



Good fuck

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Good Luck Occasions
A project by Malin Pettersson Öberg
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On my way to *IKEA* in Delft I pass by a strange little bar called *The Future*. It is squeezed into one of the tiny main streets, surrounded by canals and leaning old buildings. It looks new and kind of cheap, like a sportsbar, but at the same time secretive. The name is glued to the translucent window, in orange and white sticker letters. I see it from the bus and I don't understand that it's a coffeeshop. *Not yet used to this liberal Dutch phenomenon* I think to myself when I continue towards a slightly more familiar and Swedish one.

I'm assisting an African artist living in the south of Rotterdam. For a few days I bike all the way from my apartment in the northwest to his studio in Maashaven. I sit in front of his old PC and try to translate handwritten letters in French. Our collaboration seizes to work after only three days, so I quit and on my way back along the wa-



ter I discover an abandoned shop space, the *Good Luck Occasions*. Old neon signs from the forties or fifties have been removed from the façade, leaving white shapes of letters on the worn out blue background. Which kind of business used to take place here? An Asian food market, a hotel, casino or maybe a car sales firm?

*If it takes control of your body and soul
Embrace it If it makes you cry or leaves
you wondering why Don't turn around,
face it Everything you want is what I've
got to give you You just have to let yourself
come with me now Everything you want is
what I've got to give you There's no time to
hesitate, come with me now Let's go and
watch the sun rise ¹*

Roland Barthes touches upon how difficult it sometimes is to pinpoint why you are interested in a certain thing, in his late



book *Camera Lucida* ² (originally published in France 1980). The discussion relates to images but I think it is applicable to other expressions and phenomena as well. He claims that an image can have an informative function, which he refers to as the ‘studium’, and a ‘punctum’ function which means that it strikes or effects us in a more personal and undefined way. Early on in the book, before he encircles the punctum effect, 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, apparently similar, leave us completely indifferent? What is this something and how it operates, this detail or ability of an image to disturb or attract us, that awakens something in us or makes us love a certain image, is what Barthes is trying to investigate. He keeps returning to the impossibil-



ity of it, to the fact that the attraction is primarily evoked by 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"*.



Through making 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 which enable your artistic work to develop, and your inclination towards art-making, is to not be completely aware of what you are doing or where you are heading. *"To name something is to deprive yourself of three fourths of the pleasure"*, as French poet Mallarmé once said.



Düsseldorf. I'm installing an exhibition by another artist. It is called *Where over the green lies a red net* ³. We stay in a hotel and every evening I take a hot shower, enjoying



the luxury of having my own bathroom. We eat hotel breakfast in the morning and German food in the evening, mostly at *The Fox* or *The Owl*. The hotel is a kind of art hotel, and when we leave the owner gives me a ride in his car. I have a lot of luggage. He offers the artist to pay with an art piece instead of money. Outside of our work there is a theater called *Kulisse*, I take pictures of it before I leave. It has a vertical sign made of circles. They are yellow and red.



The starting point of my work at Duende has been an interest in business activity located a bit on the border to society or the 'normal'. In what we perceive as morally acceptable or unfamiliar. These activities, and their visual representation and presence in the urban space. What is reflected in their graphical appearances and choices of names?





Sexclubs, coffeeshops and casinos hardly exist in Sweden, and their ideologies and relation to the surrounding world as well as society's relation to them interest me. Whether they fascinate and intrigue me or make me sad is hard to tell. And the dualistic, ambiguous and complex experience always deserves an investigation. One day when I am in Amsterdam to take pictures of the red light district I meet up with X, a friend and performance artist. She shows me the old church, around which the sexshops are lined up with girls in the windows. A coffeeshop across the square is called *Coffeeshop The Old Church*.

There are several religious places squeezed in between the coffeeshops and sexclubs. Sometimes they can be very difficult to distinguish. Like *Candlelight* or *Krishna Emporium* in Rotterdam and *Café The Candle* in the middle of Amsterdam's red light



district. Their architectural and graphical appearances, and choices of names are not so different from the sexclubs and coffee-shops surrounding them. The theory behind might be that this is where they are most needed, but the risk of confusion and stepping inside the wrong kind of place is big...



We walk through the thin alleys where women behind glass are dancing or standing, exposed like commodities in a store. To compare, choose between and buy. Some are very young and some very old. They have started to close down parts of the area, many previous sexshops are empty and abandoned. We talk about whether it is a shame that one of the oldest occupations in the world is disappearing or going underground, if it is dangerous, or if it is good that society stops supporting these business activities as being normal and acceptable.





