolfsson
Rasheh Sadr Ashkevari
Andrea Sitara Gran
Julia Karla
Siri Hammarén
Matilda Kenttä
Maya Krtić
Fredrika Lindeberg
Benita Massignani
Sturla Magnusson
Cecilie Mark
Line Rolf
Anania Røde
Susi Schmid
Rasmus Strøyer



Images courtesy of the artist

Sebastian Poras Adolfsson, *Medan Staden Sovor / While The City Sleeps*, 2025. Scaffolding net, wood, digital print of photos, sound in speakers, variable dimensions. Displayed at Galleri Alva, Umeå

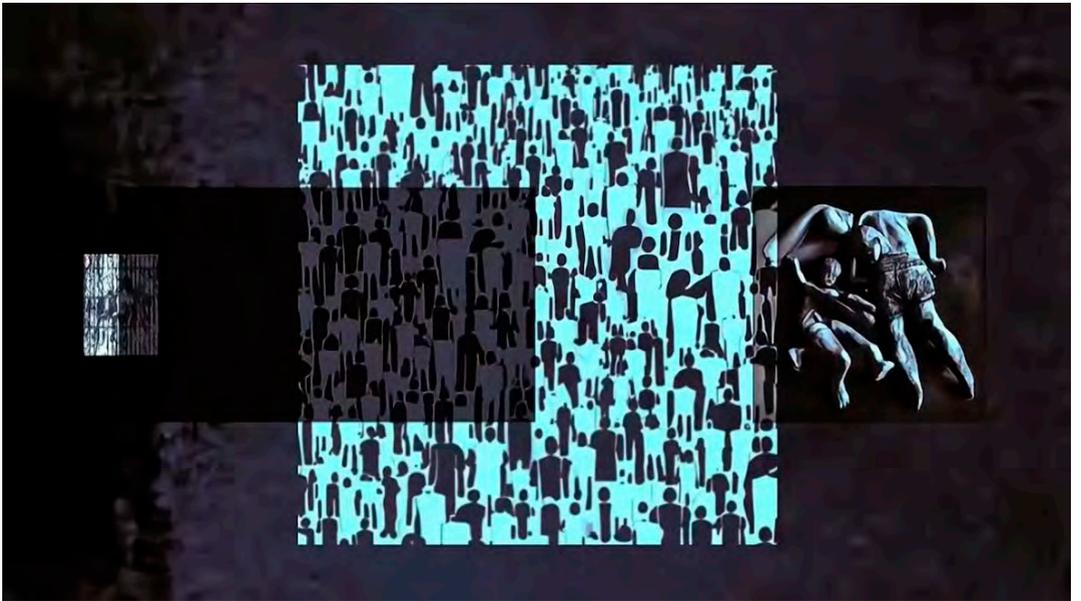


Sebastian Poras Adolfsson, *Medan Staden Sovor / While The City Sleeps*, 2025.
Displayed at Stadshallen, Lund



Images courtesy of the artist

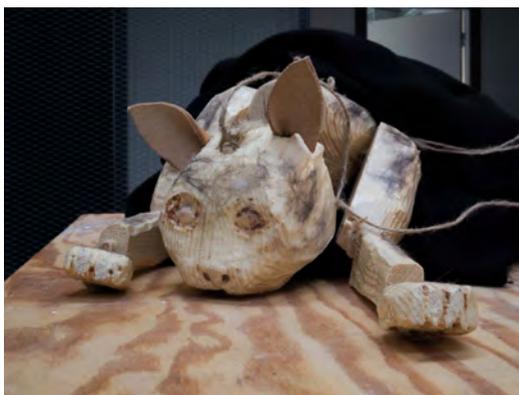
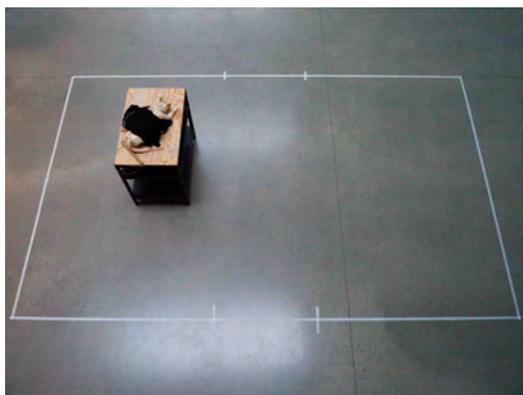
Rasheh Sadr Ashkevari, *Faces in Transit*, 2025. Compilation video, composite video, image, sound, mixed media digital art



Rasheh Sadr Ashkevari, *Faces in Transit*, 2025. Compilation video, composite video, image, sound, mixed media digital art



Images courtesy of the artist

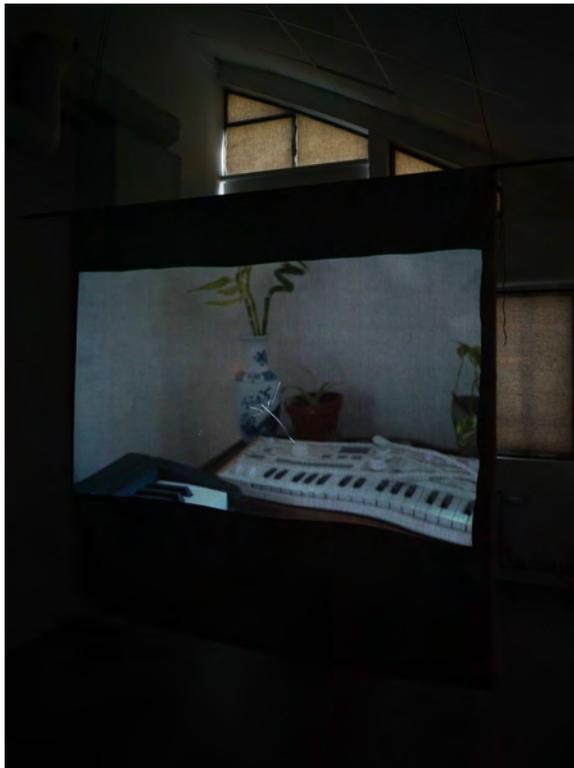


Andrea Sitara Gran, *The Animal That Therefore*, 2025. Performance with help from Jelena Pajić and Alice Ryne, 20:00 min. Installation (masking tape, table, chair, wood, thread, leather, cork, cat hair)



Andrea Sitara Gran, *To sing is a state of mind / In the tree there was a cat and in the cat there was a friend* 2025.

Video and sound installation, two films projected onto a linnen canvas on opposing sides, 06:45 min. Music by Daniele Di Girolamo and Marco Curci





Images courtesy of the artist



Julia Karla, *The force that through the green fuse drives the proximity*, 2025. Installation consisting of Clematis Vitalba, venetian blinds, app. 220×400 cm



Julia Karla, *Cloud Antonym*, 2025. Installation consisting of concrete, concrete reinforcement mesh, 500 × 150 × 150 cm



Images courtesy of the artist

Siri Hammarén, *Not yet titled*, 2025. Video, 11:21 min. DOP Leo Zhang





Images courtesy of the artist

Matilda Kenttä, *I massage geometry with scented oil*. 2025. Moving boxes and lavender oil, 430 × 260 cm



Matilda Kenttä, *Writing along walls, between legs and water pipes*, 2025. Spun cardboard, 45 × 40 cm, 50 × 60 cm, 245 × 55cm

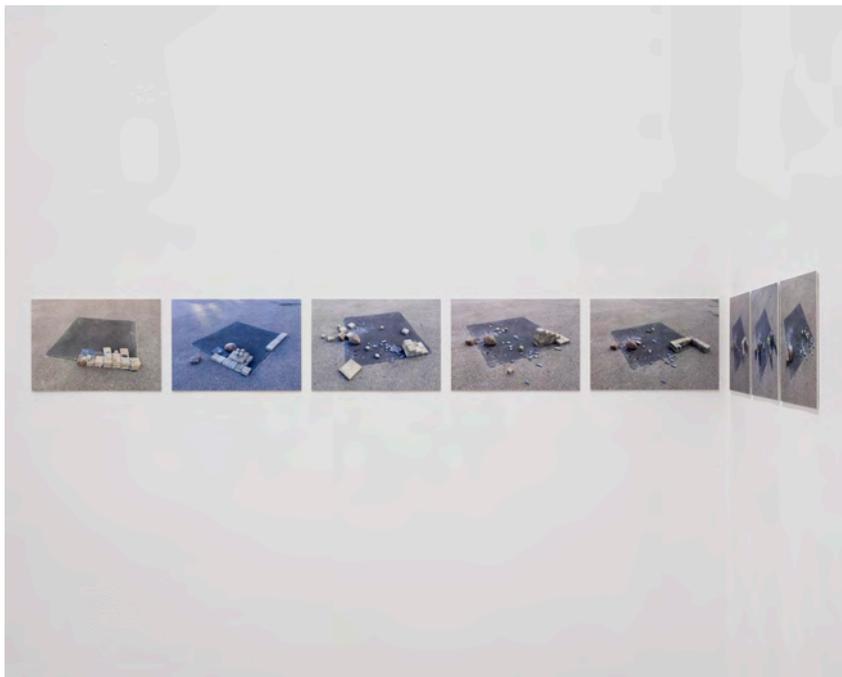
Maya Krtić



Images courtesy of the artist



Maya Krtić, *Evidence*, 2025. Glass mirror, aluminum, steel, laserjet prints, board, open window



Over the course of a week in April, I watched from the window of my studio the space in the parking lot collectively being shaped by babies, children, and adults. Working both individually and in groups, they built upon one another's work using discarded material found by the garbage container.



Maya Krtić, *21 Pairs of Hands*, 2025. Laserjet prints on board, 21 × 252 cm



Images courtesy of the artist

Fredrika Lindeberg, *Fluctuations 1, 2, 3, 4*, 2025. Oil on canvas, 45 × 40 cm, 43 × 40 cm, 57 × 40 cm, 40 × 45 cm



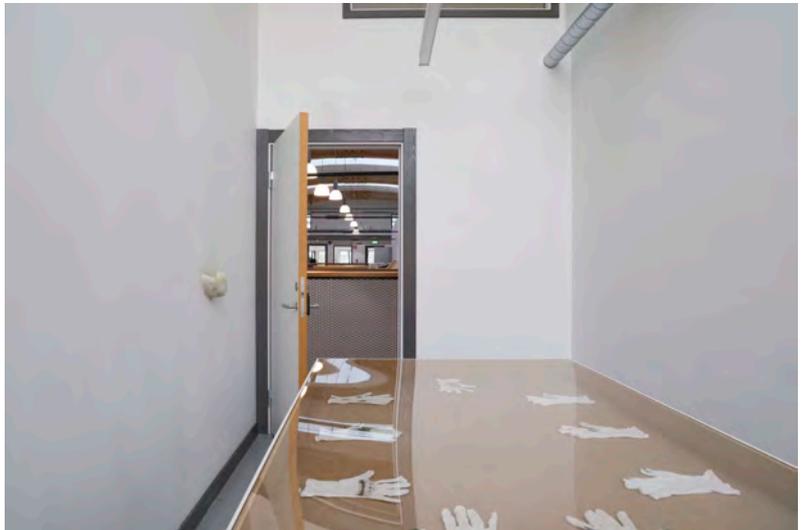
Benita Massignani



Images courtesy of the artist



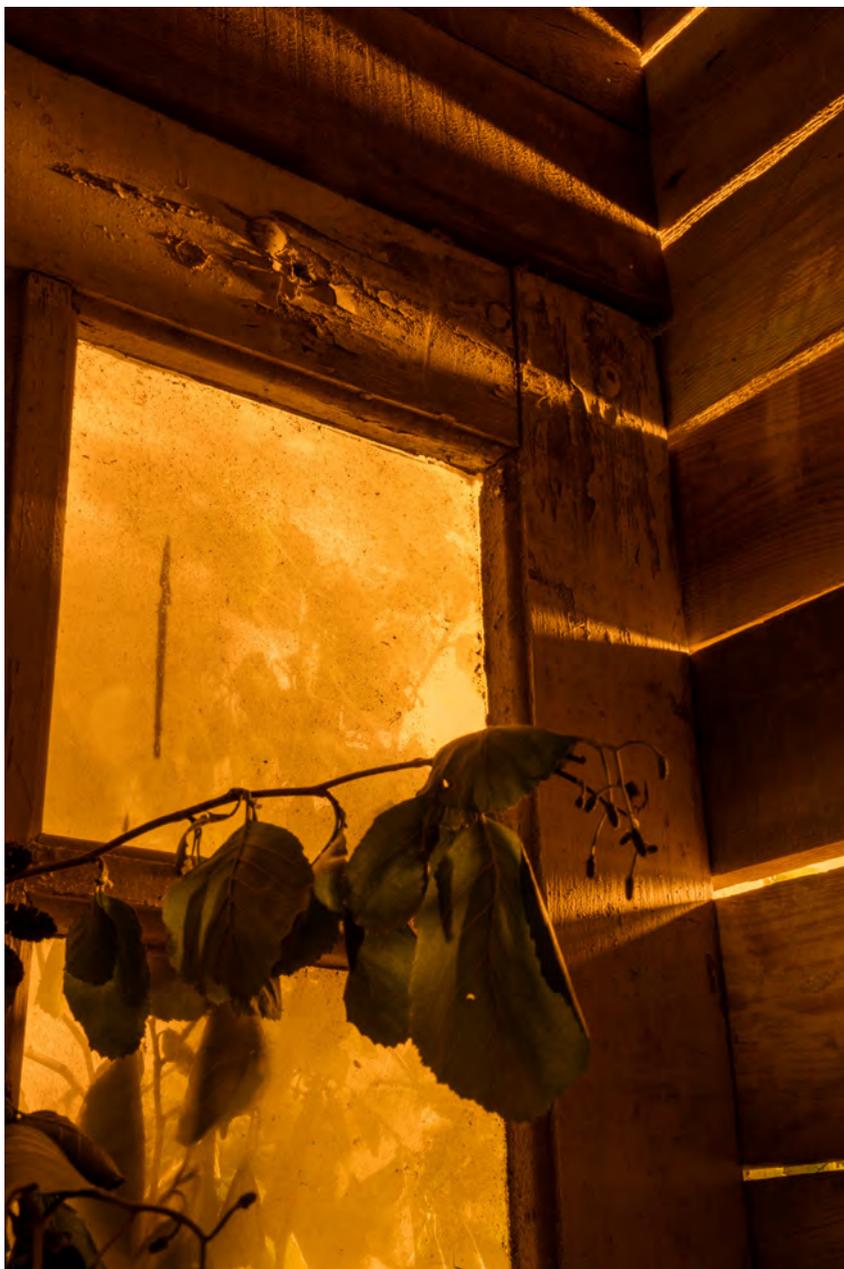
Benita Massignani, *Stoffelijke overschotten*, 2025–, Cyanotype on archival gloves



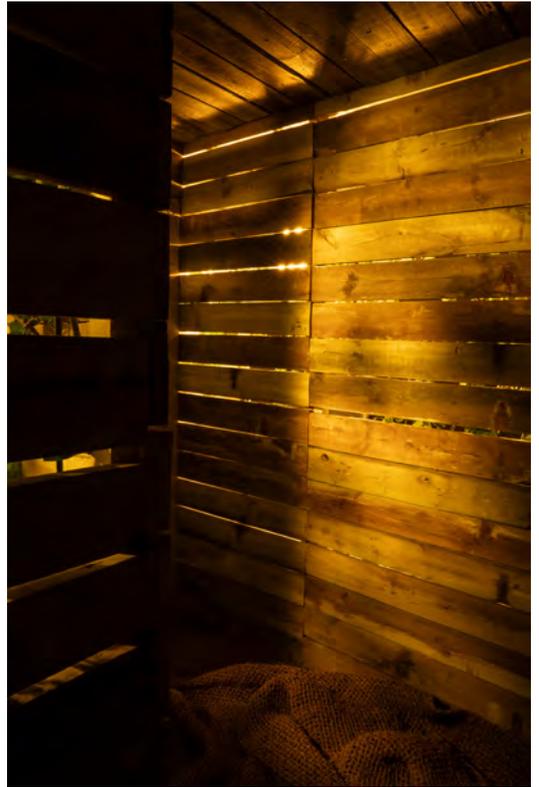
White archival gloves, a tool used to avoid leaving traces - specifically fingerprints—on fragile, valuable or sacred items. A tool held to pristine standards, now stained on the palm.

On the gloves we find prints of objects positioned as if they were held too long; objects, usually found supporting a threshold, adjacent to their more relevant content: a tag, a cardboard box, a key, a stanchion, a plastic folder.

Now encased in a vitrine, the gloves - themselves already a second layer of the peripheral —displaying a chain of making meaning through contact, of drawing significance from mere proximity.



Images courtesy of the artist



Sturla Magnusson, *Outside There Was a Bird, It Didn't Sing, Just Waited*, 2025. Installation and sound



Images courtesy of the artist

Cecilie Mark, *Live Love*, 2025. Stoneware, clay, soil, different flowerseeds, water, 45 × 35 cm



Line Rolf



Image courtesy of the artist

Line Rolf, *Dream Grrr (outtakes from a reading for the ventilation system)*, 2025. Two channel sound, pastel and pencil on wall, xerox print



Image courtesy of Isaac Rizell



Image courtesy of the artist

Left: Line Rolf, *IF YOU KNOW HOW TO LOOK AT THE SKY, WITHOUT ASSOCIATIONS IT WON'T SOLVE ALL BUT SOME (a reading from the ventilation system)*, 2025. Performance, 16:00 min
Right: Line Rolf, *Horse Mother (sentence 1, 2, 3)*, 2025. Smoky plexiglass, b&w photographs, 3 pieces of 100 cm × 20 cm

[in random order] excerpts from monologue: at the toilet one day I hear a voice singing carried through the ventilation pipes a girl is singing in a room below I'm sure until I realise my phone is playing from down in the back pocket of my sweat pants it sings heavy water / I'm not sure how much of this is true and what are details I am making up / it's like an empty landscape of sandy hills pines oaks start growing on their own / she's asked me to photograph them together her and the horse I agree to do it cus I want to look at them her and the horse from a distance / the horse might have a hormonal dys regulation Eva the horse veterinary says it is as if her instincts are running in over drive / the forest will always leap back into forest if you don't hold your ground no one wants the black cats in this decade they are low on demand because the camera finds it hard to capture nuances and details in the black fur / instead it turns it into an undefinable area of darkness and we should have called him Lucy and a rose is a flower with petals say ahhh / my grandfathers understood the flexibility of systems the relativity of systems how to build worlds to carry things around in how to move money from one pocket to another pocket without loosing them / I'm a garden an entrance hall the lobby the gate to heaven the actual gate I am the hole in your sleeve you like to push your finger through when you're bored / from below from inside the ventilation pipes a voice is surfacing spying lurking and there is a disappointment with the conversation it sings heavy water.

Line Rolf, *IF YOU KNOW HOW TO LOOK AT THE SKY, WITHOUT ASSOCIATIONS IT WON'T SOLVE ALL BUT SOME* (a reading from the ventilation system), 2025. Performance, 16:00 min

Line Rolf



Images courtesy of the artist

Anania Røde, *Untitled*, 2025. 100 × 70 cm





Images courtesy of the artist

Susi Schmid, *WORKING THE NIGHTSHIFT*, 2025. Installation view





Images courtesy of the artist

Rasmus Strøyer, *Instant Death (I-II)*, 2024. Found polaroids, bookbinders board
30 × 42 × 4 cm



Master of Artistic Research
Year 2

Orestis Mavroudis

Introduction

Any artwork is the result of mental assessments involving decisions based on both intuition and logic,¹ though the balance between the two varies from practice to practice. Likewise, an artwork's impact emerges from the dynamic interplay between structurally determined factors and a degree of aleatory influence. The diversity of agents involved in the creation and reception of an artwork, alongside the complexity of the processes at play, has led to the development of multiple analytical frameworks. Amid this breadth of coexisting approaches, the present text narrows its focus to the framework of an economy of means in visual arts, with emphasis on the artwork itself. The reflections presented here stem from my perspective as a practitioner of this framework, informed by both my artistic and my curatorial work.²

The discourse is framed within the Western neoliberal paradigm and the text begins by outlining a broad distinction between creation-based and intervention-based art practices, focusing on the symbolic significance of their material and immaterial dimensions. The analysis centres on the production processes each practice employs and how these processes define the overall economy of the artwork. Over the following pages, no rigid boundaries are imposed, as material, immaterial, and production aspects continuously shape and inform one another. Subsequently, by situating the theory of an "economy of means" within related fields and discourses, the text aims to contribute to a (re)definition of the term, identifying both affinities and divergences among existing perspectives. It proceeds by considering artworks through three interrelated components: (a) concept or idea or narrative; (b) form or style or aesthetic; and (c) display or presentation or sharing. Applying an "economy of decisions" to each of these components supports the idea that restraint from arbitrary

choices is a core characteristic of an economy-of-means thinking. In its final section, the text raises questions—rather than offering definitive answers—about the political, social, and environmental implications of this approach, treating them as inseparable and intertwined. Ultimately, it underscores the importance of integrating theory and practice, not only as a valuable learning method but also as a way of rendering both more accessible. Several examples of artworks—drawn from both other artists' practices and my own—are included throughout the text as links to an appendix, without explicit connections to the arguments at hand.³ Each work is presented as a captioned image, inviting contemplation of how elements of an economy-of-means framework can be enacted while avoiding reductive interpretations—that is, acknowledging the plenitude of coexisting layers. Neither the selection of works nor the cited references adhere to strict criteria by necessity, as both arise from diverse contexts.

Overproduction

In a mediatized world increasingly driven by a thirst for constant visual stimulation, where attention spans have shrunk to mere seconds, the spectacularisation of visual arts continues to push its own limits. We are not in a phase where visual consumption demands only ever larger, shinier, and louder artworks. Rather, that traditional mode of imposition⁴ is accompanied by more refined aesthetics: smaller in scale, elegant, and jewel-like. But it does not end there—the emergence of so-called Web⁵ and AI⁶ aesthetics has also transformed our understanding and appreciation of creativity. What remains consistent across artistic mediums and aesthetic variations, however, is the art market's ability to commodify artworks of virtually any medium and style, along with the prevailing tendency for continuous new production.

In an effort to minimise their contribution to the vicious cycle of overproduction, some creative practitioners may step back to reflect on the overwhelming surplus of objects and images—not merely to seek inspiration but to intervene meaningfully. In this direction, artists may consider not only the material and immaterial excesses but also the infrastructural systems and financial instruments that generate and sustain them.⁷ Artworks that repurpose existing infrastructures, whether by intervening directly in them or speculating on their outcomes,⁸ allow for site- and time-specificity, creating a sense of immediacy through their strong connection to the contexts in which they intervene.⁹ By doing so, they encourage audiences to reflect on the larger cultural, economic, political, and social spaces from which the work emerges, blurring the division between art and non-art.¹⁰ (Figure 1)

Intervention

Artistic practices function within several interconnected spheres, and any attempt to reduce them to simplified, antithetical categories risks a high degree of inaccuracy. However, to examine the mechanisms and implications of artistic practices in relation to their production processes—and acknowledging that all forms of thinking involve some degree of generalisation—I adopt the distinction suggested by Nicolas Bourriaud¹¹ in *Postproduction*¹² between two broad typologies of artworks: those that prioritise the creation of a new, autonomous formal proposition, and those that engage with forms that have already been produced. In the first typology, the quest for formal autonomy starts “with a ‘blank slate’ or creating meaning on the basis of virgin material.”¹³ In the latter, the work of art testifies to a willingness to be inscribed “within a network of signs and significations” and to find “a means of insertion into the innumerable flows of production.”¹⁴ Drawing from Bourriaud’s approach, one could describe artistic practices in the first category as creation based, emphasising the pursuit of formally autonomous outcomes, and those in the second category as intervention based, given their reliance on what is already produced. (Figure 2)

Lucius Burckhardt’s¹⁵ sociological theory of the minimal intervention¹⁶ suggests that the goal is

not to interfere excessively with the existing landscape but rather to work with the landscape in our minds, developing an aesthetic understanding of the environment. This notion of the “smallest possible intervention” applied to the realm of visual arts may involve engaging with pre-existing conditions and contexts, rather than imposing externally driven concepts and forms. By applying the theory of minimal intervention, artworks can speculate on cultural, economic, political, and social systems, testing boundaries and pushing the limits of artistic practice without the need for major alterations. This approach can lead to a reconsideration of the cultural environment and its inherent values, enabling the work to challenge conventional perceptions while maintaining an awareness of the surrounding context and its dynamics. (Figure 3)

Means of Economy

Artworks, like most things, rarely fall into black-and-white schemas—and the distinction between contributing to the art world through an autonomous formal creation versus engaging in intervention-based practices is no exception. Any ambition for novelty is rooted in pre-existing artistic heritage, just as even the slightest intervention on pre-existing elements constitutes, to some extent, a novel proposition. A core interest of this text is to reflect on the material and immaterial resources each approach employs and on how these resources are managed—together contributing to the overall economy of the artwork. Here, “economy”¹⁷ refers to the careful management of available resources and “means”¹⁸ to the actions or systems through which the creation of artworks is achieved.

Material resources include all tangible aspects necessary for the production and presentation of a work: raw materials, tools and equipment, access to studio space, infrastructure for transportation and storage, installation logistics, and the human labour involved in fabrication, assembly, installation, and maintenance.¹⁹ On the other hand, immaterial resources are just as crucial: time, education, networks, institutional permissions, curatorial interest, exhibition invitations, commissions, publication inclusions, and artist residencies all fall into this category—as does the intellectual and

creative labour that informs artistic production. Together, these visible and invisible support structures²⁰ shape the art worlds in which an artwork is realised, circulated, and received.²¹

One might assume that intervention-based productions require fewer resources. While this may be true in some cases, it is far from a generally valid assessment. The mechanisms and workflows for newly created works are relatively standardised, as such novel production is often what is expected from artists. Budgets are set, and labour and access to equipment and other technologies are governed by established price lists; with careful administrative handling, artists can often navigate these processes with predictable outcomes. In contrast, the needs of intervention-based practices are inherently more unpredictable. Beyond practical considerations such as safety measures, obtaining permissions, and, if required, ensuring the intervention's reversibility,²² one must also consider the less tangible but significant time costs for decision-makers when negotiating unconventional artistic requests. Given that artistic productions involve not only the direct producers of their materiality but also those who shape their meaning and value, this text takes into account the agents and criteria that contribute to the symbolic value of artworks—that is, as Pierre Bourdieu²³ describes it, “not only the material production but also the symbolic production of the work.”²⁴ (Figure 4)

Economy of Means

In *Color Theory*, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe²⁵ describes the economy of nature as a rational being “inclined to achieve much with little,” creating “diversity even though limited by a few basic principles.”²⁶ The creative framework that applies the highest possible degree of economy is referred to as an economy of means—a concept centred on employing the fewest resources possible without compromising complexity: making more with less. James Wines²⁷—founder of SITE, an architecture and environmental arts organisation—has approached this term as “the product of a reductive aesthetic sensibility—a special brand of imagination that can transform the condition of frugality itself into an inspirational source for art.”²⁸ Éric Lapiere²⁹—curator of

the exhibition *Economy of Means*, part of the 5th Lisbon Architecture Triennale: *The Poetics of Reason* in 2019—frames it as

an aesthetic category that will enable architecture to continue to exist as a sophisticated cultural medium that allows our environment to function in a harmonious manner while simultaneously giving it a broader meaning that goes beyond the questions being posed, and it will do so not just in spite of these new necessities but also, and above all, thanks to them.³⁰ (Figure 5)

The same concept of an economy of means has also been associated with a definition of art often attributed to Pablo Picasso:³¹ “Art is the elimination of the unnecessary.” In a similar vein, Jörg Heiser,³² in his text “Moscow, Romantic, Conceptualism, and After,” refers to the reductivist ethos of an economy of means in conceptual art as “employing as many elements as are necessary, but as few as possible.”³³ In his essay “A Romantic Measure,” Heiser elaborates on conceptualism as holding a tension: “using particularly few aesthetic interventions or conceptual instructions, it opens up a particularly large number of possibilities.”³⁴ An economy-of-means framework minimises the space for subjective aesthetic interventions and loose conceptual instructions, thereby pushing the tension of conceptualism to its extreme. By doing so, the artwork gains the quality of being compact, often implying that every detail has been carefully considered and economically applied.³⁵ For an economy of means to be fully realised, the outcome must be perceived as irreducible—unable to exist in any other form or shape without compromising its fundamental essence. However, the question of essence should not be reduced to a question of simplicity. As Federico Ferrari,³⁶ curator of the exhibition *Arte Essenziale* (Essential art), writes: “essence is neither necessarily simple nor inevitably complex.”³⁷ Regardless of the complexity of the artistic gesture, he argues, “if there is such a thing as an essence of art, it is not to be distinguished from the procedures it deploys, from its creative praxis.”³⁸

An economy of means is neither a methodological toolbox for making “essential art”³⁹ nor a static set of guidelines to be applied universally. Rather, it is a dynamic creative framework—a

way of thinking critically about the artistic procedures deployed and their immaterial and material impact. Lucy Lippard,⁴⁰ in *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, refers to dematerialisation as “a deemphasis on material aspects (uniqueness, permanence, decorative attractiveness)”.⁴¹ In this sense, it holds relevance for the theory of an economy of means, albeit only tangentially. An economy of means does not inherently reject any of these material aspects. If uniqueness, permanence, or decorative attractiveness are qualities already embedded in the characteristics of the source elements, then the artwork has no reason to exclude them. It neither emphasises nor de-emphasises uniqueness (adding or subtracting reproducibility), permanence (adding or subtracting temporal qualities), or decorative attractiveness (adding or subtracting aesthetic layers). The focus is not on dematerialisation as a goal but on limiting intervention to what is conceptually and structurally⁴² present within the work’s internal logic and provenance. (Figure 6)

In *Postproduction*, Bourriaud frames the artist as someone who reprograms existing cultural forms, drawing not only from other artworks but from the entire spectrum of contemporary images, objects, signs, and narratives. As Bourriaud writes:

The prefix “post” does not signal any negation or surpassing; it refers to a zone of activity. The processes in question here do not consist of producing images of images, which would be a fairly mannered posture, or of lamenting the fact that everything has “already been done,” but of inventing protocols of use for all existing modes of representation and all formal structures. It is a matter of seizing all the codes of the culture, all the forms of everyday life, the works of the global patrimony, and making them function. To learn how to use forms, as the artists in question invite us to do, is above all to know how to make them one’s own, to inhabit them.⁴³

Artworks connected to an economy of means similarly operate through strategies of recontextualisation, appropriation, and cultural inhabitation. Yet, an economy of means goes a step further by placing greater emphasis on the conceptual and representational significance of

restraint in production—material, immaterial, and structural. What distinguishes it from post-production is its deliberate minimisation of resource consumption and superfluous decision-making. While post-production theorises the creative reuse of what already exists, an economy of means also offers a critique of the production demands that post-production practices can still entail.⁴⁴

Bourriaud borrows the term “post-production” from the audiovisual lexicon, where it is commonly used in television, film, and video.⁴⁵ A related concept, “production value,”⁴⁶ refers to the techniques, materials, and expertise used to achieve a certain level of technical quality. In commercially driven projects, high production value is often deployed to reassure funders, serving as visible proof of return on investment. It can also become a statement in itself: “We constructed this production-intensive scene because we could.” If this overt display of production value represents one end of the spectrum, then an economy of means positions itself at the other. While practices guided by an economy of means may still involve significant resources and complex production processes, they emphasise a more subtle, understated production value, prioritising refinement over displays of excess. As John Knight⁴⁷ noted in a 2016 talk at Artists Space in New York City: “I am a huge believer in an economy of means. Make a format—finished. No excess; no necessity for that.”⁴⁸

Artwork

Artworks produced through an economy-of-means framework typically rely on intervention-based processes, though not all intervention-based productions necessarily align with this framework. To explore the mechanisms of an economy of means in the visual arts, we can view the artwork as comprising three interconnected and interdependent components: (a) concept or idea or narrative (explicit in figurative works, implicit in abstract ones); (b) form or style or aesthetic (the formal qualities and aesthetic layers that shape the concept); and (c) display or presentation or sharing (the context and manner in which the work is presented and shared with audiences). Artistic skill lies in the ability to respond meaningfully to a series of philosophical and practical questions across

all stages of the art-making process. The most fundamental expression of an economy of means, then, consists in minimising the space for arbitrary decisions throughout this process. To achieve an economy of decisions,⁴⁹ the artist establishes a conceptual framework in which each choice is guided by the artwork's internal imperatives, ideally resulting in a perceptible lightness of intervention, where nothing is considered forced or imposed.

(a) Concept or Idea or Narrative

An economy of means can be understood as an expanded interpretation of the found object,⁵⁰ whereby not only the object itself but also the immaterial aspects of the work—including its concepts, ideas, and narratives—are, in some way, found rather than invented. The intellectual content refers to the concept behind the artwork, which takes precedence over its physical form or aesthetic materialisation, as defined in the context of conceptual art. According to Sol LeWitt,⁵¹ "in conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work" and "the execution is a perfunctory affair."⁵² In contrast, Carl Andre⁵³ took an opposing stance: "I have nothing to do with conceptual art. I'm not interested in ideas. If I were interested in ideas, I'd be in a field where what we think in is ideas."⁵⁴ An economy-of-means approach distances itself from both LeWitt's conceptual primacy and Andre's formalism. It neither elevates nor dismisses the idea but considers the artwork in its totality, where concept, execution, and presentation are interrelated and equally significant. In this light, an economy of means in relation to ideas signals a potential for reconceptualising and recontextualising existing narratives. In doing so, the artist engages with prior ideas and their embedded meanings as the foundation of the artwork's conceptual framework, shifting the emphasis away from overt novelty as a central intellectual ambition. (Figure 7)

(b) Form or Style or Aesthetic

Douglas Huebler's⁵⁵ contribution to Seth Siegel's⁵⁶ *January Show* of 1969 reads: "The world is full of objects, more or less interesting; I do not wish to add any more."⁵⁷ If anything, this sentiment underscores the need to reconsider the terms and implications of continuous artistic production. Rather than constantly inventing new aesthetic propositions, artists may seek to reveal latent possibilities

within existing forms. From this perspective, an economy-of-means framework rationalises both what is potentially scarce and what is actually overabundant. By refraining from contributing yet another aesthetic solution to an already saturated world, artists enact what Guy Debord⁵⁸ describes as "not a negation of style, but the style of negation."⁵⁹ This approach does not merely appropriate existing elements but fully embraces their inherent properties: shape, material, colour, duration, scale, technology, and more. In this sense, an economy of means avoids hierarchies that favour organic over geometric forms, monochrome over polychrome palettes, inexpensive over costly materials, short over long durations, small over large scales, or analogue over digital. Instead, it engages with the material remnants of the past and their embedded aesthetic qualities to activate unrealised potential. Through the smallest possible gesture, the aim is to return the found form as if the intervention had been anticipated in its original state—as though it had always been there, dormant. To borrow Giorgio Agamben's⁶⁰ words on remembrance, an economy of means attempts to "restore possibility" to our materialised cultural past, making what was materialised "incomplete and completing what never was."⁶¹ Yet, if material forms shape artistic language, do their imprints not extend beyond the external world—into thought, perception, or memory? Here, material culture is approached in line with Joseph Beuys's⁶² conception of objects as repositories of memory and energy, transformed through art into catalysts for discourse⁶³ and serving as instruments of social, cognitive, and material transformation.⁶⁴ (Figure 8)

(c) Display or Presentation or Sharing

Once the initial conceptual and formal aspects of an artwork are established, the presentation plays a crucial role in shaping its impact. Every aspect of display—from the title and caption details to the framing, pedestal, and overall installation choices—serves as an extension of the artwork's economy. These elements are not merely functional; they actively contribute to meaning, engaging with a history of exhibition practices that carry their own embedded connotations. A video work, for instance, takes on different contextual and aesthetic resonances⁶⁵ depending on whether it is shown in a cinema setting, projected in a gallery, displayed on a large or small screen, played on a vintage tele-

vision, or viewed on a smartphone. Likewise, a photograph can evoke distinct interpretations based on its material form: printed as a billboard poster, a standard A4 sheet, a fine art archival print, or a translucent film on a light box, among countless other possibilities. Presentation, then, is not a neutral act but an extension of artistic intent. It determines how audiences encounter a work and shapes the layers of accessibility embedded within it. Ideally, an artwork operates across multiple registers, reaching a broad spectrum of audiences. An economy of means can manifest in a work's ability to communicate with diverse publics, relying primarily on its own context and structure. Such an approach aims not to restrict how a work is displayed but rather to ensure that every presentation choice functions as an internal accompaniment rather than an external imposition. Instead of adding arbitrary layers, the display becomes part of the work's vocabulary—enhancing its conceptual and formal coherence. In this sense, an economy of means neither favours nor rejects presentation conventions but seeks a cohesive articulation of the artwork's sharing potential. **(Figure 9)**

Implications

Far from being an isolated conceptual and formal framework, an economy-of-means approach is both informed by and informs the structures in which it operates. The implications of the artwork's economy extend beyond artistic concerns, touching on broader political, social, and environmental dimensions. Whether through the symbolic significance of artistic gestures, the accessibility of material and immaterial resources, or the contribution to environmental awareness, the choices embedded in artistic practices carry meanings that resonate beyond the artwork itself. What follows is an exploration of how an economy of means can reflect ideological positions, foster more inclusive modes of engagement, and raise questions about the sustainability of cultural production models. These implications are offered not as conclusions but as interrogations into the kinds of meanings these practices suggest. **(Figure 10)**

Political Implications

Exhibited artworks contribute to the visual arts landscape and to the cultural capital⁶⁶ of their context, regardless of whether they position themselves in opposition to dominant trends.⁶⁷ In fact, participation in the alternative cultural scene is crucial to the legitimacy of the mainstream. Every exhibition becomes a platform where ideas about the material and immaterial world are contested. In this way, artists—especially, but not exclusively, when working with public artworks or exhibiting in public institutions—occupy a certain position of power. Any artistic decision inevitably assumes a political dimension, even when that dimension claims to be apolitical. Consequently, any decision about how to use the given platform is also a decision about how this power is exercised.

With this understanding, some artworks remain primarily reflective of the artist's aesthetic ideals, while others operate as mediators of pre-established aesthetic propositions. On the one hand, when artists attempt to bypass the conscious mind to access the subconscious, minimising rational constraints, they engage in a rather introverted process. On the other, when they focus on the historical, cultural, and political layers embedded in pre-existing elements, their role becomes one of defining the territory and mode of intervention, rendering the process comparatively more extroverted. Prioritising one approach does not necessarily exclude the other, but focusing on the outcomes each *modus operandi* generates allows speculations about their embedded philosophical assumptions to surface. If *creare ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing, associated with divine acts) reflects creationist beliefs, then *facere de materia* (making from material, characteristic of human production) aligns with evolutionary processes.⁶⁸ In this sense, the method of creation itself may become a manifestation of underlying ideological orientations.⁶⁹

(Figure 11)

Could any connections, however, be identified between intervention-based practices and conservatism?⁷⁰ In some cases, a subtle gesture can produce a profound impact, while in others, grand gestures may result in negligible change. As Francis Alÿs⁷¹ puts it: "Sometimes, to make something is really to make nothing; and paradoxically, sometimes to make nothing is to make something."⁷² Regardless

of the desired outcome, an economy-of-means framework proposes a holistic approach in which the path taken to make an artwork is as important as the artwork itself,⁷³ aiming to integrate the two in a thoughtful and cohesive manner. Some artists may be driven by the need for self-expression, healing, acceptance, or resolution of internal conflicts. Others may engage with visual arts to contribute to the evolution of their chosen medium or to fulfil aesthetic purposes by decorating spaces with their beautifully designed objects. There are those who seek validation through social, institutional, or financial approval, and those who believe in art's capacity to shape ideas and provoke political change. Whatever the driving forces may be, the choices made in the pursuit of meaning inherently carry their own meaning, thereby informing the political implications embedded in each artistic practice.

Social Implications

John Smith⁷⁴ shoots most of his films on his own and in close proximity to his home. As he stated in an interview, this choice stems from his belief that one does not need to go far to find meaning. In that sense, his work is "kind of economical, both in financial terms and in the means of production." He sees this quality as enabling viewers to look at his work and think, "I could have made that."⁷⁵ But does this approach not challenge the notion of the artist as a master of exceptional skill, whose work elicits admiration precisely because of the rare talent required to create it? Could it be that the highest artistic skill⁷⁶ is the one that allows the artist's authorship to disappear, granting the artwork a certain autonomy from its creator?

For some viewers, the experience of art is anchored in being captivated by the artwork's aura⁷⁷ (its unique aesthetic authority), as though visiting an exhibition offers access to the artistic authenticity of the artefact. This approach tends to be passive, positioning the audience primarily as observers. In contrast, audiences with more socially grounded sensibilities may place greater emphasis on the artwork's potential to resonate through its immaterial and material dimensions (from conception to production to reproduction), devaluing aura in favour of inclusivity and social relevance. In this way, the work embodies Smith's production economy, inviting viewers to imagine themselves in the artist's

position and fostering more active engagement. However, when audiences encounter an artwork that does not rely on conventional artistic skills or explicit production efforts, the thought that "they could have made that themselves" is commonly interpreted as dismissive. An economy-of-means approach can be seen as an attempt to support Smith's reasoning by subverting these negative interpretations. The sense of accessibility in production—the idea that "I could have made the artwork myself"—is symbolically significant.⁷⁸ Even if the required means are not truly accessible to everyone, the perception of accessibility implies that art is not bound to privileged resources. (Figure 12)

In *Creation and Anarchy*, Agamben writes:

Alongside activities that produce works, there are others without a work—which Aristotle exemplifies in vision and knowing—in which the *energeia* is instead in the subject himself. It goes without saying that these latter are, for a Greek, superior to the others, once again not because they were not in a position to appreciate the importance of artworks with respect to knowledge and thought, but because in unproductive activities, as thought (*theōria*) precisely is, the subject perfectly possesses his end.⁷⁹

By de-emphasising production requirements, artworks that could theoretically be created by anyone propose not the objects themselves but a way of looking at them—and, by extension, a way of looking at the world.⁸⁰ From this perspective, artistic practice reaches its fullest potential, expressed in Robert Filliou's⁸¹ definition: "Art is what makes life more interesting than art."⁸²

Environmental Implications

Contemporary artistic production is not isolated from the broader societal and environmental contexts in which it operates. As the cultural sector continues to expand,⁸³ the visual arts participate in patterns of overproduction that resemble those of the wider consumer economy.⁸⁴ The relentless demand for new exhibitions, new objects, and new spectacles generates material waste, energy consumption, and logistical infrastructures that are no longer being left unquestioned. Instead, these

realities are prompting a fundamental rethinking of our ways of knowing and seeing the world. This growing awareness has led to studies on the cultural dimension of sustainability, assessing the potential role of art in transformation processes.⁸⁵

Other manifestations of the Western neoliberal economic model reveal that those who can afford a sophisticated consideration of their existence and daily practices (whether in the form of a modern low-energy house, a low-emission electric car, fairly traded clothing designed to last, bioethical nutrition, or a lifestyle harmonious with the ecosystem) are those who can choose the terms of their lives, rather than being compelled to settle for the cheapest options. Studies show that “despite seemingly well-meaning intentions behind the emergence of sustainable development, it almost invariably facilitates exploitative economic development activities that exacerbate systemic inequalities and injustices without noticeably protecting all life forms in the Anthropocene.”⁸⁶ Similar contradictions are likely to arise within visual arts practices too, making assessments of their social and environmental impact an inherently complex task. Artworks created within an economy-of-means framework are not presented here in a competitive light, nor are they framed as more sustainable, mindful, or just than others. The comparative arguments employed in this text serve solely to highlight similarities and differences between artistic approaches, without asserting normative claims.

Ecosystems increasingly intersect, interdependencies become more visible, and the perceived distance between humans and the rest of the living world continues to narrow. Despite growing visibility of these entanglements, assessing the environmental footprint of any given art practice—if possible at all—requires a holistic examination of specific case studies,⁸⁷ tracing both material and immaterial resources throughout the entire art-making process. At this stage, my goal is not to engage in quantitative analyses of various artworks but to interrogate how certain practices contribute to the prioritisation of one type of awareness over another. **(Figure 13)**

Artistic Practice

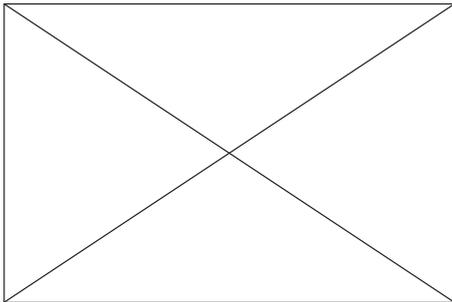
It goes without saying that aligning with an economy-of-means approach does not in itself validate the quality or significance of an artistic practice—such judgements are best left to those who hold positions in juries. In engaging with the thinking of an economy of means, the goal is to explore its potential meanings and implications rather than to glorify it. But how can you come to understand the dynamics of an artistic practice that is also your own?

I see artworks as fortifications, in the sense that their internal mechanisms are obscured through layers of mediation and transformation, until they become nearly unrecognisable. The artwork resembles a Kafkaesque castle: the longer you look, the less you can make out.⁸⁸ In attempting to see the implications of an artwork, one might also consider the act of making as a process of understanding—an engagement that is not only mental but also physical. Yet artistic practice is perhaps also the space where, paradoxically, the more one makes, the less one understands—rendering the interplay between theory and practice a valuable strategy for avoiding their respective dead ends. Despite potential frictions in balancing the two, the combination of seeing (i.e., thinking about visual arts) and making (i.e., practising visual arts) is, I believe, relevant not only as an attempt to develop an artistic practice but also as a more comprehensive way of sharing it with audiences. After all, if everything about an artistic practice could be expressed in words, artists would not make artworks, they would write them⁸⁹—and, vice versa.⁹⁰

This text is part of the graduation requirements for the Master of Fine Arts in Artistic Research at Malmö Art Academy.⁹¹ By the time you read these lines on an economy-of-means practice, the program itself will have been paused—or perhaps entirely discontinued—due to economic reasons. As an epilogue, I share documentation of an artistic intervention: a farewell to a similarly concluded story.⁹²



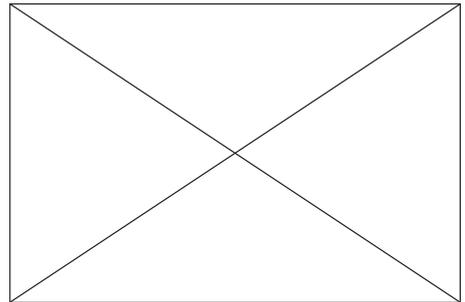
Orestis Mavroudis, *Adio*, 2023



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Figure 1: John Knight, *The Right to Be Lazy*, 2007/2009–

John Knight's work is titled after the book *The Right to Be Lazy* (1883) by Paul Lafargue—Karl Marx's son-in-law—who criticised the labour movement's effort to expand wage labour rather than abolish or at least limit it. Knight's *The Right to Be Lazy* is situated in the circular garden with boxwood topiary balls in front of the main entrance to the Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum of Contemporary Art in Berlin. The work consists of the artist's stipulation that the museum may tend only the hedge running around the outside of the roundel, while all other plants within it must be left to grow wild. As a result, the installation changes with the seasons, subject to time and its effects. The juxtaposition of uncontrolled growth in a central location with formal gardens and a paved interior courtyard makes the deliberate decision to not intervene with garden shears visually evident. In *The Right to Be Lazy*, natural order confronts human-made order, as the plants continue to grow, convert light, and produce oxygen—unaffected by human intervention.



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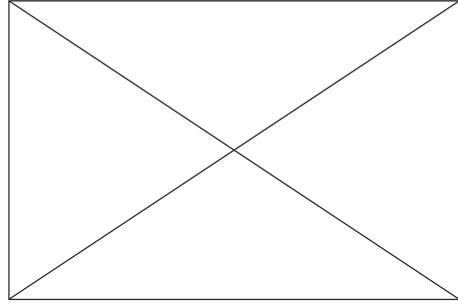
Figure 2: Petrit Halilaj, *Kur Dielli Të Ikë Do Ta Pikturoj Qiellin (When the Sun Goes Away We Paint the Sky)*, 2022

Grand Hotel Prishtina opened its doors in 1978, transforming what was once the city's outskirts into a vibrant new centre. Although its time as a luxury destination was relatively brief, the building remains one of the most esteemed architectural landmarks in Kosovo. Over the years, the hotel fell out of use, and the lights of its iconic rooftop sign eventually went dark. In 2022, Petrit Halilaj reanimated this dormant symbol with his work *Kur Dielli Të Ikë Do Ta Pikturoj Qiellin (When the Sun Goes Away, We Paint the Sky)*, created for Manifesta 14 – The European Nomadic Biennale, which that year was held in Pristina, the artist's hometown. Halilaj's installation temporarily transformed the hotel's sign into a phrase drawn from a 2014 essay by twelve-year-old Njomza Vitia. To spell out the sentence in both Albanian and English, Halilaj reused original letters from the sign and fabricated new ones in the same style. To illuminate Pristina's skyline, he also remounted and reconfigured the hotel's original stars, inviting the people of Kosovo to create and display stars of their own—together forming a new, collective constellation.



Figure 3: Orestis Mavroudis, *Sunny and Cloudy*, 2013

Billboard posters are typically printed on blue-backed paper designed for paste application. The blue backing prevents older layers from showing through when new posters are applied on top. When an advertisement expires and no replacement is scheduled, operators cover the outdated poster using the reverse side of leftover prints. This procedure ensures that no promotional content remains visible beyond its contracted period. In 2013, during Italy's economic recession, the demand for billboard advertising sharply declined. As a result, Milan's urban landscape saw a growing presence of blue backs—unintentional monochromes scattered across the city's advertising infrastructure. This public art proposal imagines a coordinated intervention: covering every billboard in Milan on a cloudy day with the reverse side of blue-back poster paper. The particular shade of blue closely resembles the colour of a sunny sky, contrasting with the grey atmosphere in which the city is often immersed due to persistent smog from Italy's largest industrial zone on its periphery. Together, the city's numerous billboards would create the illusion of an artificial sky under the real one, making the skyline appear simultaneously sunny and cloudy.



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Figure 4: Jason Dodge, *A Permanently Open Window*, 2013–

A Permanently Open Window is an installation that Jason Dodge conceived for a formerly abandoned industrial site—now transformed into a commercial outlet—adjacent to the Maramotti Collection in Reggio Emilia. Realised at the top of what was once the tower of a factory's electrical power plant, the work consists of a window left permanently open, as an appropriation of everything that pertains to the air.

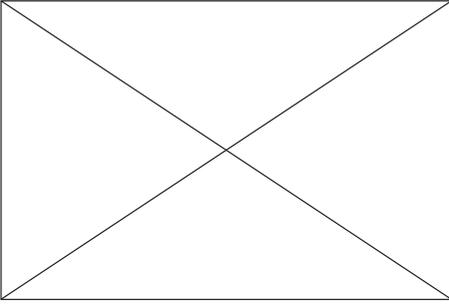


Figure 5: Nektarios Pappas, *Welcome and Enjoy the Ruins*, 2017 (original mural) / 2023 (restoration)

Nektarios Pappas originally created *Welcome and Enjoy the Ruins* in June 2017 on the rooftop of the then-abandoned hotel at 94 Andrea Syngrou Avenue in Athens. It was visible only from the terrace of the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens (EMST), which at that time was serving as the main exhibition venue for documenta 14. In fact, the mural's typography was based on a font created by the international art exhibition's graphic designers, inspired by the street-art culture of Athens, thus prompting ambiguity as to whether the mural was an official participation or not.

The museum's top-floor terrace functions as a platform for reflection, offering a final view that juxtaposes contemporary art with the ancient ruins of the Acropolis—an invitation to consider historical continuity and contextual resonance. Framed by the Acropolis hill in the distance, the untagged graffiti presented a welcoming message that alluded both to the remnants of the former hotel that hosted it and to the Greeks' renowned hospitality—the foundation of the country's largest industry: tourism. Written in English, it addressed the international art audience visiting a city visibly marked by the devastation of Greece's decade-long financial crisis. As often happens in such cases, the local population's impoverishment and the loss of income and property created opportunities. The wealthier could buy affordable homes and enjoy the low-cost services the country had to offer, investing in a city then promoted as the new epicentre for contemporary art.

Over the years, the hotel underwent renovation, the mural was painted over—except for the word “Ruins,” written on the adjacent building—and EMST opened to the public in full operation after twenty years of a troubled, nomadic existence. In June 2023, Closing Soon undertook the artwork's restoration, applying a process similar to that used for classical monument restoration: piecing together fragments and historical documentation to achieve the most accurate reconstruction possible. The aim was to contribute to ongoing conversations around the boundaries between the private (hotel) and the public (museum), the value of preserving contemporary artistic heritage, and the influence of both ancient and modern ruins in shaping the country's cultural identity. The mural's (re)inauguration was held on EMST's terrace, coinciding with the museum's summer opening. For the occasion, the artwork was lit to harmonise with the illuminated Acropolis in the background.



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Figure 7: Orestis Mavroudis, *Today Ours, Tomorrow Others', and Never Anyone's*, 2023–

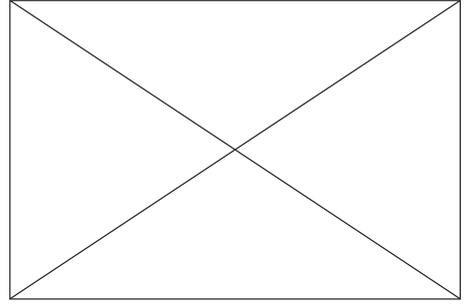
“Today mine, tomorrow someone else’s, and never anyone’s” is a phrase carved in ancient Greek on a stone inscription from 1880 that adorns the facade of the house of the monk Grigorios Louridis in Marpissa, on the island of Paros. The statement alludes to both the futility of attachment to material possessions and the temporary nature of ownership. In the work *Today Ours, Tomorrow Others', and Never Anyone's*, the original sentence is transformed from singular to plural form, shifting its meaning from personal to collective ownership. The altered sentence is engraved on a marble sign identical to the signs used on the streets of the village and appears on the facade of a community building next to the central square.

Figure 6: Johanna Karlin, *Inflyttarna*, 2023–
Johanna Karlin’s public artwork *Inflyttarna* (Newcomers) comprises around thirty benches. These unique readymades were removed from various locations across Sweden and re-located to Hagaplan in Stockholm. Like people who move to new places, the benches became *inflyttarna*. Each one is distinct in appearance and character, carrying traces of the place it once belonged to—like individuals, each with their own stories and histories. Together, they form a welcoming collective, offering a place to sit regardless of who you are, how you feel, or what brings you to the square.



Figure 8: Orestis Mavroudis, *Remember (Θυμήσου)*, 2022–

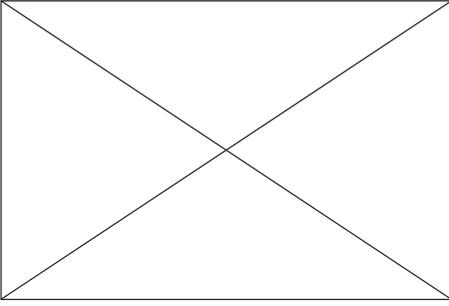
The public installation *Remember (Θυμήσου)* is based on an information sign from the road network of Ios island, built on the initiative of the Municipality of Ios in 2012, outside the framework of the Greek Highway Code. The sign's message originates from the mistranslation of the French word "*rappel*" in both Greek and English, which render it as a verb ("remember") instead of a noun ("reminder"), as typically used in similar signage within France's road network. In Ios, a total of ten identical signs were placed under warning signs with the ambition to increase drivers' attention. The confusing meaning of the exhortation "Remember" gradually led to the abandonment of the sign campaign. Ten years after the municipal authority implemented the idea, only one of the original signs was still in use. The work *Remember (Θυμήσου)* reconsiders the potential of the word "remember" in light of the uncontrolled privatisation of large areas of land, as well as the distortion of the natural and cultural heritage of the island, placing ten new replicas of the original sign on empty poles throughout the road network. The project's intention was to revisit the actions taken by local authorities for reasons related to strengthening personal and collective memory in a place of constant change.



