

Master essay by Charlotte Ostritsch,
Umeå Academy of Fine Arts
Spring 2021

IT IS
WHAT
IT IS



This is the art students' studio wall at Umeå Academy of Fine Arts in February 2021. All artworks are retracted into themselves.

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EXHIBITION PROPOSAL

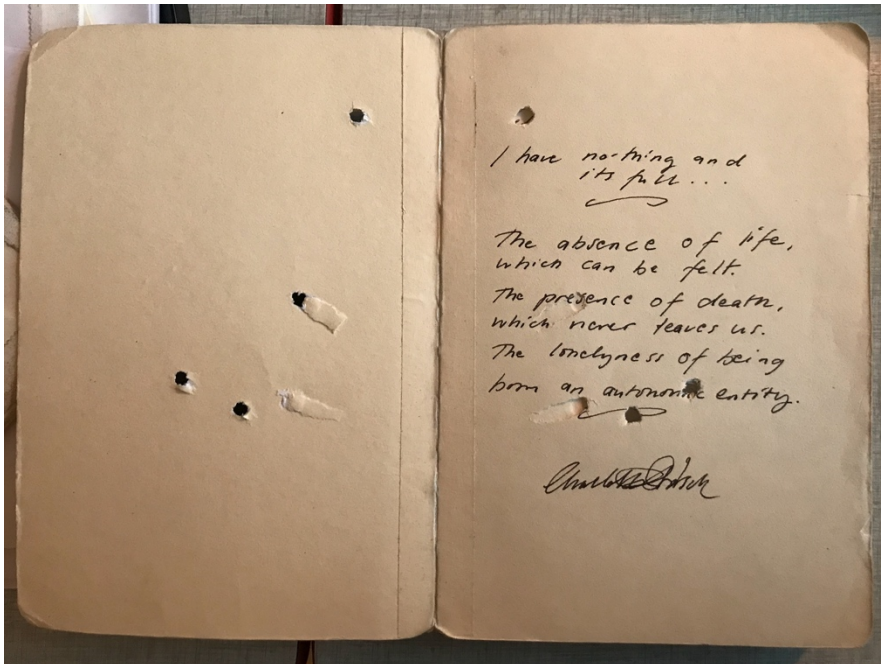
I have an idea for an artwork. I want to exhibit EVERYTHING surrounding the artist, and the art object. I want to retract the art objects' mass into itself, and display its context and history, the processes that made it, the time, the people and the spaces around it, the shadows it casts and the discourse that follows, so that EVERYTHING around the artwork is unveiled, like a roll of negative film where the art object is the potential image to be developed.

I want to put the focus on all the other people involved in order for one artist to make one art object at a particular point in linear time, all the ideas thought before or simultaneously, everything which through physical touch or through a shared collective consciousness have influenced and made it.



This is the undeveloped artist in front of the not yet developed art objects. We see a baby being held and a corner of an exhibition space.

NOTEBOOK 1:



"I have nothing and its full – the absence of life, which can be felt, the presence of death, which never leaves us, the loneliness of being born an autonomous entity."

28th of august 2018

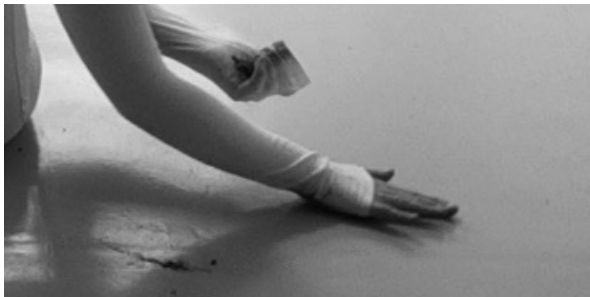
I began by listening. Then I learned the letters. I started with their shape. I drew them. I saw lines and similarities and mimicked the movement. Then I learned their corresponding sounds, I listened, observed, connected and imitated, put them together wrote and read words, created and understood linguistic connections, related the world to language, was able to tell and understand stories, even understand stories about stories. I understood that I am human. I gathered experiences, many of them became language, I interpreted the world from this human perspective. Later I found that another language was needed for the experiences that cannot be captured in the butterfly hoof of linguistic storytelling.

Fine

EXHIBITION VIEW: “ART MUST ALSO BE TENDED TO”

“Art must also be tended to” began as a way to highlight actions that need to be maintained in order for an art gallery to remain its status quo. Cleaning gallery floors using the body dressed in white as a canvas for dirt patterns was just one way of doing that. The project grew and became a poster campaign for things outside the art world that also need tending to. I was thinking a lot of Hannah Arendts’ description of Adolf Eichmann as a mindless official, and that officials might be societies’ most dangerous individuals as they are not questioning orders or thinking critical. I could not stop thinking about all the ways I might be like one of the systems officials, playing a part as a building brick in a society that I also criticized. This led to different sorts of text works displayed as a poster campaign, a powerpoint-presentation in an online exhibition at Aint no Gallery by Jonatan Björkman in 2020 and the hashtag #AMABTT

The cleaning of the gallery has among other spaces been performed at Galleri KonstBunkern, Växjö Konsthall and Umeå Academy of Fine Arts.



