



*The different Parisian neighbourhoods; communities located side by side can be completely different. Last summer I often took the metro to Pigalle instead of Saint-Georges on my way home, and followed rue Henri Monnier downwards. At first I found myself at the center of the red light district, the street lined by worn out bars, sex shops and peepshows. One hundred meters ahead the area changes over into a sleepy middle class neighbourhood with fancy hotels and expensive antique shops. Same thing nearby where I live: if I follow boulevard de Magenta all the way up, there are exclusively shops sell wedding dresses, bridal veils, suits, wedding shoes, lighting and different types of frames for cakes. If I turn left, down again towards boulevard Saint-Martin, I cross the intriguing Chinese wholesaler district for children's wear. Supposedly a cover up for the Chinese mafia, and full of shops called "Mini-Mode", "Fanny Look", "Top Child II", "Junior International" and "License Kid". Further down around Chateau d'Eau the African community, where hair dressers and beauty shops dominate the public space. Only black mannequins in the shop windows, and outside on the street artificial hair in different colours drift around.*

To describe my artistic work and its underlying mechanisms is difficult. I often find descriptive and analytic writing restrictive, a sense of deficiency and inability to capture the central point of a context affects me. Art communicates in different ways than language even if they are closely connected. The relationship between them interests me. You can describe a good art piece, but never express exactly the same thing as the piece itself. We completely depend on language and our abilities to use it, which are determined by access and confidence. Perhaps that is why I'm interested in the grey area between words and images, between intellectual and emotional experiences and expressions. Somehow it seems more universal, or equal. In his last book, "Camera Lucida" ("La Chambre Claire", France, Editions du Seuil 1980, here London, Vintage 2000<sup>1</sup>) Roland Barthes approaches this rather tricky subject. He describes how an image, unlike the informative function Barthes refers to as the "studium", also can have a "punctum" effect which influences us in a more personal and undefined way. Barthes describes the situation as if he was stuck analytically (p. 7): "I found myself at an impasse and, so to speak, 'scientifically' alone and disarmed". Why do certain images affect us while others, seemingly similar, leave us completely indifferent? What this detail or ability in an image is and how it operates, which disturbs or attract, awakens something or makes us love a certain image, is what Barthes is trying to investigate. He keeps returning to the impossibility of it all, to the fact that the attraction is primarily evoked by

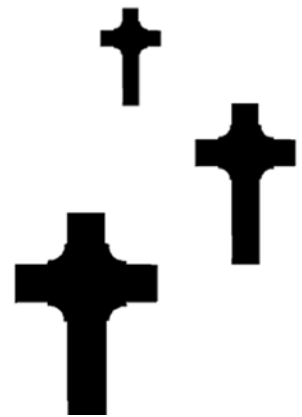


Image 2-3: Aubrey Beardsley, illustrations for "Salome" by Oscar Wilde, 1894



the incapacity to name (p. 51): *"What I can name can not really prick me. The incapacity to name is a good symptom of disturbance"*.

I constantly adjust, exchange and reformulate the fundamental content of my work. I pass through different phases, and the descriptions of my work changes. The purpose is to avoid becoming bored, repetitive or that the artistic practise becomes predictable or limited. In this way I develop my work, guided by the intellect as much as the sentiment, or what we can call intuition. In a video shown at Galerie Air de Paris (June 2006) the French poet Mallarmé was quoted: *"To name something is to deprive yourself of three fourths of the pleasure"*. Through art you constantly investigate and expand your identity and understanding of the world through entering and exiting different roles and worlds. Part of the conditions enabling a development within, and inclination towards, making art is to not be completely aware of what you're doing or where you're going.

*All I wanted was to be your housewife I'll iron your clothes I'll shine your shoes I'll make your bed And cook your food I'll never cheat I'll be the best girl you'll ever meet And for a diamond ring I'll do these kinds of things I'll scrub your floor Never be a bore I'll tuck you in I do not snore I'd wear your black eyes Bake you apple pies I don't ask why And I'll try not to cry I'll always be by your side Even when you're down and out I'll always be by your side Even when you're down and out It's nearly midnight And all i want with my life Is to be a housewife*<sup>2</sup>

During my studies at the Konstfack University I have investigated and developed my interest in visual and three-dimensional communication, both on a practical and theoretical level. I have involved new materials and media in my work, and sharpened my awareness of my points of view and how I can mediate them to the viewer. Briefly, one could say that I'm interested in representation and communication, and how they function in society: in our contemporary situation as well as earlier in history. Which expressions and activities are perceived as interesting or not, as high or low culture? Who has the right to represent and be represented, to define, evaluate and construct society? I have investigated different types of relevant aesthetics, appearances, activities and phenomena to increase my understanding of these codes and systems. Difficulties and possibilities involved in visual communication, generally, and more specifically in the relationship artist - spectator, interests me. To displace material between different contexts, such as the public (commercially



Image 1-3: Aubrey Beardsley, illustrations for "Salome" by Oscar Wilde, 1894



governed) domain into the gallery space, personal and poetic texts into the public domain, ephemeral expressions such as text messages into a more solid representation and so on has been central to my work. I often try to describe a complex situation in a “simple” way. My purpose is never to say one single thing, but to offer a couple of interpretative possibilities, a set of clues or tools which the spectator can use in the way he or she wants. Ambiguity and paradoxes interest me, the world is full of them and we often need to be reminded of that there is never only one true perspective or solution, but multiple ones. It is up to everyone of us to be critical and make up our own mind.