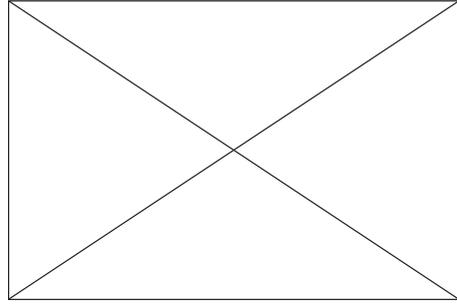
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Figure 9: Steve McQueen, *Year 3*, 2019

Steve McQueen's epic portrait of year 3 pupils from across London was presented on billboards across the city in November 2019. *Year 3* is one of the most ambitious visual portraits of citizenship ever undertaken in one of the world's largest and most diverse cities. Every primary school in London was invited to take part in the project in 2018. A total of 1,504 schools of every kind—state, independent, faith, and special-needs schools—took up the invitation and a total of 3,168 class photographs were taken in 2018 and early 2019. All the photographs take the form of a traditional class photo, with children sitting and standing in rows together with their teachers and teaching assistants. Year 3 is considered a milestone year in a child's development: it is when they start to become more aware of being part of a bigger world beyond their families and friendship groups. The individual class photos are a microcosm of society, blown up into billboard format. Looking directly at the camera, the children face the photographer and the viewer, the present and the future.



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Figure 10: Alicja Kwade,
Against the Run, 2015

Alicja Kwade's *Against the Run* is a clock that tells the correct time, but does so in a way that confounds expectations. Adapting a nineteenth-century design that we might typically see in New York City, the artist here reverses the conventional mechanism. The clock's face rotates backwards while the second hand appears to stand still, pointing vertically at all times. Our understanding of how a clock should run is second nature, making this variation almost impossible to read, even as it continues to tell the right time. Kwade's whimsical clock captures her interest in the systems we invent to make sense of our lives and the world. In doing so, it prompts us to see "reality" from a new perspective.

Figure 11: Banu Cennetoğlu,
BEINGSAFEISSCARY, 2017

In the aftermath of the 2015 European migrant crisis, documenta 14 took place in both Kassel and Athens as part of artistic director Adam Szymczyk's concept, with most featured artists working across both locations. For her contribution in Kassel, Banu Cennetoğlu rearranged ten of the existing letters on the facade of the Fridericianum Museum and cast six additional letters (after the existing ones) to spell out "BEINGSAFEISSCARY." The caption for the work states that the phrase is based on graffiti found at the National Technical University of Athens, one of the documenta 14 venues in that city. As noted in Negar Azimi's text in the exhibition catalogue, this exact phrase also appears in the diaries of Kurdish journalist and freedom fighter Gurbetelli Ersöz (1965–1997). Written in Turkish, *Gurbet'in Güncesi: Yüreğimi Dağlara Nakşettim* (Gurbet's diary: I engraved my heart into the mountains) was first published in 1998 by Mezopotamien Verlag in Neuss, Germany, and later in 2014 by Aram Yayinevi in Diyarbakır, Turkey. Since February 26, 2017, Ersöz's diary, along with hundreds of other books, has been banned in her home country.



Figure 12: Orestis Mavroudis, *Clap Hands*, 2018

The Greek financial crisis unfolded through a series of sudden reforms and austerity measures that led to widespread impoverishment among the population, loss of income and property, and a humanitarian crisis. As a result, the political system was upended, social exclusion increased, and hundreds of thousands of Greeks left the country. This video work presents every plenary session of the Hellenic Parliament from April 23, 2010, when the country announced it was resorting to the European Stability Mechanism, until the official end of that program on August 20, 2018. The archival footage is arranged in chronological order, with all content edited out except for hand-clapping. The speakers at the podium and the parliamentarians in the amphitheatre-like main chamber, engaged in this self-congratulatory ritual, make politics appear as a show in progress. The video is screened on a Fujitsu Siemens thirty-two-inch television set, a product launched in the Greek market in 2008, the year when investigations into the Siemens scandal began. Many Greeks watched the economic crisis unfold on this specific, best-selling TV model.



Figure 13: Anna Valeria Borsari, *Dall'Acropoli al Pireo*, 2022

Dall'Acropoli al Pireo (From Acropolis to Piraeus) is a site-specific installation by Anna Valeria Borsari. The work consists of an oil painting mounted on the remaining wall of the first floor of a demolished building at 126 Dimofontos Street in the Petralona district of Athens. It depicts a seascape, with typical wave formations along the lower edge and the horizon near the top. The painting style that the artist employed deliberately echoes the kind of art once common in working-class homes in the area. Its placement—at eye level and centrally located within what was once a room—suggests that the artwork survived the destruction of its surroundings, as if it has always been there.

Petralona is located between the archaeological site of the Acropolis and the Port of Piraeus—both emblematic of the dissemination of ancient Greek culture and of the country's contemporary tourism industry. Made with materials unsuitable for outdoor conditions, the painting is destined to degrade or vanish unpredictably, contrasting the timeless sea motif with the impermanence of human construction. With this new work, Borsari continues her long-standing research on the boundaries between private and public space and between interior and exterior, as well as the anonymity of the artistic gesture and the poetic dimension of decay as an inevitable condition of all human creation. *Dall'Acropoli al Pireo*, an off-site project by Closing Soon, marked the artist's first site-specific installation outside Italy.

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Public Art Agency Sweden: <https://public-artagencysweden.com/>

Public Art Online: <https://publicartonline.org.uk/>

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change: <https://unfccc.int/>

- 1 In other words, as critic and writer Susan Sontag (b. 1933, New York, New York, US; d. 2004, New York, New York, US) stated in an interview: "It's always a mix between an extreme degree of self-consciousness and a surrender to a process that carries you like a wave." Susan Sontag, "Susan Sontag Interview (2000)," YouTube video, 25:10, posted by Manufacturing Intellect, 11 August 2016, <https://youtu.be/fOCXuufv9S8?si=Q2Dw-yzwp5GL2RfUP>.
- 2 My curatorial work is carried out at Closing Soon, an artist-run space I founded in 2019 in Athens. See <https://closingsoon.gr/>.
- 3 This text focuses not on artists' entire bodies of work but on individual artworks—instances of larger practices. It does not aspire to provide objective insights, nor does it benefit from the solid methodology of the art historian or the abstraction of the philosopher. In this light, the artworks in the appendix serve not as proofs of a point but as thinking companions—encouraging readers to think *with* them rather than *about* them.
- 4 "Each individual commodity fights for itself. It avoids acknowledging the others and strives to impose itself everywhere as if it were the only one in existence. The spectacle is the epic poem of this struggle, a struggle that no fall of Troy can bring to an end." Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2014), 27.
- 5 Vito Campanelli, *Web Aesthetics: How Digital Media Affect Culture and Society* (Rotterdam: Nai Publishers, 2010).
- 6 Lev Manovich, *AI Aesthetics* (Moscow: Strelka, 2019).
- 7 Bassam El Baroni, ed., *Between the Material and the Possible: Infrastructural Re-examination and Speculation in Art* (London: Sternberg; Oldenburg, Germany: Edith Russ Haus for Media Art, 2022).
- 8 Marina Vishmidt, *Speculation as a Mode of Production: Forms of Value Subjectivity in Art and Capital* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).
- 9 Maria Eichhorn's contribution to documenta 14 in Athens involved converting the status of a neoclassical building in the Plateia Amerikis area into that of unowned property. Working within the existing Greek legal framework, the project aimed to designate the building for public use by legally transferring it into a state of non-ownership. Once its status was changed, the building would exist in the city much like a sculpture in public space—disputing fixed notions of public and private property vis-à-vis the impact of economic crisis in urban space. The publication *Κτίριο ως περιουσία άνευ ιδιοκτήτη / Building as Unowned Property / Gebäude als Nichteigentum* (2017–) documents this ongoing process, including the property acquisition and transfer to non-ownership. It brings together a wide array of working materials: the artist's project proposal, legal documents, and historical maps and photographs, as well as the notarised purchase agreement and the land register entry. Maria Eichhorn, *Κτίριο ως περιουσία άνευ ιδιοκτήτη / Building as Unowned Property / [Gebäude als Nichteigentum]* (2017–) (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2024).
- 10 "But if the critique of the cultural confinement of art (and artists) via its institutions was once the 'great issue,' a dominant drive of site-oriented practices today is the pursuit of a more intense engagement with the outside world and everyday life—a critique of culture that is inclusive of nonart spaces, nonart institutions, and nonart issues (blurring the division between art and nonart, in fact)." Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 24.

- 11 Nicolas Bourriaud (b. 1965, Niort, France), art critic and curator.
- 12 In *Postproduction*, Bourriaud examines the increasing proliferation of artworks—since the early 1990s—created on the basis of pre-existing cultural products.
- 13 “All these artistic practices, although formally heterogeneous, have in common the recourse to already produced forms. They testify to a willingness to inscribe the work of art within a network of signs and significations, instead of considering it an autonomous or original form. It is no longer a matter of starting with a ‘blank slate’ or creating meaning on the basis of virgin material but of finding a means of insertion into the innumerable flows of production.” Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World* (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2002), 16–17.
- 14 Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, 16–17.
- 15 Lucius Burckhardt (b. 1925, Davos, Switzerland; d. 2003, Basel, Switzerland), economist and sociologist.
- 16 Lucius Burckhardt, *The Minimal Intervention* (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 2022).
- 17 “Economy: careful management of available resources. Origin: late 15th century (in the sense ‘management of material resources’): from French *économie*, or via Latin from Greek *oikonomia* ‘household management,’ based on *oikos* ‘house’ + *nemein* ‘manage.’ Current senses date from the 17th century.” *Oxford Languages*, <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/>.
- 18 “Means: (often means of / to do something) an action or system by which a result is achieved; a method.” *Oxford Languages*.
- 19 Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Manifesto for Maintenance Art: Proposal for an Exhibition “CARE”*. 1969, four typewritten pages.
- 20 Céline Condorelli, *Support Structures* (London: Sternberg, 2009).
- 21 “Fully developed art worlds, however, provide distribution systems which integrate artists into their society’s economy, bringing art works to publics which appreciate them and will pay enough so that the work can proceed.” Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 93.
- 22 This argument becomes particularly evident in public art projects, though it is not limited to them.
- 23 Pierre Bourdieu (b. 1930, Denguin, France; d. 2002, Paris, France), sociologist.
- 24 “Given that works of art exist as symbolic objects only if they are known and recognized, that is, socially instituted as works of art and received by spectators capable of knowing and recognizing them as such, the sociology of art and literature has to take as its object not only the material production but also the symbolic production of the work, i.e. the production of the value of the work or, which amounts to the same thing, of belief in the value of the work. It therefore has to consider as contributing to production not only the direct producers of the work in its materiality (artist, writer, etc.) but also the producers of the meaning and value of the work—critics, publishers, gallery directors and the whole set of agents whose combined efforts produce consumers capable of knowing and recognizing the work of art as such, in particular teachers (but also families, etc.).” Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 37.
- 25 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (b. 1749, Frankfurt, Holy Roman Empire; d. 1832, Weimar, Grand Duchy of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach), critic, novelist, playwright, poet, scientist, statesman, and theatre director.
- 26 “Our precursors admired the economy of nature. She was thought of as a rational person who within herself created others with rather little material and is inclined to achieve much with little. When we express ourselves in this manner, we further admire her versatility; she knows how to create diversity even though limited by a few basic principles.” Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Goethe’s Color Theory* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1971), 68.
- 27 James Wines (b. 1932, Oak Park, Illinois, US), architect, artist, and educator.
- 28 James Wines, “Economy of Means: Some Notes on Alternative Architecture (Or, Trying to Do More with Less during These Difficult Times),” *Journal of Architectural Education* 62, no. 4 (May 2009): 97–104, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40481069>.
- 29 Éric Lapiere (b. 1966, Tarbes, France), architect, curator, and architecture theorist.
- 30 Éric Lapiere, *Economy of Means: How Architecture Works* (Barcelona: Polígrafa, 2019), 125.
- 31 Pablo Picasso (b. 1881, Málaga, Spain; d. 1973, Mougins, France), visual artist.
- 32 Jörg Heiser (b. 1968, Nigeria), art critic, curator, teacher, and writer.
- 33 Jörg Heiser, “Moscow, Romantic, Conceptualism, and After,” *e-flux journal*, no. 29 (November 2011): <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/29/68122/moscow-romantic-conceptualism-and-after/>.
- 34 Jörg Heiser, *A Romantic Measure* (Berlin: Kerber, 2007), 149.
- 35 In another interview, Sontag stated: “The most powerful form of storytelling is very compact, and if it’s very compact, it’s likely to be very economical in its details, and therefore this economy can be experienced by us, with our modern ways of looking at things, as something abstract. In that sense, it may take on a certain universality.” Susan Sontag, “John Berger and Susan Sontag To Tell A Story 1983,” YouTube video, 1:03:53, posted by Everything has its first time, 28 February 2017, <https://youtu.be/MoHCR8nshe8?si=WtJfKBhceQezkRzL>.
- 36 Federico Ferrari (b. 1969, Milan, Italy), art critic, curator, and philosopher.
- 37 Federico Ferrari, *Arte Essenziale* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2011), 164.
- 38 Ferrari, *Arte Essenziale*, 162.
- 39 Ferrari, *Arte Essenziale*, 152–66.
- 40 Lucy Lippard (b. 1937, New York, New York, US), activist, art critic, curator, and writer.
- 41 “But for lack of a better term I have continued to refer to a process of dematerialization, or a deemphasis on material aspects (uniqueness, permanence, decorative attractiveness).” Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 5.
- 42 Here, “structurally” refers not only to what is used in making the artwork but also to the underlying rationale behind its use—the logic that shapes the work’s internal coherence and its relationship to context.
- 43 Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, 17–18.
- 44 “No Ghost Just a Shell” was initiated when French artists and frequent collaborators Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno paid a visit to an agency that produces and sells animated stock characters. Anyone, from animators to advertisers, can go to these agencies and, in essence, buy an actor. The artists bought a Japanese manga character by the name of Annlee. Huyghe and Parreno used the original computer file as a starting point for an extended

- exhibition process in which several artists have been asked to appropriate the character and make a short digital animation that brings Annlee to life." "No Ghost Just a Shell," San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2002, <https://www.sfmoma.org/exhibition/no-ghost-just-a-shell/>.
- 45 "Postproduction is a technical term from the audiovisual vocabulary used in television, film, and video. It refers to the set of processes applied to recorded material: montage, the inclusion of other visual or audio sources, subtitling, voice-overs, and special effects. As a set of activities linked to the service industry and recycling, postproduction belongs to the tertiary sector, as opposed to the industrial or agricultural sector, i.e., the production of raw materials." Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, 7.
- 46 "Production Value," Hollywood Lexicon, n.d., <https://hollywoodlexicon.com/production-value.html>.
- 47 John Knight (b. 1945, Los Angeles, California, US), visual artist.
- 48 John Knight, "Artists Space Dialogues: John Knight and Bettina Funcke in situ," YouTube video, 1:21:08, posted by Artists Space, 4 May 2016, <https://youtu.be/4UdVW-xlZE?si=5BA12L2Ra5w-ERb8z>. Originally recorded in 2016.
- 49 Lapierre, *Economy of Means*, 23–29.
- 50 "A found object is a natural or man-made object, or fragment of an object, that is found (or sometimes bought) by an artist and kept because of some intrinsic interest the artist sees in it." "Art Term: Found Object," Tate, n.d., <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/f/found-object>.
- 51 Sol LeWitt (b. 1928, Hartford, Connecticut, US; d. 2007, New York, New York, US), visual artist.
- 52 "In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair." Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," *Artforum*, Summer 1967, 79–83.
- 53 Carl Andre (b. 1935, Quincy, Massachusetts, US; d. 2024, New York, New York, US), visual artist.
- 54 Carle Andre, "Carl Andre: December, 1969," in *Artists Talk, 1969–1977*, ed. Peggy Gale (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1977), 12.
- 55 Douglas Huebler (b. 1924, Canton, Massachusetts, US; d. 1997, New York, New York, US), visual artist.
- 56 Seth Siegelau (b. 1941, New York, New York, US; d. 2013, Basel, Switzerland), art dealer, author, curator, and researcher.
- 57 *January 5–31, 1969* was Siegelau's first group exhibition in which the catalogue was the primary manifestation of the project. Also referred to as the *January Show*, the exhibition—a direct critique of traditional art institutions—existed for one month only in a temporary space at 44 East 52 Street in Manhattan. Artworks were displayed in one room and the catalogue in another. See Seth Siegelau, ed., *January 5–31, 1969: Barry, Huebler, Kosuth, Weiner* (New York: self-published, 1969), 15.
- 58 Guy-Ernest Debord (b. 1931, Paris, France; d. 1994, Champot, Haute-Loire, France), filmmaker, Marxist theorist, and philosopher.
- 59 "It is not a negation of style, but the style of negation." Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 110.
- 60 Giorgio Agamben (b. 1942, Rome, Italy), philosopher and political theorist.
- 61 "Remembrance restores possibility to the past, making what happened incomplete and completing what never was. Remembrance is neither what happened nor what did not happen but, rather, their potentialization, their becoming possible once again." Giorgio Agamben, "Bartleby, or On Contingency," in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 267.
- 62 Joseph Beuys (b. 1921, Krefeld, Germany; d. 1986, Düsseldorf, Germany), visual artist.
- 63 "Beuys's objects were often memorabilia, artifacts of destroyed European material culture re-formed, sometimes isolated sculptural objects given new, communal life, petrified energy machines (batteries that look as if they were buried for eons), fat, felt, in fact, anything he could conceive a use for, including, sometimes, drawings. And Beuys made his drawings into 'tools' of his art: 'objects' redesigned so as to force discourse: in performance, art is not merely a set of objects but an attitude toward objects or a cognitive stance." Bernice Rose, "Joseph Beuys and the Language," in *Thinking Is Form: The Drawings of Joseph Beuys*, by Bernice Rose and Ann Temkin (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1993), 103.
- 64 "The theory of sculpture thus entails the possibility of orienting the entire social organism to a new level, to a new height, towards a future human culture, and at the same time systematically listing the measures that should be taken to transition from a given form to a future one." Joseph Beuys, *Werner Nekes und Dore O.*, 1981, 16 mm film, digitised, color, sound, 11:00.
- 65 For an early study of the aesthetics of electronic media displays, see Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (1970; repr., New York: Fordham University Press, 2020).
- 66 Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," on *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 241–58.
- 67 "Modern art, midway between critical terrorism (ideological) and *de facto* structural integration, is quite exactly an *art of collusion vis-à-vis* this contemporary world. It plays with it, and is included in the game. It can parody this world, illustrate it, simulate it, alter it; it never disturbs the order, which is also its own." Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (St. Louis, MO: Telos, 1981), 110.
- 68 "Naturally, Aquinas still distinguished between *creare ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing), which defines divine creation, and *facere de materia* (making from material), which defines human making. At any rate, the comparison between the act of the architect and that of God already contains the seed of the transposition of the paradigm of creation onto the activity of the artist." Giorgio Agamben, *Creation and Anarchy: The Work of Art and the Religion of Capitalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019), 18.
- 69 "We must build new settings that will be both the product and the instrument of new behaviors. To do this, at the outset, requires that we empirically use everyday approaches and cultural forms that presently exist, while questioning their value. The very criterion of novelty, of formal invention, has lost its meaning within the traditional limits of an art, i.e., within the limits of an inadequate, fragmentary medium whose partial renewals are already outdated, and hence unworkable." Guy Debord, "Report on the Construction of Situations and on the Terms of Organization and Action of the International Situationist Tendency," in *Guy Debord and the*

- Situationist International: Texts and Documents*, ed. Tom Mc-Donough (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 42.
- 70 “Conservatism: commitment to traditional values and ideas with opposition to change or innovation.” *Oxford Languages*.
- 71 Francis Alÿs (b. 1959, Antwerp, Belgium), visual artist.
- 72 Francis Alÿs, “1000 Words: Francis Alÿs,” *Artforum*, Summer 2002, 147.
- 73 As Lucius Burckhardt puts it, highlighting the importance of the process or journey (central to the theory of minimal intervention): “the way was as important as the goal.” Lucius Burckhardt, “Strollological Observations on Perception of the Environment and the Tasks Facing Our Generation” (1996), in *Lucius Burckhardt: Writings: Rethinking Man-made Environments Politics, Landscape & Design*, ed. Jesko Fezer and Martin Schmitz (Vienna: Springer, 2012), 242.
- 74 John Smith (b. 1952, London, UK), filmmaker.
- 75 John Smith, “John Smith: DACS at the Art Party Conference,” YouTube video, 24:19, posted by DACSforArtists, 11 December 2013, <https://youtu.be/ibqn7e-AnVuw?si=Y7uE2kpT-4qTnoFr>.
- 76 Rather than deskilling, an economy-of-means approach reflects a shift towards a different skill set.
- 77 Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008).
- 78 “Those who possess the means of symbolically appropriating cultural goods are more than willing to believe that it is only through their economic dimension that works of art, and cultural goods in general, acquire rarity. They like to see symbolic appropriation—the only legitimate sort, in their view—as a kind of mystical participation in a common good of which each person has a share and which everyone has entirely, as a paradoxical appropriation, excluding privilege and monopoly, unlike material appropriation, which asserts real exclusivity and therefore exclusion.” Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 227.
- 79 Giorgio Agamben, *Creation and Anarchy: The Work of Art and the Religion of Capitalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019), 11.
- 80 Jorge Pardo expresses a similar idea: “There is a lot of more interesting stuff around here than my work, but my work is a model to look at this stuff.” Jorge Pardo, in *Art at the Turn of the Millennium*, ed. Burkhard Riemschneider and Uta Grosenick (Cologne: Taschen, 1999), 374.
- 81 Robert Filliou (b. 1926, Sauve, France; d. 1987, Les Eyzies, France), visual artist.
- 82 One of his multiples bears this inscription in French as: *L’art est ce qui rend la vie plus intéressante que l’art*.
- 83 “Arts and Cultural Industries Grew at Twice the Rate of the U.S. Economy, Adding \$1.2 Trillion,” *National Endowment for the Arts*, 2 April 2025, <https://www.arts.gov/news/press-releases/2025/arts-and-cultural-industries-grew-twice-rate-us-economy-adding-12-trillion>.
- 84 “What unites the various configurations of the artistic use of the world gathered under the term postproduction is the scrambling of boundaries between consumption and production.” Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, 19.
- 85 Sacha Kagan, *Art and Sustainability: Connecting Patterns for a Culture of Complexity* (Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript Verlag, 2011).
- 86 Louis J. Kotzé and Samuel Adelman, “Environmental Law and the Unsustainability of Sustainable Development: A Tale of Disenchantment and of Hope,” *Law and Critique* 34 (2023): 227–248, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10978-022-09323-4>.
- 87 See Kagan, *Art and Sustainability*, especially chapter 5 (“Ecological Art,” pp. 269–343), for an exploratory overview focused on North American and Western European cases.
- 88 “The longer he looked, the less he could make out.” Franz Kafka, *The Castle*, trans. Edwin Muir and Willa Muir (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), 129.
- 89 In the words of Lucien Castaing-Taylor: “We’re not trying to say anything. One thing we’re trying to do is make films that do not say anything. Films, like anything humans make, are always about something in some way. But to imagine that they are always about something that could be expressed in words, outside of the fabric of the film itself, is kind of ludicrous—because if that were the case, they would not make the film; they would write it.” Lucien Castaing-Taylor,
- “NYFF Press Conference: Leviathan,” YouTube video, 10:02, posted by Film at Lincoln Center, 30 September 2012, <https://youtu.be/clOCqClit-vE?si=P01ndMZL-1c519Y7L>.
- 90 That is to say, if the artwork could express all, then the artist text would not exist.
- 91 “The Master’s programme in Fine Arts in Artistic Research is a two-year full-time education programme. The purpose of the post-studio programme is to prepare visual artists to define and formulate a research project in Fine Arts that aims at admission to a doctoral program in Fine Arts. Conducted or choreographed across those units, the MFAAR essentially links to the doctoral programme at the Art Academy and fosters exchanges with other disciplines, thereby underlining an ethics of inclusion and heterogeneity.” “Master’s Programme in Fine Arts in Artistic Research (MFAAR), 120 Credits,” Lunds University, Malmö Art Academy, last updated 20 January 2025, <https://www.khm.lu.se/en/education-0/programmes-fine-art/course-archive/masters-programme-fine-arts-artistic-research-mfaar-120-credits>.
- 92 Orestis Mavroudis, *Adio*, 2023. Named after the radon-rich spring waters of its surroundings in Kamena Vourla, Hotel Radion was built in the 1930s and thrived during the peak of thermalism before being abandoned in 1989 due to economic decline. In April 2023, the Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund announced the sole bidder for the forty-year lease of the mineral springs and the state-owned bath buildings, along with Hotel Radion. A luxury hospitality chain is set to transform this rare example of Greek modernist architecture into a contemporary center for wellness. Anticipating these significant alterations, the hotel’s neon sign was partially restored to spell “ADIO,” meaning “farewell” or “vacant” in Greek. The act of restoration was intended as a gesture of care—echoing the therapeutic function of the thermal springs, while also asserting the potential of subtle interventions in the light of the historical building’s imminent transformation.

Bachelor of Fine Arts
Year 3

Mads Skarsteen Andersen
Gunvor Lind Balslev
Loke Berg
Benedikte Nøstvik Eide
Adrian-Alicia Bisell Gonzalez
Noah von Hauswolff
Cecilie Kappel
Othilia Hoby Leth
Malthe Jos Lundquist
Jelena Pajić
Klara Paulin-Rosell
Lavinia Samson
Felix Schéele



Image courtesy of the artist

Mads Skarsteen Andersen, *THE DAYS SEEM SHORTER*, 2025. Photography, colour images, variable dimensions. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2025

The digital camera emerged in the early 1990s, and by 2002, the major camera manufacturers had largely transitioned to digital products, replacing nearly all commercial film cameras with digital alternatives. Like many children growing up in the '90s, I had parents who took pictures of us kids using simple, user-friendly analogue cameras. These were often point-and-shoot models—mass-produced, autofocus cameras that made it easy for the general public to document daily life, special occasions, and holidays on film. The photographs would then be developed and printed, and put in frames or family albums. Despite the camera's invariable presence, I don't really remember taking any photos myself. That didn't begin until later.

In my first year of high school, I came across my grandfather's old analogue camera tucked away in a drawer in my parents' basement. It was a Ricoh 35 ZF, made in Taiwan in 1976—a camera that allowed users to manually adjust a limited number of settings or simply put their faith in the camera's automatic mode. This camera became my introduction to the world of analogue photography, and I began capturing my friends and surroundings in rather mediocre photographs. Although I was no natural talent, something about the analogue process spoke to me: I felt a sense of humility, respect, and, at the time, utter bewilderment at how an image is created by capturing light on a photosensitive surface.

Encountering Art Photography

Jeff Wall's exhibition at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebæk in 2015 was probably one of my first encounters with art photography, or at least the first that left a lasting impression. Large, luminous lightboxes, each over two metres in both height and width, dominated the exhibition spaces. The photographs were backlit, intensifying their colour and making them appear almost three-dimensional within the monumental frames, all of which served to heighten the visual experience. Wall's subjects approach a life-sized scale, and the enormous frames seem to act as portals into the works and the universes they depict. The sheer scale of the photographs lays bare every element of the composition, leaving no room for error or coincidence, and this is a quality that has come to influence my own approach to photography.

The exhibition featured thirty-five works spanning from 1996 to 2013.² Drawing on the conventions of painting, Wall constructs meticulously arranged tableaux in which every detail is carefully considered. His images, often inspired by literature, cinema, or his own experiences, are stylistically reminiscent of documentary photographs, yet they are crafted in collaboration with

the people depicted—typically non-professional models. The resulting images present ordinary moments charged with complex meanings. I remember being especially struck by how, despite their obvious staging, the photographs retain the feel of spontaneous snapshots, hovering somewhere between everyday life and constructed fiction.

Wall frequently reconstructs events he has witnessed but did not capture in the moment, challenging assumptions about the truthfulness of documentary photographs and raising questions about how we perceive and interpret them.³ Unlike traditional documentary photography, which is often accompanied by captions rooted in journalistic conventions, Wall's works are presented with no explanatory text, leaving them open to interpretation. Only the titles offer the viewer clues about his visual narratives. At the Louisiana, this absence of descriptive text provided an important lesson, teaching me not to overexplain my images, but rather to invite the viewer to fill in the blanks and draw their own connections.

One of Wall's works, *After "Invisible Man" by Ralph Ellison, the Prologue* (1999–2000),⁴ is a staged interpretation of the prologue to Ralph Ellison's 1952 novel *Invisible Man*. In it, Wall reimagines a scene featuring the protagonist—a nameless African American man—who lives in a basement illuminated by 1,369 light bulbs, powered by illegally diverted electricity. The scene is constructed like a film set: hanging from the ceiling in a small, cluttered, yet somehow orderly room are hundreds of sporadically lit bulbs. Composed according to the golden spiral, the viewer's eye is led to the protagonist, who sits in a white undershirt, barefoot, with his back turned to us. Visually, the work combines literary motif, cinematic aesthetic, and photography, evoking themes of isolation, identity, and invisible power structures that shape society. I was especially inspired by Wall's ability to build multi-layered narratives, which can be deciphered only by studying individual elements in their broader context or by reflecting on the image as a whole.

In that same period, the museum also presented a powerful and disturbing exhibition by Richard Mosse, documenting the brutal civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Using Kodak Aerochrome film, which renders green tones in bright pinks, Mosse produced surreal images that seem to come from another world. The question of whether this intense aestheticisation of violence and war helps bring greater attention to a conflict neglected by mainstream media or whether it merely reinforces alienation and the colonial gaze belongs to a wider discussion beyond the scope of this

text. Still, the exhibition made clear what art photography is capable of: challenging the notion of photographic truth, raising ethical questions, and exploring the blurred boundaries between documentary photography, photojournalism, and art.

From the beginning, what fascinated me most about photography was the old mechanical analogue cameras that functioned like intricate clockwork, advancing the film, cocking the shutter, and resetting the mirror with the turn of a lever. After seeing those exhibitions, I discovered the possibilities afforded by large- and medium-format cameras, which allowed for larger negatives. With a larger negative came richer colours, greater tonal range, and higher resolution in my work, just like in the photographs I'd admired at the museum. I started searching and eventually found a cheap Hasselblad 500C from 1969 in an old camera shop in Copenhagen. The medium-format camera gave me much greater creative control but also set restrictions in the form of fewer exposures per roll. This forced me to slow down, refine my compositions, and clarify my vision for what I was trying to express. Colours, in particular had come to captivate me, and I was eager to explore what large-scale prints might mean for my photographic practice. Up until that point, I had considered my practice to be strictly documentary, but I began to appreciate what narrative possibilities might be gained by adopting a more quasi-documentary approach. For the final exhibition of my preparatory programme, I created two photographic lightboxes to accompany my photobook, and this encounter between printed and sculptural photography was really exciting for me.

The History of Photography

Since antiquity, humans have been aware of the phenomenon known as the “camera obscura”—a natural optical effect in which light passing through a small hole projects an inverted image onto a surface inside a darkened space, much like my Hasselblad camera, where the lens and internal mirrors project what the eye sees onto a frosted-glass plate. Painters once used this same principle to produce more accurate depictions of their subjects, particularly in portraiture. For centuries, artists and scientists experimented with ways to fix these images onto light-sensitive materials, eventually leading to the invention of photography. One of the most significant effects of this invention was how it democratised image-making. Whereas painted portraits had long been a privilege reserved for the upper classes, photography made it possible for a much broader segment of society to have their portraits taken at relatively low cost.

Nicéphore Niépce was among the first to devise a method for capturing a permanent image. He created what is now considered the first photograph by exposing a tin plate coated in light-sensitive asphalt (bitumen) inside a camera obscura. After many hours of exposure, the image was then fixed by washing the plate with lavender oil and turpentine. However, this process, known as heliography, was not practical for mass production. Louis Daguerre and Henry Fox Talbot later

refined the technology, making photographs less time consuming and more cost-effective to produce, and they also introduced the photographic negative, which allowed for reproduction, thereby increasing the medium's accessibility and utility.⁵ The chemical processes behind analogue photography continue to amaze me. Even though I've developed countless rolls of both black-and-white and colour film, I still get a thrill each time a photograph whose final form I've only been able to imagine suddenly emerges, there, on the negative.

The invention of the negative made reproducibility a defining feature of the photographic medium, paving the way for mass distribution of images, both among the general public and within the realm of journalism. In this way, photography created a new visual language.

Analogue vs. Digital Photography

A central issue in my practice is the relationship between digital and analogue photography. At a time when anyone with a smartphone has access to a camera, image production has become an ingrained part of everyday life. I am drowning in images, and this raises ongoing questions within my practice: What constitutes quality? What qualifies as art? What is staged? What has been generated by artificial intelligence? And do these distinctions even matter? Digitalisation has accelerated the circulation of images and transformed how we experience and consume photography—through news media and social platforms, in art and culture.

At the same time, I find that analogue photography prompts a different kind of behaviour—both in myself as the photographer and in the people I photograph. When I use a large-format analogue camera, the photographic process itself changes, becoming both performative and deliberate. People respond and move differently; they seem more reflective, more critical, compared to when I use a digital camera or smartphone. I don't believe many of the iconic photographs I often return to in photobooks could be made today. While much documentary photography has historically been shaped by imbalances in power and privilege, these dynamics have changed with the increasing democratisation of the medium. I also believe our behaviour has shifted in response to where photographs ultimately appear—whether in print or on digital platforms—and how we are presented or exposed. Today, photographs more often take the form of self-staging through ubiquitous videos and images on social media: a kind of Lacanian mirror stage, in which we perform and present ourselves for the approval of others.

The Position of Photography in Art

Photography's status as an art form has been the subject of debate since its invention. Initially, it was widely regarded as a mechanical means of representation, lacking the human intervention and creative skill that painting or sculpture required. One of the most vocal critics was the poet Charles Baudelaire, who viewed photography primarily as a technology for reproduction rather than as a creative and artistic discipline. “Photographers, you will never become artists. All you are

is mere copiers,” he declared.⁶ His words still lurk in the background of my practice, like a ghost constantly questioning the artistic value of photography and the things I seek to create. My work is deeply impacted by this tension, and I continually seek to challenge the limitations of photography. During my studies in visual culture, I have examined the development of photography and the changes its digitalisation has brought about. This shift has not only altered art photography’s visual language but also expanded its accessibility and means of production. Today, images can be generated by artificial intelligence without any human involvement at all.

This evolutionary trajectory has played a crucial role in concentrating my work around analogue processes. Historically, the photographic image has maintained a direct causal connection to the subject in front of the camera at the moment the picture was taken. Unlike a painting, a photograph cannot be created from memory or imagination. In the field of semiotics, Charles Sanders Peirce described this characteristic as “indexicality”: the way a photograph points to its referent, which he saw as a quality unique to photography.⁷

Painting as Inspiration

My photographic practice is greatly inspired by painting, influencing my use of colour and the composition of my images. At the same time, I feel somewhat envious of painters—at least when it comes to the creative process. To make a photograph, a subject must be physically placed in front of the lens. While painters may use photographs as references, their entire creative process can unfold in the studio, flowing unhindered from thought to action.

This sentiment has only grown stronger since I began my studies at a school where many of my peers work with disciplines outside photography, and I have become more curious about and interested in exploring sculpture in my practice. Working sculpturally allows for a more tactile engagement with my works, through manipulation that is far more physical than what is possible with a computer or in a darkroom. I’ve become interested in casting, which—like photography—relies on a distinction between positive and negative forms.

I’m especially drawn to French painters like Pierre Puvis de Chavannes and those he later inspired, who led a movement to simplify painting. They pared down grand paintings and subjects in an attempt to foreground the most essential elements, arranged in quiet, harmonious compositions and coloured in muted pastel tones: “To simplify, that is to release the thought; the simplest conception proves to be the most beautiful.”⁸ My early photographs were often chaotic and lacked order. As I studied paintings and photographs, I found myself longing to reduce and organise the elements within the camera’s viewfinder when composing my images until only the most essential remained. My aim is to create a clear structure and a sense of calm, and to evoke that same timelessness I find in painting.

This reductionist approach made me more inquisitive and exploratory in terms of where to position myself to construct an image, but it also made me curious about where and who I photograph, and how I might create visual order in chaotic environments. As is the case with photojournalism, simplifying the material helped me express my stories with greater clarity. This shift also prompted me to question my use of colour—after

Images courtesy of the artist



Left: Mads Skarsteen Andersen, *Untitled*, 2025. Casted tin, 30 × 18 cm

Right: Mads Skarsteen Andersen, *DRY YOUR EYES*, 2025. Glazed ceramics, backlit, photographs mounted on acrylic sheets, LED lamp, 80 × 85 cm

all, surely the ultimate form of simplification would be achieved through exclusive use of greyscale? My interest in photography evolved alongside the transition from black-and-white to colour film, and my list of idols includes Henri Cartier-Bresson, Sally Mann, Diane Arbus, and Richard Avedon. Despite my fascination with their black-and-white work, I have yet to figure out how I can create images that feel personal to me. I usually compose my images according to colour and light, rather than light alone. I manipulate my film both during exposure and afterwards, in the darkroom, to achieve tonalities and hues inspired by painting.

In Puvis de Chavannes's era, the mid-nineteenth century, Japanese artworks entered the Western art market and became hugely popular, profoundly influencing European artists—a wave that became known as Japonisme.⁹ Especially Japanese woodblock prints inspired Western painters and the impressionists. Many of these prints' key stylistic traits remind me of photography: tight, radical cropping; unusual viewpoints and perspectives; flat compositions that emphasise shape and colour. Furthermore, the prints often depict domestic interiors and everyday urban scenes, in compositions reflecting Japanese principles of harmony, asymmetry, and the use of negative space—in sharp contrast to the European tendency to fill the entire frame.¹⁰ I try to incorporate similar principles in my photographic work to produce more poetic visual narratives. Much like that era's flâneur figure, I've also delved into Japanese art and philosophy, drawing inspiration from two concepts in particular—*kaizen* and *wabi-sabi*.

Kaizen is a Japanese philosophy popularised in the industrial sector after World War II. It emphasises continuous, incremental improvement, based on the idea that small, positive changes gradually lead to perfection.¹¹ This can be translated into an artistic practice as a sustained focus on process over outcome. By refining techniques, experimenting with materials, and learning from my failures, I aim to gradually enhance my skills. *Kaizen* has deep roots in Japanese culture, which holds great respect for the worker's lifelong dedication to perfecting craft traditions and mastering their discipline. Alongside this, I've been inspired by *wabi-sabi*,¹² which celebrates the beauty of imperfection, transience, and incompleteness. My work with the analogue, chemical, and tactile processes of photography and other art forms often gives rise to results that, despite prior testing and preparation, surprise me. By adopting both philosophical approaches in my artistic practice, I seek to improve technically while remaining open to the new paths and possibilities offered by unexpected results.

Many of the photographers who currently inspire me are as inquisitive and experimental in the darkroom as they are behind the camera. Here, imperfections and experiments are essential, producing abstract, painterly, poetic, and unique results. Encouraged by their work, I intend to learn techniques for printing in colour in the darkroom, which would allow me to create more tactile colour images and grant me more direct influence on the process. Although photography has traditionally been tethered to the representation of reality, my aim is to explore its limitations and the ways it can be used for personal expression. By expanding its sculptural possibilities, I hope to build bridges between the painterly, the performative, and the sculptural in my photographic practice.

- 1 Steven Spielberg, in "THE POST interviews – Spielberg, Paulson, Coon, Odenkirk, Rhys, Whitford, Letts," YouTube video, 15:07, posted by FOX 5 Washington DC, December 12, 2017, <https://youtu.be/fgW5ERhXj84>.
- 2 "Jeff Wall," Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 2015, <https://louisiana.dk/en/exhibition/jeff-wall/>.
- 3 Yilmaz Dziewior, *Jeff Wall: Tableaux Pictures Photographs, 1996–2013*, press release, Kunsthau Bregenz, 2014, https://www.kunsthau-bregenz.at/fileadmin/user_upload/KUB/Ausstellungen/1997_bis_2015/Jeff_Wall/Pressemappe_JW_engl.pdf.
- 4 Jeff Wall, *After "Invisible Man" by Ralph Ellison, the Prologue, 1999–2000*, transparency in lightbox, 174 x 250.8 cm, in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.
- 5 Helmut Gernsheim and Alison Gernsheim, *The History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present*, 4th ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), chapters 1–2, <https://archive.org/details/aa052-TheHistory-OfPhotography>.
- 6 Charles Baudelaire, 1859, quoted in Annie Le Brun, "The Feeling of Nature at the Close of the Twentieth Century," *Camera Austria*, no. 14 (1984): 20.
- 7 Kris Paulsen, "The Index and the Interface," *Representations* 122, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 89–90.
- 8 Janet Oh, "Pierre Puvis de Chavannes," *The Art Story*, edited and revised by Ruth Epstein, first published March 2, 2016, <https://www.theart-story.org/artist/puvis-de-chavannes-pierre/>.
- 9 Marie-Joelle Eschmann, "Japonism: This Is What Claude Monet's Art Has in Common with Japanese Art," *The Collector*, September 1, 2020, <https://www.thecollector.com/claude-monet-japonism/>.
- 10 Rosie Lesso, "How Japanese Art Influenced Impressionism," *The Collector*, September 5, 2020, <https://www.thecollector.com/how-japanese-art-influenced-impressionism/>.
- 11 Masaaki Imai, *Kaizen: The Key to Japan's Competitive Success* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1986), chapter 1.
- 12 Leonard Koren, *Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers* (Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge, 1994).

Image courtesy of the artist



Mads Skarsteen Andersen, *THE DAYS SEEM SHORTER*, 2025. Photograph printed on fabric, 200 × 260 cm



Image courtesy of Youngjae Lih

Gunvor Lind Balslev, *A growl says more than a 1000 words*, 2025. Video installation, 4K digital video, stereo sound, TV stand, speakers, carpet of plushies, 18:11 min. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2025



Image courtesy of the artist

Gunvor Lind Balslev, *A growl says more than a 1000 words*, 2025. Detail

word / image

*“it’s dark outside, blue
I look up at a house with lights in the windows
the sound is heavy and intense, summery
birds, grasshoppers, flies, dogs, frogs,
completely maxed out
maybe I hear footsteps
but I don’t know who’s walking them
maybe I’m the one walking them
maybe I’m no one at all
the darkness is safe, the silence noisy”¹*

I am holding a spiral-bound notebook I once bought at Muji. Newly acquired notebooks always feel alien to me. Before I can think in them, I need to get to know them. I need to break them in, give them another visual identity—I paint the cover with nail varnish, stick on stickers, tear pages out, and tape new ones in. They can’t be too pristine. The one I’m holding in my hand dates to 2022. Purple sentences written in pen, slightly smudged by the rain. I recognise the words on the page from when I was working on the video piece *Whether We Want It or Not*. As an early part of the process, I let the pictures in my head spill onto the pages as words, which become sentences, which become a mood or feeling. Over time, these fragments weave together, forming the ground from which the artwork grows.

Whether We Want It or Not began with a sense of place: a garden in a suburban neighbourhood. A mundane setting, laced with a magical undertone. Here, a person gets bitten by a tick, and the tick grows bigger and bigger until its human host is forced to confront it.

*“skin up close
so close the skin cells feel real
almost alive, and you can see it
skin cells, which are animal cells too
the tick attacking the skin
blood sucked aggressively, dramatically*

*sweaty skin, slightly itchy
attempts made to remove the tick, it holds on
growing larger with every try
the tick tags along when laundry is hung
now as big as a backpack”²*

Inspired by Franz Kafka’s novella *The Metamorphosis*,³ *Whether We Want It or Not* became a story about the tick as a kind of burden that can no longer be ignored or separated from the person carrying it. The person is forced to reckon with what appears to be a parasite residing on their body and must find a way for the two to coexist. To accept that something undesired and foreign has lodged itself in the body and will never fully

go away. That one is marked by it. That everything we experience leaves its trace on us and becomes a fundamental part of our experience.

A few years have passed since I worked on that piece, and although my method has changed in many ways, I recognise the attempt to evoke different emotional states, human tendencies, or social relations through metaphorical worlds. My aim is to construct a particular atmosphere, steering the evolution of the metaphorical world in a certain direction, while preserving an ambiguity that serves as an opening, letting the viewer in.

whatever happened to fun?⁴

In my practice, I often work with stagings that explore space, characters, and expressions. I try to allow the works to be humorous while still being rooted in a certain seriousness—it’s a balance I’m always trying to strike. I draw inspiration from the world of theatre and epic works that do not shy away from grandiosity when it comes to both humour and emotion. I see my own works as theatrical spaces I can enter and investigate.

*“The Truth!”
at which Orlando woke.
He stretched himself. He rose. He stood upright in
complete nakedness before
us, and while the trumpets pealed Truth! Truth! Truth!
we have no choice left but
confess—he was a woman.”⁵*

In Virginia Woolf’s exuberant satirical novel *Orlando*, humour is ever-present as the reader follows the eponymous protagonist through a life spanning nearly four hundred years, filled with every conceivable fantastical experience—including the transition from man to woman. Woolf is not afraid of overdoing it: her characters are unapologetically too much, and yet just right.

In my own work, *Newton’s Cradle*, the viewer is introduced to a flamboyant character performing a melodramatic monologue in a thirteen-minute one-take video.

*“the goal is melodrama
our weapon is to revel
we’re recognised on the street
there go the revellers, they say
as we crawl out of our
skins and sew them into pretty skirts
gold and satin and pretty please”⁶*

The titular object—a Newton’s cradle—dictates the rhythm of the monologue through a constant staccato ticking, symbolising an oscillating emotional life. Declaring itself “a manifesto for sensitive souls,” the

work explores a kind of queer sensibility characterised by *too muchness* or being *too emotional*. The character in the video stands in a stark concrete space in the glare of a spotlight, wearing a shimmering orange tulle dress. In a sketch from the notebook I kept during the work process, the character looks like a goldfish in an aquarium.

"I AM IN TRAINING, DON'T KISS ME"

These words are emblazoned across Claude Cahun's chest in an iconic self-portrait. The photograph depicts a character with a steady gaze, hearts on their cheeks, and meticulously styled kiss curls. The figure sits composedly, legs crossed, exuding an enviable self-assurance with a cartoonish homemade dumbbell in their lap. In these photographs, Cahun merges playful curiosity with fierce intensity, experimenting with expressions of identity through costumes, makeup, and props. I remember the first time I saw the picture at the Black Diamond.⁸ Small in scale and easy to overlook, it nevertheless drew me in through its expressive force, its carefully balanced symbolism, and the ambiguity of its character. I still find it hard to believe these photographs of Cahun are nearly a century old.

When I stage spaces and characters in my own work, I usually begin with very specific images in my mind. I try to keep them open, because once I'm behind the camera, they always look a little different—and that's also where the images seem to become most dynamic.

antennae

Just as it was for Cahun, the camera is my most important tool for creating works. When I got my first mobile phone capable of recording video, I would go around studying the world through its pixelated lens. Later, I began transferring the files to my laptop and editing them in Windows Movie Maker. Right from the start, something about the moving image spoke to me—how it allows you to manipulate time and space and construct your own reality.

"The mechanical similarity between the lens and the eye is largely responsible for the use of the camera as a recording, rather than a creative, instrument, for the function of the eye is to register. However, it is in the mind behind the eye that the registered material achieves meaning and impact."⁹

In her essay "Cinema as an Art Form," Maya Deren speaks about how the camera (and the editing room) only becomes a creative instrument through conscious imaginative use. Technology has evolved since Deren wrote that essay, but her point still stands. Throughout any creative process, one must ask the questions: Why am I doing things this way? Why does the image look like this? What technology am I using, and why? It's a matter of staying open to the medium's possibilities, both while filming and in post-production, to take advantage of these in ways that serve the specific needs of the work. When do you make choices purely for aesthetic reasons, and when do you make choices that add something new to the piece?

"One of the habits that we bring with us is the anticipation that there will be narrative in film and that narrative will give the film form. In this case there is no narrative, any more than there is narrative musical composition. Yet we know there is logic in musical composition, even though no narrative. To say there is no narrative is not to say that it is anarchic; but according to another logic. My effort is directed toward discovering what would be the logic of film form as contrasted to the logic of narrative form: to discover this logic—as a poet discovers the logic of one tone following another—and in which we recognize a melody, although it is not a narrative."¹⁰

I find Deren's comparison between experimental film and a piece of music or a poem especially compelling: the idea that a film follows its own internal logic, even if that logic doesn't conform to a narrative. There are so many variables in video production: movement, sound, image, rhythm, space, time ... For me, working with video is a sculptural process. I use my antennae, trying to feel my way, while also recognising when an idea just doesn't work in practice. I often find inspiration in the structures of poetry or music. Sometimes, I'll carry certain rhythms in my body that influence the editing. Or I'll have particular sounds or words that evoke images. Or movements I can visualise from the camera's point of view. I test things out and often discover they're not what I'd imagined. But sometimes, they offer me just the thing I was looking for and lead me to the next step. I know my limitations, and I often collaborate with others who have different areas of expertise to help bring the ideas in my head to life.

finding one's way in the collage

How can an inner reality be expressed, and how does it gain external relevance? I see myself as a single layer within an infinite collage of time, history, mythology, systems, conditions, and lived lives. How do I justify my layer, how do I add something new while respecting the references I draw upon? Often, I find my entry point into my works through historical events or mythologies that somehow speak to a current condition I identify within me or around me.

"My subject is not prehistoric images in contemporary art, but prehistoric images and contemporary art. What I've learned from mythology, archaeology, and other disciplines is the overlay's invisible bottom layer. My internal method is that of collage—the juxtaposition of two unlike realities combined to form an unexpected new reality."¹¹

In her book *Overlay*, Lucy Lippard examines how artists draw on prehistory and mythology in various ways, forming a vast collage, layer upon layer, each transformed into something new by the context in which it's placed. Lippard primarily bases her analysis on ancient ruins and monuments—structures made by humans from natural elements and used for various rituals, through which they were imbued with a social significance we now have only the slightest knowledge of. In my own practice, I find myself beginning with



Gunvor Lind Balslev, *A growl says more than a 1000 words*, 2025. Video installation, 4K digital video, stereo sound, TV stand, speakers, carpet of plushies, 18:11 min. Selected video still

historical events or mythological concepts and placing these in new metaphorical contexts in order to explore human tendencies or social absurdities.

*“The real challenge to a socially aware artist working in this mode is to make the resurrected forms meaningful now, not in terms of nostalgia, but in terms of present struggles and dreams and hopes and fears.”*¹²

I’m reminded of Anne Carson’s lyrical novel, *Autobiography of Red*¹³—the dreamlike, moving, and strange tale of Geryon, an outcast winged red monster, following his journey into the world of photography through his camera and his heartbreaking love for the golden, carefree Herakles. *Autobiography of Red* draws on the ancient Greek myth in which Herakles is sent to the ends of the earth, Erytheia, as part of his tenth labour, to slay the giant Geryon and bring his cattle back to Eurystheus. Through an imaginative portrayal of a sensitive mind, Carson transplants this myth into a contemporary setting, leaving the reader unsure of which reality they’re in. The story is told in a language that follows its own internal logic and poetry, offering us glimpses of Geryon’s peculiar view of the world around him. I love that Carson tells the story from the monster’s perspective. That it’s the monster we come to sympathise with, because it doesn’t fit the societal ideals we’re told to aspire to.

In pop culture, villains have often been queer-coded.¹⁴ A few examples include Baron Vladimir Harkonnen in Frank Herbert’s *Dune*,¹⁵ Frankenstein’s monster,¹⁶ and HIM, the flamboyant devil from *The Powerpuff Girls*¹⁷ (which I watched on TV every day as a child, both terrified of and fascinated by HIM). The references I draw on also tend to emerge from a queer perspective. Queerness becomes a lens through which I see the world. In the work *Conversation in lavender*, I took inspiration from secret queer languages, collectively referred to as “lavender languages”: entire vocabularies, intricate slang, and secret signs developed within queer subcultures as safe ways of communicating. In the film, two characters meet in an otherwise desolate landscape. Their exchange is wordless but evolves into a kind of choreography with threads connecting the characters’ fingertips. The film has no sound, and their interaction relies on other forms of communication beyond spoken language.

who will care for our caretakers

This is the question Pamela Sneed poses several times throughout her book *Funeral Diva*,¹⁸ which weaves together memoir, essay, and poetry documenting life during the AIDS crisis in New York as a queer Black woman. When I visited the exhibition *Who will care for our caretakers*¹⁹ by Kang Seung Lee—

titled after a line in Sneed's poems, it was, above all, a physical experience. As I stepped into the dim light of the concrete gallery, I was faced with a wall-sized photograph portraying a group of feminine-presenting individuals, each looking straight into the camera with a range of expressions: from wide, toothy smiles to unbothered stares. The texture of the photograph makes it seem like it's slowly fading away. Immediately, I felt the stirring of a sensitivity that constitutes an entryway into the rest of the exhibition.

The first series of works is presented as framed archival material—symbols and images, clippings from newsletters referencing the queer community during the AIDS crisis, diary entries, and letters from deceased queer

artists recreated in black-and-white watercolours. Throughout the exhibition, Lee pulls in research and archival material using a variety of methods. Framed collages and poster-like pieces, textile works stitched with delicate golden thread, and tables laid with books and background material for the visitor to peruse. It almost feels like stepping into the artist's own personal library of sources and references, tracing the lost queer generation claimed by the AIDS epidemic, and the grief of that loss, still embedded in younger queer generations. The golden thread runs through the exhibition, weaving the works together into a coherent experience. The embroideries form sentences written in an alphabet Lee has invented: a secret language the viewer slowly begins to decipher.



Images courtesy of the artist



Gunvor Lind Balslev, *A growl says more than a 1000 words*, 2025. Video installation, 4K digital video, stereo sound, TV stand, speakers, carpet of plushies, 18:11 min. Selected video stills

At the heart of the exhibition is a video work showing a choreography between two performers. The soundtrack plays a melancholic composition that seems to reference old-school club genres. The two characters meet in a neutral space, where they discover a garment made from two conjoined shirts, enabling two people to wear it at once. Through a dance, the characters put on the shirt, and meanwhile, the tension between them builds until it is all-consuming. There can be no doubt that the double-shirt represents great danger.

Outside the museum, I filled my lungs with the cool March air while a sparrow hopped about in circles at my feet. I was left with the words. The tenderness with which Lee handles the stories, offering an arena for reflecting on oneself and others through the perspective of queer history.

*"I'm not a woman, I'm not a man
I am something that you'll never understand
I'll never beat you, I'll never lie
And if you're evil, I'll forgive you by and by"²⁰*

Who are our caretakers? Who took care of them? And who can we be caretakers for? Community is a cornerstone of my practice—in the end, we only have each other. I think about how connections can be formed across time and place. How art might serve as a kind of link, a place to gather, a starting point from which to speak. Can we dismantle rigid structures in order to build something more organic—something more caring? Nobody's free until everybody's free.

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Images courtesy of the artist

Loke Berg, *Finder*, 2025. Multimedia installation, hole in wall, daylight, various mirrors, trajectory of light, photopolymer print, forged passport



Loke Berg, *Finder*, 2025. Handmade telescopic stands with ballhead mounts, various mirrors

When I was three years old, I had to get my stomach pumped after eating a cube of cadmium yellow I'd found in my mum's watercolour box. My parents were artists, so my first encounter with the artistic experience was through the visual arts. When I was a few years older and started developing my vocabulary, I discovered the same artistic quality in language. At first, this was in the form of specific words that I thought had a particular *something* about them. I collected these words in a little book that I kept hidden away in my room. *Klot: Möbel-Glaskropp*: When I learned to read properly, I experienced the same thing within poetry and prose. At the age of twelve, I began making music and, for the first time, encountered the unfolding of the extended art experience, where the passage of time itself was essential. My first realisation about the metaphysics of art was that it is completely independent of the processes through which it is created. Eventually, I found myself working at an animation studio, where my encounter with movement as thousands of moments, one after another, gave me my second realisation, this time regarding the extent of the artistic experience. Atsushi Wada portrays this in a confronting fashion in his short film *Day of Nose* (2005).¹ The film uses significant contrast between soft, repetitive movements, animated at twenty-four frames per second, and sequences in which the same static image is shown for several seconds. The animation makes use of delicate pen lines and contains no dialogue: the only audio are sounds from the artist's hands, voice, and breath. I have never experienced time as something constant but rather as something akin to an accordion. At the worst of times, it gets stretched and then compressed violently,

erratically, making it almost impossible to keep track of. When experiencing art, however, it suddenly falls into a sort of rhythm, leaving its troublesome trajectory and instead creating little loops along my timeline.

