

NEW BEGINNINGS

-the manuscript

Although Hegel never used the terms himself, the triad thesis, anti-thesis, synthesis is often used to describe the process of Hegelian dialectics and the belief in some kind of historical and philosophical progress. What if we played with this triad? 1) The thesis as an intellectual proposition that is incomplete and looking for an answer. 2) The antithesis as a negation or reaction to the thesis. 3) The synthesis as a temporary solution of the conflict between the thesis and antithesis by a reconciliation of their common truths, thus forming a new proposition. In this textual experiment, I've organised the prologue as a thesis that claims that it's time to look for new beginnings. The responses of the 13 artists and writers can be seen as the antithesis. The epilogue can hopefully function as a synthesis.

PROLOGUE:

NEW BEGINNINGS BY SINZIANA RAVINI

MONOLOGUES:

13 ARTISTS/WRITERS:

Monologue no 1: LINA ISSA

Monologue no 2: FATALE/ MEIKE SCHALK
& KATARINA BONNEVIER

Monologue no 3: TOM MCCARTHY

Monologue no 4: HANS ROSENSTRÖM

Monologue no 5: MAKO ISHIZUKA

Monologue no 6: LINA BJERNELD

Monologue no 7: DANIEL EATOCK

Monologue no 8: INGO VETTER

Monologue no 9: CARL PALM

Monologue no 10: JESPER NORDAHL

Monologue no 11: SÖNKE HALLMANN

Monologue no 12: ARMANDO LULAJ

EPILOGUE:

NEW BEGINNING BY SINZIANA RAVINI

PROLOGUE

BY SINZIANA RAVINI, PARIS 15 MARCH 2010:

“Finally the horizon seems clear again, even if not bright; finally our ships may set out again, set out to face any danger; every daring of the lover of knowledge is allowed again; the sea, our sea, lies open again; maybe there has never been such an ‘open sea’.”

Friedrich Nietzsche—The Gay Science. Book Five: We Fearless Ones

We are freer than ever to direct our gaze in every direction. We’ve climbed every mountain and crossed every sea. Where do we go from here? From this infinite space of possible resolutions? The artworld has for a long time now suffered from nostalgia for past utopias. Retrofuturism, heterochronology, entropy, are the fashionable postmodern words with which we adorn our chronophilic desires. We are obsessed with archives, the traceability of products and people, documentations and re-enactments of historical events. The entire art system has turned into an excavation site looking for history. At the same time the simulacra of the presence is everywhere. News hit us faster than ever. And we’re constantly wondering what’s coming next.

The endless slide show of art history can only be fruitful if we engage with that which cannot be repeated or rewritten—the escapable, or that which has not yet occurred—the coming. It seems as if we have come to a point where some of us think that looking back is as exciting as going out with the garbage, while others think that looking forward is as naïve as wanting to build a hammock on an eruptive volcano, hoping the lava will keep your feet warm. Perhaps we have to reclaim Nietzsche again who said that too much history isn’t good for us. Does that mean that we have to start forgetting where we come from? That we have to cut our cultural roots and start sliding along our liquid society? Or is there a better way? A way where we don’t have to chose between Orpheus, Janus or Cassandra?

Pamela M. Lee writes in Chronophobia: “Compromised by an endless temporal switching, one always returns to the past too late, just as one always projects into the future too early”. If so, what shall we do? Sit and wait? Remain faithful to the future of our pasts? Or can we start

moving again? If so, in which direction? It is said that Moses let his people wander for 40 years in the desert, not because he couldn't find the way to "the promised land", but because he wanted to give them enough time to get rid of their slave mentality. Enough time to reinvent the community with the help from a younger generation that hasn't lived under oppression but with open horizons, with promises of a time yet to come and spaces waiting to be reclaimed. Perhaps we've misunderstood Moses, and the Promised Land is not to be found on a geographical spot, but in our hearts and minds—in an imaginary space where the artist is not only a semionaut but also a psychonaut. If the unconscious is formed as a language, then language is our only tool for social change.

Perhaps we're nothing more than language players. If so, can our languages—visual or textual—produce new realities? If so, can we intermingle them? Otherwise—how can we ensure that our language plays won't recede to a hermetic box that shuts the world out? How does one find the balance between introspectiveness and social engagement? Pragmatism and romanticism? Problem searching and problem solving? Or is such a balance impossible to attain? And how can one create a common where each singularity is preserved and transcended at the same time?

Some claim actions are stronger than words. Even Slavoj Žižek says that in times of confusion it's better to step back and not act. It's not a bad idea. Action has inflicted more pain on the world than the lack of action. Does that mean that we have to become pacifists? Put our hands in our pockets and stick our heads into the ground? That's even worse than nihilism. It's defeatism. What if words were to be seen as actions? What if writing was already an act in itself?

But first of all, we have to know what we want. For me, the political resides not only in what we do, but in what we want to do! I'm convinced that we will come to a point where we have to reinvent the politics of the will. (Not a will to power in a Nietzschean sense but a will to action in a psycho-activist sense.) Now the big question is—what do you want? And what do you do in order to get what you want? This question goes straight against the Lacanian concept of "objet petit a"—the blind spot, that marks one's impossibility to know one's desire, but at the same time coordinates all our desires. The concept is as creative as it is disempowering. At least it has been very successfully perverted by capitalist forces that tell you "what you want". I'm convinced that we all know what we want, but it takes a lot of guts to express that knowledge. To go

from the unknowing, to the knowing, to the expression of the knowing—and not confine us with the usual refrain—that the only thing I know is that I don't know...

Now, what does this text want? Well, like all grandiose master plans, it wants the impossible. It wants to engage on a collective writing journey that doesn't necessarily have to end with the editing of this hopefully collective, dialogical or even better—cacophonous text. Neither time nor space is on our side. You have 6 days until the 3rd of March. The 7th you can rest like all other Gods that have completed their creation. You're free to write what you want: What you eat for breakfast and what you see outside your window is as interesting as your work, your hopes and fears, your visions for tomorrow. I tend to believe that restrictions can be fruitful—so therefore two pages are the limit. Perhaps we cannot change the world tomorrow. Perhaps not even after tomorrow. But perhaps we can change the way we speak and write about the art that tries to do so.

MONOLOGUE NO 1

BY LINA ISSA:

In pursuit of new beginnings I am tempted to write: “Those are our early days”. But it would be inaccurate. What is early when one is over-run with too many beginnings? Too many endings?

This strange feeling I discovered because you put your hands on me, because she blew her pain through me, because he found his voice in me and because she remembered my memories for me. This strange feeling makes it impossible for me to believe anything is old, is early, is past. There in what I thought was going to be my always unresolved departure from home, she made this feeling bloom in me.

I lost my faith in certainty when I sent her, a stranger to take my place and she disappeared into the world that is intimate to me, and thus became no one. What are the moments in our society when people are reduced to disappearance?

I lost my frames of subjectivity when I took the place of a stranger and after did not know the way back to mine.

In both, I felt disorientation, exclusion. I did feel transformation. I got anxious. I waited for my mouth to scream, but did not. In that silence I began to learn what it is to be without ground.

Three years ago, as a student from Lebanon, I was denied my residence permit in the Netherlands for strictly bureaucratic reasons. Since I appealed against this decision I have not been able to leave the Netherlands and re-enter the country.

Not being able to travel home myself, I cast a replacement and sent Aitana, a Spanish dancer, to Lebanon for 10 days as my stand-in, messenger and recording device. She visited different people—my family and friends—and traced the places of my memory and what constitutes the idea of “home” to me.

Where We Are Not was the place for us to explore. Those places we carry

with us in our bodies. The places that are part of us, and that also have made us who we are. The place where our absence is felt by the people who have known us so well, by the objects we no longer touch, and by the trajectories we no longer pass.

Aitana performed lots of “tasks” that I gave her in a handwritten notebook and she wrote impressions and experiences in a notebook.