*Hej hej,*

*how are you? Recovered from adventures of the weekend? I'm fine, had a great stay but nice to be back in Paris as well... There's something I really like about this city, don't know exactly but been thinking of it a lot since I came back. I think it mainly has to do with the size and the diversity, that so many different things can go on at the same time and all be part of Paris. It's fascinating, you can never grasp all that the city is about, it contains so many different worlds. Compared to Barcelona I mean, which seems more homogeneous to me... Of course it's smaller too. What do you think?*

*Hi,*

*it's nice hearing from you - and hearing how you enjoy being in paris. paris, a city i never learned to like (but it probably has a lot to do with its role in my previous relationship). anyway, barcelona is so controlled, so foreseeable that it gets really boring after a while. you can guess pretty well what kind of people you're gonna find in each place, how the general atmosphere would be, etc. as i told you, i'm really to leave - only i have to stay at least until the summer to finish my phd.*

# *Souvenir*

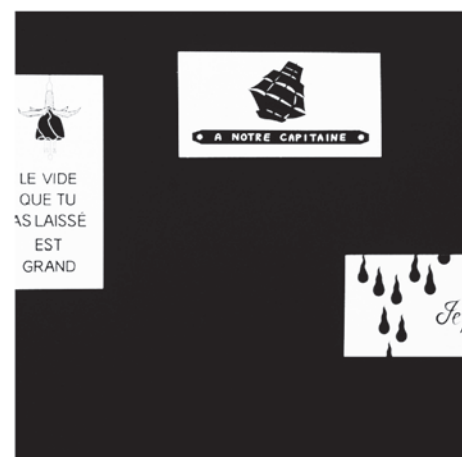
”I wish someone were waiting for me somewhere (A Cemetery Scenery)” is a piece I made in Paris during the summer of 2006, to exhibit at the Konstfack University during the fall. (Two years later it was shown in a solo exhibition



at Galleri Hörnan, within the Falun City Library. <sup>3</sup>). By photographing and using texts and symbols from headstones in the Parisian cemeteries “Père Lachaise”, “Cimetière de Montmartre” and “Cimetière de Montparnasse”, I dealt with recent changes in my own life. Almost filling a ritual function as emblems for change, the quite cemeteries also became my refuge from a new, alarming and overwhelming city. My language skills developed with the curiosity to understand the intimate greetings to beloved and deceased friends, and my interests in dualistic and ambiguous meaning due to translation, cultural codes and economic restrictions. The displacement of the aesthetics, from eternal to a contemporary and almost promotional format, and the exchange of context from the public domain in Paris to an enclosed gallery space interested me. It underlined the codification that all communication and expressions are subject to, which makes them understandable only in their proper context. What was regarded as tasteful and not tasteful interested me, and the differences between protestant and catholic cemetery traditions. In Paris, due to Catholicism but also to a strong economy, an extensive image- and decoration culture allows for more personal and individual expressions. In Sweden on the other hand, even the most fancy cemetery “Skogskyrkogården” contains surprisingly worn out, small and similar headstones, with only the minimum amounts of text required. The pet cemetery “Cimetière des Chiens d’Asnières” outside of Paris, with its incredibly fancy, personal and kitschy greetings and decorations, was equally fascinating for me. (Finally it became the subject for my gallery solo exhibition at Konstfack in February 2007, a wall drawing piece which was later that spring part of the exhibition “In search of the lost self” at Bonniers Konsthall <sup>4</sup>.) The double function of the Parisian cemeteries, as tourist attractions and functioning graveyards, contributes to a strange and ambiguous atmosphere. The mixture between real ongoing funerals with well dressed, mourning people and tourist groups with leisure wear, maps and cameras is a bit bizarre.

*I DREAMED I WAS IN YOUR ROOM YOU SAID I’M MAKING DRAWINGS  
NOW AND WRITING SHORT STORIES I SAID THE ONLY THING THAT  
MATTERS IS COMMUNICATION WHEN WE HAD WATCHED THE MOVIE  
IN THE DREAM YOU SAID IT WAS BEAUTIFUL BUT THE WORLD IS NOT  
LIKE THAT THE RAIN STARTED FALLING THE TEARS STARTED FALL-  
ING IT’S ONLY LOVE GIVE IT AWAY<sup>x</sup>*

After a text and image based piece made in Berlin during the spring of 2006 I continued thinking of the relationship between image and text, and how lan-



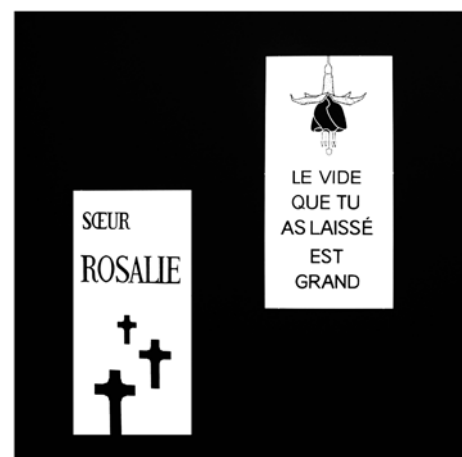


guage, culture and context affects the interpretation of a piece. Among other things I worked on combining separate phrases in order to make them interpretable both separately and together. I involved images, in order to investigate how the text and image elements related to each other. When I moved to Paris and became interested in the cemeteries I realized that I could apply these ideas on different kinds of material. My research is often made during wanderings in public space, in the everyday urban environment, walking, reading, taking notes and photographing or filming things that interest me. For example odd scenarios like old shop fronts or signs, funny shop names, architectural elements, posters and display windows. The collected material I later categorize, and select themes out of that I go deeper into.