Look at the sky: that is for you. Look at each person's face as you pass on the street: those faces are for you. And the street itself, and the ground under the street, and the ball of fire underneath the ground: all these things are for you. ⁴



In *The Politics of Small Gestures* (Istanbul 2006) Mika Hannula discusses the melancholy or cruelty evoked by certain artworks. He mentions Phil Collins' work *The World Won't Listen* in which the artist arranged a three day karaoke-session in an Istanbul club. It was a homage to The Smiths, in which everyone could participate and sing The Smiths' songs. Noone was allowed to laugh at other performers. Hannula points out the simplicity and beauty of the piece, and then the inherent cruelty (s. 30-31): *"The [...] cruelty present here is the motion that takes place when Collin's teases out the discrepancies between the ideal world*





and the not-so-ideal reality. There is bound to be a cruel kind of upset when a bedroom fantasy gets a chance to be lived for real. It is a revelation, and disillusionment. A kind of wake-up call that is not necessarily all that kind.”



Through moving, displacing and combining text and image material in new and unexpected ways I try to juxtapose how we look upon our everyday reality and surroundings. To create new meanings, to reconsider old ones, to reveal inherent poetry and magic in what we normally take for granted. To show the gaps and discrepancies between the utopian dream and the sometimes harsh reality, to consider them in all their humoristic banality or sad beauty.



*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 Is to be a housewife ⁵

A friend and artist once described my work in the following way, which I think could be relevant to this project: *"I clearly sense a fascination with parallel worlds in your work. Through displacing language between different 'worlds', you as a viewer loose 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. [...] 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.”⁶

The approach you have to a new place as a stranger and temporary visitor is nice. Both the freedom of interpretation and association concerning the language and other culture-specific things, but also the way you observe. Your gaze is different, at the same



time more naïve and more clear. The luxury of spending time discovering and uncovering a city, slowly, bit by bit. Inhabiting the role of the Flaneur, walking and biking the streets, talking to people, drinking coffe. This role, invented and practised by important male authors and philosophers more than one century ago, is still more difficult to inhabit as a woman. Especially if you combine it with investigating sensitive activities, or business on the border to the legal. I worked with it in Paris, investigating a Chinese wholesaler district with links to the mafia. A lot of suspicious gazes, comments and questions can be expected, though many men take for granted that the pictures are for private use. Once in Paris a man asked me if it was for my photo album. *Oui* I answered him with a smile, and continued my work down the street.



When a whale dies, it falls through the ocean slowly, over the course of a day. All the other fish see it fall, like a giant statue, like a building, but slowly, slowly. ⁷

The romantic, glorifying and positivistic names of these rather shabby places intrigue me. Who thought of names like *Frontline* or *The Future* for a coffeeshop? *Coffeeshop Desire*, *The Free World* or *Speak Easy* makes more sense to me. There is a common idea to name a bar, shop or sexclub after an exotic place far away. A place that represents all your dreams and wishes about something else and different: *Mata Hari*, *Paradise*, *Golden Taj-Mahal*, *Eldorado*, *Tropical*, *Broadway*, *Zanzibar*, *San Francisco*... Names romanticizing the sea are also common, like *Mediterrané*, *Atlantic* and *Maritime Rouge*. When I pass by the *Bar Ramona*, just after the callshop *Call Me* at the Nieuwe Binnenweg, I get an idea



for a new art piece. *And what kind of place is really the Temptations Drinks and Music Palace?*

My younger brother and his girlfriend are visiting. We sit on a sidewalk terrace in Rotterdam, it's only February but warm enough. They don't know how lucky they are: the sun is shining for three days. We drink beer, except for my brother's girlfriend who drink soup. She doesn't like alcohol, she's Asian and besides she's pregnant. We talk about the house they just bought, and how we will be able to celebrate Christmas there instead of with our parents. Next to us on the sidewalk is the band from last night, they are packing their instruments in a car. Before we pass by the Chinese supermarket on the way home, I take pictures of two shops across the street. *Silver River Giftshop, Deep Impact.*



*Please leave all shiny objects behind, you
won't need them where we're going Relax,
take a deep breath, and concentrate now,
we really must be gone There's a risk in
everything we undertake, but now you must
trust me more than anyone 'Cause I've seen
things, that you could only dream about
I've been to places that you'll never find
And I've had dreams that you couldn't even
fit inside your head All the places I wish I
could find ⁸*



NOTES

1. Kings of Convenience (2001), excerpt *Gold for the Price of Silver*, album *Versus*, UK / US: Source / Astralwerks 2001.

2. Barthes, Roland (1980), *Camera Lucida*, London, Vintage, 2000. Originally published in French, *La Chambre Claire*, France: Editions du Seuil, 1980.

3. von Brandenburg, Ulla (2008), original title of the exhibition is *Wo über dem grün ein rotes netz liegt*, Germany: Kunstverein Düsseldorf, 2008.

4. July, Miranda (2007), quote from *The Shared Patio*, in the book *No One Belongs Here More Than You*, Great Britan: Canongate Books, 2007, 11.

5. Cocorosie (2004), lyrics of the song *By your side*, album *La Maison De Mon Rêve*, 2004.

6. Guermouche, Oscar (2006), quote from email used in my essay *Artistic Statement*, Stockholm: Konstfack University, 2007.