THE
ART
WORLD
MUST
BE
TENDED
TO

THINGS THAT ALSO NEED TENDING TO:

TOTALITARIAN REGIMES

must be tended to

World RELIGIONS

must *also* be tended to

THE PREPARATION OF Fast food

must be tended to

The health care system

must (also) be tended to

The open market

must also be tended to

Keeping capitalism successful

must also be tended to

Democracy

MUST BE TENDED TO

The notion that Karma will find us in the end

Must be tended to

Transparent production chains

must also be tended to

Keeping secret love affairs secret

must also be tended to

The People's liberation

must also be tended to

Keeping platonic friendships platonic

must always be tended to

Education for unemployment

must (weirdly) be tended to

Mental health

must also be tended to

Agri culture

must be tended to

International relations

must to some extent be tended to

The cleaning of office coffee machines

must also be tended to

Fearing diabetes and high cholesterol

must also be tended to

Forming ones own political opinions

must also be tended to

Developing infrastructure for a sustainable future

must be tended to

Respecting the international bill of human rights while striving for individual goals

must also be tended to

Regulating the wild animal population in Sweden

Must seemingly be tended to

Finding a cure for ecophobia

must also be tended to

Slaying imaginary monsters while keeping up appearances

must also be tended to

and so on...

5th of February 2019

Notes on performing the work “Art must also be tended to”

The work departs from Marcel Duchamps’ notion that that which is shown in an exhibition space not just *is* art but *becomes* art through being displayed there. If I use the exhibition space for *presentation of something as art* this gives me the possibility to name/make everyday movements and actions art. In that sense the exhibition space gives me the creative possibility to make the invisible appear as something highly visible.

How to perform it: Perform an action like a machine, be the movement, perform instructions. That the action is performed is more important than how it is performed. *That* the action is performed has priority. *How* it is performed is important but secondary.

4th of February 2019

Notes on performance art

PERFORMANCE IS ACTION

DOING > DONE > DISCOURSE/REDOING

THROUGH PERFORMANCE KNOWLEDGE CAN BE TRANSMITTED BY MEANS OF THE BODY

PERFORMANCE IS EPHEMERAL YET LASTING

IT CONTINUES WORKING LONG AFTER IT IS OVER, BY THE PERFORMATIVE FORCE OF THE ORIGINAL IDEA

PERFORMANCE DOES NOT REQUIRE ANYTHING ELSE BUT THE ACT ITSELF, AND IS THEREBY FREE

~~ANTI-INSTITUTIONAL~~
~~ANTI-ELITIST~~
~~ANTI-CONSUMERIST~~

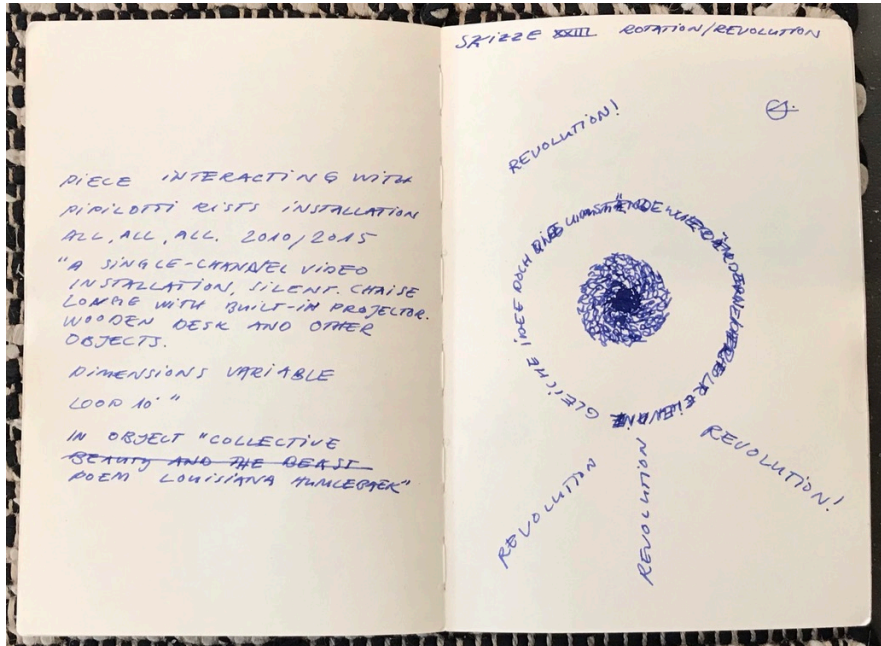
BODIES ARE HARDER TO CONTROL THAN MEDIA PLATFORMS, RADIO BROADCASTS, TELEVISION, SOCIAL MEDIA

IF THERE IS A NORM OF PERFORMANCE, IT IS BREAKING THE NORM.

QUOTE: “political art ceases to belong to the artist and becomes property of everyone who uses it”. Diamela Eltit

Louisiana Museum of Modern Art 6th of April 2019

Reconstruction of Original



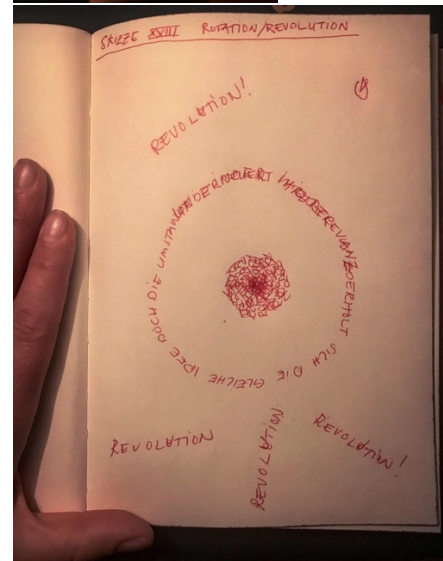
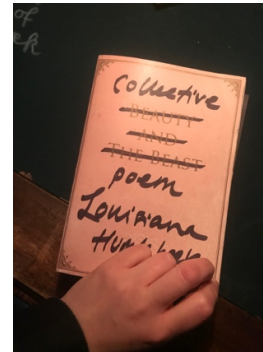
"Piece interacting with Pipilotti Rists' installation All, All, All 2010/2015 "A single-channel video installation, silent, chaise longue with built-in projector. Wooden desk and other objects.