In “I wish...” I first wanted to translate the texts into English to make the piece more accessible. Then I realized that the inaccessibility was partly what I wanted to address. The experience of standing in front of a cipher in need of decryption; actually my own position within the French language and society. A complex experience of alienation which both frustrates, allures and offers a convenient space for imagination, projection and critical reflection. The reason was also the difficulties involved in translating texts so intimately connected to their language and culture. This goes a for languages and cultures in general, some things are impossible to translate - a quality I find challenging, annoying and fantastic at the same time.

# REGRETS

Finally I chose short French phrases and words, possible to figure out the meaning of, but with other connotations in Swedish and English. My purpose was to detach the images and texts from its origin, and make the piece function a bit like a rebus or puzzle. The reactions to the piece, when it was exhibited at Konstfack, varied from immediate understanding of where the material came from, to interpretations of the piece as something completely different than a cemetery scenario. Someone thought it was more like a travellers’ diary, about my experiences and memories from France. Some people became blocked because of the French language, and did not understand anything. Other viewers found it a pity that I hadn’t made better use of the cemetery aesthetic in it self, and found the displacement of the material and the aesthetics too much.



*Fauvette  
si tu  
voles*



Others again found that the mixture and paradox between the sentimental, romantic content and the strict and contemporary “frame” gave this emotional material a renaissance and a new dignity. The choice of subject, content and aesthetics in my work is motivated by a wish to propose a reconsideration of forgotten, marginal areas, phenomena or activities. For example I was earlier very interested in kitsch- popular and folklore expressions, and lately I have been turning towards the banal, forseen aspects of the everyday life and the urban environment, ephemeral expressions and outdated business activities or architectural elements. (In this work I very much admire and look at artists such as Zoe Leonard.<sup>5</sup>).

On some basic level this work is about seeing, and trying to keep, what would otherwise be lost. It is about questioning existing orders (to use an expression by Jacques Rancière <sup>6</sup>), and about, at least symbolically, trying to give place and voice to that which doesn’t have a place and voice.

*hi malin,*

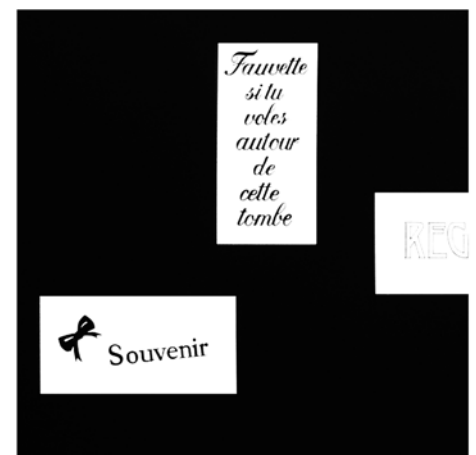
*a couple of days ago i was discussing with a few friends the language of contemporary art, so to say. they all studied fine arts and after we went to an exhibition (video art) we talked about the kind of knowledge it presupposes, you know? for example i’m not comfortable dealing with artistic stuff other than cinema / documentary / photography. i have problems with connotation, especially. i mean that idea that one uses a thing to mean another. i’m all for a denonative practice! i know it sounds naïve and that it is quite unlikely to happen, but there’s something horizontal about using an object just as that object that i like. anyway, thing is i wanted to ask you how you feel about producing stuff that (most likely) only a few people can easily relate to. like when i read people like hal foster or benjamin buchloh i trip off. it’s amazing all they can do with, lets say, a minimal piece. but isn’t it elitist? take care*

*Hej,*

*thanks for an interesting email! It has troubled (and excited) my mind for a few days, you didn’t bring up the easiest question to respond to... But an important one. I think, like you, that the contemporary art scene is a problematic and contradictory field. Internal agreements and the context being the only thing deciding what counts as a piece of art, the weak connections to the market and a bigger audience, the rapid change of the field over the last 100 years from being a craft with the monopole on depicting the world, until photography was invented and art started questioning itself, and developed*

SŒUR

ROSALIE



LE VIDE  
QUE TU  
AS LAISSÉ  
EST  
GRAND

*towards a more conceptual and critical practice - it all caused the scenario we have today. People feel uncomfortable facing a piece of contemporary art because it lacks a fixed form, a set of rules or a frame for the spectator to recognize. The category, compared to others (cinema, documentary, photography, literature) are combining, and breaking borders between, already existing categories. And a piece demands a little bit more time from the viewer than it used to, but still not as much as a film or book does. Maybe people's conception of what art is will gradually change, and enable a bigger audience, who knows. My personal reason to be in this field is that I think it enables a way of discussing and communicating about things in a more complex and critical way, than many other fields. It corresponds better with my conception of the world as being a very complex place, difficult to understand. I just want to try to understand more, and the most important thing for me is not to reach a lot of people but to say what I want to say in the right way. I think, like you, that maybe the best way to communicate something, if you want to reach a lot of people and not be elitist, is via literature or cinema. But these fields acquire so much technical and formal knowledge, and you're forced to have a regard to the market/ audience (at least your publisher does), and then so much time is occupied by other things than trying to understand / investigate the greater essential issues... I don't know if this makes any sense to you? It's hard to describe what I mean.*

During the spring of 2006 I made a piece in a residency flat that the Konstfack and Umeå University rents in Berlin. It consisted of two black wall drawings: a text message from my mother and a silhouette of an old clipper ship. At the time I had avoided producing and exhibiting works for a while, due to an anxiety to get stuck in a production tempo that didn't provide time for reflection or critical consideration. This anxiety caught me after having exhibited quite a lot during the previous year, partly in order to get more experience of exhibiting and collaborating, but also because of stress over not profiting enough from Konstfack as an educational and professional environment. After three years I was tired of the school, its norms and values, and of producing art in this environment. A fear to become a product of one single system of values effected me, and a feeling of getting absorbed by an big machinery which didn't provide the best conditions for creativity. I applied for an Erasmus exchange in Paris, and while waiting to move I went to Berlin and Barcelona. The trip became a bit like a breathing space, and I realized to which extent a change of environment can effect your identity and practise.