My notebook is 150 pages of instructions, narrations, recollections, lists of things to touch, to smell etc... It moves irregularly between the present, the past and the future. Sometimes it is an uncertain probing of the memories of an exilant, asking Aitana to tell me if things really are as I remember them, if places also remember me. In some moments the fear of loss and the pain of dislocation frame the writing where a desire to fix things in the past comes through.

In pursuit of a beginning, What if, if I take your place?

Arriving in a new city, I placed an advertisement in the newspaper asking people if I could take their place in one situation or another of their life. For an hour, a day, a week... Groundless as I am, my work locates itself in the limbs of this unstable factor called “the other”- you. Where to go and how to go on is dependant on my encounter with you. The only cartography I trust is that of your instructions, of your traces, of your holes and of your scripted falls, spilled desires, mesmerizing vulnerabilities and unsung songs.

A desire to disappear in your geography results in a hyper presence. Borrowing each other’s absence or presence for a narration, a confrontation, a (re/dis)placement, a withdrawal, or a repetition of your/my reality points at things that escape us, things that we are but have not yet become.

Thinking of the art context within which I am doing this, I experience the creative space as a space of tension between our subjectivity and sensible reality (where things are perceived as forms/representations). To me, confronting and dealing with this tension allows life to breathe and opens up our capacity to receive, to affect and be affected.

I promise you I will not to make a spectacle out of our encounters. I will focus my sensitivity on the conditions that are appropriate for the sharing of experience. Which I perceive in turn, as temporal and transitory.

I am not interested in finding a balance between “social engagement” and “introspection”¹. I am also not interested in “change as it is articulated in language”². I am interested in shifting ground, losing balance—please. Falling! I want to be able to embrace my place/your place in the world, your place and its place within me rather than change it.

In pursuit of a beginning. I dislocate myself on a prewritten page of a history of a stranger. And I fantasize about inserting commas and full stops transcribing the erosions of the familiar, the unbearable yet beautiful proximity of places and people, and the fragility of our subjectivity and social constructions. My writing is that in the gaps, in the negative space, the black holes, the uninstructed, the unspoken, and the not agreed upon. I only retrace the letters that have been exhausted by the urgency to be heard and seen. The most difficult is placing a full stop at the end of the page, and imaging a blank one as I flip to continue.

In pursuit of new beginnings. I wrote instead: “When do things end?” I was still in the rhythm of regularly updating my “facebook” status this time on my account, not hers though. She wanted to disappear for the weekend and gave me six pages of instructions and asked me to take her place. She wrote:

“Friday

I go home and have something to eat from the fridge. Drink some whisky and a beer. Check my facebook, write where I am going and tell everyone to comment on my status.

...

I sleep on the left side. If he lays there I find a way of moving him, maybe I ask him to get me something. We talk for a long time in bed. I have my head on my pillow (the soft one) on his chest. I make sure my feet are tucked in the blanket and that I have the cover underneath me so that I take it with me when I turn around from his chest and turn my back at him. I ask him to scratch my back (especially the spot on my left-hand shoulder blade) and he holds me the whole night. His right

1. Referring to Sinziana’s text.
2. Ibid.

arm is under my head and I hold his right hand with both my hands. I like it when he talks about when he was a kid. And I like him to say stuff to me in French. I put the alarm on my cell so that I will sleep for 7 hours. I like to wake up early”.

I ALSO UPDATED HER BLOG AND I WROTE:

“...

Suddenly saliva spills pushing my tightly closed lips- still anticipating a song.

Guess I've swallowed your songs and my mouth is so dry

Spit me out, please! Spit me into your cavities!
Spit me into the emptiness you left behind. Spit till I disappear.

Can I lie still as you touch me?

3 long salty fingers pushed all the sounds inside; licking them I was only a tongue splashing against your confused tight caress. Meanwhile, I wait.

'She' comes out of my mouth.

(an)other woman

I tried to hear all the things that I have not been told. Still waiting. Would this song ever sing me?

Does she caress your hair as you spoon her so tight? Does she kiss your nipple? Does she kiss your belly?

You shook your head with a No. She likes the hair on my belly, you murmured. By that, you gave me a space to get lost between my lips and her hands curling between the hairs of your belly.

On your floor I have been leaving myself behind—in the silences of your words, in the closed pores of his skin, as he loves you again and again.

Piles of possible costumes, cut-outs of a love letter, blown out lights, sealed lips, the only

few weightless footsteps... behind ...on your floor.
This morning, making art at your breakfast table I
felt enormously sad
How can I love him the way you do?
I have a strong need to love him like you do.
Do you?

Love leaves me alone”.

FACEBOOK FRIENDS COMMENTED
ON MY STATUS “WHEN DO THINGS END?” WITH:

“Never”.

“Things end when other things start”.

“Things end when nothing is starting”.

Coming home, I fumbled for my keys at your door. The neighbour asked me
where I had been. I smiled saying: “I am not sure. But it was new.”

MONOLOGUE NO 2

QUEER ARCHIVE OF FOLLIES, COLLECTIVE RESEARCH,
AND FEMINIST ARCHITECTURE SALONS.

BY FATALE/ MEIKE SCHALK
& KATARINA BONNEVIER, STOCKHOLM 3 MARCH 2010:

(roles: the architects) Being architects and architectural theorists our practice differ from art practices in respect to methods and skills, the basic economic conditions, and above all in the way our profession projects the future. Architecture is through and through a positive profession, at least most of the time. In situations of crisis, however, old boundaries may perforate and open up to new territories, where more critical architectural practices get the chance to enter a discourse.

When we think of possible futures, then we dream of the making of different spaces, of other architectures and cities, and most of all, of the altering of a patriarchal architectural practice.

Sexuality and gender are often implicit burdens in architecture theory. The performative force of the male, western, middle class, heterosexual canon dominates the practices, methodologies, contents and theories, of architectural research, whereas contributions by women and minority groups are deemed less important, less qualified, deviant or are simply omitted altogether. The Swedish Architecture Museum holds a collection of drawings representing approximately 500 architects; out of which some thirty are women. The writings about these architects and their work are far from exhaustive. Feminist scholarship has pointed out that it is not enough to add women to the mono-gendered history of men; the methods and structures of historiography need to be reconfigured.

In our practice, certain formats and methods have evolved: A feminist encyclopaedia of follies, participatory mapping/collaborative research and feminist architecture salons, all projecting a different future:

A FEMINIST ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF FOLLIES

We propose to investigate architecture as a performative act, the authoritative forces and the excess meanings of architecture, as a path towards new architecture. A queer archive of feminist architecture engages in a dialogue with a series of comprehensive buildings. The archive exists momentarily; we consider it much like architect Eileen Gray described her house E.1027 as a moment in a much larger study. It is a concrete search for critical feminist architecture; to find tactics for resistance and transgression of normative orders. The queer archive of follies collapses time since here we collaborate with architects that no longer live and bring out drawings for houses that were never built. In a kind of enactment the imaginary collaboration is explored through drawing and writing.

PARTICIPATORY MAPPING OR COLLECTIVE RESEARCH

Participatory mapping or collective research suggests other methods of collecting knowledge about spaces than usually applied within urban studies and site analysis for the purpose of urban planning, architecture and design. It indicates that methods, which are narrative rather than analytical, would consequently lead to different ideas and proposals for urban developments and architectures. Instead of looking at sites through “objective” and standard concepts and terms, we approach a scene or an act, inhabited by various actors and props, where we get engaged on a 1:1 level finding out about the stories, rumours and crimes from within the existing context of an “urban drama”. Our hypothesis is that from this material, which is informative as well as it is fictional—meaning it has the power of pointing towards a different future—new themes can and will be created. This could start with the collective making and using of new forms of city maps.

Participation and collaboration starts with the desire of wanting to make a change. In considering the participative process as a way of assembling a collective economy of desire of actors and gestures, we can understand collaboration as a process of a “labour of desire”.