Dimensions Variable
Loop 10"

In Object "Collective ~~Beauty and the Beast~~ Poem Louisiana Humlebaek" "

EXHIBITION VIEW: "ROTATION/REVOLUTION"

Interventional text work



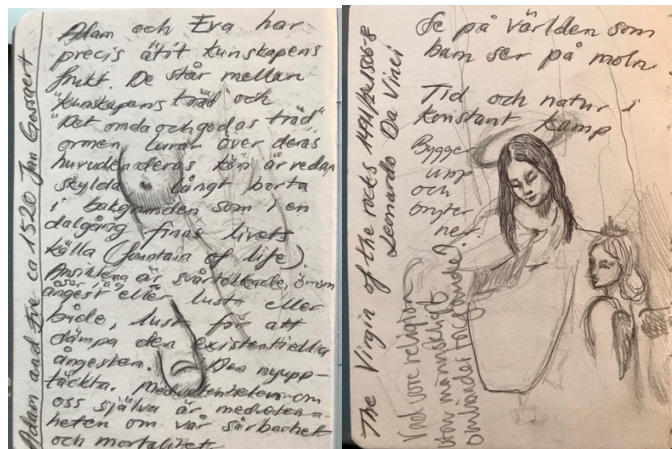
"Skizze XXIII ROTATION/REVOLUTION

...UND IMMER WIEDERHOLT SICH DIE GLEICHE IDEE DOCH DIE UMSTÄNDE VERÄNDERN IHRE RELEVANZ..."

NOTEBOOK 2:

National Gallery London 21st of September 2018

Notes and drawings reflecting upon historical art pieces with the intention of a student to learn from teachers



Adam and Eve ca 1520 Jan Gossaert: It is the moment right after Adam and Eve have eaten from the fruit of knowledge. They stand between The Tree of knowledge and The Tree of good and evil. The serpent hovers above their heads, their genitalia are already veiled. Far away in the background in a sort of valley we see the fountain of life. The faces are hard to read. Something like pain, could also be desire, or both? The desire to ease the newly discovered existential angst, perhaps? The awareness of a self is the awareness of ones' own vulnerability and mortality.

The Virgin of the Rocks 1491/2 1506/8 Leonardo Da Vinci: To look at the world the way a child looks at clouds. Time and nature are in a constant struggle. Building up and breaking down.

What would religion be without human maintenance?



The dream of Saint Helena about 1570 Paolo Veronese (1528-1588):

Saint Helena swore that she would find Jesus' cross which was revealed to her in a dream including the location where it was to be found.

Relaxed facial features, non-posing, seemingly unaware of a viewer.

Earth tones and gold enhances the feeling to be witnessing rest.

(The composition) seems like a cut out of a larger image or an event about to take place or as if something has already happened.

Thinking of a statement by John Berger that paintings are silent differences, that they have no sound effects.

Keywords: open window "dream window" dream space

Contrasts:

Dream/reality

Light/Darkness

Cool hard stone/ warm coloured softness of textiles

geometrical order/symmetry/assymetry

(Maybe I am drawn to this image because it reflects my state of mind. I want to sleep and dream big dreams)

EXHIBITION VIEW “NO MESSAGE”:



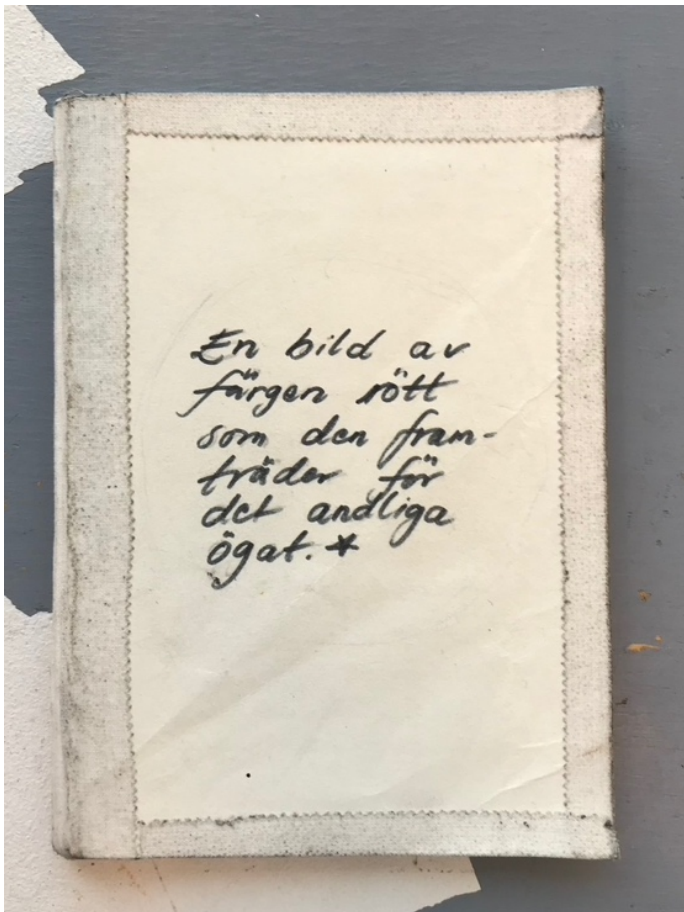
“NO MESSAGE” Site specific interventional installation at Örebro Music Academy, spring 2018