HI.DEAR!GOOD YOU  
HAVE ARRIVED!TAKE  
CARE.WE'VE BEEN  
TO THE BANK TO  
LOAN MONEY TODAY.  
EXCITING!AUNT  
LIZ IS IN THE HOSPI  
TAL.LOVE YOU.  
MUM



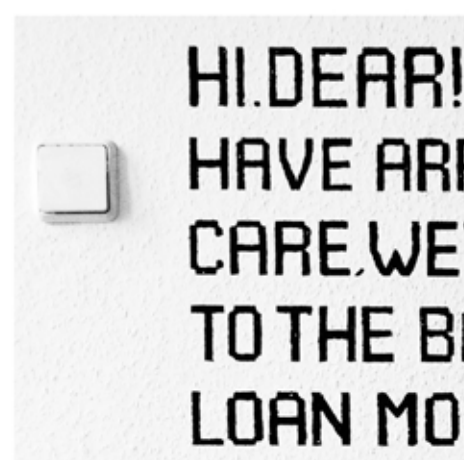
LOAN MONEY TODAY.  
EXCITING!AUNT  
LIZ IS IN THE HOSPI  
TAL.LOVE YOU.  
MUM



In Berlin I thought a lot about real and imaginary travelling, distance and displacement, nostalgia and communication. Travelling as communication, but also the communication traveller's have with them selves or people far away. Boundaries between private and public, reality and fiction and eternal and ephemeral expressions interested me, and my work came to circle around the interpretation act between sender and receiver. Site-specific methods and interests were used, something I returned to more and more after this work <sup>7</sup>. I was interested in how images and texts are reproduced and recycled, how their value change due to context and time. For example an oil painting of a ship, originally considered a very exclusive piece of art, becomes every man's property after the development of the reproductive technologies. The image changes, or at least what we see in it changes - the image is a sign, a code for something else. Suddenly the same motive has become kitsch (the word originates from Yiddish and refers to an inferior piece of art or artistic handicraft <sup>8</sup>), and the lowest form of white trash decoration. Later again, it becomes re-considered by a new nostalgic and recycling generation, as interesting popular culture (will my contemporary-art-wall-drawing transform it into really exclusive high culture again?)

Text messaging interests me both as a lost, ephemeral communication method, and as a compressed form of expression that gives rise to new forms of language, ambiguous and multiple readings and funny mistakes. The compression is caused by economic restrictions which limits the space, and thereby effects the quality and meaning of the message. In this aspect it is similar to the conditions behind cemetery inscriptions, that I worked with before. In contradiction to them however, text messages are an ephemeral, most often not preserved way of communicating. This awakens my will to archive, collect, capture and preserve, everything which passes and are lost with time. (In this work I also looked at artists such as Wim Delvoye. Another reference, to Swedish text based art, is "TEXST – An anthology with Swedish text/visual art", edited by Magnus Bårtås in 2004.<sup>9</sup>)

HI.DEAR!GOOD YOU  
HAVE ARRIVED!TAKE  
CARE,WE'VE BEEN  
TO THE BANK TO



LOAN MONEY TODAY,  
EXCITING!AUNT  
LIZ IS IN THE HOSPI  
TAL,LOVE YOU,  
MUM

My mother sent me this text message, as the only form of communication during the two or three weeks I spent in Berlin. Not mainly due to her lack of interest, rather because of her idea about abroad communication as something too expensive. I found the message funny, it was full of linguistic mistakes and double meanings, a type example of the qualities I mentioned earlier. “Unsuccessful” communication and mistakes can lead to an expansion of language and habits, in this way they carry a potential. The dualistic message or expression forces the viewer to make up his or her mind, and reminds us that there are always multiple readings and ways to look upon things. It opens up a space for the projection, imagination and experience of the spectator, for a more “complex contract” with the audience, as it is formulated in “TEXTS”<sup>10</sup>. The message, even tricky for me to interpret, made me curious about how a total stranger would interpret it. So I made a wall drawing in the residency flat, of the enlarged, translated and transferred message.

(The original for the ship wall drawing was a framed postcard I found in a flea market, depicting an American clipper ship built in 1851; *Flying Cloud*.)

## *Flying Cloud*

Graphic expressions, for example the reduction of the graphic image and how it works, interested me a lot earlier. Before Konstfack, when I studied at preparing art school, I was interested in activating the two-dimensional surface of a canvas or sheet of paper by using as few lines or color fields as possible. The effect obtained by creating a flat image in lack of a natural center, partly consisting in a constantly moving gaze, is a theory about the “Superflat” that



Japanese artist Takashi Murakami developed during the nineties <sup>11</sup>. However, it stems from a long tradition of Japanese wood-cut artists, manga and anim  designers and so on. The function of the graphic image as a sign, a reference to something else, interests me; that it represents rather than depicts. Text and image are similar and sometimes even merge, when it comes to typography. And as we all know, the first letters were images.