Collaboration involves a part of place-making, the preparation of a spatial situation in order to invite for interactions, so that encounters can take place in an atmosphere characterised by informality and

intimacy. Place-making means the creation of a situation of trust. This is important because how, what, and from whom information is provided forms the basis for a process of collaboration, which results not only in analytical criticism, but produces first and foremost a proposal for change.

FEMINIST ARCHITECTURE SALONS

Historically, salons have played an important role in women's struggle for civil rights. The theatre theorist Sue-Ellen Case describes the salon as a sort of private theatre without any obvious divisions into private/public, actor/audience, theory/practice, since it is both everyday life and theatre. A salon emerges as a result of action—a context which, for a period of time, is intertwined by participants and their actions (conversation, interaction, listening, flirtation, drawing, hanging-out, gestures) with props, furniture, doors, refreshments, snacks, clothes, wallpaper and adjacent rooms. In addition, the salon touches upon various issues, texts, questions, sometimes across several spaces. It can take place in a number of different containers. Whether it is a garage, a café, a garden, they become salons through the staging of a salon. The staging transforms, even creates the architecture in a kind of re-reading. But that does not mean that it appears from a blank sheet, or that the construction is a meaningless frame to be filled; there are already intentions, clear, often unspoken rules, norms and methods of application.

NOW, WHAT IS OUR VISION FOR TOMORROW?

The struggle to bring out and insist on feminist aspects of the history, theory and practice of architecture is definitely an on-going process in Sweden as elsewhere. This works along a method of reinterpretation. Reading buildings and spaces as queer performative acts and not static preconditions makes architecture less confined within normative constraints. It is a key both to accomplish a shift in how architecture can be understood or analysed and to contribute to a transformation in future building. To enact architecture otherwise, might, eventually, lead to the creation of a more inclusive architectural practice.

MONOLOGUE NO 3

BY TOM MCCARTHY:



Official Document

Title: Stockholm Propositions

Subtitle: Once more we shall board our imagined ship

Type: INS declaration

Authorised: First Committee, INS

Authorisation Code: TMcC030310

Document follows

1.

The angel of history faces backwards.

2.

Listen: the world is a sign of restless visibility, greater than six miles.

3.

Objects in the rear-view mirror may appear closer than they are.

4.

Listen: Babble of voices, 90.3 MHz, internal party dissonance. Several highs from the Atlantic to the Baltic. Ringtones in commercials and screaming hosts of the new generation.

5.

The Future is boring.

6.

Listen: Risperidone and bupropion for new-onset depression with psychotic features. Filtering the voice of America. Withered into the air.

7.

Listen: Stockholm, within the umbra, 08:40-09:42. Brain injury to the right cerebral hemisphere, dark river-nymph, her name is Echo, and she always answers back, expressed in Terrestrial Dynamic Time. Tomorrow will be 3 minutes and 57 seconds longer.

8.

Listen: between cities, countries and continents, we are going to crash.

9.

Listen: Radio Essen, 102.2, from the Atlantic to the Ostsee. Mich aber umsummet die Bienen. Trumpets, Wupertal. Reuters, down 48, IBM down .84, AT&T down .67. The bees hum around me, and where the ploughman makes his furrows, birds sing against the light.

Document Ends

26.

Listen: Radio Essen, 102.2, from the Atlantic to the Ostsee. Mich aber umsummet die Bienen. Trumpets, Wupertal. Reuters, down 48, IBM down .84, AT&T down .67. The bees hum around me, and where the ploughman makes his furrows, birds sing against the light.

MONOLOGUE NO 4

BY HANS ROSENSTRÖM:

As a response I'd like to say that for me the only sensible way forward is in an understanding relation to the past. It is bewildering how fast history seems to be forgotten and re-made. Maybe one way to look at the work I am presenting at the open house in Iaspis is through a destruction of history and identity to enable a new beginning.

In Our Hearts is a video filmed by a camera attached to a round raft that floats freely on the river Tigris. The current of the river transports the camera through Hasankeyf, a small town in the south-east of Turkey. Jolting and twirling, the river creates a dramaturgy by its pace and portrays the landscape by its terms. Presenting an area transformed through a long period of time where the natural, geographical and cultural formations are closely entwined within each other. The video also tells the story of a river about to change its pace and a landscape that is to be flooded underneath its surface.

In August 2006, Turkey started a dam project on the Tigris called the Ilisu Dam. If the construction is finished according to plan the dam will create a reservoir of a surface area of 313 square kilometres. This would cause flooding not just of the ancient city Hasankeyf whose history stretches over 12,000 years but also around a hundred other settlements. It is estimated that 50,000 people will be resettled from the area.

Thinking about our civilisation's ruthless exploitation of different possibilities; a new beginning seems merely like a desirable mirage. Not just taking this complicated situation with Hasankeyf as an example, which touches upon natural but also geopolitical and ethnical issues, but looking at what's going on around here... everywhere, the list is endless, I presume (hope) most of us feel the need for a change, a shift towards a different set of values and ideologies. Yet the more I think about it the more I am convinced that we will act as most of the other animals would do, reproduce and use everything at our hand until we can't reach it anymore. The only new beginning I see comes after a definitive end.

-I'd love to be wrong though... and at times some measures are taken:
The video was filmed the 20th of June 2009. A few weeks later, on the 7th of

July, three European export credit guarantee agencies pulled their money out of the Ilisu Dam project, claiming that the project failed to meet international standards regarding cultural heritage and human rights.

–Sometimes these measures are responded to:

The Turkish minister for environment responded after the cancellation announcement: “Turkey will construct the Ilisu Dam by its own means”, and continued “For some, Hasankeyf is just a word, but we carry it in our hearts”.

MONOLOGUE NO 5

BY MAKO ISHIZUKA:

I start with what I once ate for breakfast and what I usually see outside my window, as an answer to Sinziana's text.

RAINBOW AFTER MY BREAKFAST

Once I travelled to Gothenburg for a presentation and I stayed overnight at a hotel alone. In the morning I went down to have breakfast in the hotel restaurant. The hotel had a buffet, and I could see many people taking too much food and leaving a chaos behind, it looked disgraceful. When I finished my breakfast, I saw some fruit rinds left on my plate. I arranged them in colour order, and all of a sudden they appeared as a rainbow to my eyes. I wanted to share this view on my plate, but since I was eating breakfast alone, I took a photo of it with my mobile phone camera and sent it to my friends as picture message with my mobile phone. They responded with remarks saying, "beautiful!" and "it is so you", which made me happy. I decided to put the rainbow on my plate back to its original location—in the sky. I printed the image on transparent adhesive sheet so that I can put it on the window, integrating it with the view outside.

I showed it as a photo installation in an exhibition. Afterwards some people asked me for this sticker that they could have on their windows. I liked the idea of sharing my rainbow with people in different parts of the world, and I started to send the rainbow with a letter telling my story and giving some instructions for installation. At the end of the letter I asked them to send me a photo documenting the rainbow and the view outside of their window. In the documentation photos from all over the world, I see different landscapes seen from a certain viewpoint reflecting the personality of each rainbow owner. I made a photo album on the net, and the archive of the rainbow photos is growing.

BEAUTIFUL DISTANCE

I am interested in distances in society—physical and psychological distances, as well as distances in time/age. Since I have been living in foreign countries for my art practice, I have faced many cultural, societal and language barriers. It was natural to use my viewpoint as an expatriate or a stranger in my practice, and negotiate these distances. Though the word distance may have negative impression, I also look at positive qualities in distances that should be kept: There is beauty in distance.

When I first moved to Europe, I lived in Amsterdam where people are direct and close. I like their straight-forwardness but it was different from the manner in my native Japan. Leaving enough personal space for other people is also a sign of respect in my culture. We also appreciate things that are distant and ephemeral, and they are often subjects in traditional art forms, such as literature and painting. Distance creates a delicate diplomacy and poetry between objects. Because of invisibility and inaccessibility, you imagine, you dream. It becomes sublime, psychologically close and present, despite physical distance.