7. July, Miranda (2007), quote from *The Shared Patio*, in the book *No One Belongs Here More Than You*, Great Britan: Canongate Books, 2007, 9-10.

8. Flotation Toy Warning (2005), excerpt from *Happy 13*, album *Bluffer's Guide to the Flight Deck*, USA: Misra Records, 2005.



Some of the quotes have been used earlier, in the essays
There is nothing ordinary in the world (Sweden: Whyred
 Art Project, 2007)
Artistic Statement (Sweden: Konstfack University 2008)



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 Changes and Challenges for Contemporary Art*, Turkey:
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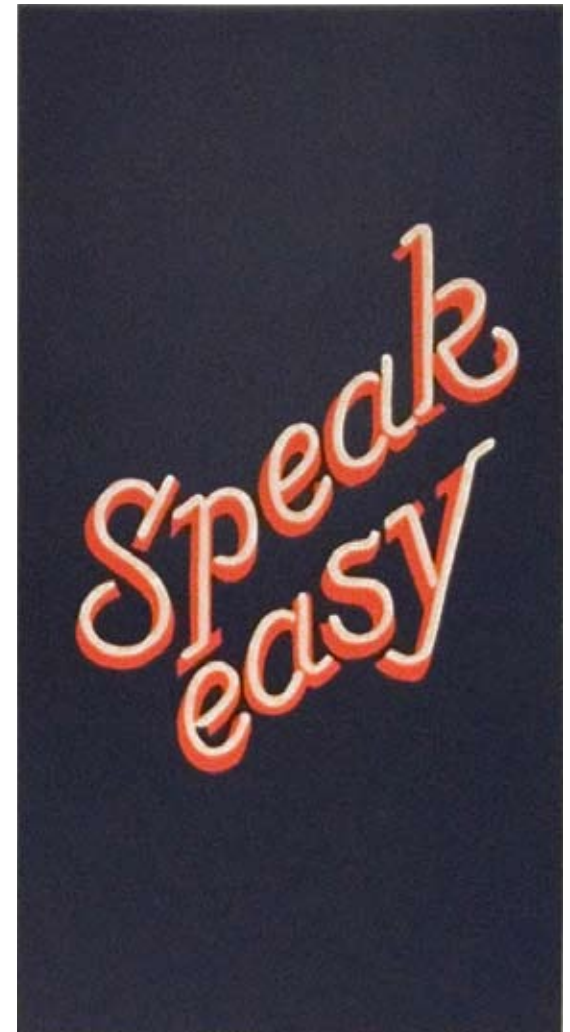


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*Wallpaintings in acrylic paint
different sizes*



The Future



Good luck

OCCASIONS

TROPICAL

Golden



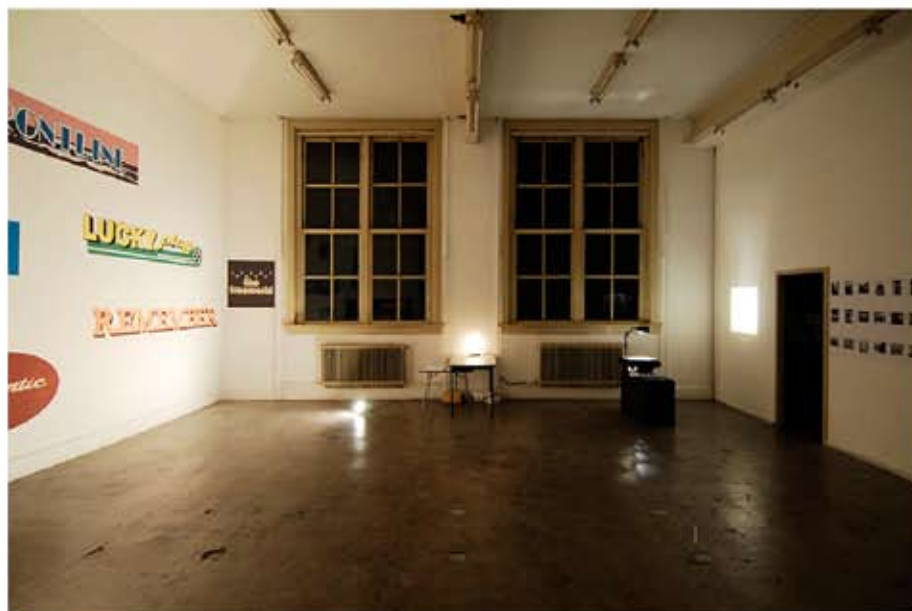


LUCKY *play*

The logo consists of the word "LUCKY" in a bold, gold, 3D block font and the word "play" in a gold, cursive script font. Both words are positioned above a dark green horizontal bar. The bar has a white outline and a white four-leaf clover symbol on its right end.

REMEMBER





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