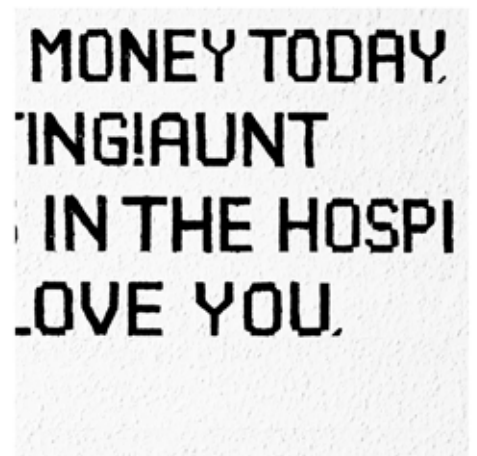
Short phrases or words, in poetry, song lyrics or random ones removed from their context, communicate in almost the same way as images - the lack of "frame" and story creates a space for projection and imagination.

Hi,

*I don't know which of my last pieces you've seen, but I attach some pictures from an exhibition at Konstfack in September. For this piece I had used material from the cemeteries in Paris. I also attach some pictures of my work in Berlin (including the text message I told you about). Unfortunately I'm a bit too tired to express myself clearly at the moment (by the way, that's often something I find difficult! I want so much with every piece, sometimes I can't manage to explain them very well). But I've somehow been interested in how interpretation functions if you don't understand a language, the problems with reading if a text / image is removed from its original context, and of differences / similarities between image and text and how they communicate. I've also tried to handle a material that easily becomes sentimental-kitsch, with the ambition of it not to be, and wanted to leave a lot of space for the viewer (I don't have an explaining frame / text beside the pieces). Exactly what they are about is also up to the spectator. It can result in inaccessibility, but I don't want to be too explicit, rather offer a set of keys... What do you think about this, does it work if you look at the pieces? I'm not always sure of what I want to obtain.*

Hi Malin,

*I like the fact that your aesthetic expression becomes more and more strict and graphic. I think it underlines the intentions I sense - and which you describe in your letter - that you have with your work. In your earlier pieces, from Gerlesborgsskolan and the first year at Konstfack, I felt that you were still making up with the traditions of painting. In the same way I've worked on making up with things before I could "land" in my own expression and relationship to things. As I interpret your work and your writing, I see parallels to for example X's work. You both work with displacement and twists of language and format. I clearly sense a fascination with parallel worlds in*



*your work. Through displacing language between different “worlds”, you as a viewer lose the kind of safety obtained by a recognizable contextual “set of rules”. Something usually considered sentimental and / or kitsch, ends up in a completely different context or format through your work. What is “wrong” and “right” suddenly becomes very difficult to determine and – just like that – you’re caught in a mind-spin which could easily make you end up at the nuthouse. I like it!*

*Where then that one should put the key to a piece I also find extremely tricky. The boundary between being inaccessible and over-explicit is as thin as it is important. Often the border gets displaced too, due to in which forum you’re located at the moment, and I think it’s necessary to make small adjustments. At the same time I think we should give up the ambition to be understandable and accessible to everyone. Maybe the purpose of art isn’t to exist for everyone... I think you have to decide which group you want to communicate with. The formulation of your work will then have to be based on this. Utterly art is about some kind of communication and the questions would then be what you want to say and to whom. It sounds very simple, but we both know that it’s two very difficult questions.*

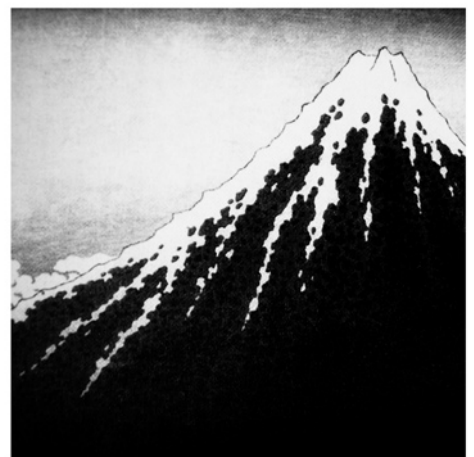
*I just want to add that when you displace a sentimental and / or kitsch expression into another context and format, I get the impression that you’re taking care of that expression. As if you wanted to say that there is a reason, a cause, to why the expression has become kitsch and is treated as sentimental. The reason is that someone originally perceived the expression as beautiful. Your treatment of the expression is like a respectful but at the same time analyzed illumination of the original intention and point of view. So to say, you know that certain expressions are “ugly” and “silly”, but realize that they haven’t always been. Through your thorough work with these expressions, the original intention is underlined and the “beautiful” is given a renaissance. That’s how I perceive it and – once again – I like it. Oh! Time flies. Now I have to make lunch for my girlfriend, but I’d be happy to continue this e-correspondence at another time.*

*Hi,*

*Thank you for your reply. I ABSOLUTELY didn’t mean that your work description was tiring – on the contrary, it was really interesting to read. I’m happy that you answered so thoroughly and engaged, that was more than I could expect (but what I hoped for). I just meant that I was very tired*



Image 2-3: From “Superflat”, Murakami, 2000





*when I answered, but that I wanted to answer anyway. I'm impressed by how you describe your work, the sharpness in how you formulate yourself, and the awareness of what you're doing. Personally I feel that I just started to formulate something – for a long time I have “instinctively” known my intentions but not really been able to describe them verbally (not to mention in writing). I think you're right concerning that your meeting with X has been important. It's in conversation with others, and especially people who really understand your work, that you build awareness and obtain the tools to communicate about your work.*

