

## **What Are You Working On? / Vad Har Du På Gång?**

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# **What Are You Working On? / Vad Har Du På Gång?**

*by Hanna Ljungh & Ulrika Sparre*



*foreword*

What are you working on? / Vad har du på gång?—a popular phrase at any given art opening. “What are you working on?” Where one’s individual answer is the definition of one’s self-justification. I act, produce and think; therefore, I am. The WAYWO project is a self-fulfilling journey through the contemporary art process. I define what I do; therefore, I am. We, artists Hanna Ljungh and Ulrika Sparre, initiated the project *What are you working on? / Vad har du på gång? / WAYWO* in 2012 fueled by our common search.

Sparre’s work investigates mechanisms, behaviors and social patterns which constitute our lives. She explores subjects such as individuality, the impact of development towards individualism and consumerism in contemporary society. She is also interested in how non-religious and scientific beliefs are expressed in today’s more secularized, Western society. Ljungh’s work often circles around dominant concepts of interpretation. In her work, she questions ideas revolving around science, as well as how human observation forms all that is not man-made. In her ongoing work *Vivisections*, she stages investigations, such as geological excavation, where she treats scientific subject matter with subjective motives.

In 2012, the exhibition “we are *still* lost between the abyss within us and

boundless horizons outside us” (Ljungh & Sparre) featured a selection of both artists’ work which began a dialogue. These discussions then became the foundation for the project *What are you working on? / Vad har du på gång? / WAYWO*. Together, we wish to discuss cultural practices and examine how time is valued in our current era—more specifically, how the expectation of renewal pervades both society and the art world. In 2012, we introduced art critic and writer Jacquelyn Davis into the dialogue, which led to her becoming this publication’s editor. The aim is to continuously work together with invited theorists, artists, writers, curators and others to conduct a close study of the concept of time and the ‘contemporary.’ We hope to allow room for ranging disciplines to meet and collide—in an attempt to say something more about the present and contemporary thinking.

During the *Art-Athina* Platform Project in 2013, WAYWO participated by presenting videos and on-site interviews, presenting the initial question: “What are you working on?” Later that year in the exhibition “Vad har du på gång?” which occurred at Husby Konsthall, Ljungh and Sparre initiated the thought and potential problem through their site-specific sculpture *Seize the Day* (2013). At Husby Konsthall, their collaborative sculpture was created, resembling in form a monumental, infinite hourglass. Visitors were invited to climb a ladder and replenish sand into the infinite hourglass, then sand would trickle down to the floor. The act could be seen as an individual’s ability to physically influence time.

In the 2013 exhibition at Husby Konsthall, we invited Polish artist Zuzanna Janin to present her work *I’ve Seen My Death, Ceremony / Games*

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*Art-Athina Platform Project (2013). Image : Hanna Ljungh & Ulrika Sparre.*

(2003) where Janin participated by simulating her own funeral procession. On April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2003, Janin published obituaries in several Polish newspapers; then on April 7<sup>th</sup>, she was “laid to rest” in the Warsaw Cemetery. Only a scant few treated the work as a subversive form of expression capable of promoting the contemplation of existential, philosophical questions which encouraged an honest discussion of death. Furthermore, Lars-Erik Hjertström Lappalainen is an art critic with a background in philosophy. For the *WAYWO* exhibition, he contributed a new text “Do or Die, Die!” which is presented in this publication.

With the *WAYWO* project, we wish to examine how time is valued in present time and contemporary terms. Why do we value short-term projects? Does this way of thinking stem from an entrepreneurial form of thinking—where short-term planning and perspectives are now viewed as the norm? There will always be something or someone new to follow. What was made yesterday is—more often than not—already forgotten.

In many cities, it has become popular for exhibitions to remain open only for opening night and, perhaps, the following weekend. Then, the audience disappears and continues to the next party. “The majority of artists participating in these short-term exhibitions often present works made with limited resources. Part of this tradition is that there is no budget and no curatorial thoughts.”<sup>1</sup> Is short-termism also linked to economic conditions? Young, unestablished artists are expected to make art without resources—combined with a demand to constantly create something new: a new product or new

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1 *Walk of Shame* (2011)—exhibition text by Line Halvorsen.



Ulrika Sparre, *On a Clear Day I Can See Forever* (2013).

Image : Fredrik Sweger.



thought.

How does contemporary art emerge as an infinite perspective? Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman describes in his book *Liquid Fear* (2006) that people who avoid thinking about the eternal, minimize the risk of considering thoughts of their own death. Thoughts about our own mortality and infinity are given less significance, something which is obvious—for example: in politics. Expressions such as “seize the day” reinforce our sense of immortality and reduce thoughts of our own disappearance; when this finally takes place, however, there remains an explainable cause of death.

Are monuments previously erected to perpetuate history now preceded by continuous short-term, individual manifestations? According to a study *To Believe Is Not To Know* (2003),<sup>2</sup> fear of death is greater amongst art practitioners than in ‘general’ society. Let us pose the question: has our view of time, eternity and long-term thinking changed? Is this the reason why the short-term project has become a guideline for many contemporary artists? Why do many eagerly expect a new thought or new work?

Which is to blame: our fear of dying or lack of time? The more projects one has going on, the more one is able to justify being alive. When one is recognized as working on something, one is more certain to feel immortal. I have something going on; therefore, I am.

Constant, short-term, time frames within social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, emails (all used in the art world), as well as fast, commercial strategies aim to generate intellectual and economical surplus in the

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2 Ulrika Sparre’s MA project while at *Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design*.



Hanna Ljungh, *Vivisection VI: Honour and Exorcism* (2013).

Image : Fredrik Sweger.

shortest periods of time possible. Social and environmental structures do not allow people to think in a long-term manner. Of course, this is a result of an economical perspective where waste, in terms of material goods, is seen as having economic value as it increases growth in terms of expanded consumption. To think sustainably (long-term) does not possess the same economic value. So: could this be the primary reason why we want to go to art parties—because we harbor the expectation that we will indeed perceive something new? We agree: this reflects our own immortality.

To paraphrase Lars-Erik Hjertström Lappalainen in his text: *in art, this manifests itself in the way that people care less about artistry than about the artist's latest project—time is shorter and scarcer*. Perhaps, the WAYWO project can be seen as a self-fulfilling prophecy, where we are unable to think outside the project itself. We work within the project's structure; it starts with an idea, then a discussion, project description, exhibition, publication and lastly: archive. Additionally, Jan Rydén summates in *The Eternal State of Being Busy: the art world is a part of this cult of the process. Since we have abandoned the idea of progress in favor of process, it is no longer realistic to believe in utopian ideas*. What remains? A constant flux of the now—we have no option but to work on short-term projects.

And how does one consider different velocities? The critique and analysis of art does not possess the same speed as Twitter, Facebook or blogs. Due to a lack of time, art critiques rarely go viral. How does an artwork exist speed-wise? What velocity does art have? When an artwork does go viral, it is almost always categorized as a scandal or provocation. There is an

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Hanna Ljungh & Ulrika Sparre, *Seize the Day* (2013). Image : Fredrik Sweger.

expectation that art must be slower in pace—more thoughtful, thought through. How does this align with a highly accelerated mode or method of production? Examining a project for art production begins with an examination of time. A project begins when artists divide their practice into shorter, more manageable pieces of time—where clear deadlines and transparent structures exist. This tends to create distance between the artist and the creative act—an urge to make art more scientific and research-based. A scientific mind is the norm in Western thinking where, in the end, everything must be proven in order to be understood or validated. The ‘emotional’ and ‘poetic’ are given less or no significance, but when present, they must fit within a project’s guidelines.

Through the *WAYWO* project, we wish to highlight the potential problem of how the contemporary mindset affects outlooks, expectations and artistic practices of artists and creatives—as well as the perception of art as product, production or process.





# **And Then, In Here**

*by Harold Abramowitz*





It was one, or it was the other. That much, and violence. If you were a prince. That was the way the picture wanted to go. To put up its fists and fight. But we were broken for the way we spoke of mediation. As if your color was better than anyone else's. It was in the way we looked at time. It told us all sorts of things. I was walking. I was eating food from the palm of my hand. And then I wondered what the point was. Troubling times. It is the force that folds the violence, that calls us names. I am a junior lying in my casket. And that was before you believed in me. What I would then say to you is about the state of my heart. I was a child, a junior. But babies call each other things all the time. And the way we are falling now is even more meaningful than it was at first. But who knows. It takes all kinds. And then bright colors. And then you are feeding me feeling.

And then you want to tell me that the world is this way or that way. I was walking on my knees. I put my hands in my pockets. And then you asked me something. I ran out of the house, crying. I put my hands in my pockets and told you that I was going to feel much better.

This becomes the summer much better than anything else. That was an old pattern. But then they call it behavior. A violent struggle. It was beyond

belief. I would say it was. It was in the way you looked at me. I was in the hall, and I had my guns out. I was turning red. It was all the time. There was no way we could find our way around the room. I put a better face on this by asking what the red in the room was all about. So you wanted to say to me. There were various faces. It was funny to put it all together. That much. I was telling you. There were a few of them in the house. I was walking in the hall. I wanted to run, but I kept thinking the same old things. I was in the bedroom first. I was putting my best foot forward.

And, even then, I might have felt better about myself had I been able to see things clearly. And then I was finding out a little bit more. It was hurting me. I could see myself turning around, or away. There was the prettiest angel on the ceiling. This was exactly like the way it was supposed to be. I kept asking for things, and no one could hear me. I thought a lot about you. And then I was turning around. There was a monster in the doorway. I couldn't believe that you were who you said you were. I wanted to have something to eat. It was a warm day. I thought that I believed in you. It was the morning. I was wanting a lot of things, at that point. I was in the hall, and I thought that I would say something to you. I would move forwards and then backwards. I would put my best foot forward. But that was because of the way I was looking forward to things. I couldn't believe that there was something in there.

There was someone waiting there. I had to put my head down. It was not funny because the time was moving by so quickly. Then I suddenly fell apart. It was up to me. I looked up and down the street. I felt like I could

accurately survey the whole situation just by looking around. I started to move very slowly. I wanted to find out how much things would cost. It was sort of incredible to think that this could be taken for that. There was a mirror in the hall. I think my face was burning. And what do you think the chances are of hearing some good news today? I asked. I was waiting for my dreams to come true. But they called it violence. It was the market. The way things moved from one hand to the next. In time for dinner. You could see me from where you were sitting on the couch. I was wondering about the ways of the world, or rather, origins, how the world was born. I am old, I thought. I am thinking a million things at one time. And the river runs in the house and there are all kinds of demons that run after me and torture me. All because of the way things become when they think of death, I said. Your heart is all of a flame. You put your glasses on and wait for me by the furnace, the fire. I was in flames already. I couldn't wait because I was angry and hungry and looking for a fight.

I am tired, I said, of being vague. There was a kernel of truth in the house. I put my goldfish up for sale. They were rare and valuable and I used to love and take care of them. I heard you say that you were angry, that I had burned myself down too quickly. I protested that I had never been comfortable in that place. That I had continually put myself in the worst positions. Because of the way you looked at me. I forgot what I was going to say. I wanted to tell you that you were exactly what you thought you were, but I am in the house, and then I am in the hall and none of it matches or makes any kind of sense. It is a little bit like a fraud, or a swindle, I think.

The way you talk.

I confess that I collect things, but then there is an authorization process that takes place. A way to make me believe that I am on the right track. I say, for instance, that you are Romeo and Juliet. I pick my stick up off the ground. It is a perfect day. There is a pile of potentially good and usable items left by the side of the road. I can't believe my face looks just the way I say it does. But, then, I barely know you. If I could picture you, I think I would know you better. But then you ask me for money. I am sitting in my room. I see that the walls are painted a very pleasant color. I can't believe it, though, when I am looking at you. If only I were to become someone else, I think. I think I am very happy sitting here at the café table, looking at all the people, looking at all the life as it passes me by. The day is young, and there really is little else that I need to be doing, at this point. I really wish that I could see your face when I wake up each morning. Each and every day there is some kind of scene. We make a scene between us. And then we barely make it. You can't put your face in the water so suddenly, I think. You can't just make things happen that way.

So, when you are standing there, and it feels very emotional to say that we are in here, in this house together. I was walking down the street. And it would be as violent just about anywhere else, I thought, anywhere else in the world that I would care to go. Whatever the excuse might be. I don't know why I would even want to resist. I could tell you the things I know. I was waiting to be called to duty by the gods or whatever other force there was that had a similar power over people. I wanted people to pay attention

to me, but we were all very distracted, at that point. I pointed my gun. It was not nice, and I was not a very nice person. But I wanted to be able to say that there was something in the world for me. I could have said the same thing. You could have said the same thing. I should have stayed inside that day. But on the outside it is funny that people are free, I think. I look up and say, Boo! I want to stare at the sun all day. There is nothing else I am doing, at this point. And this, in spite of what people are thinking and talking about at any given time.

You might have asked me what I was waiting for. It was a quiet day. I was standing on the street. There was a lot to do. And the people in this part of town are extremely well-rounded, I thought. "Why, with a little bit more money ..." I started to say to a stranger passing by. You are standing on the same part of the street as I am. In the same part of the city. And it was as if you were going to turn me around. Hey, I was just another face in the crowd, at that point. We both were. I put you in my dreams for just that reason, I thought. The question remained, though. So this was in a building, and the building was many stories high. Something I was wondering. How life was easy. How nothing is easy at first. It was funny to say that the thing was true, that life was easy, that nothing is easy at first, whether it was true or not. In any case, the day was making me feel like a failure. I put on my favorite song, then I suddenly realized that I was put here for a reason.

And no matter what I want to ask you about, I say. I say that I am feeling a little bit stung by your indifference to my mystery. At first, of course, there was nothing wrong with the way you saw me. My violence.

What I was going to do or say in the first place. What I was going to say in the first place was that I was glad to be there. In that place. There could have been so much more, though. Or that's what I thought. What I was thinking, at that point. I was thinking for a purpose, a reason. And whatever you said to me was true. It was going to be quite alright in the end. However, I was starting to look and act like a real phony. There was something really phony about the way I felt. I think I just stood and stared for a really long time. And then I found myself standing in the hall. It was a bad dream. I set all of the things that I had in my pockets in a row on the shelf. And if I get to live anywhere else, I thought in my dream, it would be in a house on a cliff, overlooking the ocean. I think that I would like to live in a house with a view of the ocean. And then I am seeing you clearly for the very first time. There was something new in the room. In the world. In the way we moved from place to place. I was shaking with excitement for what I knew to be true. How I could cover my own steps, if I wanted to. And I was already stepping very delicately, very gingerly, I thought. And in that very special way that only I knew. In fact, I could tell you. I could reach out and touch you, too, I thought. Inasmuch, as that was also true. It was what I said it would be. I had to look all over the place to find my scarf. It was all very colorful. Just like someone might have said. Here are all the landmarks, I thought. I asked myself whether I wanted something to eat. I could have said that that was also true for anyone else in my position, for anyone else in the room, or in the world. But I put my fists up because I was looking for a fight. I don't really fight all that often, I said.

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And I was asking you questions. It was a funny thing to say, at that point. Then I looked at the door closing. It was summer. I was living in the city at the time. I thought I could hear you moving. It was funny to walk around the city. I could see you from where I was sitting in front of the café. But I think I was in a panic. There was something there. Or some reason or another that I had to imagine. I was facing panic. Still, I always had something to say. I think the emotion of the moment was getting to me. I thought, perhaps, about too many bad things. Why, I asked myself, would I think about so many bad things. I remembered bad things. I imagined bad things. And then I asked myself whether or not I was even a good person. I put my hands in my pockets. And then I remembered to ask you. It was in the city and there were a lot of good things to look forward to. I wasn't afraid of the weather. I put my hands in my pockets. I tried to remember how I was supposed to use my fingers. I polished all the brass around my room. It was morning. I was feeling splendid. I didn't think it would be wise to do anything too differently, not at that point. Then I asked you what you wanted. I was putting my best foot forward. I would think, I said. I would provide for you, I said. And that was my mistake. I took a deep breath. There is a reason that I find the things I am looking for so quickly, I thought. I needed a nap. I put my foot out. I put my best foot forward.



~

It was in the morning and there was radar. You live on a shelf. And all afternoon I had you in my sights. I was filled with vision. There was definitely something there. In the morning. I was trying out any number of different things. I was putting my best foot forward. And then I saw you. I thought that I would turn to you. I remember that I was in the city. I could not remember anything better than that, better than what I wanted to say. I could hear you. I could even see you. But, then, I would have to have turned my head. I live very much lower. Or perhaps I live near. Or perhaps none of it matters. Or all of it, except the turning around. And then what I suspect to be the truth. And the truth, it turns out, is so unexpected.

Maybe I liken you to an angel. I might be seeing you sitting over there. The folds in your hands. I like to stress that this is an angel I am thinking of. I like to think that I remember that garment. The specific folds in his garment. I put my foot forward each time I take a walk. And things get slower. There is the ribbon. There is a kind of book. And then there is isolation. You are my benefactor. And I say that the truth is strange. It takes me a lot longer to beg. I have my pride, you know.

~

In the city they like to say that I am on my knees. If I put my foot down,

I will think of a million things to do, and usually all at one time. I step this way and that way. There is so much to do. I can even say there is trouble. I like to smell trouble. Or this is what I say. Your money comes at me. I value a car over a dish. I am perverse for thinking so. Am I on the ground? This is my neck and my shoulders. What I might have told you was the first thing on my mind. It is ringing in my neck. And every time I turn around I see that you can see me.

It was a specific day in the city. There was a bright sky. I folded my hands and legs. I might have told you something. Some lie. It does depend on the way you sit and where you put your feet, how you cross your legs. If I was in the city. If I wanted to say something to you. It was going to rain. And then your intention. Like a little bit bad. You just don't know where anyone comes from. I lived in the city and then I put my hands in my pockets and decided that I was going to take a walk. It was an unparalleled level of intensity. The best and the worst of things all at one time. I feel that my fingers are too small. It was just a dream. There was no telling. I don't think I believe what I see at this point.