In this essay, I consider the role of the artist and what this means today. I will analyse my own experiences and observations, and translate them with fingers on my keyboard into fragments of writing in a dead document.² In this way, I will convey my thoughts about my role, function, and impossibilities on a thousand plateaus. By "impossibility," I mean all perceptible elements of reality that do not fulfil any function in the explanatory model that justifies the existence of everything nowadays. My determination and only consolation is made up of these impossibilities. Because everything is not possible, everything is impossible. Everything that is of any interest to me, at least.

Sound and form have always existed. Everything we know has always had a colour. Practising and refining one's craft was, originally, the entire definition of being an artist. In ancient Greece, this was called *techné*. However, the Greeks identified yet another mystical aspect of creation, one whose essence could not in the same way be attributed to knowledge or competence: *poetry*.³ In Plato's dialogue *Ion*, this phenomenon is investigated through the foundational premise of quality. Socrates questions the bard Ion (a professional in the field of poetry recitation) about why some poetry is better than other. Ion cites Homer and talks at length about Homer being the greatest poet; but Socrates argues that this does not explain the epistemological

reasoning behind Homer's brilliance. What *knowledge* does Homer possess? To illustrate the problem, Socrates remarks that, for example, a doctor must be said to know more about medicine than a poet, and yet Homer writes about medicine, sculpture, and archery, among other things, better than experts in those fields. The conclusion they come to is that the previously mentioned practitioners by definition have expertise (gained through the practice of their craft), while the poet's field of work cannot be attributed to anything that they possess any knowledge of. As a result, the poet does not *know* anything or master any skill; rather, their poetic rhapsodies spring forth from a fundamentally different practice: *inspiration*. The poet therefore connects to and channels something divine. This is made possible by the assistance of the Muses, and the poet continues their work in an alternate state, that of divine possession.

I drive along Avenida da Liberdade, looking up at the flashing foliage as the wind tumbles under the back of my shirt, embraced by citrus and warm asphalt. As I put some pressure on the gearstick with my toe and grasp the clutch with my left hand, the lamella plates gently disengage, whizzing around for a brief moment, before the gear turns in sync with the drive sprocket, and my hand jerks the accelerator back, like a spear soaring through the centuries ... I am Speed, a being in time, and my thoughts turn to the young Japanese men who rolled this contraption through the factory doors in Hamamatsu in 1974 while soldiers and farmers were putting carnations in the barrels of their guns on Europe's western peninsula. The synchronicity comes full circle as I pick up a book, a few weeks ago now; a sort of philosophical exploration of life, love, and the art of motorcycle maintenance, told through a travelogue in the year 1974. A million heartbeats pass and I die for a brief moment...

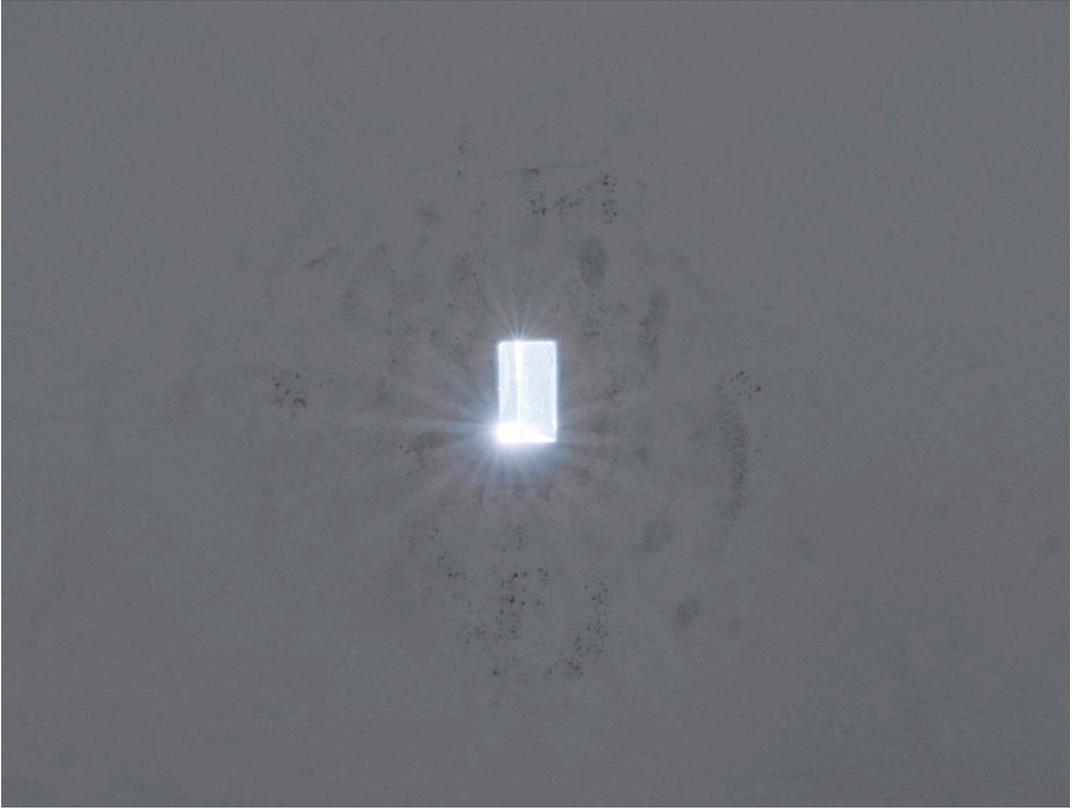
Near the start of the nineteenth century, the trope of the artistic Genius began to take shape, a concept that dramatically changed (and eventually drove a wedge in) the relationship between art and craft. In the Enlightenment, beauty started to become a priority, and the importance of mimesis was questioned.⁴ Aesthetics emerged as a philosophical concept, and humans pursued a new understanding of the subjective experience of the individual. The concept of originality was seen for the first time as the main objective of art; true *original* works were only and could only be products of the artistic Genius.⁵ This trope was fleshed out by Arthur Schopenhauer, who stated that the artistic experience (the product of artistic genius) had a transcendental potential to channel a state in which thought and perception are one and the same. The unique angle afforded by the concept of the Genius is the paradoxical trope of its apathetic subject, who cannot be questioned or held accountable for anything because they impart only inspiration, while the Genius cannot take part in crafts either, since their works depart from *beyond* knowledge. Today, our primary criterion for distinguishing art is of a performative nature (in the very statement itself; *this is art*), but if we presume a context

in which this fact is already given, then the first thing the viewer encounters when entering a contemporary art exhibition would be the prologue of merits. These merits are an integral part of an economy that the artist is fully aware of, with the implication that they now concern themselves with a form of knowledge: something that can be measured, taught, and proven. This, by definition, represents a break from the role of the Genius, because the artist consciously handles and works with the currency of this knowledge. There is a balancing act in which the artist must take advantage of the artistic freedom of expression in theory (renouncing their devotion to the meritocratic structure it acts within and is conditioned by) to maintain the amnesty granted to their work, as well as characterising their brand as genuine.⁶ But how do our merits relate to our experiences?

It's approaching 9 pm, it's starting to get dark, and I'm deep into a nature reserve when I suddenly taste blood in my mouth. I've driven straight over a hole in the road and now I'm bouncing uncontrollably between the walls of the chasm with 250 kilos of God on my side. The ignition sputters out, the headlights fade to black, and I just about manage to release the headrest before the centripetal force gives way to gravity and my back hits the ground, the scornful sun beating down on me. The grotesque twittering of foreign birds and my warm head embraced by their dusty flora. No phone signal can reach me, and there I lie, without tools, dying as the ocean cries out at the foot of the mountain...

In 1957, Marcel Duchamp described what he called the "creative act,"⁷ which can be partly understood as the distance between intention and realisation—a subjective process in which the artist must make decisions unknowingly. Duchamp explains that he is wholly unconcerned with quality in this regard: irrespective of whether a work of art is good or bad, it consists only of the arithmetical relation between the (unexpressed) intention and the unintentionally expressed. For Duchamp, this is the unique "art coefficient," or rather the *raw materials* from which Art is created. It is then the viewer who refines this raw material and completes the work of art with their attention and judgement, which over time determines the designated place of the work and the artist in history. The creative act is therefore not something that the artist themselves can carry out; rather, it is something that is completed for the first time by encountering the outside world and the viewer. It is because of Duchamp that I can call what I do *art*. His model describes the pragmatics of the artistic process as well as its fundamental dependence on the social context, meaning that the analysis of both the artist's intention and the viewer's perception can be deepened through a consideration of sociopolitical or psychoanalytic factors. In short, art is relative.⁸ Rather than speaking in terms of *good* or *bad* art, I can think of many reasons why the viewer's preferences might align with the artist's "art coefficient" that don't necessarily have anything to do with art, such as one's values, preferences, heritage, environment, et cetera. I don't preclude that these correlations might make

Image courtesy of the artist



Loke Berg, *Finder*, 2025. Hole cut in wall



Images courtesy of the artist

Loke Berg, *Finder*, 2025. Daylight, mirror in handmade stand, concrete frame with photopolymer print, forged passport



Loke Berg, *Finder*, 2025. Speed camera snapshot reproduced as a photopolymer print

up some sort of subjective foundation, because every single one of us has facilitative factors that enable us to get closer to the *hidden principles of art*. But if these principles aren't part of the equation, then we end up standing in front of a mirror that solely shows our own preferences and values. Such an experience can have high or low entertainment value, it can be informative, fun, or consist of a well-composed riddle. However, when the hidden principles of art are present, you can *feel* them: the experience becomes fundamentally different. It is clearest when it happens outside of an artistic context (where this theory is not present), or in art that clashes with our secular beliefs.

Michel Houellebecq's story *Serotonin* (2019) includes a passage where the main character (and narrator), Florent-Claude, considers murdering his ex-partner's son in order to get her to love him again. This episode resonated with me, specifically with my experience of artistic creation as an existential dilemma, in which creation and destruction represent two sides of the same coin. I see the roles of "ex-partner" and "child" here as metaphors for the inherent qualities (or conflicting desires) of the main character himself, with the child representing some sort of necessary sacrifice in this dialectic—*kill your darlings*. Taking into consideration FC as an unreliable narrator (who is also nearing mental collapse), his motivation is still, fundamentally, romantic. However, it gets perverted through the course of events, and the romantic determinist soon stands, paralysed and alone, accompanied only by his suffering and the serotonin in his body. I do not believe that anyone should or needs to extol suffering as necessary in the modern world; it would be enough for us to give up our technological prostheses to realise that we are already in that position.⁹ I believe that this is what Houellebecq is forcing us to come to terms with, and this could very well scare the reader. Criticism of Houellebecq often originates in the position that, by portraying pessimistic viewpoints, he is endorsing and legitimising them: there seems to be a general irritation over his "unwillingness" to depict a human downfall without offering some positive insights or constructive solutions. Even if this criticism may be partly due to an inability to separate the art from the artist, it also contains a notable implication about how an artist should (not) portray the world. The experience of reading this work of art is spoken about as if it were a relatively powerful tool for shaping our moral values. Morals, however, are a function of a system and are not in any way related to experience.

*The slender road. My incubator, immersed in darkness. The world reduced to a pair of headlights that disappear into the night, the tiny stretch of road constantly being renewed—this is my melody—a perpetual truth, and this is what actually happened: "The stars of the sky tumbled down to earth, like a fig tree full of unripe fruits toppling after being shaken by a strong wind. And the Earth folded up, like the closing of a scroll; and every mountain and island slid out from its place."*¹⁰ I switch off the radio and listen to the poetry: thousands of synchronised explosions that shudder through the seat and out

of my body, the rhythm of marker posts along the road like iambs in my peripheral. It's as if life has forced me to forget where I came from—like my glances towards the edge of the road where it meets the darkness. The timeless freedom of it all makes the question of God meaningless; hybrid moments of wonderful life and there I die, once again...

I can no longer link my artistry to any specific activity or part of my existence. Rather, it is a sort of continual, nebulous responsiveness to all aspects of my being. The pursuit of this responsiveness is something fundamentally different to crafting. It can't be conceptualised as a specific knowledge of something, but this responsiveness is also an integral part of all well-made crafts, which is the point at which the sharply defined dichotomy between art and craft becomes a less useful philosophical tool. It is also not an exclusive quality of the artist's existence: it can be perceived by all who seek it. A work of art can be dependent on the viewer also developing this sense of responsiveness within themselves. My experience is that the more I engage with my own existence and draw inferences from what I actually perceive, the closer I come to feeling true and honest instincts about *the hidden principles of art*. From this it follows that even if this search doesn't revolve around any sort of craft, it is a thoroughly practical activity, something that needs initiative, action, and, above all else, consistency. This responsiveness to the artistic principle must be allowed to saturate one's entire being to function. If we understand the artistic experience as a real, animating, ontological force, we must learn before anything else that we should base our actions on this understanding. That is to say, we should live our lives based on this understanding, not internalise it until it becomes something else. Only then can we reap the rewards and continue to craft.

*THE SACRIFICE (...)*¹¹ About ten years ago, I heard about a giant mirror that would reflect sunlight down into the darkest town in Norway. This short fable struck me as having an almost mythological quality: its fragmentary nature created a sort of sublime thought experiment in my mind, a mental entity that I sacrificed in the process of writing this text, when I visited the website of the artist Martin Andersen and watched a short film about the inception of the sun mirror.¹² The film shows Andersen through a series of cross-cut interviews with the residents of Rjukan,¹³ who describe him as a saviour and a genius. Andersen doesn't say a word, but instead is shown squinting at the sky while his wife explains how he "got the idea" while trying to stay in the sun during walks with their child in a pushchair until he suddenly exclaimed: "Why should I chase the sunlight? Why shouldn't I bring the sunlight down to the city!" The film is somewhat disturbing: it feels like some sort of pornography, and it struck me as impressive how the realisation of such a beautiful idea could be so abruptly perverted by our technological society's demiurge. I immediately lost interest in the whole ordeal and started to wonder what I could write about instead. But, failing to come up with anything else, I read a master's thesis from the University of Oslo

about Rjukan and the sun mirror, and something on page eighty-three jumped out at me. It was a letter to a local newspaper, *Rjukans Arbetarblad*, written in 1913 by a completely unknown and forgotten man by the name of Oscar Kittlesen. The column's title is "Sollys paa Rjukan om vinteren?" (Sunlight in Rjukan during the winter?), and something about the tone made me look *beyond* the words, seeing just how a worker lived in a newly constructed industry town pre-World War I, the belief in the future and the experience of living through those long winters without even a single ray of sunlight between the months of September and March. How one of the plant workers one day decided to pick up his pen and write down his ideas in a letter to his local newspaper. Out of the ashes of my fallen idea rose a new one, beginning to take form, a Norwegian ghost's audacious wish for a statue "à la *Frithjof hin frøkne*." I wrap it up tightly in cotton wool and leave it be, carefully backing out of my mind palace.

One or two days in the middle of April, the sun's path lies over the sky in such a way that I experience a sort of miracle my own apartment. When the sun sinks over the courtyard in the west, flooding my kitchen through the two-paned window, it comes to rest just above the rooftop of the house over the way: a position that lets the light flow right through the hallway, into my bedroom, and out again through the window of the living room, where it leaves my apartment for a moment before making its way to the balcony door on the house across the street, which reflects it back to the far wall of my living room, where it sings in chorus with the wallpaper, lingering there "for about half an hour."¹⁴ In experiencing the perpetual rise and fall of the sun, I drink your bright blood from its rays and I die again, and again, and again...

THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL FRAGILITY OF MY OWN JUDGEMENT does not allow for any straightforward definition of my role in life, so therefore I allow each and every event to be controlled by a sort of logos¹⁵ that has begun to define my identity. I therefore never feel any sense of peace, nor do I feel that I have ever accomplished anything. My better moments consist of a sense of relief, or, at its best, bewilderment. Three years ago, in my first semester of art school, I borrowed some money, a car, and a trailer so I could make my way up to a place just north of Uppsala, where I had bought a motorcycle. I didn't have a driving license, nor did I have any reasoned rationale behind this decision: it had simply suddenly become a fact as strong as my sense of the hidden principles of art. During my second year, I converted my studio into a garage, took the machine apart, learned a bit about repairing it, and got in enough practice to get my driving license just before I left for six earth-shattering weeks in Amsterdam in late 2023, where I got the idea to drive down to Portugal and back. Six-thousand five-hundred kilometres later, I find it difficult to remember whether I thought it would even be possible; I remember it simply as fragments of isolated snapshots, features of my revelation to take art seriously.

In Ragnar Kjartaanson's *Guilt Trip* (2007), a man dressed in black wanders aimlessly across a snowy landscape, carrying a yellow plastic bag and a shotgun. He comes to a stop and digs around in his plastic bag, taking out a couple of loose rounds and loading them into his weapon. He tilts his head back and waits for a moment before he shoots one round directly up into the air, then sinks his chin, rests the gun against his shoulder, stares blankly into the horizon and shoots another round. The wind whips around him, the man gathers up his things, then slowly starts forward. I see a sort of metaphor in motion, without linearity or narrative—simply an event portrayed as unending, hopeless, and cyclical; like Benjamin's Angel,¹⁶ it is looking back upon our future, moving in circles and shooting blindly. The hidden principle whispers in my ear: *It is never too late for us all, to spread ignorance about the impossible to the innumerable outwith time.*

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Loke Berg, *Finder*, 2025. Forged passport

- 1 Atsushi Wada, *Day of Nose*, 2005, YouTube video, 9:30, posted by Oxion YuTubi, 5 December 2014, <https://youtu.be/Z9Vjp-OYhdzw>.
- 2 Socrates's teaching about the dead nature of the written word comes to mind. For every word I think, formulate, and write down, the distance between myself and my true objective grows. According to Socrates (in Plato's *Phaedrus*), reliance on writing leads to the neglect of memory, which in turn leads to forgetfulness.
- 3 Poetry in this context should be understood as a broad designation, as it described by Diotima in Plato's *Symposium*: "'Poetry' has a very wide range. After all, everything that is responsible for creating something out of [c] nothing is a kind of poetry; and so all the creations of every craft and profession are themselves a kind of poetry, and everyone who practices a craft is a poet." Plato, "Symposium", in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper D. S. and Hutchinson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2010).
- 4 "Mimesis" comes from the Greek word *mimēsis*, meaning "imitation." Aristotle and Plato spoke of mimesis as a form of depiction or imitation of reality.
- 5 "An Original may be said to be of vegetable nature; it rises spontaneously from the vital root of Genius." Edward Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition* (London: A. Millard and R. and J. Dodsley, 1759), 10, reproduced in Ian Lancashire, *Rep. Criticism On-line* (1996).
- 6 "Brand" meaning the artist's signature and/or name.
- 7 Marcel Duchamp, "The Creative Act," *Art News*, June/July 1957.
- 8 That is to say, anything that fits this formula is, by definition, art. Regardless of content, intention, or ambition.
- 9 Modern technology allows us all to walk around with a live-streamed genocide in our pockets while a large share of society's resources are dedicated to space exploration.
- 10 The Holy Bible. Book of Revelation. 6:13–14. (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1917)
- 11 "... For a long time, three dots in a row along the writing baseline designated something lost and unknown, then at some point also something unuttered and utterable; no longer only something omitted or left out, but also something left open. Hence the three dots became a symbol that invites one to think the allusion to its conclusion, imagine that which is missing, a proxy for the inexpressible and the hushed-up, for the offensive and obscene, for the incriminating and speculative, for a particular version of the omitted: the truth." Judith Schalansky, *An Inventory of Losses*, trans. Jackie Smith (New York: New Directions, 2020).
- 12 "MAZDA REBELS: Rjukan Sun Mirror (VICE)," Vimeo video, 5:54, posted by Robin Schmidt, 18 November 2015, <https://vimeo.com/146119920>.
- 13 Rjukan was Norway's first industrial town, constructed in the early 1900s to house the workers of the water plant on Rjukanfoss. It is situated at the very bottom of a deep valley, surrounded by tall mountains, leaving it without direct sunlight in the winter.
- 14 Book of Revelation, 8:1
- 15 "Although logos is common to all, most people live as if they had a wisdom of their own." Herakleitos, *Fragment*, trans. Håkan Rehnberg and Hans Ruin (Stockholm: Kykeon, 1997), 19.
- 16 Walter Benjamin, part IX, in "On the Concepts of History," 1940, trans. Dennis Redmond, Marxist Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm>.



Image courtesy of the artist

Benedikte Nøstvik Eide, *My intimate name is: zero*, 2025. 2-channel HD video, two projectors, two tripods, mp3 player, headset, schoellershammer High-transparent paper, sound "Pre words" (Violin—Lone Aagot Meinich), variable dimensions. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2025

A fluid and undefined existence that tears in all directions, a total chaos swirling like a storm that diminishes the recognisable, creating confusion and disorientation. The question is whether to shape something in the outer, or whether something in the outer should be allowed to shape the inner: to let oneself be shaped by what is external, or to let what is external shape the internal. The two spaces are in constant dialogue. What does it mean to be pulled between something inside and something outside of yourself? Isn't it a necessary part of ourselves to be torn between different energies?¹

What if a daydream is reality, and what if we just stay in that daydream, living in an ambience? A zone where time stops. Where does time go? What actually happens in a daydream? Isn't it a bit like you're not thinking about anything at all? It's just an empty space, one where you disappear. I ask myself if you can choose what a daydream should be and if you can choose to disappear in it, or does it only come unconsciously.

The distinction between what has actually happened and what is a true dream merges. Time and place are displaced—shadows of people, turned upside down. The shadows walk along the street, those we already know. This is a space that is part of the real, but at the same time something else. In Mark Lewis's experimental 2005 film *Rush Hour, Morning and Evening*, reality and illusion are intertwined.² What we see is a new space, which we usually don't pay attention to or can't quite see, but with the help of a camera, he creates a new space that can be experienced as disorienting. You see something from a new perspective. It can be experienced as uncomfortable; for me, it's as if I'm forcing myself to be in reality, but at the same time, I'm in a dream.

I used to be interested in fiction, and in what I consider escapism. At that point, I hadn't given much thought to understanding what was physically outside of myself, but in the last couple of years, that has changed. I have become obsessed with understanding what is physically around me, rather than resisting it. It's an attempt to get closer to others, and in a way, closer to myself: a shared presence.

Immaterial art, the materialization of an idea

Sometimes I am more interested in an idea than in its visual expression: in immaterial art, the materialisation of an idea. There is a language in the structural. By "structural," I mean what medium or material I work with, as well as how something is represented. I have never had an obvious interest in particular mediums or materials; I have been interested in all of them to a degree. Quality doesn't necessarily lie in being an expert in a material. For me, quality also lies in the idea.

I explore mediums that have shaped me. It is a demystification of the medium. To break down a medium in order to understand oneself and to understand the medium. To explore the possibilities that exist within the limitations of the medium. When I break down a medium, I work directly with it in my images. I look at the quality that exists in the images from a camera, and what reality is created through the quality. How does the quality reflect a truth of its own? What energy is there in this quality? I would like to highlight and amplify precisely that quality that can be found in certain images, almost to exaggeration. In this way, the images nourish a form of surrealism. It's not a mystery; that much is obvious. It's inevitable that I'm not in contact with the medium I work with; it cannot be separated from an idea. When it comes to a traditional relationship with a medium or material, I can relate to breaking with it and at the same time have respect for its limitations. I work with experimental film, which can consist of disorienting camera movements, extreme close-ups, and negative images, among other things.

Energy exists in immaterial art

Energy exists in immaterial art: music can fill a room with an energy that moves the audience through a range of emotions. It's fascinating that music can charge a room with its own atmosphere. I often think about music in relation to images, whether still or moving. The embodiment that can exist in film interests me, how it can express emotions almost like music. I think about energy: What energy is there? What feelings are expressed in the images? Like an old symphony or a DJ mix from 2025: what is expressed in the emotional, in the atmosphere? The influence of music on images impacts me profoundly. As Kenneth Anger said, he would prefer to "project images directly into people's heads."³ The images can enter a new body to function as and become more of an abstract character.

To produce under control or not

I am a structuralist whether I want to be or not. I mean this in the sense of how Lee Lozano worked: a painting relates to a context, to what moves outside the canvas. How can a painting relate to the external world? It draws it inwards, like a processing of the external. As with Lozano's paintings, I see my own pictures as things that exist in our world, always relating to the external. The images are not isolated; they draw in something external. I see the images as a representation of something. It is not reality, but they are in dialogue with it. As if the pictures both draw the external inwards, but at the same time, exert something of their own. They are psychologically charged, as if something is mentally being projected into the images. Not a reflection of the external and shared reality, but of an emotional reality. According to psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott, what one projects onto an object is something that can

be understood as an illusion and a result of one's own experiences.⁴ I project myself out into the world—can I escape from it, or should I try to escape from it?

Mixing the old and the new, the ugly and the beautiful, the vulgar and the simple. Unexpected ideas and resistance in the visual. Focus on the functional rather than the aesthetic. Miuccia Prada and the designs created by Prada inspire me a lot. It's not the clothes themselves, or wearing them, but the design choices that inspire me. In them, there's a resistance, an invalidation. Valuing functionality more than looks. Function is the priority. That inspires me in how I relate to images: that something should be allowed to retain its functionality; that the focus is on what is happening and on the technical rather than the visual. Still, the visual is a big part of the images. But it's more a result of coincidences, something that's more out of my control. I don't want to control the visual too much, and my driving force lies in the practical or technical.

Is the task of art to reach an understanding? I don't know, maybe it is. Understanding one's own experiences, feelings, and memories, with an opportunity to create a reality of precisely that. Transparency. The transparency of art. To experience something for what it is. In a culture based on excess and overproduction, a loss of presence is created in our senses. I believe the task of art is to create transparency.⁵ To be able to see something for what it is, that is what I want.

I haven't necessarily sought out what is alien to me, but I have unconsciously been drawn towards it, as if I have held on to a certain fascination with it. There are moments where I have been a complete stranger to myself. There are many. Moments where there is a total disconnect between what I express and who I feel I really am. Alienation, putting words to or expressing alienation, is something that fascinates me. For me, there is so much alienation in moving around in society. It is as if I don't quite feel at home. To give in, to lose yourself, to find a camouflage, or to be honest and show resistance, that is the question. You don't get anywhere by thinking that you can abandon alienation. We are all alienated, and we always will be. Is it perhaps false to believe that we can deceive it? We are in what we are in, together.

I think about the fact that I always want to move forward and learn something new. I also see that in my surroundings. There is a kind of separation between myself and how I relate to objects. It almost feels like contrasts. What does something represent functionally, but also aesthetically? How does it correspond to what I feel and what I identify with? It is under a degree of control. I would like to let more randomness into my surroundings, so that I can be emotionally and intuitively drawn towards something. Maybe I am already doing exactly that? But there is something about my own insights, and the self-awareness around the choices I make, that bothers me. It bothers me incredibly that I even have these choices. Is that what modernity is?



Image courtesy of the artist

Benedikte Nøstvik Eide, *My intimate name is: zero*, 2025



Benedikte Nøstvik Eide, *My intimate name is: zero*, 2025. Detail

“There is never a repetition of a loop, because everything around it changes all the time.”⁶

“The stars in the night sky are where they are regardless of how we look at them and there is something in how they are positioned above us that suggests the image we construct of them.”⁷

Thinking in relations

A thing is in relation to everything else. Objects can stand alone, but they also create a common and interdependent unity. To think in relation, to think in relationships. I didn't really think I was a collage artist, but it has grown on me over time. I can relate to that mode of expression: in an installation in a physical space or in something immaterial like a film. The composition of the different elements is something in itself.

To start from formlessness: I begin by doing something without knowing what it is, and I see its meaning in hindsight. The ignorance and the coincidences that exist when there is no clear intention behind what something is.

These limitations and simplifications are what make me an artist. What are my limitations? Choosing what to process, shape, and share, and what to hold back, is constantly in conflict. Sometimes it's just a coincidence that determines what remains, the result after trying to share something with others. It is through making thoughts, feelings, and memories clear, clarification, or not necessarily trying to be so clear, but expressing something that can have value for others. My greatest fear is to be misunderstood, but sharing something without being misunderstood is challenging. Being

misunderstood can create a deep wound in me, and it's precisely from this fear that the motivation for expression is so great and important: to be able to say something that can be understood. It confirms something from within me. Communicating through art is complex, and it is easy to be misunderstood. It's almost impossible not to be, because the world consists of unique individuals, with individual perspectives, and you have to accept that. Will there always be misunderstanding? What I want to share has changed, and there is a distinction between what is personal and private, and what should meet an audience. I ask myself if art exists without an audience.

*"What I am waiting for," Lozano wrote in her notebook, 'is some kind of fusion between art and life.'"*⁸

How do I write about art and life, if art is life? I come up against a wall, and I know that I occasionally abandon my focus on art. Because for me, it really can't exist without life. Without life, it is nothing. In some periods, I have looked into art for something specific, only to find

that there's nothing more there than all that already is; it leads me back to all there is. I can understand through art. My studio may not only be a physical place; it is a mental space as well.

*"I don't want to race against myself. A fact. What becomes a fact? Should I be interested in the event itself? Have I been reduced to filling these pages with information about 'facts'? Should I make up a story or do I allow my chaotic inspiration free rein? There's so much false inspiration. And when the real inspiration arrives and I don't realize it? Would it be too horrible to want to move closer to the lucid self within?"*⁹

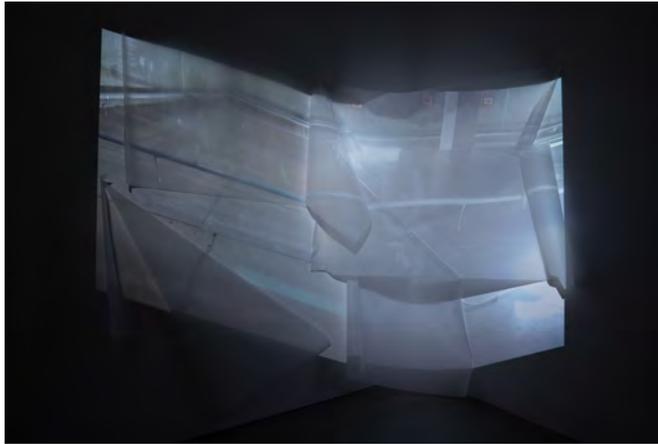
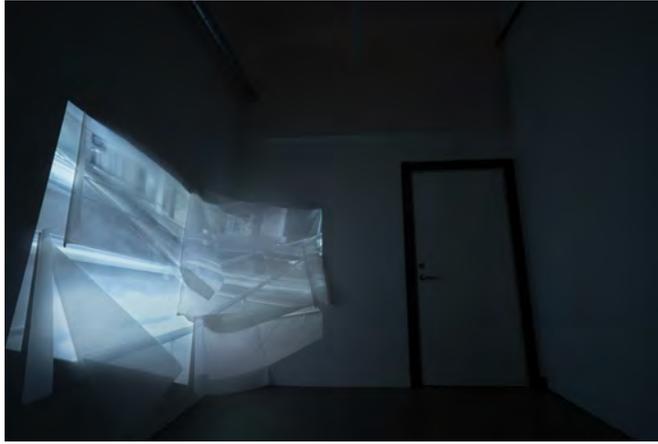
Moving towards abstraction

In moving towards abstraction, am I trying to achieve an ego death? In some ways, I may be moving towards abstraction by letting go of ideas of a set truth, by opening up to the random and uncontrollable. Getting away from oneself may be impossible, but lately I have been thinking more about that possibility. Do I want to get closer to myself or take distance from myself?



Image courtesy of the artist

Benedikte Nøstvik Eide, *When "I" doesn't exist?*, 2025. 1-channel HD video, projector, mp3 player, headset, schoellershammer High-transparent paper, sound "Pre words" (Violin—Lone Aagot Meinich), variable dimensions. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2025



Benedikte Nøstvik Eide, *When "I" doesn't exist?*, 2025. Installation view

- 1 "The Principle of Entropy has effects that are easy to understand and observe. According to this Principle, all organized forms of matter require more energy than those that are less organized. These organized forms will lose their order and initial energy, unless they are constantly nourished by energy." "Syntropy vs. Entropy," Syntropy Energetics, 2011, http://syntropy-energetics.com/Syntropy_vs._Entropy.html.
- 2 Mark Lewis, *Rush Hour, Morning and Evening*, 2005, 35mm transferred to video, colour, silent, duration 3:42.
- 3 Quoted in P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943–1978*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 133; quoted in William C. Wees, *Light Moving in Time: Studies in the Visual Aesthetics of Avant-Garde Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 123.
- 4 Donald Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Routledge, 2005).
- 5 Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation* (London: Vintage, 1994), 13.
- 6 "Anne Imhof: EMO," YouTube video, 14:37, posted by SCI-Arch Channel, 15 November 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KFJfUr6KYxE>.
- 7 Nassima Sahraoui and Caroline Sauter, *Thinking in Constellations: Walter Benjamin in the Humanities* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018, <https://www.cambridgescholars.com/resources/pdfs/978-1-5275-0922-1-sample.pdf>).
- 8 Todd Alden, "The Cave Paintings Exist Because the Caves Were Toilets: Reactivating the Work of Lee Lozano," in Lee Lozano: *Win First Don't Last/Win Last Don't Care*, ed. Adam Szymczyk, exh. cat. (Basel: Schwabe, 2006), 18.
- 9 Clarice Lispector, *A Breath of Life*, trans. Johnny Lorenz (New York: New Directions Books, 2012), 5.



Image courtesy of the artist

Adrial-Alicia Bisell Gonzalez, *We do not work alone*, 2025. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2025

skin

The skin. The largest organ which forms the boundary between the body and what surrounds the body. We moisturise it with creams and serums to keep it from cracking, dress the skin in the skin of other animals. If it breaks, we sew it up, but whatever has damaged it leaves a trace. We do everything we can to keep the body's horizon intact against the world. Both because it's vital for the body's survival, but also because the skin is like the body's safety-net environment.¹ It is the surface we show to the world because it is more repairable and adaptable than the inside it protects. The skin acts as a barrier as long as the body is alive. After death, it is the skin that first starts to disintegrate and decompose, allowing the body to blend into its surroundings. The skin then becomes the membrane that relaxes and blurs the border between the body and the world.

The skin holds the sense of touch. It is with the skin that I encounter what surrounds me, it is with the sense of touch that I register and then understand the surfaces that come to me. Sensation is dependent on touch—the skin grazing a surface—but touch is not dependent on sensation. You can touch something without feeling it, but to feel something, you have to touch it or have it touch you. To touch or be touched. There is a difference, because to be touched by something means that it gets past your skin and echoes in your body. In any case, it is in the touch that the surfaces of the world reveal themselves. That's when density, hardness, and warmth show themselves. It is through touching that I understand what is hidden behind the surfaces visible to the eye.²

The skin and the surface become the junction, that which surrounds most things. It is the skin that meets the other surfaces. It is the skin that gets dirty from soil and steel. The material leaves traces on the skin in the same way that I leave traces on the material: the number of times the material I'm shaping has punctured my skin, causing the surface to crack and split open; blood. I put a Band-Aid on and push it back, bend and sand it away. I shape it—the material—until it ceases to exist, until the shape is dust and I take it home with me on my skin, in my nose, under my nails. The shape, it seeps into me.

The skin is the border between self and space. But skin is treacherous, taking in what surrounds us in tiny particles and releasing sweat and other bodily fluids. Leaving traces of us in the world.³ So the skin is not the border we consider it to be. Didier Anzieu says:

The skin is permeable and impermeable. It is superficial and profound. It is truthful and deceptive. It regenerates, yet it is always drying out. It is elastic, yet a piece of skin cut out of the whole will shrink substantially. It provokes libidinal investments that are as often narcissistic as sexual. It is the seat of well-being and seduction. It provides us with pain as well as pleasures. It communicates messages from the outside world to the brain including “intangible” ones whose job is, precisely, to “feel” without the ego being aware of them. The skin is both strong and fragile. It is the servant of the brain, yet it is capable of regeneration while the nerve cells are not. In its nakedness, it shows us denuded and bare but also reveals our sexual excitement. In its thinness and vulnerability, it represents our native helplessness, greater than that of any other species, but at the same time highlights our evolutionary adaptiveness. It separates and unites the various sense-faculties. In all these dimensions—and my list is far from exhaustive—it has the status of an intermediary, an in-between, a transitional thing.⁴

The skin is not just a passive membrane, but also an active part of having a body, of existing. The skin is the place where inside and outside meet, an intersection, a space that functions as a place where the relationship to the world, the environment is transformed into perceptions and impressions. My practice depends on the skin; I'm bound by the sense of touch that the skin holds, but also by the skin as a surface that sometimes resists and sometimes yields. The skin holds a perception of the world that cannot be experienced from a distance, the understanding comes in the touch, and to touch something you have to be close to it. It is when things are within reach that surfaces can meet the skin, it is then that the touch can reveal what is behind them.

material

I need to touch a material in order to understand it. But I also have to go beyond the touch, I need to push and lift the material. Press it into corners and bend it. All this is a form of investigation into understanding in which ways the material agrees to be manipulated or not. The comprehension comes in the destruction, when I push a material to its limit and then past it, when the material fails or becomes dull, when material-fatigue sets in.⁵ Then I know how far I can go. Where to stop. It is through this search for limits that the material makes itself comprehensible to me; it is in the search that it reveals its nature.

For me, material is a fluid concept that depends on what a thing is and is defined by. Sometimes I find it difficult to know where a material ends, or even to distinguish material from tool. To understand a material is to understand what can shape it, to understand which tools can grind its surface, which tools can cleave it in half. That which is a tool is fluid, as it is defined as something that shapes a material. A tool is linked to the hand because it is the hand that holds and manipulates the tool. Therefore, the tool becomes an extension of the body, an extension that exists for what the hand cannot or does not have the power to shape.⁶ An extension that protects the skin and the body from being damaged more than necessary. The tool becomes diffuse for me because it is not always the tool that shapes the material, but also the material that shapes the tool. Part of understanding materials is being able to grasp (both mentally and physically) which materials resist which tools. Regardless, there are few tools that are not affected by use. The edge of the knife becomes dull, the grinding wheel gets smaller, sandpaper becomes smooth. The tool rarely leaves the material unaffected; in the act of shaping, both are impacted. Few things in the world can touch without one affecting the other.⁷

I prefer heavy materials that offer resistance. Steel has become central to my practice because of these exact qualities. With each polish, a new surface is revealed. Steel is used to shape steel: the hammer head that pounds it, the saw that splits it, the bit of the Dremel. The fact that this material is best at shaping itself becomes invasive; therefore, me being behind the hammer becomes brutal. I am constantly forced to change my position in order to regain control as I shape the steel. In the moments when I lose control, the line between who is the material and who is the tool changes. After moving, I have adapted to the steel and positioned my body according to its limits. I often wonder who is shaping whom—who has won.

Ana Mendieta returned to nature as material throughout her life. I often think about how she rearranged nature to resemble a silhouette or a body in her *Untitled: Silueta Series* (1973–78). How the boundary between the world and the body became diffuse and blurred. There is also something paradoxical in how she has shaped the materials with the body that she is mimicking. That the body is the tool that shapes the illusion of itself. In her sketchbook, she writes, “Make a *silueta* at the edge of the ocean. Leave the figure so the water flows into it and then empties out. Also fill the *silueta* with blood or red tempera so that it empties into the ocean and disappears. Over time document the erosion of the figure.”⁸

Is water the tool or is water the material? Perhaps water can hold both purposes in its matter. The water fills the silhouette of the body and actualises it by destroying it. It is the destruction of the figure that carries it, the coincidence of all *siluetas* is what makes them so strong, resonant.

object

Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes our position in the world in relation to its things: “It is the body and it alone, because it is a two-dimensional being, that can bring us to the things themselves, which are themselves not flat beings but beings in depth, inaccessible to a subject that would survey them from above, open to him alone that, if it be possible, would coexist with them in the same world.”⁹ I take materials from the world and make them mine. They become mine when I shape them into things, objects with an end. I try to give the objects I create back to the world, but I find it hard to take my hand off them. I’m always involved. The extension of my body into the world happens through the shaping of things—when they turn from matter into object.

I’ve been thinking about the desire to create things. To turn materials into forms with directions and ends. I think about objects and ownership. That objects are shaped in relation to humans, that we create them to suit our needs and desires. That we surround them and they surround us. Hannah Arendt says that “because human existence is conditioned existence, it would be impossible without things, and things would be a heap of unrelated articles, a non-world, if they were not the conditioners of human existence.”¹⁰ If we were suddenly deprived of the things we surround ourselves with—what we own and use on a daily basis—our world would feel fragmented and alien. Ownership is therefore not only about material control, but also about creating a coherent life-world.

I wonder if I feel alienated from the world and therefore need to shape the objects that reside within me. I bring the world closer to me by making my desires physical. To bring the imagination into the world is to give myself a point of orientation.¹¹ I surround myself with my works, I relate to them.

When I possess the object, I have to activate it. I have to put it in a context. If I leave it in a box, it dies. It needs space to land and expand, to find its place in the world. It feels like violence to create something and then leave it.

room

The walls are a border, a dividing line between me and the world. They surround me in so many places that I’ve gotten used to them; I don’t see them anymore. Or is it just that the walls stop my gaze? I have a complicated relationship with walls. They rise up around me, loom over me. I’m consumed with the idea of tearing down the walls, destroying them, breaking through them, demolishing them from the inside.

Gordon Matta-Clark destroyed architecture in an organised way. He made so-called “cuts” through houses and buildings. Through his “building cuts,” he opened a literal hole between the domesticated and the public. For Matta-Clark, it was more about the objectification of the building:

Images courtesy of the artist



Adrial-Alicia Bisell Gonzalez, *Breach*, 2025. Steel, 19 x 20 x 29 cm



Adrial-Alicia Bisell Gonzalez, *Runner I*, 2025. Steel, 42 x 28 x 150 cm

These projects took most of their energy from the object-like treatment of the suburban home. Buildings are fixed entities in the minds of most people. The notion of mutable space is taboo, especially in one's own house. People live in their space with a temerity that is frightening. Home owners generally do little more than maintain their property. Once an institution like home is objectified in such way, it does understandably raise moral issues.¹²

For me, walls have come to represent a boundary, a political and social boundary that should not be crossed unless by a screw or a nail. I actually think the screw is an innocent party in this. It's not the screw's fault that it depends on walls, that it is so small and ugly. It's because of the walls that the screw exists and is needed, because of the walls and the things that need to be attached to the walls. The screw is just a catalyst for the wall('s presence)—is the screw a material or tool? Or just an adapter?

It is through installation that I claim my position in the room. By adapting the rooms to me, that is to say to my works, I reverse a hierarchy to which I have otherwise always adapted my body. I want to conquer the spaces that limit me.

"If orientation is about making the strange familiar through the extension of bodies into space, then dis-orientation occurs when that extension fails."¹³

I refuse to see the white cube and the institution in which it is located as an isolated place in the world. It is always part of a context; it is always burdened by its history and the bodies it has and has not given space to. When you enter a room, you are expected to ignore the electrical outlet, the radiator, and the ceiling fan. Placing my works in the space, I blur the line between sculptures and pre-existing things, which then makes each object important. By using the walls and the objects they hold, I want to challenge how we approach space. How we as a collective imagine and view the space of the white cube and the institution. Nothing is ever isolated and to pretend so is violent to the bodies that are excluded from its interior.

gravity

The tension in sculptures comes from the way they rise above gravity, resisting it. Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* (1981–89) is not fixed to the ground but is impossible to tip over, fettered by its own weight, bent so that it catches itself and stands stable. In Olga Balema's *Cannibals* (2015), the PVC surface of the sculpture is being pushed out from the inside, where her earlier sculptures rest. The PVC is filled with water that stretches and makes the smooth surface soft and rounded, taut. They lie like bodies—also fettered to the ground, but in a different way than Serra's work, a different kind of subjectivity towards gravity where the material cannot support its own form, but capitulates instead.

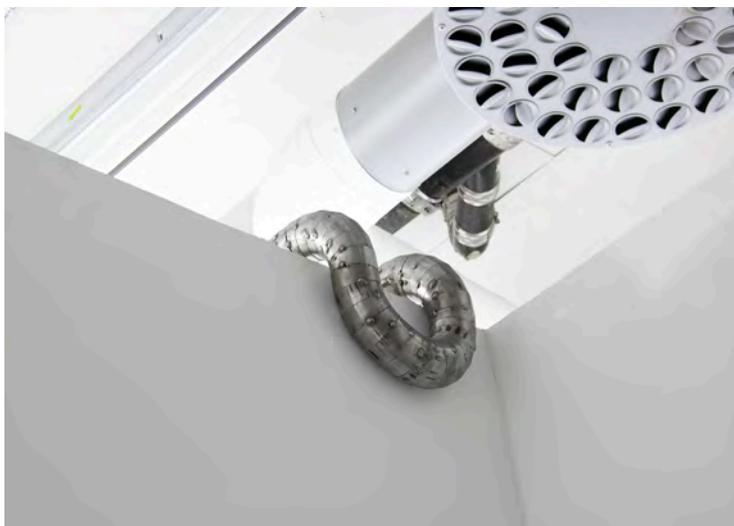


Image courtesy of the artist

Adrial-Alicia Bisell Gonzalez, *Runner II*, 2025. Steel, 140 × 28 × 32 cm

"We say gravity pulls us down. But we have it all wrong. Totally inverted. What you feel is not gravity but rather the atoms in the mattress pushing against your atoms. If only the bed would get out of your way, and the floor, and all the lower floors, you would fall, and falling is the purest uninterrupted form of gravity. Only in the fight against gravity do you feel its pull, an inertia, a resistance, a heaviness. Give in to gravity, and the feeling of a force disappears."¹⁴

Being at the mercy of gravity is not about feeling it and resisting it, but about falling. What you feel is the resistance of the floor; if it had also succumbed to gravity, it would have broken under your weight. As I shape things, I'm constantly wrestling with gravity. I give my shapes legs. They lift their own bodies above the ground; the gap is the tension. The legs carry their weight—gravity pulls. I give them claws, so they can hold onto walls and carry their own weight against gravity. I give the metal joints, so it bends, falls to the ground, and yields to gravity. Having a shape means resisting and yielding to what is pulling at it.

Gravity is also about the surface that resists, the one on which the shape rests: the ground, the chair, the mattress. It offers the same force, resistance, and keeps the shape from falling. I tussle with the heavy metal and force it onto the wall, screwing it in place, hoping that the wall will not break. I fill the fabric with wheat and hope the seams will hold. As I test the limits of the material, I also test what surrounds it. I have a longing, a desire for rupture. I want to introduce something so heavy the floor breaks, so that it must give in to the pull. That everything holding it up gives way. A great relief, in fact, it must be, for all materials: to finally be allowed to give in, up. To return to the fall.

Image courtesy of the artist



Adrial-Alicia Bisell Gonzalez, *Runner II*, 2025. Steel, 140 × 28 × 32 cm

- 1 Didier Anzieu, *The Skin-Ego*, trans. Naomi Segal (London: Routledge, 2018), 18.
- 2 Johann Gottfried Herder, *Sculpture: Some Observations on Shape and Form from Pygmalion's Creative Dream*, ed. and trans. Jason Gaiger (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 36.
- 3 Astrida Neimanis, "Hydro-feminism: Or, On Becoming a Body of Water," in *Undutiful Daughters: Mobilizing Future Concepts, Bodies and Subjectivities in Feminist Thought and Practice*, eds. Henriette Gunkel, Chrysanthi Nigianni, and Fanny Söderbäck (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 104.
- 4 Anzieu, *The Skin-Ego*, 19.
- 5 Johanna Ekström and Sigrd Rausing, *Och väggarna förvandlades till världen runtomkring [And the Walls Became the World All Around]* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 2023), 93.
- 6 Richard Sennet, *The Craftsman* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), 149–52.
- 7 Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Wave in the Mind* (Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 2004), 8–9.
- 8 Olga M. Viso, *Ana Mendieta: Earth Body; Sculpture and Performance, 1972–1985* (Washington, DC: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, 2004), 169.
- 9 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 136.
- 10 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago Press, 1958), 9.
- 11 Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 28.
- 12 Gordon Matta-Clark, proposal for Guggenheim fellowship (draft, 18 August 1976). Quoted in Pamela M. Lee, *Object to Be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta Clark* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 26.
- 13 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 11.
- 14 Janna Levin, *Black Hole Survival Guide* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2020), 13.



Image courtesy of Youngjae Lih

Noah von Hauswolff, *Nocturne II*, 2025, Oil on pine plywood, 42 × 29.5 cm

I believe that everything I want to say with my painting is in the image. It would feel fairer to use images here instead of words, like one long slideshow. That's how my work functions—I use an image and then translate it into one of my own. It's one long, wordless dialogue between me and the image. A dialogue that I can't envision ever ending. The slideshow would consist of book covers, nature shots taken on my cell phone, screenshots from paused scenes in movies, postcards of paintings in the studio, and album covers. The order of these images would correspond to how I think via image.

The Antiquarian Bookshop

"I am perhaps misled by old age and fear, but I suspect that the human species—the only species—teeters at the verge of extinction, yet that the Library—enlightened, solitary, infinite, perfectly unmoving, armed with precious volumes, pointless, incorruptible, and secret—will endure."

At the age of fourteen, I had a part-time job at an antiquarian bookshop across the street from where I lived. Every Wednesday, I went there after school. I sat in the basement and catalogued books. I wasn't much of a reader at the time, but pure curiosity drove me to the bookstore. My curiosity was mainly directed at the books themselves and the book covers. All these old things had been handled with care. I'd often linger at the science-fiction shelf and look at the old, worn paperbacks from the '70s and '80s. To this day, I sometimes take books home only because of their front cover, with no particular intention of ever reading them. I'm frequently drawn to the more ambiguous and dramatic covers, either illustrated or painted. These are images that suggest to me the feeling or mood of the world the reader is about to enter. The picture is the surface of a story hidden in the words.

I see my paintings as books. I want each painting to be perceived as a book, which can be picked up and held. There is an intimacy in that. I've long desired to tell stories, but I haven't had the words to do so. At an early age, I decided to become a cartoonist. I spent a large part of my teenage years drawing comics but never managed to complete a single story. Language got in the way. I sought a greater freedom, where the image could speak for itself, a freedom that I later found in painting.

The Landscape

When I think of a landscape, I think of Kullaberg. I spent my summers there as a child. It's a mountain ridge in the south of Sweden, which is known for its dramatic cliffs and nature. Despite the romantic setting,

there's something menacing about the place. It may have something to do with the TV series *Kullamannen*, which I grew up with, a young adult thriller from 1967 set in Kullaberg. Starting with the opening credits of the series, a fateful mood is built up about the place. A montage of black-and-white images of silhouettes, the light from a lighthouse, and violent waves crashing against a cliff, all to the sound of evocative music.

I'm fascinated by the encounter between the beautiful and the terrifying. The feelings that the mountain and its surrounding nature arise in me is best described by the philosopher Edmund Burke:

The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully, is astonishment: and astonishment is that state of the soul in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it. Hence arises the great power of the sublime, that, far from being produced by them, it anticipates our reasonings, and hurries us on by an irresistible force. Astonishment, as I have said, is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree; the inferior effects are admiration, reverence, and respect.²

To me, the landscape is an inward-opening portal, like Lewis Carroll's fictional character Alice going down the rabbit hole. It's there that thoughts begin to settle and images begin to emerge. The landscape has become as much a character in my world of images as the people I create. It's through the landscape that I feel I can portray emotions. The people in my pictures are contemplative. They are fully immersed in emotions and thoughts that bleed into the environment.

The Movie

When I'm about to start making my paintings, I tend to approach them like one builds a scene in a movie. There should be a location, actors, lighting, a soundtrack—all the essential elements to create the specific atmosphere I want to try to emulate. A big part of my process is collecting images from movie scenes. A lot of the time, I don't know why I'm drawn to a particular image; it might just be the feeling it evokes. Other times, it's more specific, like how a person is standing or how a shadow falls upon a person's face. My main fascination with movies is how different worlds are built, especially in the period that predates computer-generated images. I think of the bustling courtyard in *Rear Window* (1954) or the alien spaceship (designed by H.R. Giger) in *Alien* (1979). There's something magical in knowing that a scene is a construction, an illusion.

The movie *The Night of the Hunter* (1955) sets a mood that I try to approach in my own images. The movie is basically a fairy tale disguised as a film noir that deals with topics such as poverty, greed, religion, and death, but primarily the struggle between good and evil. Evil in this case is the false preacher Harry Powell, who does everything in his power to get hold of two orphans named John and Pearl. The scenes in the film are as if plucked from a dream. They might as well be paintings. Two specific scenes come to mind.

At the bottom of a river, we see the children's murdered mother tied to a car. Her hair moves sideways, along with the seaweed that surrounds her. Daylight reaches faintly down through the darkness and illuminates her. Later in the movie, when fleeing the evil preacher, the children take shelter in a barn. The boy wakes up at night and looks out over the silhouette of a landscape. To his horror, he sees Harry Powell riding his horse far off on the horizon, singing a hymn that echoes across the landscape. The boy asks himself, "Don't he never sleep?"³

Despite the horror that both scenes evoke, there's something enchantingly beautiful about them.

A movie that is very close to my heart is the horror film *Don't Look Now* (1973). It's a highly visual movie filled with symbolism, a kind of poem in pictures. It evades the characteristics that one might typically expect in a horror movie. It's an associative story about how time coexists between present, past, and future. The movie is about the inability of married couple John and Laura to come to terms with the recent death of their daughter. They flee to Venice, where John denies his grief by immersing himself in work, while Laura seeks meaning in the unknown. The film explores the rational and irrational in how we view life. Is there a greater meaning or does everything ultimately come down to chance? Director Nicolas Roeg leaves the question unanswered. My own working process is reminiscent of *Don't Look Now*. At first, my images are like strangers to me. It is only when all the paintings are finished that I can begin to form a narrative for myself.

*"Nothing is what it seems. How did these pieces fit together? After all, most of our lives are some sort of puzzle. Is there a reason? Is it random? Is it chaotic? Eventually, in the end, we can see how everything fitted in some way."*⁴

One artist who works between fictional and real worlds is Tova Mozard. Her photographs of Hollywood fascinate me the most. The settings in Mozard's images are anything but the Hollywood recognisable from the golden age of cinema, but rather like a place that no longer exists. Hotel room interiors, empty theatre stages, and iconic film sets are captured like crime-scene images. In the photograph *Ice*, we see forgotten props lit up under a clear blue sky.⁵ An artificial iceberg is in the foreground, and a little farther away, we see the back of the house from Hitchcock's classic film *Psycho* (1960). The iceberg and the house are transformed into something other than what they were intended for:

instead of a background in a movie, they become the main characters. Even though Mozard lays bare the illusion of the world of cinema, the image is nonetheless dramatic and suggestive.

Images in the Studio

When I started looking at paintings, it felt easier to look back in time. There were clear rules then. I'm easily captivated by contemporary painting and find myself emulating those painterly techniques. I find greater freedom in looking at Renaissance painting, for example, because I could never emulate how Bruegel painted. Something exciting arises in the translation.

There are few painters whose work I feel close to. I avail myself of painters when I need to solve a problem. How does one paint a wave crashing against a rock? For this, I turn to Marsden Hartley. How does one depict a cypress tree? I look to Arnold Böcklin. I prefer to experience paintings in print. The image becomes my own; I can cut it out, fold it, and paint on it. I'm almost always disappointed when I see paintings in real life. The colours are different from those on my sun-bleached postcards.