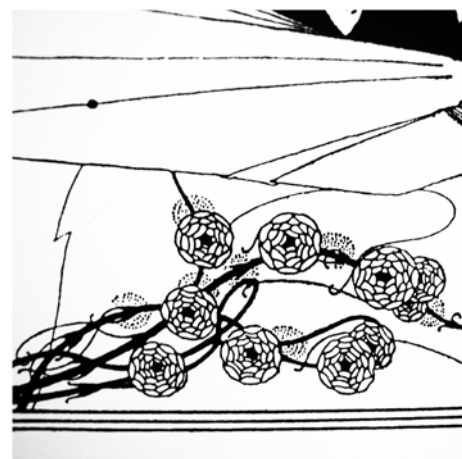
*Thank you for the feedback on my work! What you say is interesting and relevant – I can identify with it and at the same time it opens up new approaches. That I've been “making up with painting” haven't been really clear to me, but I think you're right! Also concerning my development towards a more personal and reduced aesthetic expression, that has a lot to do with the graphic. What you want to say, and to whom, is really the tricky core of doing art... You don't want to be elitist, but at the same time not reduce the complexity of what you're saying... I can add that the title of the piece I showed in September was “I wish someone were waiting for me somewhere (A Cemetery Scenery)”, it can be relevant to the question about keys to pieces, and to what I wanted to express with the entire piece actually. What you write about my work in the last piece is nice... I think it makes sense. And I work with something similar for my solo exhibition. Going away sounds nice! It's so easy to loose focus on your work and on what really interests you in Stockholm, especially at Konstfack. That's why I've withdrawn to Paris for a while. Strange enough, I can think more clearly here than at home (at least so far), and I feel closer to what I want. Perhaps it's just the change, I don't know... But I hate the French keyboards! It takes so much longer to write (I'm at school), so I have to quit now.*

In Berlin I saw “Of Mice and Men”, the 4th Berlin Biennial, and became amazed by the way the curators related to the art, the place and the artists. I didn't always agree with the selection of works, but after many didactic and pedagogical exhibitions, dominated by an “uncritical and exoticizing intercultural aesthetic” (to quote Swedish curator and writer Sinziana Ravini, in “Paletten” #4, 2005 <sup>12</sup>) that has dominated the art scene during the last few years, it was a relieving experience. (I must add that now, three years after I wrote this, I have seen many more exhibitions like this, for example the 2nd Torino Triennial 2008. <sup>13</sup>)



Image 1: Bag from the Berlin Biennial, 2006

Image 2-3: Aubrey Beardsley, illustrations for “Salome” by Oscar Wilde, 1894





We believe that art is about experiencing possible worlds, getting diverted from or immersed in a reality we had previously overlooked. [...] "Of Mice and Men", then, is an exhibition about life, but as observed through its simplest elements: You are born, you live and then you die. Except that life never proceeds in such a linear fashion: it jumps, falls, runs and skips; it takes wrong turns and is illuminated by sudden flickers of light. Echoing this pace, the exhibition proceeds in a non-linear fashion, with digressions, spreading out into the buildings along the street as if following the threads of memory or the seduction of chance. "Of Mice and Men" is not strictly a theme show, but certainly an exhibition of subjective affinities and unexpected connections, with recurring moods and tensions. We never set out to prove a point or to illustrate a specific concept: Art has to defend its ambiguities; to a certain extent must to remain obscure. [...] Visiting the show, then, should be like opening a series of time capsules. And yet, we are not interested in documenting life: we actually hope that through the work of the artists and through the musings of memory, the everyday could appear suddenly extraterrestrial. So do not expect statistics or sociology in this show. Do not concentrate on issues of gentrification or real estate: It has nothing to do with our show. It might very well be that all this has been made possible due to some economic function, but we believe reality and our surroundings can be described with, and therefore transformed by, much more complex and enchanting words and images.<sup>14</sup>

## Please don't turn on the radio I don't like outside influence<sup>15</sup>

A lot of information and communication is simplified, predictable and redundant. It doesn't provide us with any real knowledge, nor does it correspond with the complexity of reality. It isn't capable of surprising or generating any new thoughts or ideas. I need to protect myself towards the flood of unnecessary information, overflowing me each day through media and in certain parts of the urban space. Art offers a space for a more complex discussion about, and thereby in better accordance with, reality. Art can be subjective, fragmented, dualistic, poetic, abstract or metaphoric, and often describe reality better than a news report or statistical survey. In a text based piece published in "Paletten" (#3, 2004), the lack of belief in art and its' ability to change something was

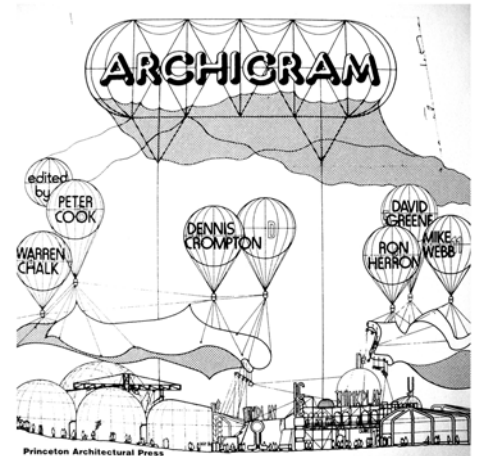
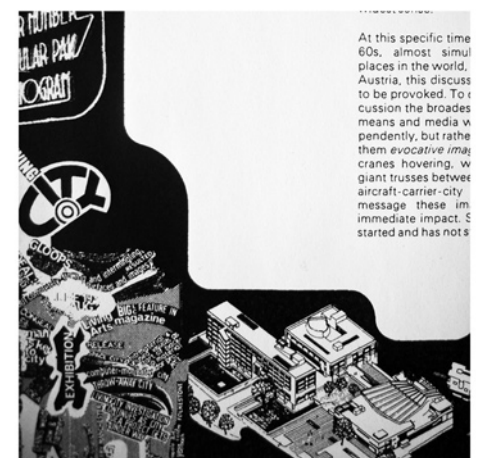


Image 1-2: Archigram, 1963

Image 3: Aubrey Beardsley, illustrations for "Salome" by Oscar Wilde, 1894



approached. The text, quoted from below, was called “The impossible legacy of the eighties: Appeal for self-criticism and glue gun”<sup>16</sup> and was written by artists Maja Hammarén and Fredric Gunve.