When some talk about beauty, they often mean aesthetics. My works may not inherit beauty of an immediate kind, like in visual language in advertisements; I am interested in finding beauty in relationships and/or in-between spaces rather than in objects.

TRAVELLING LIGHT

The romantic quality in travelling may also be invisible beauty, which might be shaded by global mobility in our contemporary life. I was dreaming of different places in the world when I received letters and postcards from my relatives abroad during my childhood in Japan. When I started to travel abroad myself, I also started collecting postcards, some are views of the places I visited, and some are reproductions of art works from museums and galleries that I like.

When I could not travel out of Sweden for nine months due to my visa status, I got an idea for a project that I am working on—to make an assortment of postcards with the reproduction/documentation of other artists' work that I love, which deal with travel and views. Travel can

be a long journey, but also a walk in the neighbourhood or a mind trip. Artists' works include contemporary art as well as literature, a global archive by a philanthropist, and a performance to walk 40 metres where the preparation took six years. But a single image on a postcard requires an immense fantasy to envision the original works. I want to focus on the quality in communication, travel and art experience where imagination plays an important role in the negotiation of distance. I also see this project as an experiment to find new methods to express my thought in relation to my nomadic life.

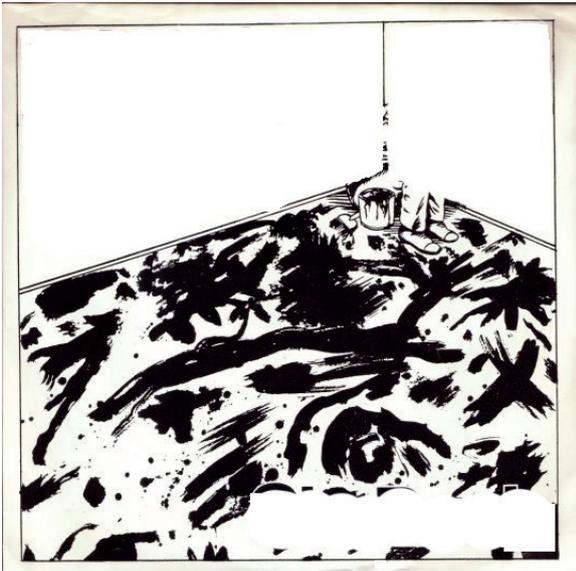
One of the artworks I want to bring into this project is Correspondence, a story by Tove Jansson that was published in a book, Travelling with Light Luggage, a collection of short stories. Last year I found the Japanese translation at Stockholm City Library and read it for the first time. The piece takes the form of letters sent to Tove Jansson from a Japanese girl who admires the writer. There are poetic descriptions of an ephemeral nature from different seasons in Japan, and a strong admiration and longing for the distant—an old writer who lives on a remote island in Finland. When I read the story, I recognised my roots, my background culture, and my starting points in my art practice and life. But when the story ended, I learnt that I am taking an alternative path to the one that the protagonist might have wanted to take; being free, not rooted, and always “on the way”.

MONOLOGUE NO 6

BY LINA BJERNELD:

Text on Desire and the Big Question

This is what I want;



In order to get it I am going to make it!

MONOLOGUE NO 7

BY DANIEL EATOCK:

Does everything go full circle and begin at the end? It is said that if you could see infinitely into the distance you would see the back of your own head. A seamless connection where the beginning meets the end. Does everything go full circle and end at the beginning?

One moment it's the future, then instantly the future becomes the past. How long does the present last? Does the present exist? Is the present an impossibility like Zeno's paradox?

A ball thrown in the air, travels up then travels down—what happens when it stops travelling upwards, the moment before it starts to fall? Is the ball temporally suspended? Could that moment be compared to the present? It is bracketed by what has just been and what is about to come.

Maybe art exists in this moment, neither moving up or down. Like the ball, we know our past and can anticipate our future.

What happens if the ball never falls? A ball suspended not moving, not frozen, the moment of transition extended.

Impossible ideas, contradictions, oxymorons, things working together in opposition. Imagine art in Lewis Carroll's Wonderland? Impossible art. Steven Wright tells the story of a photographer who goes completely insane trying to take a close up photograph of the horizon.

What is in-between past and future, introspectiveness and social engagement, pragmatism and romanticism, problem searching and problem solving? Moments of transition, grey areas, blends, the middle, a passage, metamorphosis. Like the fading of a light bulb as it's switched off, the human eye can barely catch it. Being the perfect temperature is unnoticeable, not too hot nor cold, perfectly in the middle.

Can we exaggerate or extend the middle—extra medium.

Being present, in-between, in limbo, sitting on the fence, on the edge. Everybody remembers being a child and leaning back on only two legs of a chair. A special sensation is created when the body is suspended momentarily, neither falling forward nor backward. The moment the chair inches back, the body reacts by throwing legs and arms forward to counterbalance, resulting in a feeling of butterflies in your stomach. Subtle movements and adjustments are required to stay in control, going backward and forward simultaneously to stay still.

MONOLOGUE NO 8

TRIUMPH DES WILLENS?

BY INGO VETTER:

Reading your text, I'm tempted to claim my artist position and answer in a Bartleby manner "I would prefer not to..." get pushed into a generalisation. Ambivalence is a cosy hideaway in this discussion and Žižek's suggestion to not act makes this retreat even easier. But as artists we constantly produce cultural values and fulfil our duty as the exemplarily un-alienated worker, or a bit more contemporary as an example of the creative imperative. This involvement in society and its economic circles gives us the maximum freedom of an institutional critique, but never an outsider position.

Some steps into an artistic working process: get deeply engaged with your matters, know as much you can find out, and develop your skills. The New will never be created out of nothing. To move between historical debates, research/references and/or common displays is more a daily routine than a decision for one form. As things are complicated, you will never stay unambiguous. Contradictions lurk at every corner and sooner or later you will get dirty hands. I don't see this negative, as dirty hands show your involvement. And it's nothing, language should resolve, it's rather a quality of the more or less physical appearance of the artwork. In my collaborative work with Annette Weisser, we liked to use a quote from a text on chaos theory and mathematics: "What counts is to absorb all the antitheses at once, rather than resolve them."

You ask about what we want. My personal answer is, to be with my wife and my son! This might be an un-sexy statement, as the artist should be committed to his/her work in the first place. But I would like to stress this "bare life" self-assertion as a precondition for all other things. What we want is maybe more the result of what we want together? This common place you are asking for is maybe a place of permanent negotiation and renegotiation, a lot of dirty hands work? I believe in collaborations and here the nice Swedish term "ödmjukhet" (which finds only an approximate translation in the English "humble" or "empathy") helps more than a manifestation of the will.

As a new beginning, I would like to see a stronger emphasis on the local (where ever this is), with all its implications of involvement, without leaving a global perspective. If we are searching for new commons, we might question our own work; in which way, it is able to create (inter-) relations?

MONOLOGUE NO 9

BY CARL PALM:

A proposed textual contribution is understood as a natural step in my current production, an array of interests is forming a precise point of departure, method and direction.

A reoccurring detection of humble treasures while constructing logical solutions out of irrational situations is a self supporting machinery of thoughts and actions clarifying an endless process of recreations, constant withholding of the complete collection of information and pre-written proposals leaves traces reflecting a present.

What then follows is a specific consideration of liminal parameters or context-specific circumstances which triggers an interest in (intern) logical, circular and reductional methods, neutralising spectacular effects and attempting to open possibilities towards simple questions of life in a "encyclopaedic waltz de naive".

I would consequently propose an all-inclusive deconstruction and temporal rearrangement of particular raw material assets inside the walls of a institution, transformed into an additional parquet flooring as the main visual culmination, constructed solely out of the schematically and scrupulously dismantled existing white cubes, from its current vertical position, cut, sorted and levelled, laid out like a comprehensive puzzle, a horizontal display depicting a multitude of architectural proposals considering the possibilities of the formal and structural future of a white cube situation in relation to the significant venue brought into play.