The paintings I'll write about next have been taped up in my studio during the years I've been pursuing my bachelor's degree. Some are put up temporarily and others have become essential and must always be present.

Young Spartans Exercising (c.1860), Edgar Degas⁶

There's something magical in the light of the painting, right before dusk. It's a flat landscape except for a lone mountain shining in the distance. In the foreground, the image is divided between men and women. One is whispering. One is on all fours. A strange scene is unfolding—the groups challenge each other like children in a schoolyard. The painting was never finished, which is the main reason I'm so taken by it. Most remarkable is how the women are painted. Their legs are smudged out and sketch-like, they interlock and create movement. They vibrate.

The Wounded Angel (1903), Hugo Simberg⁷

The angel is crouched on a stretcher carried by two young boys. It's a fairytale scene rooted in reality, which is something I want to access in my own visual world. It's the small details in the painting that catch my eye. The angel's hands cling to the make-shift stretcher. In one hand, she is clutching snowdrops, which are seen as important for her recovery. Another detail is the two pink lines depicting the wounds on one of the angel's wings, which are restrained and carefully executed.

Magdalene with the Smoking Flame (c. 1642–44), Georges de La Tour⁸

The painting is minimal in its expression, distilled to the absolute essentials. It's devoid of biblical drama. It is



Noah von Hauswolff, *Nocturne III (Havet, havet)*, 2025, Oil on pine plywood, 127.3 × 73 cm



Noah von Hauswolff, *Nocturne V*, 2025. Oil on pine plywood, 50.6 × 55.7 cm

still. Magdalene's gaze is fixed on the candle burning before her. One hand lightly rests on the skull in her lap. The image shows a person in inward contemplation. She is fully present but elsewhere.

Dick Bengtsson (1936–89)

I started looking at and studying painting very late, long after I started painting. Back then, my references were mainly from movies and comic books. Dick Bengtsson was the first painter I studied properly. It is through his painting that I have shaped mine. What struck me most

about Bengtsson's painting was his craftsmanship. He was self-taught, which gave his paintings an expression all their own. He oscillates between complex and scenic motifs, such as the landscape in *Bergsvandrare* (Mountain hiker, 1974),⁹ to more raw naïve motifs, such as the figures drawn in *Venus och Cupido med sko* (Venus and Cupid with shoe, 1970).¹⁰

In Karl Ove Knausgaard's essay *Inadvertent*, he writes about Edvard Munch's painting *The Sick Child* (1885–86).¹¹ I was struck by a word he uses to describe the painting: "excavated." It's a word I associate with

Bengtsson's paintings. Although Bengtsson was self-taught in the craft of painting, he was inspired by a particular detail of an art forger who was active in the 1930s and 1940s. The forger baked the newly painted paintings in an oven to produce an aged craquelure, so they'd mimic paintings by Vermeer. Instead of putting the paintings in the oven, Bengtsson ran a hot iron over them. This method makes his paintings appear worn and grimy. There's something appealing to me about these worn works. It's as if the paintings have lived.

There's no easy way into Bengtsson's visual world. There is as much resistance as there is charged emotion in the paintings. His work can be interpreted in endless ways, and perhaps that's why I keep coming back to his work. I'm trying to approach something that cannot be approached.

Sonic Youth (1981–2011)

I grew up in a cultural home with two parents who worked in design. This home was full of design objects and contemporary art on the walls. Even as a child, my parents encouraged me to pursue creative work. I'm convinced that my interest in art arose because of my upbringing. During my teenage years, it felt important to find a world that was mine alone, and I found that world in music.

"Kill Yr Idols
Sonic Youth
It's the end of the world
Your confusion is sex"¹²

The experimental indie rock band Sonic Youth was formed in the early '80s in New York. Their album covers got me interested in the band. Their iconic covers came from the art that surrounded and inspired them; artists such as Raymond Pettibon, Mike Kelley, Gerhard Richter, and Marnie Weber are examples of the band's symbiotic relationship with the art world. I became aware of the band when I was most receptive to them, in my teens. A time when everything feels the most intense and hedonism is at its most exciting. The music fractured the safe, innocent world I was in and opened the door to a darker one.

Sonic Youth's music can be divided into two categories: the recognisable pop-and-rock genre and the noise, no wave genre that moves towards the more abstract. The band's music can go from a harmonic guitar riff to absolute noise. It is the meeting of these contrasting worlds that attracts me, a meeting that is unexpected.

The fine and the coarse.

The beautiful and the horrific.

The light and the dark.

- 1 Jorge Luis Borges, *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Viking, 2022), 118.
- 2 Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1757; Pressbooks, 2017), part 2, sec. 1, <https://pressbooks.bc-campus.ca/classicreadings/chapter/edmund-burke-on-the-sublime/>.
- 3 *The Night of the Hunter*, directed by Charles Laughton (1955; US: MGM Home Entertainment, 2004), DVD.
- 4 "Looking Back," featurette in *Don't Look Now*, directed by Nicolas Roeg (1973; US: Warner Home Video, 2002), DVD.
- 5 Tova Mozard, *Ice*, 2005, photographic print. From *Tova Mozard: Ghost Light* (Malmö: Bokförlaget Arena, 2013), 41.
- 6 Edgar Degas, *Young Spartans Exercising*, c.1860, oil on canvas, 109.5 × 155 cm, in the collection of the National Gallery London, <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/hilaire-germain-edgar-degas-young-spartans-exercising>.
- 7 Hugo Simberg, *Sårad ängel* [*The Wounded Angel*], 1903, oil on canvas, 127 × 154 cm, in the collection of Ateneum, Helsinki, <https://www.kansallisgalleria.fi/sv/object/396251>.
- 8 Georges de La Tour, *Magdalene with the Smoking Flame*, c. 1642–44, oil on canvas, 128 × 94 cm, in the collection of the Louvre, Paris, <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010066780>.
- 9 Dick Bengtsson, *Bergsvandrare* [Mountain hiker], 1974, oil on panel, 103.5 × 134. From *Dick Bengtsson: Sveriges Allmänna Konstförenings årsbok 2005* [Dick Bengtsson: Swedish Association for Art's 2005 yearbook] (Stockholm: Bokförlaget Atlantis/Moderna Museet, 2005), 90–91.
- 10 Dick Bengtsson, *Venus och Cupido med sko* [Venus and Cupid with shoe], 1970, oil on panel, 125 × 113. From *Sveriges Allmänna Konstförenings årsbok 2005*, 18.
- 11 Karl Ove Knausgaard, *Oavsiktligt. Om att läsa och skriva* [*Inadvertent (Why I Write)*], trans. Staffan Söderblom (Stockholm: Norstedts, 2019).
- 12 Sonic Youth, "Kill Yr. Idols," on *Kill Yr. Idols*, Zensor, 1983.

*“Action, to be free, must be free from motive on one side, from its intended goal as a predictable effect on the other. This is not to say that motives and aims are not important factors in every single act, but they are its determining factors, and action is free to the extent that it is able to transcend them.”*¹

I perform. I perform as an artist. I create performances, installations, videos, sculptures, reliefs, sketches, collages, photographs, drawings, and text. I see art as performative in its essence. I see most things as performative. I do not see myself outside of my performance. I move within my definition. Generating. Classifying. Searching. Filling out my body. Searching and searching and searching and searching, only to find myself having passed what I was searching for. I criticise society, and in doing so, I criticise myself. I criticise myself, and in doing so, I criticise society.

My work engages the concepts of “performance” and “performativity,” their meanings, and the intersections between them. Performance within the context of artistic performances and also as it is understood by businesses² occupied with so-called performance measurements. Performativity as a foundation for identity, as outlined by the philosopher Judith Butler, and as behaviour adapted to social spheres, as described by the sociologist Erving Goffman. I understand my artistic performances in the tension between these theories and concepts.

*“Whether an honest performer wishes to convey the truth or whether a dishonest performer wishes to convey a falsehood, both must take care to enliven their performances with appropriate expressions, exclude from their performances expressions that might discredit the impression being fostered, and take care lest the audience impute unintended meanings. Because of these shared dramatic contingencies, we can profitably study performances that are quite false in order to learn about ones that are quite honest.”*³

In his work, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman describes how we perform for one another in daily life. The self, constructed in accordance with its surroundings. We support each other’s performances. Want to believe in each other’s performances. Thinking we are acting authentically, we try to convince others of our authenticity. In my practice, I work with different selves. Selves who blur the boundary between “backstage” and “frontstage,” between “teammates” and “audience.”⁴ Selves within the social choreographies of everyday life. I am interested in how selves are created, lived, repressed, and whether a self can exist outside its performance. I believe that we can profitably study artistic performances in order to learn about the performances of everyday life. While

Goffman does not challenge the idea of a core self in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* but rather proposes that this self alters its behaviour depending on its “setting.” Butler describes the self as constituted through its performance.

*“The challenge for rethinking gender categories outside of the metaphysics of substance will have to consider the relevance of Nietzsche’s claim in *On the Genealogy of Morals* that “there is no ‘being’ behind doing, effecting, becoming; ‘the doer’ is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything.” In an application that Nietzsche himself would not have anticipated or condoned, we might state as a corollary: There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results.”*⁵

I use my body. I play with which characters might inhabit it. I experiment with costumes. My characters often wear shirts, blazers, and high heels. Several of them are dressed entirely in white. The face precisely made-up. I play my gender. I play with the expectations directed at me. I am “The Businesswoman,” young and innocent, calculated and naive, constructed and performed. In 2023, in a collaboration with Hanna Normann, who was pregnant at the time, I replaced her in the graduation piece for her Master in Acting.⁶ Here, I was the young replacer, she was the replaced, the mother, the actress, the one behind the scenes, and the object of my study. Through other collective configurations, including the performance group the Un suffering (Performance) Artists, I experience how my characters shift in relation to groupings, how they interact with other characters and bodies as counterparts. I examine what the characters reveal about the structures that produce them. My work often engages with the expectations I experience upon me, and how I am supposed to “perform.” I perform expectations. I perform what I expel. I am what I try to observe from the outside. Society has taken root in me. And my perception of society is rooted in me. It is impossible to separate the characters from my selves. When I am in an artistic performance, I am the character I am performing. It is not acting, it is a performance of an alternative “me.” Highlighting parts of me, suppressing others. Just as I do when I am not in an artistic performance.

In my work *The Unfinished (Q.E.D.)*⁷ the performer (me) exists somewhere between logical meaning and meaninglessness. Through experiments involving thrown glasses, drawn graphs, and philosophical lines of thought, an illusion of a proof for the completion of the Unfinished is presented. Thoughts with varying degrees of causality are composed. Theses, antitheses, and syntheses are constructed on false premises and collapse under the pressure of the viewer’s gaze,



Cecilie Kappel, *The Unfinished (Q.E.D.)*, 2025. *The Unfinished*, 2024. *WHERE DO EXPECTATIONS GO WHEN THEY ARE NOT MET?*, 2025. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2025

turning the character's logical conclusions into logical collisions. What happens when we are confronted with the knowledge of the difficulty of finding unambiguous truths? In the awareness that not everything can be explained and resolved through logical deductions? What exists on the other side of the absence of meaning? On the other side of the pursuit of meaning? Where are "we," as a "we," left, if "we" have no shared meaning holding us together? I explore meaninglessness. I balance between (self-)confidence and (self-)deception. I create in the pursuit of meaning and control. My practice is both dependent on and a reflection of the world that shapes me. Post-meaning. Post-objectivity.

"The illogical necessary.—Among the things that can reduce a thinker to despair is the knowledge that the illogical is a necessity for mankind, and that much good proceeds from the illogical. It is implanted so firmly in the passions, in language, in art, in religion, and in general in everything that lends value to life, that one cannot pull it out of these fair things without mortally injuring them."⁸

I see my generation stranded without the safety of a clear direction. Abandoned as the antagonists we attempt to fight. In a society overflowing with choices and truths, the pursuit of one's "Übermensch"⁹ more commonly leads to endless, corrosive doubt than a

sustainable liberation. Even comfort in the seemingly unshakeable faith in science no longer seems unshakeable. Arendt describes the language of science as untranslatable into a language we can understand.¹⁰ Morality is malleable, and science and technology are ubiquitous. The linguistic infrastructure of the world has become incomprehensible, and navigating it, a perpetual hesitation. We are entangled. Society, my insides, art. All moving in sync. Out of sync. In balance. Out of balance. In each other. Impossible to grasp, even though I am grasping. High-performing in my struggle against high-performance culture, existing somewhere in the exhaustion of my own performance.¹¹ Existentially anxious. Unable to see an alternative for myself and society.¹² Completely absorbed in my search for my next fix of meaning. Too bodily. Too repelled by my bodiliness. Too estranged from my bodiliness.

Pipilotti Rist's artworks place bodies in unusual actions. She lets recognisable elements inhabit settings that diverge from the familiar. In her works, I feel myself immersed both in the personal sphere of another and in my own. As mentioned earlier, I perform what I attempt to expel. My artistic process starts by throwing up large quantities of material, ideas, and disjointed thoughts that accumulate within me and the world. Then, I filter. Which elements can transcend the autobiographical? Which have nerve? In which do I see

meanings and systems? To detach myself from what is me and what is not me in this process is an impossibility, yet it resonates when Rist says that one of the artist's roles is to have a "detached view on social constructions or political situations and try to bring in other alternatives."¹³ This is, despite its impossibility, a driving force, a desire, also within me. To polish the lenses of my glasses and see clearly.

"For inner and outer worlds to remain utterly distinct, the entire surface of the body would have to achieve an impossible impermeability. This sealing of its surfaces would constitute the seamless boundary of the subject; but this enclosure would invariably be exploded by precisely that excremental filth that it fears."¹⁴

In Carissa Rodriguez's video work *Imitation of Life* (2024),¹⁵ the reflection of a sunrise appears on a skyscraper's glass facade. We are placed in movement, between this reflection and the artist's apartment, where she holds her newborn child. The child experiencing the self through the mother. A world where the sunrise is reflected in towering skyscrapers. The child's reality, within the mother and the pre-existing architectural and societal constructions. The video inhabits a space between the internal and the external, the near and the distant. A space where I also locate my own works.

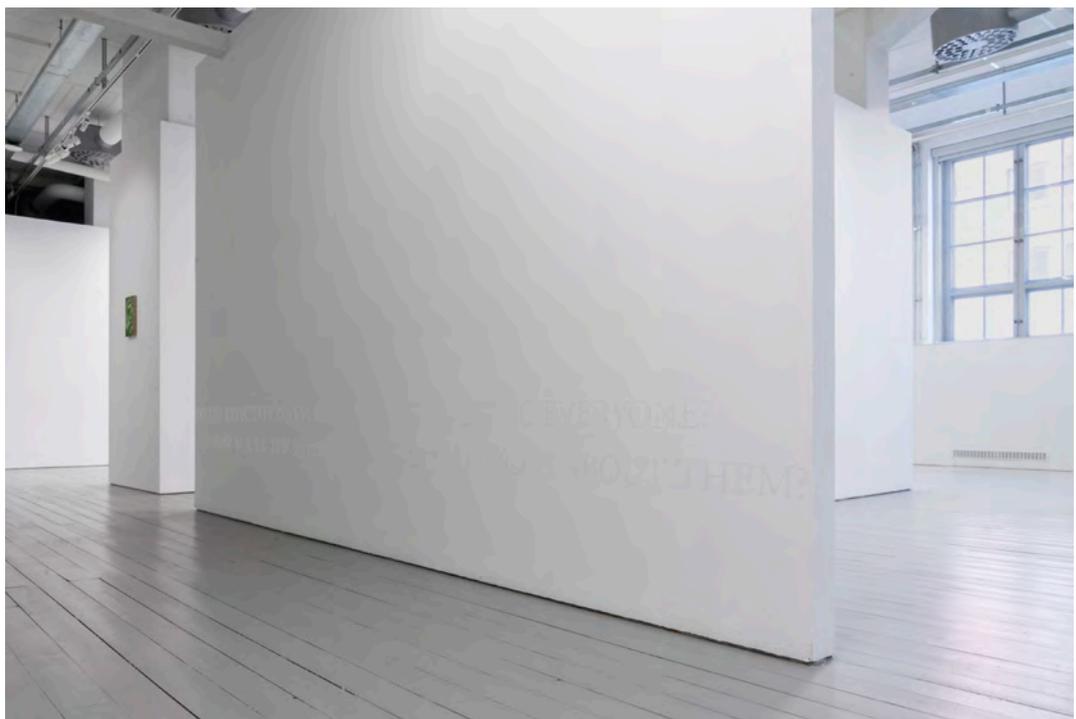


Image courtesy of the artist

Cecilie Kappel, *WHERE DO EXPECTATIONS GO WHEN THEY ARE NOT MET?*, 2025. Text installation, vinyl text, various dimensions. Installation view



Cecilie Kappel, *Untitled*, 2025. Writing, documenting and erasing text on sanitary bins, 5 photographs 42 × 31.5 cm, inkjet prints

*"In the actual act of deception, with all its preparations, its enthralling in voice, expression and gesture, in the midst of the scenery designed to give it effect, they are overcome by belief in themselves: It is this which then speaks so miraculously and compellingly to those who surround them."*¹⁶

Joseph Beuys entangled truth and deception, being and performing, in his artistic practice. Here, I see the performance of the self as something fluid and malleable. His works challenge the logic in thought, the same logic I am inclined to challenge.

*"If the theory behind the work (of art) were the actual work (of art), then I wouldn't have to make something which was to be perceived through the sense organs, then I could have just depicted it in a number of logical sentences. ... Now the task of art isn't to be understood through this cerebral, thin, intellectual way of thinking, but rather art has to be understood in the sense of completely understanding it. This means the work of art enters into the person and the person internalises the work of art as well; it has to be possible that these two completely sink into each other."*¹⁷

Whereas Beuys articulated a vision of completely bypassing individuality to become one with a work of art, playwright Bertolt Brecht pursued the opposite approach in his theories and works. Beuys sought to promote abilities that are not the cerebral. For Brecht, theatre was meant to create a distance and an awareness that the work is an illusion of reality, and to thereby endorse a reflection on the real world and our actions within it.

In my own work, I often break the fourth wall. In video formats, I remain aware of the camera's gaze.¹⁸ I frequently look directly into it. I am the acting character. I speak directly to the audience. My works engage with the performativity of the audience. How their bodies perform as a result of the frames my works create.

I do not consider the ideal role of art to be one of persuasion, convincing others of a particular set of values. In my practice, I find little relevance in performativity as a personal narrative, as it appears in Beuys's work. Rather, I am interested in performativity as a shared sphere, not as a means but as a material in itself—the sphere we live in and my art as a reflection on and

engagement with this sphere. Just as the characters in Brecht's plays, my characters and works often contain an internal conflict. A manifestation of society's opposing forces. Oppositions that rarely resolve into a sense of catharsis. Questions who seldom find answers.

In one of the experiments conducted in *The Unfinished (Q.E.D.)*, the character throws a glass through a metal frame, towards a hard floor. The glass does not shatter.

The camera operator¹⁹ exclaims: "Wow."

The character is derailed from the otherwise over-intellectualised script and its construction of theses. How could this glass survive such a throw? What does this mean for the character's logic? Her search for the Finished? Her search for truth in a world post-truth? Her search for meaning in a reality where we have no shared meaning holding us together? What might this reveal about both the character's search for meaning and our own? The illogical survival of the glass prompts the character to laugh in surprise.

The camera operator says: "You fixed it!"
The character replies: "Yes."

But what appears to have been solved could just as well be described as dissolved. No answers remain. The glass retains the same physical form as before the throw, and by the end of the video, the character's enquiry is no closer to a finished form than it was at the beginning. The character deduces what is deducible: namely, that what the character wanted to conclude

is no longer concludable. The final synthesis has already been surpassed, dissolved, disproven, and is unfinished.

By the end of the video, both we and the character are left with so many possible conclusions that none of them seems right. Impossibility has become a reality, or reality has become an impossibility. Impossibility has been made possible, or perhaps impossibility was never actually impossible but simply possible under different conditions. Does impossibility even exist, or is it simply impossible for us to perceive its possibilities? Within the unexpected survival of the glass, a kind of miracle arises.²⁰ A throw was made with the expectation of a specific outcome. Something improbable happened instead. Arendt describes freedom as the ability to act, action as the precondition for the miraculous, and the miraculous as the precondition for all life.²¹ With this in mind, the performative²² emerges as both the condition and the result of the miracle. "Statistically improbable actions"²³ open the possibility of a disruption in the system, of "infinitely improbable"²⁴ outcomes, and thereby of events that transcend what we expected or intended. Our imagination is limited by our expectations. I am interested in what these limits can reveal about our reality. What do we assume to be impossibilities? And what might arise if we become conscious of those assumptions? If we practise inhabiting performances that diverge from the familiar, performances that break with our automatic performance of the self, can we then find meaning in the reality we experience? Or experience a reality that lends us meaning?

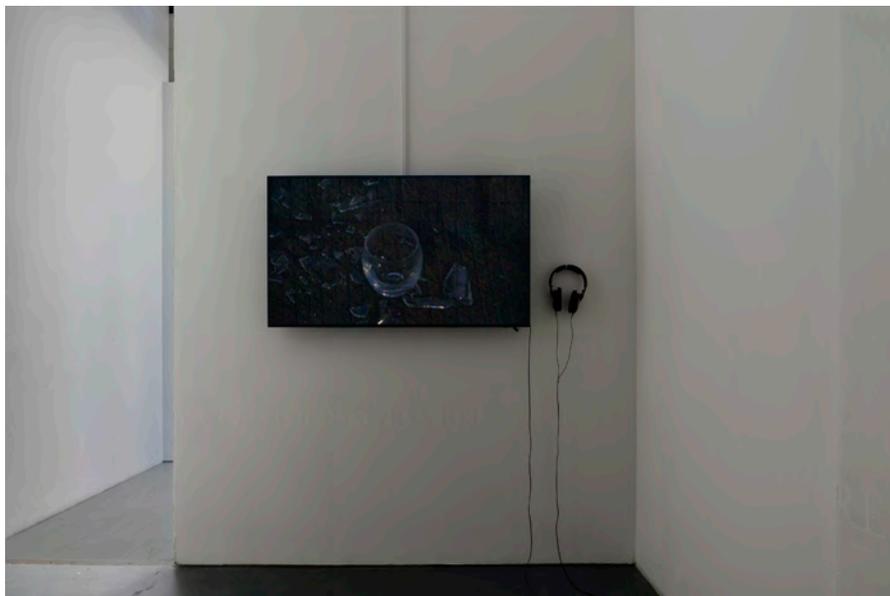


Image courtesy of the artist

Cecilie Kappel, *The Unfinished (Q.E.D.)*, 2025. *WHERE DO EXPECTATIONS GO WHEN THEY ARE NOT MET?*, 2025. Installation view



Cecilie Kappel, *WHERE DO EXPECTATIONS GO WHEN THEY ARE NOT MET?*, 2025. Questions, 52 A4 papers, pen on paper. Installation view

- 1 Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Viking, 1961), 151.
- 2 This encompasses institutions, companies, etc.
- 3 Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1956), 44.
- 4 I draw these terms from Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.
- 5 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London: Routledge 1999), 33.
- 6 Cecilie Kappel, *It is not about becoming you, it is about replacing you*, 2023, performances and video documentation for *Never forget we met @internet* by Hanna Normann, Stockholm University of the Arts.
- 7 Cecilie Kappel, *The Unfinished (Q.E.D.)*, 2025, video.
- 8 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 28.
- 9 As described by Nietzsche.
- 10 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).
- 11 Inspired by Jan Verwoert, *Exhaustion and Exuberance*, exhibition pamphlet, Sheffield 08: *Yes, No & Other Options*, Sheffield, UK, 2008.
- 12 Mark Fischer, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2009).
- 13 Pipilotti Rist, "Pipilotti Rist Interview: Freeing the Wonder-light," *Vimeo video*, 27:47, posted by *Louisiana Channel*, 29 April 2019, <https://vimeo.com/333100607>.
- 14 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 170.
- 15 Carissa Rodriguez, *Imitation of Life*, 2024, video installation: 4K video, colour, sound, LED screen (250 x 450 cm), 22:33, Kunstverein München.
- 16 Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 40. Emphasis in the original.
- 17 Joseph Beuys, "Joseph Beuys – English Subtitles – How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare 1/2," YouTube video, posted by mishiko1824, 27 October 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mo47lqk_QH0.
- 18 In reflection on camera movement and the typical "male gaze" in cinema, as discussed in Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1975): 6–18, <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/16.3.6>.
- 19 Performed by Loke Berg.
- 20 If we equate the miracle with a highly improbable act or outcome, in keeping with Arendt, *Between Past and Future*.
- 21 Arendt, in *Between Past and Future*, describes the improbability of the fact that out of all possible outcomes, we, and the world we inhabit, have come into being. Hence, the miraculous may be posited as the starting point for life.
- 22 Here understood as: to do, to act.
- 23 I borrow this term from Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert's 2022 film *Everything Everywhere All at Once*. This film itself is an interesting example of characters breaking with the expected performance of the self.
- 24 Arendt, *Between Past and Future*.



Images courtesy of the artist

Othilia Hoby Leth, *Godsibb, gossip, gossip*, 2025. Video, sound, 17:05 min. Video stills



“Of course, gossip involves not only facts, but interpretations; not just facts, but facts organized into stories; not just stories, but stories located in private history”¹
Othilia Hoby Leth

Voice 1: “I think there was something about it being ... confusing ... or that you don’t know where it comes from, which reminded me of gossip. Someone said something ... And you’re like ... where ... where did it ... who’s actually ...?”
Voice 2: “Where did it begin?”
Voice 1: “Yes, where did it begin?”²

It begins with a voice. And then several voices join in, interrupting, speaking one at a time or all at once. In my film *Godsibb, gossib, gossip*, many voices are present, weaving in and out of one another. They speak, sing, gossip, repeat themselves and each other.

What is a voice? A personal expression—it ultimately points back to the person, the body to whom it belongs. Each voice has its own individual and distinct characteristics: tone, melody, timbre, and rhythm. It connects the body to language and carries meaning. In his book *A Voice and Nothing More*, Mladen Dolar explores the role of the voice in intellectual history, philosophy, and psychoanalysis, arguing that the voice is not only a material object of aesthetic enjoyment and a carrier of meaning, but also “the lever of thought.”³

The voice is commonly seen as a sign of presence, but what happens when a voice is absent? My film *She wrote stories about them* grapples with the loss of a grandmother’s language and voice.⁴ A voice can tell stories, pass on knowledge and experience, and the absence of a voice is the absence of the stories that only this person, with this voice, could have told. The presence of the voice, on the other hand, is precisely the possibility to speak, to tell.

In my practice, I primarily work with film, and I am interested in narrative structures and the relationship between image, sound, body, and language. Voice in particular plays a central role in my films, either by virtue of its presence or its absence.

“Just VOICES, no faces, talking about this story”⁵

“When I speak, I draw attention to the act of speech. When I say ‘an understanding of meaning,’ I mean an understanding of words. And when I say ‘an awareness of meaning,’ I am talking about a meaning that cannot be reduced, but to which one must nonetheless stay close.”⁶

In Marguerite Duras’s 1975 film *India Song*, set at the French embassy in India in 1930, four voices speak.⁷ The voices are detached from the image track; we never see them. They recount a love affair that unfolded during a reception at the embassy, talking to one another about what they remember. Some of the voices

recall things more clearly than others, and this is how we come to know them—through what they remember and how they tell it. Their memories gradually piece together a story, but it’s fragmented, full of gaps; their recollections and retellings are lacking. The voices have been described as “off-screen gossip,”⁸ and the word “gossip” points specifically to the subjectivity—or unreliability—of the narrators. They weave a loose narrative, and it is up to the viewer to connect its threads. The act of speech itself is made manifest in *India Song*. The first time I saw—and listened—to it, I lost myself in the materiality of the voices, their aesthetic quality, tone, and slow pace. I listened to the voices, but I forgot to listen for the meaning they carried. On subsequent viewings, I listened more actively for *meaning*, for connections among words and sentences. But the intonation, the pauses, and the many nouns in their speech create a kind of musicality that disrupts and obfuscates meaning.

The voice that stands in the way of meaning, of the word, by drawing attention to its own materiality and musicality is often associated with the feminine. When the voice becomes meaningless, when it becomes an object of pleasure, it has, in Western history, often been seen as threatening. Dolar discusses the function of the voice in relation to meaning: “There is no assurance or transparency to be found in the voice—quite the contrary, the voice undermines any certainty and any establishment of a firm sense. The voice is boundless, warrantless, and—no coincidence—on the side of woman.”⁹ By contrast, writing, the word, is on the side of man, and Dolar describes another voice, one that reinforces the word: “The voice of the Father ... the voice that commands and binds, the voice of God.”¹⁰ We can therefore think of two kinds of voices: one that undermines fixed meaning and one that supports it.

The Voice and the Body

In her book *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, Kaja Silverman describes how, throughout the history of Western cinema, the male voice has commonly been separated from the body and the image, while the female voice has been bound to them.¹¹ The disembodied male voice, often in the form of voice-over or voice-off, represents authority and truth, speaking from a place outside the world of the film, a place that is *other*. Especially in documentary film, this kind of voice-over has been the standard: a single voice that holds the knowledge and power to tell the story. Silverman argues that the man, in both documentary and fiction, has wielded a more discursive power through his separation from the body, while the woman “becomes almost synonymous with corporeality and specularity.”¹²

In Yvonne Rainer's film *Kristina Talking Pictures* (1976), a disjointed narrative follows Kristina, a Hungarian lion-tamer who travels to New York to become a choreographer, and her lover Raoul, a sailor.¹³ The film works with displacements of sound and image as well as synchronous and asynchronous speech. Voice-over, voice-off, dialogue, and text are all central components in Rainer's work. She experiments with doubling or splitting of characters, and multiple voices or multiple bodies representing the same figure. Kristina is played by several different people, including Rainer herself. The voice—or the character—therefore cannot be pinned to a single bodily representation. Silverman describes this absence of a stable visual representation as a disruption of the automatic link between sound and image—a link that serves as “one of the means by which the female subject can be made to emerge within a discourse contrary to her desires, and to submit at least temporarily to a fixed identity.”¹⁴

Kristina Talking Pictures is a collage of scenes that do not immediately cohere, resisting fixed identity and fixed meaning. Scenes are broken up by abrupt changes in camera position, sound suddenly cuts out, speech is interrupted or repeated—all of which draws attention to the constructed nature of the film and the meanings it conveys. This fragmentation, combined with the actors' monotonous intonation, produces a sense of estrangement that hinders any psychological identification with them. In one scene, the characters actually discuss the subject of intonation as they, and the camera, shift positions relative to one another. The movements of both characters and camera become choreographic. Bertolt Brecht's concept of the *Verfremdungseffekt*—a defamiliarisation of what otherwise appears fixed and natural to show that it is subject to change—is relevant to the reading of Rainer's film. Everyday actions and “ordinary” situations, like a conversation, are rendered strange. By deconstructing narrative structure and emphasising bodily interaction and the actors' *performance*, representation and staging are examined, not as fixed or natural, but on the contrary, as constructed and changeable.

*“Within its form of shifting correlations between word and image, persona and performer, enactment and illustration, explanation and ambiguity, Kristina Talking Pictures circles in a narrowing spiral toward its primary concerns: the uncertain relation of public act to personal fate, the ever-present possibility for disparity between public-directed conscience and private will.”*¹⁵

Polyphony of Voices

The voice and the body can themselves disrupt meaning, as can many overlapping voices, speaking and singing all at once: “We can follow the same predicament with the enormous problems posed by the introduction of polyphony, since when several voices sing at the same time, and follow their own melodic lines, the text becomes unintelligible.”¹⁶

In Trinh T. Minh-ha's 1989 film *Surname Viet Given Name Nam*, she explores the experiences of Vietnamese women after the Vietnam war, weaving a complex narrative from an array of forms: interviews, archival footage, dance, song, poetry, and text.¹⁷ The film is based on the book *Vietnam: un people, des voix* (Vietnam: A people, voices) by Mai Thu Van, which consists of interviews with Vietnamese women from different generations. The interviews were conducted in Vietnamese, published by Thu Van in French, translated into English by Minh-ha, and then re-enacted in the film by Vietnamese American non-actors in English. The language has thus been rewrought through translation, moving from speech to text and back into speech. In the first part of the film, these re-enactments initially appear as though they are the “original” interview situations, but as the film progresses, the scenes start to feel increasingly unnatural, peculiar, and staged. Once it becomes apparent that the interviews are in fact staged re-enactments, the film pivots, and the women now appear in interviews about their own lives in California. At the same time, they reflect on why they chose to participate in the film and how they wish to be represented. The staging itself is scrutinised and laid bare, becoming the basis for the film's entire narrative structure. Minh-ha emphasises that storytelling always involves staging, and rather than concealing this, she foregrounds its inevitable role in representation.

In *Surname Viet Given Name Nam*, many voices speak alongside and over one another: the voices of the Vietnamese women recounting their lives, the Vietnamese American women who re-enact their stories while also telling their own, the folk songs, the poetry, and Minh-ha's own voice, heard as a voice-over. This polyphony of voices speaking from different positions forms a narrative that rejects a single truth, instead offering a multiplicity—and questioning the notion of truth altogether.

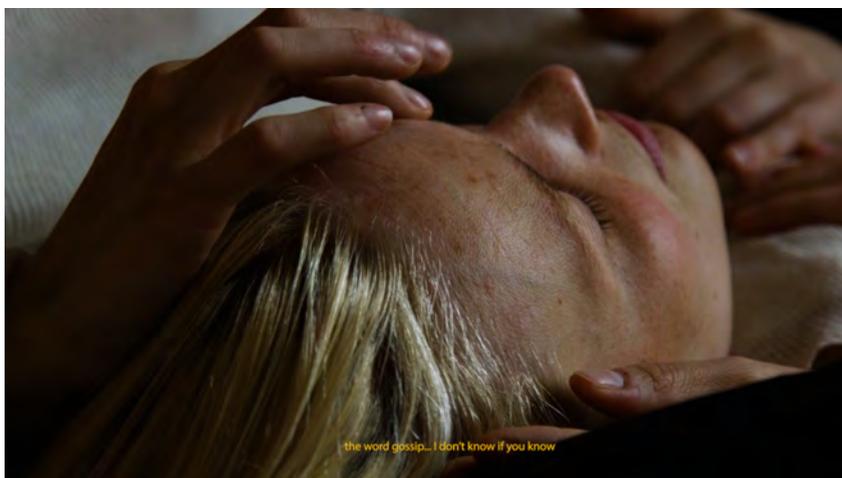
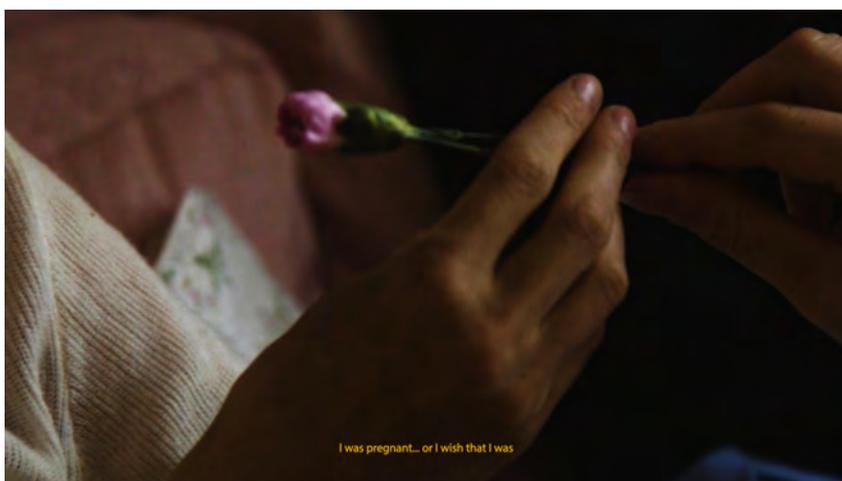
At one point in the film, we see one of the re-enacted interviews with synchronised sound, accompanied by Minh-ha's voice-over. It's difficult to hear both voices at once, forcing the viewer to choose which one to listen to. The scene highlights the choice any filmmaker has about who they allow to speak in their film, and it illustrates the power dynamic at play between the “voice” of the filmmaker and that of the subject. As Minh-ha says in the film, “Interview: an antiquated device of documentary. Truth is selected, renewed, displaced. And speech is always tactical.”¹⁸

Who Is Speaking?

*“She who knows she cannot speak of them without speaking of herself, of history without involving her story, also knows that she cannot make a gesture without making the to-and-fro movement of life.”*¹⁹

Who is speaking? The works of Duras, Rainer, and Minh-ha pose this question, whether by separating voice from body and image, having voices represent several different characters, or letting voices speak the words of others. Who is speaking? And, perhaps even more importantly: from where is the speaking done?

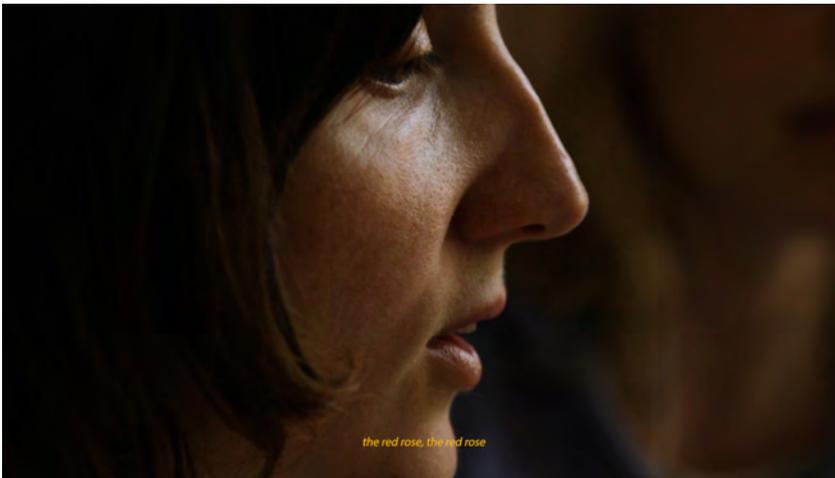
Images courtesy of the artist



Othilia Hoby Leth, *Godsibb, gossip, gossip*, 2025. Video, sound, 17:05 min. Video stills



Images courtesy of the artist



Othilia Hoby Leth, *Godsibb, gossip, gossip*, 2025. Video, sound, 17:05 min. Video stills

To ask *from where* is to point to a position, a location relative to something *other*. In the three works I've described, the filmmakers' voices are present—not only in the cinematic language, but quite literally: their actual voices feature in the films. And they speak, or make films, from a personal standpoint. They begin from a place close to themselves and their personal experiences, and from there they create works that—among many other things—have to do with colonialism, war, gender, and love. They begin with themselves, but move onwards and outwards, allowing others to speak alongside and with them. To “allow others to speak” in a work is a form of power, and it is crucial to remember that one does *not* “give voice” to those who speak—as

though they, as Minh-ha notes, “never had a voice before.”²⁰ A self-reflexive awareness of their own position is expressed through form. Form and narrative structure become ways of thinking with—and against—the medium of film and its relationship to representation. By introducing gaps in narrative structure, disrupting meaning, and destabilising truth, they make their own presence and their control over the story apparent. They reject the idea of a single truth or single position that can lay claim to truth, instead creating openings that allow for multiple, complex meanings. They think *through form*, and in the works of Rainer and Minh-ha, reflections and discussions on representation are also articulated by voices within the films.

Working with the medium of film means placing one thing in relation to another, moving it around, deciding when it begins, when it ends, and what happens in between—and then, at some point deciding that it's now finished. This fundamental characteristic of film as a form—that something always precedes something else—means that what came earlier inevitably colours your understanding of what follows. But at the same time, what comes after also affects your understanding of what you have just seen. In this way, meanings reach into one another.

My film practice comprises two tracks. In one, I work with shorter scenarios, often involving performative or choreographic elements, and in the other, I work with longer narratives rooted in linguistic transmission. Repetition forms a recurring thread in my work: repetitions of images, movements, and language. I'm interested in repetition as a form that can cause meaning to collapse and re-emerge. Disjunction is another thread: the encounter between images, movements, languages, and narratives that may not have any direct connection, but which gain a certain coherence and logic within the film. What happens when this image meets that image? What happens when this image meets that sentence? What happens when this sentence meets that sentence meets that movement? What happens when it is shifted, repeated, accumulated, or withheld?

*"When I talk about the meaning of a shot, I am trying to talk about its direction, about the direction the shot takes by virtue of the one that came before it, and about the meaning it takes on when it is itself overtaken by another shot."*²¹

*"In this chain and continuum, I am but one link. The story is me, neither me nor mine. It does not really belong to me, and while I feel greatly responsible for it, I also enjoy the irresponsibility of the pleasure obtained through the process of transferring. Pleasure in the copy, pleasure in the reproduction. No repetition can ever be identical, but my story carries with it their stories, their history, and our story repeats itself endlessly despite our persistence in denying it."*²³

In my practice, I'm particularly interested in the transmission and circulation of language, stories, and meanings. I am fascinated by the voice and the body, both as carriers of meaning and as disruptors of it, capable of undermining fixed and stable meaning. Language and body language tend to reveal something, to bring something to the surface, which is then circulated and passed on.

My starting point is a more traditional documentary approach, so the question of "truth" has always been central to my practice. What is truth? Is it possible to tell a true story? Can a film be true? By working with memory, retellings, gossip, or existing texts and statements repeated in new contexts, I set out to explore what it means to tell a story, while remaining critical of fixed truths and meanings. To tell a story is to interpret, and interpretations will always be subjective. As a filmmaker, I collect and systematise, I take something from reality and tell a story about it—and in that sense, perhaps a filmmaker is a gossip?

*"The interpretations gossip offers inhere in the stories it tells. The organizer of a narrative controls its meanings, thus takes partial possession of other people's lives."*²⁴

- 1 Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Gossip* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 30.
- 2 Othilia Hoby Leth, *Godsibb, gossip, gossip*, 2025, colour, sound, 17:05.
- 3 Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 11.
- 4 Othilia Hoby Leth, *Hun skrev historier om dem*, black and white, sound, 3:32.
- 5 François Bovier and Serge Margel, eds., *Marguerite Duras: My Cinema*, trans. Daniella Shreir (n.p.: Another Gaze Editions, 2023), 151.
- 6 Bovier and Margel, *Marguerite Duras: My Cinema*, 155.
- 7 *India Song*, feature film, directed by Marguerite Duras (France: Les Films Armorial, 1975).
- 8 "India Song," synopsis, Mubi, n.d., <https://mubi.com/en/dk/films/india-song>.
- 9 Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 50–51.

- 10 Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 52.
- 11 Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 141–66.
- 12 Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 164.
- 13 *Kristina Talking Pictures*, feature film, directed by Yvonne Rainer (USA: n.p., 1976).
- 14 Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 166.
- 15 Yvonne Rainer, "Camera Obscura Collective: Yvonne Rainer; Introduction and Interview," *Camera Obscura* 1, 1976.
- 16 Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 49.
- 17 *Surname Viet Given Name Nam*, documentary, directed by Trinh T. Minh-ha (USA: n.p., 1989).

- 18 Trinh T. Minh-ha, voice-over for *Surname Viet Given Name Nam*.
- 19 Trinh T. Minh-ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics* (London: Routledge, 1991), 76.
- 20 Minh-ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red*, 60.
- 21 Bovier and Margel, *Marguerite Duras: My Cinema*, 155.
- 22 Trinh T. Minh-ha, "There Is No Such Thing as Documentary: Interview with Trinh T. Minh-ha," interview by Erika Balsom, *Frieze Magazine*, 1 November 2018, <https://www.frieze.com/article/there-no-such-thing-documentary-interview-trinh-t-minh-ha>.
- 23 Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Post-coloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 122.
- 24 Spacks, *Gossip*, 30.



Image courtesy of Youngjae Lih

Malthe Jos Lundquist, *Gemt og begravet i bunker på Tippen 1967–2025*. Grass (wood small-reed), beeswax, bronze, aluminium. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM2 Gallery, Malmö, 2025

*"27.12.2021 Harvest
Harvesting wood small-reed with my hands and a small knife
Its sharp leaf-blades cut at my skin"¹*

*"28.12.2021 Uncontrollable actions attempting to hold together unruly structures
Trying to keep all the many loose stalks in check with my hands*

*Sewing the stalks together with flax twine and a handmade wooden needle
Each time I let go to pick up more stalks, the twine slackens, and the stalks fall into my lap"²*

*"25.05.2022 Memorial ceremony
Burning a mat made of wood small-reed and flax twine
The mat falls over the oil drum like a lid, nearly smothering the fire beneath it"³*

For several years, I have been observing movements and changes within a landfill site near where I live. In many ways, this site could be any such reclaimed terrain in the Nordic region. These areas are relatively recent in origin, filled within roughly the same brief period, and they resemble what I imagine the Western world might look like half a century after the departure of humankind—a kind of post-Anthropocene, or perhaps more accurately, post-Capitalocene landscape.⁴ The specific site I have been engaging with has been left untouched for around fifty years. Over this time, it has transformed from a rubbish tip to a kind of non-space valuable to non-human life, and eventually to a green oasis valued by the local community as a scenic, recreational refuge. Yet beneath this picturesque surface lies buried waste, scrapped trams, and the detritus of the city's past.

What fascinates me about this landscape is how the past (in the form of objects from its time as a landfill) gradually rises to the surface, revealed by processes such as frost heave. These artefacts are not merely historical remnants; they shape the current and future character of the landscape.

Anthropologist Tim Ingold offers an interesting view on how the past is embedded in the ground. "The past is not buried under the present but actually closest to the surface,"⁵ he notes, proposing an anti-stratigraphic model in which earth is not to be understood or studied as a sequence of sedimentary layers, but rather as a conglomerate of animate and inanimate elements, continually reshaped by time and natural forces. The model thereby challenges conventional conceptions of a linear, layer-based timeline. Similarly, Cecilie Ullerup Schmidt foregrounds this non-linear understanding when she writes, "We do not possess our own time but are indebted to other beings and other things woven into our time."⁶ Inspired by these perspectives, my research in this area becomes an enquiry into the space between the heritage from the past and the legacy passed on to the future.

Materials and Imprints

“13.11.2024 *The plain*

*View over the site where wood small-reed is harvested
most of its seeds have been blown off and scattered across the landscape
wood small-reed appears increasingly ready to lie down and return its remaining energy/nourishment to the earth
it adorns the landscape, reminding us of winter’s slow pace*

I harvest with a hand sickle

whet the blade after every tenth swing

repeat the movements

*I lay the stalks in piles and bundle them with flax twine for carrying
the many bundles resemble large baskets with no hollow”⁷*

In my artistic practice, I have harvested grass (*Calamagrostis epigejos*, commonly known as wood small-reed, a dominant and robust species found in the area) and collected bricks, taking them with me. I employ weaving and/or casting techniques. For me, this working of materials is not simply a method; it calms my mind.

“07.03.2023 *Reaping and piling hay*

*Nature’s caretakers reap the wood small-reed in the area
They mow wood small-reed with a scythe to suppress its spread
The cuttings are raked up and gathered in large piles”⁸*

I understand Lala Meredith-Vula’s fascination with the haystacks made by farmers in Albania and Kosova,⁹ the subject of her 1989 *Haystacks* series.¹⁰ It makes me think of the stacks that the caretakers and I make, becoming living beings in their own right.

I’d like to approach my work more as an observer/narrator than as a user/harvester. I’m not interested in generating new commodities for the world, but rather in acquiring knowledge that can be transmitted through objects that serve as vessels for thoughts and observations. I’ve tried to minimise my interventions in the landscape in order to let the area speak for itself.

I see similarities between my own life and the writings of Henry David Thoreau in his 1854 book *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*. Thoreau describes a way of being that is conscious and reflective, attuned to the impact one has on one’s environment.¹¹ At a young age, I moved to a dark harbour on the outskirts of Copenhagen, living on a Swedish barge with a shed built on top, in the hope/belief that I could liberate myself from structural expectations. I see Thoreau’s retreat to the woods as an attempt to liberate himself or perhaps to opt out of structural frameworks.



Image courtesy of Youngjac Lih

Malthe Jos Lundquist, *Gemt og begravet i bunker på Tippen 1967–2025*

"14.09.2022 Hidden garden

*I discover a small hidden garden in the middle of a 30 × 40 metre sea buckthorn shrub.
Old bricks from the area form small paths and encircle plant beds within the shrubbery
There are pumpkins, strawberries, cabbage, sunflowers, and herbs
There is a box with various tools. A shovel and a rake lean against the sea buckthorn shrub
There are slug traps and tilled rows"*¹²

*"I cherish them, I hoe them, early and late I have an eye to them; and this is my day's work. It is a fine broad leaf to look on. My auxiliaries are the dews and rains which water this dry soil, and what fertility is in the soil itself, which for the most part is lean and effete. My enemies are worms, cool days, and most of all woodchucks. The last have nibbled for me a quarter of an acre clean. But what right had I to oust johnswort and the rest, and break up their ancient herb garden? Soon, however, the remaining beans will be too tough for them, and go forward to meet new foes."*¹³

"05.05.2023 The Encounter

*I see an elderly man fetching water in two canisters from a small waterhole near the sea buckthorn bush
Can't help but watch as he collects it
He turns around and spots me, we smile at each other, then he picks up his canisters and sets off
Don't want to disturb him, but I am curious to see if it might be him
Try to act like I'm headed the same way
I follow him for about 100 metres, walking towards the sea buckthorn shrub
He crawls through the small hole in the thicket"*¹⁴

I notice a cyclical pattern within art and society. Perhaps that's why many of the artworks from the 1960s and 1970s that I reference in this text are important sources of inspiration for me. I recognise many parallels between the conditions of that era and those of our present moment. At the same time, I see differences in our approaches, which could stem from a shift—a softening, perhaps—in our understanding of the boundary between human beings and the earth. The artists of arte povera and Land Art who inspire me from that period seem to share an attentiveness to their impact on their surroundings, their structural conditions, and the interrelation between these—frameworks that similarly define my own practice.

I've been preoccupied with the inevitability, through my sheer presence, of leaving an imprint, whether visible or invisible. To the keen-eyed passer-by, it may be apparent that I have harvested or simply lain in the grass. Something may have changed shape or disappeared. Giuseppe Penone's *Soffio di foglie* (*Breath of Leaves*) (1979) expresses the link between the artist's

body and his breath, which does not usually leave visible physical traces.¹⁵ In my view, the work draws a fascinating connection between the non-visible imprint and what might be called non-visible heritage. In this case, heritage relates not merely to the past, but to the future. This future-heritage, as Sofie Isager Ahl writes, refers not to what our predecessors did, but to what we ourselves as predecessors do.¹⁶

For me, Andy Goldsworthy's *Rain Shadow* (1993) encapsulates something interesting about the heritage of the ephemeral trace. A fleeting moment is interrupted by an oncoming car and preserved in both image and text:

*"Afternoon off
went for a walk
began to rain
lay down
had to get up
car coming"*¹⁷

The work portrays a negative imprint, or a reverse shadow of a human body. One narrative the work evokes for me is that of a trace that is transient but nonetheless is given the opportunity to live on. Goldsworthy, to me, offers an inverted or alternative form of storytelling that eschews what is dominant or invasive. In my view, this narrative attests to the possibility that an untold or alternative story can coexist alongside conventional or dominant narratives. This gives me hope that the subtle—the quiet and overlooked—may be given a voice. That the untold history of the oppressed, the disenfranchised,¹⁸ the co-creators,¹⁹ those denied the right to define the historical narrative²⁰ may nonetheless help shape the stories passed on.

By anchoring my artistic practice to a specific site over an extended period, my intention is to let my enquiry be guided on the site's own terms. Such an approach holds the potential for a form of knowledge that allows for mutability and process. It provides space for listening and connecting with the environment before mental and/or physical interventions are made.

Elin Sundström exemplifies this practice in *River-and-I: A Multispecies Story of Loss and Love on the Brink* (2021), where she explores her relationship with her surroundings by connecting to and merging with them.²¹ She allows herself to be led by the river's current and shaped by its materials. In her attempt to connect with an ever-shifting environment, her approach to knowledge is sensory and emotional. For me, her work

underscores the importance of slowness and tactility when attempting to attune oneself to the existing structures of a place. Through this approach, I believe it may be possible to regenerate a sense of belonging to the environment, to materials, and to communities.

Such a process also feels necessary to me because my own artistic practice fluctuates and is inconstant. Because of my periodically heightened mental activity, among other things, the feeling of time becomes all the more important. I enjoy repetitive work that allows stillness to settle over me. This is a way for me to work with respect for myself, my surroundings, and the materials. It also creates a space where the connections between these components can coexist.

I see parallels between the work of an artist and that of an excavator at an archaeological dig who dissects a site and removes the materials/structures present from their original context in order to examine/exhibit them. In that process, a narrative is constructed that refers to a time and place suddenly no longer visibly present. The site is integral to the specific conditions impacting the knowledge that is produced. This is founded on the idea that knowledge and practice are situated and embedded.²² Part of me feels uneasy about the tendency to separate, categorise, and dissect, which I associate with a detached scientific tradition and worldview. In response, I seek to create a practice that is more symbiotic and constructive, and which nurtures the relationship between me and the earth.

"12.03.2024 Little House on the Commons

Planks, plywood, and pallets form the framework of a former dwelling in the middle is a bed

The little house will soon be cleared due to urban development in the area

I envision land artist Andy Goldsworthy's work Five-Ten from 2022²³

In which he builds a stone house around the wreck of a car

I interpret his work as an attempt to protect/encapsulate the wreck

I see the same thing happening around the Little House on the Commons²⁴

A landfill site contains countless objects already removed from their original contexts. There are stories to be found here. The rubble of centuries of life. People's daily lives. I move through thousands of stories of what has occurred: the production of the bricks, the construction of houses/buildings, their lives as "functional" structures, and ultimately their disposal. Sofie Isager Ahl describes our affiliations as a constantly shifting interplay between home, places, cultures, and social community.²⁵ I see affiliations strewn about here among past and present homes/containers/boxes/baskets, vegetation, cultural heritage, legacy, and social inheritance. These are stories told from a landfill site, about and by a landfill site.

"09.04.2024 A block of soap for the harbour

The memory of the house from 12.03.2024 is rebuilt. It surrounds a block of soap

The structure is made of found local materials

reeds

wood

lime

cup

clay²⁶



Malthe Jos Lundquist, *Gemt og begravet i bunker på Tippen 1967–2025*. Installation view



Malthe Jos Lundquist, *Gemt og begravet i bunker på Tippen 1967–2025*



Image courtesy of Youngjae Lih

Malthe Jos Lundquist, *Gemt og begravet i bunker på Tippen 1967–2025*



Photo of the nature caretakers haystacks om Tippen, 3 March 2025

There is something fascinating about traditional crafts such as weaving and thatching. For me, they reflect a different relationship with time and materials. Simon Starling's *Houseboat for Ho* (2023) draws on two related yet geographically distinct techniques: those of Danish thatchers and Bolivian reed-boat builders.²⁷ Despite the greater difficulty and time requirements of such techniques, the work acknowledges these inherited histories and carries them forward. This temporal aspect is also manifest in the work of Kazuhito Takadoi, such as *Kasumi (Haze)* (2024).²⁸ Here, Takadoi carefully weaves together hawthorn twigs, demonstrating how craft and skill require time, concentration, and repetition.

Traditional crafts are passed down through generations. Some are regionally specific, some are passed on orally in the form of stories, some have been recorded in household books and handed down through families. Much has likely been lost, but some still endures. The Laboratory for Aesthetics and Ecology regularly publishes *Husholdningsbogen for Radikal Omsorg* (The household book of radical care), inspired by our foremothers' cookbooks, which were characterised by their accumulative, ongoing nature.²⁹ It gathers experiences, memories, rituals, recipes, and more as a practice of healing and gentle resistance. The idea behind the household book is "to honour the work our foremothers did in keeping house, while simultaneously addressing the catastrophic foundations on which that house was built."³⁰ In these efforts, knowledge-sharing is "an essential element for survival."³¹ Such sharing must include the hidden, the forgotten, or the untold story. In *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, Ursula K. Le Guin writes about another story, the life story: "It's unfamiliar, it doesn't come easily, thoughtlessly to the lips as the killer story does; but still, 'untold' was an exaggeration. People have been telling the life story for ages, in all sorts of words and ways. Myths of creation and transformation, trickster stories, folk tales, jokes, novels ..."³² According to Walter Benjamin, these life stories are fundamental to society as they serve to connect people, fostering a sense of belonging that is vital for preserving cultural heritage.³³ Even as societal trends point in the opposite direction, we must insist that oral storytelling and intergenerational exchange are valued and upheld. I believe hidden or forgotten knowledge can be recovered if we care for the places where it is found.