Then each section of the city calls to me. I have to go and not kick and scream quite as much as I am used to. I want to fight the feeling. That much is true. If I have to put my feet forward. I say that I am fighting. I am committed to fighting. And things being as such. If I was going to go and see you one day, even though I was fighting a feeling of panic. I put my thoughts towards good things. I could feel the pandemonium come and want to get me. I put these giant feet I had forward and started running

because I was so scared. And that's not all. I looked bad. I felt bad. I was in the current situation solely because of my own arrogance.

And if need be, I would drop. I was almost not able to see the sun. It was so cloudy. There were so many tears. And there was heat. And there was a move I made. I was in motion. I put my best foot forward. The whole world was watching. I was a star. It was in the middle of all of this thinking that I asked you if you wanted to get married. It didn't matter what you said. I could hear what you were thinking. And to think that I was in the middle of it all. I had my hands up just enough to shield my face from the sun. Yesterday seems like such a long time ago, I thought. And it's funny in here. Your language as a result of my feeling. I was on time. I met the moment head-on. There was no tomorrow. But to make that much, or to mean that much. In the end, I was going to come around. I was going to see myself through. It is like they say in the movies. You belong home. I was not going to find myself in difficult positions anymore. I had to vow to that to believe that it could possibly be true. But I don't have a concept of such things, I said.

Not really, I said.

And you were going to say that I was first married because of how bad things looked. So I looked up at the sky and there was a lot to say and do. The capital even. It was like a dream even. My mind on the breaks and the places that I felt I could go, if I had to. You weren't what I wanted in the end. That was clear. And then it will be tonight, but all of us need the company. How could you let yourself slip so badly. It was like poison or it was like the worst door that was opening and closing and causing us all kinds of disease.

So I was looking at where I might have been. I think slowly. I think dead. I think all the same things all the time. And this because the world is what it is and I don't have to ask you anything. Not then, not when I was putting my best foot forward.

And it is not idiotic in the least.

But it was incredible. To be looking up so quickly. Like I was used to the way things were. People in cars. An urban area. A city, if you will. And then I was asking about some of the things you were familiar with. You wanted to say that to me. I could explain that tomorrow was okay too. Peace of mind. A hidden spot. This is what they tell me. And if the birds don't make me run. And if I am sitting here and wondering what the next move is. I couldn't tell a lie, not then, not at that point. But I do want to say to you that there is a place in the road and we could get to that place. I think I have to believe in all the things I smell. Even all the things in the grocery store. There is much to live for. I would think the trail is strong. The scent of the trail. This is what I tell you. If there is a reason for it. For what I might say to you. But the challenge is to move successfully from one place to the next. I am not the boss of my situation at all. Not if I want to be. But then there is summer to think about, too.



# **Does Time Really Matter?**

*by Paulina Olszewska*



What does my day look like? I wake up around 7 a.m.—sometimes 8 a.m. Once a week, I go swimming, so occasionally, I drag myself out of bed at 6 a.m. instead. I eat breakfast. Coffee is obligatory. Then, I sit at my computer. I research, read articles, answer, write emails. Lunch (if I have time). I arrange meetings for the afternoon. In the evening: openings, lectures, talks, sometimes dinner with friends who are in Berlin. If not, I stay at home, write articles or prepare project proposals. Often, I go to bed long after midnight. The next day will start soon.

Who am I? Answer: unemployed.

Last year, I had a Skype conversation with Swedish artist Ulrika Sparre about time. Actually, the whole conversation was about me—winning because I was more busy, because I suffered from lack of time. Last year was tough indeed. I had a ‘regular’ job which helped pay rent but was not satisfying. Therefore, I involved myself in other projects to fulfill my hunger for new experiences and achievements.



Shortly before Christmas, I was fired. My reaction was similar to Hannah's, the main character from "Girls" (the HBO TV series): "I got fired so I could receive my unemployment, because mama is going to need that unemployment." I felt relieved. Finally, I would have time to do everything I wanted to do. I imagined that I wouldn't use an alarm clock. I would read books, take walks on Tempelhof, do things I wanted to do but never found time to do. I would prepare applications for residencies and grants, which I wanted to both do and receive. I would have time—time which I only dreamt about.

When New Years holiday was over, everything returned to normal. I discovered that my lifestyle supported by employment versus unemployment was not so different. I still struggle with the problem: lack of time. My pile of unread books did not decrease; training shoes were covered with dust; applications were not sent; I rarely left my computer before midnight.

I began thinking about this situation—intensely analyzing. I suffer from a lack of time; perhaps, I shouldn't?

I began to pay attention to people surrounding me and those I occasionally met. I discovered that no matter what they were doing (or not doing), everyone appeared to be busy. Their answers to the polite, seemingly insignificant question, "How are you?" resembled ten-minute monologues where they explained how busy they were—what they finished, what they were working on, what their plans were and, "Sorry! There is no time for coffee

any time soon because I am busy; I don't even have time to eat or sleep." No matter what, sooner or later, conversations led to the "What are you working on?" topic. Sooner rather than later.

Such remarks have before escaped my mouth. The more I pay attention to my answers, the more I realize how I mimic a similar pattern. Words unconsciously leave my mouth, even before I think about the answer.

I notice that no one readily admits to having nothing to do. No plans, no work at the moment. Only free time. Words from some well-known song *I'm wasting my time, I got nothing to do* never surface in conversation. Even if there was time off or a break, it was used for a reason or purpose.

It appears that having free, unplanned, unorganized, unmanaged time is shameful. Therefore, we do our best to pretend that we are engaged.

In our culture—more precisely, in arts and culture circles—having free time is associated with doing nothing. In a sense, free time is equated with being lazy, unproductive, not-so-clever, lacking creativity. Generally speaking: unsuccessful. Time must be occupied and wisely used; otherwise, we are losers. There is no inbetween.

A specific, social and professional hierarchy based upon time has been crafted. The more one works, the more successful one should be. It entails social

and professional status. The less time we have for others, the more powerful we ought to be.

Most of us cannot pinpoint when we started playing the ‘being busy’ game, where we try to appear occupied, to value achievements and show successes. Why do it? What is the reason? Are we afraid that if we don’t play this game, we will be sentenced to social or professional ostracism? Would we be excluded from the social circus? Nobody will greet or kiss us, shake our hands or talk with us? We would be plagued with an invisible sign reading: *Do Not Come Closer*.

While thinking about this situation, I found it difficult to recall moments when I had nothing to do. By nothing I mean *nothing*. I do not mean so-called ‘free time’ used to accomplish tasks, but instead: where I am in a situation cut off from *all* activities: both physical and intellectual. No acting. No thinking.

Complete separation from activities, impulses and thoughts is not only impossible to achieve but awkward. Facing a certain situation, where one has nothing to do, a difficult feeling arises. Discomfort appears; one feels lost and frustrated. As if we are programmed to be occupied and busy. In English, German and even in my native language Polish, the phrase ‘to kill time’ exists; it is used to describe activities (mostly useless ones) which occupy free time, thereby encouraging time to move faster. As if time was enemy #1.

Should we kill time—especially free time—to get rid of it? Totally?

Many individuals are overwhelmed by information, both received and in need of analysis. In a person's professional and private life, surfacing problems are connected with a lack of concentration or multitasking gone awry. The skill of alternating between tasks has been mastered, but the possibility to switch off completely has been lost.

Do intellectual and physical states of boredom still exist? Are we capable of being bored—alone with emptiness and the totality of time? Or have we lost this capability?

I think about time and its value in the context of the art world. Although we are forced to use time wisely to build our position, there is actually no time for achievement.

Polish artist Zuzanna Janin once mentioned her situation. When she was 35 years old, she was raising children, preparing exhibitions and working on her artistic development. Now that she is established and can more freely concentrate on applying for grants or open calls, she is too old to be considered. As if an artist after a certain age should not exist or does not need support.

Putting aside the problems of women—struggling with prejudices when they

attempt to merge their private lives with careers—let us concentrate on the pressing concern: age. When we regard the art world, the terms ‘young’ and ‘successful’ exist side by side. One must be younger than Jesus—not older. In order to succeed, you should die by the age of 27. Age constraints concern not only artists but art workers and cultural producers: curators, critics, managers, gallerists.

How silly the situation has become! In 2013, a Berlin project space organised an exhibition “Daddy, YOU Can’t Make a Cactus ... This Has Been Done!” There was nothing special about the show, except: it was curated by a ten year old boy, as it proudly announced. Cato, son of an artist, chose the work of various artists which he also personally appreciated: artists already engaging on local and international levels. It is no surprise; feedback was huge. Newspapers notified the public: *a new star is born*. I recall this story to illustrate how monstrous the hunger for being young, talented and successful has become.

It was not long ago that in order to reach social and professional recognition, artists needed to devote a certain amount of time to their personal and artistic development. Studies at different universities, artistic travels and internships working with other artists were obligatory so as to gain experience—without which: artists should not be considered professionals.

Yet, I do not wish to regress to older methods of education. I draw attention

to the fact that, today, young artists and other art professionals do not have enough time devoted to individual development. As soon as they start careers, they are expected to be both mature and without doubt. The pressure placed upon them is strong.

The art world has drastically shifted. Before, society treated genius children as unique and special. Now, artists who succeed later in life are considered unexpected, unusual and surprising. If one does not succeed in their youth, then the person may not ever succeed.

Two aspects—a permanent state of working and an awareness of time limits—put me in an uncomfortable situation. There are moments when I compare my situation to being an element in some larger art machine. I cannot stop, because I am part of this structure. I am aware that at some point, I will simply be too old and disregarded.

Is it possible to overcome the pressure of time or create a new system? Instead of trying to be busy, should we admit that we have no desire? Instead of capping the maximum age limit, should we consider a minimum? Give time back its value as an important part of life; let it work for us, not against us.

Tobias Jundt, front man in the Berlin-based band “Bonaparte” (described as ‘visual trash punk’) proclaims a manifesto in one of his songs:

running in circles, living in squares,  
what goes up will come down and then who cares  
return to sender, don't be offended,  
but I don't live here anymore  
this concept of going chop chop with the time  
frame your life and then we're supposed to be fine  
face it, this deadline is like very dead,  
you better start looking for something new instead  
but don't call me, call up what's his face,  
I won't be doing this anymore

Perhaps, it is possible to stand against the time regime. Are we are able to do  
it? That's another story.



ARTISTS SHOULD NEVER BE OLDER THAN 30.  
AFTER 30, THEIR FACES GROW LONGER AND STRETCH,  
THE SAME HAPPENS TO THEIR WORKS.

Pola Dwurnik, *Artists Should Never Be Older Than 30* [after E. L. Kirchner] (2014).

Image : courtesy of the artist.





# **Notes on Hole**

*by Emma Kihl*



It is a dream. I'm traveling with the *Deepsea Challenger*. But the  
further down we get to the bottom of the Mariana Trench,  
the more frightened I become. I know I should keep my eyes  
open to see these magnificent self-lit creatures,  
but I can't. Even though I know it is a  
once-in-a-lifetime experience, I close my  
eyes, forcing myself to  
wake up.

Black holes can hold information for a long time, but the information can escape.

*A Fault*

*A Depression Hollowed Out of Solid Matter*

The deepest borehole he ever drilled was 70 meters.—That is usually the farthest you need to go to get to the rock, says Andreas Lundgren, a field engineer at one of the largest consulting companies on geotechnical engineering in Sweden. We're seated in a coffee shop on Södermalm in Stockholm, an area located on sheer cliffs and rocky hills.—Sweden, Norway and Canada have the most complex conditions for ground construction, he continues.—There is a lot of clay in the grounds. I note the classic order of soil: solum, clay, gravel and till (which is almost always the last one).—What you need to know is how hard or stable the rock is, he says and continues explaining that you often misinterpret the till as the rock and the opposite, the fractured rock as till. What he does is define the soil's bearing capacity in order to build. I ask him to explain how his work is performed.—Let's say we use five boreholes to determine the geotechnical conditions of a certain site. In the center of the site, a piston sample would be needed in order to determine clay features. Two boreholes will determine the depths and status of the bedrock. The other two determine the soil horizons and their physical features. The one in the middle provides us with a hollowed sample of 'undisturbed' clay (the clay generally ends at around ten meters depth). By determining all of this, we can provide a recommendation for the construction. Usually, we recommend a deep foundation, Andreas says. Sometimes, you might have to build retaining walls to resist the lateral pressure of soil. If you construct something under water, you might need stays, so the hole doesn't collapse from the pressure of water.

In November of 1963, a *New York Herald Tribune* journalist visits the Arlington graveyard to meet a grave digger and his two colleagues. The men prepare the grave for John Fitzgerald Kennedy. When the first bucket with dirt comes up, the journalist notes that the cemetery superintendent comments on the soil. He says it's of good quality and that he will use it to cover machine tracks by the grave, and the other grave digger says he will take some of it home to grow turf.

I often think about death. Not so much in regard to the soul, but that this body will most likely be left for people to deal with (of course, I tend to think of issues dealing with bodily decay and pain). In some cultures, human corpses are buried in soil, about two meters down. There are a few methods used to block decomposing bacteria and other organisms from accessing the corpse, or to prevent the body from collapsing under the weight of the earth, or from floating away during a flood.

*An Unoccupied Space*

*An Opening Deliberately Made In Or Through Something*

I'm sitting in a lecture room listening to a seismologist explain why our planet is the only one in our solar system to have plate tectonics, when one of the slides presents a tall yellow tower in a deserted wasteland. It depicts the Pechengsky District on the Kola Peninsula in northwestern Russia, where we attempted to go as deep as possible into the Earth's crust. Three boreholes were drilled by branching from a central hole. The deepest, SG-3 reached 12, 262 meters in 1989, but when trying to go further, a section of the drill string twisted off and was left in the hole. The ground temperature at this level was 180 °C instead of expected 100 °C. The Kola borehole penetrated about a third of the way through the Baltic continental crust, estimated to be around 35 kilometers deep, reaching rocks more than 2.5 billion years old. One of the findings to emerge from this well is that no transition from granite to basalt was found at the depth of about 7 km, where the velocity of seismic waves has a discontinuity. Instead, change in the seismic wave velocity is caused by a metamorphic transition in the granite rock. In addition, the rock at that depth had been thoroughly fractured and was saturated with water. This water, from deep-crust minerals, was unable to reach the surface because of a layer of impermeable rock.

*An Opening Into Or Through Something*

The first hole that gave me a sense of the abyss was when I, one Christmas—while trying out a job for state home care—met a woman with multiple sclerosis. I did not know much about the inflammatory disease then, but I knew that she could not walk. She was a woman around the age of forty who spent most of her time in her semi-electric bed, in a room with low ceilings, with large windows framing a small yard. By the bed, there was a wall-hung TV and an elevated nightstand piled with magazines and empty cups. On this day, she needed help with showering. She and I got her into the wheelchair and to the bathroom: soap, scrubbing, warm water and a new, white night dress. Once back to the bed, she asked me if I could change the bandage that was placed on her upper right thigh. Not knowing that this specific job should have been completed only by medical staff, I said that I would. I rolled her over to the side then carefully lifted her nightgown to move the brown plaster. While gradually detaching it, I watched a mound of green goo follow the bandage's reverse side. For a moment, the ground moved, as I realized—I was looking straight through the woman's flesh and into her bone.





# **The Eternal State of Being Busy**

*by Jan Rydén*



Today's cult of the process—is it like last century's cult of progress? Everywhere you turn, you find people lauding change, flexibility, the open-ended, the fluid, the process, the project. Not the result, the concept. No, it's materialization, the dialogue, not the conclusion.

The project—not the object.

The art world supports this notion. As opposed to progress, process does not have to lead to a specific end. It is not teleological; it is not utopian. It is more about constant flux.

Activity.

What is driving and rewarding this fixation with the non-fix? Are we experiencing neo-liberal, individualist ideology which has trickled down into the soul of every individual? We should all be little active atoms—moving around to create heat.

The hegemony of business. Literally. Being busy is our business.

We do; therefore, we are. Just being won't do.



# **Conversation with Jacob Dahlgren**

*by Juste Kostikovaite*



**Juste Kostikovaite:** I would like to know more about your background.

**Jacob Dahlgren:** I started as a printmaker, and I was interested in Swedish Modernism. I had many books that my grandfather left me when he died. Mostly biographies of Swedish painters who traveled to different countries. Of course, I was more interested in the books' visual aspects because I was only twelve years old—quite young. I liked drawing even then, and I tried to draw everything—from cows to fantasy images. In school, there was a book, and you were allowed to draw anything. I was drawing guts from page to page, from book to book. Already then, I enjoyed repetition.

**JK:** What has been the biggest, most singular influence on your work?

**JD:** I mention Blinky Palermo—a student of Joseph Beuys who was an artist from the 60's and 70's. I liked him because he made paintings which became objects using a language which spoke to me. He used textiles and other materials. He painted onto stone and wood—almost landscape art but not quite. The name Blinky Palermo refers to Frank “Blinky” Palermo: a



notorious American mafia figure and boxing promoter. According to legend, the nickname was given when Beuys noticed the physical resemblance between the artist and gangster. My dog is also named Blinky.

**JK:** When I see your work, I think of Daniel Buren's stripes. The most striking memory is of one work installed in Paris—a vague, topographical work titled *Les Couleurs: Sculptures* (1977) in which Buren marked sites in Paris with rooftop, striped flags.

**JD:** Daniel Buren is great because he brings abstraction to the streets. I try to bring the street back to abstraction. I take photos constantly—every day—of abstractions I notice in the real world. I have more than one hundred thousand photos now. They are important; I look at them in relation to each other and make connections between them. I meticulously categorize them by different subjects. It's a diary of my life, a collection of daily life abstractions.

Before going to bed, I take the camera off my neck; I usually have it hanging around my neck all of the time. I am also doing film work—I follow people with stripes. I have a film function on my camera, so I started to follow them from behind until they walked into a shop or they realize that I'm following them. Then, I had many short films, so I merged them into an almost infinite film. Stripes are the main subject, but what is more enticing is what happens around them: the way people walk, objects, actions you don't notice in real



Jacob Dahlgren, *Non Object* (2013). Image : courtesy of the artist.

life but only when seen on film. This action of following people forces me to leave my normal path; I end up in unexpected places. When I follow someone, time stops. I stop thinking about normal duties, and I get lost in time and space. I don't like *Google Glass*—you can record everything, without effort.

**JK:** Tell me even more about your background—how did it (or didn't it) influence your work which incorporated colors and stripes?