The primary motifs presented within the intricate patterns constituting the "aforementioned" parquet flooring will be cut in direct relational scale correlating the specific measurement of the offered rooms (preferably all) and the predetermined and acceptable formats formulated in each specific brief addressing the participatory architects. I will for each room compose a unique and classical parquet frame enclosing the central pattern within the flooring, using the left-over pieces from preparing the fundamental parts in the floor.

As I said the double reversal interests me, when a sculpture is balancing a dual function internally, when a beginning appears similar to a conclusion, pressuring the relationship of concept-context-content and understand your presence in exhibiting as something extended, bendable. I like to work with a situation that is in direct relation to its reality and actual future.

As a background to an additional production lies a conceptual subtext and particular utilisation of the “paratext” and its physical translation (according to the French literary theorist Gerard Genette, a paratext is a piece of text [often a text] that accompanies the main text in a published work).

The proposed translation is initiated with meticulous production and material studies of a specific set of furniture found inside the walls of institution, replicated in a 1:1 scale and further culminating in a subtle exchange (my products replacing the “original[s]”, while the “original[s]” will consequently migrate into my ownership and care) as a twofold permanent contribution in the name of “open ended” generosity. As the “pedestrian” in Michel de Certeau’s sense: a tactician and a poacher, always finding ways of moving over other man’s land, using what’s not his but what is there, playing with what’s there.

Seeing the site-specific circumstances or variations of needs as triggers for internal logical, circular or reductional methods, tends to neutralise the effect and open the possibility to pose simple questions of life in a “encyclopaedic waltz de naive”.

The double reversal interests me, when a sculpture is balancing its own functions internally, when a beginning appears similar to a conclusion, the possibilities to investigate “artistic surplus” related to ideas of failure or mistakes increases, pressure the relationship of concept-context-content and understand your presence in exhibiting as something extended or bendable.

To company this aforementioned work, I would like to present a “boîte-évalise” including works produced specially for other venues, “misfitted” into a mini retrospective, underlining my interest and further develop concepts of secondary as main, and reversing ideas of a master plan.

I would finally stress the importance for a meticulous orchestrated

publication including preceding equivalent realisations compiled in a physically extendable and printed “readable only” matter, on display in the admission freed bookshops in close connection to the exhibition venue brought into play, balancing a specific interest in works arranged especially for books, thus bringing its problems and possibilities indispensably to the surface, read “in situ” but never to be bought or displaced.

MONOLOGUE NO 10

BY JESPER NORDAHL, STOCKHOLM 2010-03-15:

I am interested in positioning my work within a proper counter-hegemonic, oppositional context that establishes links between artistic practice and the possibility of social change. The complexity of our contemporary moment makes necessary a departure from earlier artistic strategies. What might replace such strategies is something that my work explores. Also, my work attempts to reposition the artist as an oppositional subject or agent, a researcher, able to invent forms that constantly re-negotiate art as a critical and aesthetic project. Ultimately then the question that animates my work is not if, but how, it is possible to effect change.

One of the potential realms of art is the production of knowledge and narratives, which are part of constructing "realities". I think that recent geopolitical changes disallow the comfortable reiteration of past strategies associated with the 20th century. It is really important to explore what new strategies are currently available and/or historically necessary.

I came across this article that Ron Suskind wrote in the New York Times before the US election in 2004, which addresses 'reality' and history making. It also expresses how it appears little left to expose when the operations of neo-liberal economics and imperial politics are so blatant:

In the summer of 2002, after I had written an article in Esquire that the White House didn't like, -I had a meeting with a senior adviser to Bush. "The aide said that guys like me were "in what we call the reality-based community," which he defined as people who "believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality." I nodded and murmured something about enlightenment principles and empiricism. He cut me off. "That's not the way the world really works anymore," he continued. "We're an empire now, and when we act,

we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality—judiciously, as you will—we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors ... and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.'

Other relevant issues are the different possibilities offered by different theoretical positions when making video or film. Often within a documentary film tradition, which my video work is often associated with, the filmmakers try to unveil or show the "reality" and how it "really" is. When I think about my own practice, I prefer to think that I construct "reality". "Reality" and "fiction" are as much part of constructing the so-called "reality". "Reality" and "fiction" are as real or non-real. Consequently I can use any kind of footage, as everything is part of constructing "realities". Everything is discursively constructed. If you think like this then you are free to produce any "reality" you like, just as the senior advisor to Bush stated.

I have done several art projects together with groups or individuals that have an oppositional position to hegemonies. From a queer feminist and anti-capitalist position these projects investigate gender, economic (capitalism and neo-liberalism) and political structures, as well as strategies in how to challenge dominating power structures and produce counter-hegemonic narratives. At the same time my video works are part of a tradition of immanent critique, which seeks to provoke critical examination of the basic vocabulary of the movement of thought to which it belongs.

In my most recent projects made in Moscow I wanted to look into art, video and performance as critical practice. I have made a series of videos, which are recordings of staged or non-staged social situations (performances), with the focus on the performative aspect and gender issues. Those works also address the complex relationship between reality and fiction (as well as documentary and feature film) and staged and non-staged performance. There is a text by Esther Newton on drag that has been very important for me in relation to those issues. Besides informing my thoughts on gender structures this text also connects to my thoughts on "reality" and "fiction", video/filmmaking and constructing "realities". The way Newton writes about drag (and its double inversion) expresses how the illusion and essence ("reality" and "fiction") are as "true" or "real":

At its most complex [drag] is a double inversion that says, “appearance is an illusion”. Drag says [Newton’s curious personification] “my ‘outside’ appearance is feminine, but my essence ‘inside’ [the body] is masculine”. At the same time it symbolises the opposite inversion; “my appearance ‘outside’ [my body, my gender] is masculine but my essence ‘inside’ [myself] is feminine.

The video “The t.A.T.u. project” (56 min. 2009), which I made in Moscow investigates the Russian pop duo t.A.T.u. and their social and political significance. I was interested in the potential paradox of pop culture (in this case music) as critical practice. As they are an incredibly famous pop band with millions of fans, they reach a lot of people and have much influence through what they perform. Consequently they have an immense opportunity to affect social change. At the same time they act within a global pop culture machine that is part of the structures they are criticising. My video focuses on when the group early on projected the image as a teenage lesbian couple, specifically, their politically charged appearance during the US invasion of Iraq on NBC’s Jay Leno Show, wearing t-shirts with the text Хуй войне! (“Fuck War!”); and then later, their appearance on a Japanese TV show wearing t-shirts that addressed Russia & Japan’s spat over disputed islands.

This video also addresses the relationship between “reality” and “fiction” and how “realities” are constructed, partly through the question if Yulia and Lena, the singers of t.A.T.u., is a “fake” or “real” lesbian couple. Does it really matter if they are “fake” or “real” when “reality” is produced through what they perform?

MONOLOGUE NO 11

MÜLLER'S "FATZER"—PLACELESS WRITING

BY SÖNKE HALLMANN:

“Fatzer” is a place of writing. In Heiner Müller’s words, it is the figuration—aborted by Bertolt Brecht—of “the egoist, the mass-human, the new animal” in his texts. “Fatzer” is a gaze without illusions, directed towards the hopeless situation, an experiment of writing “in order to understand oneself”, a project that Brecht put to a halt in favour of the morality of the learning-play and the possibility of revolutionary action—in favour of a pragmatism, Müller writes, that provides a substitution for the contemporary “due to a revolutionary impatience with the unripe constellation of today”. Thus “Fatzer” for Müller represents nothing less than the question of which position his own reading and writing is able to construct in relation to the historical situation in which it exists.