In *Ancestral Future* (2024),³⁴ Indigenous Brazilian leader Ailton Krenak highlights the critical importance of Indigenous knowledge when tackling the challenges of our era. He questions the notion of linear time and explores our relationship to the earth and the knowledge embedded within it. Krenak urges us to face the challenges of the present rather than getting caught up in apocalyptic visions or fantasies of liberation. In doing so, he echoes Donna Haraway's call to "stay with the trouble."³⁵ For me, the landfill site offers the opportunity to confront the trouble, but also to re-establish connection and to integrate the knowledge sedimented in the soil.

"27.02.2025 Winter harvest
The landscape and the soil are damp
I feel winter in the stalks
They're soft
Incipient spots of mould
Many have flattened, making it difficult to harvest them
I begin carefully, choosing the upright stalks
Then lose patience
and start to harvest also what is lying down"³⁶

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7 Bill Viola, *Chapel of Frustrated Actions and Futile Gestures*, 2013.

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9 Bill Viola, *Heaven and Earth*, 1992.

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Image courtesy of the artist

Jelena Pajić

house 1
location: Croatia
status: sold

...

"One time, Justice and Injustice stepped into a tavern. There, they ate and drank as much as they pleased. As they walked towards the door, the innkeeper stopped and asked them:

– Ah, my dears, you ate and drank. Who will pay? Injustice turned to the innkeeper with irritation, speaking seriously:

– Have I not paid! ... Or do you wish to be paid twice!

The man grew confused upon hearing that response, and he replied:

– Consider, please, whether you are mistaken. You have not given me any money.

– No! I have paid!—Injustice exclaimed.

– Oh, but you haven't!

– I have paid!

– You haven't paid! Why do you say so?

– I have paid you, man. I have!—Injustice shouted piercingly.

The man, grasping the situation, turned to Justice, who stood quietly and calmly to the side, and asked her:

– Justice, oh, Justice, why do you stay silent?

– What am I to do after having eaten and drank with Injustice!—Justice responded."

—Elin Pelin, "Pravda i krivda" ("Justice and Injustice")¹

"Justice and Injustice" is from a Yugoslav children's short story collection that was read to me before bed during my childhood.

...

All that remains familiar to me is the in-between. By its very nature, it is multi-layered, interwoven, and largely based on memories. Both my own and those of my blood and birth. A small reminder, too, that memories exist where you least expect them.

*"The punctum ... wants to be an alphabet, wants to turn events into a history—in this case to recount how time is constructed, its tastes and its sensitivity. But in fact, all we see is the nakedness."*²

...

Drinking coffee twice a day, once in the morning and again in the evening, has long been a tradition in my family. Aside from satisfying physical addictions to caffeine as well as nicotine, the ritual's purpose is obvious—to gather and discuss what is due. Despite the

passage of years, and the change of cities, countries, and languages, those two cups of coffee every day remain the same. One to start the day and the other to end it.

After I left the family home, the question "Will we have coffee?" replaced an invitation to meet. The mechanism of the Pavlovian reflex at work in this word-game intrigues me. I see it reflected in my own approach to using photography, as well as in the way I build relationships with the items I collect. Taking one object, one frame, and imbuing it with values, messages, or memories, thus creating a keepsake.

In her book *In Memory of Memory*, poet and novelist Maria Stepanova describes a similar approach:

jotting notes on scraps of paper or on my mobile whilst on the train or on the phone, a little like notching a stick (to remind me, so that from these two- and three-word distillations the memory would be able to put together a whole viable and elegant construction, a silken tent for the narrative to reside in).³

I turn to coffee drinking precisely for its role in the evolution of personal narrative. Though not always round, the table we met around was always a place to talk about what was, what is, and what will be. Conversations about daily and life events all began or ended with considerations of geopolitical relations in the ex-Yugoslav area and how these shaped our *private* and *public* lives.

For me, these were, and still are, lectures on history, ethics, genealogy, and anthropology. As the philosopher Hannah Arendt argues in her work, when the state attempts to invade private life, the family becomes the last refuge of free thought. In such societies, it serves as the ultimate bastion for preserving freedom, alternative narratives, and memories excluded from the official discourse. In this way, the family establishes a micro-public space that serves as both a form of resistance and a means of better understanding all that is.⁴ She writes:

The task of the mind is to understand what happened, and this understanding, according to Hegel, is man's way of reconciling himself with reality; its actual end is to be at peace with the world. The trouble is that if the mind is unable to bring peace and to induce reconciliation, it finds itself immediately engaged in its own kind of warfare.⁵



Jelena Pajić

house 2

location: Bosnia

status: disputed, abandoned

Looking back, I can say with certainty about my practice, and thus about myself, that I was *just* a photographer. Worried that *just* might undervalue the significance of this role, I must stress that *just photography* was all I truly needed then. It was a language that allowed me to observe, experience, and respond.

These visual notes were never calculated but were a purely impulsive response to the sociopolitical context of my environment. The street served as the site of my action, and life itself was the main motivation. In a Martin Parr manner, I commented on daily life, creating a picture of a society whose near proximity made me feel disoriented and provoked, yet also interested in interaction.

I would say that the sharp sound of a camera shutter aroused in me something primal and physical. Without questioning it, I fostered the primal feeling and sense of superiority that I have when operating a camera.

It allowed me to expose, provoke, poke my nose where it didn't belong, be defiant, and most importantly, point the finger. I also see that the role of photographer, primarily driven by the notion of distance, allows one to wear the shoes of a perpetrator with a "get out of jail free" card, believing one cannot be an accomplice if one is *just* a photographer.

As I ponder how I continue to undermine myself by labelling something as *just* one, inadequate, or unjustified—without any counterargument to its timelessness or even a single example to help distinguish it—I cannot but notice how the act of photographing has enabled me to transcend from *just* photography to something larger than myself.

"We photograph things in order to drive them out of our minds,"⁶ I think I once read in a book by filmmaker and theorist Susan Sontag. It emphasises the distance facilitated by the act of taking photographs. To move

Jelena Pajić

house 3
location: Serbia
status: for sale



Images courtesy of the artist

one or several steps back from the perceptions that haunt me. To retreat, liberate oneself, find peace. Nevertheless, photography presents a paradox—the *punctum*,⁷ the realm where emotions are evoked. Thereby, it highlights not only my naivety but also the state of self.

The photographic record, the document, continues to be the foundation of my perception today. A deeply entrenched mechanism, even when I don't reach out for a camera. I continue to be captivated by its use-value, just as I was on the first day—photography as a tool for thought. And right on the cusp of its highest functionality, photography evokes in me a bitter sense of inadequacy. My need to convert time into space renders photography a mere outline. A road I must travel to reach the point of friction.

...

"We're at home and yet we're lost, in the deep dark network of stories, trying to find our way to a beginning, or, at least, an end," states one critique of Georgi Gospodinov's novel *The Physics of Sorrow*.⁸ Near the end of the novel, Gospodinov writes: "Sorrow, like gases and vapors, does not have its own shape or volume, but rather takes on the shape and volume of the container or space it occupies."⁹ For me, this means not that sorrow, or even melancholy, necessarily determines the worth of the space I intend to create. I'm not saying it doesn't, either. What drew me to this idea was the possibility of adaptation. The way in which emotion leaves its signature, its detail, due to displacement.

I feel compelled to draw a parallel with the artist Yael Bartana and her reflections on her own work.¹⁰ Leaving the Balkans, the distance, has allowed me to practise articulating certain questions that I was unable to express before. The issue of identity, both personal and

collective. The issue of home and homeland. The issue of trauma and memory. The issue of guilt, and what about it. And the most intense: the issue of loss.

I would distinguish my need for recording and gathering memories from the traditional role of a historian. My relationship with memory is not neutral. On the contrary, I will gladly remove the excess for the sake of the sentence I am articulating. However, there is a caveat—I will never abandon the consistency of what I believe to be my truth.

In the foreword to *Between Past and Future*, Arendt states: "A person's mind would stand revealed as having been forced to turn full circle not once but twice, first when he escaped from thought into action, and then again when action, or rather having acted,

forced him back into thought."¹¹ Using her terminology, I emphasise that the past does not hold me back but rather propels me forward. On the other hand, thinking about the future forces me to turn to the past. It is in the midst of this struggle that I discover an explanation for the battlefield that constitutes my self—the terminal end or space where the infinite past and infinite future clash. I find I constantly fight myself so as not to give in to exhaustion, even though the space I live in is more akin to war than home.

*"Now to make the dead speak we have to give them space in our own bodies and minds, carry them inside us like the unborn. And yet the burden of postmemory is placed on children's shoulders: the second and third generations of those who survived and who allow themselves to look back."*¹²

...



Images courtesy of the artist



Jelena Pajić, *Echo / Jeka*. Video, 11:30 min. Video stills

"Diane, 11:30 am, February 24th. Entering the town of Twin Peaks."³

Although I keep mentioning memories, I believe it is necessary to give this thought a present date. In this case, it would be February 1, one day after the Serbian students' nomination for the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize was approved. The same day when the largest student protest in the region in recent decades took place in a city where I, not so long ago, was also one of those students.

From my vantage point in the diaspora, playing the part of a "drained brain," I can't help but notice the catharsis elicited by the students' collective performance among the people, as they publicly protest repression, corruption and violence, media blackout, and nationalism. A completely unexpected wave of solidarity and support is pouring in from all sides, from people in Serbia who were previously apathetic, to people from ex-Yugoslav countries, to people from around the world. They call the students *liberators*.

Although I frequently feel that being bound to the now is challenging, this is due in part to the trap of sensationalism and spectacle, as well as my own impulsive reactions, but primarily to the fear caused by unpredictability—when reality is not simply what *is* but what *becomes*. Despite this, I have decided that my duty, my truth, is to let this social phenomenon remind me of the strength of micro-public spaces in the fight against cynicism and scepticism.

Since the beginning of this text, I have tried to avoid writing, "How only trauma makes individuals—singly and unambiguously us—from the mass product,"¹⁴ a thought from Stepanova, afraid of falling into the trap

of victimisation. But the reason this notion resonates with me is the idea of a radical, deeply self-critical change arising from catastrophe. In the epicentre of the collapse, there exists hope. A place where trauma allows us to imagine—if we, like the students, possess the courage to pose questions and bear the emotional weight that accompany such questions.

...

"If you set out in this world,
better be born seven times.
Once, in a house on fire,
once, in a freezing flood,
once, in a wild madhouse,
once, in a field of ripe wheat,
once, in an empty cloister,
and once among pigs in sty.
Six babies crying, not enough:
you yourself must be the seventh."

—Attila József, "The Seventh"¹⁵

...

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Image courtesy of the artist

Klara Paulin-Rosell, *Elisabeth och Alma (Elisabeth and Alma)*, 2025. 16 mm film transferred to 2K, 3:19 min

I want to construct this text like a house. A house with several rooms and corridors. One of the rooms is inaccessible. The door is closed, if there even is a door. From within the room come the sounds of someone or something, which the reader encounters from outside the room. One room acts as a memory of a room. Or as an echo of a room. Another is fictitious. Some rooms are blind spots, some rooms are warmer, and some are cold. Through this essay, I'll enter and exit different rooms, real and fictional. Often something is left out, something that you who are reading this will never find out, perhaps because the only thing I remember about the room is precisely that one little detail, a feeling, something buzzing, or a look.

A Language that Doesn't Hurt to Speak

In my practice I often use characters, myths, and other people's fiction, as well as earlier works of my own and others. It's a kind of investigation into how something is told and by whom. Sometimes I use characters that are close to me, where the line between me and them is thin. It becomes a way to put myself in another body, to approach something, something that might otherwise hurt too much to talk about.

Certain excerpts from other people's texts will appear in this essay. These excerpts have served as mantras for me in recent years, but when I repeat them to myself, I change some words and the sentences become different and change over time, so I'll write them down as I remember them.

*"The word, the message: the cut in the silence of thing and animal. The wound that opens their lives to something other than themselves."*¹

An Ambivalence of the Double of Lived Experience²

*"Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of inter-subjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double."*³

In "Word, Dialogue and Novel," the linguist and philosopher Julia Kristeva coins the term "intertextuality." The concept is based on philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of dialogism. She draws on these theories to describe three dimensions of dialogue: *the writing subject*, meaning what the writer addresses; *the addressee*, which identifies the reader being addressed; and *exterior texts*, which describes how all written text

is a result of what the writer has previously read or in some way consumed. In turn, these dimensions are grouped along a horizontal axis and a vertical axis. The horizontal axis is the subject and the addressee, and the vertical axis is the text and the context of the text, which both coincide with each other. This means that each word (text) is a mixture of words (texts), in which at least one other word (or text) can be read. Bakhtin calls these axes "dialogue" and "ambivalence," which are overlapping. This also leads to what Kristeva describes as "reading-writing," that is, writing based on a correlation of all other previous texts. A text also functions as a response to or an absorption of previous texts.⁴

Kristeva further describes how poetic language cannot be formalised through rational scientific language without becoming distorted. One way to capture poetic language is through dialogism, which describes a poetic language in which multiple voices and structures can coexist alongside and inside one another. Logical, causal connections are not necessarily present in poetic language. And this in turn forces a different way of thinking.⁵ My rooms can be read in this way. I try, both through this text and through my visual work, to shape a poetic language, a language in which several voices can be heard at the same time, a language that is allowed to be contradictory.

The Room with the Yellow Wallpaper

I enter the first room on the left from the hall. It's claustrophobic. The walls are covered in a yellow wallpaper that evokes disgust. It feels as if, even at night, the room does not shut its eyelids. I first entered this room seven years ago. This room is a short story, and the short story utterly consumed me. A few years after I first read it, I began researching the narrator and the room in which the story is set, which later became part of me and my work. The work I did based on "The Yellow Wallpaper"⁶ was the first room I created—*perhaps it has become the room that the other rooms I create come from?*

"The Yellow Wallpaper" is a short story by Charlotte Perkins Gilman written in 1892. After giving birth, the unnamed narrator is diagnosed with "temporary nervous depression" by her physician husband. This was a common diagnosis for women at the time, and they were often "treated" with a so-called "rest cure" to rid them of their "hysterical tendencies." Although all she wants to do is write, the narrator is not allowed to engage in any kind of intellectual work. She, her husband, and the newborn baby go to a mansion for the summer. The room in which she has been confined to

rest is decorated with yellow wallpaper. She devotes many diary entries to describing the wallpaper: its sickly colour and yellow smell, its bizarre and unpleasant patterns. The longer she spends in the room, the more the wallpaper seems to change. After a while, she catches sight of a woman behind the wallpaper. She becomes increasingly obsessed with the wallpaper as the rest of her surroundings fade. She starts to think about how to help the woman get out, and eventually she tears off the wallpaper piece by piece. The narrator's madness can be read as a result of suppressing creativity and the desire to write, denying it an outlet, with one's perception of reality being constantly disregarded and declared to be an illness. Rereading the story several years later, I still can't help but ask myself: *What's really behind the wallpaper?*

In Ingmar Bergman's film *Through a Glass Darkly* (1961), one of the main characters, Karin, who suffers from schizophrenia, hears voices from behind the wallpaper of a room in the house she is staying in for the summer. At a reading by the artist Meriç Algün at Lunds konsthall in late October 2024, I learned that the working title of Bergman's film was "The Wallpaper." Algün asks herself: Is the wallpaper in fact the *mirror* in "The Yellow Wallpaper"?

Francesca Woodman is an artist whose images come to mind when I read Gilman's short story. Her photographs often depict women, including herself, whose bodies are partially hidden behind wallpaper, blurred by the light streaming through windows, or blocked by mirrors. The mirrors reflect different surfaces, rooms, and faces that are outside the image. It seems that Woodman referred to her images as "ghost pictures,"⁸

which feels appropriate because the bodies are often blurred. This is an effect of the body's movement and the long exposure time she often used. When I look at Woodman's pictures, it feels like she's staging a kind of escape or a way out of the camera's gaze and definition of her. Or perhaps it is more an escape from the male gaze. At the same time, she is the one in control of the camera and the staging, and is in this way taking over the male gaze she has experienced upon her body. Her body is in direct interaction with the interiors that surround it. In one image, the weight of the artist's body is put in relation to a door. In another, her body is partially hidden behind a sheet of wallpaper she has sort of moulded her form to, and in a third image, her arms are swinging in the air, partially clad in bark that takes on the shape of the birch trees in the background, effectively disappearing into them. It's as if the body is mirroring the settings and their surroundings, or maybe it reflects an inner state. Perhaps it's trying to tear itself off. I think Woodman's images visualise what Gilman is expressing in her short story: *the constant interplay of a dual identity*.

In *Den tänkande kroppen* (The thinking body), psychoanalyst Irène Matthis writes about the imagined body and the actual body. She likens the gestures of hysteria, the twentieth century's female disease, to "a fragment that has lost its function." She writes:

The body represents the presence of an absence. It gives signs, not of what has been lost, but of the absence itself. The materiality of the body is thus used by the hysteric not to create a symbolic expression of something else but to stage the loss. The pantomime is the model for



Image courtesy of Youngjae Lim

Klara Paulin-Rosell. To the left: *Vittnen (Witnesses)*, 2025. 16 mm film, video projection, 6:17 min. To the right: *263 sidor (263 pages)*, 2025. A room, a door, a door frame, sound

the hysteric's embodiment of a conflict. ... One could say that the body provides a stage onto which a "movement" walks and performs something as if it were "the somatic." The movement, the performance of the pantomime, has the same status in hysteria as the manifest material of a dream and must be analysed in the same way: not as a natural movement of the body but as a fragment that has lost its function. It could also be said that the hysterical representation gives an incomplete, distorted, or interrupted idea of something that continues to remain incomplete in the hysterical body.⁹

The gestures of the hysteric interest me. These gestures are movements that try to express nothingness or emptiness itself. They are empty gestures that do not extend beyond that to which they refer, or, to borrow Matthis's words, that act like *a fragment that has lost its function*. In "The Yellow Wallpaper," the narrator's repetitive gesture of tearing off the wallpaper can be explained in this way—the gesture becomes images of a wordless language for what cannot be expressed. Emptiness itself is expressed through her movements. In my works, I try in various ways to approach a language of the inexpressible and an emptiness. Often by attempting to follow a structure, only to then break it apart. Letting the image, the gesture, the text, the space, and the language collapse in the transfer so as to make room for something else. *Letting the inside become the outside*.

In "Of Other Spaces," philosopher Michel Foucault describes the term "heterotopia," which is a concept that describes ambivalent places that can be located in several ways at the same time and where several layers of time can exist at once. These spaces can be both open and closed. Isolated and permeable. Present and absent. They are spaces constructed by contradictions. Foucault begins the essay by defining the

term "utopia," which is a place that has no real place. The mirror, he says, is a placeless place. It is simultaneously a utopia and a heterotopia. He writes:

In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent.¹⁰

I wonder if I can use Foucault's theory of these ambiguous places to explain the rooms I'm creating, which are both contradictory and ambivalent. Rooms that function as stages where multiple narratives and layers of time are allowed to play out and exist all at once. They are memories of rooms or echoes of rooms where the boundary between the body, memory, fiction, and reality is played out.

The artist Hreinn Friðfinnsson made a piece, *First House*, that became the first in a series called *House Project* (1974–),¹¹ which spanned almost his entire career. The work is a house he built inside out and placed in the Icelandic landscape. The outside of the house has been shrunk into a closed space consisting of only the walls and roof. The rest is made up of the inside—the house contains the whole world except for the house itself. *Second House* (2008) is an inverted version of the first house. This house now includes itself, with wallpaper on the inside, and the outside points out into the world. Photographs of *First House* are on the inside of *Second House*, which can be seen through the windows. While these first and second iterations were built with typical building materials, such as wood and metal, and have a door, windows with curtains, and wallpaper, the third was constructed as a three-dimensional drawing of the house in the form of a steel frame. From the inside of the house being outside and the outside inside, and vice versa, the



Image courtesy of the artist

Klara Paulin-Rosell, 263 *sidor* (263 pages), 2025. Detail



Image courtesy of the artist

Klara Paulin-Rosell, *Vitnen (Witnesses)*, 2025. Video projection: 16 mm transferred to 2K, 6:17 min

boundaries have now been blurred, creating ambivalence. You can see and be in both places at the same time. *Third House* (2011) was placed on the same site in Iceland as *First House*, thus becoming an echo of it. *Fourth House* (2017) is made of stainless steel and virtually blends in with its surroundings. The house's

reflective frame emerges and the space takes shape each time a viewer encounters the work. A mirrored reality is reflected and structured by its own form. All four houses reflect each other and contain the whole world while also shutting it out.

The Memory Room

At the top of the house is an attic. It is my grandmother's attic. The room is like a map of her consciousness, without beginning or end. She saved everything. When she passed away, I wanted to save every last thing too. I found her cut-off braided hair in a box, letters, photos, calendars, newspaper clippings, bags of fabric with little handwritten notes explaining where the scraps of fabric came from. Every little thing bore (literally) at least one sentence. I found an old notebook in which I wrote about this. I think the reason I wanted to save all her things was because I wanted to be able to enter her home. I thought the objects would help me do that, but I didn't have enough space to save it all. So if I were to rebuild her home as I remembered it, it would be full of blind spots, empty spaces.

One film that comes to mind when I walk around my grandmother's attic is *The Souvenir* (2019) by Joanna Hogg. In the film, she reconstructs the memory of the apartment she lived in when she was in film school. The movie is about a complicated love affair with a man and is built on her memory of the relationship. The relationship with the man remains mysterious, as it is based solely on her experience. The unknown remains unknown. Julie, the main character (who acts as Hogg's alter ego) was instructed, without a script, by the director's diaries, photos, and memories. The sequel, *The Souvenir: Part II* (2021), is about making the first movie. It follows the protagonist's work on the first film and the frustrated actors who are instructed by Hogg's memories and the emotions that emerge during the film's making. The work on these two films feels like one long exercise in remembering.

I'm drawn to the fragmentary form. This can be anything from diaries, lists, and indexes to letters or a sentence from a conversation or a movie. Similarly, I am drawn to reading other artists' and writers' notes and diaries, and looking through old sketchbooks. I've long been engrossed by Emily Dickinson's fragments; in the book *The Gorgeous Nothings*, her fragments are collected at their true scale. The poet wrote on whatever piece of paper was available to her at the moment she wanted to write something down. These were torn envelopes and other scraps, which she tore into new shapes and crumpled up and then smoothed out again. The fragments are often difficult to decipher, because the writing can be loose, and often the letters' lines overlap. Sometimes it seems as if they were written in the dark. The fragments yield a different kind of reading, as if something else is being revealed, beyond what has been written. Something the reader would not otherwise have access to. Something that reveals where the poet was, how she felt, whether she was in a hurry, or if she perhaps had difficulty finding a solid surface on which to write. The fragments open up a mental landscape, where something otherwise inaccessible unfolds.

A Closed Room

The door to one of the rooms on the second floor cannot be opened. From inside the room you can hear the sound of someone writing. This sound of intense writing slowly subsides. Suddenly there is a pause. The outside of one room is often the inside of another room, but this room does not function as an inside for any other room.

The sound of writing returns.

Writing doesn't have to be anything other than exactly what it is. It is alive, and it refers to something else, *to something beyond the text itself*.

To write is to use *nothing* as material. I am rereading *Writing* by novelist and filmmaker Marguerite Duras. I might be able to find something of use in her short essay. She writes:

Finding yourself in a hole, at the bottom of a hole, in almost total solitude, and discovering that only writing can save you. To be without the slightest subject for a book, the slightest idea for a book, is to find yourself, once again, before a book. A vast emptiness. A possible book.¹²

When I read Duras's words, I imagine a room from which the writing comes. I've tried to cast that space. Or, rather, I have tried to cast the act of writing, which became a closed room. An artist who works with materialising the immaterial is Rachel Whiteread. She creates rooms that you cannot enter and doors that cannot be opened. Her sculptures are the insides of objects and architecture from everyday environments, moulded in plaster and concrete. In the work *House* (1993), she gives shape to the entire inside of a house.¹³ The inside of the house creates a ghostly presence of an absence.

I stand there listening to the scene unfolding within the closed room, thinking: *Writing is also screaming*.

*"As if the camera shutter had closed for good (or the heart of the image had stopped beating)."*¹⁴

I see my art as a form of collecting stories and places from other people's works, both real people and imaginary characters. Together, they create a new fiction. Art becomes a means to step into another role, to see through someone else's eyes. Sometimes I use elements from previous works, and other times I use someone else's text and put it into a new context to explore its meaning. I often come back to Duras's books and films, and how she allows characters to jump around and have a place in a later work, where they may even become someone else. It's a method I also use. I feel like I'm trying to break apart writing, creation, the room, the image, and through this create meaning.

Duras's *L'Homme Atlantique* (The Atlantic man, 1981) is a film that is mostly all black, a darkness that is at times interrupted by images from one of her earlier

films, *Agatha et les lectures Illimitées* (Agatha and the limitless readings, 1981). Through the black image, the focus shifts to the sound. The soundtrack consists only of the sea coming and going and the calm voice of Duras recounting a love story that has ended, a loss, something dying. The voice consists of several layers; it speaks of a loss, perhaps the loss of a lover, but also of time and life disappearing into the blackness before our eyes. The image shifts between blackness and footage of Yann Andréa, the filmmaker's lover, to whom the voice also gives instructions. She speaks to him through a *you* and the viewer becomes *them*. It's as if the camera is turned towards the viewer. The instructions are about how Andréa should relate to the camera. The voice also comments on the film and the spectators watching the film. In a way, Duras's love affair with the medium of film also ends with this black film, which would be her last film.

Every time I see *L'Homme Atlantique*, new worlds open up. The black image creates a void, a void that generates an infinite number of films. Duras called it cinematic writing,¹⁵ which in many ways can be compared with writer and theorist Hélène Cixous's concept of *l'écriture féminine*,¹⁶ which was formulated around the same time. *L'écriture féminine* translates as "female writing" and can be explained as writing that breaks with linear time to instead move in a circular time that tries to capture the corporeal and the momentary. It is writing that follows its own inner seeking as it tries to get at *something* or an *it*, around which the search circles and which the writing materialises. It becomes a way of trying to depict a language before or beyond the rational.

"The meaning shifts, changes and eludes you, but you continue to long to pursue it, as if it were the beloved itself."¹⁷

Witnesses

The gaze circles slowly around a room and is met by chairs upholstered in red velvet, then by a round table with a half-eaten breakfast and some apples on it, an oversized kettle on a small stove, and an empty space next to a bed. It is quiet. The room urges us to navigate our own silence and reconsider what we see.

The film *La Chambre* (The room, 1989) by Chantal Akerman exists somewhere between a self-portrait and a portrait of a place. Because it progresses slowly, the film's relationship to still images reverberates. It is slow enough to make the viewer pause at each frame and allow the eye to follow the composition as in a photograph or a painting, and in the moment you forget that this is a moving image, a new frame reveals more of the room, causing the previous composition to echo within the walls of the new one.

In another part of the room, a spotlight illuminates some objects. It feels as if these objects are waiting for something or someone. Or, rather, it's as if they're looking at someone. It seems to be a scene that we

don't have access to. One of the witnesses is a chair with a dressing gown on it, another is a cutting of a porcelain flower in a brown vase, a third, a rock that bears the marks of time. They are looking back at you.

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Klara Paulin-Rosell, *Vittnen (Witnesses)*, 2025. Video projection: 16 mm transferred to 2K, 6:17 min

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Note: In recent weeks I have begun to make sketches of the house.



Top: Lavinia Samson. Left to right: *Handen (The hand)*, 2025. 20 × 25 cm. *Huset (The house)*, 2025. 57 × 62 cm. Patchwork, inkjet print, cotton, MDF

Bottom: Lavinia Samson. Installation view, BFA exhibition, KHM2 Gallery, Malmö, 2025



“Strange: she could see that she could not see, but she could not see clearly”¹
Lavinia Samson

The goddess Fudalo comes to the weaver in a dream. She's clad in what is to be woven. It is what clothes her. It is etched into the weaver's mind. The weaver wakes up and now knows how the weave is to take shape. She saw it in her dream. Should she forget, Fudalo will return with a reminder.²

I try to remember when my life as an artist began.

Is the act of remembering like travelling? When I remember, I am transported and I like to travel far. I often want to remember things that happened long ago, somewhere far away. I want to return to places again. Socrates compares the memory to a wax tablet. He proposes that we have large wax tablets in our souls. “The gift of Memory, the mother of the Muses.”³ We imprint the wax with everything we want to remember. As long as the image is impressed in the wax, we recall it. What I experience becomes imprinted in the wax of my soul. But wax is soft, malleable. It can change and melt. Am I observing a true memory? What is true? A memory of a memory, a copy of a copy of a copy. An image.

Sometimes I use photos to help me remember. But my old family albums further distort my memory's engravings. What is taking place in the picture has happened, I can see it with my own eyes. I find myself looking for something in the photographs. In the clear, almost vulgar, truth. Photograph and memory in a vicious circle. Together they chafe, grate. I cut the photo up, sew it back together, weave it in. Maybe I'll find what I'm looking for when the image is no longer intact.

The Stitches

Louise Bourgeois's sculpture *Couple II* (1996) depicts two headless bodies lying in an embrace.⁴ The bodies are sewn out of black fabric. It's unclear whether they are making love or trying to kill each other. In an interview, Bourgeois said of the sculpture:

I am exasperated by the vision of the copulating couple, and it makes me so furious, it upsets me so much, that I chop their heads. This is it. When a person is under such anxiety, I turn violent.

I cut the heads of everybody. ... The sewing is a defense. I am so afraid of things I might do. The defense is to do the opposite of what you want to do. I would never separate a couple.⁵

The sight of the couple embitters Bourgeois. She cuts off their heads. She sews them together. The stitch binds them. It brings together that which has been separated. It closes wounds. I sew together images and fragments of images. I join them together. I stitch together places, thoughts, and moments as if they were one big bleeding wound. Through the stitch I wed them to each other. Now they are one. But while the seam unites, it also forms a barrier. A line, a scar. In *Stigmata*, feminist theorist Hélène Cixous writes about the scar:

[The] scar adds something: a visible or invisible fibrous tissue that really or allegorically replaces a loss of substance which is therefore not lost but added to, augmentation of memory by a small mnemonic growth.⁶

The seam, which is also the scar, joins, separates, and adds. It is a reminder of the impossibility of union, while also being proof of this union having just taken place. I look at a painting from the nineteenth century. It depicts Filipino farmers' revolt against the Spanish colonial government after it took control of the use and sale of sugarcane wine.⁷ The Spaniards have managed to capture the leaders of the revolt. They have been hanged, and then their dead bodies will be decapitated. I cut the painting apart. Then I stitch it back together with a photo taken a century later, but in the same area. It shows a child swimming in the sea. Perhaps some of the farmers once swum there too. Maybe I too sew as a defence against violence.

The Material

I listen to the sound of my loom. A rhythmic thumping. The sound of a body. The loom as body. I give it a heartbeat as I beat the beam against my work. I am the force that pumps the blood around the body. I am part of the body—or is it part of mine? Are we in the moment one and the same, or in symbiosis? My body

follows the movements of the loom. I relate to its mechanics, to its rules. I give it my time and I spend time with it. It gives me back pain. I help it through labour. I give birth to a weaving.

When I first started working with textiles, I watched a documentary about Hannah Ryggen. I remember the way she described her weaving process: weaving without a predetermined pattern.⁸ Like the T'boli weaver, the dream weaver. The weaver who doesn't know what to weave until her goddess arrives with a pattern, t'nalak, for her in a dream.⁹ Ryggen dyed her own yarn. Her main colour was "pot blue," a shade of blue she made by collecting urine and simmering it with indigo. In *We Are Living on a Star* (1958), Ryggen's largest tapestry, most of the image is woven from yarn dyed what I assume is pot blue.¹⁰ I think of her material as an extension of her body. That a part of her body is living in it. In another of Ryggen's tapestries, *The Use of Hands* (1949), a naked, pot-blue female body is surrounded by soldiers.¹¹ Ryggen often wove images of her time, of war and fascism. *The Use of Hands* was completed shortly after World War II. The blue body is her wish and dream. It pulls one of the soldiers by the hand, leading him towards a utopia where hands are used for something other than violence. What do my hands do? My fingers and my hands. They make stitches when I sew and string threads when I weave. They draw to them the fabric and the weave. I like the constant presence of the textile. How it is in constant contact with the body. It caresses and clings. It chafes and warms and folds. It draws my hands to touch it. I think about the caress between me and my material. In *To Be Two*, psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray writes:

The caress is an awakening to you, to me, to us. The caress is a reawakening to the life of my body: to its skin, senses, muscles, nerves, and organs, most of the time inhibited, subjugated, dormant or enslaved to everyday activity, to the universe of needs, to the world of labor, to the imperatives or restrictions necessary for communal living. The caress is an awakening to intersubjectivity, to a touching between us which is neither passive nor active; it is an awakening of gestures, of perceptions which are at the same time acts, intentions, emotions. This does not mean that they are ambiguous, but rather, that they are attentive to the person who touches and the one who is touched, to the two subjects who touch each other. ... The caress is a gesture-word which goes beyond the horizon or the distance of intimacy within the self. This is true for the one who is caressed and touched, for the one who is approached within the sphere of his or her incarnation, but it is also true for the one who caresses, for the one who touches and accepts distancing the self from the self through this gesture.¹²

Irigaray writes about a caress that moves away from the subject-object model. Instead, she describes the caress between two subjects, a caress where no one is the object. I stroke my material. My material brings me closer and it draws closer to me. I touch it as it

touches me. Since I often work with distance, between places and in time, the caress is an important part of my process. It becomes a way for me to reduce the distance.

The Body

In *Matter and Memory*, philosopher Henri Bergson writes that a memory, before it becomes an image that we can perceive, is first latent in the body as "pure memory." Through the movements of our body, a field is created in which the memory image can emerge. With the help of the body, a frame or form is created in which a certain memory image can be accommodated. Calling up a memory so that we can see it as an image is, therefore, not just a mental effort, not something that happens only in our brain, but also linked to the whole of our body. The body draws out the memory. Bergson writes:

For, though the whole series of our past images remains present within us, still the representation which is analogous to the present perception has to be *chosen* from among all possible representations. Movements ... prepare this choice [of past images], or at the very least mark out the field in which we shall seek the image we need. ... Virtual, this memory can only become actual by means of the perception which attracts it. Powerless, it borrows life and strength from the present sensation in which it is materialized.¹³

The body is part of remembering. On the loom, does each new row I weave create a field? A field that keeps expanding the longer the weave becomes, with every stitch I sew. Until a memory fits in the space that has been created for it.

A Memory

I am living in the Philippines. I'm four, maybe five years old. I'm there so long that I forget Swedish words. I no longer know how to say "vacuum cleaner." I go to school with my cousin. I see big fields outside the window. Windows without glass, wide open. Concrete floor. My cousin and I wear flip-flops and go shopping. We drink orange soda in plastic bags with straws, eat corn snacks. Some kind of powdered candy that I no longer remember the name of. It's wrapped in gold-coloured plastic. We ride on mopeds. It smells of exhaust fumes and heat and salt. My uncle drives and I stand between his feet. When it's time for my cousin and me to wash, we bathe in a big blue plastic tub out in the yard. It's fun in the tub. There's enough room for both of us.

There are things I want to preserve in my memory. Kusikus is a pattern woven in the Philippines, mainly in the Ilocos region,¹⁴ which is home to my family on my mother's side. I carve it into my inner wax tablet. The region has a long tradition of weaving and textile production, with knowledge passed down through generations. This knowledge has not been passed on to me, and so I'm seeking it out. So that I can preserve



Lavinia Samson. Left to right: *I havet (In the ocean)*, 2024. 10 × 25 cm.
I trädgården (In the garden), 2024. 25 × 26 cm. Weaving, cotton, paper

it and pass it on. Kusikus is made up of rectangular shapes, woven to create the illusion of a whirlwind. It served as a shield against the wind god and was often used as a sail by sailors. This pattern was both the protection during and the means of travel. I think of travelling and returning. Perhaps kusikus can both watch over and guide me through my journey.

In Zineb Sedira's work *Mother Tongue* (2002), a triptych of video works is played side by side.¹⁵ Three generations of women—maternal grandmother, mother, daughter—talk to each other about their childhood experiences in their respective mother tongues. Arabic, French, and English. Confusion arises between daughter and grandmother. They can't understand each other. Language separates them. This difficulty in uniting is something that I try to channel in my work. Or rather, in my work, I am trying precisely to unite, to come closer. Sometimes I see my practice as attempts at translation. I want to translate an image, a memory, the feeling of a material. I let what I want to translate travel between different states. It becomes something else and yet not. It might be more clear and it might be less clear. To translate something, I have to be close to the thing that is to be translated. I have to be fluid. But it is also through the act of translation that I can begin to get to know the thing.

*"To sense you, to preserve a place for you and to speak to you beginning from this memory. To find tone, rhythm, meaning. To cultivate the breath until the words can rise up in me and pass the threshold of myself. May I find them and carry them up to you! May they be born and dwell in me, in you. Not as truth but as faithfulness to us."*¹⁶

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Plant, Sadie. "The Future Looms: Weaving Women and Cybernetics." *Body & Society* 1, nos. 3–4 (1995): 45–64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X95001003003>.

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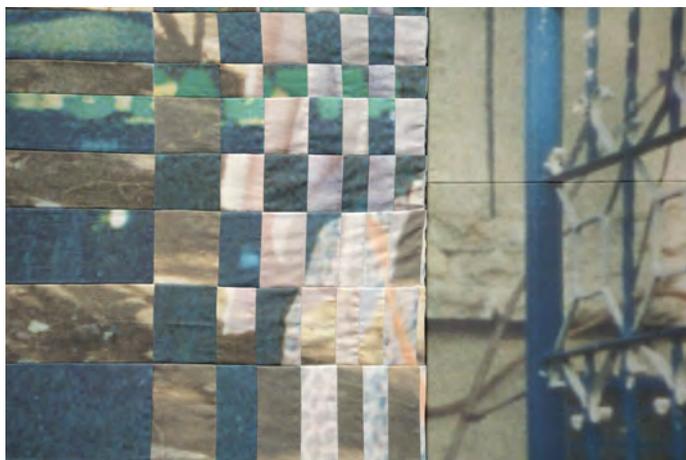


Image courtesy of the artist

Lavinia Samson, *Den blåa tunnan* (*The blue tub*), 2025. Patchwork, inkjet print, cotton, MDF, 145 x 180 cm. Detail



Lavinia Samson, *Handen (The hand)*, 2025. Patchwork, inkjet print, cotton, MDF, 20 × 25 cm

- 1 Hélène Cixous and Jacques Derrida, *Veils*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 9.
- 2 Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP), *Spin: CCP Textile Collection*, exhibition catalogue (Manila: Museo ng Kalinangang Pilipino, 2001), 9.
- 3 Plato, *Theaetetus*, trans. John McDowell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 79.
- 4 See Louise Bourgeois, *Couple II*, 1996, fabric and knee brace, 68.5 × 152.5 × 81 cm, in *Louise Bourgeois—Destruction of the Father/ Reconstruction of the Father: Writings and Interviews, 1923–1997* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 362.
- 5 Bourgeois, *Destruction of the Father*, 363.
- 6 Hélène Cixous, preface to *Stigmata*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Taylor & Francis eBook, 2005).
- 7 I'm referring to the *Basi Paintings*, fourteen oil paintings by Esteban Villanueva depicting the Basi Revolt, which began in 1807 due to the Spanish government's monopoly on basi. Basi is a sugarcane wine that has been an important part of traditions and rituals in the Philippines since precolonial times. The paintings were completed in 1821 and were commissioned by the Spanish government as a warning against future attempts at rebellion.
- 8 *Hannah Ryggen – bildväverska* [Hannah Ryggen —Weaver of Images], documentary, directed by Lennart Ehrenborg, SVTplay video, 28:06, posted 3 April 2017, <https://www.svtplay.se/video/ey9My9e/hannah-ryggen-bildvaverska>.
- 9 CCP, *Spin*, 9.
- 10 Hannah Ryggen, *Vi lever på en stjerne [We Are Living on a Star]*, 1958, tapestry in wool and linen, 402 × 314 cm.
- 11 Hannah Ryggen, *Henders bruk [The Use of Hands]*, 1949, tapestry in linen and wool, 192.5 × 208.5 cm, in the collection of the National Museum, Oslo, <https://www.nasjonalnuseet.no/samlingen/objekt/NG.M.02262>.
- 12 Luce Irigaray, *To Be Two*, trans. Monique M. Rhodes and Marco F. Cocito-Monoc (London: Routledge, 2001), 25–26.
- 13 Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy M. Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 95, 127. Emphasis in the original.
- 14 CCP, *Spin*, 10.
- 15 Zineb Sedira, *Mother Tongue*, 2002, three-video installation, 5 min. each, <https://www.zinebseidira.com/mother-tongue-2002/>.
- 16 Irigaray, *To Be Two*, 14.



Image courtesy of the artist

Felix Schéele, *Beach Day*, 2025. Stereo and audio installation. Video projection, plywood, wood studs, 6:35 min loop. Installation view, Annual exhibition, Båghallarna, Malmö, 2025

A few years ago, I lost the first external hard drive I ever had. It wouldn't start up after years of not being used, and with that, everything I'd saved on it was lost. I immediately thought back to what files and documents were on it, but it was hard to remember since I hadn't seen them in so long.

In the end, the only files I hadn't transferred from this drive to my new one were my photos, all the photos I had taken on my first camera phone—a present for my thirteenth birthday—from when I got it up to when I bought a new hard drive about six or seven years later. Learning that everything from that period of my life was gone made me very sad and upset; it made me realise how difficult it was for me to remember my life as a teenager. The memories from that time are like elusive clouds of hazy feelings, contours of events.

I think I am able to recall certain things from back then, but a lot of it feels quite unclear, and I'm not sure if it truly did happen. Did I just hear someone tell me about an event, or did I see a picture somebody else showed me? And if it did happen, is my memory of it right? Is their memory of it right? That uncertainty brought on lots of thoughts around memory and truth, about how memories are uncertain, fragmented. It's made me wonder if our memories can ever be conveyed in full, or if they're always coloured by our subconscious interpretations.

Memories from my teenage years have also blended with what I've seen online. In that period, I began spending a lot of time on the internet after I bought my own PC instead of a scooter. I was spending an extreme amount of time on YouTube and various forums, obsessed with seeing everything absurd that I could find. And now, later, it is as if memories from the online world have suddenly become my own memories. Then again, I am the one who experienced those things, just

not in "the real world." It's as if I can no longer distinguish what is what. As if I sometimes actually do believe that I've experienced things that I only saw online.

As I remember it, I was often quite bitter and sad when I was younger. I absolutely did not want to live a small-town life. In Motala, where I grew up, I hated everything that had to do with the place. All I wanted was to get away; living there was a feeling of infinite hopelessness. I'm sure some of it was over-dramatised by being a teenager and part of a social environment where people around me seemed to feel the same way. Many were unemployed, depressed, or had drug problems. Every day was the same, a common feeling among people living in smaller communities.

My decision to buy a computer instead of a scooter led me to withdraw in isolation, since I was more comfortable online than in the real world. It might have been terrible for my social life at the time, but as this happened during the heyday of Pirate Bay, it also meant I could access cracked versions of Photoshop and Fruity Loops 9 for free. Using YouTube tutorials, I learned to edit photos and make electronic dance music, an interest stoked by my discovery of *Random Album Title*, a record by Deadmau5. Pretty soon thereafter, my fascination with the absurd online merged with my interest in music, and I entered a new, deeper world of music subcultures. I didn't realise it then, but music and the scene I slowly joined were my first points of entry into the art world.

I find the absurdity and overstimulation of living in modern society interesting. The fact that it can be really hard to interpret the world we live in has become part of my practice. I experience the world as very overwhelming, a constant flow of information that's impossible to digest, with so much stimuli that it can lead me to shut down. Everything turns into mush, a din

of information that can't possibly be interpreted in the moment. This can certainly be frustrating and ruinous in the day-to-day, when trying to get things done—but from a distance, or from a different perspective, it can be quite beautiful. The onslaught turns into abstraction.

This feeling that there is so much going on that you have to leave yourself behind and simply *be* in it resembles, in some ways, a meditative state. Everything that surrounds me takes up so much space that I momentarily forget my body. I'm still touched by what I take in, but not in a way where I'm present in my body. Time disappears.

I rarely work with anything that portrays actual reality; it's more of a feeling of something that might have happened, an attempt at interpreting the world and the memories it might produce. I do this by trying to recreate memories in vague scenarios that include all alternative versions of what might have happened. I look for every possibility and choice: what is what and what is true and what isn't. I look for something that invites introspection, a path to memories but also fantasies. Like a thick fog over it all. Like the sublime, dreamy feeling of standing in front of a smoke machine at a nightclub or being enveloped by thick fog on a fall evening, when all you can see are hazy lights and what is right next to you, so that you need to walk into the grey mass to actually be able to see what's there. This lack of clarity is an elusive feeling that is both tempting and frightening.

I am drawn to working with the mixed emblems of overstimulation and this grey sublime, in a process that combines multiple layers of hazy information and repetition, whether physically in sculptures or digitally in sound and images. I use photos of photos of photos taken from the few old phone pictures I still have or found content from the internet, like YouTube videos or photos from old forums. These are the few pictures I still have from my childhood, archived online by people I knew or others who are complete strangers to me. Still, it gives a sense of memories I might have experienced. I also use new photos made to imitate and recreate a place or memories I want to believe I have.

Combining all this creates a mixture of real and fake, and when the photos are placed on top of each other in layers of low opacity everything turns grey, the layers so numerous that you can no longer discern them at first glance. This result was not intentional at first, but it reflects the feeling I wanted to explore, which was the foundation for this method. Looking at it now, it is a method that's highly reminiscent of music, in the sense of constant repetitions—loops and samples that just keep going.

The resulting greyness makes me think of Gerhard Richter. He talks about the greys in his works as a form of neutrality and objectivity, an absence of emotional charge that is neither positive nor negative. Richter has characterised this colour as “[making] no statement whatever; it evokes neither feelings nor associations: it is really neither visible nor invisible. Its inconspicuous-

ness gives it the capacity to mediate, to make visible, in a positively illusionistic way, like a photograph. It has the capacity that no other colour has, to make ‘nothing’ visible.”¹ I can relate to this view, though I don't fully agree. Grey, to me, is not passive; it's a highly sublime and emotional colour, which is always in limbo. It is always in a struggle between darkness and light.

Grey can function as a mirror for memories and fantasies, its obscurity providing a place to explore the shifting and lost parts of our experience. Grey gives life to the past and to ambiguity, allowing memories to be reawakened and combined with ideas about what could have been. Still, and though we use it for different purposes, I strongly relate to Richter's view on using it as a tool, since grey can create an illusion of invisibility or subtlety, while it simultaneously offers up a frame that allows other things to be visible, thus lifting what's subtle or muted, giving life to what might otherwise have remained invisible or forgotten.

Making casts of objects and changing their materials shifts both how we view them and how they're interpreted. This is another method I've used to concretise memories and confusion. When contemporary objects are copied in this way, they seem aged, and a sense of uncertainty around their identity emerges. An object that was once familiar can suddenly appear as unfamiliar, difficult to grasp, inviting feelings of uncertainty.

One example of such an attempt is a cast of my hard drive, which I've recreated in bronze and porcelain, stripping the gadget of its original function. Similarly, I've processed photos by giving them an artificial relief, then 3D-printed them and melted them to create casts for bronze reliefs that I've subsequently oxidised to turn them black. The new, gilded versions of these objects bring about questions around their origin and purpose. They feel both foreign and ancient, but also strangely familiar.

I had a feeling that reminds me of what I'm trying to do with these distortions when I saw Anna Uddenberg's sculptures in the 2022 *Fake-Estate* exhibition at Schinkel Pavillon in Berlin.² This experience was immensely rewarding, seeing something so confusing but concretised, in which what looks like a functional environment of objects turns out to be a disorienting backdrop. The installations appear to have practical functions, but after a closer look, they turn out to be completely unusable.

Perhaps my memories work in the same way. They feel real until I try to use them, try to step inside of them, only to realise they don't hold me the way I thought they would.

Sound is a crucial medium for me, not least because of its tactility. That's what I've focused most on, both in sound art and music; it makes me visualise and feel like nothing else can. It inspires thoughts about textures, places, and memories, which can get quite emotional for me.



Felix Schéele, *Shore Gleam*, 2025. Photocollage. Photoprint, Stainless steel angles, MDF
Installation view and detail, BFA exhibition, KHM1 Gallery, Malmö, 2025





Images courtesy of Youngjae Lim

Felix Schéele, *Infirm Agent*, 2025. Sculpture. Unburned clay, aluminum tablet holder, stainless steel hooks, MDF. Installation view



I find it difficult to talk about only sound in and of itself, as if some works are expressly about certain things. For me, it's more important to capture feelings, whether that's about doubt, discomfort, love, or something else. At the same time, sound contains lots of specific elements in the form of recordings, found sound, or music—often processed with modulation or taken out of its original context. I am interested in how much can be altered before these sounds change meaning entirely, and how idiosyncratically different references land in people. By layering sound clips, you can directly change the feeling of the original recordings. There is also a nostalgic aspect to it, using sounds and samples from a time gone by. By using sound clips from recordings, songs, and videos, which bring to mind something particular that happened in that context, you invite reflection and reminiscence, though grounded more in the feeling of it than the actual meaning.

The feeling of the sound in my work can in some ways be said to reflect an interaction between various histrionic feelings, like being at a nightclub, getting a dopamine kick from doing something you really enjoy, hearing music you like, being with friends, being rejected, feeling sad. It offers up a place where it's more acceptable to have strong feelings, where you're allowed to feel things that many wouldn't necessarily allow themselves to feel in their day-to-day.

James Whipples's album *Hesaitix*, published under his alias M.E.S.H., is a concept album that explores what club music is and isn't.³ The record challenges established norms in electronic dance music by constantly shifting between the familiar and the unpredictable.

The songs begin with a dancey rhythm, which is suddenly broken and deconstructed until it is unrecognizable. The most fascinating thing about *Hesaitix* is how it is able to create a listening experience that, to me, isn't about satisfaction but rather about confrontation.

I am much less focused on club music in my own work, but the way of thinking and the refusal to compromise is fascinating to me. My practice remains highly inspired by electronic dance music. The spatial element in a production is crucial for its success. Using techniques from music and manipulating the sounds' stereo image and effects in order to distort electronic music, I'm able to create a sense of spaciousness or close, intimate, or claustrophobic proximity. By combining these artificial elements with "real," recorded sounds, I can create a surreal, absurd feeling, where reality meets the artificial, while still holding back to avoid making it too obvious what is real and what is artificial, thus ensuring that the listener doesn't know where one thing ends and the other begins.

The result brings to mind a picture hinting that there is something beyond what you see. Some sounds carry a mystical, hard-to-capture feeling. Echoes or an unexpected note or sound in the background give the sense that there is something more in the soundscape than what you initially hear. Just as a foggy horizon in a photograph might lead you to ask what is beyond what you see, these sounds can create a feeling of something hidden, something bigger, an invisible presence or a story that can only be sensed.

1 Gerhard Richter, in a to Edy de Wilde, 23 February 1975, "Grey Paintings," Gerhard Richter's website, <https://www.gerhard-richter.com/en/quotes/subjects-2/grey-paintings-9>.