The opposite of being is not something existing, it is simply not being. The notes might have read:

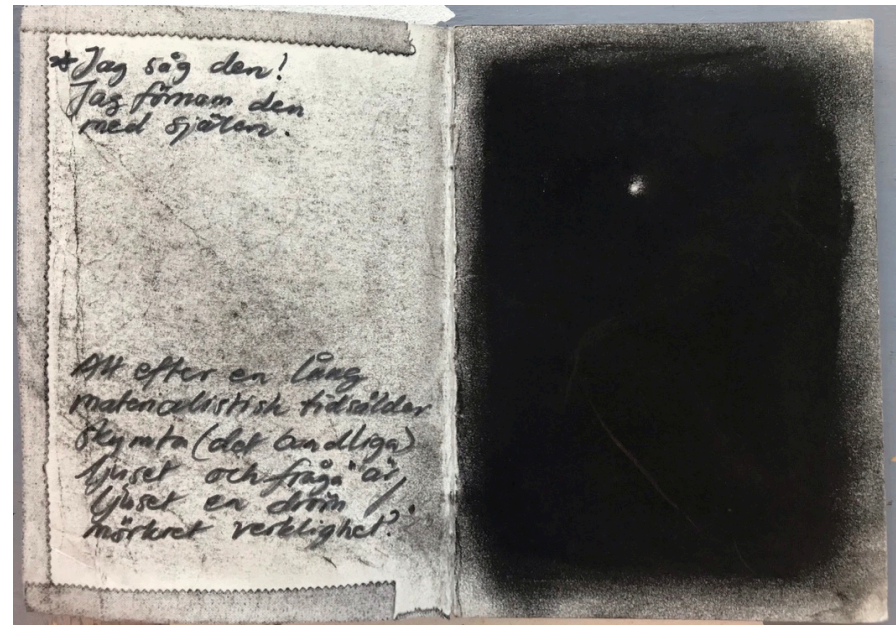
<i>No blackouts</i>	0000000
<i>No message</i>	0000000
<i>No projects</i>	0000000
<i>No essay</i>	0000000
<i>No linear time</i>	0000000
<i>No idea</i>	0000000
<i>No poetry</i>	0000000
<i>No cake</i>	0000000
<i>No distribution</i>	0000000
<i>No money</i>	0000000
<i>No policies</i>	0000000
<i>No television</i>	0000000
<i>No names</i>	0000000
<i>No rules</i>	0000000
<i>No game makers</i>	0000000
<i>No sound</i>	0000000
<i>No scriptures</i>	0000000
<i>No way</i>	0000000
<i>No fear</i>	0000000
<i>No academia</i>	0000000
<i>No coffee</i>	0000000
<i>No dessert</i>	0000000
<i>No dinner</i>	0000000
<i>No room</i>	0000000
<i>No work</i>	000-000
<i>No time</i>	0000000
<i>No future...</i>	0000000

NOTEBOOK 3:

Hand bound notebook. Undated notes made the years 2019-2021, reacting to the reading of Wassily Kandinskys' "About the spiritual in art"



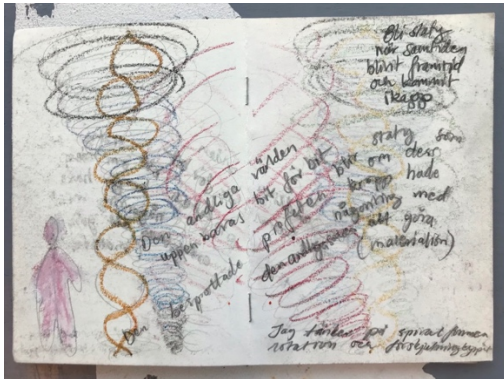
"An image of the colour red as it is seen by the inner eye*"



*I saw it! I perceived it with the soul!

"After a long materialistic era, to catch a glimpse of the (spiritual) light and ask "is the light a dream/darkness reality?"

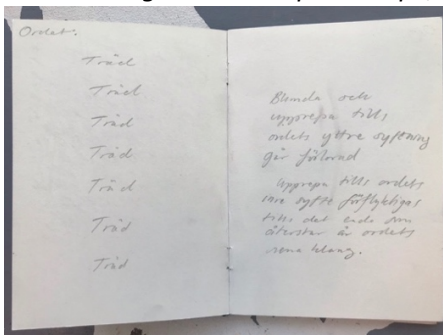




For the artist to become a statue when the contemporary has turned into the future and caught up.

The spiritual world is revealed piece by piece. The mocked prophet will eventually become a statue, as if their body (materialism) had anything to do with spiritual matters.