In a conversation with Alexander Kluge from the beginning of the 1990s, Müller states that “the crazy thing about the revolutions in the countries of the former Eastern bloc is however that (...) they since some time have been completely without historical energy”. This remark allows us to introduce a somewhat different question. Stripped of their energy, the revolutions in the Eastern European countries appear to be separated from the places of their happening by a historical hiatus—and to some extent this is true also of their relation to the countries of Western Europe. The loss of energy that Müller refers to opens the question of the possibility of tradition. How can the collective experience of a moment of freedom, the “treasure of the revolutions”, be passed on? And if these experiences are not accessible as such, and not possible to pass on, how can a literary practice of writing construct a relation to this hiatus?

This question is of crucial relevance for that textual space which is called “Fatzer”. This figure, abandoned by Brecht, becomes for Müller in the end of the 1970s the place from which he introduces his poetics of “constructive defeatism”. “Fatzer” refers to a place of writing in which critique is temporally allied neither with the utopian nor with the nostalgic. The attitude from which it starts off is expressed in Müller’s

quote of Fatzer's last words before he is executed by his own comrades: "From now on, and for a long time, there will be no winners any more, only losers." Brecht's Fatzer, who as a deserter with his comrades left the trenches of the First World War with some hope, only to soon enough realise the vanity of every one waiting for the revolution, directs us towards the hopeless historical place to which Müller attempts to relate his writing.

The poetics of constructive defeatism can be put in a few words: "What remains: lonely texts, waiting for history". This is how Müller in a letter summarises his taking leave of Brecht's learning-play. The waiting of the text, however, that is referred to here, does not at all mean "twiddling one's thumbs until a (revolutionary) situation appears". In their very persistence, Müller's lonely texts are active. Here, we encounter a movement of language that, in a singular gesture demands the explication of the text and refuses it. In this movement, the historical non-place of Müller's writing is related to that "weak messianic power" that Walter Benjamin refers to in his theses on the philosophy of history. This could be understood as the push of what has been, i.e. of the unfulfilled hopes, towards a "now of readability". We are not speaking here of the meaning of a text that is different in one time from another, or that is always the same. The textual placelessness provokes us to think a movement of language that relates the past and the present to each other in such a way that it itself is located as a temporal hiatus in the process of history. It is towards this hiatus that Fatzer's gaze, without illusions, is oriented.

Heiner Müller: Fatzer ± Keuner, 1980. (English translation in Margaret Herzfeld-Sander (ed.) Essays on German Theatre. New York: Continuum, 1985 (Swedish translation in Hamletmaskinen och andra texter. Stockholm, Bonniers, 1986)
Heiner Müller/Alexander Kluge: muller-kluge.library.cornell.edu
Vivian Liska: Giorgio Agambens leerer Messianismus, 2008
Nikolaus Müller-Schöll: Das Theater des "konstruktiven Defaitismus", 2002
Heiner Müller: Krieg ohne Schlacht, 1992
Heiner Müller: Verabschiedung des Lehrstücks, 1977 (Swedish translation in Hamletmaskinen och andra texter. Stockholm, Bonniers, 1986)
Walter Benjamin: Über den Begriff der Geschichte, 1940 (English translation in Selected Writings, Vol. 4. Cambridge, Mass., Belknap Press, 2003; Swedish translation in Bild och dialektik. Stehag: Symposion, 1991)

This text was originally written in 2009 for the Center for Context and Communication Kyiv (CCCK).

Translator's note:

"Fatzer" is an unfinished dramatic fragment that Brecht worked on 1926-32: "Der Untergang des Egoisten Johann Fatzer" (The downfall of the egoist Johann Fatzer). The material encompasses more than 400 pages. Müller made an adaptation of it for the stage in Hamburg 1978.

Translated from German by Christian Nilsson.

MONOLOGUE NO 12

A KIND OF OVERTURE

BY ARMANDO LULAJ:

...Mire si' funeste
Se son degne di Atreo, son degne di Tieste ¹

1. If such a sinister design isn't worthy of Atreus,
it is worthy of Thyestes.

EPILOGUE

BY SINZIANA RAVINI, PARIS 15 MARCH 2010:

When I wrote the prologue of this play, I was listening to Air's dreamy lounge-pop song "Sing, sang, sung". Air's "aircheologic" and highly optimistic song is usually used as an acoustic tranquilliser in the airplanes of Air France. The song made me think of Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, where the protagonist can't choose between two women. He eventually comes to the awareness of life occurring once and never again, the importance of choosing, even if our choices create a path of no possible returns—even if these moments of suspension, of choices between two or more different directions, that precede all beginnings can be the most joyful thing there is. In his response to my text, Daniel Eatock chooses not to choose between past and future referring to the moment a ball thrown up in the air stops rising and begins falling. You write: "Maybe art exists in this moment, neither moving up or down. Like the ball, we know our past and can anticipate our future". Like in your equilibriumistic table- and book-shelf constructions, you're constantly balancing between two states, asking: "Does everything go full circle and begin at the end?" If the future always becomes the past—"How long does the present last?" What's in between opposites? Moments of transition, grey areas, extended middles, "extra mediums", limbos. But balanced things can also, as you told me once, conceal aggressiveness, for what happens if you take an object away from a balanced construction?—it falls... Yes, I, too, remember being a child, leaning back on the two legs of a chair, knowing I'm going to fall, but by falling getting the attention of my classmates. If Beckett said, "Try again, fail again, fail better", it's perhaps time to say, "Try again. Fall again. Fall better".

There's an uncanny similarity between Daniel Eatock's and Carl Palm's texts. Carl writes: "The double reversal interests me, when a sculpture is balancing its own function internally, when a beginning appears similar to a conclusion, the possibilities to investigate 'artistic surplus' related to ideas of failure or mistakes increases, pressure the relationship of concept-context-content and understand your presence in exhibiting as something extended or bendable." At the same time he writes that he's interested in "constructing logical solutions out of irrational situations", a temporal rearrangement of "material assets inside the

walls of the institution”, playing with “what’s there”, while at the same time “reversing the ideas of a master plan”. Yes Carl, master plans must always be reversed.

While I’m writing this text, I’m listening to the Danish singer Kristian Finne Kristensen in Christodoloulos Panayiotou’s work “To be willing to march into hell for a heavenly cause” (2007). The singer is sitting on a boat in the Aegean Sea, in front of an audience, singing utopian songs. As in all of Panayotou’s works the atmosphere is hovering between sadness and joy, creating some kind of buoyant melancholy, an oceanic gaze where everything feels limitless. The song that moves me the most is “Dreaming the impossible dream”. The song comes from the musical “Man of La Mancha” that builds on the love story between Don Quixote and Dulcinea that he encourages to dream the impossible dream. When Don Quixote at the end, lying on his deathbed gives up on his dreams, Dulcinea starts singing the song back to him... It goes like this:

To dream the impossible dream
To fight the unbeatable foe
To bear with unbearable sorrow
To run where the brave dare not go
To right the unrightable wrong
To love pure and chaste from afar
To try when your arms are too weary
To reach the unreachable star

This is my quest
To follow that star
No matter how hopeless
No matter how far

(...)

What are the impossible dreams of our time? One usually says: “She did it, because she didn’t know it was impossible”. I’m thinking of Lina Issa, her mesmerising text about how she lived someone else’s life. It all started with when she found out that she couldn’t return to her country, Lebanon. Instead of drowning in sorrow, she invited a stranger to visit her country in her place, giving her a handwritten book with small instructions, guiding her replacer in her new emotions, in her reversed Proustian search for future memories. Some time later when Lina comes to

Sweden, she decides to invert the roles and be the one that replaces. In an advertisement she offers other people the luxury of disappearance, living their lives for a while, carrying their sorrows, crying their tears, but also experiencing their most joyful moments. What a sense of freedom that must be for them—to be able to leave and come back, knowing that someone else in the meantime is filling the gap. The question is no longer where do I begin, but where do I end? When you returned home, the neighbour asked you where you had been. You smiled and you said—“I’m not sure. But it was new”... I think that your story is a beautiful example of how you can handle immobility, the feeling of no possible return or escape. Your stories—and they are many and detailed—move me beyond comparison

When I arrived in Sweden at the age of 11, my father who had finally escaped from years and years of persecution under Ceausescu’s regime told me—“My daughter, We’re going to do what Cortese did when he decided to settle down in a new world—we’re going to burn all our ships. That’s the best way to deal with longing”. Did it hinder us from looking back? Never... Cut roots are always hurting. But we can alleviate the pain by listening to each other’s stories, by reconquering the realm of empathy!