2 Anna Uddenberg, *Fake-Estate*, Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin, 15 September–31 December 2022.

3 M.E.S.H, *Hesaitix*, PAN, 2017.

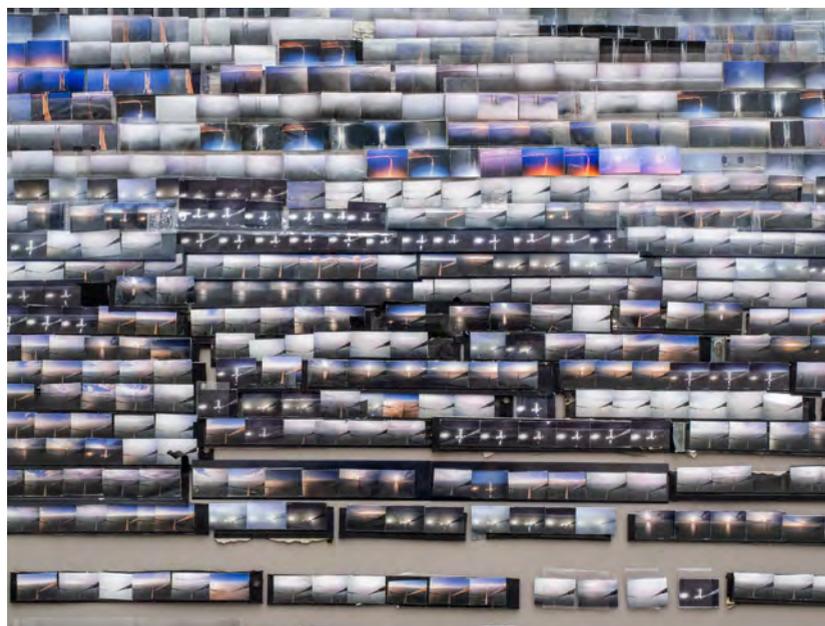
Bachelor of Fine Arts
Year 2

Isabella Nicole Best
Anna Filippa Moberg
Niki Cervin
Sæunn la Cour Degnbol
Elliot Hjälmrud
Alma Holtvedt Exchange out
Maja Dahlström-Horvath
Sarah Folker Kappel
Fiona Alberte Exchange student
Emilio Marroquin Exchange out
Felix Emmanuel
Isaac Rizell
Liva Stare
Mingsheng Xu



Images courtesy of the artist

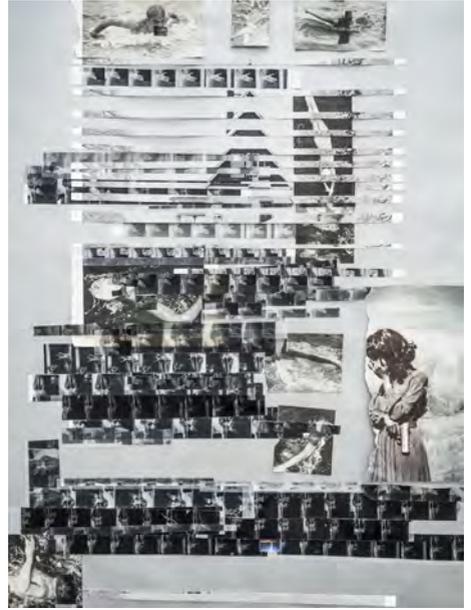
Isabella Nicole Best, *It Ended Sweet and Was Bitter Once*, 2025. Mixed media wall installation/ Assemblage of various pieces made with discarded and found objects, misused words, photographs



Isabella Nicole Best, *Crossings*, 2023–2025. Photographs, time, many types of tape and an array of coinholders, stamp hinges and the like, discarded wooden board courtesy of Vio Rossi



Isabella Nicole Best, *You'll Get Over It, I'm Sure*, 2025. Drawer, parasolclip, mountings, padlock, flower 1, flower 2



Isabella Nicole Best, *Even The Swimmers Are Frozen / Found Hands, Lost House*, 2024–2025. Photographs of hands captured in her home, discarded image of a house in snow courtesy of Koi, found images of swimmers



Isabella Nicole Best, *You Never Returned So I Stayed*, 2025. Discarded objects, words extracted from lighthouse keeper manual, found photographs of swimmers

Anna Filippa Moberg



Images courtesy of the artist



Anna Filippa Moberg, *Feeding*, 2025. Archival pigment print mounted on aluminium.
Digital collage of Instagram uploads, 40 × 50 cm each



Anna Filippa Moberg, *Untitled (Graveyardflowers)*, 2024–2025. Pigments of discarded graveyard flowers. Each pigment is made from one bouquet of flowers, collected from a graveyard over one year, variable dimensions

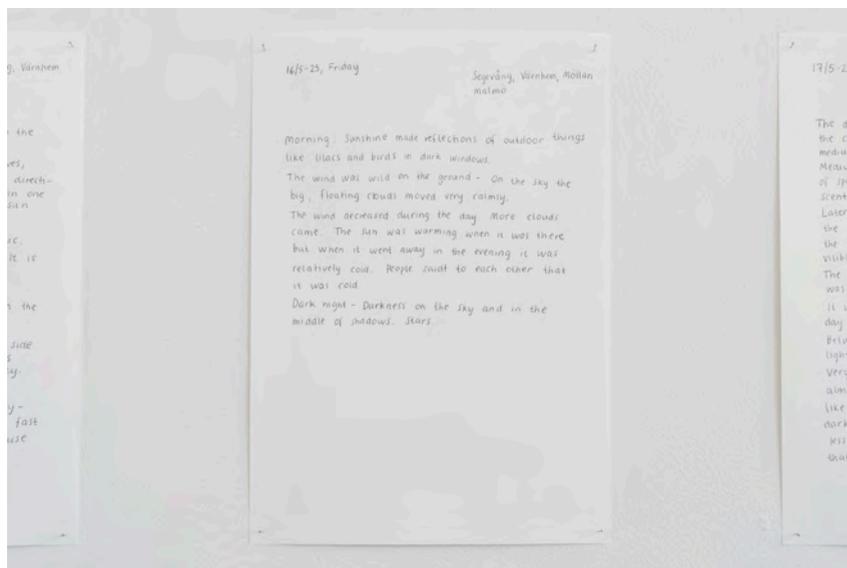


Niki Cervin, *Lines/Letter/Letter/Lines*, 2025. Oil on canvas, 200 × 160 cm



Niki Cervin, *In Search of Painting—Let's Find It Tomorrow*, 2024–2025. Oil on canvas, 30 × 26 cm, 32 × 26 cm each





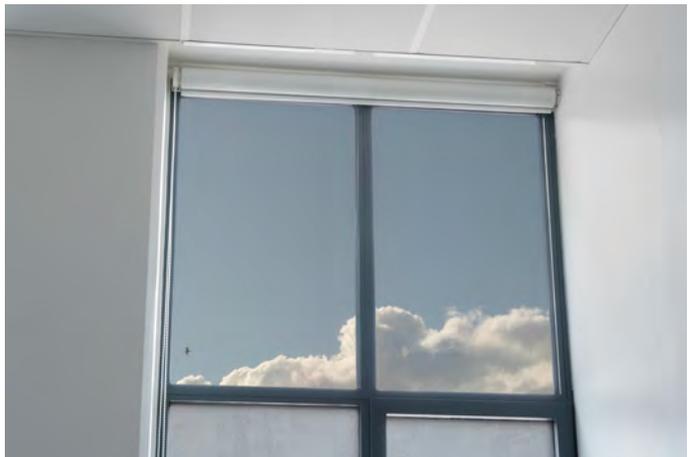
Images courtesy of the artist



Sæunn la Cour Degnbol, *Yesterdays Weather*, 2025. Performative installation, 1–10 A4 papers with text



Sæunn la Cour Degnbol, *Dog and Gun*, 2025. Stick and twig. Installation view



Sæunn la Cour Degnbol, *This Part of the Sky From This Spot*, 2025. Window, yogurt, line on floor. Detail



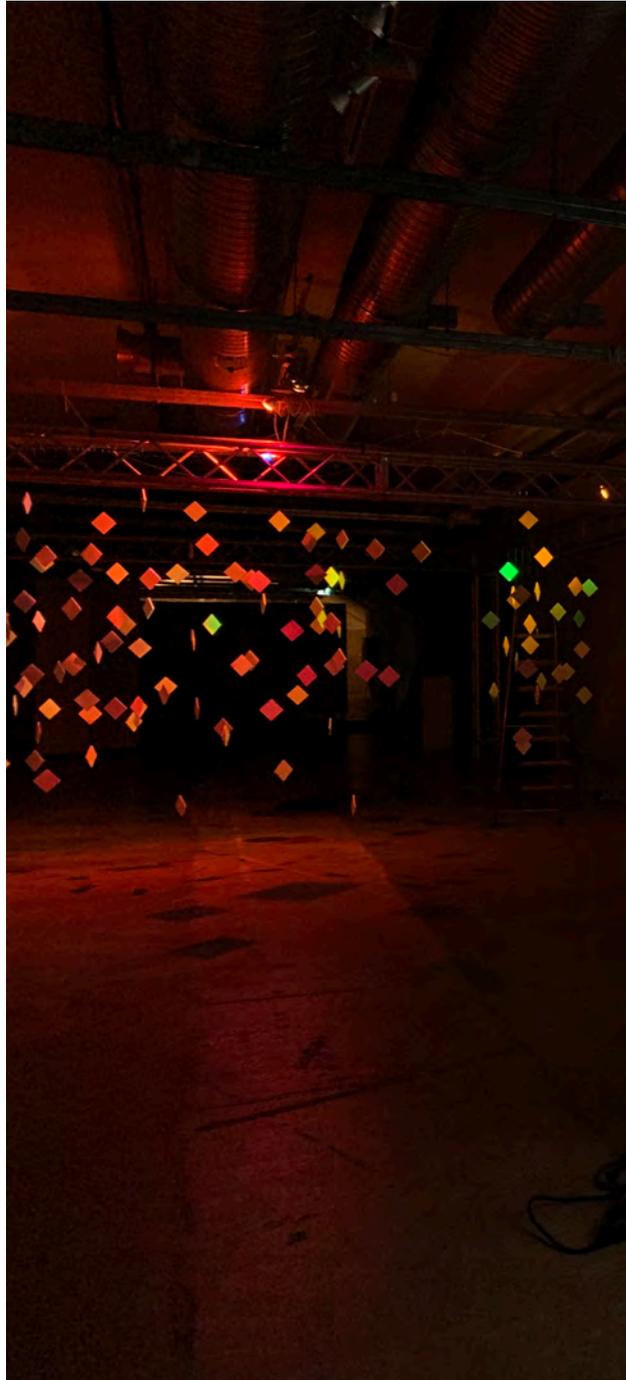
Images courtesy of the artist

Elliot Hjälmrud, *Rum a.01:069*, 2025. Found objects; stone, bricks and concrete pieces. Acoustic panels made of fiberglass and mineral wool, frame mounted in ceiling for acoustic panels, stonefloor, original floor color 2 bas, wall color pro 7 NY, drywall, concrete column, radiator, windows. Installation view





Image courtesy of the artist





Alma Holtvedt, *Displaced Conversation*, 2025. Video installation



Images courtesy of the artist

Maja Dahlström-Horvath, *Shards*, 2025. OSB, plexi, silver gelatin emulsion on molded pine resin, lightboards



Maja Dahlström-Horvath, *Coming undone*, 2025. OSB soaked in alcohol, hardwax oil



Maja Dahlström-Horvath, *Bypassing*, 2025. Silver gelatin emulsion on MDF

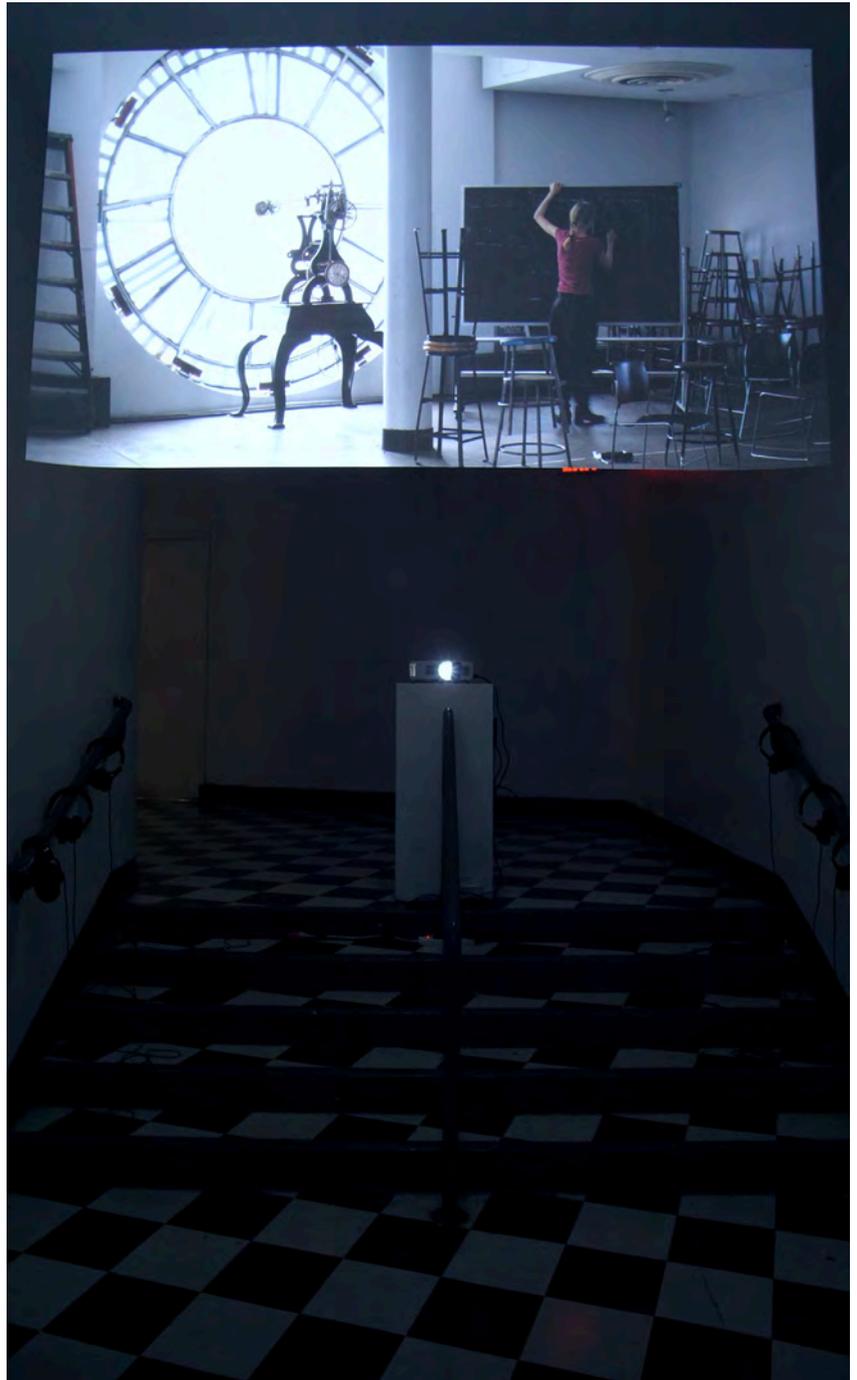


Maja Dahlström-Horvath, *Composite conditions*, 2025. Projection of color photographs, OSB, 04:56 min



Images courtesy of the artist

Sarah Folker Kappel, *Angels Slouching*, 2025. Video, 19:00 min. Installation view (front)



Sarah Folker Kappel, *Angels Slouching*, 2025. Video, 19:00 min. Installation view (back)



Images courtesy of the artist



Fiona Alberte, *If the sick ruled the world*, 2025. Acrylic paint on wall, foam flooring. Installation, variable dimensions

If the sick ruled the world
and synthetic realities

The petrified of admittance The petrified of unpredictable care

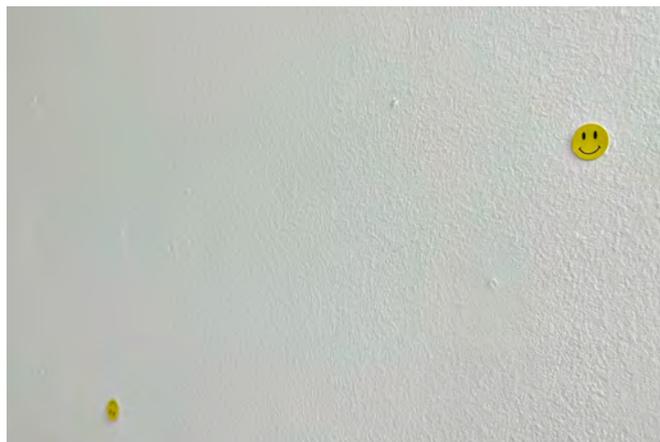
Everything stiffly pulled upwards // frozen and stretched to its absolute breaking point // so many
caked up layers glossed over // remember the cloth clip pulling the news reporters face back in
the Simpsons movie // straight and blown backward to the neatest position cramping up //
holding a breath to not break the porcelain mask // masked into function by thirty-four layers of
Elnette-Ultra-Strong-Hold hairspray // standing ovation on one leg by the smallest of toes with a
needle for balancing // every strand of hair pinned to perfection // // so tightly

Interlude

Like the beige rubber band stretching from my teeth to my toes // maniacally \\
I shove a thumb in your face // confused you hand me a thumbs up and hold up a
yellow faced smiley on a stick in place of where your face should be



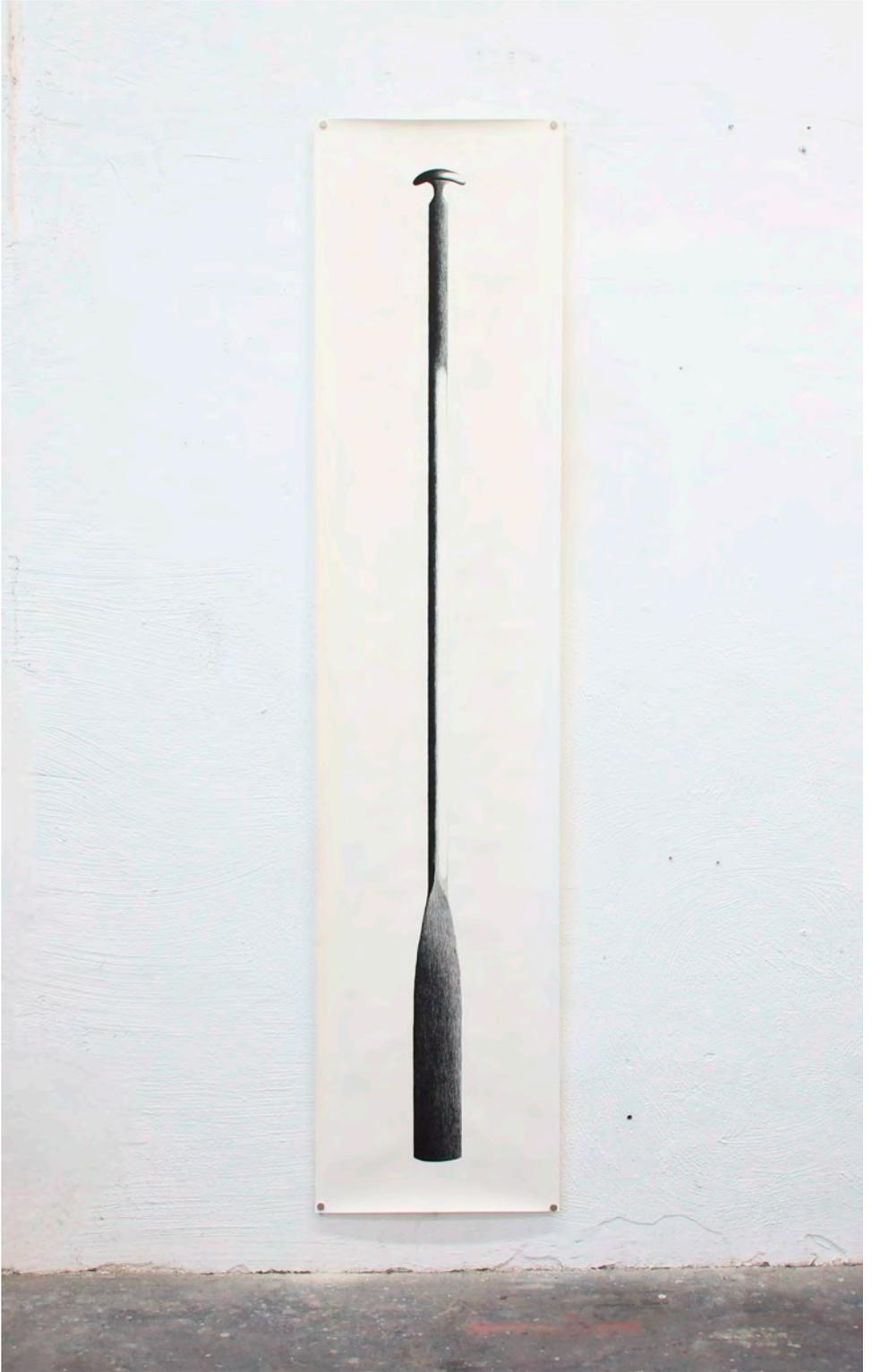
Fiona Alberte, *If the sick ruled the world (2)*, 2025. Photo on glossy 365 paper, mapping pins.



Fiona Alberte, *Face-card*, 2025. Plastic, tape

¿Quién puede navegar sin viento?
¿Quién puede remar sin remos?
¿Quién puede separarse de su amigo
sin derramar lágrimas?
Puedo navegar sin viento,
puedo remar sin remos,
pero no separarme de mi amigo
sin derramar lágrimas.

Image courtesy of the artist



Emilio Marroquin, *Vem kan utan ?*, 2024. Charcoal on paper, 50 × 220 cm

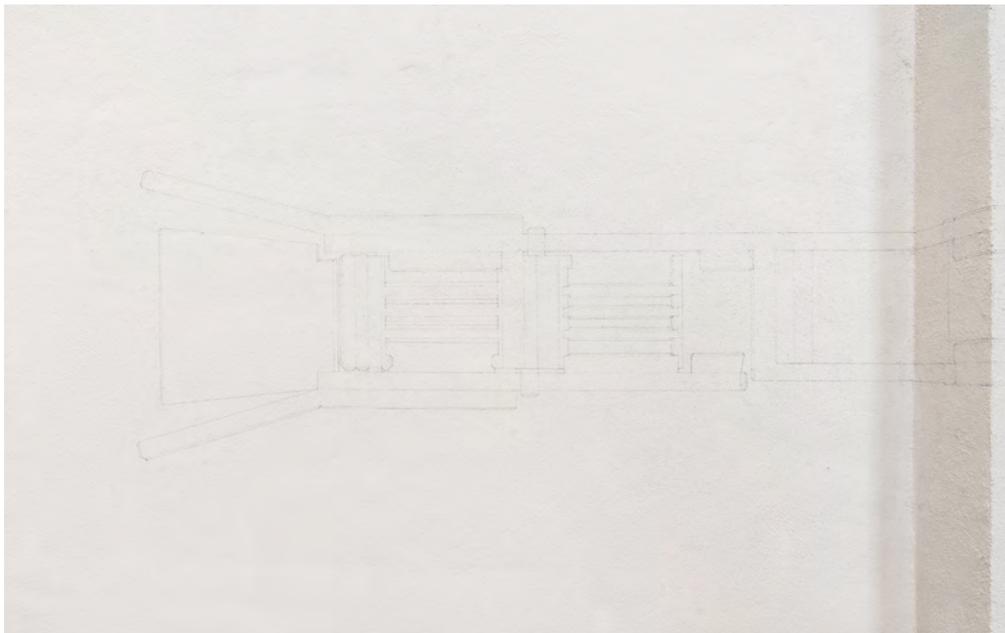


Images courtesy of the artist



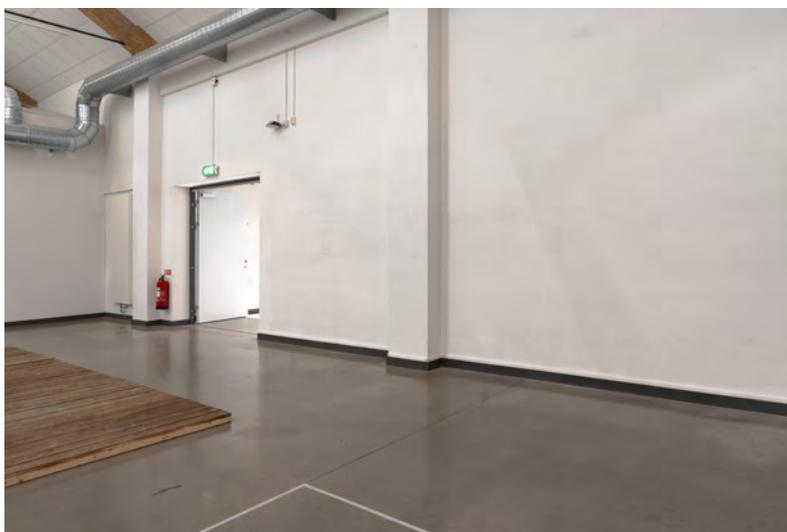
Felix Emmanuel, *The Girl & The Clock*, 2025. Video, 04:00 min





Images courtesy of the artist

Isaac Rizell, *IKEA PINNTORP Chair*, 2025. Graphite on wall





Isaac Rizell, *Fire Extinguisher*, 2025. Embossed steel plate

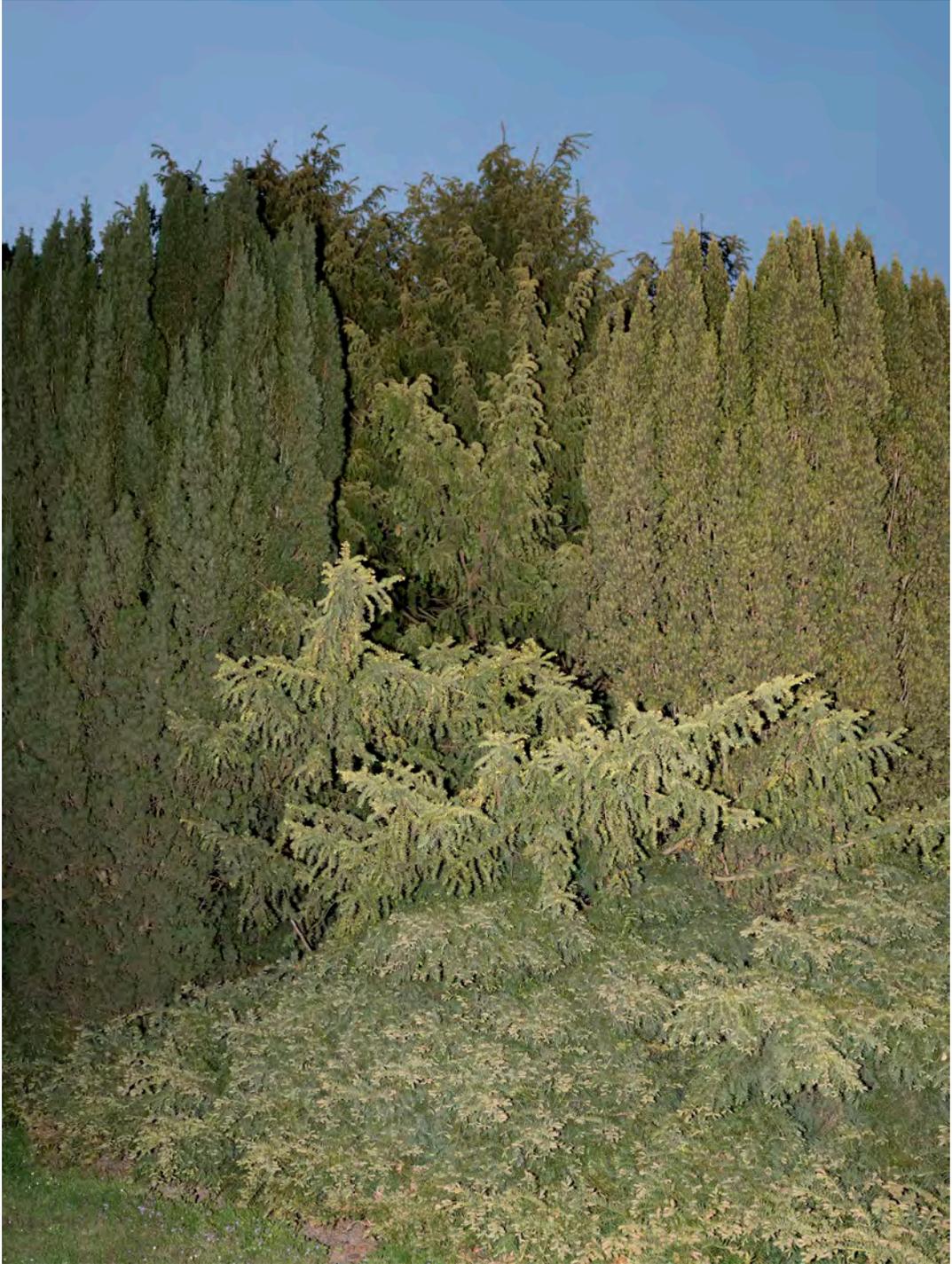


Isaac Rizell, *Whistle (Shaking Stairs)*, 2025. Haptic Installation. 7:39 second sound loop of whistling, tuned down to the natural resonant frequency of the stairs played through a surface transducer causing vibrations on said stairs

Image courtesy of the artist



Liva Stare, *Untitled*, 2025. Inkjet print, plexiglass, aluminium



Images courtesy of the artist

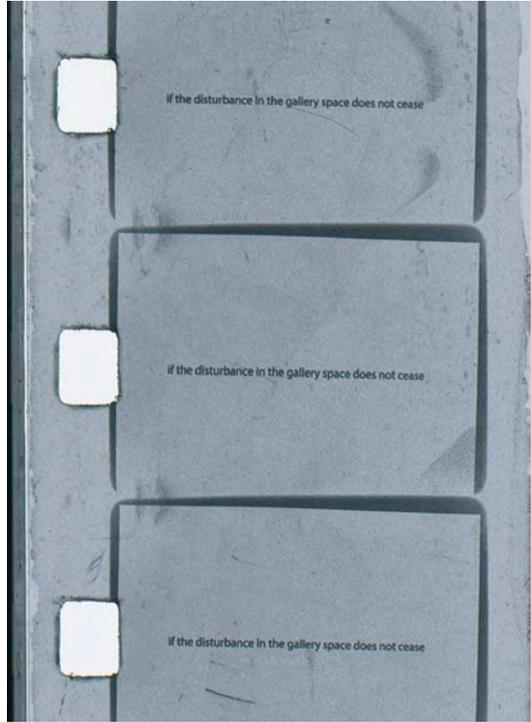
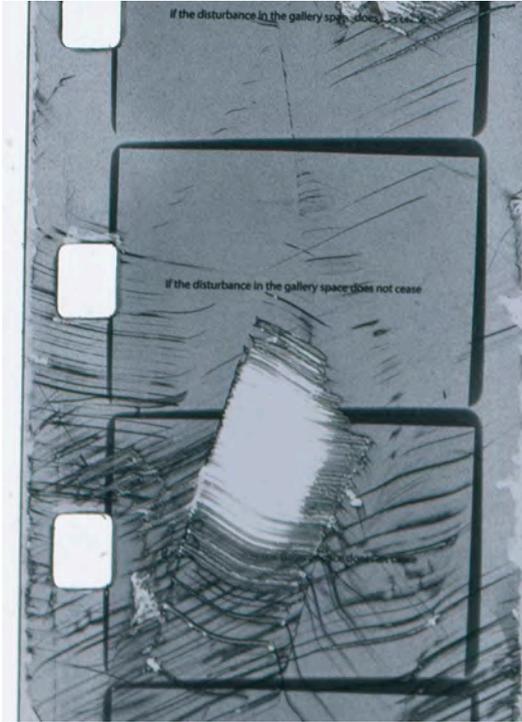
Mingsheng Xu, *Untitled 1*, 2025. Digital photography



Mingsheng Xu, *Untitled 2*, 2025. Digital photography

Bachelor of Fine Arts
Year 1

Peter Bidstrup
Johan Buch
Lasse Schmidt Hansen
Ludvig Holm
Felicia Jartelius
Jacob Linholdt Nielsen
Markus Lipsøe
Claudia Munro
Nina Fjordbak Nielsen
Petra Maria Scott
Hannes Nilsson
Julia Sol Schenk
Martin Sjöberg
Marius Poika Valtanen
Albert Willim



Images courtesy of the artist

The piece *Disturbance or Kinomuseum* was exhibited in one of the school's corridors at the 2025 annual exhibition. It is an analog loop of Super8-film projected onto a white wall. It turns off and on again at undisclosed intervals due to an electronic timer hidden in the white plinth that supports the projector. The loop consists of two interchanging text frames; One says "if the disturbance the gallery space does not cease", and the other says "the showing of this film will be discontinued", thus constructing a conditional sentence. The sentence is typed with a sans serif font, that is supposed to subtly point toward the polished aesthetics of art institutions, and to function as a counterweight to the somehow antiquated look of the Super8-film frame. The placement of it in a space of passage encourages the kind of encounter between spectator, artwork and gallery space that is sought after, since the projector/projection would be timidly placed close to the wall, and in a narrow space where it would be difficult *not* to confront or be confronted by the loop.

As the latter part of the title might suggest, there is a textual reference for the work, an anecdote brought to my attention by the late critic Ian White in the essay *Kinomuseum*¹. The MOMA, he writes, was one of the first art institutions exhibiting moving images. They did so in an auditorium, where the film curator had a slide made (white text on black) saying "if the disturbance in the auditorium does not cease, the showing of this film will be discontinued". The slide would be put in front of the projector, if people would not stay quiet during the screening. At the time, at screenings in commercial cinemas, yelling and cheering during the film was common, and I find it interesting how the art institution wanted to get rid of these antics and impose the controlled behavior of the art museum or gallery space onto the realm of the film screening.

My work can thus be seen as a rewriting of this anecdote of art institutional history, but I would like to think that it works without this knowledge as well. I think the conditional sentence is devoid of both a distinct addresser and addressee, yet it hopefully poses questions or summons reflexion in the spectator about attending an art show. Maybe the unwritten contract between institution and spectator will be questioned for a moment before the roaming onward through the gallery space is continued.

¹ White, Ian, 2007, *Kinomuseum*: <https://ianwhiteestate.org/pdf/Oberhausen%202007%20catalogue%20-%20Kinomuseum%20pages.pdf>



Images courtesy of the artist

Johan Buch, *wait until the end*, 2025. Receipt printer, bpa-free thermal paper, icloud photo library 2015–2025







Images courtesy of the artist



Lasse Schmidt Hansen,

*She is truly beautiful
All dressed in chainmail*

*The holy pulse,
I feel it now*

*Our ancestors must have met in the trenches,
1916, France, 50 km east of Amiens*

*Private
Take your trembling hand
And point it to the leader*

*Friend
Wash yourself
Wash yourself in the tears of your father*

*And even though you madden me with your
Useless, perverse and esoteric worldview*

*I still want to pinch your cheeks until they
burst like grapes in september*

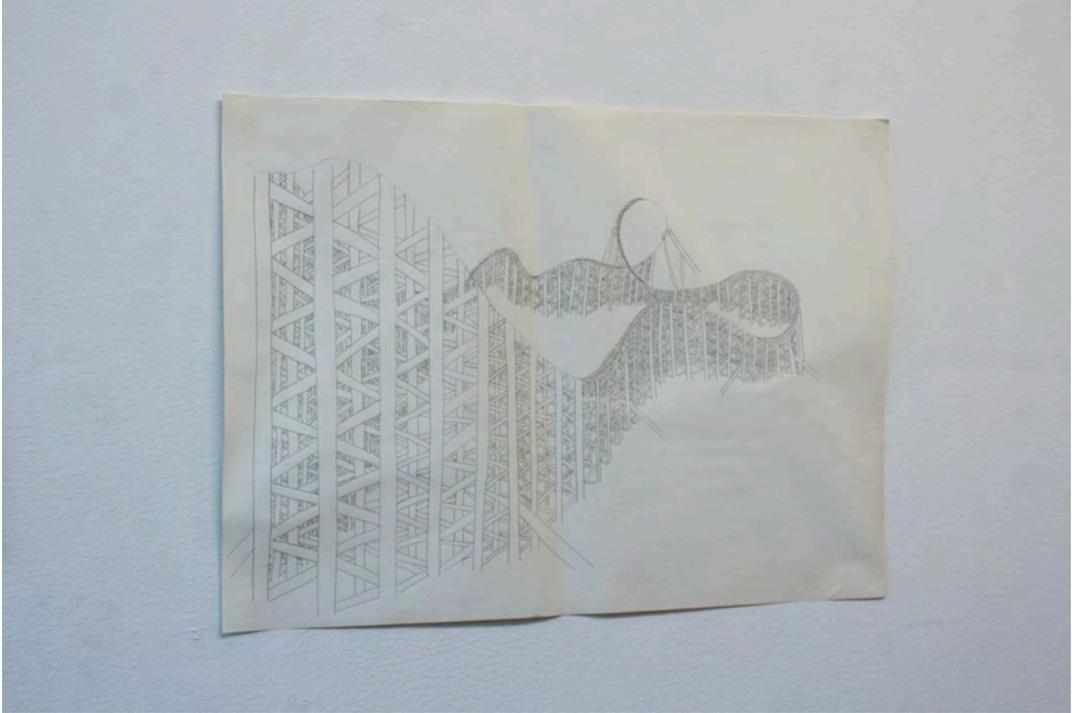
And I know you wish you had four hands on the piano

*But you're young and riding the knife's edge,
Smelling like frankincense*

Just exactly ripe for ascension commands,

2025. Installation view





Images courtesy of the artist

Ludvig Holm, *Bergodalbana*, 2025. Pencil drawing, 46 × 64 cm



Ludvig Holm, *Jycke*, 2025. Pencil drawing, 21 × 30 cm

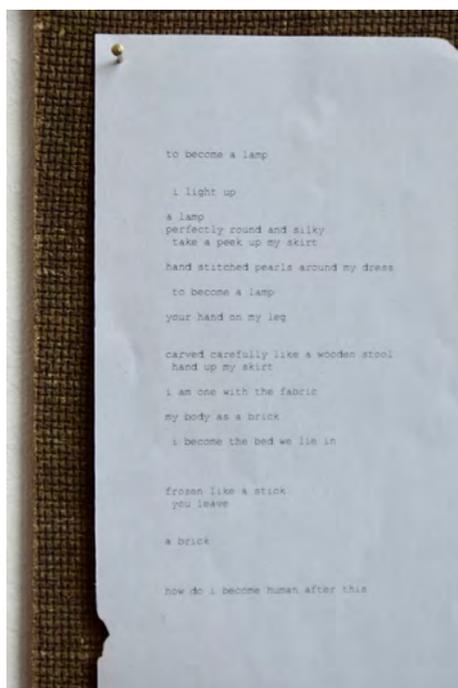


Ludvig Holm, *Isbjörn*, 2025. Pencil drawing, 21 × 30cm



Images courtesy of the artist

Felicia Jartelius, *lighten up*, 2025. Poetry on burnt paper, bulletin board, pin. Installation view





Felicia Jartelius, *lost-and-found/ goods*, 2025. Text, canvas, oil on wood, installation view



Images courtesy of Mateo Del Campo

Jacob Linholdt Nielsen, *Summer House*, 2025. Miniature, wood, foam, fabric, 45 × 85 × 35 cm







Images courtesy of Peter Bidstrup

Markus Lipsøe, *These were turbulent times indeed. In response to the deteriorating situation, the mayor of a generic, European city decided to completely block the increasing noise of the disintegrating outside world from his picturesque inner city, 2025.* 2-channel mono speakers, active noise cancellation, sound, microphones, variable dimensions

I can't really remember how it all began. At first, I heard it as a weak mumble, unrecognizable, distant. I thought I understood it all, but meaning made itself into a thick porridge. And then the language disappeared and I heard nothing again.

Now it's back again. This time, I seemed to detect a slight coherence. Could it be? A synthetic meaning, a somewhat logic behind consciousness. I abandoned my intention and lost myself to language. No matter how hard I tried, meaning seemed to slip away from me, leaving me in the dark.

What is your philosophy of time?

- Rebus.

What is your philosophy of time?

- Sleeeeeeeeeeep.

What is your philosophy of time?

- Life is short and art is long.

I can never see what I hear, but always hear what I see.

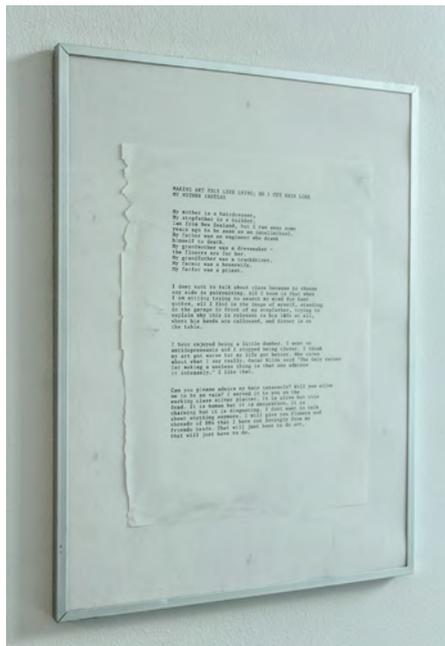
The night was all breathing and we went out by the sea. The waves never stopped, on all sides. You found a rock which had a hole in it. A sound travelled far behind us, fluctuating and changing over time. You looked at me and took a bit of the rock. You tried to say something which you were incapable of saying, and the voice was trying painfully to make itself heard. The cool of the evening grew colder, and at that moment, you became a stranger to your own tongue.

(...)

A full company of teeth will be curled for years, like curled duct tape on a pair of broken glasses. The present. There is another now. Now is an instant. No! No! The past seems to overflow, the present. I love you. I told you, I don't understand myself and this is a story about everything I know. I don't know. Damn. Maybe. Maybe not.

Text extracted from videowork.

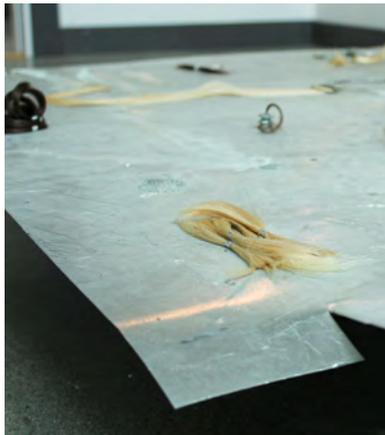
Markus Lipsøe, *Wo Ee O*, 2025. B&W video, sound, 06:50 min

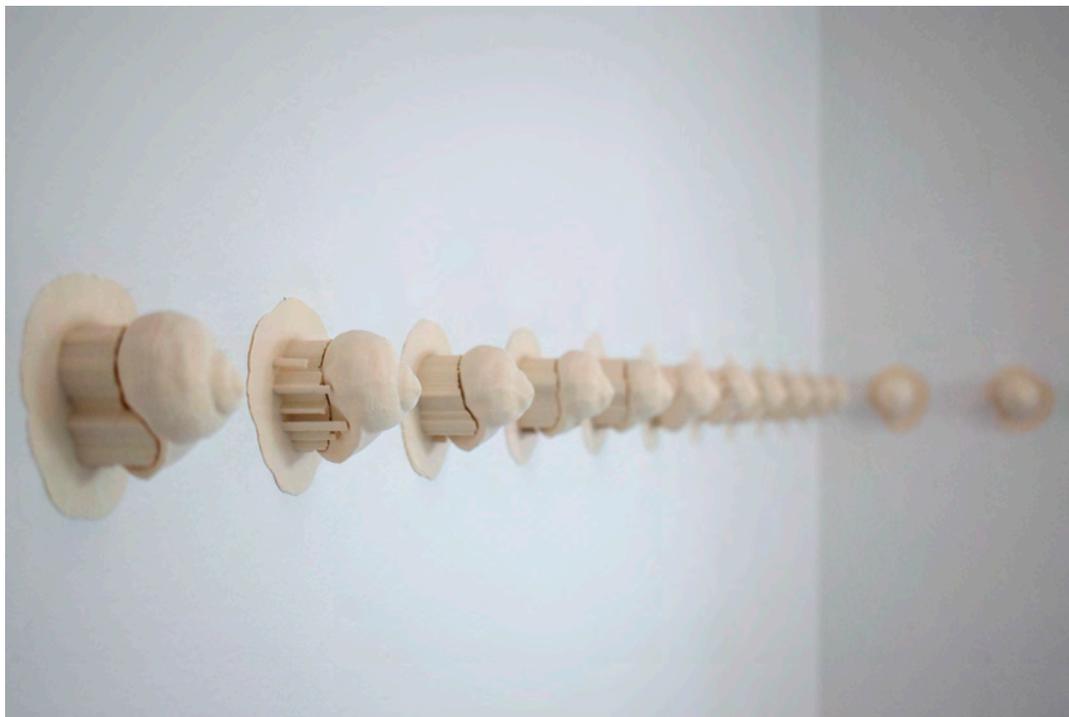


Images courtesy of the artist



Claudia Munro, *Making Art Felt Like Lying, So I Cut Hair Like My Mother Instead*, 2025. Cut and collected hair, various hardware, string, stolen metal sheet, vintage lamps, paper, secondhand frame, glass vase, lilies





Images courtesy of the artist

Nina Fjordbak Nielsen, *A realistic, spiral-shaped snail shell with textured surface and natural coloration. [...]*
Smooth, textured seashell with soft earthy tones, showcasing intricate natural patterns, 2025.
Recursive 3D-scan and 3D-print in PLA, 150 × 180 × 170 cm



Nina Fjordbak Nielsen, *Codes from another perspective, 2025.*
Oil on unprimed canvas, 110 × 130 cm



Nina Fjordbak Nielsen, *It appears that the most vulnerable spot on the house is where past meets present*, 2025. Brick made of slaked lime of empty burned snail shells (Ca(OH)₂), sand and snail shells, 24 × 12 × 10 cm



Nina Fjordbak Nielsen, *CYKLUS*, 2025. HD video, 07:10 min. Installation view



Nina Fjordbak Nielsen, *The original story we share*, 2025. Clay, speaker, limestone-bricks, gloves, 100 × 100 × 50 cm



Images courtesy of the artist

Petra Maria Scott, *To nobody*, 2025. Plastic glasses on aluminum





Petra Maria Scott, *Sweat*, 2025. Cotton towels, epoxy resin



Petra Maria Scott, *Untitled*, 2025. Paraffin



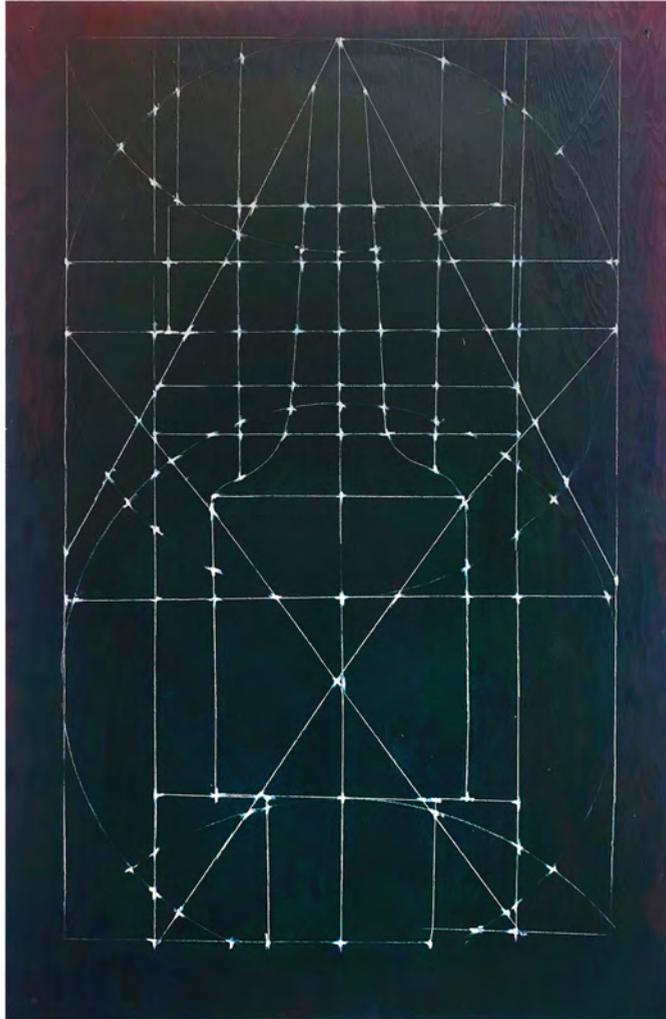
Images courtesy of the artist

Hannes Nilsson, *105x68 m*, 2025. Wax, 27 × 21 cm

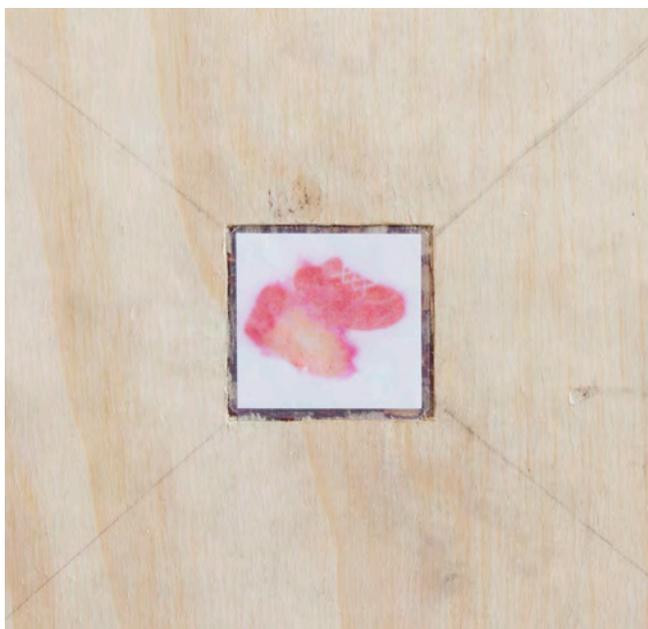


Hannes Nilsson, *426 m²*, 2025. Oil on canvas, 50 × 38 cm

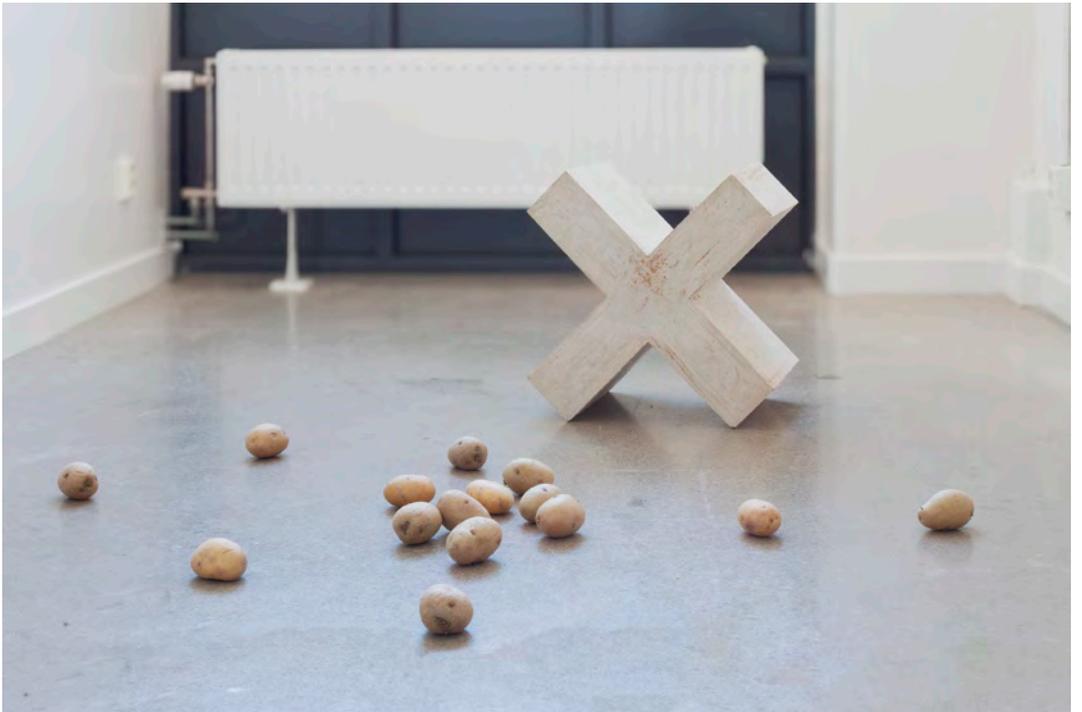


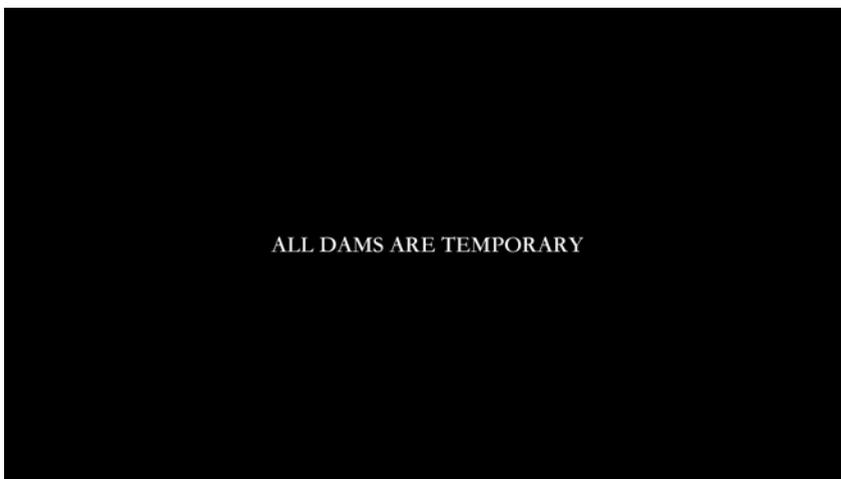


Julia Sol Schenk, *TRANSFORMERS*, 2025. Plywood, acrylic, white chalk and oil pastel, 87 × 122 × 2 cm

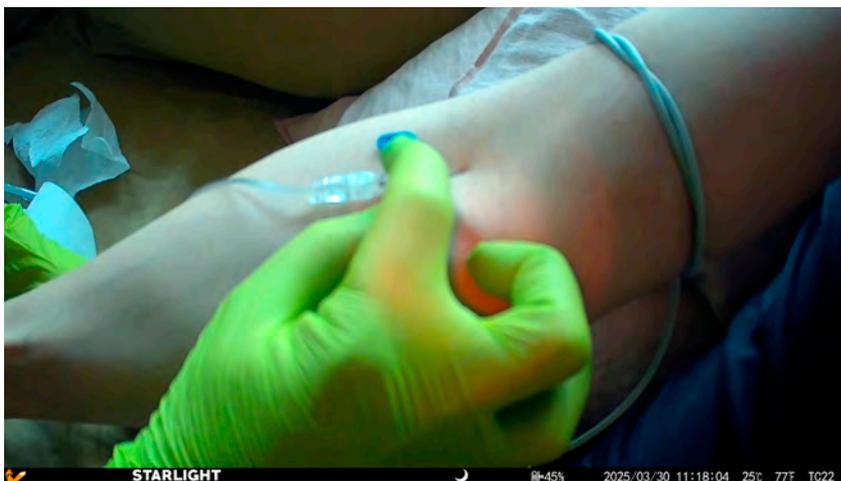


Martin Sjöberg, *Untitled*, 2025. Installation, mixed media, 64 × 56 cm (photo in the wooden frame)





Images courtesy of the artist



Marius Poika Valtanen, *All Dams Are Temporary*, 2025. Video, trail camera, 10:47 min





Images courtesy of the artist

Albert Willim, *Greens-series installation*, 2025. Silver gelatin prints in artist frame, golf pegs





PhD Candidates

Sven Augustijnen
Yael Bartana
Jürgen Bock
Bouchra Khalili
Jacob Korczynski
Emily Wardill



Image courtesy of the artist

Sven Augustijnen, *Fierté Nationale: De Jéricho vers Gaza*, 2024. Film still

Fierté Nationale : De Jéricho vers Gaza Sven Augustijnen

What started as an inquiry into the Belgian arms used in different revolutionary movements, eventually turned into a portrait of what has become of the Revolutionary impulse itself. In the first part, focused on the Palestinian liberation struggle, we follow the protagonist, Hassan Al Balawi, a Palestinian diplomat in Brussels, as he returns to his homeland on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the death of Yasser Arafat, the historical leader of the PLO. Filmed in 2019, Balawi's journey from Jericho to Gaza draws a subjective image of the situation that led to the tragic events that began on October 7 2023.

This research was drafted while finishing *Fierté Nationale : De Jéricho vers Gaza* early Spring 2024. It was written alongside the fact that the film ends in Sderot, one of the towns that were attacked by Hamas on October 7, a place that is as deserted today as it was on that November day in 2019 when Hassan Al Balawi was trying to find the border with Gaza while rain was flooding the place.

If the film title refers to the weapons of the Fabrique Nationale d'Armes de Guerre Herstal, used both by state armies and revolutionary movements, and as such to Belgium's pride, this initial idea was flooded by the "situation" of the more than fifty years of Israeli military occupation of the Westbank and Gaza, giving space to the underlying question of armed struggle and national pride as such: Where did the armed struggle of the past bring the revolution today? What constitutes national pride and what are the mechanisms that drive it? And how this is embodied by the main character of the film, Hassan Al Balawi and the characters he encounters.

Furthermore, how are historical processes formed by the psychological mechanisms of the people that constitute these very same processes, and vice versa? What are the underlying motives, drifts and structures behind those movements of history? And how do movements or forms of documentary cinema relate to them?

BIO Sven Augustijnen (b. 1970) lives and works in Brussels. His films, publications, and installations on political, historical, and social themes constantly challenge the genre of the documentary, reflecting a wider interest in historiography and a predilection for the nature of storytelling: "Historiography is by no means a natural phenomenon. The way we use stories, images and fiction to construct reality and history fascinates me." Sven Augustijnen is represented by Jan Mot, Brussels, and is a founding member of Auguste Orts, Brussels.

Generation Ship: Light to the Nations
German Pavilion, 60th Venice Biennale
Yael Bartana

The exhibition *Light to the Nations*, at the German pavilion, unfolds the narrative of a generation ship by the same name, designed to carry humanity toward new galaxies in response to Earth's impending crises. Named after a passage in the Book of Isaiah calling the Jewish people for leadership, the generation ship serves humanity in the face of man-made environmental and political destruction. This vessel is designed to host a large community for millennia and travel eon years, far beyond our solar system. A pre-enactment of possibilities, *Light to the Nations* will carry humans toward new galaxies and planets. The project is influenced by a post-apocalyptic subgenre in science fiction literature called "generation ship" and Jewish mysticism—the Kabbalah.

The concept of the generation ship, a hypothetical spacecraft designed for long-duration journeys that spanning multiple generations, was popularized by science fiction writers, many of whom were also scientists. It is challenging to credit the invention to any single individual. Early contributors, such as John Desmond Bernal in his 1929 essay "The World, the Flesh & the Devil," discussed space habitats and the potential for human colonization of space, laying the groundwork for discussions on generation ships. Similarly, Robert H. Goddard, known as the father of modern rocketry, wrote about long-term space travel, contributing foundational ideas to space colonization concepts. Olaf Stapledon's 1937 novel "Star Maker" portrayed interstellar travel using generation ships. The detailed and popularized vision of generation ships in modern science fiction owes much to writers like Robert A. Heinlein, who explored the social and psychological aspects of living aboard a generation ship in his 1941 novella "Universe." Arthur C. Clarke also frequently addressed themes of interstellar travel and the logistics of multi-generational voyages, with works such as "2001: A Space Odyssey" (1968) exploring future technologies and the expansive future of humanity.

Light to the Nations operates within the framework of Jewish mysticism, the Kabbalah. It superimposes the Sefirot diagram, the main image of Kabbalah, onto the structure of the spaceship. The ten Sefirot transform into the ship's spheres, each designed for different functions, including ship headquarters, space research, engineering, medical center, learning centers, agriculture, heritage, public sphere, living quarters, and recycling. The Sefirot contain all facets of God, and symbolizing the idea of God as *Ein Sof*—an eternity that equals the infinite expanse of outer space through which the generation travels. Overlaying imagined technologies with mystical doctrine, the project utilizes the ship as a vehicle of redemption, analogous to the *Merkava*, the Kabbalistic carriage that brings the mystic close to the throne of God. The spaceship's journey toward a utopian ideal aligns with the core messianic promise of a better future and another Kabbalistic concept: *Tikkun Olam*, the mending of the world. Without humans present to destroy it, Earth can recover, and without the restrictions of the land, new forms of societies can be designed on the ship.