*Maja: It frightens me that so many artists justify their artistic existence by working under the “good flag” and with those given subjects which legitimate the existence of art. To even consider yourself knowing what is good! And what kind of conception of art is it – that art needs an explicit function in order to exist? When art has to refer to and treat the correct subjects of the day, like postcolonial problematic, feminism or segregation, it loses its point. Instead of striving for art as a space, practically the only one in this society where we can twist and turn things that are normally taken for granted, where we can question obvious ideas about right or wrong and create new experiences and visions, the artists become good moralists who serve under the agreement – towards the simplified image of “evil”.*

*Fredric: By completely leaving art like that, you also leave the belief in art as a revolutionary force. And then you also leave the possibility of change. All that remains is a lonely western artist with too much equipment and money and yet another shaky video of an exposed and objectified third world inhabitant. [...] It's not anymore about the content or form of art. It's about the easiest way to get money from the Swedish Arts Grants Committee through formulating yourself the right way. And not just to be able to carry out a project, but far more about getting a stamp by the state which says: you're ok, you work with subjects justifying the existence of your practice, we accept you as an artist. It's remarkable how the idea of a “free” art can pass so uncriticized among ourselves as artists.*

*Maja: It's as if we've become completely disconnected from the idea of that the realization of things are just as much politics as the “subject” of an artwork. We can't criticize hierarchies and at the same time organize ourselves strictly hierarchically. [...]*

*Fredric: Relational aesthetics has become a behavior pattern for lazy or anxious artists to use when they apply for money. Institutions and Arts Grants Committees appreciate simple words like integration, youth and interactivity. The fact that none of the nice words exist in the actual exhibition after the opening doesn't seem to matter. I want to challenge all of Art-Sweden to focus the gaze on all these hidden committees and their criteria and attitude to art. We who work within the field know which trendy words function the best, but it shouldn't be about today's words, it should be more about courage. Art is the courage to look at the world from an aesthetical point of view and to chal-*

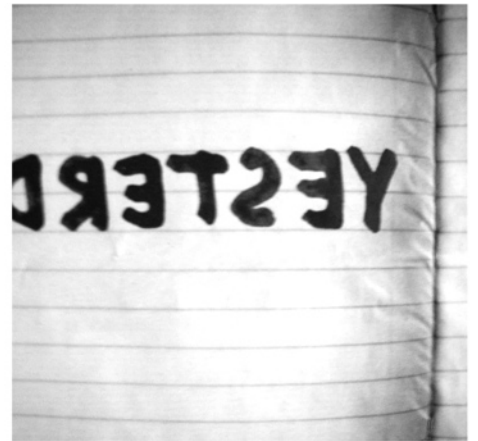


Image 1-3: Johan Thurfjell, “Untitled (Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow)”, 2006



lenge predetermined hierarchies. To pose the questions that make the world spin...

*Maja:* To enter territories you're not familiar with, and look for your own flag. To be foolish, make mistakes, make bad art, but to use yourself as an example and try to break free from stupidity as far as possible.

*Fredric:* The danger of desiring the searchlight is that the critical gaze then tends to disappear, along with the focus on the autonomy of art. Art is not supposed to stand alone outside of society, it's not that kind of alienation I'm talking about, but if it's supposed to handle human and spiritual values it needs integrity. The average artist of today suffers from the same disease that everyone who above all wants to participate in Big Brother suffer from. But not everything goes. Art has to recover its pride and position as free and critical.

When I moved to Paris I noticed a difference concerning how art and other intellectual activities are looked upon in society, among politicians and among the general public. It is approached with more curiosity and respect, it possesses a more secure position. People in general are aware of that art and culture is a generator and producer of new knowledge and ideas, a forum of critical reflection and more complex discussions. In Sweden art has often been forced to legitimate itself through being useful, moralistic or disguise itself as a form of social work. Both politicians and people in general, sometimes even the art world, seem unsure of such elementary things as the purpose and function of art.

*Hi,*

*Is there any good art to see in London, how is the culture climate? Here it's both good and bad. There's a lot of things happening on the art scene, especially now during the fall when the big art fair FIAC just took place (with three smaller, parallel fairs beside) and now the month of photography with a big fair coming up, next weekend I think. It's also a much wider and more commercial art scene here than in Sweden, which turns over much more money. Unfortunately a great part of it is traditional and less interesting, maybe because France is so ego centric and wants to keep things as they are (f. ex. the language and culture), they're kind of stuck in some aspects due to a lack of influence from the outside. But it brings good things too, art and culture is very supported in society, both from the state and from private initiatives, so there's room for an endless amount of art spaces, culture centers and galleries, some of them in the suburbs make pretty interesting stuff. And, as you mention, there are people who actually buy art... A great part of*