When I read Ingo Vetter’s text I am immediately awakened by its clarity, by the way he overcomes the initial Bartlebyan “I would prefer not to...”. Ambivalence is indeed a cosy hideaway and Žižek ’s suggestion not to act is much too easy. As you say—“the New will never be created out of nothing” and sooner or later we will all get dirty hands, since contradiction lurks around every corner. I love the sentence: “What counts is to absorb all the antitheses at once, rather than resolve them.” You also write: “You ask about what we want. My personal answer is, to be with my wife and my son!” This is such a beautiful statement. We hopefully all come to a point sooner or later where we realise that our family and friends are more significant than everything else. Robert Filliou famously claimed: “Art is what makes life more interesting than art”. It’s a nice statement. But I don’t agree, I think life will always be more important than art and we don’t need art to remind us of that but each other, the inter-human space that exceeds all representations and intellectualisations.

You write: “What we want is maybe more the result of what we want together? This common place you are asking for is maybe a place of permanent negotiation and renegotiation, a lot of dirty hands work?” That’s exactly what I was after. Writing this text with you all is an attempt to find

out whether we can find a common ground or not, a way of getting our hands dirty, showing each other what we really think. If one perceives the common as a space of negotiations and renegotiations, of questions and answers, thesis and antithesis—perhaps we’ve found it! Perhaps we’ve found a way of “being singular plural” as Jean Luc Nancy termed the meaning of co-existence. As he says: there’s no existence without coexistence. There’s no meaning if meaning is not shared, but for this to occur, the “I” shouldn’t come before the “we”, Dasein should not precede Mitsein. The question is then how the curatorial process of an “I” that seeks a “we” can be reversed and renegotiated within the frames of such a construction. Curating and editing is definitely a dirty job... I see it more like an organisation of a playground where each and everyone can play out their desires within an initial frame that we’re constantly reconstructing. Like you did with the Tree of Heaven Woodshop in Detroit—where you helped to transform the constantly regenerating “ghetto palm” that populates the deserted factory sites all over Detroit into an agent of communication between small, local businesses. All desolated sites can be overturn into spaces for new beginnings.

When I read FATALE’s new manifesto, written by Katarina Bonnevier and Meike Schalk, I was exhilarated by its dynamism, by its engagement with the quest for new beginnings, its optimistic zeitgeist. As you say—architecture is first and foremost a positive profession, at least most of the time. As Aristotle claims in the fifth book of the Metaphysics: “... arts are also called ‘beginnings’, and of these especially the architectonic arts” (Metaphysics V, 101a).

I know much too little about architecture. When I studied art history, the teachers stopped their linear storytelling with Corbusier, saying that all the styles that came after were just postmodern imitations of past glories. I don’t even think that the word feminism and architecture ever occurred within one and the same lecture... I’m sure that things have changed now, that we’re becoming more and more aware of the monogendered history of architecture. Women are added, but as you say—it’s not enough to add women in the historic line, the structures of historiography need to be reconfigured. I’m so happy that there are people like you, that not only come with new reading tools—like a lot of feminist scholarships, but also with new actions and forms—like the feminist encyclopaedia of follies or participatory mappings like the one in Tensta where you inverted the gloomy map into a cartography of pure potentialities. I also like the idea of seeing investigation and research as a performative

act, a path towards the new, while at the same time engaging with a queer archive where you collapse time by collaborating with architects that no longer live, realising drawings of houses that were never built. Yes, it's as you say—an enactment of the imaginary! I think it's crucial that you're using a dramaturgical terminology. That instead of looking at sites through "objective" concepts and rational terms, you approach them as scenes where new dramas can be enacted. As Michel De Certeau writes in *Spatial Stories*—the theatre has always been used as a space for practical actions, the Roman "fetiales" provided a rehearsal scene for political and military activities and all strategists rehearsed the invasion by using models and theatrical devices. Yes, we definitely have to start thinking of the theatre as a place of political action, get inspired by all the political theatre that is being produced around us, and see "reading buildings and spaces" as "queer performative acts".

Also Jesper Nordahl's text breathes a lot of optimism and belief in the possibilities of art to bring about social change. You write: "My work attempts to reposition the artist as an oppositional subject or agent, a researcher, able to invent forms that constantly re-negotiate art as a critical and aesthetic project. Ultimately then the question that animates my work is not if, but how, it is possible to effect change". Politics have become a matter of storytelling. What does one do with storytellers like Bush's advisor Ron Suskind? "We're history's actors... and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do?" Well, we reverse the mirror, by sending them the same message: "We too are history's actors, and you too will have to study what we do". It's very true what you say, Jesper, that we're all producing realities. When it comes to documentary and fictionality—they are both as constructed. Everything is staged, and all "events", "revolutions" or "returns of the real" need a stage and a public in order to perform their reality. If we're free, as you say, to produce any reality we want—than it's just up to us to choose which reality we want to produce. If the world is a stage as Shakespeare said, and life is nothing but a tale signifying nothing, we have to fill this nothingness with new meanings.

"We have to let Matter matter" as Tom McCarthy and Simon Critchley famously claimed in their enacted dual lecture at Tate Britain last year. It was one of the sharpest and most entertaining deconstructions of the western history of philosophy I've ever seen. Who could have played this lecture better—than their replacers? Two actors—that divided the entire audience in those that realised they were confronted with performing

actors—and those that didn't... But then again, aren't we all performing and enacting ourselves when we write or speak?

In his response to my text: Tom McCarthy writes a text that will develop into an extended lecture at the opening. You write: "The future is boring" referring to JG Ballard. Of course it's boring! We don't know it yet. But we're so much freer to imagine a new future than a new history! We have to prove Ballard wrong. If the future is a suburb of our souls, we have to reconfigure our souls. You write: "The angel of history faces backwards". You hereby indirectly refer to Klees Angelus Novus—also called the Angel of History that Benjamin analyses in "Theses on the Philosophy of History". The angel of history is flying forwards caught up in the storm of progress. He is turning his gaze towards its past, thus meeting the future with his back, constantly split between the "no longer" and the "not yet". But the Angel progresses, does fly into the future, even if he's meeting the future with his back. In an email exchange we talked about Blanchot's text on Orpheus' gaze, the looking back and the significance of that. I interpreted Orpheus' transgression of the "not to look back" rule as a quest—a search for knowledge, a desire to penetrate the secrets of the underworld. You answered me: "What Orpheus really wants is absence itself, the night at the heart of the night. It's not about knowledge but about disappearance—and about an undoing of the work within the work: what Blanchot calls 'désœuvrement'". Indeed, the undoing is as important as the doing, if not more. We have to forget and sometimes even "unlearn" what we have learned. Can we unlearn our fear or lack of interest in the future? Can we create a unavowable Community where we don't have to agree, but at least speak of common concerns?

I often ask myself, where does my desire for new beginnings come from? Perhaps it is because I've spent too much time on constantly looking back. For years and years I built my entire identity on reading and looking at the classics, thinking that contemporaneity sucked. In communist Romania—people fled the contemporary since it was equated with Ceausescu's regime—the only thing that happened "here and now" were his speeches on television. Reading old literature, going to the theatre and opera, seeing the classics was the only way to escape the dominant discourse. It makes me laugh now when I think of it—but I must say that it took me almost 20 years to recover from my angst towards the idea of "the contemporary", the "now", or even worse—the future. I love looking back, but when I see conservative forces in Sweden, France and England hating everything that looks contemporary—coinciding with our art world's

fascination with past times, anachronisms, dystopias and its lack of belief in the future, as if future was a modernist invention, I get worried. Are we all starting to go in the same direction? Is time going backwards or are these retrophilic gestures to be seen as continuations of Smithson's ruins in reverse?