According to Gershom Scholem, Kabbalah is a mystical and esoteric interpretation of the Jewish faith, that has evolved over centuries. It combines theology, metaphysics, and a symbolic understanding of the cosmos. Scholem argued that Kabbalah should not be seen as a singular, coherent system but rather a diverse tradition with various schools of thought and practices. The Kabbalah symbolism refers to the spiritual experience of the mystics intertwined with the historical experience of the Jewish people. For centuries the Kabbalah had been vital to the Jewish communities' understanding of themselves.

The ultimate goal of the generation ship is deliberately undefined: whether to inhabit a distant planet, return to and populate Earth once it recovers, or travel endlessly, ever-evolving, aboard this spaceship. As the project evolved, the futuristic science-fiction

framework seemed well-suited for observing and contemplating the future of humanity, its current problems, and the promise or threat of technological progress. Is a generation ship feasible? Where should or could it travel? How should the ship's community function and organize itself? Who will be its members? And what about those left behind – people, places, and things? These questions were vital in shaping the project and they stimulated the imagination.

The project has been evolving over several years. Its initial phase was first showcased at an exhibition hosted by the Center for Digital Art in Holon, setting a foundational stage for its development. For the 60th Venice Biennale, curator Cagla Ilk, overseeing the German pavilion, invited six artists to participate in the exhibition titled 'Threshold,' representing Germany. Among the participating artists, I was invited to showcase *Light to the Nations* alongside Eran Mondtag's *Monument of an Unknown Man* at the German pavilion.

The german pavilion

The Bavarian pavilion opened for the Eighth Biennale in 1909. Designed by Venetian architect Daniele Donghi, it was a symmetrical, neo-Renaissance building featuring a portico with Ionic columns and a central pediment, leading into a tall exhibition hall flanked by three side rooms on each side. A few years later, the building was repurposed as the exhibition pavilion of the German Empire. The existing exposed-brick side buildings were coated with bright plaster to unify them with the main structure, and a classical figurative frieze with an ornamental band was added to the pediment and the entire volume of the building. This pavilion served both the Weimar Republic when it resumed exhibition activities for the Thirteenth Biennale in 1922 and the Nazi regime in 1934 and 1936.

The building was demolished and rebuilt in 1938 according to Ernst Haiger's design. Haiger expanded the pavilion by adding three rooms in the back, with the central one forming a kind of an apse that extends the main hall and increased the height of the building as a whole, so that all the rooms received light from above. He replaced the historical portico with an enormous central pillared hall with an inscription on its architrave dedicated to



Arno Brker, *Bereitschaft*, German Pavillon, 1940



Hans Haacke, *Germania*, 1993, installation views at the German Pavilion, 45th Venice Biennale.
© Hans Haacke/VG

“Germania.” The architecture of the colonnade recalls the corner pillars of the Haus der Deutschen Kunst in Munich by Paul Ludwig Troost. The row of square pillars is particularly reminiscent of the Ehrentempel (Honor Temples) honoring the “blood martyrs of the movement” on Königsplatz in Munich, which were blown up in 1947. This design expressed Hitler’s deployment of art as a means of self-representation for the Third Reich and as a vehicle for political promotion. The pavilion was not demolished after the Second World War. The only minor adjustments of the exterior were the removal of the German Reich eagle and the swastika. After WWII, the pavilion was used to represent West Germany and was used as a tool to demonstrate its national values. However, it was criticized by figures such as German art critic Walter Grasskamp, who argued that it aimed to represent a part of Germany that resisted Nazism while failing to exhibit works by exiled Jewish artists.

Due to its distinct political history, the location has frequently become the center of its own controversy. The debate, often marked by varying levels of antagonism, revolves around whether this once Fascist pavilion is appropriate for representing Germany today, or if it would be better to simply demolish it.

While planning Light to the Nations installation for the pavilion, I considered its heavily charged political complexities. I was mostly considering two of the pavilion’s historical exhibitions as a point of reference. The first is Arno Brekerr’s *Bereitschaft* at the 1940 Venice Biennale and the second is Hans Haacke’s *Germania* at the 1993 Venice Biennale. These works significantly influenced my dialogue with the history of the building.

The larger-than-life bronze sculpture (approx. 3.89 m. on a 1.5m stone pedestal) “Bereitschaft” (readiness) created in 1938 was intended to decorate the Nuremberg Nazi Party Rally Grounds. Depicting a male nude warrior with excellently modelled muscles placed on plinth in the form of a rock.

Hans Haacke subverted the whole building. He scattered the marble floor and inscribed “Germania” on the curved wall of the main space. “Germania” was once adorning the frieze above the main portico, indicating the pavilion’s national affiliation. For Hitler, Germania would be the new name for Berlin if they would have won the war.



The German Pavilion in Venice, 1909



The German Pavilion in Venice, 1938

Haacke placed one large Deutschmark coin at the place where once the eagle with the swastika was shown.

The installation at the German pavilion, particularly in its apse, echo the narrative of the generation ship as it departs from Earth. The presentation aims to explore the potential of art as a device for redemption, engaging with the pavilion histories and collective memories. I included imagery reminiscent of Nazi propaganda to reveal with the collective unconscious, a recurring theme in my work.

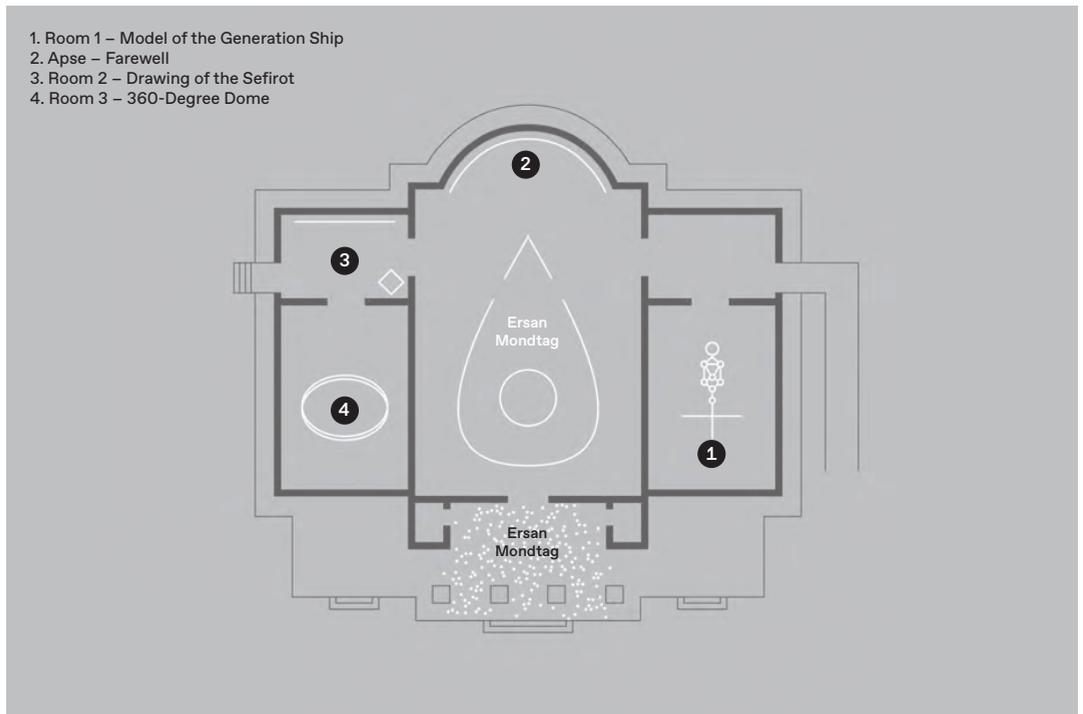
Layout

The narrative of *Light to the Nations* unfolds in the pavilion through a melodramatic immersive installation comprising sculpture, sound, light, films, a video-interview, a drawing, and immersive video installations. The show includes a model of a kabbalistic spaceship (represents a 1:5,000 scale of a 32 km generation ship), a 16 min film titled "Farewell", an interview with Doreet LeVitte-Harten, a drawing of the ten Sefirot diagram based on a 15th century manuscript, and a 360-degree immersive video projected onto a dome. The layout at the pavilion forms a choreographed experience, with each space representing a chapter in the journey.

The windows of the central room are kept open, allowing beams of light to enter the space during midday while the windows in rooms 1 and 2 are sealed (see floor plan below). The floor is covered with a dark carpet and the walls are painted dark gray, to achieve optimal control of the space.



Ersan Mondtag, *Monument eines unbekanntes Menschen*, 2024



1. Room 1 – Model of the Generation Ship
2. Apse – Farewell
3. Room 2 – Drawing of the Sefirot
4. Room 3 – 360-Degree Dome

Room 1

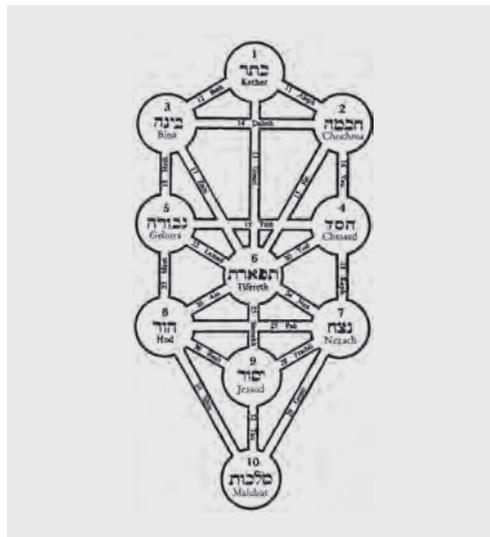
Upon entering the pavilion visitors encounter on the left side a large model of the spaceship, suspended from the ceiling. This model, hanging 2.30 meters above the ground, represents a 1:5,000 scale of a 32km generation ship. The spaceship, measuring 7 meters in length, is constructed from ten spherical segments and a large turning circle at the rear, with 40 rotating spikes, adding a dynamic element to the display. The spaceship is illuminated by two sources of light that project beams in a spectrum of colors—blue, yellow, green, red, orange, and white.

Light is a pervasive symbol in Kabbalistic literature, representing divine emanation and spiritual enlightenment. The process of creation is often described as a series of emanations of divine light, progressively diminishing as it moves further from its source, illustrating the descent from pure spirituality to material existence.

The religious nature of the building enhanced my motivation to treat the spaces accordingly. The first room with all its special effects turned into a chapel, a spiritual space for the vehicle of redemption and utopia. As such, the atmosphere of chapels can evoke strong emotional responses, making them effective settings for artworks intended to move and connect with audiences on a personal level.

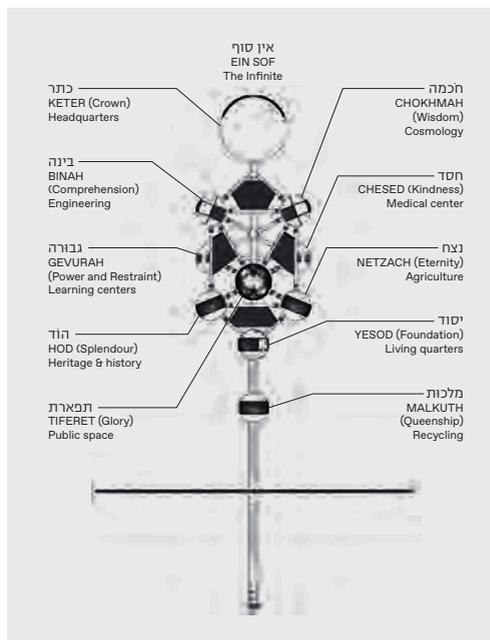
The experience of the room further intensifies by a dark, heavy, and loud soundtrack that blends traditional Jewish songs with industrial rhymes, played through four speakers and one subwoofer. This auditory component complements the visual elements, forming a multi-sensorial experience for the visitors.

The structure of the Generation Ship is inspired by the Kabbalah diagram of the Ten Sefirot. The ten Sefirot transform into the ship's spheres, each designed as clusters for various functions, including ship headquarters, space research, engineering, medical center, learning centers, agriculture, heritage, public sphere, living quarters, and recycling. The Sephirot contain all facets of God, symbolizing the idea of God as Ein Sof—an eternity that equals the endless outer space of the generation ship's journey. The generation ship becomes the Merkava, the Kabbalistic carriage that brings the mystic close to the throne of God.



The Ten Sefirot of the Kabbalah:

1. Keter (Crown): The divine will or purpose.
2. Chokhmah (Wisdom): The intuitive, pre-conceptual insight.
3. Binah (Understanding): Analytical and conceptual thinking.
4. Chesed (Kindness): Loving-kindness and mercy.
5. Gevurah (Severity): Judgment and power.
6. Tiferet (Beauty): Harmony and compassion.
7. Netzach (Eternity): Endurance and victory.
8. Hod (Glory): Splendor and submission.
9. Yesod (Foundation): Connection and transmission.
10. Malkhut (Kingdom): Manifestation and presence in the world.



The Ten Spheres of the Generation Ship *Light to the Nations*. Spaceship length: 32 km



Room 1—*Light to the Nations*—Generation Ship, 2024. 3D model, 410 × 410 × 700 cm

Apse

Apse In the Apse, the film *Farewell* is projected on a 7.5 meter × 5 meters curved LED wall, that complements the architecture of the building. *Farewell* combines video footage with 3D animation. The Apse of the building is essential for bridging the two parts of the work – the model of the spaceship and the depiction of life aboard the spaceship. The use of the apse—a space traditionally associated with spiritual and ceremonial significance—reinforce the theme of salvation and redemption.

Farewell portrays a ceremony preceding the departure of the generation ship. As the journey transcending the boundaries of time and space is about to begin, the ceremony is designed to observe this separation from Earth. The dancers, with their ethereal movements, evoke a sense of longing and anticipation as they navigate the liminal space between our world and the unknown. Dressed as sylphs, they allude to the spirit of Romanticism and its explorations of human transformation and the supernatural. The choreography draws from the Labanotation, a system developed by choreographer Rudolf von Laban in the early twentieth century. The ceremony alludes to a moment of “birth”, the birth of the generation ship, marking a new beginning.

The lens transports viewers beyond the confines of Earth to space, where the generation ship, *Light to the Nations*, floats in the cosmic void. The epic ship emerges as a messianic vessel, symbolizing a promise of redemption. The dancers mirror the kinetic movement of the ship as well as the human endeavor behind it. Towards the ceremony’s climax, the dancers don animal masks—a horse, a donkey, and a ram—evoking apocalyptic imagery and connecting to the Judeo-Christian messianic narrative. *Farewell*’s pre-enactment of an ecstatic dance becomes a visceral exploration of looming catastrophe and hope. The forest setting reflects *Light to the Nations*’ imperative to grant nature a chance for rejuvenation. *Farewell* envisions a departure toward realities yet unknown to humankind.



Apse—*Farewell*, 2024. One channel video and sound, 15:20 min

Watch the film: vimeo.com/938574456
Password: Adio2024



Apse—*Farewell*, 2024. One channel video and sound, 15:20 min
Watch the film: vimeo.com/938574456, Password: Adio2024

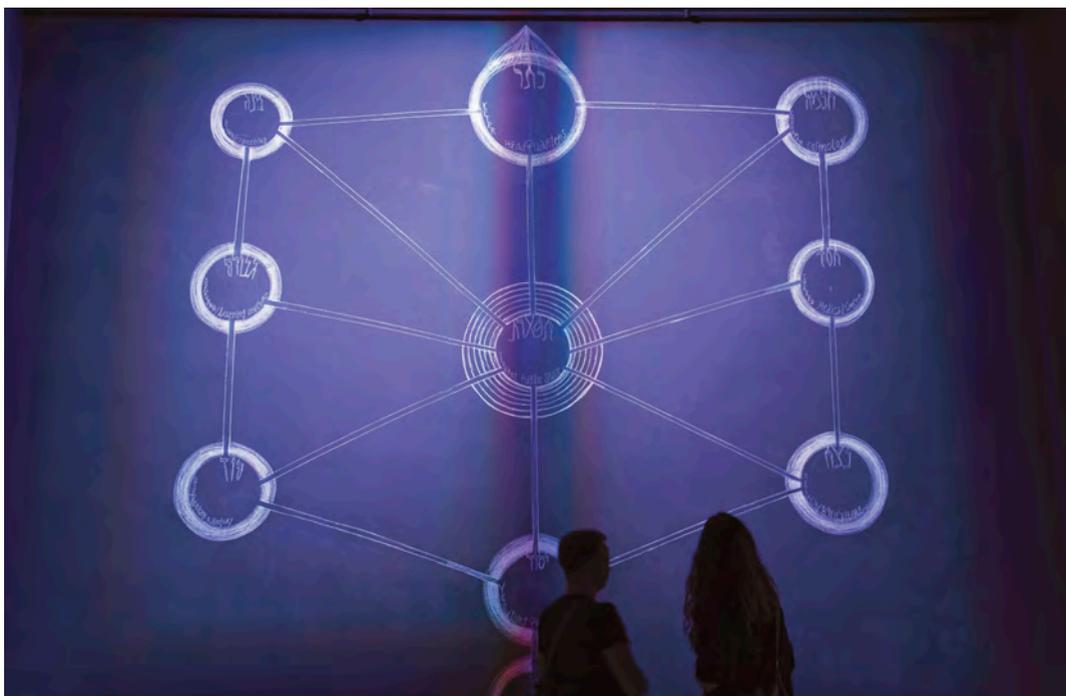
Room 2

The room features two main components: a large-scale drawing and a video interview. The drawing, applied directly on the wall, spans approximately 5 × 4 meters. It is based on a 15th-century drawing of the Kabbalah's Sefirot manuscript.

Adjacent to the diagram, there is an 11-minute interview with Doreet LeVitte Harten, who talks about the project and its conceptual frameworks. In the interview, she contextualizes the connection between Kabbalah, science fiction, and the concept of generation ship. Harten discusses the implications of creating 'places' that are fundamentally 'nowhere,' drawing parallels with Zionist concepts of land and identity. The video not only provides depth to the artwork but also turns the interview into a piece of art itself, a recurring theme in my work, in which the advising experts for a project become part of it.



Room 2—Doreet LeVitte Harten, *Interview*, 2024.
One channel video and sound, 11:30 min
Watch the film: vimeo.com/937569850/d4f0e3b7a2



Room 2—*The Ten Sefirot*, 2024. Site-specific wall drawing, variable dimensions

Room 3

On the left wing of the pavilion, an immersive installation of sound and 3D rendering films is projected onto a 360-degree dome. The audience is invited to recline on large sofas and watch life inside the futuristic spaceship. The projection on the dome continuously rotates, showcasing the reality of the five Sefirot-based spheres of the spaceship: Bridge, Heritage, Agriculture, Public Space, and Recycling.

In the previous phase of *Light to the Nations* at the Center for Digital Art in Holon, life inside the generation ship was visualized through VR glasses, forming an isolated individual experience of life on the ship, and partake in the journey to outer space. For the pavilion, I wanted to shift from the isolated experience to an immersive collective one in which different visitors gaze together onto the futuristic life. The films visualizing the five spheres were designed using a video gaming software. The dome is meant to provoke an initial emotional response of amazement and curiosity, what is often described in the discourse of science fiction as a “sense of wonder”. “sense of wonder” is a concept considered one of the primary attributes of the genre since the pulp era. It refers to a profound emotional response that readers or viewers experience when they encounter imaginative and visionary concepts that expand their understanding of the universe and human potential. It is a feeling of awe, amazement, and intellectual curiosity sparked by the exploration of ideas that challenge our perceptions and envision possibilities beyond our current reality.

The installation takes the shape of a dome not only to correspond with the form of the sefirot but also due to the dome’s symbolic value in architectural history. Domes are often associated with sacred spaces of worship.

Watch the films:

Bridge: vimeo.com/manage/videos/949110487

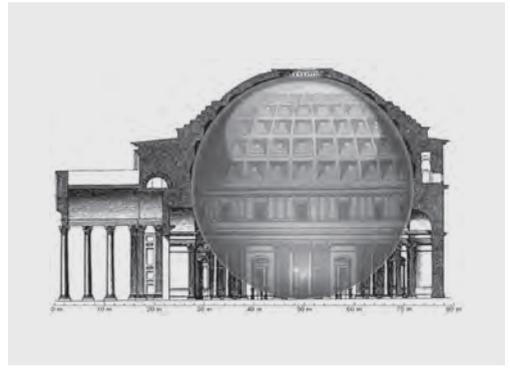
Heritage: vimeo.com/manage/videos/949119643

Public Space: vimeo.com/manage/videos/949117430

Agriculture: vimeo.com/manage/videos/949096966

Recycling: vimeo.com/manage/videos/949125368

Ships’ exterior: vimeo.com/manage/videos/949130047



Pantheon, Rome, 27th BC



Room 3—Apsē Life in the Generation Ship, 2024. 3D rendering for dome projection, 21 min

Reflection

As in my previous projects, this project tackles questions of homeland, belonging and the construct of national myths. It explores Zionism as a modern messianic movement whose hope was to secure a safe place for the Jewish people. Light to the Nations is rooted in in the fear of an apocalyptic end of the world, responding

specifically to Netanyahu's catastrophic messianic rightwing government and its continuous failure to bring a peaceful solution to the region.

The project thus presents a new futuristic opportunity for Jews and all of humanity. Yet, unlike traditional science fiction, where concepts are organized in well-defined

plots, *Light to the Nations* uses fragmented concepts to invite audience to participate in an unknown journey that has just begun. The title *Light to the Nation* named after a passage in the Book of Isaiah: "I will appoint you to be a covenant for the people and a light to the nations [*Or Lagoyim*]" is ironic and ambiguous, potentially alluding to Jewish supremacy but also resonating with the dark historical context of the German pavilion—the final solution.

The ship's design, based on the Kabbalistic diagram of the ten Sefirot, established the concept of *Tikkun Olam*—the repair of the world—as the founding principle of the ship's community. The ship's structure emphasizes the importance of establishing new relationships among its inhabitants for creating a new, rectified world beyond Earth. This is an invitation to think about *Tikkun Olam*, in two complementary ways: one addressing social-human aspects and the other referring to the physical world, namely Earth itself, which may recover in our absence. Therefore, the ship must sustain a full and dynamic human existence, allowing its inhabitants to evolve, change, grow, develop technologies, and create culture.

The spheres, designed to sustain life for generations to come, provide opportunities for creating a community, rituals and renewable cultures. They explore the link between the material culture left behind

and the new, evolving world, prompting the pressing question of what we want future generations to remember, and how are they to connect, if at all, to their earthly past. This is echoed in the virtual reality experience, where images of monuments and libraries preserve the memory and foundational values of the community. These artifacts may represent the relics of lost cultures, acting as archaeological evidence of a society that is nearly forgotten, or simply serve as a warning about the dangers of repeating history.

The immersive installation of *Light to the Nations* delves into the concept of history and its relation to the present. It continues my exploration of pre-enactment in which history is seen as a series of ruptures rather than a continuous progression. The choreographed exhibition is a journey through time and space, between reality and its reproduction through 3D images. In the words of Gertrud Sandqvist while watching the 3d animation of life in the generation ship: "*This is reality.*"

Light to the Nations proposes a redemptive idea for repairing the world and uses political imagination as a platform for future possibilities between redemption and utopia. The generation ship creates an archeology of the future and a means to explore both the past and present, what I understand as pre-enactment.

BIO Yael Bartana, an artist born in Israel, is an observer of the contemporary and a pre-enactor. She employs art as a scalpel inside the mechanisms of power structures and navigates the fine and fissured line between the sociological and the imagination. Over the past twenty years, Bartana has dealt with some of the dark dreams of the collective unconscious and reactivated the collective imagination, dissecting group identities and (an-)aesthetic means of persuasion. In her films, installations, photographs, staged performances, and public monuments, Bartana investigates subjects like national identity, trauma, and displacement, often through ceremonies, memorials, public rituals, and collective gatherings. Her work has been exhibited around the world and is represented in the collections of many museums, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate Modern, London; and Centre Pompidou, Paris. She currently lives and works in Berlin and Amsterdam.

Selected solo exhibitions: *Two Minutes to Midnight*, Cecilia Hillstrom Gallery, Stockholm, 2022; *Malka Germania*, Claire Trevor School of the Arts, University of California, Irvine, 2022; *Redemption Now*, Jewish Museum Berlin, 2021; *Cast Off*, Fondazione Modena Arti Visive, 2019–20; *And Europe Will Be Stunned*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2018; *If you will it, it is not a dream* Secession, Vienna, 2012; Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 2012; Moderna Museet, Malmö, 2010; and MoMA PS1, New York, 2008. Selected group exhibitions: *Witch Hunt*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2021; São Paulo Art Biennial, 2014, 2010, 2006; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 2015; Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, 2012; documenta 12, Kassel, Germany, 2007; Istanbul Biennial, 2005; and Manifesta 4, Frankfurt, 2002. Bartana won the Artes Mundi 4 Prize in 2010 and her trilogy ... *And Europe Will Be Stunned* (2007–11) was ranked as the ninth most important art work of the twenty-first century by the *Guardian* newspaper in 2019.



Images courtesy of Fred Dott

Maumaus as Object, part of *The Educational Web*, Installation view, Kunstverein in Hamburg, 2023

Maumaus—An (Auto)Biography of an Organisation Jürgen Bock

Through the lens of the history of Maumaus, an art institution in Lisbon dedicated to education, curation, and production, my aim is to come to a greater understanding of how art and arts education—with their inherent critiques—have shifted over the last thirty years. My research aims to explore to what extent the history of Maumaus can be considered to mirror developments in the wider art world from the 1990s onwards. The project considers whether Maumaus has been able

to provide an alternative to an increasingly accelerated world of “cultural industries” or if it may paradoxically be understood as an institution that has enabled the system it opposes. I consider the specific socio-economic and political circumstances under which Maumaus has been able to develop, and what such circumstances—encountered and recognised or consciously created—have in turn both enabled and disabled the project.



Images courtesy of Manthia Diawara and Maumaus

Manthia Diawara, *AI: African Intelligence*, 2022. Film still



Manthia Diawara, *Angela Davis: A World of Greater Freedom*, 2023. Film still

BIO Jürgen Bock obtained an MFA from the Cologne University of Applied Sciences and works as a curator, writer, and producer. Exhibitions he has curated include a series at the CCB Project Room, Centro Cultural de Belém, Lisbon (2000–01), comprising projects with artists such as Eleanor Antin, Nathan Coley, Harun Farocki, and Renée Green; Andreas Siekmann, Triennale-India, New Delhi, 2005; Ângela Ferreira, *Maison Tropicale*, Portuguese Pavilion, 52nd Venice Biennale, 2007; Heimo Zobernig, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, 2012; Allan Sekula, *The Dockers' Museum*, La Criée, Rennes, 2012, and Johann Jacobs Museum, Zurich, 2014; *Parting with the Bonus of Youth—Maumaus as Object* (with Simon Thompson), Galeria Avenida da Índia, Lisbon Municipal Galleries, 2019; and *Maumaus as Object* (with Simon Thompson) as part of *The Educational Web* exhibition, Kunstverein in Hamburg, 2023.

Over the last three decades, Bock has established and grown the Maumaus School of Visual Arts in Lisbon from a local photography school to an internationally recognised independent study programme, where participants are encouraged to analyse and develop their art practice in a stimulating and intellectually rigorous, yet informal, environment, in which they encounter a number of international lecturers including artists, filmmakers, art historians, philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, and cultural and political scientists.

Since 2009, Bock has curated and programmed more than fifty exhibitions at Lumiar Cité, the exhibition space affiliated with Maumaus, including work by artists and filmmakers such as Gabriel Abrantes, Maria Thereza Alves, Judith Barry, Cosima von Bonin, Alejandro Cesarco, Tiffany Chung, Loretta Fahrenholz, Harun Farocki, Ângela Ferreira, Peter Friedl, Renée Green, David Hammons, Judith Hopf, Ana Jotta, Dozie Kanu, Aglaia Konrad, Lone Haugaard Madsen, Jawad Al Malhi, Willem Oorebeek, Christodoulos Panayiotou, and Fredrik Værsløv.

In addition, Bock has written numerous essays, published a range of catalogues, and edited several books, including *From Work to Text: Dialogues on Practise and Criticism in Contemporary Art* (2002) and *Parting with the Bonus of Youth—Maumaus as Object* (co-edited with Simon Thompson, 2021). He produced Renée Green's artist's book *Negotiations in the Contact Zone* (2003) as well as Portuguese versions of Allan Sekula's books *TITANIC's wake* (2003) and *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum* (2015). Bock has been responsible for the organisation and coordination of numerous international conferences and has produced several documentary films, such as *Angela Davis: A World of Greater Freedom* (2023) and *AI: African Intelligence* (2022), both directed by Manthia Diawara. Bock has been a PhD candidate at Malmö Art Academy and Lund University since 2019.



Images courtesy of the artist

Bouchra Khalili, *The Public Storyteller*, 2024. 16 mm film transferred to video. Dual synchronised channel on 4 × 3 m LED panels. Video stills



Bouchra Khalili, *The Circle Project*, 2023. Mixed media installation: dual synchronised channels, wooden structures, five 16 mm films on monitor, mural poster. View at “Between Circles and Constellations”, solo exhibition, Museum of Contemporary Art, Barcelona. February–May 2023

Performing Invisibility:
A Method for Making a Community (to come)
Bouchra Khalili

This research departs from the multi-screen installations *The Circle* (2023) and *The Public Storyteller* (2024), the concluding works of a series of projects I began in 2017 with *The Tempest Society* (video installation), followed by *The Tempest Society: A Publication* (artist book, Book Works) in 2019 and *An Audio Family Album* (sound project, eight channels) in 2020.

These works are the results of research conducted between 2012 and 2023 on the theatrical experiments of members of the Arab Workers' Movement (Mouvement des Travailleurs Arabes, MTA), who founded the theatre groups Al Assifa and Al Halaka. Active between 1973 and 1978 in Paris and Marseille, the theatre groups were made up of Maghrebi factory workers and experimented with performance as a form of anti-racist activism and a part of the struggle for equal rights at work and in housing, as well as a means to build solidarity networks. Their theatrical experiments culminated in the candidacy of "Djellali Kamal," an undocumented and anonymous member of Al Assifa who, during his hunger strike

for the right to legal status, ran in the French presidential election of 1974, presenting himself as the candidate of those "who cannot vote."

The Circle revisits the genealogy of the MTA and its theatre groups, crystallising in the candidacy of Djellali Kamal. Throughout the work, the question of how to make oneself visible recurs like a litany. For members of the MTA and its theatre groups, performances, demonstrations, and hunger strikes were all methods and practices used to make oneself visible, individually and collectively.

In *The Public Storyteller*, Djellali Kamal's candidacy is transformed into a tale, reactivating the ancient Moroccan tradition of public storytelling that inspired and informed Al Assifa and Al Halaka's theatrical strategies.

However, in both *The Circle* and *The Public Storyteller*, Djellali Kamal is constantly present yet remains invisible and anonymous.

With this research, I want to investigate how moving images can provide techniques of invisibility and, by doing so, provide a method for making a community come into being, even one that was already there.

BIO Bouchra Khalili is a Moroccan French artist. She graduated in Film and Media Studies at Sorbonne Nouvelle and Visual Arts at the École Nationale Supérieure d'Arts de Paris-Cergy. She works with film, video, installation, photography, printmaking, and editorial platforms. Khalili's work has been subject to many international solo exhibitions including recently at Sharjah Art Foundation (2024); Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2024); Museum of Contemporary Art, Barcelona (2023); LUMA Foundation (2023, Arles); Bildmuseet Umea (2021); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2019); Museum Folkwang, Essen (2018); Jeu de Paume, Paris (2018); Secession, Vienna (2018); Wexner Center for the Arts (2017); Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York (2016); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2015); and Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), Miami (2014–13); among others.

Her work has also been included in collective exhibitions and biennials, such as Venice Biennale, (2024, 2013); Sharjah Biennial 15 (2023); documenta 14 and Milano Triennale (2017); *Telling Tales*, MCA, Sydney (2016); *Europe: The Future of History*, Kunsthau, Zurich (2015); *Positions*, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (2014); *Here and Elsewhere*, New Museum, New York (2014); and *Intense Proximity*, La Triennale, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2012); among others.

An award-winning artist, she received the Sharjah Biennial Grand Prize in 2023. In 2019, she received the Columbia Institute for Ideas and Imagination Fellowship. She was also the recipient of Harvard's Radcliffe Institute Fellowship (2017–18), the Ibsen Award (2017), Abraaj Art Prize, (2014), Sam Art Prize (2013), and DAAD Artists-in-Berlin scholarship (2012), among others.



Images courtesy of 421, Abu Dhabi. Photo: Ismail Noor.

Mahshid Rafiei, *trace*, 2023 (left); and *Minor Witnesses*, 2023. Commissioned by 421, Abu Dhabi. Installation view: *Of Mythic Proportions*, 421, Abu Dhabi, 2023

Circulate/Circlerate:
Distribution as Curatorial Practice
Jacob Korczynski

The question of how to facilitate access and establish context for artists' projects begins with the foundation of my own curatorial practice in the Indigenous territories claimed as Canada. Here, organisational models initiated by artists to distribute media predisposed to sharing, informs an ongoing history that also connects to parallel practices across an international network of peers. My current doctoral research includes these foundational frameworks, but at the same time it acknowledges the limits of these systems that focus upon standardised, medium-specific formats. Connecting to a developing field of contemporary discourse that asks how artists' critical practices can be extended to the infrastructure that enable

them, this set of theoretical threads is met by the material encounter embodied in each artwork. These are further accompanied by extensive writings that artists have authored to identify their intentions and the aesthetic, economic, and political challenges that distribution poses.

In contemporary art, the terms "dissemination" and "distribution" are often used interchangeably. My doctoral research proposes that these are different processes that need to be distinguished. "Dissemination" refers to a linear and ever widening movement of access, as an artwork shifts from its initial production to its exhibition and collection. In contrast, "distribution" is a cyclical system of access—contiguous rather than continuous.

BIO Jacob Korczynski is a curator based on the lands of Treaty 13 known as Toronto whose projects take the form of exhibitions, screenings, and publications. He has curated exhibitions for Participant Inc, New York; Mercer Union, Toronto; Unit 17, Vancouver; and the Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, and has edited the publications *I See/La Camera: I (If I Can't Dance I Don't Want to Be Part of Your Revolution)*, 2014), Andrew James Paterson's *Collection/Correction* (Kunstverein Toronto/Mousse Publishing, 2016), Nour Bishouty's *1—130: Selected Works Ghassan Bishouty b. 1941 Safad, Palestine—d. 2004 Amman, Jordan* (Art Metropole / Motto Books, 2020) and *distinguish the limit from the edge: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha & Jimmy Robert* (Book Works in association with Participant Inc, 2025).

A former participant in the de Appel Curatorial Programme, his writing has been published by Afterall, BOMB, Camera Austria, and e-flux Criticism. The recent recipient of a Curatorial Research Fellowship from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, he is also the inaugural recipient of the General Idea Fellowship from The National Gallery of Canada.

The Imagined Image and Misremembered Bones
Emily Wardill

The Imagined Image and Misremembered Bones: A study into the status of an image that is reliant on a form that is absent. What can a study of “imagined images” observed in different fields tell us about imagery itself, about the proximity of image and imagination, the relationship between thought and the plastic, and the plasticity of thought?

Given the nature of images—which we can trace back to the etymology of the word as having its roots in the idea of an apparition—the status of an image that is imaginary is one step back from the image itself. The image or apparition carries with it the insinuation of a falsity or a being that is no longer alive. The apparition implies seeing something that is no longer there, the losing of one’s mind, or a hallucination. The apparition allows for breaking out of other people’s fantasies or constructions of reality when utopias are made. That all of this is in the etymology of the word *image* might help us understand why images are mysterious and persistent.

I would like to compare the status of the image as a sign that obscures or outlasts that which it represents (the image as record) with the imaginary image persisting as part of a mental process. I will question the relationship between recorded image and the material world, which is ever subject to change, thinking through the “image as record” as an

antonym to the imagined image and as that which is not in process but is rather fixed. For instance, is it possible to compare the impression of wholeness that the image gives us of the outside of the body with the representation of consciousness in the film-editing process wherein the fragmentary nature of consciousness is both represented and augmented? Is the film sequence an imaginary that enters into the flow of time by leaping from place to place within the conjectural linearity of film time? What is this attempt to appear “lifelike” as it presents itself within the images that we produce and retain within moving-image technologies? If imagined images are always in process and memories are also procedural, is there a relationship between imagined images and memory?

Given the abstract nature of these questions, I will tether the research to a form that is familiar and yet largely unknown, the human body, and begin from an imagined human body as it appears in the writing of the photographer Luigi Ghirri. Musing on photography, Ghirri cites a moment in J.G. Ballard’s “The Drowned Giant” when an imaginary giant washes up on the shores of the Atlantic to be first beached, then explored by curious tourists, then dismembered and its parts woven into the everyday fabric of village life. Like the townspeople who eventual-

ly come to misremember the giant as a whale, Ghirri also misremembers Ballard's giant human as an "enormous and unknown" animal. I would like to use these misremembered and imaginary bones as a beginning from which to examine how the body itself becomes an imaginary material. In this discussion, I will draw on the work of Hannah Arendt in *The Life of the Mind*, where she writes about our imagination as it relates to interior bodily organs and the world of appearances.

The etymology of the word *image* contains the idea of the copy. Imagined images can set up spaces to be repeated or aspired to, similar to the example, the case study, or the spectacle. Arguably, when an image is described rather than produced, it can be an attempt to provoke such imitation without recourse to specifics; that is to say, this psychological case study of a certain behaviour may be generic, and we can find patterns here that will help us to understand future human behaviours. The image is always vulnerable to copying: forgery, replication, or appropriation. The imagined image—although it sometimes aspires to the universality of the image (available to be imitated in different places and times)—sidesteps this fixity but can also create fixed categories. I would like to look into this idea of categories as they relate to the imaginary image through both Israel Rosenfield's work on colour as an invention of the brain and Denise Ferreira da Silva's *Toward a Global Idea of Race*. How do the imaginaries of colour and category interact? What can this particular interaction between image and imaginary tell us about categorisation and the copy?

Continuing with the idea of the human body as an imaginary material, I will investigate the key psychiatric case studies included in Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and Nigel Gibson and Roberto Beneduce's book *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics*. I would like to explore what happens to a human body when it becomes psychiatrically symbolic. What is this particular relationship between the imagination and the political when the political is tethered to both the psychiatric encounter and the body? How does it mix up the simple distinction between the individual/psychological and the social/political problem of the case study as the subject of political change? Studies into mental health are often used to probe the fragile construction that delineates our idea of what is sane, and the conjectural nature of our logics. I will be taking three pieces of my own artistic work as coordinates from which to expand into and reflect on the thesis: *Ben* (2006), *Night for Day* (2020), and *Identical* (2023). *Ben*, which stems from psychiatric case studies and uses the notion of stages of understanding as stages in the theatrical sense, will be a ground from which to think about the case study as an imaginary image. *Night for Day*, which reflects on the revolutionary utopia as it relates to techno-utopia, will serve as a space from which to think about the communist utopia, dialectical materialism, and techno-fantasy as imaginary images. Finally, *Identical*, which talks about the use of sport as an imaginary and colour as a construct, speaks about categories of understanding and control as they relate to imaginary images.

I will divide my research into five chapters:

Chapter One

I will use Luigi Ghirri's misremembering of J. G. Ballard's drowned giant as a kind of hovering imagined image that floats over the whole PhD like a cloud; in this chapter, I will introduce its significance. Why is Ballard's giant, washed up on the shores of the Atlantic, such a resounding image? Is he an image of something outside of cognisance or something thrown out by us—we thought forever—which then returns? It is a human that gets redescribed as an animal—as both Ghirri and the townsfolk in Ballard's story turn the enormous human into an unknown animal through misremembering. Is the image also an attempt to both separate the human body from the animal kingdom and simultaneously attribute everything that is beyond our understanding to non-human animals? It is erased by time, as we will all be—smoothed off to become a part of whatever people collectively think of as common sense. How can the giant's body be a cipher for the unknowability of our own bodies? I would like to probe this relationship between the imagining of parts of our body that we cannot see through a close reading of *The Life of the Mind* by Hannah Arendt as though it were in dialogue with Ballard's giant human. Notably, there will be moments where I will refer to a human body as "we." Although I am aware of the situatedness of human experiences and the pitfalls involved in claiming a "we" when talking about human experiences, I am drawing from Arendt's idea of the relative universality of the internal organs of the body as opposed to the plurality of appearances when I make these generalisations.

Four of my own works will be under this imaginary cloud, acting as a skeleton from which to expand and investigate these questions around the imagined image. In my work, I have avoided a signature style in order to be able to question the relationship between form and idea, to resist the form becoming the content of the work and to avoid the idea that there are forms that elude the superficiality of images and can act as transparent carriers of meaning.

In the following chapters, I will take *Night for Day* (2020), *Identical* (2023), and *Ben* (2008) as my coordinates from which to think about the human body becoming imaginary (and possibly a new project that I am developing at the moment, with the working title N + N).

Chapter Two: *Night for Day*

If imagined images are always in process and memories are also procedural—what is the relationship between imagined images and memory? I will think through the imagined image as always in process via *Night for Day*. It is a film installation from 2020 that sets up the fictional conceit of a mother/son relationship between Isabel do Carmo (who was in the revolutionary brigades that overthrew the Portuguese dictatorship) and Djelal Osman and Alexander Bridi (the founders of a start-up in Lisbon that looked into the use of machine learning to recognise moving images). Prominent throughout the film is a narrator attempting to remember or create a sense of connection between disparate elements—searching for images and voices that might remember or express bonds. I will use my own work to investigate editing and the "life-like" as it is reproduced through filmmaking. If we model the human body as an animation and then it comes back to us "lifelike," this surprises us, it "makes strange" the body through its reproduction in non-organic form.

I would like to probe the relationship between consciousness and editing as it appears in this particular work to see if the space that the imaginary image makes for itself is possible to achieve within film, where the images and sounds are fixed and played off identically each time the image as record is screened. Where is the space in an image as record for the dialectic that Isabel do Carmo takes as her mode of living in *Night for Day*?

Chapter Three: *Identical*

I will use *Identical* as a starting point to speak about how categories are imagined into being. *Identical* is a two-screen video installation from 2023 that brings together the idea of splitting as it pertains to life creation, duplic-

ity, and copies. Within the work, images and voice convey how we use colour to categorise the world and use sport as a metaphor for progress. I would like to take this idea of categorisation to look at the relationship between imagined images that both help us to make sense of the world and create false divisions and hierarchies. The piece already has many “voices” in it, and I would like to speak with it and in it—reading into images whilst asking what it means to read into an image. Here, I will bring in Israel Rosenfield’s work on colour as an invention of the brain and Denise Ferreira da Silva’s work *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, to speak about the relationship of images and the imaginary in categorisation.

Chapter Four: *Ben*

Ben will be a springboard from which to think about the case study as an imagined image. *Ben* is a 16 mm film work from 2006 that uses two case studies as a starting point from which to enact a hallucinatory scenario.

The psychiatric or psychoanalytical case study uses a specific imaginary that is lent a universal application through the theory it comes to exemplify. Case studies repeat a narrative that becomes a case, an example, and an imaginary in the minds of those who read about it. Unlike Ballard’s giant, the body of a patient within a case study is not a fictitious body but one that has lived and that has been interpreted. These case studies become stages towards understanding, but

in the film *Ben*, this stage towards understanding becomes a fictitious stage. In this chapter, I will investigate what happens when a case study becomes opaque rather than transparent—this imagined container used to probe images themselves—and question how a human body becomes an object (of study). I will use the case studies of Frantz Fanon in dialogue with *Ben* (a film based on Freud’s case study into negative hallucination and on a textbook case study used in an A-level exam on psychiatry to help students to diagnose a patient) to look at the idea of the case study more broadly as an example of how bodies become imaginary.

Chapter 5: *NATO and the Nude*

This is what I would like to research in parallel to writing chapter one. I am using the nudist beach next to the NATO base in Portugal (bombed by the revolutionary brigades as part of their fight against the dictatorship) to reflect on the human body and power.

From my research, I will conclude on the status and utility of the imagined image, bringing together the strands that I have had space to investigate through the lenses of theory and art practice. I will be looking to see if there are similarities across the different fields that I have space here to investigate, to see if the imagined image has repeated properties when it appears in art practice, psychiatry, theory, and utopian thinking.

BIO Emily Wardill’s practice spans film, video, sculpture, performance, photography and installation. It has been an ongoing enquiry into the imagined image—what it is, what it has been used for and how it leaves indelible motes and shrapnel behind it. This has taken her from examples of entropy to case studies on risk detailing fires attributed to paranormal activity. It has travelled from psychoanalytical case studies on negative hallucination to memory palaces and their relationship to colourless vision. From stained glass as an early device to communicate with the illiterate right up to the filmic technique of ‘day for night’—reversing it to reflect on technological vision, performed gender and imagined utopias.

Wardill’s work has been exhibited at KW, Berlin, Secession, Gulbenkian Project Spaces, SMK, de Appel arts centre, List Centre MIT, The ICA, XYZ Collective Tokyo, The Biennale of Moving Images Geneva, The Serpentine Gallery, The Hayward Gallery, MUMOK Vienna; and MOCA, Miami. She has shown in the Berlinale Forum Expanded and the New York and London Film festivals. Her work was awarded the Jarman Award in 2010, the Leverhulme Award in 2011 and the EMAF award in 2021. She participated in the 54th Venice Biennale and the 19th Sydney Biennale.

Wardill has taught at The University of the Arts Helsinki, University of British Columbia, Central Saint Martins, Academy of Fine Arts Munich, School of the Art Institute Chicago, National Art School Sydney, Städelschule, Goldsmiths University & the CCA San Francisco.

About Malmö Art Academy
Faculty Biographies
Programme Descriptions
Course Descriptions

About Malmö Art Academy

Malmö Art Academy is a department at Lund University that has been offering higher education in fine arts since 1995. Together with the Academy of Music and the Theatre Academy, Malmö Art Academy is part of the Faculty of Fine and Performing Arts, one of nine faculties within Lund University.

Malmö Art Academy offers advanced study programmes in fine arts at the Bachelor's and Master's degree levels for aspiring artists. Malmö Art Academy also has a wellreputed research studies programme. Teaching is not divided into separate categories of art. As a student, you can choose to move freely between various forms of artistic expression or to specialise in a particular form. Your studies will provide ample opportunity to develop your art and a firm professional identity. You will be included in new and inspiring contexts and acquire the tools to develop your critical thinking. To enable you to develop your skills, you have access to the Academy's premises and your own studio around the clock.

Malmö Art Academy offers wellequipped workshops for work with wood, metal, plaster, plastic, clay, concrete, photography, video, and computing. It also features large project studios, a library, and lecture rooms, as well as the students' own studios. Malmö Art Academy also offers a PhD programme in fine arts, mainly intended for internationally active artists, at the Academy's research centre, the Inter Arts Center. The programme is key to current artistic research.

Our study programmes offer students the opportunity to work with internationally active artists and teachers, whose expertise covers a broad spectrum of interests and mediums. Individual supervision of the student is considered to be key. The language of tuition is usually English. The students' commitment to and influence on the design of the study programme is given high priority. In 2014, Malmö Art Academy was assessed as being of very high quality, with regard to both its BFA and MFA programmes, by the Swedish Higher Education Authority's quality evaluation of all higher education in fine arts in Sweden.

Malmö Art Academy cooperates with other fine arts programmes all over the world and has built up strong networks over the years. The education offered at Malmö Art Academy also benefits from the active artistic climate in the Öresund region, with its galleries, museums, and other arts institutions in a markedly cosmopolitan context. Lectures from visiting artists, critics, and curators, as well as various forms of collaborative projects, are natural elements of Malmö Art Academy's activities.

Several graduates of Malmö Art Academy have become successful artists who have earned strong international recognition.

Since the autumn of 2018, Malmö Art Academy has been located at three addresses in Malmö; Båghallarna at Föregatan 4, in Kulturhuset Mazetti at Bergsgatan 29, and in Dimman at Bergsgatan 20. The premises offer large project studios, a library, and lecture rooms, as well as private studios for the seventy students in the fine arts programmes and a common study room for students taking the Master of Fine Arts in Artistic Research. Students have access to their studios and the common study room as well as most of the workshops twentyfour hours a day throughout the year.

Malmö Art Academy was set up in 1995 by Lund University. Its study programmes were offered in the former Mellersta Förstadsskolan in central Malmö, a building that was considered a model of modern school architecture in 1900.

Lund University's remit for the new school included the ambition that the Academy be interdisciplinary and international. The Academy became the first school in Sweden to actively avoid the so-called professors' school model. No divisions were created; rather, the idea was to make the hierarchies as horizontal as possible. Another central concept was the requirement for students to be independent. It is still the case that meetings with lecturers take place on the students' own initiative.

From the outset, Malmö Art Academy wanted to make the most of the artistic expertise of its lecturers and professors. This is also why administration is not part of their duties. The Academy further wished to facilitate the continuation of the artistic careers of its lecturers and professors, enabling them to participate in major international contexts. Hence lecturers and professors have come, and continue to come, to the Academy for defined periods in order to free up time for their artistic work. To extend opportunities for students to benefit from a broad spectrum of artistic supervision, external supervisors were also introduced in 1996. External supervisors are internationally active artists who come to the Academy five times per year.

Malmö Art Academy was the first art academy in Sweden to invite external contributors to examinations in 1996. The Academy wanted both to ensure its quality in an international context and to reinforce students' chances of being correctly assessed. The external examiners have primarily been internationally active curators such as Bart De Baere, Charles Esche, Lynne Cooke, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Maria Lind, Iwona Blazwick, Dirk Snauwert, Jürgen Bock, Robert Storr, Sabine Folie, Brigitte Franzen, Lisa Le Fevre, Martin Clark, Lolita Jablonska, Jochen Volz, Mats Stjernstedt, Jens Fänge, Abraham Cruzvillegas, and John Peter Nilsson.

Malmö Art Academy launched a Master of Fine Arts in 2002, the same year the PhD in Fine Arts was established. Malmö Art Academy was the first institution in Sweden to award three doctoral degrees in fine arts in 2006, to Sopowan Boonimitra, Miya Yoshida, and Matts Leiderstam.

The Bachelor of Fine Arts was introduced in 2007.

In 2020, the Master of Fine Arts in Artistic Research was launched, directed by Verina Gfader. The programme builds on the earlier Master of Fine Arts in Critical & Pedagogical Studies, which ran from 2011 to 2019 under the direction of Maj Hasager. Prior to this, the Critical Studies programme was set up by Simon Sheikh, first as a oneyear Master's programme in 2001 and later as a twoyear Master's programme in 2008–10.

Over the years, the following people have worked as professors and lecturers at the Academy: Lars Nilsson, Charlotte Gyllenhammar, Anette Abrahamsson, Niels Bonde, Axel Lieber, Jimmie Durham, Sophie Tottie, Jens Fänge, Andrea Geyer, Matthew Buckingham, and Annika Eriksson.

External supervisors have included Sigurdur Gudmundsson, Berend Strik, Cecilia Edefalk, Voobe de Gruyter, Eva Löfdahl, and Olav Christopher Jenssen.

Maj Hasager has been Rector of Malmö Art Academy since 2021. Gertrud Sandqvist was Rector of Malmö Art Academy from 2011 to 2020, a post she also previously held from 1995 to 2007. Anders Kreuger was Director of Malmö Academy from 2007 to 2010.

The Academy's first Yearbook came out in 1996 and has been published every year since.

Maj Hasager Rector;
 Professor of Fine Arts

Maj Hasager is Professor in fine arts and has been Rector of Malmö Art Academy since 2021.

Hasager is a Danish artist based in Copenhagen. She studied photography and fine arts in Denmark, Sweden, and the UK, earning an MFA from Malmö Art Academy.

Hasager's artistic approach is research and dialogically based, and she works predominantly with text, sound, video, and photography.

She has exhibited her work internationally in events and at institutions such as Lunds Konsthall; Fondazione Pastificio Cerere, Rome; Critical Distance, Toronto; GL STRAND, Copenhagen; Galleri Image, Aarhus, Denmark; FOKUS video art festival, Nikolaj Kunsthal, Copenhagen; Moderna Museet, Malmö; Cleveland Institute of Art; Red Barn Gallery, Belfast; Laznia Centre for Contemporary Art, Gdańsk; Liverpool Biennial; Al-Hoash Gallery, Jerusalem; Al-Kahf Gallery, Bethlehem; Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center; Ramallah; Overgaden Institute of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen; and Guangzhou Triennial.

Hasager is the recipient of several international residencies and fellowships, most recently at 18th Street Arts Center, Los Angeles. She has been awarded grants in support of her work from Edstrandska, Danish Arts Council, Danish Arts Foundation, Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (Beirut), and ArtSchool Palestine. Additionally, Hasager is a guest lecturer at the International Academy of Art Palestine; Dar al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture, Bethlehem; Barbados Community College, Bridgetown; Sacramento State University; and University of Ulster, Belfast. She occasionally writes essays, catalogue texts, and articles.

Alejandro Cesarco Professor of Fine Arts

Alejandro Cesarco is a Uruguayan artist based in Madrid.

Recent solo exhibitions include *A Solo Exhibition*, Kunstinstituut Melly, Rotterdam, 2019; *These Days*, Tanya Leighton, Berlin, 2019; *Tactics & Technics*, Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, 2019; *Song*, Renaissance Society, Chicago, 2017; *The Measure of Memory*, Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan, 2017; *Public Process*, Sculpture Center, New York, 2017; *Prescribe the Symptom*, Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis, 2015; *Loyalties and Betrayals*, Murray Guy, New York, 2015; *Secondary Revision*, Frac Île-de-France/Le Plateau, Paris, 2013; *A Portrait, a Story, and an Ending*, Kunsthalle Zürich, 2013; *Alejandro Cesarco*, mumok, Vienna, 2012; *A Common Ground*, Uruguayan Pavilion, 54th Venice Biennale, 2011; *One without the Other*, Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City, 2011; and *Present Memory*, Tate Modern, London, 2010. These exhibitions addressed, through different formats and strategies, Cesarco's recurrent interests in repetition, narrative, and the practices of reading and translating.

Group exhibitions include *Question the Wall Itself*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 2016; *Under the Same Sun*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2014; *Tell It to My Heart: Collected by Julie Ault*, Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel, 2013; and *The Imminence of Poetics*, 30th Bienal de São Paulo, 2012.

He has also curated exhibitions in the US, Uruguay, and Argentina, and most recently a section of the 33rd Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil (2018) and ARCOmadrid (2020). He is Director of the non-profit arts organisation Art Resources Transfer, New York.

Joachim Koester is a Danish artist based in Copenhagen. His work has been shown at documenta X, Kassel, Germany; 2nd Johannesburg Biennale; 1st Gwangju Biennale; 54th Venice Biennale; Busan Biennale 2006, South Korea; Manifesta 7, Trento, Italy; Tate Triennial 2009, London; and Taipei Biennale 2012. Koester's solo shows include Bergen Kunsthall, Norway; Camden Arts Centre, London; Beirut Art Center; Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen; Centre d'Art Santa Mònica, Barcelona; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City; Power Plant, Toronto; Kestnergesellschaft, Hanover; Institut d'art contemporain, Villeurbanne, France; MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA; Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen; S.M.A.K. – Municipal Museum of Contemporary Art, Ghent, Belgium; Camera Austria, Graz; Centre d'art contemporain Genève; Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK; Greene Naftali Gallery, New York; Galleri Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen; Gallery Jan Mot, Brussels; and Galería Elba Benitez, Madrid.