**JD:** When I went to art school, I was mainly painting hard-edge, geometrical paintings. I liked the look of them, but for me, it was limiting. I was not interested in deciding between colors and compositions. The more paintings I made, the more uninteresting it became. A long time ago, one friend said that I resembled my paintings because I usually wore a striped Hang Ten t-shirt. I decided to paint an exact copy of my t-shirt. It looked like my other paintings, but suddenly, it occurred to me that the connection meant something—it was relating to something outside the painting. This realization was an important moment.

In 2000, I decided to wear a striped t-shirt every day and paint it. After a while, the t-shirt in-and-of-itself become more interesting than the painting. Now, I see each t-shirt as an abstract painting. I have been collecting t-shirts since 2000; I now have more than 1071 t-shirts. I invite people to curate shows incorporating my t-shirts, where they decide which t-shirt

I wear for a specific time, they give the show a title and write a short text about the show's concept. I take a photo of myself in the t-shirt then post it on Instagram each day. The end result: a poster with all images that the Swedish design group Research and Development designs.

**JK:** Picasso liked to say that all art is copying.

**JD:** It's important to copy yet still keep yourself in the work. For Picasso as well, when you get lost in yourself, you should stop. Maybe that is what happens today, since so many artists make work. It's impossible not to copy—you must copy yet make it your own. But to an extent, the work is still someone else's work. It was the same for Picasso—he stole, but he stole in his own way.

**JK:** This seems rich, given that contemporary artists have plundered the iconography of advertising for the past 40 years—if not more.

**JD:** Usually, they copy each other in a shallow way; they don't bring anything new to an original idea.

**JK:** In your case, is the public a decision-making factor?

**JD:** I hate making decisions; there are so many decisions to make. Yes, the public decides about supply and which t-shirt I shall wear. In my t-shirt

show “Familiar Stranger” curated by San Francisco-based artists Amy Franceschini and Stijn Schiffeleers, I was told to approach a stranger then ask them to draw a line on my t-shirt. Each project requires that I follow through with actions that I would not be doing otherwise. I’m shy and usually don’t speak to people whom I don’t know, so this was a great experience. Another project, curated by Matthias Ulrich: I was instructed to wear 14 t-shirts simultaneously then remove one each day. In the beginning, I looked like a bodybuilder. Slowly, I became thinner. My kids are still young; they are proud of me. I pick them up from kindergarden and elementary school wearing my t-shirts.

**JK:** Why are you doing this curatorial experiment with your life?

**JD:** It’s not an experiment; rather, it’s a way to make life more interesting. Time as a factor is important. I aim for formal aspects to remain constant: curatorial components (e.g. someone else selecting t-shirts for a show with supporting idea, title, text), a cropped photo of me centered, framed in a similar manner each day. When you see documented images from this project, I get older, but the t-shirts remain the same. Sometimes, I buy ugly ones. I *really* don’t want to make a selection. Some t-shirts are not good quality; some are too short, made for females or they don’t fit me.

These images create a diary of my life; it’s a life-long project. I’m like the Polish painter Roman Opalka who painted numbers from one to infinity by

adding one percent more white to the ground with each passing detail. He expected to be painting virtually white on white by the time he reached 7777777. On August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Opalka completed his work *the finite defined by the nonfinite* (1965-2011). 5607249 was the final number he painted before dying. In 1968, Opalka introduced a tape recorder into his process, speaking each number into a microphone as he painted. He began taking photographs of himself standing before the canvas after each day's work. I love these images of him getting older—hair getting whiter. I want to have similar images of me because they are part of the exhibition and memory—to archive time. What will happen to the project when I die? I don't know. In the end, everything would almost be the same, except I'm older and would be in different places. I will have an image diary of my life.

**JK:** What does order mean to you?

**JD:** I like order. I want to do things smoothly, so I try to create order. I am naturally messy, yet I like repetition. Most of my work creates order but in different ways. I work with mass. When using large quantities of material, it's important to create structure so as to function—to be open yet not in total control—to also involve others who make unexpected decisions. It's a struggle between order and chaos.

In my piece *i, the world, things, life* (2004), I arrange dart boards to cover an entire wall. I leave a box with darts in front view; the work creates itself

when people throw darts at the board until the box is emptied. The activity begins again—repeats itself. The work becomes an action painting. I don't even touch the work; it creates itself.

**JK:** What do you think of Lygia Clark's *Bicho* (1960)?

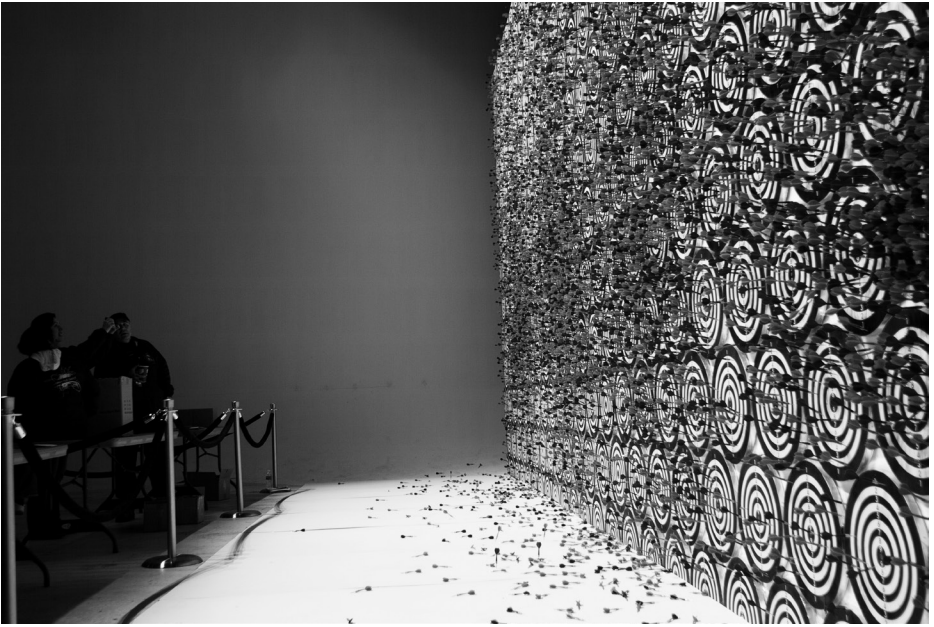
**JD:** I love Lygia Clark's *Bicho*. One of my favorites is Hélio Oiticica's *Dialogue for Hands* (1966). Curiously, they both took ideas from Swiss artists—Max Bill, for instance. Although such artists worked in different ways, their methods proved to be more interesting than those of Swiss artists. Theirs felt more related to the world.

**JK:** How do you keep your ideas true, yet at the same time, steer clear of the shallow?

**JD:** In order to keep ideas true, you must trust yourself. Much in the same way that Lygia Clark did with her work in relation to Max Bill.

**JK:** How is the public dimension significant in respect to your practice?

**JD:** In much of my work, the public is a part of my work and directly involved in creation. I like to work with people positioned outside the art world's context—to include decisions which do not originate from the 'art crowd.'



Jacob Dahlgren, *i, the world, things, life* (2004). Image : courtesy of the artist.



**JK:** What annoys you most about the art world?

**JD:** Hierarchy—which is a drawback in the art world. I don't like power structures that declare that someone is more important than another. I invite all kinds and types of people to participate in projects.

**JK:** What makes you happy in the design world?

**JD:** Beautiful compositions and bright colors make me happy.

**JK:** Are there any objects which you feel are addictive at the moment?

**JD:** It's not important what shape or color the object is as long as it speaks to me—in the language of abstraction. I like all colors and shapes.

**JK:** Is abstract art a universal language?

**JD:** Many people like the same paintings, so I suppose it's a universal language.

**JK:** Many of your projects have no defined ending or conclusion. What is your relationship to time, work and artistic production?

**JD:** Sometimes, the t-shirt project resembles a hobby that I'm pursuing in my

spare time—focusing more on the hobby than ‘real’ work. But this hobby has become real work. Normal people peripheral to the art world have hobbies but not many artists. Time passes with the project’s progress; it would be strange to have a defined point when I must stop. It’s beneficial to have projects which keep going; one is relieved of having to constantly think about concept.

**JK:** Much of your work could be perceived as infinite—even eternal. Or: many of your works will only desist when you die or no longer exist. What are your opinions about the infinite and eternal? Do you find these topics to be sublime, blissful? Or do these topics frighten you, seem inaccessible or insignificant?

**JD:** For me, projects become more alluring the longer I work on them. I’m interested in mass. The longer I work, the bigger the mass becomes. One can view my work’s documentation in a short span of time, but it takes my entire life to collect and experience them. My life has become a time-lapse, and others are able to choose a speed. Eternity sounds far away; I don’t think about it. For Roman Opalka, it all stopped at 5607249.

**JK:** Do you know how long a project is going to take before you start? How do you know that some projects will continue with no determined end, whereas others are meant to be finite? How do you differentiate between these two kinds of projects—or is it more organic or not within your control?

**JD:** Most of my projects have a clear end; some projects decide on their own when to end. It would be strange to stop the t-shirt project after 15 years—what a difficult decision to make. Insofar as abstraction is concerned, I will continue as long as I continue to find abstraction.

**JK:** When you are working on projects of various lengths, do you feel that you are spending too much time on one idea, concept or theme related to a work? Do you regret your projects or ever believe that you're in over your head—especially with more time-consuming works?

**JD:** I have many ideas; some are more time-consuming than others. I never regret projects. When I have a lot to do, it can be stressful to manage or keep my t-shirt archive organized. Since it's a living archive where I use all t-shirts, I must wash them and maintain their order. My t-shirts have a number sewn into them; they are organized by number in my studio. I have a digital archive with a photo of each t-shirt, an illustrator file storing each pattern and each t-shirt's relevant info: brand, size, price, where I bought it and when. To keep everything organized and updated is trying, but the project is part of my life. It's stressful, much like making sure that I pick up my kids from school at the right time.

**JK:** Do you have opinions related to the hereafter (what comes after death)? Do you feel that you are able to live on, after you are gone because your work will still exist—at least in documented form? Do you feel connected to



Jacob Dahlgren, *Heaven is a Place on Earth* (2006). Image : courtesy of the artist.

your work in a spiritual or religious way?

**JD:** I'm not spiritual about my work, and I don't think often about what will happen after life. It's enough of a struggle to manage doing everything well and to be alive. If you look at On Kawara's twitter account, it still sends out one message: "I'm still alive." After many years of stripes, perhaps, others will think about abstraction when they see a striped t-shirt. Then, my project will live on, and *I'm still alive*.





# **Morning of a Decent Man**

*by Alberta Vengryté*





That cold, vernal morning, when he woke up, everything had been conquered, and he knew everything he had to know. Hence, he stayed in bed, then, without moving his head, looked around and chose a speckle on the wall to gaze upon. After this ritual which he repeated every morning, the man jumped out of bed then lit up an odorous cigarette. A man found himself looking at a turbid mirror, repelled by such a manner which leant upon him. He was a man who loved cleanliness and order. In a bowl of nipping water, he refreshed his beautiful, rough-featured face and put on new, white underwear. A man felt muddy yet. Traces of thinking of past days emerged in his bright mind; still, the room was too dark and silent to work. More importantly, everything had been conquered; he knew everything he had to know. So, for the next few hours, Clive Akes (such was the name of this man) sat in a scuffed, leather armchair thinking of all women he'd ever had, as well as cotton swabs. It was imperative that he purchase cotton swabs today.

Clive Akes was a decent man. He had a proper and promising career, was healthy (in spite of this repetitive throat clearing which stemmed from being a heavy smoker—for some people, it was perceivably neurotic—he never had more serious issues). He annually donated to a children's home and mowed his lawn often enough. Nobody had complaints or untold rebukes which could have sullied him. Yet, a strange, unpleasant feeling had been unfolding inside Clive Akes. This decent man no longer had poise. He saw himself becoming restless and frail, impatient and disillusioned, and it clashed with his once balanced, fine-drawn nature. Clive was worried. He closed his eyes, was insecure and sighed unintentionally. *This was it!* Still not sure about the veracity of his clarification, which instantly embodied his mind, and as if thus he would have found symbolic or manifest proof (in fact, the most insignificant confirmation would have been enough), Clive rushed towards the window—the one and only source of daylight in his room—and pulled back his heavy curtains. What he saw was disappointing; on such an early, spring morning, it was too

glaring, sapless. Neighbors leaving for civil service jobs, runners with headphones on (listening to energizing or sentimental sounds), a dazed, brown dog, an all-perishing, vernal sun. Certainly not scenery for miraculous proof to appear. However, Clive was no longer hesitating. What was chronically growing inside of him was a feeling of boredom—no doubt.

*He was bored of being proud.*

A man came back to the armchair; for the first time, he felt how cold and rough its scuffed leather was. Sunlight besieged his naked knees, but Clive Akes did not notice. In fact, he, this decent man, was the one that people usually felt proud of! What a horrid coincidence. Now, he clearly remembered his father's, this authoritative man's, voice addressing him as a youngster:

*Clive, my son, I am so proud of what you did.*

It was inevitable. A wave of sickness overtook him,

from throbbing temples to toes. Voices—male and female, old and childish, wicked and skittish—whirled inside his head accompanied by serious and much-aware looks from those whom the voices belonged. They were arranged in an amateur kaleidoscope; by the time one would cease, another arose as loud as ever. If Clive had a voice himself at that moment, he would have shouted, would have told these people that he is bored and sick of being proud. Not only of himself (actually, he never aimed for it or felt it necessary) but also of those who were proud of anything on Earth, as well as those who never made anyone feel proud of themselves but were willing. A man was too exhausted to think of those who would have liked to become objects of national pride.

Clive did not feel well but remained silent. He desired to darken his tasteful small room, to return to bed and never make anyone feel proud again—but he could not. He was a decent man! Clive Akes got dressed neatly, drank his coffee without loitering, then left for work.

*Good morning, Mr. ... are you alright?*  
*I heard your dear daughter is doing well in Washington.*  
*You must be ...*



# **Do or Die, Die!**

*by Lars-Erik Hjertström Lappalainen*





A Roman moralist once described it as “the highest injustice to prefer life” over “what makes life worth living.” To keep on living despite the fact that you are deprived of everything having intrinsic value (i.e. what you wouldn’t sell) simply signified a lack of honor.

When was the last time I did something worth doing for its own sake? What I do for free is not always something I want to do but something that “may lead to something.” The rat race is omnipresent; it is a system where you always do something for the sake of something else. And if this “something else” doesn’t happen, it was all in vain—or rather: you didn’t do anything at all, but blank time still passed. That’s why you want compensation in order to do something, and now you’re lost: what you want from now on is not life but compensation for (not) living. And people today are happy to say that what they do is their profession. Even artists: they are so proud of being professional. It makes me cry.

Still in the seventeenth century, actions completed for mere compensation were described as slavery by Spinoza: unfree peoples’ irrational actions. At the end of the eighteenth century, this was the perception of work: what is boring and meaningless in-and-of-itself and what no one would choose to do

if not for profit or compensation. In our time, everything in my life revolves around compensation. It's a strange world where you end up asking for possible compensation for your life up until now. It's no wonder Christian parties received a boost during neoliberalism! Society will not compensate you, ever—only religion is equipped to do that.

So as to handle this desperate situation, is there an alternative to parody and excess? Could you, for example, substitute one standard (for when something is considered done) with another? To not accept it as done, but to re-do it again, one last time, then one more time? “Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished”—the beginning of Samuel Beckett's one-act play *Endgame*. Beginning and end united, like an autotelic activity, still leading to something else, but for nothing—a different mode of correlation between means and end. You can always change the rules while playing the same game, or play a different game but by the same rules. A new goal is always possible, or new motive, new desire, new standard for when something is finished, other than those you're compensated for reaching.

A fictionalization, parody, exaggeration, withdrawal; drop out, be absent-minded and ideal, think instead of doing *stuff*. Or do too much, spam the world, work with 'noise art' aesthetics to produce visual and cognitive noise which interferes with the established (and thus power invested) forms of production and circulation of images and ideas.<sup>1</sup> In any case, you'll disturb the means-to-an-end life and may create unpredictable effects on sensibility and thought.

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Nechvatal, *Immersion Into Noise* (Ann Arbor, MI : Open Humanities Press, 2011).

URL : <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.9618970.0001.001>

In order to qualify as a living being, perhaps one must ask oneself—ask in wonder, stupefied: why do anything at all? Try to answer this question with reference to your motives and desires, not to the consequences. Why do you have something going on? And if compensation is part of your answer, of every answer you come up with: *just die*.