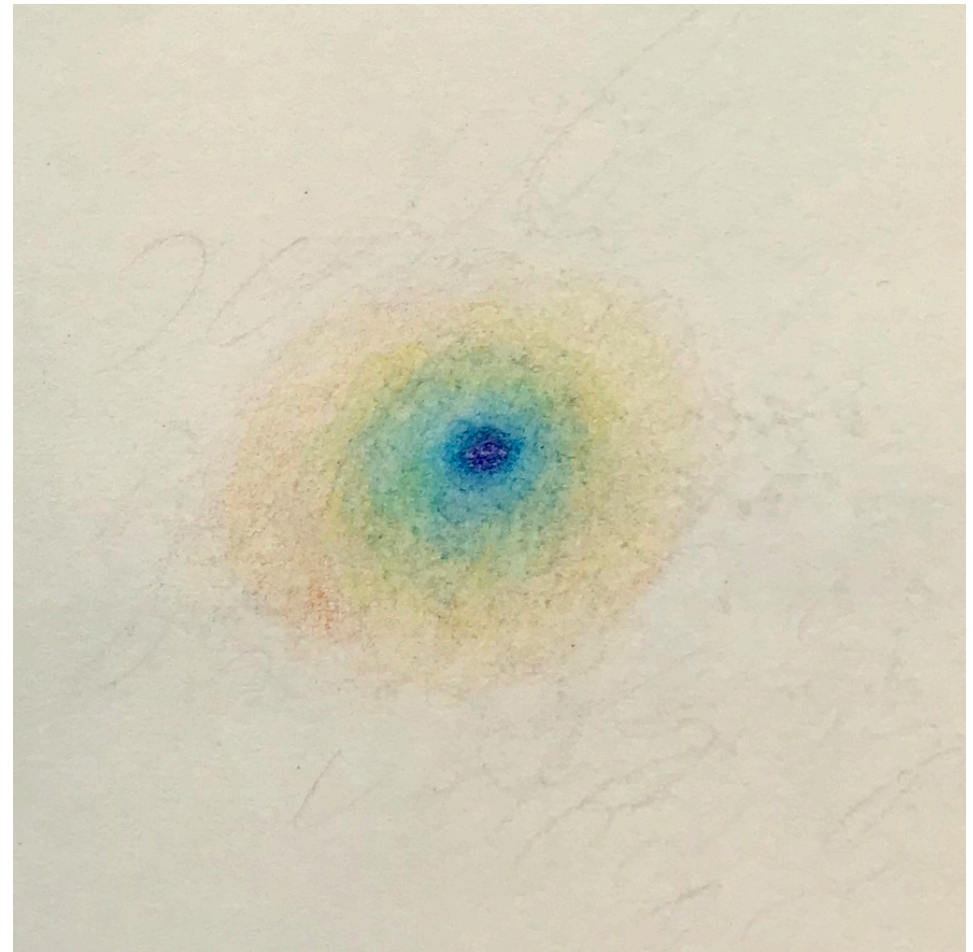
I am thinking about the spiral shape, rotation and shifts upwards.



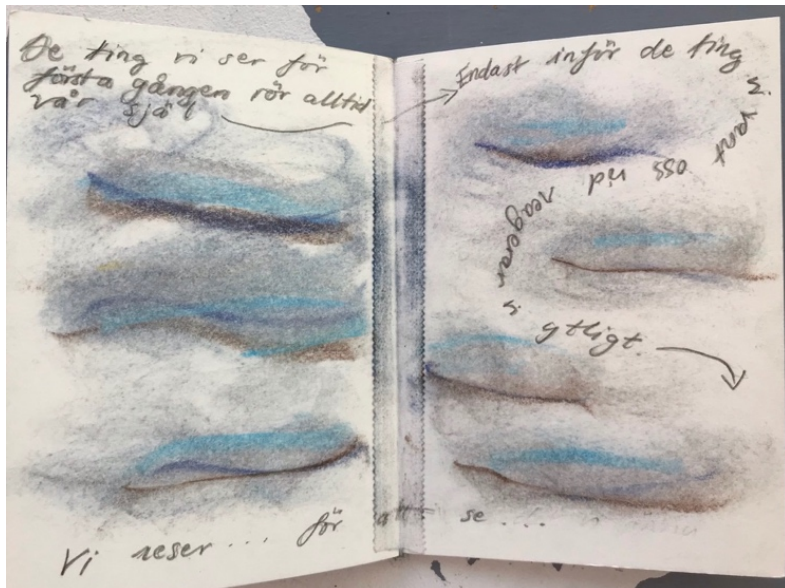
The Word:

Tree Tree Tree Tree Tree Tree Tree

Close your eyes and repeat the word until it's outer referential meaning is lost. Repeat until the words inner referential meaning dissolves, until the only thing remaining is the words pure resonating sound.