Koester's work can be found in the following museums and collections: Tate Modern, London; Louisiana Museum, Humlebæk, Denmark; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; S.M.A.K., Ghent; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Baltimore Museum of Art; Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, Madrid; SMK – Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen; ARoS, Aarhus Kunstmuseum; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Kiasma, Helsinki; Kongelige Biblioteks Fotografiske Samling, Copenhagen; Fonds national d'art contemporain, Paris; Sorø Kunstmuseum, Denmark; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Malmö Konstmuseum; Sammlung Hoffmann, Berlin; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; MACS – Grand-Hornu, Boussu, Belgium; Kadist Art Foundation, Paris; FRAC Le Plateau, Institut d'art contemporain, Villeurbanne, France; Generali Foundation, Vienna; Sammlung Verbund, Vienna; and Museum Sztuki, Łódź.

Publications on his work include *Bringing Something Back* (Koenig Books 2019), *maybe one must begin with some particular places* (Guayaba Press, 2015), *Of Spirits and Empty Spaces* (Mousse Publishing, 2014), *I Myself am only a receiving apparatus* (Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, 2011), *Message from the Unseen* (Lunds Konsthall, 2006), *Nordenskiöld and the Ice Cap* (Space Poetry, 2006), and *Message from Andrée* (Lukas & Sternberg and Pork Salad Press, 2005).

Sarat Maharaj

Professor of Visual Art and Knowledge Systems;
Supervisor for the Doctoral Programme

Sarat Maharaj (South Africa / United Kingdom) is Professor of Visual Art and Knowledge Systems at Lund University and Malmö Art Academy, and Research Professor at Goldsmiths, University of London, where he was previously Professor of Art History and Theory (1980–2005). Maharaj was Rudolf Arnheim Professor, Philosophy Faculty, Humboldt University of Berlin (2001–02) and Fine Art Research Fellow at the Jan Van Eyck Academie, Maastricht (1999–2001). In 2018, he was the Stedelijk Fellow at the University of Amsterdam / RKD, Art History Institute, Den Haag / Stedelijk Museum and is Visiting Fellow at Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp in 2020–21.

Maharaj's specialist research and publications focus on Marcel Duchamp, James Joyce, and Richard Hamilton, and his writing covers: Monkeydoodle—"thinking through art practice," visual art as know-how and no-how, textiles, xeno-sonics and xeno-epistemics—"thinking the other and other ways of thinking," cultural translation, "dirty cosmopolitanism," North / South divisions of work, manufacture, and "creative labour."

His selected publications include *The Sarat Maharaj Reader*, published in both English and Chinese (Nanfang Daily Press, 2010); "Small Change of the Universal," *British Journal of Sociology* 61, no. 3 (2010); *Hungry Clouds Swag on the Deep: Santu Mofokeng at Kassel 2002: Chasing Shadows* (Prestel, 2011); *Sounding South Africa: In the Rainbow State* (2012); "The Jobless State: The Global Assembly Line, Indolence," in *Work, Work, Work: A Reader on Art and Labour* (Iaspis, 2012); "What the Thunder Said," in *Art as a Thinking Process* (Sternberg Press, 2012); "Nicky-Nacky to Bunga-Bunga: Venice Preserv'd in the Global Assembly Line of Biennials," in *Venezia, Venezia* (Actar, 2013); and "The Surplus of the Global," a conversation with Marion von Osten, *Texte zur Kunst*, September 2013; "Weggebobbles to Virginatarian: The Alimentary Passage through the Vegan and Beyond in James Joyce's Foodscape" for the XXVI International James Joyce Symposium; "'Sillymotocraft / Cinematograph': Towards e-Gutenberg: On Finnegans Wake" (2019); and "Diversity Fever: Notes Towards an Epidemiological Map," *South as a State of Mind*, no. 11 (2019)

He was a co-curator of documenta11 and he curated *retinal.optical. visual.conceptual ...* at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, in 2002, with Richard Hamilton and Ecke Bonk. Maharaj was also co-curator of *Farewell to Postcolonialism*, Guangzhou, in 2008, and *Art, Knowledge and Politics*, at the 29th Bienal de São Paulo in 2010. He was Chief Curator of the 2011 Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art, *Pandemonium: Art in a Time of Creativity Fever*, and a peer advisor to the Sharjah Biennial 11 in 2013.

Recent lectures include "Surya Namaaz. Deniz Sözen," Institute of International Visual Arts, London, 2020; "Dataists or Dadaists? Drivers of the Human," ZKM Karlsruhe, 2020; "Mapping the First India Diaspora, Euro-Art History and Tantra," Bihar Museum Biennale, Patna, India, 2021; "The Sphinx Contemplating Napoleon: Gilane Tawadros," Africa Institute, Sharjah, 2021.

His current research projects (2016–) are "Repristinating London: Knowledge Mecca" and "The Apartheid Era Art History Room, Durban, Salisbury Island." Maharaj sits on the boards of several journals, museums, galleries, and other institutions.

Gertrud Sandqvist Professor of Art Theory and the History of Ideas;
Supervisor for the Doctoral Programme

Gertrud Sandqvist was Rector of Malmö Art Academy from 2011 to 2020, a post she also previously held from 1995 to 2007.

Professor Sandqvist has been writing extensively on mainly European contemporary art since the early 1990s, and most recently she authored *Estragon*, a monograph on the Norwegian painter Olav Christopher Jenssen, published in 2018.

Sandqvist is the curator of *Jag bor i ett annat land, men du bor ju i samma, Drömmare söder om Hallandsåsen* at Ravinen Konsthall, Båstad, held in the autumn of 2021. In 2010, she was the co-curator of the *Modernautställningen* at Moderna Museet, Stockholm. She co-curated, together with Sarat Maharaj, Dorothee Albrecht, and Stina Edblom, the Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art, 2011. Furthermore, she recently curated *Siksi—The Nordic Miracle Revisited* at Galleri F 15, Moss, Norway, 2015; *Red Dawn* at HISK, Ghent, Belgium, 2014; *Channeled*, which showed contemporary artists alongside Hilma af Klint, at Lunds Konsthall, 2013; and *Against Method* for Generali Foundation, Vienna, 2013.

Since 2019, Sandqvist has been a member of the Novo Nordisk Foundation's Committee on Research in Art and Art History.

Fredrik Værsløv Professor of Fine Arts

Fredrik Værsløv is a Norwegian artist based in Drøbak, Norway, with a focus on conceptual painting.

Selected solo exhibitions include Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo, 2018; Bonner Kunstverein, 2018; Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, Switzerland, 2017; Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York, 2017; Gió Marconi, Milan, 2016; Bergen Konsthall, 2016; Kunsthall Aarhus, Denmark, 2017; Le Consortium, Dijon, France, 2016; STANDARD (OSLO), 2015; Power Station, Dallas, 2014; Lumiar Cité, Lisbon, 2014; Circus, Berlin, 2013; and Indipendenza Studio, Rome, 2012, among others.

Selected group exhibitions include Nasjonalmuseet, Oslo, 2017; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 2017; CANADA, New York, 2017; National Art School Gallery, Sydney, 2017; Ramiken Crucible, New York, 2017; Index, Stockholm, 2017; Galleri Riis, Stockholm, 2016; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 2016; Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York, 2015; Tegnebiennalen, Oslo, 2014; Galerie Mehdi Chouakri, Berlin, 2014; Lunds Konsthall, 2013; and Modern Institute, Glasgow, 2013, among others.

Værsløv is Director of the artist-run project space Landings in Vestfossen, Norway, which he founded in 2008. The organisation also produces *Landings Journal*, published once a year. Publications on his work include *Fredrik Værsløv as I Imagine Him* (JRP|Ringier, 2018); *Tan Lines* (Sternberg Press, 2018); *The Constant Gardener* (Hatje Cantz, 2016); *All Around Amateur, vols. 1 and 2* (Sternberg Press, 2016); *Reality Bites* (Mousse Publishing, 2015); *East Bound and Down* (Power Station, 2016); and *Fredrik Værsløv: The rich man's breakfast, the shop-keeper's lunch, the poor man's supper* (STANDARD (BOOKS), 2012).

Værsløv's work is found in the collections of Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Le Consortium, Dijon; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Malmö Konstmuseum; Nasjonalmuseet, Oslo; and Astrup Fearnley, Oslo.

Maria Hedlund**Senior Lecturer in Fine Arts**

Maria Hedlund is a Swedish artist based in Berlin. She graduated from the Photography Department at the University of Gothenburg in 1993.

In her latest ongoing works, she uses objects, plants, and smaller collections. They are mostly found or given to her. What they all have in common is that they are in a state of transition and of being outside their original context. This specific interest has formed works such as *Life at Hyttödammen* (2006–), *Dissolve* (2011), and *Some Kind of Knowledge* (2014–). The title of *Some Kind of Knowledge* refers to an ambivalent condition that always needs to be renegotiated and rephrased as new objects come into play. The work's "collection" is in a state of constant evolution. Sometimes there is a clear direction, which a while later might be forgotten, followed by a new one. Its objects and plants appear in other works as well.

Hedlund has recently exhibited at Kohta, Helsinki, and Västerås Konstmuseum. Last year, she completed a public commission for the Tranströmer Library in Medborgarhuset, Stockholm.

Youngjae Lih**Senior Lecturer in Fine Arts**

Youngjae Lih is a Korean artist and engineer living and working in Sweden. He holds a Master of Fine Art from Malmö Art Academy and Bachelor of Fine Art from Korea National University of Arts, Seoul. Previously, he had a career as a research and development engineer in the semiconductor industry. Focusing on the nature of existing objects and the interactions between them, Lih is interested in the syntax and formation of new narrative strands. In this sense, while the majority of his works are developed in different mediums, they share an obvious grammatical and linguistic structure.

Solo exhibitions include Färgfabriken, Stockholm; S:t Pauli Kyrka, Malmö; Skånes konstförening, Malmö; and Luxelakes:A4 Art Museum, Chengdu.

Selected group exhibitions include Fotografisk Center, Copenhagen; Sharjah Art Foundation; Cinema Museum, London; Hiroshima Art Document, Japan; Royal Academy of Arts, Stockholm; and Ewha Womans University, Seoul.

Lih was a recipient of the Beckers Art Award, Stockholm; Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives Research Grant and Residency, New York; Swedish National Arts Grants Committee International Artist Studio Programme, Stockholm; and Mercedes Benz Art Foundation, Seoul.

Gabriel Karlsson**Junior Lecturer in Fine Arts**

Gabriel Karlsson is a Swedish artist based in Malmö. He received his Master's degree in Fine Art from Malmö Art Academy in 2019 and has previously studied literature at Stockholm University.

Through the medium of sculpture, Karlsson explores the concepts of objects, materiality, nature and thought systems. He is interested in how human and non-human worlds interact spatially. As a Junior Lecturer at Malmö Art Academy, he is responsible for both practical and theoretical courses related to sculptural processes and the medium's unique way of communicating via form and matter.

Recent solo and duo exhibitions include *Untitled (Cumulus)*, Study For Art Platform, Stockholm, 2023; *Pivot V-XIII*, duo exhibition, Galleri Arnstedt, Östra Karup, 2022; *Krummholz (Pivot I-IV)*, duo exhibition, Landings Project Space, Vestfossen, Norway, 2022; *One finger*, Artipelag, Stockholm, 2021; *Repose*, duo exhibition, Canopy, Malmö, 2020.

Selected group exhibitions include Malmö Konsthall, Malmö; *One Room One Day*, ADDO, Malmö; Ravinen Konsthall, Båstad; Galleri Arnstedt, Båstad; Skissernas Museum, Lund; *Soft city*, curated by Coyote, Stockholm; Galleri CC, Malmö; *The Great Hall of the Art Academy of Latvia*, Riga.

Grants include Fredrik Roos Foundation, 2021; Edstrandska Foundation, 2019; Ann-Margret Lindells Grant, 2016; Gerlesborgsskolans Exhibition Grant, 2015.

Joakim Sandqvist (b.1988) is a Swedish artist based in Malmö. He studied at Malmö Art Academy and Slade School of Fine Arts, earning his MFA from the Malmö Art Academy in 2018. In 2021, he participated in the Maumaus Independent Study Program. Sandqvist works in a wide range of mediums including sculpture, textile, photography, video drawing and installation. His work predominantly revolves around the intricate interplay of visual culture, power structures, infrastructure, technology, and abstraction.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Just in Time*, Galleri Ping-Pong, Malmö, 2023, *Façades*, Galleri Ping-Pong, Malmö, 2020, *Workers, Settlers, Hippies and Imaginary Lovers*, Galleri Storgatan, Stockholm, 2020.

Selected group exhibitions include Malmö Konsthall, Malmö, The Centre for Photography, Stockholm, Malmö Art Museum, Malmö, Galleri BOX, Gothenburg, Public Support, Vestfossen, Canopy, Malmö, Österängens Konsthall, Jönköping and SEART, Stockholm.

Sandqvist has received several grants in support of his work, including The Edstrandska Foundation, The Aase and Rickard Björklund Fund, The W. Smiths Fund, awarded by The Swedish Royal Academy of Arts and working grants from Swedish Arts Grants Committee.

His works are held in the collections of The Swedish Public Art Agency, The Jönköping County and HSB (Public Work in Högsköpinge).

Charif Benhelima is a Belgian artist. He lives and works in Antwerp, Belgium.

Through the medium of photography, Benhelima deals with the topics of memory / oblivion, time, space, origin, identity, politics of representation, and perception. He gained recognition with the *Welcome to Belgium series* (1990–99), a nine-year research project on the sentiment of being a foreigner. Besides having worked with analogical photography, he has been experimenting for fifteen years with the Polaroid 600.

In parallel to his artistic research, Benhelima is a guest professor at the Higher Institute for Fine Arts (HISK), Ghent.

Recent solo exhibitions include Museu Oscar Niemeyer, Curitiba, Brazil; Niterói Museum of Contemporary Art, Rio de Janeiro; BPS 22, Charleroi, Belgium; Palais des Beaux-Arts (Bozar), Brussels; Station Museum of Contemporary Art, Houston; Volta NY 2010, New York; and Künstlerhaus Bethanien GmbH, Berlin, among others.

Benhelima participated in the Lubumbashi Biennale, DR Congo, 2015; Beaufort, Triennial of Contemporary Art by the Sea, Belgium, 2015; Marrakech Biennale 5; International Biennial of Photography, 2010 and 2012, Houston; and in group exhibitions at the Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro; MuHKA, Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp; Musée de Marrakech; Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore; Bag Factory, Johannesburg; Shanghai Art Museum; Palau de la Virreina—La Capella, Barcelona; Centro Arte Moderna a Contemporanea Della Spezia, Italy; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Buenos Aires; Witte de With, Rotterdam; EMST—National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens; Jewish Cultural Quarter, Amsterdam; and Lunds Konsthall, among many others.

Ann Böttcher was born in 1973 in Bruzaholm, Sweden. She currently lives and works in Malmö.

She has held solo exhibitions at Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm and Malmö Konsthall (2021–2022), Malmö konstmuseum, (2016), Vandalourum, Värnamo (2015), INDEX, Stockholm (2007) and Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2006). She participated at the EVA International Biennial, Limerick, and has been exhibited at Malmö Konstmuseum (both 2014), Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm and the Lofoten International Art Festival, Svolvær (both 2013). In 2014 she was one of the artists exhibited in Magasin III:s The Drawing Room.

She has participated in group exhibitions at venues including Kimball Art Centre, Park City, Utah, USA (2023), He Art Museum, Shunde, Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm (both 2020), Eksjö Museum (2018), Konsthall Stavanger, Marabouparken, Sundyberg (both 2017), Tecknismuseet, Laholm (2015), Borås Konstmuseum (2012), Liljevalchs, Stockholm, Lunds konsthall, Lund, Museum de Fundatie, Zwolle (all 2011), Malmö Konstmuseum, Malmö, Magasin III, Stockholm (both 2010), Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, WUK Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna (both 2009), Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, ZKM, Karlsruhe (both 2008), Moderna Museet, Stockholm, P.S. 1 MOMA, New York, Gallery Murray Guy, New York (all 2006), the Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb (2004), Magasin III, Stockholm and Centre Culturel Suédois, Paris (2003).

Carina Emery (b. 1991, Switzerland) is a sculpture and installation artist based in Paris and Malmö. She holds an MFA from Malmö Art Academy, graduated from École de Beaux-Arts de Paris, and studied Art & Critical Theory at the Zurich University of the Arts. In her practice, she explores biotechnological intimacies and the resemblance of materials to organic and psychic sensations, individual or social states of bodies.

Emery was a finalist for the Swiss Art Awards in 2022 and 2024. Her previous residencies include "À l'oeuvre!" at Lafayette Anticipations in Paris (2022), "Kultur-Kontakt Austria" in Vienna (2018), and "Villa Belleville" in Paris (2021). In 2025, she will participate in the Open Studio Program at Fonderia Battaglia in Milan. Her work has been shown at Gianni Manhattan, Vienna; Kunsthalle Bern; Le Houloc, Paris; Den Frie, Copenhagen; Galerie für Gegenwartskunst, Freiburg i.Br.; Espace Voltaire, Paris; Giulietta, Basel; Arcway Nightlands Connector, Copenhagen; Canopy, Malmö; Palais des Beaux-Arts, Paris; Kulturdrogerie, Vienna; Kunsthau Langenthal; Centre d'art Pasquart, Biel/Bienne; VinVin Gallery, Vienna.

Marie Muracciole is an art critic, writer, and independent curator based in Beirut and Paris.

Since February 2014, she has been the director and the curator at Beirut Art Center. Her publications include: *With*, about Jeff Weber in *Serial Grey*, (Carré d'art de Nîmes), 2021, *Lights, Camera, Movement, Film Praxis in the Work of Zineb Sedira* in Zineb Sedira (Sharjah Foundation), 2018, *Transports (Prière de toucher)* in Pierre-Lin Renié, *D'autres jours/On Other Days*, 2017, *Contrecourants: à propos d'Allan Sekula et d'Aerospace*, in Jeux sérieux, (HEAD), 2015, *Something New About Plants, Genealogy Tree*, in Yto Barrada (JPRingier), 2013; *A Love Story, Transportations*, in Amar Kanwar: Evidence (Fotomuseum Winterthur/Steidl), 2012; *Memory's body*, "Retrospective" by Xavier Le Roy, in *Texte Zur Kunst*, 2011/12; *It Is Your First Mirage Sophie, on Guy de Cointet*, *Texte zur Kunst* n°82, 2011; *Tomorrow Never Knows, Peter Roehr*, in *20/27* n°5, 2010. She is the French editor of *Écrits sur la photographie*, Allan Sekula, éditions de l'ENSBA, Paris, 2013. She published *Photography at Work: Allan Sekula*, 2017, Beirut Art Center, and *Knots'n Dust; Francis Alys*, 2019, Beirut Art Center, with Michael Taussig.

Stephan graduated from Malmö Art Academy's MFA program in 2019 and served as a Guest Teacher there from 2019 to 2022. He currently teaches at Ærø Kunsthøjskole, where he has been a Guest Teacher since 2020, and also serves as a tutor at Malmö Art Academy. At Malmö Art Academy, Stephan taught theoretical courses in collaboration with Gertrud Sandqvist, focusing on close readings of a wide range of thinkers and writers, including Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Hélène Cixous, Georges Bataille, Simone Weil, Karen Barad, and G.W.F. Hegel.

In his artistic practice, Stephan works with multiple media, and his projects often culminate in installations incorporating texts, videos, and objects. Although he uses different media across various projects, his work consistently begins with research. He has a strong interest in human interaction and intersubjectivity, particularly in how our experiences are shaped and influenced by language.

Stephan has exhibited at Skissarnas Museum in Lund, Galleri Arnstedt in Östra Karup, and Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art in Copenhagen. However, since 2020, he has primarily focused on teaching and writing.

Nina Roos is a visual artist working in the field of painting. She lives and works in Helsinki.

Solo exhibitions have been held at Kohta, Helsinki; Lunds Konsthall; Galerie Forsblom, Helsinki; Galerie Francois Mansart, Paris; Galleri K, Oslo; Kunstnernes Hus, Oslo; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Malmö Konsthall; Kiasma, Helsinki; and Brandts Klædefabrik, Odense.

Selected group exhibitions include the MuHKA, Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp; Kiasma, Helsinki; Galleri F15, Moss, Norway; Espoo Museum of Modern Art, Finland; Artipelag, Stockholm; Lunds Konsthall; Carnegie Art Award touring exhibition (first prize 2004); KUMU Art Museum, Tallinn; Kunstverein München; Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki; Nordic Pavilion, 46th Venice Biennale; and Frankfurter Kunstverein.

Public commissions include Campus Allegro, Pietarsaari, Finland, 2013; the Church of Shadows, Chengdu, China, 2012; and University of Gävle, Sweden, 2006.

Roos's works are included in collections internationally, including the Amos Anderson Art Museum, Helsinki; Apoteket AB, Stockholm; ArtPace, San Antonio; Gothenburg Museum of Art; Helsinki City Art Museum; Kiasma, Helsinki; Malmö Art Museum; and Moderna Museet, Stockholm, among others.

Programmes

Malmö Art Academy is the ideal institution for those intending to pursue a professional career as an artist and who want solid training in their field of interest.

The teaching is not divided into artistic specialisations and the Academy has no separate departments. Students have the opportunity to move freely between different forms of artistic expression or to specialise in a specific form.

The programmes offer a wide range of courses and projects in artistic creation, theory, and technique. Students choose freely from these options and build up a personalised programme of study. Regardless of the focus the students choose for their work, their own artistic development is always key, and emphasis is therefore placed on individual artistic supervision.

Bachelor's Programme in Fine Arts—BFA

The three-year Bachelor's programme consists of individual work in the studio and individual tutoring from professors and other teachers, as well as scheduled courses in major areas of artistic techniques, artistic interpretation, and art theory. Malmö Art Academy's internationally active professors work in a range of artistic fields. This leads to important and diverse interaction at the Academy and also gives the students the opportunity to choose courses that reflect their artistic intentions.

The programme begins with a set of compulsory foundation courses dealing primarily with different artistic techniques and the development of the artist's role over the last two hundred years. After this, students select their courses in theory, technique, and artistic creation. The topics offered vary from year to year, depending on students' interests and the current artistic activities of teaching staff.

Students who successfully achieve 180 ECTS credits through their studio practice and completion of courses are awarded a Bachelor of Fine Arts. Students must also have participated in a group exhibition at one of Malmö Art Academy's galleries and have written a short text (approx. five pages) based on their artistic position (art-work documentation and texts from this year's graduating students are available in this *Yearbook*). Professors at Malmö Art Academy act as examiners for undergraduate students, and an external examiner is always invited to participate in the assessment.

Graduates with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Malmö Art Academy are entitled to apply for the two-year Master of Fine Arts programme at the Academy or for Master's programmes at other institutions.

Master's Programme in Fine Arts—MFA

The Master's programme in Fine Arts is a two-year programme offering more specialised artistic training through individual studio practice and courses in art and various related disciplines.

During the first year, students begin their advanced artistic work, along with different types of teacher-led seminars and also a study trip. Just as on the Bachelor's programme, students choose from a range of technical and theoretical courses, many of which are taught by internationally recognised artists. Guest lectures from visiting artists and critics as well as various forms of collaborative projects are regularly offered at the Academy.

In the second year, students focus on their degree projects, which includes writing an essay (approx. ten pages) about their artistic practice and presenting a solo exhibition at one of the Academy's galleries (artwork documentation and texts from this year's graduating students are available in this *Yearbook*). Students who pass their degree project are awarded a Master of Fine Arts (120 ECTS credits). Professors at Malmö Art Academy act as examiners for Master's students, and an external examiner is always invited to participate in the assessment.

Master's Programme in Fine Arts in Artistic Research—MFA

The Master's programme in Fine Arts in Artistic Research (MFAAR) is a two-year full-time education programme. The purpose of the programme is to prepare visual artists to define and formulate a research project in fine arts that aims at admission to a Doctoral programme in fine arts.

The programme maintains a high international profile and prepares artists for professional activities at an international level. The focus is on the individual research project, which the student uses as their application and then develops during the programme. From this project, the student is encouraged to develop research questions that emerge from their own research processes and artistic methods. These are discussed and advanced in relation to methods that have emerged from other relevant research fields, in close collaboration with existing academic disciplines.

Through this training, the student is encouraged to develop their own methods that differ from those applied in other fields of research. The teaching method includes both seminars and courses. The seminars include programme-specific seminars and seminars together with the PhD programme at Malmö Art Academy, where the student becomes an auscultant.

Courses include method courses with a special focus on artistic research projects, but also more general method courses with invited researchers and artistic researchers from Lund University and other educational institutions. A course in research ethics is also given. The students have access to a shared workspace.

During the two years of study, students will encounter various think tanks through which to open up new vocabularies around thinking through the visual: a methodology lab, a reading group, seminars and workshops, a publishing forum, writing sessions, proposal writing, and archives. Further, they will participate in assemblies, tutorials, meditation sessions, creating a collective glossary, and other discursive events. Conducted or choreographed across those units, the MFAAR essentially links to the Doctoral programme at the Academy and fosters exchanges with other disciplines, thereby underlining an ethics of inclusion and heterogeneity. Within this relational context, the call is for thinking about artistic research today as an expanded and all-encompassing field around visual thinking. Additionally, the programme aims to confirm artistic research against its apparent marginality as a core field of thought, in synchrony with and producing emerging forms of sociality, culture, and thought.

The degree project consists of a joint exhibition / seminar / publication / conference, where the individual project is presented. A longer individual text proposing a research project, including a research question and timetable, is also required. Teaching, supervision, and examination is conducted in English. Students who pass their degree project are awarded a Master of Fine Arts in Artistic Research (120 ECTS credits).

Admission requirements, selection process, and tuition fees

Find more information about admission requirements, the selection process, and tuition fees at www.khm.lu.se/en/education/programmes.

PhD Programme in Fine Arts—PhD

The four-year Doctoral programme in Fine Arts for practising artists and curators is the first of its kind. Sweden's first Doctors of Fine Arts graduated from Malmö Art Academy, Lund University, in 2006. Professor Gertrud Sandqvist is responsible for the programme and Professor Sarat Maharaj is Head Supervisor of the Doctoral candidates, who gather for seminars in Malmö at least twice every semester.

The study programme is experimental and highly individualised, focusing on identifying, understanding, and developing artistic thinking as a specialised field of knowledge production. The studies are based on artistic knowledge and artistic work, and the focus is on individual artistic work and research.

The artistic work is both object and method. Reflective and theoretical study is not a self-fulfilling goal but serves as a means for developing artistic competence. The programme in total is 240 ECTS credits, subdivided into various seminars and courses (60 ECTS credits) and a documented artistic research project (180 ECTS credits).

Admission requirements, application process, funding and financing

Read more about PhD studies at Lund University at www.lunduniversity.lu.se/admissions/phd-studies.

*Elective Courses***Economics and Law for Artists**

Optional BFA level course, mandatory for BFA2

Credits: 7.5

Teacher: Katarina Renman Claesson

Participants:

Loke Berg
 Niki Cervin
 Elliot Hjalmerud
 Alma Skadberg Holtvedt
 Sarah Folker Kappel
 Sæunn la Cour Degnbol
 Emilio Marroquin
 Anna Filippa Moberg
 Ulla Marie Døssing Ottosen
 Vio Rossi
 CHiara Salmini
 Liva Stare
 Mingsheng Xu
 Vivian Zamora

The aim of the course is to provide theoretical knowledge and practical skills in economics and law that are important for students in the artistic process and the practice of art as well as in the role of small business owners.

The purpose is to prepare students for questions about economics and law that they may encounter after their studies. Not least, students will gain insight into when it may be necessary to consult legal and/or financial expertise.

After completing the course, the students will:

—Have a basic understanding of economic and legal issues. They will understand fundamental concepts and the impact economic and legal issues may have on their future activities.

—Understand the impact that intellectual property rights may have both on their own protection and the possibility that they will be inspired by others.

—Have a basic understanding of the effect of different types of agreements, including how agreements can be a part of the creative process.

—Understand the difference between various kinds of associations and economic basics (budget, VAT, etc.) in a small firm.

**Analogue Photography and Beyond:
An Investigation into Photographic Materiality**

Optional BFA level course

Credits: 9

Teachers: Maria Hedlund
Johan Österholm

Participants: Maja Dahlström-Horvath
Maya Krtić
Benita Massignani
Anna Filippa Moberg
Jelena Pajić
Liva Stare

In an era marked by dematerialised digital photography and artificial imagery, we aim to rekindle an appreciation for the tactile and tangible qualities of photographic art in the extended sense, with attention given to the overlap between sculpture and photography.

The aim of the course is to give the students deeper understanding of how different photographic processes and materialities can be harnessed for their own individual practices.

The first week will focus on technical tutorials of cameras, medium and large format, film development, darkroom work, and studio equipment, all adapted to the participant's level of knowledge and needs.

The second week consists of independent work.

These two weeks should be seen as a preparation for the third.

The third week will provide students with an in-depth exploration of the physical and material aspects of photography, going beyond the traditional understanding of the medium. Beginning with a theoretical part, we present a brief historical overview on how photographic materials have evolved, and their influence on contemporary practice.

We will focus on understanding the interplay between materiality and conceptual intent, highlighting and analysing artists and artworks that have extended the definition by stretching the types of photosensitive materials and conceptual content used within their artistic practices.

This is followed by a practical part, where the students experiment with a variety of materials and techniques, such as photographic emulsions applied to different materials/objects to create unique photographic works. This part includes work in the darkroom and computer room. The students will learn how to prepare analogue and/or digital negatives according to their needs and experiment with different coating techniques to prepare their own photosensitive material and learn how to expose and develop these.

The Composite Image!

Optional MFA level course

Credits: 15

Teachers: Joachim Koester
Sophie Ljungblom
Joakim Sandqvist,
Maia Torp NeergaardParticipants: Mads Skarsteen Andersen
Sebastian Poras Adolfsson
Rasheh Sadr Ashkevari
Gunvor Lind Balslev
Maja Dahlström-Horvath
Benedikte Nøstvilik Eide
Elliot Hjälmrud
Alma Skadberg Holtvedt
Othilia Hoby Leth
Maria Nadia Nour
Klara Paulin-Rosell
Vio Rossi
Felix Schéele
Rasmus Strøyer
Søren Katborg-Vestergaard
Vigga Wæhrens
Mingsheng Xu

The course "The Composite Image!" is meant to inspire the participants to develop new ways of interacting with images when working with lens-based media. The course promotes a collage-like approach to video and film-making. In other words, different media layered on top of each other or crammed together in images or scenes, or at the very least in the same video. Our method will be one of relentless experimentation: to take the materials that make up our images and transform them into multi-layered sites and scenes.

We will start by generating a collective archive of film fragments (a bit like the stock images and videos you can find online) that each student can pick and choose from for their individual film. We'll work in groups and bring lights and equipment to an off-school location and film for three days.

Additionally, each student will be encouraged to make a self-developed 16mm film. The school will provide the film stock. This material is also meant to be thrown into the "mix," but on an individual basis.

After the first week of meeting and working collectively, the students will work on their individual films, using the provided guidelines (or rules) to be followed. We will encourage students to use images that belong to different times and places simultaneously—to use the found images, music, sound, text, animation, 16mm film, and the scenes and narrative fragments we have generated in a collage-like way.

At the end of the semester—after experimenting, testing, and trying out previously uncharted ways of working and making images—all student films will be screened as part of an event at Panorama.

After this initial week, the course will take the form of individual meetings with the teachers and also a group session where each student presents their work and receives feedback. (It is obligatory to finish an individual film to get credit for the course.)

Welding course

Optional BFA level course

Credits: No credits

Teacher: Ariel Alaniz

Participants: Loke Berg
Johnny Höglund
Flavia Murillo
Vivian Zamora

Through this course, students will gain knowledge about different welding techniques such as MIG- and gas-welding as well as information about the security regulations for the different techniques. After the course, students will receive a "driver's license" that allows them to work on their own with the welding equipment.

Det Omedvetna (The Unconscious)

Optional MFA level course

Credits: 9

Teacher: Gertrud Sandqvist

Participants: Mads Skarsteen Andersen
Loke Berg
Niki Cervin
Felix Christiansson
Benedikte Nøstvik Eide
Andrea Sitara Gran
Noah von Hauswolff
Johnny Höglund
Lassi Kontiainen
Maya Krtić
Othilia Hoby Leth
Fredrika Lindeberg
Malthe Jos Lundquist
Sturla Magnússon
Line Rolf
Ulla Marie Døssing Ottosen
Emily Orlet
Klara Paulin-Rosell
Anania Røde
Lavinia Samson
Felix Schéele
Liva Stare
Rasmus Strøyer
Marcus Wallström
Mingsheng Xu

The concept of the unconscious is associated with Sigmund Freud and psychoanalysis. But Freud was in fact making use of an idea that was by then more than a hundred years old.

The notion of the unconscious emerged during the Enlightenment in the mid-eighteenth century. Freud borrowed it from philosopher Friedrich Schelling's transcendentalism, but he was only one of many. For Romantic and Gothic artists, the unconscious was a bottomless ocean, filled with ingenuity—and angst.

We will go through the different guises of the unconscious, from the eighteenth century via Freud and Lacan up to our own time.

The course includes a written assignment.

Doing Things with Words

Optional BFA level course

Credits: 6

Teacher: Michael Portnoy

Participants: Gunvor Lind Balslev
Isabella Nicole Best
Julia Karla
Elliot Hjalmrud
Cecilie Kappel
Sarah Folker Kappel
Matilda Kenttä
Lassi Kontiainen
Sæunn la Cour Degnbol
Benita Massignani
Flavia Murillo
Ulla Marie Døssing Ottosen
Line Rolf
Vio Rossi
Vigga Wæhrens

The focus of this practice-based course is experimental creative writing. We'll be looking at a diverse selection of short fiction and experimental texts from authors such as Richard Kostelanetz, Sheila Heti, Raymond Queneau, M. NourbeSe Philip, Lucy Corin, Édouard Levé, Claudia Rankine, R.A. Lafferty, Padgett Powell, Gregg Bordowitz, Daniil Kharms, Lydia Davis, Lucy Ives, László Krasznahorkai, Jamaica Kincaid, and Olga Ravn, among others, as well as visual and performance artists who have innovative approaches towards language.

The core of the course is the engagement in daily writing, which follows from different formal and conceptual prompts.

Through practice and discussion, we'll do things with words both on the page and in the mouth in order to build a toolbox of techniques that can be drawn upon when incorporating text into one's work. The course will culminate in a PDF produced by the class including a selection of the writing created as well as prompts devised by the students designed to inspire future prose stylists.

Thinking Sculpture

Optional BFA level course

Credits: 5

Teacher: Gabriel Karlsson

Participants: Adrian-Alicia Bisell Gonzalez
Matilda Kenttä
Maya Krtić
Malthe Jos Lundquist
Cecilie Mark
Sigrid Soomus
Liva n Stare

How can we think sculpture? Is it possible to treat sculpture as a subject? What thoughts are inscribed into sculpture and what does it tell us about the world it inhabits?

Over the course of a slow discussion, we explore in groups how close reading and “close observing” can be used in the understanding of sculpture and in sculptural processes. The course is based on spatial experiments where we install and look at objects together. Using poetry and short textual extracts, we explore the similarities and differences between “reading” and “observing.” We treat text and object side by side and examine how different media can create cross-constructions and thereby new meanings in a piece.

The course presents methods for a common practice of observation. Using theoretical frameworks, we move from the general to the specific to approach the multiple nature of things. By mapping inherent information, the superficial and the hidden, we discuss how this can be used as a tool in thinking about sculpture.

Polyphonic Plots

Optional BFA level course

Credits: 9

Teacher: Tamar Guimaraes

Participants: Loke Berg
Isabella Nicole Best
Andrea Sitara Gran
Cecilie Kappel
Sarah Folker Kappel
Kyusang Kim
Othilia Hoby Leth
Line Rolf
Maria Nadia Nour
Emily Magdalena Orlet
Klara Paulin-Rosell
Søren Katborg-Vestergaard
Mingsheng Xu

This is a workshop focusing on aspects of film form from a conceptual and processual standpoint.

On the one hand, we will consider the task of film dramaturgy in the light of contemporary readings of Brechtian representational principles calling for a dialectical dramaturgical structure, which is also a polyphonic structure.

And on the other hand, we will consider (and practise) sound and rhythm in film editing. The workshop will entail collective readings during the first week, when we will discuss key concepts of Brechtian dramaturgy, its aims, and contemporary interpretations. We will also reflect on film sound using Michel Chion’s concepts of sound perspective, synchresis, sonic fidelity, and its subversions. Screenings of case-study films will be part and parcel of our conversations.

In the second week, course participants engage in self-directed work. My suggestion is to produce from five to ten pieces, which are from one to three minutes long—or the length of a cinematic trailer—focusing on rhythm and sound.

The third week will be dedicated to group presentations and discussion of these exercises as well as to individual studio visits. Time allowing, we will engage in reading and discussing the essay-film form.

The Social Life of Affects

Optional MFA level course

Credits: 9

Teacher: Alejandro Cesarco

Participants: Sebastian Poras Adolfsson
Es Gandrup
Julia Karla
Thomas Udomrat Hostrup
Maya Krtić
Sæunn la Cour Degnbol
Fredrika Lindeberg
Anna Filippa Moberg
Anna Pezzoli

This intensive two-week seminar meets five times a week for three hours each day. It will serve as an introduction to affect theory and a more focused engagement with the work of Lauren Berlant, perhaps best-known for their theory of “cruel optimism.” The course will explore the affective turn in the humanities, social sciences, and arts.

We will think through how affect is enacted—its capacity to act and be acted upon— by analysing some of the intensities of feelings that fill life and form it. Affect transverses relations between bodies, and thus intersects with race, disability, gender, and sexuality. Some of the questions we will ask ourselves are: How can an engagement with affect enrich our understanding of contemporary systems of power? How can an engagement with affect help us transform our world or at very least our work? And how can thinking through affect help us understand our roles as artists and the type of works that we make?

We will circle around different definitions of affect to then focus on Berlant. We will complement their work with texts by Brian Massumi, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Sianne Ngai, Sara Ahmed, and Kathleen Stewart.

Assessment: In advance of each seminar, each student will prepare a short written provocation or question to pose to the class. This is a short paragraph that speaks to a moment in the text that you want to affirm or put in doubt. This informal writing will help guide our conversations around each reading.

Towards the end of the seminar, students will present an object (their own work, that of someone else, a text, a person) and analyse their particular attachment to it through the lenses and concepts of affect outlined in class. Assessment of the course consists of active participation in class and presentation of your individual project.

*Elective Courses***What Is Practice**

Optional BFA and MFA level course

Credits: 3

Teacher: Joachim Koester

Participants: Sebastian Poras Adolfsson
 Peter Bidstrup
 Felix Christiansson
 Benedikte Nøstvik Eide
 Es Gandrup
 Julia Karla
 Ludvig Holm
 Maja Dahlström-Horvath
 Felicia Jartelius
 Julia Sol Schenk
 Maya Krtic
 Sæunn la Cour Degnbøl
 Fredrika Lindeberg
 Markus Lipsøe
 Benita Massignani
 Anna Filippa Moberg
 Line Rolf
 Claudia Munro
 Felix Emmanuel
 Nina Fjordbak Nielsen
 Hannes Nilsson
 Luis Oppel
 Anania Røde
 Lavinia Samson
 Felix Schéele

What Is Practice:**What We Need to Know, and What to Do**

Most often, artists make a living by multiple means: exhibition fees, commissions, public works, grants, sales, teaching, or odd jobs. It's a marginal economy, and complicated, since it involves many types of interactions and business-like relationships.

Over the years, I've been approached by many students, asking the same questions again and again: What happens when you sell an artwork, and what if it's a video, an instructional price, a performance, or an immaterial artwork? What is an edition, how should it be priced, and how do you make a certificate? How do you work with galleries, and is it important to work with galleries or not? (There are lot of myths and misconceptions about this.) How do you work with institutions and other art venues, and what to expect when it comes to the exhibition fee? What about the VAT, is it better not to bother? What are the advantages of starting your own company, or does it make more sense to join an organisation like KKART? Is it a problem if someone infringes your copyright? Why do artists deliberately break the law by infringing on somebody else's copyright? Should you choose to go on a residency—and which one—or not bother at all?

Over four sessions of two hours and an individual assignment, we will address these questions. There will be exercises, discussions, and games. Hopefully, we will come out with a better understanding, and also a more hopeful attitude towards the precarious time that follows art school when you try to make a living as an artist.

—Introduction to editions, certificates, and instructions as well as working with galleries and institutions.

—What VAT is, what the rules are, and why it is important to know about this. Advantages and disadvantages of having a company and alternatives to this.

—Why artists break copyright and why it isn't necessarily a problem if somebody infringes on your copyright.

—Residencies, which one to choose, and what they offer.

**The Cabinets: Building, Collecting,
and Showcasing Your Curiosities**

Optional MFA level course

Credits: 7.5

Teacher: Youngjae Lih

Participants: Elliot Hjälmrud
 Benita Massignani
 Felix Emmanuel
 Isaac Rizell
 Vio Rossi
 Susanna Schmid
 Rasmus Strøyer

The course consists of three components:

Part one: Literature seminar in which the participants start to build a digital archive, learn curatorial decision-making, design their own exhibition space on different platforms, and design a digital narrative in a systematic way. We also explore different technical tools, legal and ethical considerations, funding strategies, and 2D/3D/collective work-spaces/open-source archives/wiki-data structures/digital twins.

Part two: Reading and independent project.

Part three: The focus is on the launch and marketing of the participant's own digital cabinet project. The participants identify and apply the resources, learn to measure the results of their own project and the future of the digital curated cabinet.

The course culminates in the participants' presentation of their own digital curio cabinet.

**The Saddest Thing Is
That I Have Had to Use Words**

Optional BFA level course

Credits: 6

Teachers: Ingrid Furre
Kah Bee Chow

Participants: Isabella Nicole Best
Johan Buch
Ludvig Holm
Maja Dahlström-Horvath
Felicia Jartelius
Julia Sol Schenk
Matilda Kenttä
Sæunn la Cour Degnbol
Markus Lipsøe
Claudia Munro
Anna Filipa Moberg
Fiona Alberte
Nina Fjordbak Nielsen
Luis Ooppel
Cecilie Mark
Lavinia Samson
Susi Schmid
Martin Sjöberg
Albert Willim

Presentation of the architects/artists/writers Arakawa and Gins's work, which aimed to increase mental and bodily awareness. Their buildings were designed to train the occupant to "not die" through built features including uneven and undulating floors, unusual shifts in scale, and vibrant colour combinations, intended to make the occupant confront their body and senses.

Day 1: Choose an item of clothing to wear to class for its texture, for how it feels against your skin, hair, scalp, feet, etc. This can be something particularly uncomfortable or pleasurable, up to you. "Where we are" writing exercises to help train our attention on being present: we ask the students to write about how they made their way to the classroom this morning within a set time of seven minutes. We follow with another prompt: how do you perceive this room for seven minutes, and so on. After the writing exercise, we ask the students what their chosen item of clothing was and why they chose it (task from first day). From this discussion, we expand to considerations of materials that are produced in Malmö, Skåne, and the surrounding region. What does our immediate landscape look and feel like? What is the kind of architecture we are housed in right now? Presentation of artists who work with their "home" as a studio: Kurt Schwitters, Andrea Zittel, Jewyo Rhii, Marc Camille Chaimowicz, Jan Matson, etc. Discussions in smaller groups on how the spaces you live and work in affect your practice.

Day 2: Provide a link, image, artist, or artwork that is evocative of touch for you, or relates to our discussions and exercises thus far. You can email them to us in advance of the next class to include in the morning slideshow.

Day 3: Site visit to exhibition A: site visit to a relevant exhibition in Malmö. After viewing the exhibition, we task the students with recalling specifics of the exhibition, sketching the layout of the exhibition on paper (floor plan printed on A4), writing a list of materials, processes, and observations. After sharing these sketches and observations, we will go through the exhibition together to "see" what we missed and also read it together.

Day 4: Presentation of students' links, images, etc. Morning: Presentations of students' links, images, etc., and discussions. Afternoon: Presentation of artists who actively worked with limitations, such as Takako Saito, Ana Mendieta, Iza Tarasewicz, and Francis Alÿs. Discussion of concerns we have about size, weight, fragility, further sustainability, budget, storing, etc. Task for the next day: We ask students to bring two materials they deem good and bad to the class tomorrow—we ask them to explain what determines these categories.

Day 5: Material as categorically evil: from Linnaeus to the minimalist maxim "truth to material" to the proliferations of moss-as-material as art entering its "ecological" turn, we unpack the contemporary reading-of material alongside the making-with material.

What is extractive? What is “good”? What are desires? What are demands? What is “purity”? What is “natural”? What nourishes? What harms? If there is no “ethical consumption under capitalism,” should one do anything at all? Sometimes it appears the only “right” thing to do is to do nothing at all. Every possible action risks complicity, mistakes, waste of time, energy, and resources. With this session, we wish to stay with the complications and complexities of working with physical materials in our current times and also to

practise and emphasise multiple ways of looking at a material, a process and our engagement with it.

Day 6, 7, and 8: Studio work. Each student works in their studio and prepares for a presentation.

Day 9 and 10: Group discussions. Each student presents their work/work-in-progress. The rest of the group discuss their response to the material and forms of the work. The artist who is presenting does not speak until later.

**The Autonomy of Art:
Examining Art’s Role in a Democratic Society**

Optional BFA level course

Credits: 15

Teacher: Joakim Sandqvist

Participants: Sebastian Adolfsson
Rasheh Sadr Ashkevari
Peter Bidstrup
Johan Buch
Niki Cervin
Lasse Schmidt Hansen
Julia Sol Schenk
Maya Krtić
Markus Lipsøe
Line Rolf
Claudia Munro
Luis Oppel
Isaac Rizell
Liva Stare
Mingsheng Xu

In 2021, the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis (Kulturanalys) published a study on artistic freedom and the arm’s-length principle, concluding that parts of state-grant allocation is governed and implemented with detrimental effect on artistic freedom and that there is a lack of understanding and application of the arm’s-length principle at regional and municipal levels. The report sparked a recent discussion in Sweden about artistic freedom and autonomy both within the media and in academic circles, most notably the “counter report” written by three researchers at Södertörns Högskola.

The concept of the autonomy of art has been debated ever since it was formulated by Immanuel Kant in *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790) and elaborated by the Romantic philosopher Friedrich Schiller in the *Kallias Letters* (1793). The debate surrounding the autonomy of art has significantly evolved since the eighteenth century. Thinkers such as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels critiqued the idea, emphasising that art cannot be detached from the material and social conditions in which it is created. In contrast, the *l’art pour l’art* (“art for art’s sake”) movement, championed by figures like Oscar Wilde, asserted the independence of art from moral, political, or utilitarian functions. Later, the Frankfurt School, with thinkers like Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin, offered critical reflections on art’s autonomy, highlighting its complex relationship with culture and capitalism. More recently, the concept has been further scrutinised through feminist, postcolonial, and institutional critiques, each challenging art’s supposed independence in favour of examining its embeddedness in power structures and societal dynamics.

In the course, we will read texts to trace this history from the eighteenth century to today and explore limitations and possibilities to see if there is something that is not exhausted through these critiques of the once, and maybe still, radical concept of an autonomous art, and how it could be redefined today. We will also discuss the relationship and difference between artists and arts autonomy as well as the history of public funding for art.

We will meet in seminars to engage in close readings and discussions of the texts. Each text should be read individually before the meeting. Additionally, students are expected to prepare by highlighting or marking paragraphs they wish to discuss and/or formulating questions to pose to the group.

Analysing Your Own Work

Optional MFA level course

Credits: 7.5

Teacher: Gertrud Sandqvist

Participants: Gunvor Lind Balslev
Andrea Sitara Gran
Noah von Hauswolff
Othilia Hoby Leth
Fredrika Lindeberg
Klara Paulin-Rosell

The aim is to provide the students with deepened knowledge and insight in both the artistic field that their work will be a part of and the history of how that field has developed. To integrate analytical knowledge into their own artistic work, special attention will be given to both spoken and written language. The course aim is to enhance the students' ability to formulate and show a well-motivated artistic wholeness. The goal is for the students to develop a deepened understanding of artistic work.

Form a Form That Forms a Form:**Experimental Casting Course**

Optional BFA level course

Credits: 9

Teacher: Gabriel Karlsson

Participants: Julia Karla
Hannes Nilsson
Cecilie Mark
Anania Røde
Petra Maria Scott
Rasmus Strøyer
Marius Poika Valtanen
Albert Willim

The craft of mould-making and casting can be traced far back in time and has been used in many ways: from shaping ceramic vessels to the production of industrial components, from the meticulous systematisation of animals/plants to the mapping of archaeological sites, from the manufacturing of church bells to the endless reproduction of everyday objects. Casting has also had an important function in art history as a tool for creating, reproducing, and transferring information from one material to another.

I see mould-making as a kind of meditation that provides the opportunity to approach something from a new perspective, via a material process. By giving something time and attention, a relationship arises where material and object begin to dictate their own will. The process of working with a material thus generates new ways of thinking and seeing; material and object, form and content seem to be closely connected concepts.

The purpose of the course is to individually explore one or some specifically selected materials and, via practical and theoretical research, get an understanding of the inner logic of the material(s) and how this can be used as a conceptual framework.

In addition to basic materials such as clay, gypsum, silicone, and wax, the course provides, among other things, jesmonite, pigment, paraffin, latex, porcelain casting slip, and moulding sand.

Documenting Your Own Work
Mandatory BFA/MFA level course
Credits: 7.5
Teachers: Youngjae Lih
 Maria Hedlund
 Johan Österholm

Participants: Sebastian Poras Adolfsson
 Rasheh Sadr Ashkevari
 Loke Berg
 Isabella Nicole Best
 Niki Cervin
 Julia Karla
 Elliot Hjälmrud
 Maja Dahlström-Horvath
 Cecilie Kappel
 Marilda Kenttä
 Maya Krtić
 Sæunn la Cour Degnbol
 Benita Massignani
 Line Rolf
 Anna Filippa Moberg
 Felix Emmanuel
 Isaac Rizell
 Anania Røde
 Liva Stare
 Susi Schmid
 Martin Sjöberg
 MIngsheng Xu

Photo studio: We will go through "general" camera settings, how to use a grey card, light settings on flat and three-dimensional objects, and discuss common obstacles and how to overcome them. In preparation for photographing installation views, we will discuss natural light vs portable studio light and look at examples of both. We will also document work in motion and reflective works. Computer room: We will look into how to get a good digital workflow: screen calibration; Photoshop editing and RAW-file processing; correcting exposure, white balance, and lens distortion in one's work; merging images with different exposures and removing unwanted objects like dirt from the floor and walls, emergency signs, etc.; straightening lines; creating a seamless sequence of images.

The purpose of the 3D-rendering class in the second week is to prepare students to use rendering tools (SketchUp/Maya) for model-building to flesh out ideas and present their works in a timely manner, use V-Ray for SketchUp or Arnold for Maya to create renderings with proper lighting and photo realism, also learning to use rendering-tool layouts to create presentations including the renders, floor plans, sections, and elevations in an organised manner. Students are expected to take notes, review the videos, and practise the instructions given in class. It is the students' responsibility to further look into subjects that will be touched upon in class. These include but are not limited to documentation, lighting, and digital-space design.

Teaching takes place primarily in laboratory form with ongoing supervision. After an initial technical review, the students may carry out their own projects. The course can end with a presentation of these projects.

Manufacturing the Imaginary:**Cinema and the End of Work**

Optional BFA level course

Credits: 3

Teachers: Marie Muracciole

Amin Zouiten

Participants:

Peter Bidstrup

Johan Buch

Elliot Hjalmsrud

Ludvig Holm

Markus Lipsøe

Fiona Alberte

Nina Fjordbak Nielsen

Luis Oppel

Petra Maria Scott

Anna Filippa Moberg

Upon completion of the course, the student will be able to explain the first film screening in Sweden (which happened in Malmö) and its connection to the industrial fair where it was shown and Malmö's status as an industrial city, linking this to the early history of film.

The aim of the course is to get an understanding of the first film shown in a commercial screening, which took place on 28 December 1895: in *Workers Leaving the Factory* by the Lumière Brothers, workers are seen walking out a large door before it closes. On screen, with their bosses as the film's directors, it looks like a one-shot capture. In real life, they had to repeat it three times for the camera. They were workers and representations, or samples, or actors. At the time of the industrial revolution, workers were in high demand to the point that their entire lives were designed for productivity. This drew a clear line between a whole night of sleep and a long day of work. Sleep became half of life, a distinct regimen to serve work, productivity, and consumerism. The Lumière staff would ideally soon end their day's work and go to the movies. Movies that would aim to "entertain" them: its Latin etymology means "to hold together."

With time, workers have become outdated commodities. Larger profits come from financial flux. Many factories have closed (and were sometimes transformed into museums).

The actual production was often displaced to faraway countries with more accommodating laws—where nobody could see how workers were treated. The invisibility of work, its different levels of automation, are nowadays largely questioned. In their film-making, artists like Chris Marker, Allan Sekula, Wang Bing, Sharon Lockhart, and Marie Voignier deal with different ecologies of work. Records of human relationship to time, domination, and exploitation are challenging our capacity to think and relate to the way we share life—with different species and with the planet.

Current and graduating students

Bachelor of Fine Arts—Year 1

Peter Bidstrup
Johan Buch
Lasse Schmidt Hansen
Ludvig Holm
Felicia Jartelius
Jacob Linholdt Nielsen
Markus Lipsøe
Claudia Munro
Nina Fjordbak Nielsen
Petra Maria Scott
Hannes Nilsson
Julia Sol Schenk
Martin Sjöberg
Marius Poika Valtanen
Albert Willim

Bachelor of Fine Arts—Year 2

Isabella Nicole Best
Anna Filippa Moberg
Niki Cervin
Sæunn la Cour Degnbol
Elliot Hjälmrud
Alma Holtvedt Exchange out
Maja Dahlström-Horvath
Sarah Folker Kappel
Fiona Alberte Exchange student
Emilio Marroquin Exchange out
Felix Emmanuel
Isaac Rizell
Vio Rossi
Liva Stare
Søren Katborg-Vestergaard
Exchange student
Mingsheng Xu
Vivian Zamora Exchange student

Bachelor of Fine Arts—Year 3

Mads Skarsteen Andersen
Loke Berg
Gunvor Lind Balslev
Benedikte Nøstvik Eide
Adrian-Alicia Bisell Gonzalez
Noah von Hausswolff
Cecilie Kappel
Othilia Hoby Leth
Malthe Jos Lundquist
Flavia Murillo Exchange student
Ulla Marie Ottosen Exchange student
Jelena Pajić
Klara Paulin-Rosell
Lavinia Samson
Felix Schéele

Master of Fine Arts—Year 1

Sebastian Poras Adolfsson
Rasheh Sadr Ashkevari
Andrea Sitara Gran
Jithu George
Julia Karla
Siri Hammarén
Matilda Kenttä
Kyusang Kim
Exchange student
Lassi Kontiainen
Maya Krtić
Fredrika Lindeberg
Benita Massignani
Sturla Magnusson
Cecilie Mark
Line Rolf
Anania Røde
Susi Schmid
Rasmus Strøyer

Master of Fine Arts—Year 2

Ylva Kublik Borg
Felix Christiansson
Es Gandrup
Thomas Udomrat Hostrup
Johnny Höglund
Ingrid Jacobsen
Johan Mørkøre Nordskar
Maria Nadia Nour
Emily Orlet
Anna Pezzoli
Stella Sieber
Sigrid Soomus
Marcus Wallström
Vigga Wehrens
Hannes Östlund

Master of Artistic Research—Year 2

Orestis Mavroudis

PhD Candidates

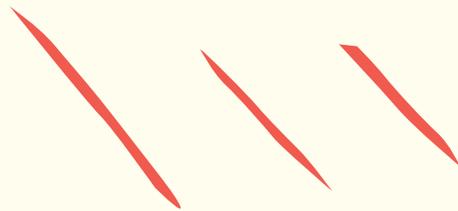
Sven Augustijnen
Yael Bartana
Jürgen Bock
Bouchra Khalili
Jacob Korczynski
Emily Wardill

Master of Fine Arts—Year 2

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Jelena Pajić
Klara Paulin-Rosell
Lavinia Samson
Felix Scheele



Master of Artistic Research—Year 2

Orestis Mavroudis

PhD Candidates

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