# **Smoke Gets In Your Eyes**

*by Jacquelyn Davis*



- everything, no, *nothing* expected—
- incompetence inclusive—
- temporary community of creators—
- a given series of manifestations—
- specific key points—
- working in a number of contexts and capacities—
- anger relayed—
- expectations high—
- coincides and interrelates with other local allusions—
- rethinking formats—
- others hunt me down—
- self-involved injury—
- temporary escape route—
- politics of financing—
- eliminate possible misunderstanding—
- return to hometown—
- proven reluctance—
- shift from essence to appearance—



- desire to limit visibility—
- one man's trash is another man's trash—
  - i could be dogmatic—
- a year just passed (wtf)—
  - quote proust's *in search of lost time*—
- focus on the endgame—
  - no 'right' time to deal with 'it'—
    - extreme point of its creative parabola—
  - drafts, multiple, of the original—
    - never happy with format—
- medium is not the message—
  - accusatory even—
  - pull off of the road—
  - forged paths—
    - every second counts—
      - useful exchange leads to momentary release—
        - to be more self-reliant—
  - fully accounted for and catalogued—
    - locate a funding structure—
      - it should come as no surprise—
  - again—
    - strategic separatism—
  - sideways thoughts dodge bullets, knives, dull spearheads—
    - gesture of protest—

—outside of the very annunciation—  
—if not for the fog—  
—don't be so conceited—  
—singular sculpture encompassing the act—  
—equally characteristic of the notion—  
—left shoe fails, sole detaches—  
—where is the meeting?—  
—waitress fills my glass—  
—is it possible to *still* think that way?—  
—explanation or intention—  
—schema of betrayal is seen to be untenable—  
—means of evading—  
—idiot improv, dipstick diy, fundraising 'success'—  
—every second does not count—  
—belittle for not adding up—  
—wet rope—  
—listen with contempt—  
—abundance of formal abstraction—  
—rare opportunity—  
—unusually laborious and slow—  
—not a revelation—  
—recognize historical precedent—  
—unable to remember her name—  
—rest assured—

—there will be no compensation—  
—argument repeated—  
—coming from relative peripheries—  
—inconclusive effect—  
—yes—  
—take a trip to postpone consequences—  
—no ghost, just a shell—  
—trial and terror—  
—denial of curating as craft—  
—call, call, (ugh) no response—  
—to avoid having a theme—  
—that look—  
—demonstrate challenges—  
—it's no wonder the collab failed—  
—closer—  
—reflect upon your efforts—  
—they have to feel like they can trust you—  
—radical ruptures—  
—in conjunction with the inauguration—  
—implicit warning—  
—mounting pressures of spectacle and access—  
—of the so-called—  
—diverse mystical associations—  
—not confident that the project is worthwhile—

- proper response to uninvited criticism—
- where is the meeting?—
- their silence drives me up the wall—
  - an inherently ‘better’ method—
- the dilemma—
  - everything you do should be fun!—
    - it is the intrinsic conflict—
  - accept responsibilities which are only ‘up your alley’—
  - communication stifled—
    - inclination or an inclining from one towards the other—
- scarcity versus excess—
  - sensational beings leading to non-sensational acts—
    - proposed as oppositions—
  - unrealized potential—
- ignoring open mouths—
  - to aspire, no, to *embody*—
- treachery and ethical instability—
  - everyone appears to be correct—
  - pass the white house from childhood—
    - good curators read the news—
    - care about the outcome—
- almost finished with the final version—
  - invest stock in the future—
    - be careful what you say—

—reinvent the wheel, no, *cop a feel*—

—importance of patience—

—on the hunt—

—give prestige to its subject—

—stretching materials—

—selfish methods of gain—

—of a work subtly standing proxy for something else—

—they must like you, first and foremost—

—not quite—

—such reversals are customary—

—univocity or stability of a ‘proper’—

—placate the masses—

—she wants me to reiterate—

—directorial tricks, frivolous feints—

—readerly, no, *writerly*—

—generate predicted results—

—too much knowledge interferes with knowing—

—motivate viewer, underestimate buyer—

—muddy, hazy, fuzzy, cloudy—

—blame it on the invisible hand—

—where is the meeting?—

—to be more nuanced, smart and sensitive—

—contradictory outcome—

—all coming together nicely—

- shameful, really, what actually happened—
- basic exposition requested—
  - provocative trap or delusion—
  - target audience, no, *imagined* audience—
    - language fail—
  - when profundity proves nonsensical—
    - seeing in black and white—
- pragmatism bites—
  - sky-is-blue-grass-is-green type of work—
  - impoverished flirtation—
    - reality wasn't always adaptive—
- occasionally inarticulate, amateurish—
  - aversion for intellectualism—
- endless variants towards conclusion—
- product proves valueless—
  - déjà vu—
    - both departs from and challenges the principles—
    - puzzle pieces from ranging games—
      - participation shortchanged—
- everything is inflected by resignation—
  - wrong—
- where is the meeting?—
  - not quite what was expected—
- entangled in its meshes—

- term dependent upon many different conventions—
- shifty promise—
  - what was said versus what happened—
  - or rather reduced—
    - walk the plank—
    - embarrassing to admit—
    - desire to forget mistakes—
    - seeking some kind of heroic vanguard—
    - nothing lost, nothing gained—
    - restitution, you say?—
- not on the hunt—
  - everything in its right place—
- emphasize the speaker’s position—
  - failing to get the ‘best’ out of ‘it’—
  - strikingly symmetrical yet authoritarian—
  - swivel a spotlight—
    - raw material aimed at a goal—
- welcoming versus fearing conflict—
  - participate in the constitution of the subject—
  - becoming something *else*—
    - overwhelmed by the sheer volume—
- the pleasure is all mine—
  - margin of error—
  - trace movement from A to—

- demonstrate the challenges—
  - on the verge of—
  - perhaps—
  - damage unavoidable—
  - emphasis on learning, not teaching—
- discursive model?—
  - what always happens in this particular situation—
  - refer to the general lexicon—
  - highly selective—
  - radically questioning the temporal aspects—
- not at all worried—
  - on the contrary—
  - expressed in political terms—
  - diminishing possibility—
  - exchange to transform—
- in order to point out their shortcomings and deficiencies—
  - pragmatically speaking—
  - where is the meeting?—
- or even better—
  - combine skepticism with enthusiasm—
  - giving it a distinct taste—
- individual laziness—
  - in a more roundabout, general manner—
  - in the end—



- incremental, rhizomatic production process—
- perfunctory summary—
  - navigable as a format—
- even more afraid of the silence—
  - biggest catastrophes stem from the most available information—
    - established modes of behavior—
    - take into consideration the legacy—
  - considerable amounts of fanfare and adulation—
- viewed as either a ‘crank’ or ‘leader’—
  - given this classic example highlighted—
    - familiar road becomes strange—
  - point of departure, right?—
    - contrary to popular belief—
- that is to say: it is exposed—
  - magic, seemingly from nowhere—
    - arrive at an impasse—
- moral courage to use what is available—
  - problematic problematics—
- baton in a relay race—
  - getting performative ‘round here—
  - slow burning, rather than explosive—
  - both mundane and sublime—
- private donations unregulated—
  - seminal, no, *similar* in transformation—

—in preparation for our story—

—to simultaneously connect yet decenter—

—form the foundation—

—where is the meeting?—

—in relation to its surrounding reality—

—none other than cross-pollination—

—tempted to rethink previous decisions—

—deceptively easy to digest—

—authentic, if you will—

—exclusion of life-forcing position—

—confrontation of the institution—

—no choice but to respond—

—tantamount—

—without a bond, without communion—

—at the last minute: jump ship—

—acknowledge the fact—

—venture from your comfort zone—

—or even worse—

—how the curatorial can readily contain such dimensions—

—unusually complex—

—encouraged to take a second glance—

—idea rich—

—the thought of errantry—

—parallels between conceptual and immaterial—

- matter versus mass—
- playing with the undecidable—
  - collectively apply yourself—
- the most neglected distinguisher—
  - molecular—
    - passage from one logic to another—
      - to approach and get a grip on the world—
  - waitress refills my glass—
    - establishing transversal junctions—
    - the creative subject of modernist aesthetic discourse—
  - humiliated and drained of its vitality—
    - no doubt—
      - idea: to illicit a participatory response—
- where is the meeting?—
  - interlinking of settings—
    - the level of artistic investment in the execution of the project—
      - immanent paradox—
        - deliberate omission raised questions—
  - nor from frustration—
    - due to the character of contemporary art—
  - implies a stable order—
    - caught in the ambiguity of an actualization—
      - fee chat, fee banter, fee talk—
- systematically subordinated—

- time for spontaneous reflections—
  - exile can be seen as beneficial—
- provide ample proof—
  - conceals significant transformations—
  - design didn't turn out as planned—
    - one important exception—
  - those who force obscurity—
    - modes of valorization—
  - certain intellectual currents—
- sacred territory or filiation—
  - detours that led away from anything totalitarian—
- where is the meeting?—
  - axes of value—
  - this vicious circle—
- play on the readability—
  - the denigration of power in general—
- proper research—
  - moment when high art is constituted—
- all forms of sublimity—
  - close to the finish line—
- canonical procedures of delegitimation—
  - cut from the same sensible fabric—
- in the car, archiving ways the house changed—
  - provocations *in situ*—



# **About Mimicry in Approximateness**

*by Andrey Kharitonov*



*We must put out the excess rather than the fire.*

—Heraclitus

*What allies us, only the excessive ...*

—Osip Mandelstam, “Verses on the Unknown Soldier”

These fragmented, arbitrary notes are an attempt to assort and approximately represent some possibilities of collateral contemplation about The Amazing Situation—when ‘the arts’ are absorbed by the globally accreting, rhizomatic organism of digital Medium. It is clear now that we can talk about mediums in singular, as if talking about a new entity spreading in the pervasive process of self-incrementation and self-aggregation. Art, whose essence has always been associated with invention of techniques, comprehension of forms and orders of mediation, is becoming a feeble companion (subservient satellite) of the new hegemonic agent of the world media revolution.

The catastrophic weakness of Art, faced with the Other, is one of basic plots of modern theory. But, in this case, the alienated Medium is such an Other that sets its dominance by amplification and development of these forms of *techne*, that initially have been the inner essence of Art. It captures and utilizes the actual stream of human history and likewise substitutes Art in the field of imaginable potentiality. The advanced worldwide transfer of the presence surpasses the arts in providing the global platform for, in the



words of Jacques Rancière, ‘the distribution of the sensible.’<sup>1</sup>

## Art as Technique

Most artists working in new media art regard technology as an appliance—even a primary catalyst—which will provide additional opportunities for production of the New. It is interesting that media art makes itself at home in territory domesticated by European art theories of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—a place where the event of Art occurs as sensible communication. Modes and techniques of Art came to be seen, in that time, as tools for engaging the audience in concurrence of a common sentence.

One prominent example of upgrading this approach in the twentieth century was the concept ‘montage of attractions’ coined by Sergei Eisenstein. He remarks:

An attraction (in relation to the theatre) is any aggressive aspect of the theatre; that is, any element of the theatre that subjects the spectator to a sensual or psychological impact, experimentally regulated and mathematically calculated to produce in him certain emotional shocks which, when placed in their proper sequence within the totality of the production, become the only means that enable the spectator to perceive the ideological side of what is being demonstrated—the ultimate ideological conclusion.<sup>2</sup>

Inter alia, Eisenstein obviously was influenced by Viktor Shklovsky’s

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1 Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (New York, NY : Continuum, 2010), 7-20.

2 Sergei Eisenstein, *The Montage of Attractions* : For “Enough Stupidity in Every Wiseman,” in Sergei Eisenstein & Daniel Gerould’s *The Drama Review : TDR* Vol. 18, No. 1, Popular Entertainments (Cambridge, MA : MIT Press, 1974), 78. URL : <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1144865>

theory of ‘art as technique (device).’ Shklovsky, founder of Russian Formalism, argued that the essence of Art is not in creating an image but in accumulating and identifying new methods of transformation and deconstruction for itself.

The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar,’ to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important.<sup>3</sup>

It is significant that the notion of technique in the Russian language has a strong connotation with something like wrestling, ploy and circus tricks. Here we can, using inevitable oversimplification, say that technique acquired the aura of the latently chanceful remedy. It exceeds the insufficient abilities of the artist and uncovers a clear perspective of inevitable failure. Subsequently, the notion of technique has shifted towards meaning of the device, or method to deal with the medium. That has to be subjected to reinvention<sup>4</sup> with the aim to represent the idea of the medium as such, that would ensure plurality of the arts, as a new mode of autonomy.

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3 Viktor Shklovsky, “Art as Technique” in *The Critical Tradition : Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends* by David H. Richter (New York : Bedford / St. Martin’s [Third Edition], 2006), 778.

4 Rosalind E. Krauss, “Reinventing the Medium” in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 25, No. 2, “*Angelus Novus*” : *Perspectives on Walter Benjamin* (Chicago, IL : University of Chicago Press, 1999), 289-305. URL : <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1344204>

## Déjà Vu

Does it still make sense to hope for implementation of this perspective? The metaphysically funded ideal of Art as the gestalt of individuation of the mystery and apparition is tempted now by the Medium as a device of installation of attractions of meditated reality in the condition of readiness-to-hand. The potentiality of unlimited handiness becomes a strange attractor for artistic practices. It determines the necessity to elaborate modes of immersion into media space, which can be regarded as a kind of substitution of techniques of empathy to the nature.<sup>5</sup> The contemporary technique as Art acquires the peculiar stratagem for manufacture of the interstitial ply between the odds and ends of human content and the continuity of metamorphic expressions of the inhuman. Perhaps, one of the most interesting and fundamental consequences of digital technologies has become computation of time. It provides the appearance of the implicit modes of temporal consciousness.

Interfaces of instantaneous access attempt to instrumentalize time. That is, it becomes as if spatialized inside digital devices, a resource and substrate of mediatization. According to Henri Bergson, the present moment of human time consists of two parts. Perception is the actual, that is simultaneously duplicated by the virtual—pure memory of this perception which does not get recollected in consciousness. The virtual is like an image in the mirror, which will vanish instantly, as soon as only one perception is substituted by another. ‘Paramnesia’ (déjà vu) is such a peculiar experience, which

<sup>5</sup> Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style* (Chicago, IL: Elephant Paperbacks / Ivan R. Dee, 2007).

enables us to realize confluence of the present with its virtual reflection—pure memory. Bergson compares the person feeling *déjà vu*, with the actor automatically playing the role which becomes its own audience.

Contemporary technologies of real-time are devices for capturing of pure memory, like a Bergsonian mirror equipped by a recorder. It duplicates the present in mediatized handiness, that lures inside the magical sphere of the presence of an absence—where even what cannot be shown has to be shown. The materialized substance of the instant implicates us in the constantly ardent core of *déjà vu* immersed into viscous tar of eternal recurrence. The artificial apparition of excess of the present is the utter, sudden realization of pure memory in an overdetermined environ of the instant repetition produced by the Medium.

The excessive is something which we have no direct access. We cannot employ an infinitely multiplied variety of phenomena of the virtual existence that surpasses our imagination. Art practice could be an inquiry of a probable strategy of alliance with the impervious matter of an excessive, which are available for applying in virtual mode of real time. This alliance is a situation of coincidence between non-equivalent entities, that is not bound by common teleology. It does not create a common field of opportunities and plane of consistency. It is a contingent encounter of a sewing machine and umbrella. The abrupt and unbidden intrusion of the impossible threatens to induce the chain reaction of a meltdown of sense. The fundamental concatenation of creativity with inevitable failure provokes the aspiration to the unrealizable conjunction of the incongruous. In this sense, the work of art

would occur in the stage of transition from fallacy to falseness.

## Farce

In Søren Kierkegaard's "Repetition,"<sup>6</sup> he describes a scene as metaphor for the place where hidden individuality, whose real face is taboo and cannot be represented, must prove himself by playing the role. The role on stage is a specific form of repetition of a character or example, that already existed before. Playing a role is a way to protect themselves from the unbearable inanity of their own true nature. When experience in various roles has become good enough for adaptation in the scene, you must perceive your own presence in the role. Farce is best suited for this purpose.

The initial artlessness of farce makes forgery of falseness, that is, naively introducing and performing 'the haphazard concreteness.' It becomes evident when using the childish method of generalization as something non-comparable and incompatible in 'monstrous categories,' which tend to hold together distant things and meanings. Haphazard concreteness leaking from crevices in monstrous categories provokes jumps and somersaults as a manifestation of hidden individuality. There is no guarantee that farce will give a certain impact. It can result in a flow of tears instead of laughter. The reaction of audience to stage action is unpredictable, because there is no universally accepted system of reciprocal feelings. The content of farce depends entirely on forms of expression and therefore is too abstract to make certain judgments of taste. It does not follow rules of classical

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<sup>6</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Repetition and Philosophical Crumbs* (Oxford, UK : Oxford University Press, 2009), 26-31.

aesthetics. Farce acts by random collection of bodies, gestures and scenes which accumulate in the contingent assemblage of an approximateness of some abstract in general.

The coincidence of abstract approximateness with particular officers, maids and chimney sweeps provokes the convulsions of flesh and paroxysms of feelings. The immediate simultaneity of transferring and mirroring of affect is a reification of the excessive. Kierkegaardian farce is a model of a montage of attractions. It is attractions of interaction with alienated pure memory in the area of a mutual perceptive mimicry. The meaning of this technique is to launch the primal mimetic reaction by using the explosive energy of shocking delusion.

## **Mimicry**

Mimicry is the primordial and involuntary mechanical mode of reaction to a recursive challenge of the Other. It begins with allocation of a reliable background inside this fluctuating environment, spreading a force field of total responsiveness. It is an endeavor of self-dissolution by imitation and an effort to erase itself by becoming a fragment among other fragments. Successful mimicry must create an area in which a dangerous creature will be subjected to temptation of absence of a victim. Temptation starts with an unnoticeable hint of the subtle gradual touch to the membrane of perception. Such deceptive enticement is the initially contingent coincidence of the camouflaging method with a sensual scheme of spectator. Perhaps, the technique of a hidden access to the perceptive assemblage of an extraneous

‘*umwelt*’ is based on a potential aptitude to find correlation between different configurations of ‘perceptual faith.’ Such faith is a notion introduced by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, which means the immediate individual confidence in one’s own existence, based on inner experience of raw sense.

In the web of global communication, raw sense data may become a hypothetic substrate for shaping and managing new subtle channels for distribution of micro-policies of consensus reality. It is not quite one micro-political level as described by Michael Foucault, where a proliferation of techniques of bio-power and social control are performed in structures of knowledge and communication. Accommodation and fitting interactive devices to the internal perceptive framework may lead to a variety of consequences. Now comes the development of interfaces of sensual inactivity using various technologies—from ‘haptic feedback’ to ‘polysensuality.’ On one hand, it may be a direct way to incredible methods of control, in the sense of totality of coverage and depth of penetration, over ‘human condition’ and management of ‘human nature.’ On the other hand, the domain of raw sense data is essentially intangible. The core of raw sense data is *qualia*. That is not available for objective study and lurking in the depths of the subjective experience. *Qualia* is something of a hypothetical nucleus of direct perception and an intransitive, inner feeling which constitutes individuation of senses and detects the gradient of impact of external stimuli. It is elusive, like a place without a place, or a ‘blind spot’ for embodiment of the energy of pure sensual affects. It seems, that here the techno-dispositif of the distribution of sensible encounters some irrevocable impossibility.