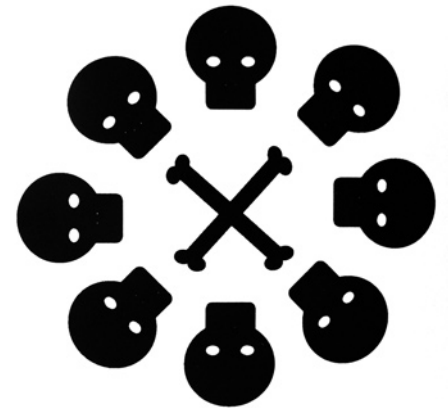
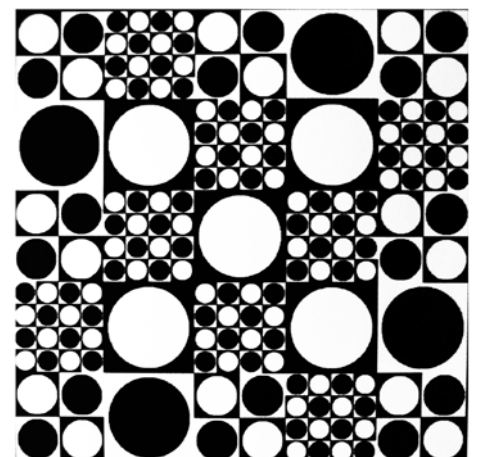


Image 1-4: Karl Holmqvist, from the catalogue to the exhibition "Gå Vänta Stanna", at Marabouparken, Stockholm 2006



*the public art discussion right now circles around the political situation in France and its relation to North Africa, about the consequences of colonialism, immigration, segregation and national / cultural identity. I get the feeling that a guilty conscience among the powerful and cultural elite, (perhaps unconsciously) are determining what kind of contemporary art is considered as interesting, especially by media. But there are exceptions of course. Scary with the shooting! You have to be careful. London seems more dangerous than Paris, here I've never experienced anything threatening (but I haven't either been to the suburbs where they burned cars, etcetera...).*

*The canal stretches out northwards from République and passes by just a hundred meters from my house, right after the bakery, the food store and the French restaurant with the checked red and white tablecloths. The October air is gentle, I hurry outside to catch the last minutes of daylight. My autumn jacket appears to be unnecessary, so does the scarf. Even with November approaching, people gather in the numerous terraces along the canal, at tables full of beer or wine glasses, sometimes a coffee cup. Tired after last night's adventures, I cross the street through a gap in the stream of cars and continue upwards along the water. It unfolds on a street level and strikes me, as always, as unnaturally green. Like the sea surrounding a Caribbean island - it doesn't belong here among the house blocks. Further up, under the bridges, the homeless live in small communities of lined up tents. They are more numerous than a couple of years ago, the tents that were provided by the Red Cross fill up several parks and other gaps in the city. Further up I reach the recently built cinemas, one at each side of the canal. A small ferry crosses the water in between. On the way down I stop and take some pictures of banners, with messages of justice and solidarity. It starts to rain, and I return home.*




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1. Barthes, Roland "Camera Lucida", Vintage, London 2000. The original, "La Chambre Claire" was published by Editions du Seuil, in France 1980.

2. The quote includes the entire lyrics of the song "By your side" by Cocorosie, 2004. The title is part of the album "La Maison De Mon Rêve" from the same year.

3. Galleri Hörnan, Falun City Libraray, Falun, Sweden 2008.01.30 - 2008.02.25

4. "And in my heart there is... (Asnières)" 2007, Galleri Konstfack, Telefonplan, Stockholm, "In search of the lost self" Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm 2007.

5. Leonard, Zoe "Analogue" The MIT Press, Cambridge 2007.

6. Rancière, Jacques "Texter om politik och estetik", Site Editions, Lund 2006. Original texts Editions Galilée, La Fabrique Editions 1998-2000.

7. For example "Untied (Flag)", "Kosmos III" and "Good Luck Occasions" from 2008, [www.malinpetterssonoberg.com](http://www.malinpetterssonoberg.com).

8. The Swedish Television, Channel 2, the program "Second Hand", 29/6 2005.



9, 10. Bårtås, Magnus "TEXST – En antologi med svensk ord/bildkonst", Stockholm, published by artist and writer Magnus Bårtås with support from Konstfack University College, 2004.

11. Murakami, Takashi "Superflat", MADRA Publishing, Japan 2000.

12. Ravini, Sinziana "Biennalretorik och smakpolitik" Paletten #262-263, 4-1/2005-2006: "Vad är konst?", Gothenburg, Palettens Förlag, 2006.

13. "50 moons of Saturn - 2nd Torino Triennial", curator Daniel Birnbaum. Torino, Italy 2008.

14. The text was part of the smaller exhibition catalogue for the 4th Berlin biennial "Of Mice and Men", which took place in Berlin during the 25/3 – 5/6 2006. It is written and published by the three curators of the exhibition: Maurizio Cattelan, Massimiliano Gioni and Ali Subotnick, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Germany 2006.

15. The quote comes from the film by Wim Wenders entitled "Don't come knocking" from 2005.

16. Original title "Det omöjliga arvet från 80-talet: Upprop om självkritik och limpistol". Translation of the quoted text was made by Malin Pettersson Öberg.

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## Acknowledgements

Thanks, to everyone who read and gave feedback on this text. A special thanks to my tutor Katji Lindberg, to Håkan Nilsson, Oscar Guermouche, Kira Carpelan and Daniel Andersson at Konstfack, to Caroline Elgh and Camilla Larsson at Bonniers Konsthall, Karolina Pahlén at Wip:Konsthall, to Sébastien Berthier, Isaac Marrero, Sinziana Ravini, Maja Hammarén, Fredric Gunve, and Ivar Feldborg at Galleri Hörnan.

All images without captions show documentation of my own two pieces "I wish someone were writing for me somewhere (A Cemetery Scenery)" 2006, and "Untitled (Berlin)" 2006, which are the works further described in the text.

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Stockholm 2007