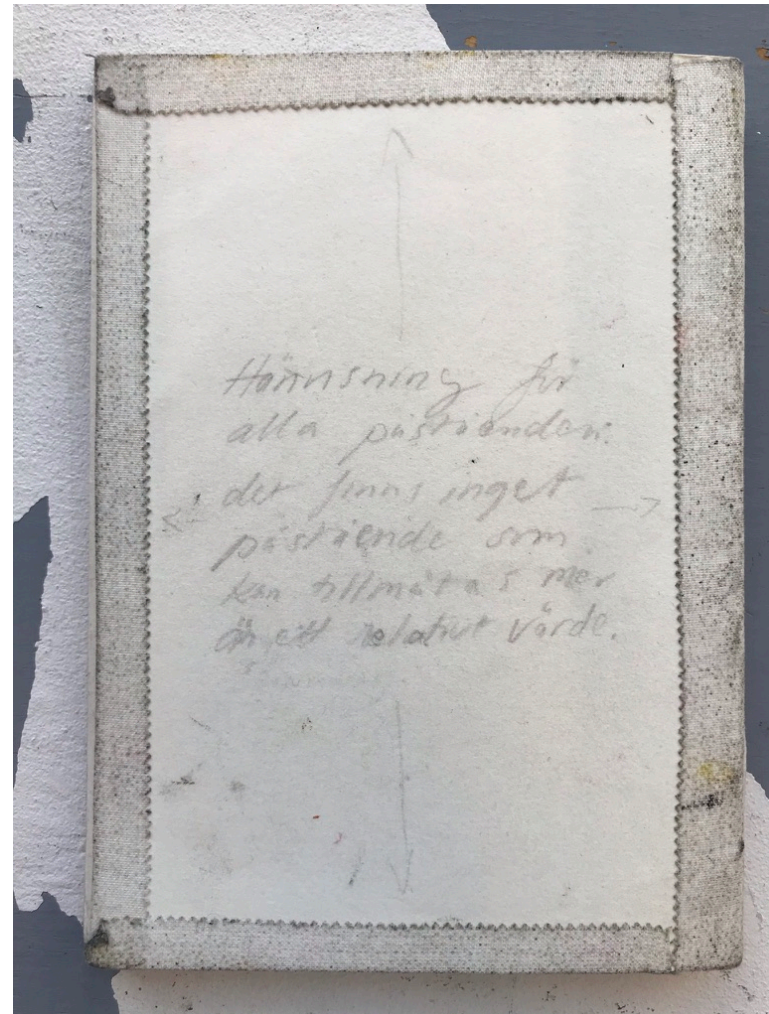


Maybe the pure sound will come forth to affect the soul directly so that it comes into vibration.



The things we see for the first time always touches' our souls. Only when we are faced with habitual things will we react shallowly. We travel, to see again.

I think I turned to Kandinsky to understand the space between language and art.



"Reference for all statements. There is no statement that can be assigned more than a relative value."

NOTEBOOK 4 and 5:



Hand bound fold out book of auto scripted drawings in progress

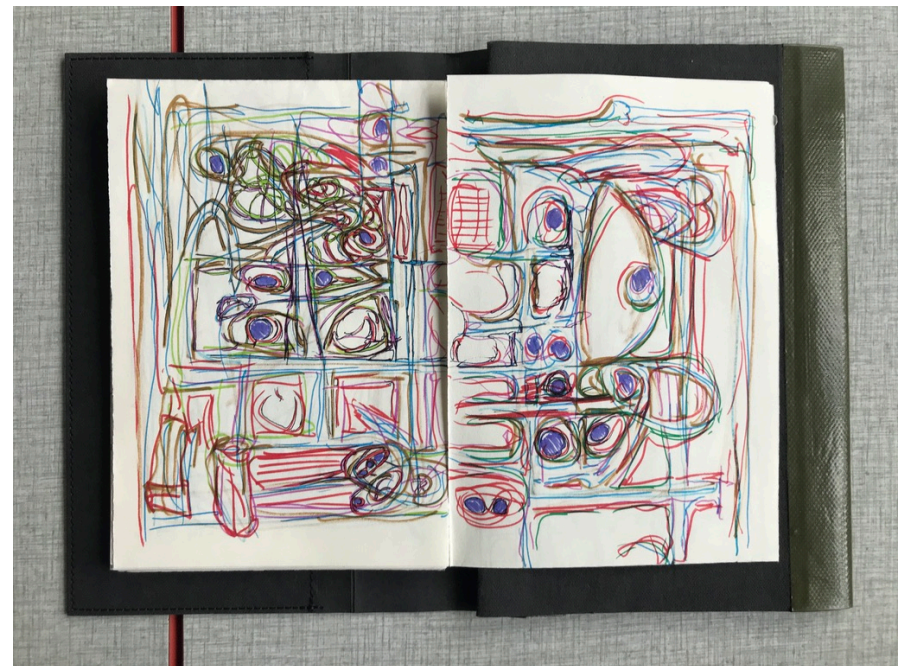
14 November 2020

ON THE AUTOSCRIPTUM WORKS

It is like a meditation on how mass is formed into existence. It starts with a white piece of paper; some gestures with a pencil, witnessed by the first viewer - the artist self. The traces of movement on paper are then amplified. Forms develop, become more detailed, connection links arise, deepen, get more colour, fuller, go from light