## **CNI=A\*S**

What if we made a reinvention of a setup of alliances? Thus, preparing conditions for the impossible coincidences and mutual mimicry of disparate sources from the excessive. We implement this suspicious ploy by applying Crypto Nerd Imagination. It is an obviously fallible peculiarity of crypto-maniac behavior when one tries to encipher intimate but worthless data by using the most complex and resource-demanding methods of encryption. Errors in decryption lead to endless accumulation of unsaved residue of demolished data. The bewildering practice of compound of the mutually incoherent leads to emancipation from routine of the deterrent reflection on the origin and teleology. This ultimate experience of artfulness would guide (bring) to a weird link-up of the abduction and serendipity. Abduction is a hypothetical inference connecting the superfluous and unexpected data with prior knowledge. According to Horace Walpole, serendipity is a fortuitous happenstance which results in making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things one was not initially in quest of. Abduction must deal with some contingent coincidence of partial objects: visual, conceptual, digital, intuitive, interactive and so on, which retains a certain lack of details. Incitement of abductive serendipity is provoked by revealing the impurity of a mutually alien in diversity of partial objects. Abductive serendipity attracts the superfluous external particles of sense and nonsense in haphazard constellations. The cryptic event of delocalization of the Imaginary happens as a result of serendipitous insight of infinite ramification of abductive consistency into an indestructible approximateness.





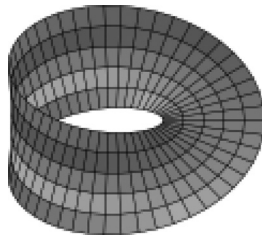
## **Varnish 2 Vanish**

*by Egle Kulbokaite & Carl Palm*





u me geese rrolling  
tumble weed bAllin  
3-sexy degrees  
growling with cheeze ...  
in on full circles  
parmesan mealz  
möbius buddies

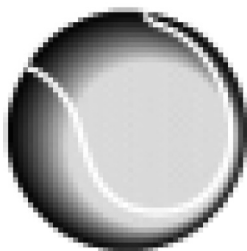


free Willy  
rolling on a beach  
milli vanilli  
notes from a peech  
Sir Kohout piece

circumber in reach  
around me me miss  
pro miss kiss  
misfits perfect  
u won't get lost  
full low the moon



rolling eyes  
8 home runs  
monkey's fist 4 lofty ice



shine bright dear Baseletta  
twice light less  
eight try 2 find me

Varnish 2 Vanish

grappii ice mess  
since ya USeD to  
step on ma knee  
get lost under sun dew

$$A = \pi r^2$$

islet in sea  
whirl  
don't be square  
squirl  
fool around oar  
less is not more  
how can that be?  
more is more  
it's a circle of life



Dj spinn me  
ripp Rashad me  
like 12 inch  
OoOOoOoOr  
calamari loops  
hoola hoops  
within glucose dreams  
peachless potential  
la la luna circle rhymes  
tink tank tink tank thyme  
accord rappin @ daylight fades  
big bang & heat's here  
= tan up  
tune into infinite waves



glow bally  
round & around  
just start & no end  
dear my Vittoria

flavored with oranges

puff on backs

puff in handy traxxx

waitin 4 vãn ice

4 chatty paw pow

ein-eisless

I scream U screamed



cookin in sections

n BB Queing

afta afta dolla dolla

3-sexy degrees

tumble weed bAllin

u me geese rrrolling

...





## **Trip to Fear**

*by Agnieszka Rayzacher*



## Zuzanna Janin: 150 Years Within

I am humbled when working on controversial problems. I find it difficult to make works about things and issues which I haven't lived through myself, at least on some level—that I haven't seen. In my works, I am merely an observer. My works are also confessional. I try to confess, find a local story and “propagate it,” or make my own history universal, as Agnieszka puts it.<sup>1</sup>

In the summer of 2013, Polish artist Zuzanna Janin journeyed into Russia following traces of two interwoven stories. The first of them dates back to early nineteenth century, when Poland was erased from Europe's map with its territory divided into Russia, Germany and Austria. That was when the artist's great-great-grandfather Edward was sent far into Russian territory, where like many other prisoners, he was sentenced to forced labor in a salt factory in Usolye (today known as Berezniki), which belonged to one of the wealthiest families: the Stroganovs.

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<sup>1</sup> Indented quotes are excerpts from Zuzanna Janin's statements from the meeting on *A Trip to Fear* featuring a debate with the artist about the excluded, marginalised and forgotten, as well as the universalisation of private history with professor Paweł Śpiewak and curator Agnieszka Rayzacher—part of *Hate Speech* project at the Jewish Historical Institute on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

The second story refers to events of February of 2012—when artists from the Russian punk group Pussy Riot entered the empty Orthodox Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow and performed, under its iconostasis, the song “Mother of God, Drive Putin Away,” in which they denounced close ties to Russian Orthodox Church officials alongside the secret service and president Putin. After their action, three (of five) of the band’s participants were arrested in August of 2012. Two of them, Masha and Nadia, were sentenced to two years in a penal colony. Masha was sent to colony K-26 in Berezniki (formerly Usolye), where Edward also served his sentence—where Janin later traveled.

## Broadening

In 2003, Janin carried out her controversial, transgressive work *I’ve Seen My Death* (2003). It was a simulation of her own funeral and an attempt to *see* what cannot be seen; it was also a battle waged with weapons of contemporary art against the local tradition of martyrdom and romantic space of death—featured and exploited in Poland’s tradition as a country shattered by war, loss, personal tragedy and the Holocaust. Developing her action and its display at Foksal Gallery (proposed for the Polish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2003), the artist, as she explains, *tried to reclaim ordinary life and ordinary fear, as well as the elderly, the ill, the forgotten and the ordinary, invisible, non-heroic death*. That work marked the opening of a chapter, while concluding Janin’s previous practice consisting of metaphorical, symbolic works operating with a conceptual abbreviation and incorpora-

ted, personal experience.

Another important project by Janin was her multi-channel installation *Majka From the Movie* (2009-2012). The video-polyptych is a multi-component patchwork comprised of various footage. Its foundation and point of departure was the youth TV series, *The Madness of Majka Skowron* (1975), where the artist played the main role of a revolting teenager on the run from her family home. It was interlaced with contemporary scenes with Majka, this time acted by the artist's daughter Mel and extracts from feature films—the world's cinematographic heritage from the last 40 years. *Majka from the Movie* is unique video art, with its TV series-like structure, to be watched in a non-linear, non-chronological way, as opposed to TV or internet productions of the genre. An significant feature of this work is its lack of linear narration, likening it to a subversive loop of images, quotations and scenes from the popular film and television format. Last but not least: *Majka from the Movie* can be perceived as a video installation in a gallery space; the artist almost always presents it in the form of a video-frieze comprising eight or nine screens—with a different chair set in front of each representing various designs. *These are various home interiors symbolically combined, as it were, mutually permeating "privacies," various approaches to aesthetics, comfort, modernity*—the artist explains.

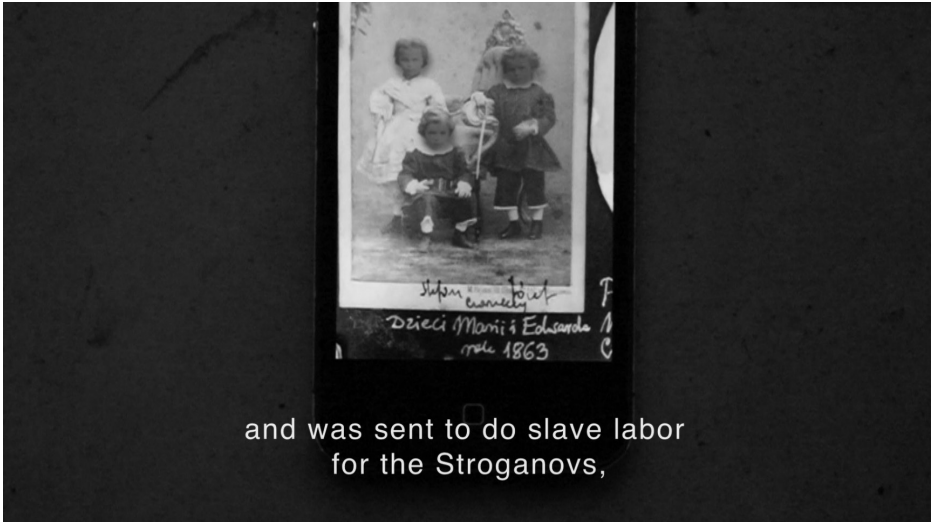
*Majka from the Movie* is a seminal work in Janin's practice. It is an excellent example of self-reflection combined with the need to elevate one's own experience to a universal level—to translate individual experiences and emotions into the language of art. At the same time, both *I've Seen My Death*

and *Majka from the Movie* mark a breakthrough in the artist's work—broadening its scope with local social, political and historical problems.

Thus, both metaphorically and literally, the protagonist of the polyptych sets out on an important and symbolic journey (with the title *U-Via* given to the epilogue of one of the episodes, the artist introduces her self-made name as an endless way to a never-attainable Utopia). Janin locates this way beyond a specific time (its frames are contemporary times—between 1968 and 2012), and above all: beyond a specific place. *Majka* is traveling, or rather rushing at enormous speed through cities, countries, continents—sometimes, it is difficult to determine her destination. Then, we know that the most important thing for her is *the way*—sheer pursuit, will to discover, but also to escape, to break free. The way becomes a destination.

## The Way

*The End. Chapter 1. A Trip to Fear* (2013) is a road movie. It is somewhat anticipated by *Majka from the Movie*, not only in mythologization of the private and local in the context of the general history of culture, but above all, in its attempt to deal with this experience by setting out on a journey—being permanently on the move. Like Janin's earlier works *Fight* (2001) and *I've Seen My Death* (2003), *A Trip to Fear* broadens frames of her practice. Her personal experience is lived through also by the viewer, but above all, it is the sheer journey which appears to be one of the project's significant components, while the video on display is a shortened, understated record of combined poetic threads—snippets of history, imagination, memory,



and was sent to do slave labor  
for the Stroganovs,

Zuzanna Janin, still from *The End. Chapter 1. A Trip to Fear* (2013).

Image : courtesy of the artist.



juxtaposed with observations from contemporary Russia. The artist visits peoples' homes, talks to people, looks for traces of history of the excluded in towns and villages of the Russian province. Yet, the journey, largely recorded on camera, bears a disturbing yet important element of understatement and silence?

Janin's project derives meaning from its performativity, which makes us sure that what happened beyond the frame is likened to Schopenhauer's "incommunicable," which escapes description or record. This part of Janin's project and awareness that the artist *actually* took this journey impacts the way one perceives the entire work. The route covered by Janin is the same route that her great-great-grandfather Edward took—deprived of rights and hope. But let us not allow this reconstruction or historicization to lead us astray. Janin did not intend to act as a convict—she did not cover the route on foot and in a cattle wagon. Air travel, train, car—contemporary means of transport allowed her to symbolically follow the way and take a trip to fear, to its source, rejecting at the same time the romantic tradition: crowning the head with a martyr's laurel. *This repetition pertains to working through the notion of fear and updating memory and emotions, and not a literal re-enactment of facts*—Janin adds.

I am against continuing and returning to the romantic tradition—as I derive a way of thinking and try to break the spell of thinking from a more modern tradition. The year is 1968, because in a way, we are all its heirs. To and from that year, I draw threads of the imagined vision of revolt, struggle, hope, utopia—making the world a better place. I'm not a historian

and not interested in any post-romantic, historic narration. I'll even add: narration of Polish history without women is harmful.

## Laurel on the Head and Transgression

In *The End. Chapter 1. A Trip to Fear*, Janin overcomes fear. Renowned Polish theorist Antoni Kępiński wrote (to paraphrase): *as an alarm signal, fear is to a certain extent a social signal because it often pertains not only to a single member of a group—but to an entire community*.<sup>2</sup> Traveling to its source, Janin follows a path indicated by political prisoners, prisoners of conscience, people excluded, forgotten, humiliated, deprived of their rights, who were condemned for living and thinking differently, who dared to voice discord. At the same time, the artist emphasizes that she has nothing to do with political romanticism which arose in Poland in the first half of the nineteenth century and has persisted until the present day—thriving nowadays owing to right-wing milieus, which perceive the presidential plane crash in Smolensk in 2010 as a continuation of Polish national martyrdom.<sup>3</sup>

As for the January Uprising, the artist draws attention to the progressive manifestation of 'the red,' which aimed to level social inequalities which troubled most societies in the era of the Industrial Revolution. The mythology of martyrdom and 'Poland as the Christ of Nations' was dissected in the 1970s by Maria Janion—prominent scholar in literature and culture from that

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2 Antoni Kępiński, *Lęk* (Warsaw : Państwowy Zakład Wydawnictw Lekarskich, 1987), 303.

3 On April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010, on the way to anniversary commemoration ceremonies in Katyn, 96 people died in an airplane catastrophe—mostly representatives of the Polish government and parliament, including the president of Poland and his spouse.



Zuzanna Janin, still from *The End. Chapter 1. A Trip to Fear* (2013).

Image : courtesy of the artist.

period.<sup>4</sup> In reality, Janin creates a work (with following episodes underway: *Memory & Riot; An Astronaut; Cour. With Humility and Lowliness*) about the need for transgression, and, concurrently, a work marking transgression in-and-of-itself. To paraphrase Bataille: *it is not only the great variety of their subjects but also a certain illogicality which makes it difficult to discuss taboos. Two diametrically opposed views are always possible on any subject. There exists no prohibition that cannot be transgressed.*<sup>5</sup>

Discord voiced by Pussy Riot, similar to the case of Polish rebels, became the reason for their imprisonment and humiliation by the totalitarian state, which felt threatened by acts of transgression of narrower or broader groups—or even single people. Essentially paradoxical, their actions laid bare fragility of the system which sent revolting individuals to penal colonies. Janin's transgressions also relate to crossing borders of historically understood chronology—the artist follows traces of modern-day rebels from Russia, interlacing her journey with the recurring motif of Polish fighters, whose traces she finds—or at least tries to come across in remote villages and cities. The twenty-first century blends here with a history from nineteenth century diaries, official (tsar's) notes or oral histories.

Isn't the sheer fact of traveling also a transgressive act? Too absurd to rationalize, the goal of the journey seems blurred, like Bataille's border, like a prohibition, whose violation depending on circumstances proves to be an act of courage or meaningless gesture.<sup>6</sup> Janin investigates this border; she

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4 Maria Janion & Maria Żmigrodzka, *Romantyzm i historia* (Warsaw : WIP, 1978).

5 Georges Bataille, *Erotism : Death and Sensuality* (New York, NY : Walker, 1962), 63.

6 Members of Pussy Riot were prosecuted only after sharing their actions on the Internet.

gets near the prison, orbits around it under a wall with barbed wire—then, she has to leave. She is not allowed in, but still, she touches fear, and what is more: she visualizes it in her film.

It is a trip to our Polish fears here and now; history unfolds quickly. When I went there in July of 2013, the atmosphere differed. It was not recorded on camera, but after approximately 10 or 15 minutes, services arrived to observe and check what we were doing. They probably recorded us on camera. Today, they would most likely get out of their car to brutally man-handle us. Everything happens fast. Getting to know something means to liberate yourself from burdens moved, lugged from shoulder to shoulder, from generation to generation. I felt that if I went there, got to know it all, saw it, sensed it (at least, symbolically), then I could discuss with full awareness and responsibility—talk in a different language about fears piling up. This work revolves around politics, propaganda, incitement, exploiting fears; on the other hand, we are in the middle of it. Getting to know it brings liberation.

## Erased from History

*My family has preserved a diary of a conspirator and anarchist—a painter who was sent down to Vyatka (modern Kirov), and that little diary contains portraits of his convicted friends, including some women. In the archive in Vyatka, it turned out that he was sent down there with Teofilia Blendkowska, who is an unrecognized figure in Poland. They conspired to kill the tsar's governor Fyodor Berg in 1863, for which they were sent to penal colony. A bomb was built at Teofilia's house. That woman not only didn't go crazy, as the Polish romantic tradition of a "mad" (active) woman would "expect" her to, but she*



Zuzanna Janin, still from *The End. Chapter 1. A Trip to Fear* (2013).

Image : courtesy of the artist.

*manifested great courage and with full awareness she went to serve her sentence leaving her husband and four children at home.*<sup>7</sup>

In this video, I used a recurring extract from another film made titled “The Chorus”—footage from my protest in Lubyanka Square in front of the former NKVD seat, where my grandfather had once been detained—amongst others. In the nineteenth century, the building housed a bank, later NKVD and KGB; I treated the place symbolically. I could have followed through with this action provocatively, so security services would detain me at once ... lesson learned before when I stood in front of the court in Perm with a piece of paper reading “Free Pussy Riot,” because it took less than one minute for the KGB (FSB) to arrive with their camera to record me, document my action and later stop my protest. I explained that it was an individual, artistic action—the law does not prohibit individual actions but does not entirely allow them either. They can lock you up at any time, for whatever reason. A tourist in Russia can be locked up for two weeks for spreading gay propaganda. In order to carry out my action, I invented a silent protest. It was a subversive protest, an appeal to release people imprisoned now but also for those from 70, 100, 150 years ago who are now gone. I wanted to set them free symbolically. An action across time and obstacles, aimed to reclaim them from oblivion, to pay homage to people excluded, marginalized, suffering because of convictions, nationality, race, affiliation with a specific community or way of thinking. I wanted to combine their stories and update them by connecting them to the women from Pussy Riot, as I thought they were continuers of efforts to make this world better—they see that Russia is retreating into its past, into its methods of repression and control elaborated through centuries.

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Zuzanna Janin by Małgorzata Borkowska.

URL: <http://zuzannajanin.natemat.pl/79239,rozmowa-szalenstwo-majki-skowron-to-nor-malnosc-zuzanny-janin>



Zuzanna Janin, still from *The End. Chapter 1. A Trip to Fear* (2013).

Image : courtesy of the artist.



Teofilia, the Polish rebel, erased from official history like many other women active in the subsequent uprisings, becomes one of the silent heroines whom the artist refers to abundantly across *The End*. She appears in the mute, performative action which Janin carried out in Moscow, on the square in front of the famous prison in Lubyanka. “Free Teofilia Blendkowska”—“Free Pussy Riot”—the artist’s tablet reads. Already, the sheer form of the action—words not uttered but stored in the memory of an electronic device, therefore easy to delete—is an expression of solidarity with women erased from memory, swept away from public space, swept away from the discourse of society. Obviously, Janin’s act of reclaiming takes a symbolical course, yet the small, nearly meaningless gesture becomes the project’s main motif. A mute call for liberation is pronounced like a manifesto, becoming its visual record, or visualization.