This temporal confusion reminds me of the beginning of Hamlet, where Hamlet is visited by the ghost of his father. The ghost tells him about all the rotten things that are going on in Denmark, murders and betray-ers. Hamlet famously responds: "The time is out of joint: O cursed spite. That ever I was born to set it right!" Hamlet chooses to heal time, to revenge his father's death, by re-enacting it through a mise en abyme—the famous play within the play. Thanks to the theatre play, the authority (the King and the Queen) recognises itself in the mirror of the play, reacts upon it, and the kingdom falls like a house of cards after a battle of all against all. Thus, repetition becomes a political tool that sets time right again. We can, of course, regard our time's fasci-nation with repetitions and re-enactments as a way of healing a time out of joint. Or is healing no longer possible? Have we always been out of joint?

Armando Lulaj's "Time out of joint" is a dual projection showing a mono-lith of ice throning in the middle of a wasteland. Some kids interact with it and use the monolith as a refrigerator for bananas; others go by and photograph it with their mobile phones. The ice monolith, reminis-cent of the monolith in Kubrik's space odyssey, slowly melts and things return to their previous order. Armando's contribution to this text experiment is "Some kind of overture" containing a cryptic text line: "If such a sinister design isn't worthy of Atreus, it is worthy of Thyestes". I look to Armando and ask the question we're not supposed to ask: "What do you mean?" Armando answered me in a letter: "It's a ref-erence to The Purloined Letter, the short story by Edgar Allan Poe. In the beginning of the story, Poe mentions Seneca: Nil sapientiae odiosus acumine nimio. (Nothing is more hateful to wisdom than excessive clever-ness)...When I read your text I felt like quoting the last frase from the story, referring to the minister D and Dupin who are brothers. For me the artist is the most intelligent thief in a society, the perfect criminal... The Purloined Letter is our unconscious, a circuit where everyone can be someone else but it can also contain a tragic ending if we don't resist and do something...I understand the letter as an artistic act that has to reach its destination, react upon the world, and make the world react

upon it... In a way we're all New Beginners and we can only react to society by laughing the impossible laugh. I entirely agree Armando, we have to laugh the impossible laugh, whatever that means... what is the impossible laugh I wonder and still want to continue wondering. In a way, your response was a resistance to my panoptical gaze, my initial desire to see everything without being seen. A desire that I reversed by revealing myself here and there in this text. Dupin resists surveillance. He prevents detection, identification. He protects the Queens privacy and covers up her crime, the letter that never reaches the right adressé. We all have to try to resist the panoptic gaze we direct upon each other under the guise of wanting to understand "where the other speaks from" and what his or her intentions might be. Perhaps art is the letter that never reaches its intended receiver, or the one that expects it. Instead it reaches someone who doesn't want or desire it. Perhaps we have to evoke desire there where it's not...

Now, what can we do with this dislocation in time? Affirm the present? Isn't the present constantly eluding us? Hans Rosenström writes: "For me the only sensible way forward is in an understanding relation to the past. It is bewildering how fast history seems to be forgotten and re-made... Thinking about our civilisation's ruthless exploitation of different possibilities; a new beginning seems merely like a desirable mirage... The only new beginning I see comes after a definitive end... I'd love to be wrong". In the video "In Our Hearts" one can sense that feeling of disorientation. We're looking through the lens of a camera attached to a round raft that floats freely on the river of Tigris. The currents turn the camera around and around—creating a whirling dramaturgy, an oceanic gaze of pure confusion. I'm thinking of Bergson's theories on time, its fluidity, its constant escape from our grasp. In *Time and Free Will*, he criticises Kant, who thought that the free will only could exist outside time and space and therefore only was a matter of faith. For Bergson the free will has nothing to do with faith, but is pure mobility, a becoming that transcends binary notions like being and non-being, time and space, past and future. We should therefore not ask each other whether we believe in the future or not, but whether we think that we're capable of changing our present or not.

In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson writes: "What I call presence is my attitude towards an immediate future, it's an immanent action". One also has to remember the act that precedes Hamlet's decision to act—the famous soliloquy on the mysteries of being, "to be or not to be", that also is

a reflection on action developing the underlying theme in Hamlet's indecisive inner monologues: "to act or not to act?". There's always a long step between knowing what you have to do, and doing it:

Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action

I think of Lina Bjerneld—and her reaction to my text—by a visualisation of her coming action. She writes: "This is what I want / in order to get it I am going to make it!" She attaches a sketch of the painting she plans to do. It's a beautiful gesture that gives life to all "hues of resolution"—an affirmative, performative gesture that also reconnects with all of her staged and theatricalised paintings. Her reaction to my action also reminds me of the importance of fast resolutions and readjustments. When two Swedish artists, Maria Andersson and Karin Lindh, did a performance for the release party of a magazine, they were supposed to present a choir singing a post produced song about the future. The choir cancelled at the last minute, but they found a choir leader that transformed the entire audience into a choir instead.

I decided to end this travel through your monologues, your stories and actions with Mako Ishizuka's text. Mako writes about her experience when she sat in a hotel restaurant, on her own, eating breakfast. When she was finished she had a look at the fruit leftovers on her plate. She discovered how beautiful they were and decided to construct a rainbow out of the peel. She took a picture of it and shared it with her friends all over the world. It's a gesture that encapsulates the meaning of all art production. First you do something meaningful for yourself, and then you share it with others. By that sharing, you overcome the beauty of distance, since there's always a beauty of intimacy. Mako reminds us of the importance of travelling light. Of taking with us what we need and moving ahead towards the places and people we desire. "Being free, not rooted, and always on the way" no matter how much the cut roots hurt us. We might look backwards, but we're heading forwards. We have everything we need in our hearts and minds—those are the tools we need in order to activate the space around us.

I started my prologue by quoting Nietzsche's cheerful declaration of the death of God in the *Gay Science*. The death of the ultimate authority entails an open sea of new beginnings. In book five, "The Fearless Ones", the sun has set, the trust has turned into doubt. The fundamentals of the entire European morality have crumbled. What he sees in front of him is a succession of demolition, destruction and downfall. No one wants to play the herald of this monstrous logic of horror, Nietzsche claims. Even "the guessers of riddles" who stand at the top of the mountain, "posted between today and tomorrow and stretched in the contradiction between today and tomorrow" look forward to this darkening without any genuine involvement or fear for themselves. Nietzsche proposes to stop conceiving these events as "sad" and "gloomy", but rather as "a new and barely describable type of light, happiness, relief, amusement, encouragement" and "dawn". He writes: "Indeed, at hearing the news that 'the old god is dead', we philosophers and 'free spirits' feel illuminated by a new dawn; our heart flows with gratitude, amazement, forebodings, expectation—finally the horizon seems clear again, even if not bright; finally our ships may set out again, set out to face any danger; every daring of the lover of knowledge is allowed again; the sea, our sea, lies open again; maybe there has never been such an 'open sea'." Nietzsche sees this sea as "our" sea, the possibility of the creation of a new common. That is both "ours" and "open". He couldn't have found a better metaphor for the concept of a new beginning or a more appropriate way to inspire hope in the future. The death of God is for him only a transition from absolute negation to absolute affirmation of the endless possibilities that lie in front of them, us, you.

That's the spirit I wanted to evoke in the prologue as well as this epilogue—an optimistic quest for new beginnings, a search for affirmative actions that try to create the futures we want to have here and now. By this I also wanted to create a space for investigation for whether we're ready for or desire a new beginning. We might be caught in an oceanic gaze, but we don't have to look so far. As one of Christodoulos Panayiotou's posters claims: "Tomorrow is Today". Future is not a matter of belief but of action.

All beginnings need an end in order to be perceived as beginnings. So let me end this beginning by quoting Alfred, Lord Tennyson:

"Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.

Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.”

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