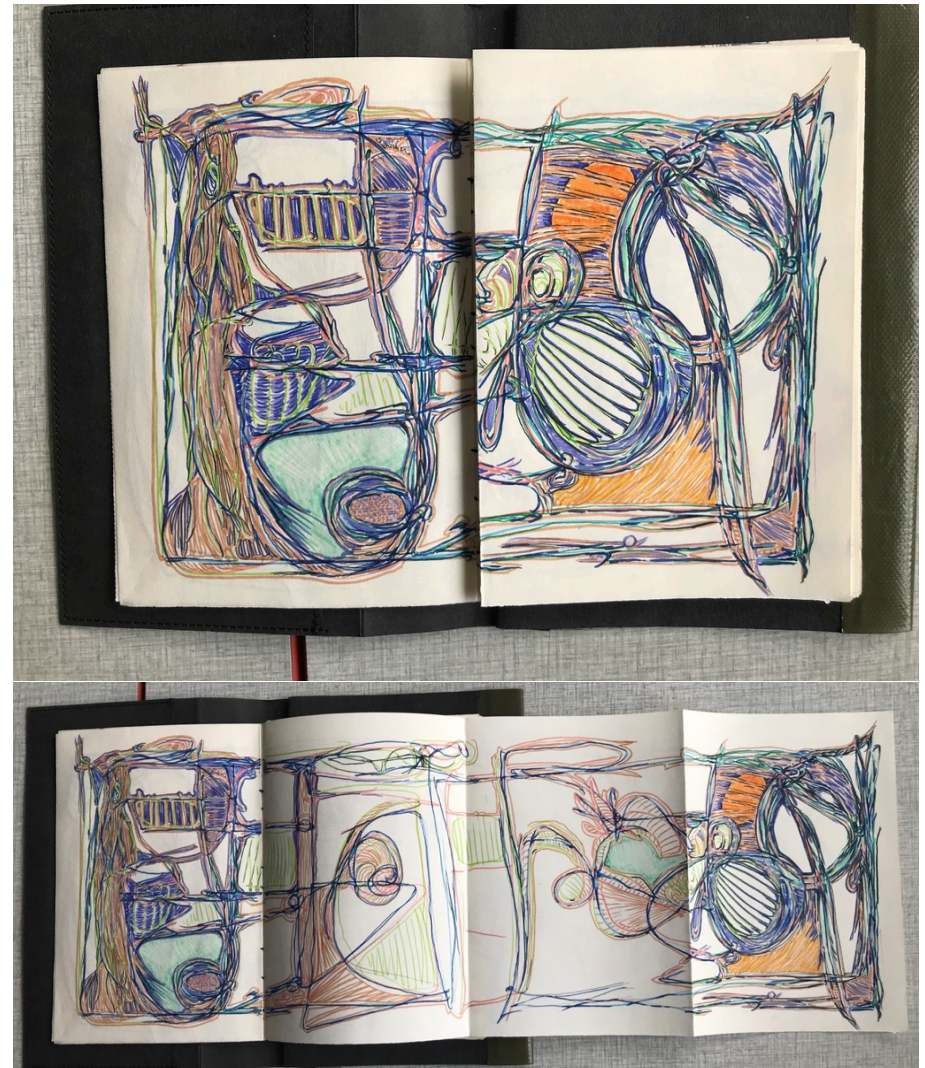
to darkness, from emptiness to overflow. What reflects and divides light is the paper surface. Black is bottomless and pulling. White is pushing and radiating. The drawings are images from the event horizon, on the borderland between division and union of radiation and mass.

Auto script is a method of highlighting what I see. What I see becomes more of what I will see. Like clairvoyance. The image grows back and forth, pushes and pulls, through the interaction between the hand's marking gesture and the eyesight, the gaze and the inner vision.



I feel foreign to the imagery in these drawings.

The artwork *wants* nothing from the viewer. It is what it is. It is our own expectations on ourselves that are reflected in its presence. We observe ourselves observing; we observe what we see and make connections. Who are we to see what we see? The encounter with the image can make us feel inadequate if we do not understand it, but if the image is appalling, strange or intaking enough on a subconscious universal level, we are all equal before it. The hierarchies between us dissolves, like hearing the ocean, smelling the forest or watching the stars.



EXHIBITION VIEW “SIGN LANGUAGE”:



“SIGN LANGUAGE” Site specific interventional hanging on information signposts in Umeå City Centre, February 2021

The opposite of information is no information. But can there be no information on a sign? If a sign exists isn't there intrinsically information on it, even when it literally reads that it doesn't tell you anything? Pointless messages puzzle us because of their lack in value therefore they may stay with us like a question. We are constantly looking for the subtext. Unanswered questions can work like a sort of mind control. The mind strives to answer all questions in one way or the other. Sign campaign messages:

Thank you for reading this sign

I hope this sign is informative

I hope this sign will be respected

I hope this sign will not go unnoticed

I hope this sign gets many followers

I felt so far away from the regular society, being put on a golden shelf at the art academy, yet without audience and money due to the pandemic or due to the detachment from the world outside the refined culture. If art production is a sort of communication and there is no receiver what is it then? I decided to do a sign campaign of inane messages.

INSTRUCTIONS

Do something you are inclined to do
Repeat the action
Reflect while doing it again
Describe how it's done
Do it again until it is automated
Do it mindlessly until it changes by mistake or by itself
Describe the change
Update the method
Repeat the action
Reflect while doing it
Repeat until it is automated and can be performed
mindlessly
Wait for it to change
Describe the change
Update the method
Repeat all steps until the point that the action demands
it's opposition to become clear again and not simply
dissolve
Do the opposite, which is demanded and follow the steps
above

Method for automatizing artistic work



Series "KREUZWEG I" and "KREUZWEG II" (2020) lino cuts on book pages

CONCLUSION

After putting this master essay together, it is obvious to me that my artistic practice is a language based one. Somehow I have worked under the misconception that I was at war with language, but as it turns out language is the most dominant material in my practice. Quoting Deleuze "The act of creativity is an act of resistance. Each act resists to something", I understand why I ended up here. That which we resist persists. I resisted language and it pours out everywhere in my work.