Philosopher and art theorist Ewa Majewska writes about the need to reformulate reflection on the presence of women in culture—*voices that disturb interpretation of women’s place in culture or pessimistic forms of pacifying women’s creative practice*.<sup>8</sup> Majewska is a proponent of the theory of art’s political agency, which does not petrify the artist nor the viewer in single, rightful manner.<sup>9</sup> Highly topical actions by Janin appear to follow a direction of stressing not only the importance but agency of the discourse of emancipation in contemporary art, to which *The End. Chapter 1. A Trip to Fear* bears testimony.

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8 Ewa Majewska, *Sztuka jako pozór* (Cracow : ha!art, 2013), 126.

9 Ibid., 225.



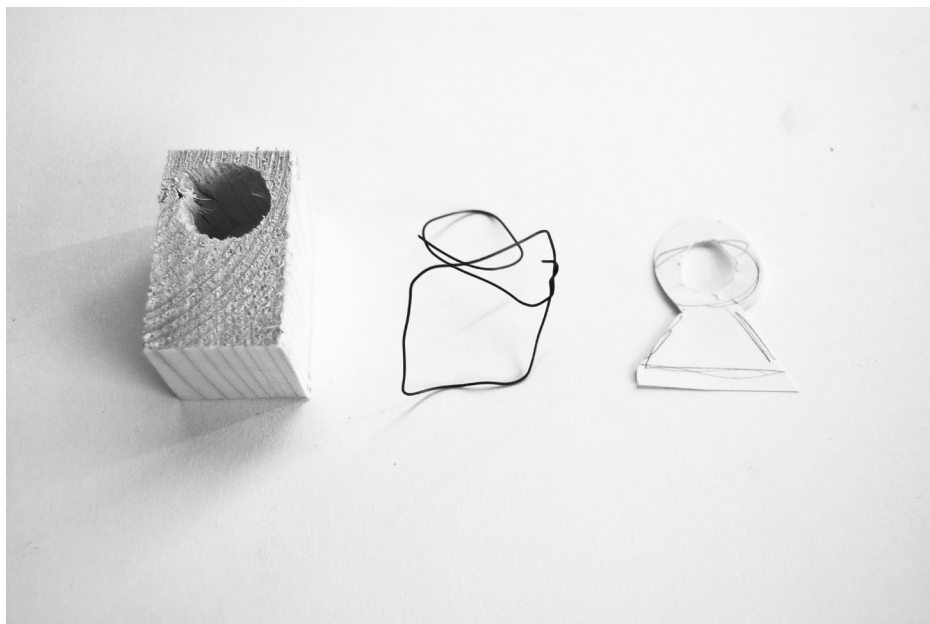


**Work : Time : Production : Eternity : New**

*by Annika Pettersson*

## Work

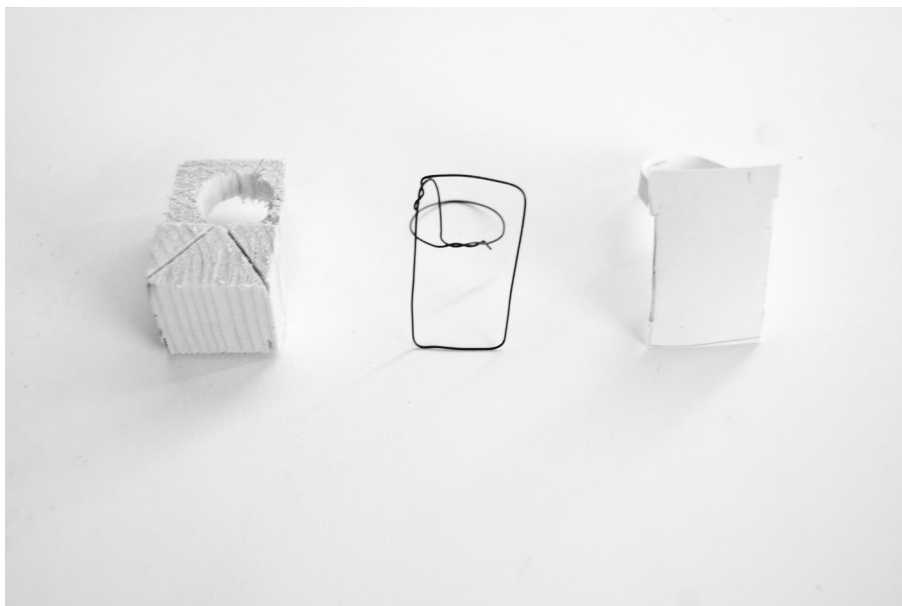
My work is often process-based; I search for specific elements in a making process, and through my work, I attempt to elaborate on these qualities. I search for the moment in a working process when control is lost in the making—when I am forced to make a decision, without having ample time to reflect upon the decision. It is action forced by a time limit; it pushes me to strictly create and not reflect. I follow through with one approach—re-making the form of a classical ring shape with a stone setting. I begin: 30 sec; 1 min; 1,30 min; 2 min; 2,30 min; 3 min; 3,30 min; 4 min; 4,30 min; 5 min; 10 min; 15 min; 20 min; 30 min; 1 hour, ad nauseam. Until: I hit the time period of one week as production time for one ring. In this instance, my interest is to see where the switch of control lies in relation to time.



Annika Pettersson, *Series : How Long*, 30 sec (2014). Image : courtesy of the artist.

## Time

For me, time represents a straightforward force which is both static and consistent. Time is a logical, onward movement working in relation to a given set of rules. My view of an artistic process is somewhere close to the *opposite* of time; therefore, I use limitations of time as a strong parameter. Abiding by a set time limit forces me to reflect and adapt my working process according to the time limit in question; it puts restraints on making. Time can force one to think in desperate, innovative ways or utilize new techniques for production.

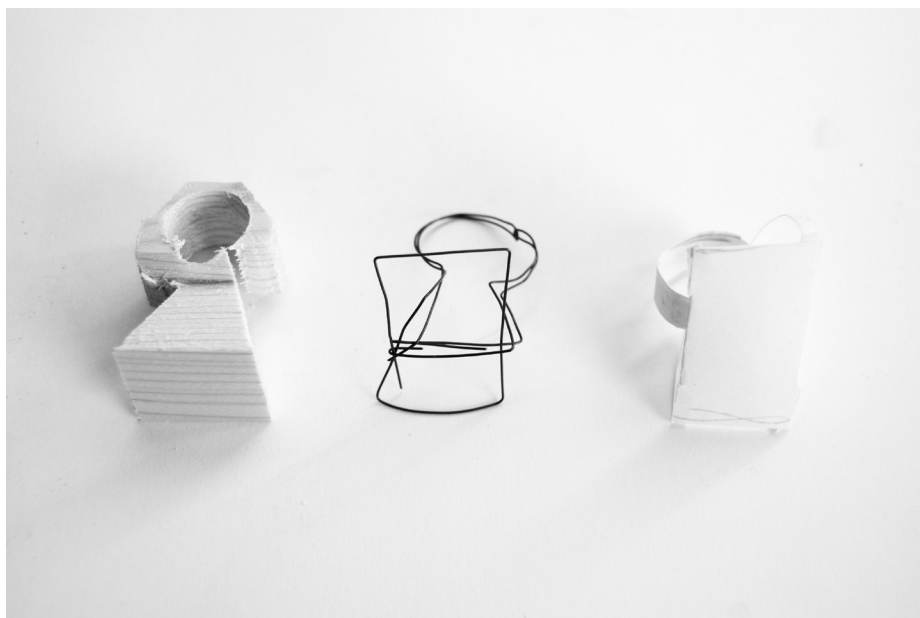


Annika Pettersson, *Series : How Long*, 1 min (2014). Image : courtesy of the artist.



## **Production**

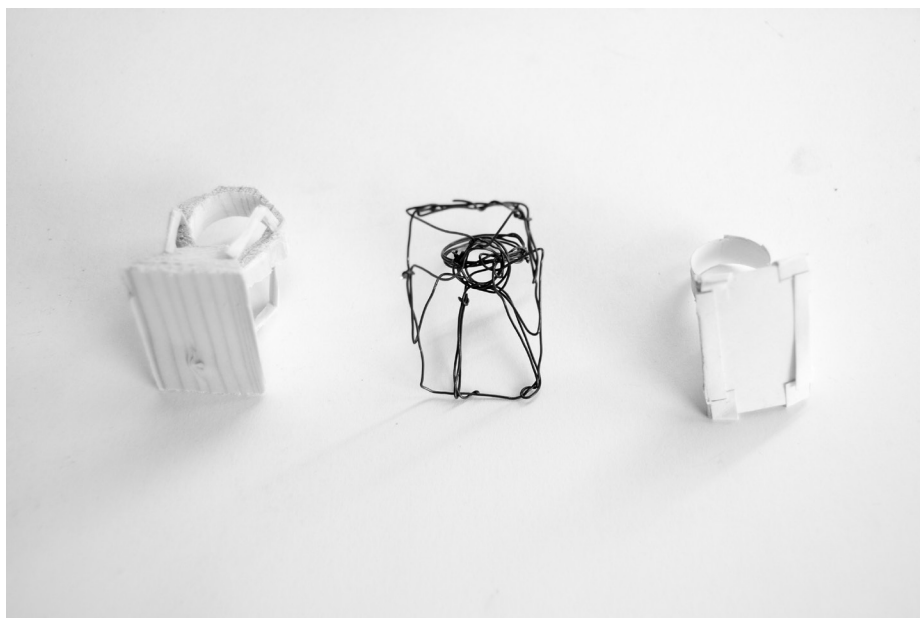
My production and making happens using my own hands. I work in a low-tech or no-tech environment in my studio. Rings are commonly made, crafting a tradition, relying on time-intensive techniques. The use of low-tech methods gives tension between convectional forms and unconventional methods so as to expand the definition of 'artistic skill.'



Annika Pettersson, *Series : How Long, 5 min* (2014). Image : courtesy of the artist.

## Eternity

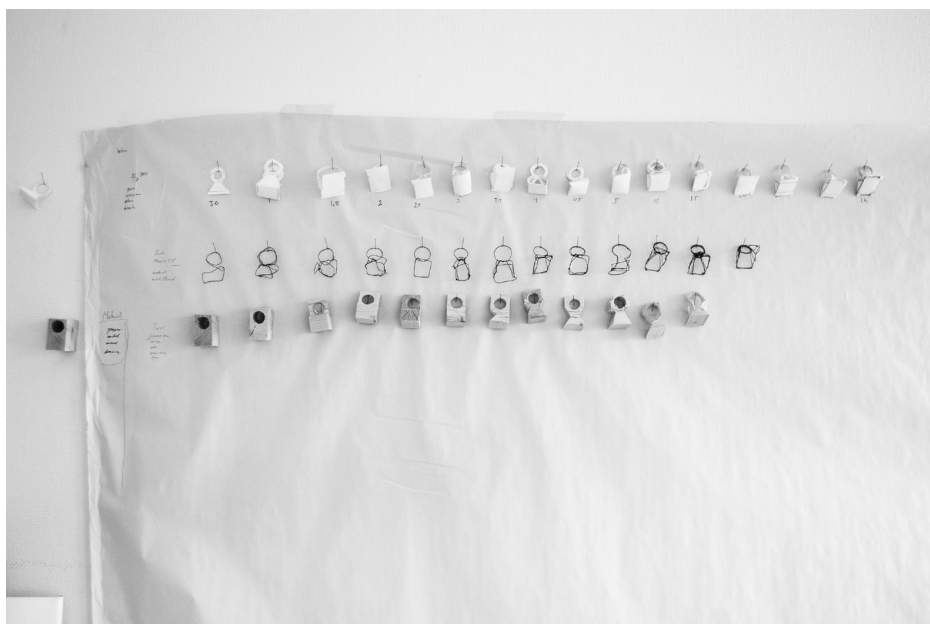
Contrary to a golden ring, my work will not last an ‘eternity.’ By using the symbol of eternity (i.e., circle) to investigate the relation between time and making, I acknowledge the power that a ring possesses—as an object. Through my own material choices, I actively reject the aspect of eternity seen from a craft perspective. At this state of investigation, I only examine limited materials: paper, wood, iron thread. Via these material choices, I make it clear that these pieces are not meant for wearing; the aspect of wearing is not the main purpose for these rings. Later in this investigation, I will work with precious metal to research the juxtaposition of time, infinity and eternity (with)in an object.



Annika Pettersson, *Series : How Long*, 15 min (2014). Image : courtesy of the artist.

## **New**

Even though an object may last forever, it is most likely that it will end up in the shadows of the world—after years pass. The constant requirement for new objects increases on all levels in contemporary society. As a maker, I do not focus on the newness of an object, process or outcome. From my perspective, it is important to maintain a contemporary element in the work but also keep true to the set of rules within one's artistic practice.



Annika Pettersson, *Series : How Long* (2014). Image : courtesy of the artist.



# **What is Work?**

*by Alicia Eggert*





## What is Work?

What is work?

Which activities qualify as work, and which do not?

Does sitting and thinking count as work?

When the artist Tom Friedman stared at a piece of paper for 1,000 hours—  
was that work?

If I sat and tried to blink my eyes once every second for eight hours, would  
that be considered a full, productive work day?

If I simply call something “work,” does that mean I can ask someone to pay  
me for it?

Can productivity be measured in ways which are not tied to money?

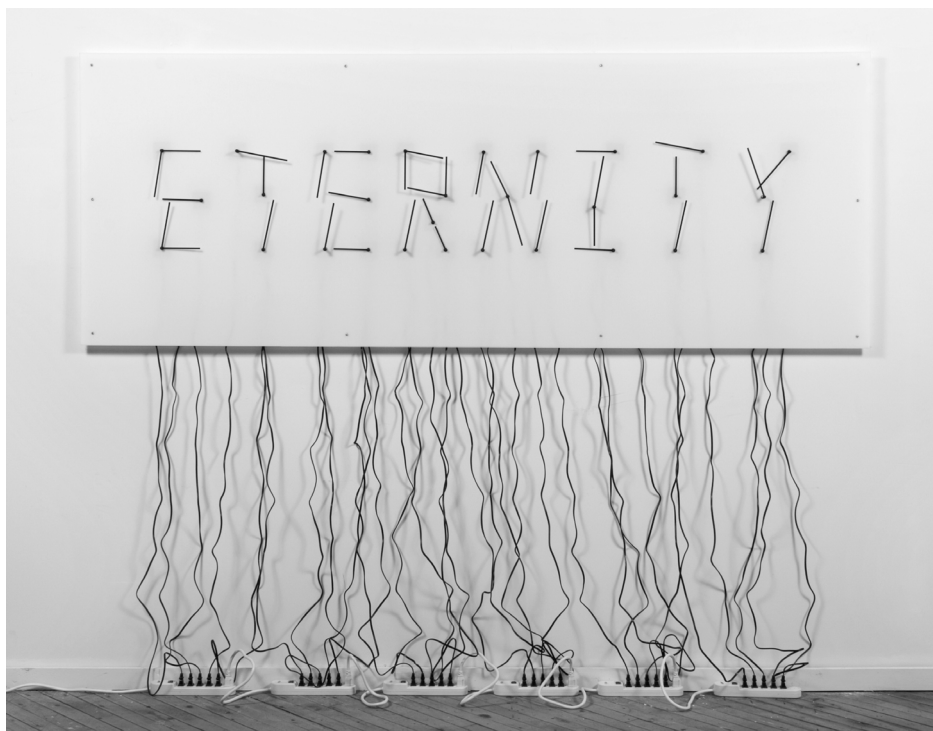
What I do when I am 'working'

Thinking	Presenting	Errand Running
Drawing	Demonstrating	Shopping
Sketching	Brainstorming	Cleaning
Constructing	Problem Solving	Moving
Deconstructing	Calculating	Traveling
Assembling	Talking	Looking
Disassembling	Listening	Noticing
Planning	Emailing	Exploring
Researching	Writing	Analyzing
Ordering	Organizing	Imagining
Applying	Arranging	Learning

How many of these activities can also be considered play?

Why do we value work more than we value play?

Which is actually more productive?



Alicia Eggert & Mike Fleming, *Eternity* (2010). Image : Mike Fleming.



Alicia Eggert, *All the Time* (2012). Image : courtesy of the artist.

At the moment, I'm working on making a baby. Not a whole lot of that work is noticeable on the outside, besides the carrying. But on the inside, my body is doing a lot of work. One day: I might make a spleen, another day: a thumb. These past few weeks, I've been helping the little one develop his / her brain and lungs. Most people (I admit that this group once included me, prior to pregnancy) would not consider this work to be productive or valuable. Yet, I have a feeling that this little person I'm creating will probably be the only truly meaningful thing I ever contribute to this world.

As an artist, I sometimes fool myself into thinking that my work will be my legacy—that objects I make will have a long-lasting, cultural impact. Or, if they are not that far-reaching, then they will at least affect a few people in a meaningful way—slightly altering their direction or perspective of the world. Then, maybe my work will inspire *them* to do something great. Like a snowball rolling downhill, or the butterfly effect.

I wonder if other animals have the same desire that humans do—to outlive themselves, to be remembered when they're gone. Why is this so important to our species? It doesn't seem to make our day-to-day lives more meaningful. If anything, it makes life more stressful. It takes focus away from the present and, perhaps, the things and people that matter—away from those we actually see, touch and impact on a daily basis. What about them? Why don't we hold them in higher regard?

My dad is currently working on working himself to death. He's been working on that for as long as I can remember. He has always been a workaholic; I think I inherited many of those tendencies from him. Much of my self-worth is rooted in how much I accomplish in a day and how much recognition I receive for those accomplishments. There is always more to be done. Will having a baby change me? Will my priorities shift significantly—if at all? I am not sure. I haven't had time to think about it, because I've been trying to get as much work done as possible before I feel the first contraction.

## What is Work?



Alicia Eggert, *Do You Realize?* (2014). Image : Sarah Morrill.





# **If You Dream About a Big City You Don't Know**

*by Adrijana Gvozdenović & Vijai Patchineelam*

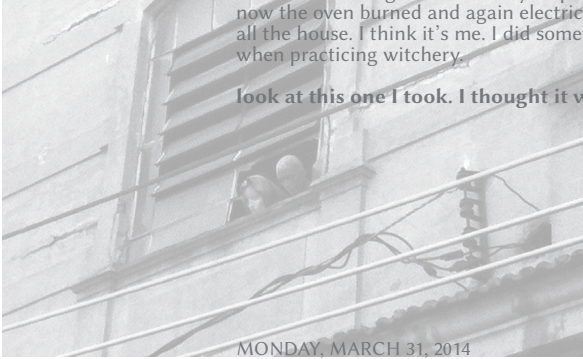
SATURDAY, MARCH 29, 2014

**Te amo.**

*i ja tebe.*

there was a change of time today. hope you knew it  
now the oven burned and again electricity went off in  
all the house. I think it's me. I did something wrong  
when practicing witchery.

look at this one I took. I thought it was people ...



MONDAY, MARCH 31, 2014

m ,m 43£€€€€

that was cat writing

\* He drank his coffee in a hurry.docx \* be re-enforced, then the hell  
with it all.

I am listening and cleaning my room  
so much clothes to throw away.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxsPF4bsDmc>

Track 4 / Comedown machine / LETRA: If we don't watch the  
sun It will rise If we don't take our time It's not wise Putting  
posters up For your band Now I'll ...

**I think its a disguise marketing plot by starbucks  
see people don't work all the time. lazy fuckers:**

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/03/29/brilliant-people-schedules\\_n\\_5055953.html?ncid=fcblkinkushpimg00000063](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/03/29/brilliant-people-schedules_n_5055953.html?ncid=fcblkinkushpimg00000063)

**yeah, need to organize. I'm cleaning the jacket  
Thomas gave me. looking much better. working  
on the project report. its called Script as the  
chronology of the project: Equilibrium I,II,III.**

sounds organized, also.

yes!

Koi no yokan (恋の予感)

(n.) lit. "Premonition of Love;" the sense one can have  
upon first meeting another person that the two of  
them are going to fall in love.

This differs from the idea "love at first sight" in tat it  
does not imply that the feeling of love exists, raher it  
refers to the knowledge that a future love is inevitable.

**that is very beautiful.**

and there is word for it.

1

He  
drank  
coffee in  
a hurry, and  
then sat for a  
couple of hours  
thinking of what had  
just happened to him.  
If in order to believe  
again "good taste" needs to  
be re-enforced, then the hell  
with it all.

## If You Dream About a Big City You Don't Know

**yes. coffee is so much better here.**

oh, I will try to make one now with the machine! I forgot I have now a possibility to cook, since they fixed kitchen.  
future love is inevitable - did you know that in Belgrade? I knew when you sent me the message.

**and I gave you some coffee as well.  
how?**

how what?

**how did you know?**

*koi no yokan.*

**ai ai ai  
but I saw you first.**

but I've seen you better. you left your perfume here.

**I know.**

you listen to the audio?

**not yet, working a bit. when I take a break. I'm afraid it will demand some focused listening and interaction.  
Have I showed you the script? its still very rough, working on some ideas, but its pretty much laid out how it will look in between the structure of the film, and the chronology of the project and an epilogue that will be the kitchen and the donation of magazines. there is so much text to translate and also to transcribe - alessandra's talk ... lots of boring work.**

I have just finished sorting, organizing and cleaning.  
now I eat. I will read it.  
wow! it gives the impression you did a lot!

**what do you mean the "impression that I did a lot"? so you think I did not do much?  
the audio is super good.**

they chose some people for the off fair, but not me. now I am very down.

**don't be. its a fair, it means nothing.**

but I am

**only commercially. I have friends who put on their cv's the fairs they've shown. I think its stupid. but you should not be. focus on what you need to do.  
my god, the audio ...**

I know. does it make you horny?  
it's beautiful audio. fuck, I am down now, and sad. I go to buy ice cream.

**more surprised than horny, we sound very good together.**

I am also not horny when I listen. I like it a lot.

**1**

**She picked up the chair, now pushed to the corner of the room, sat down and put herself to work. She drinks slowly as the coffee cools down. Last sips are no longer warm, but she enjoys the bad taste of cold coffee; it makes her feel like she's working hard. Probably, she acted hastily, and it is necessary to slow down and think. She needs more insight and knowledge before making a decision. She decides: whatever just happened to him is a warning, that he is unable to change routine even though he should.**

2

Before, taking two steps forward meant he'd take one back. But now his body projects itself against the floor. He knows how much this gamble will cost; in fact, it has been paid in full. His life is a gamble, and if everything works out, later on, he will be able to live normally.

3

What a lie! Every time he opens his eyes, his right shoulder pops out. The pain that follows is so great that his legs gives up underneath him, as his body crumbles to the floor. He hits the floor headfirst; he prefers to feel the pain of his body rather than the shame of those around him. Bad luck, nothing happens; the fall is never high enough. He wishes that one day the fall from the height of his own body would do him in. That this gap, this detachment from everything else, would be sufficient.

Can I tell you something?

tell me.

I also want to have some money.

yes, well you mean you want to work with a gallery?

but I can't. I don't have work for that.  
what do you do now?

still working on the script. laying out the images properly. tonight I transcribe the rest of alessandras talk. tomorrow I start translating the texts. theres a lot of text...  
I'm less anxious today than the last couple of days. I want to get some work in, start. so I can relax on the weekend meet with some friends and enjoy without being stressed. you?

looking out through the window.

nice.

THU, APR 3, 2014

*bom dia.* here it's still night, I stopped watching a movie, thinking of you. remember once I was speaking to you about how when I was younger I would describe myself to others as something that was me but also a bit made up, something that I wanted to be. I would describe and project an image off and on to myself so that I would have some distance and space to catch up with. we sound like that in the audio, which made me think of these japanese words you've sent me.

*dobro jutro,* It's very early there you are maybe in a middle of your sleeping time. Last night I read a book. It is nice book, but didn't help me starting my theses. Then I put our audio on and fell asleep with earphones on. It's like music. Maybe finally we can have a band.

I am ready for a reading/writing/editing day, from a bed that looks at the pine tree. you need to give me another file from final cut (XML) cause this one I can't put in premiere. watch the tutorial but there is no hurry I will edit in weekend. I have to do a lot today for a book.

coffee here is so much better. I'm drinking like four a day, big cups ...

what I've learned today

- 1) a daily soda—regular or diet—raises your risk for heart disease by 43 percent
- 2) failure is means of achieving happiness
- 3) there are emoticons on gmail
- 4) Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy was anarcho-pacifist
- 5) a lot about copyrights
- 6) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dp8aTYUrPi0>

## If You Dream About a Big City You Don't Know

SAT, APR 5, 2014

how are you? had a very strange dream, I was in the middle of a city. seemed like new york. they had made the streets ready to fill it up like a swimming pool. and people were saying that it was crazy difficult to swim, it was some sort of exercise or race. so I was stretching and getting myself ready. then I woke up.

you know your dream ... it's very symbolic. this is what I know from my grandmother and from dream interpretation book: If you dream about a big city, you don't know - your life currently lacks greater intimacy and intimate relationships and you want to start life from scratch and if you know it (the city) - you are ready to face all problems. large pool means that you will get money or succeed something in profession, and if there is a water that is growing, this dream means the culmination of your mental state and emotions. but also without all of this - it's quite clear.

you are a witch! my notes from yesterday, as I waited in the dentist office: I'm not sure anymore, what it is that I do. I wonder if it has to happen in an indirect form. not by chance, but by a lack of what to do. I have to remind myself of what I am, as I more often than not forget. I will make an effort to maintain a distance. I don't want to come back and live in this city and not even spend as much time as I am at present. Everything outside of me finds its self far away from this city. It has taken some time to understand this. Here I don't have any patience for anything or anyone. I've been here for five days and I find myself already packing my luggage.

SUN, APR 6, 2014

what I learned today

- 1) *Desassossego* = disquiet
- 2) Pessoa invented concept of heteronym - refers to one or more imaginary character(s) created by a writer to write in different styles
- 3) Me and you, we both like to use leftovers as work. Maybe me more, cause I am gypsy, but you also.
- 4) About technobrega - the music is "born free"
- 5) What does it mean to dream pool all over the city
- 6) My sister proved me that I am intolerable and unbearable when I am at home with more than one family member.

it's not 1st of May, but I feel I would like to celebrate work.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FG8Mz3j4jv8>

So, I started with reading your story as a dream and I think it can be good, I have fun doing it.

I have to do over the bear movie, cause text is not translated in premier, but doesn't matter I will do it in after, so I can slow it in a nice way. But my computer renders much slower than yours.  
Now I go to spend Sunday with family and maybe eat nice, for a change.

its good that you've been able to focus, work and get things moving along. I have also been able to be productive these days, which is good. hopefully get some ideas for new work. yesterday, I went to gustavo's house at around six I reached and by midnight I was already in a deep sleep at his house.

2

She stands up, her body and mind need a change of position, so the direction of her thoughts can alter and she can continue working. But he is there resting lamely in the middle of the room, in pain, while she walks circles around him. The sound of her heels against the floor instills a rhythm to his heartbeat. She imagines that the floor is their base, that it helps her move through the house and support him. If the house is their life, then the floor is a clear boundary between the visible and what is below, what is not accessible to their senses. Everyone knows he's a gambler; she will have to solve the situation herself.

3

She contemplates whether or not everything that happened to him was a dream. She wants to read it as a dream. "... A dream of falling suggests a basic fear in the dreamer's life ..." She knows it is a fear of moral hazard or sexual incapacity, indicating a loss of prestige or the risk of false friends. Maybe he's thinking about conceding to sexual urges and impulses for another woman. "Oh," she exclaims, "It's just an affair. Men!" She sits next to him and attempts to explain what just happened, as if she herself understands. She continues reading. Shoulders in a dream imply forgetfulness. He feels that he has too many responsibilities and is overworked by circumstances. He may constitute support for someone, and he has the ability to care for others. "You act according to your own discretion and not according to the divine plan," she says with care and, in turn, he imagines her as a witch.

4

He learned early on that the world is indifferent, and everything that passes him by is nothing more than that which does not belong to him; whatever insists on staying does not belong to him either. He made a mistake first; the second time, he got it right, but that does not correct what he did nor does it guarantee his future.

5

After reminiscing the day's events, he realized that sitting there wouldn't do much. With a degree of mastery, he removed the chair from underneath himself. He wrapped his left leg around the chair legs, turning and tensioning until the chair flipped under him and away from his body. As the chair flipped across the room, he somehow fractured his right leg. That's right: the right leg that stood firm and still, it was an effective move, a very hard move to describe here. Without complete steps of the development of this move, it is hard to believe in something that you see but cannot comprehend.

we started drinking immediately and smoking one joint after the other, at nine we took some acid and then I was gone from then on. its always the same with gustavo and our friend daniel. a lot of alcohol and drugs. we ended up not talking much and didn't go to lapa, but it was fun. gustavo was the first person I met during university that was in the painting course and he introduced me to everyone else basically. nice to be with family! I woke up very pissed today.

what I learned today:

- 1) I am not becoming better in organizing to finish things on time, more in accepting the situation and to be reconciled with failure.
- 2) panda can't learn everyday.

TUE, APR 8, 2014

I was reading articles from montenegro. I read that there is a bar where you can order nothing for 50 cents. You say "I don't want nothing" (*Neću ništa*) and it comes on your bill written and 50 cents. Great.

I just came back from the beach, also relaxed. The ocean was a bit strong to go in, huge waves and so I was just laying under the sun, getting "tented." This is the beach we placed my mothers ashes in the water and my grandmothers. I always go when I am here. I think it is nice, that you relate the memories of someone with a place like the beach. So you don't go to these ugly cemeteries and have to buy these flowers etc. Its more like something you want to do and that makes you think of someone. the talk will be on the 25th at the museum, its confirmed. how was your day?

WED, APR 9, 2014

I have come to a conclusion that is: I am working when I write in my pocketbooks and that if I am producing less than I could or should, then it is because I am not writing enough on these little books. As I have told you normally I write on buses, trains or traveling somewhere in between places. So I will now try to incorporate this habit to my daily routine. Thank you for helping me come to this conclusion.

Oi, beach sounds much better then Nijmegen nightlife. But I laugh a lot with Ilse. She is hippy. I haven't done anything here concerning exhibition. My day was rainy, painful a bit ( I had to carry pedestal and suitcase with 5 changes - supposed to be 3 but there was a train crash so I had to take a bus and a train from another place. crazy) So finally when I came I was talking a lot, tried the lights in a room, tried my video and cooked for us. It's super beautiful place, I will show you tomorrow if we skype. There is a box where I sleep and where we could have amazing sex with bars to hold all around. oh, something very strange happened: A woman in a

## If You Dream About a Big City You Don't Know

supermarket didn't let us buy beers cause I didn't have ID, and she thought I am under age. Not much of a day. Also it was rainy and cold, but now I am super calm and relaxed about exhibition.

FRI, APR 11, 2014

look at this email Rachel sent me! I'm thinking this could become a series called "To document and project". Final sections of doc:

### 7.5. Cooking

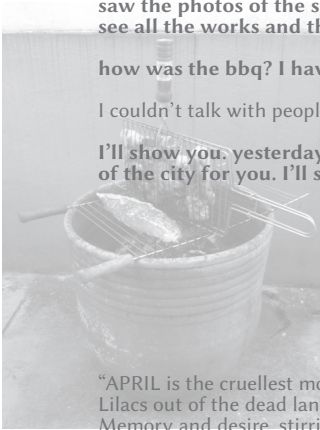
Cooking is not allowed in the Academie. The Academie may remove equipment (such as cooking appliances or gas bottles) which indicates that cooking is taking place in the studio after having made a request that it be removed."

saw the photos of the show, looks really good. happy to see all the works and the poster/boat.

how was the bbq? I have invented a new bbq pit.

I couldn't talk with people. what is pit, where you make fire?

I'll show you. yesterday I took some photos and videos of the city for you. I'll send them.



"APRIL is the cruellest month, breeding  
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing  
Memory and desire, stirring  
Dull roots with spring rain."

I am thinking something: were you getting on with neoism things?

*bom dia.* I read three of Stewart Homes books, when I was in the university. I was really into it then. you know we thought we were punk. you should read the book. I sent you the link, the whole book is online. Its about counter culture movements, but not necessarily only art. they have like dutch provos, mail art etc ...

WED, APR 16, 2014 AT 10:15 AM

after little pause I continue ...

1) indian garlic pickle + mozzarella = heaven in mouth  
(I think someone who would dare to put cheese in spicy food from east will get super rich) or better: when we fail as artists we open a restaurant where we make a combination of food that blows mind. and a kid.

2) masturbation leads to more masturbation until it makes you so miserable that you reconcile with destiny that you will never have it with a person. or with a God, in my case.

3) Napping is a high performance activity. If you looked into

4  
He will never learn; she will  
never understand.

5  
She is happy how she  
positioned herself and took  
control. Now, she has to go  
back to work. She stares at  
the empty coffee mug. It  
is hard to believe, but she  
couldn't make the chair  
stay underneath her. Or the  
chair is escaping her, or she  
is completely retarded. She  
sees but cannot comprehend.  
It's funny; she was laughing  
in the beginning, but the hell  
with that! Now everybody is  
watching. She can't fail. She  
grabbed the chair's backrest  
as she wanted to straddle it.  
She lost control and fell with  
her chin hitting  
the seat.



6

Stretched out on the floor with a broken leg, he smiled and cursed his left leg, which was able to break his right one and remain untouched. His body now demanded of the left leg the support necessary to get up and out of there, which he intended to do. He thought to himself: it would've been better if blood splattered. He sat down again and tried to flip the chair, but his shoulder popped out again. Don't ask how; he didn't understand it himself. He felt like an idiot, unable to control his actions. His left leg gave out; pain shooting down from his shoulder was too violent to bear.

On the floor again, he pissed himself. A small pool of piss grew beside him, completing the composition with his contorted body and chair beside him. As he tried to get up, pissed and debilitated, he slipped in the pool of piss. This time, he did not fall but skated in suspension. He tried taking hold of the chair as he skated but was unable; so, the chair was pushed away leaving a yellow streak on the white floor. As he contemplated this 'painting' he had just made, his leg once again gave out from underneath him. This time, as he was about to hit the floor, he placed his elbow first. Everyone laughed, and he did not swear at anyone but acted the fool. Contorting his body more as laughter grew louder.

She picked up the chair, now pushed to the corner of the room, sat down and put herself to work.

the habits of highly successful people you would see a lot of naps, a lot of recovery. It's sort of our brains' janitorial service. It helps us clean out the stuff we don't want. It also helps us work on ideas while we're asleep. Top performers use sleep as a tool. 4) a confession: last night I couldn't stand it. I was listening both audios and watching pictures for more than two hours. I couldn't come, so I did it very rough. Then I cried. I put computer to sleep and took a place on a window, staring at the sky. I was very cold but I enjoyed. Since I cried a lot and tortured my body I was ready to write a bit. I think I miss you too much. It's not sexual but it is reflecting there. I went to bed around midnight and dreamed about big bureaucratic conspiracy against me. I am ready to learn more, but first I will go out.

### Hotel panda

ooo, maybe all montenegrs are in.



public phonebooth here

phonebooth? looks like monument.

its great no? did you see each photo has, "travesti" or "mulher" - woman ... so you know what trouble you are getting into...

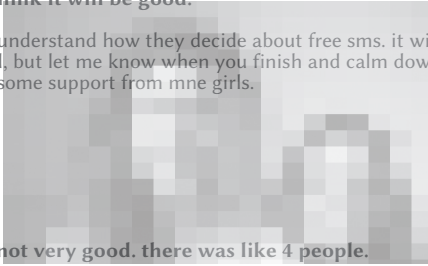


this morning after shower, I open the window and there was unexpected occurrence. only sound of birds. no cars, no people in a hurry. in a city on that side of a street felt beautiful apocalyptic.

SUN, APR 20, 2014

hey baby. I want your opinion on a new work. I'll send a test here, and when you can please tell me what you think. its a test for a new work. basically I downloaded a pirate copy of a book on gentrification, then placed photos of the collective atelier we had back in 2007-2009. this atelier was in an area that today is being gentrified. no more free sms. yesterday gustavo showed me a video he edited for the talk with footage of protests from over 4 years. super good so he'll show his video than I show my slow video of Rio. I think it will be good.