"I am flesh and words" Self portrait (2019) mixed media,

SOME OF MY MORE IMPORTANT TEACHERS AND THE LESSONS I TOOK

Marcel Duchamp – The power of the artist is the freedom to name anything art.

Joseph Beuys – I am not an artist if not everyone is. Not everyone is a sculptor or a painter, but everyone is an artist.

Mierle Ladermann Ukeles – If I name myself an artist and I have the freedom to name. I name maintenance work “art”.

Mladen Stiljinovic – There are no true artist in the west, because western artists are not lazy.

Marja-Leena Sillanpää – Be one hundred percent serious in all the things you do. Even when something is “just for fun” do it seriously just for fun.

Lenke Rothman – It is often a long process that forego simplicity.

John Cage – How to break through boredom and find interesting things.

Anna Oppermann – 1. Art is the lie that makes us see the truth.
2. Not choosing (what to exhibit) is also a choice.

Wassily Kandinsky – What it means to see with the inner eye.

Christine Macel – Art is the last outpost of free thought in increasingly authoritarian societies

Endre Tot – How to be glad under all circumstances.

Rolf Anderberg – Everything changes and dissolves through repetition.

Marianne Lindberg de Geer – To think of myself

Agnes Martin – Inspiration is an untroubled state of mind

Richard Barry – The gallery *can* be closed during the exhibition

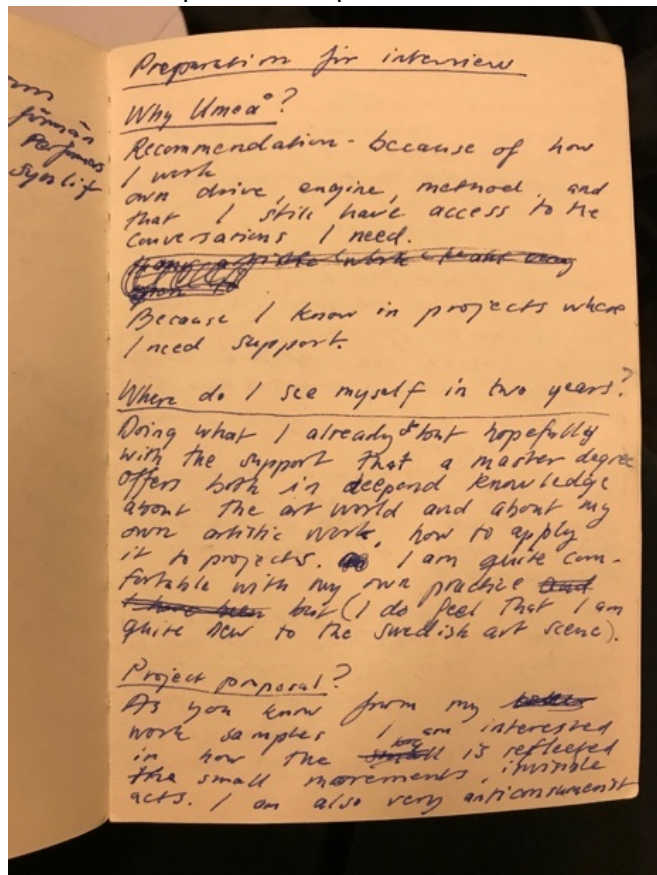
Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel – The fear of error is the error itself

Hannah Arendt – The systems officials are societies most dangerous individuals. Critical autonomous thinking is key in a democracy.

EPILOGUE: REVISITING NOTEBOOK 1

Notes made in preparation for being interviewed for a study place at the master program at Umeå Academy of fine arts in April 2019

Edited and explained in April 2021



Why did I want to come to Umeå?

Because it was recommended to me based on my way of working, that I have my own sort of engine that drives me (so they said), my own method of putting up frameworks of rules for working, and that I have access to the conversations I needed, in projects where I needed support.

Where did I see myself in two years? Doing what I already did, but hopefully with the support that a masters' degree would offer, both in deepened knowledge about the art world and my own artistic work and how to apply it more efficiently to projects. I was quite comfortable with my own practice. but I felt new to both Sweden and the Swedish art scene.

I had a project proposal in which I was referring to my work samples consisting of mainly performance pieces, saying that I had been interested in how the big is reflected in small movements and invisible acts. I was calling myself *very anti-consumerist and critical of the doctrine of individualism dictated by the capitalist consumerist forces.*

The idea was: In the western societies we are told that we are unique individuals and that we should compete for jobs and money, and that there is only place for a few excellent people. This makes for societies of pacts or situations where humans feel existentially alone, even left out. To overbridge this loneliness our meaning is found in consumption. We are individuals, striving alone to get money to pay for things, tending to a system that forces us to be egoistic or die. I had been working with the idea of reproductive art, maybe rotating or spiralling, like hermeneutic knowledge creation, thinking about the importance of tending to things to maintain the world order.

From that my focus shifted to alternative ways: what if there is a possibility to reclaim pleasure as something non-consumerist?! I thought that it would empower people to be generous and go beyond themselves. If people would enjoy themselves without having to spend money that would be something revolutionary, because as it was the culturally and socially learned behavioural patterns (dissatisfaction and isolation) were exploited by financial growth. What if ordinary people instead of feeling that they need more stuff would be thirsty for knowledge, or eager to learn skills in subjects they were interested in, just for the pleasure of it?! What if they had a curiosity about their surroundings that extended far beyond their own exteriors or everyday dramas?

It was an ambitious project.

D.C. al Fine