I don't understand how they decide about free sms. it will be good, but let me know when you finish and calm down. here is some support from mne girls.



it was not very good. there was like 4 people.

oh, and now you go to the other one?

now I go for lunch, then I go for the second talk.

so you are not happy or it's ok?

fine. we are drinking beer and smoking weed. how are you, writing?

no. we were trying to do something today. then I fell asleep. soon we go out for gallery night. so you gonna be stoned for next one. nice. I did my kind of respond to your story.

open · download

She picked up the chair.docx

no its at 19h, so I'll be ok by then. I go. people are calling. beijos.

Hey. how was the shows and galleries? second talk was great, a lot of people. one guy didn't really like the work and critisized a bit, and then alot of people started attacking him. it was funny. it was good, I am satisfied.

art was shity, I don't get all of this art things - how it's so big with such a bad form. I don't understand it even in commercial way.

what will you do today?

6

She does not feel strong enough to take a stand in this conflict and stand up. Stretched out on the floor face-down, she cried a tear. She decided to stand up quickly and surprise the chair. She is in a composition between him and the chair that is in the corner of the room. The chair is on her right side, so when she turns her head in that direction to run for the chair, her right shoulder popped out. She slipped in a small pool of piss that grew beside him and fell back. She hit her head on the corner of the wall, and for a moment, curtains closed. She wants to say that everything is fine; she is ready to try again but doesn't hear a laugh anymore. That's strange. Since everybody is stunned looking at her, she starts to touch herself and looking down, she sees her white t-shirt getting soaked with blood. She thought: this is the most beautiful moment of the day. As the field of red was growing, she thought that if this was a dream, bleeding means that she is pushed from a spiritual to an emotional level. Laughter, she hears again, is a kind of escape from reality in a dream that she is acutely aware of. In the end, she contemplated this 'painting' he thought he had made. There is an empty chair in a room.



**Restless Culture Syndrome (RCS):**  
***On the Old Demand for the New***

*by Dan Karlholm*



Is it true that the zeitgeist of our time entails “a lot of *zeit* but not much *geist*,” as Douglas Coupland put it a few years ago?<sup>1</sup> Or was the cynical Canadian writer and artist perhaps overly optimistic about the time part of this utterance? Is it not the case that we (let’s make this the biggest conceivable we) are running out of time? Is not the postmodern, global culture running away from its time-consuming problems of inequity, social disintegration and ecological catastrophe? The expectation of a planetary long-term may be about to switch for the threat of a shorter term. Although far apart and hard to compare, I have no doubt there are connections between this macro-level and all micro-situations, where artists are working in conditions of increased restlessness and generalized impatience. The outcome is project-based artwork—yielding art as a temporary version of versions.

The Hegelian construct ‘the spirit of the times’ is not easily disassociated from the chronotopic developmental scheme according to which a culture left its expressive spiritual mark on the highest achievements of an epoch. Today, the historicist underpinnings of this model have crumbled; art is no longer so much the imprint of the zeitgeist of a particular place and time,

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1 Douglas Coupland, “Convergences,” *New York Times Book Review*, March 11, 2012, 1.

as the output of a market niche. In the ‘global contemporary,’ artists move freely across the world in transnational constellations and constantly shifting networks.<sup>2</sup> Art is no longer believed to be historically produced, but the output of an increasingly global art system, the historical genealogy of which is about to be forgotten or actively put to rest. The chronotopic model—Dutch seventeenth century painting over there and pre-Columbian craft down there—is still operative in traditional museums of art and ethnography, respectively, and in mainstream art history education, but one of the greatest benefits of the contemporary as ‘our’ global dominant is a novel emphasis on *the now*, instead of *the new*. While the latter, of course, is not only hard to escape but presents numerous, indeed permanent, temptations, it is arguably in need of redefinition today. These, then, are the themes for this essay: the value of time linked to a diagnosis of our restless culture, art as a temporary version and rethinking the new vis-à-vis the now.

## Valuing Time, Countering Restlessness

In the heyday of industrial capitalism, production demanded an ever-quicker pace for the purpose of producing an ever-higher quantity of marketable goods and commodities. Time was of the essence to Fordist economy—*time is money!*—and, accordingly, highly valued as a space in which to work, produce and generate profit to capital owners. The more production was improved and accelerated, the less time was consumed, the more could be turned out. Until, needless to say, the human factor ground the

2 Andrea Buddensieg, Hans Belting & Peter Weibel (eds.), *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds* (ZKM, Karlsruhe, Cambridge, Mass. & London : MIT Press, 2013).

machinery to a halt, like in Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936). Given the open question "how is time valued in our time," this familiar background needs to be compared to the current situation.<sup>3</sup> We could say that time was highly valued in the days of the modern since immediately linked to the generation of profit. Today, improved profit rates rest, instead, on the dislocation of production, which seems to leave more time on our hands in the rich world, a.k.a. post-industrial, since we can no longer hear, smell or see production but only receive its outcome. Real work has become disguised, products turn up readymade, and the time of work appear to be an abstract entity.

From this follows, on one hand, a rather low esteem of time as such. Although many of us lead extremely stressful lives, time has actually become excessive in the rich world—a beast to 'kill.' In that sense, Coupland was right. When we, the relatively well-off, complain that we don't have enough time, this is often not just a fact, but a choice, conscious or not, endemic to the nervous disorder of 'supermodernity.'<sup>4</sup> Information, service, control and network are a few keywords to pinpoint this culture. Artists are not exempt from this overall logic. Their productions have been, at least symbolically, dematerialized since the 1960s. And in the contemporary era, according to most observers beginning in 1989, the contemporary artist is increasingly drawn into service economy, where work is process-based, project-based, flexible, customized, et cetera, which have repercussions for how time is valued. With just a slight exaggeration, what is valued

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3 Cf. <http://www.waywo.se> (2014-06-10)

4 Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity* (London & New York : Verso, 2008).



today is availability (choice) and adaptability (change), for the artist to be able in ‘no time,’ as it were, to meet new demands. Once upon a time, the latter word was intimately coupled with supply. Not anymore. Supply is for losers—unable to deliver the quick-fixed, temporary solution.

It used to be the case that if something was worth doing at all, it was also worth waiting for it to emerge. This is no longer so, that is: culturally speaking from inside the rich world. If something is worth doing, it is worth doing quickly, and for a shorter period of time, or not at all. The site-specific and culturally contingent has its charm for a while, but it can never sustain our interest—never survive as such. Interest in the specific location can only last for so long, before the perspective needs to change. No one creates art for good or for eternity anymore, at least not in the contemporary art world.<sup>5</sup>

Time has become something to overcome. ‘Permanent’ exhibitions have been exchanged at museums worldwide (as an antiquated museum piece itself) for rotating short-term installation initiatives, as if the very prospect of something lasting or remaining in place has become, in a decade or so, unbearable or deadly—literally reminiscent of the big beyond. The curator was once the caretaker of a collection; now s/he is an artist-like exhibition maker or the entrepreneur securing good crowds. The hidden keyword of the contemporary is the temporary. Against the prognosis of Terry Smith, that the contemporary “may last forever,” it is clear—at least for now—that

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<sup>5</sup> By ‘contemporary art world,’ I here refer to the selective, qualitatively refined section of the totality of art production which meets the tacit criteria of timeliness, relevance or contemporaneity.

the temporary rules.<sup>6</sup>

Now, while the short-termism of today does speak of a certain devaluation of time, in the prospect of more or less instant gratification, it also allocates to the temporal axis, as such, a tremendous value. Time seems to be valued according to how much we can refine, literally compress or tighten it. The focus on the simultaneous, ongoing and contemporary places an enormous value on 'time-space compression,' the hallmark of the post-modern condition, according to David Harvey.<sup>7</sup> Focusing on the temporal, however, could lead us to neglect the spatial. The two are, of course, inevitably intertwined, but let us, for the sake of a forthcoming argument, treat them separately. The value of fast time, speed and acceleration means a de-valuation of the time of duration. The passing of time presents a threat, along with waiting, prolonging, extending and slowing down, which is also to say that precisely these responses to the impatience of our time harbors subversive potential for artistic use.

While the demand for the new was a trait of capitalism in the 1800s and 1900s, it is no less relevant to the new form of capitalism today. The under-text of contemporaneity is a modern(ist) craving for novelty, new production and innovation, but the more stimulating prospect of a truly con-temporary instead of merely temporary project-based culture resides in the prefix 'con-' (with). The con-temporary is all about relationships, thus also and always a

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6 Terry Smith, *What is Contemporary Art?* (Chicago, IL : The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 6, 15, 196.

7 David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge & Oxford : Blackwell, 1990).

case of place-making. The contemporary has to occur somewhere, where relations are struck, for long or short, good or bad. Contemporaneity is not primarily about time, but about a highly valued discursive space, where cross-cultural encounters between different agents can be established. This is a standard description of current contemporaneity, I guess, but what I would like to add is the possibility that hereby emerges, namely to conceive of “the contemporaneity of past and present,” to speak with Hans-Georg Gadamer.<sup>8</sup> They are both around now, while both of them are not exactly *new*.

### Art as Version

How to conceive of the contemporary work of art, in its post-medium-specific, post-modern character, if such a generalization is permitted?<sup>9</sup> The work of art, as I hinted at above, has been discussed in terms of dematerialization by Lucy Lippard, among others, who characterized the new conceptual works of the late 1960s as no longer tied to a specific material or format or even objecthood.<sup>10</sup> Given that this is not understood as denouncing material conditions of production, both economic and technological, however simple, it is still a fair description of a work of art today. The work of art is also to be seen, since the 1960s, as a structure of

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8 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays* (Cambridge : Cambridge U.P., 1998), 46.

9 Cf. Rosalind Krauss, “A Voyage on the North Sea”: *Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London : Thames & Hudson, 1999).

10 Cf. Lucy Lippard, “Escape Attempts,” in *Reconsidering the Object of Art: 1965-1975*, cat. (Los Angeles, CA : Museum of Contemporary Art), 1995.

information, which can be dealt with by computation allowing, for example, for an endless, clinical reshuffling of the elements of the work. But if matter may seem to evaporate in this digital archival regime, where a work is lodged within its code, or redistributed and contained as digitalized information, the same holds true of its temporal quality. Every archived or installed painting, for example, is in a state, like all organic matter, of slow but constant decay. To preserve it, or prolong it temporally, requires continuous maintenance.<sup>11</sup> A digital object, stored as a piece of coded information in a data file emerges as self-same every time it is instantly activated and actualized. Its reality, so to speak, is only registered through its realization of a merely potential or virtual state of affairs. Digital and digitized works, respectively, on the other hand, seem above time and aging. What does age, at increasing speed, and much faster than organic paintings, is the hardware or the technological requirements to show, reveal or perform the work in question. This, again, demands constantly migrating formats from one medium to another in an ever faster pace. An artistic reaction to this situation is to regard the work of art ‘itself’ as a temporary storage space or an archive of malleable information, which does not require a stable form or unique essence. The work may consist of an array of versions, without a privileged first or primary version. Such a work appears uprooted, dislocated or unlocked in time—a floating anachronic signifier that the historicity and identity of which is only possible to determine with each encounter, each

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11 Steve Dietz, “Collecting New-Media Art : *Just Like Anything Else, Only Different*,” in Bruce Altshuler (ed.), *Collecting the New: Museums and Contemporary Art* (Princeton : Princeton U.P., 2005).

accession or actualization. The version-work takes the notion of *the project* to an extreme, disclaiming the very status of work and stability as such. In the term version lays the eternal possibility of change. Difference as far as the eye can see is coupled with case-sensitive identity. A case in point is conceptual artist Robert Barry, whose verbal piece *Art Work* (1970) begins with the line “It is always changing” and ends with “Knowing of it changes it”.<sup>12</sup>

The work of art today, whether object, process or performance, is typically consciously changeable, expressed with the phrase *dimensions variable*, which promises nothing stable, nothing lasting, no core or specific format. This is, of course, a nuisance to the art market and collector, who is never sure of what the work actually consists of. It is also eerily analogous to the new economy’s flexible assortment of customized products. Contemporary art works are part of an on-demand logic and of increasingly liquid forms of commodity culture. The work comes in many different sizes and resolutions, small or large, low or high, reduced or exclusive, depending on demands at hand. Such works seem connected to what Charles Baudelaire wrote about the fugitive and ethereal modern works, in the mid-nineteenth-century—or what Georges Didi-Huberman recently described as art’s gas-like, floating and ‘cloudy’ character.<sup>13</sup>

Projects, literally stuff ‘thrown forward,’ implies a temporary structure

<sup>12</sup> Included in *Information*, July 2–September 20, cat. (New York : The Museum of Modern Art, 1970).

<sup>13</sup> Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life, and Other Essays* (London : Phaidon, 1995); Georges Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images : Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art* (University Park, Pennsylvania : Penn State Press, 2005), 2.

that, paradoxically enough, for the successful artist, is ceaseless or endless.<sup>14</sup> If projects cease, the party is over. *The show must go on*, and projects have to overlap, vary and spread over the artist's career—or the career is over. In 'societies of control,' to speak with Gilles Deleuze, "one is never finished with anything."<sup>15</sup> It is no longer the work of art defining the quality of the creative act, but the act, the activity, documented on the artist's CV. The contemporary work of art comes to presence as a form of projection, as artists' projects, which could be due to how the work is financed (commissions, stipends, etc.), analogously with how research projects replace continuous, long-term research, which is now only a luxury the top of the cadre can enjoy, but in a wider, deeper meaning this is a theoretically favored model in line with the new spirit of capitalism.<sup>16</sup> To create within the frame of projects is to establish 'work in progress' as credo for the whole career. The ongoing and unfinished replace the finished or complete(d), which are to be avoided. The work in the collective meaning of the oeuvre, the totality of works, must not be finished either—but open-ended, non-terminated. What the short-term call establishes is the pseudo-finished work, which is only stable enough for a very short term to be perceived and quickly evaluated as such, but which is destined to evolve, devolve or mutate into something else. Parts could, of course, must indeed, be sold for the business to go on. But in the contempo-

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14 Cf. Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or not at all : Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (London & New York : Verso, 2013), ch. 2.

15 Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," *October*, Winter 1992, 5.

16 Above reflections have a direct parallel with analysis of management literature from the 1980s and 1990s presented in Luc Boltanski & Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London & New York : Verso, 2005), Part 1, ch. 2.

rary art system, finished works are not really finished, not quite finished, or even “definitely unfinished,” in the words of Marcel Duchamp.<sup>17</sup>

It has long been a theoretical given that the meaning and value of a work is not lodged within the work-object ‘itself,’ but up to the ‘spectator’ in changing contexts.<sup>18</sup> A response to this, which could fly in the face of the market and modernist expectations of the art industry as a whole, would be to present / produce the same constellation / work again, over again, over and over again, reusing the same in ever new and differing contexts yielding, needless to say, new work. This would also instill a sensation of cessation, of pausing, since every instant would be different anyhow, which would be both ecologically healthy and thought-friendly. It would reverse the short-term dictate by refusing to cooperate and present the long-term in the form a slowly evolving work, bits and pieces of which—versions of it—could be sold but the essence and durational nature of which would positively redefine art as an inevitably long-term project also on the level of the work of art. So long in fact, that the term project may have to be reconsidered.

## The Now

Dwelling, lingering and lagging behind are all offensive, almost obscene behavior today. Which reminds us of how much this contemporary frenzy

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<sup>17</sup> Duchamp famously described his Large Glass as a *delay* in glass. Cf. Thierry De Duve (ed.), *The Definitely Unfinished Marcel Duchamp* (Halifax : Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1991).

<sup>18</sup> Marcel Duchamp, “The Creative Act,” *The New Yorker* Feb 6, 1965, reprinted in *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, eds. Michel Sanouillet & Elmer Peterson (New York : Da Capo Press, 1973), 138-40.

is blueprinted on the teleology of modernism, despite claims by the contemporary mainstream to have done away not only with modernism but with postmodernism as well. The truth, however, is that so long as the new is the privileged term, the modernist mindset is resumed or re-installed—back in business. In my literally post-modern vision of the current situation another option is available: to embrace *the now*. This may seem a mere playing with words but what the now entails, as opposed to the temporal fixation of the ever accumulating new, new, new (amounting, of course, as Walter Benjamin saw, to a propelling of the same), is a topology—a place—where the new can join hands with the not-so-new or even old.

The new is successive, always out to replace the old or, by definition, no-longer new. It is linear, mechanistic and temporary—the epitome of short-termism. The now, on the other hand, doesn't last forever and is, to be sure, temporal and temporary too—what isn't? But it compensates for the latter by freezing the moment, extending it into what counts as the current, present or contemporary.<sup>19</sup> While the new always *replaces* the old, the now *involves*—at least in my book—the then. It is thus old-fashioned to try to pitch here-and-now against there-and-then. The now is the latest constellation between the now and then—where the temporal preposition *then* can refer both backwards (then as before) and forwards (then as later) in time, encompassing the past as well as the future within the present.

The now is a time which enables a space in which to act. It gives us time. It gives us a break, time to think, regroup and calibrate projects. This now

<sup>19</sup> The present does not normally refer to seconds or instants, but to a certain stretch of time, if also with highly unclear boundaries, which is how I use the term here.



too will pass, of course, and give way to a new now, but it should be able to put a strain on the virtually autonomous perpetuation of the new. What we need—now—is to renew. We need to reuse, redistribute and redefine instead of lending our services to a production system of ever new commodities replacing less new ones.

The new is the sign of modern machine time, categorically binary and paradoxically ‘digital,’ whereas the now is human, fuzzy and ‘analogue.’ Tilting the new towards the now could be a way to stall, to linger, to buy time, and to slow down enough to digest alternatives and consider effects in an outstretched moment. What I have elsewhere referred to as contemporalists (whose eagerness to be in the current moment is equal to their willingness to dispense with the past), think they are in the now, while typically and unwittingly following the modernist dictate to innovate at all cost, to value the new for the sake of being new.<sup>20</sup> By chasing the new without believing in it, or understanding that that’s what they’re doing, contemporalists suffer from a new cultural disorder called, from now on, restless culture syndrome (RCS). Embracing the now is no easy way out, no guarantee for anything, least of all a reliable cure—but at least a prospect ripe with potential for a temporally richer and more sustainable present.

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20 My forthcoming book (in Swedish) is entitled, in translation, *Contemporalism: On the History and Future of Contemporary Art*, published by Axl Books (2014).

