



## You read my gesture, not my words. Pt 1

I think a lot about how things are said. For some reason I find it easier to quote a drunk man in the metro that directed a monologue towards a bystander waiting for the train to Hässelby than quoting the people whom are closest to me. When the singular audience, who I presume wasn't too amused by the show, got on the train the man stayed on the platform, screaming "[...] för att *jag älskar dig, fattar du inte det!*" ("[...] because *I love you*, don't you get that!") at the closing doors. The drunk man became synonymous with the said sentence for quite some time after the event. The setting and extraordinary acting by the character outweighed the substandard screenplay.

"I love you."

-*Drunk man in Stockholm metro*

"I love you."

-*Dad*

## Ho/w/hat

When you have a chance to be heard, how do you choose what is important to say? When working with art I don't think it is as important *what* you say but *how* you say it. I've never thought that art is a good platform for pushing any kind of clear agenda, because there is always a filter of interpretation that is blurring the information. Art is dependent on a dialogue between the transmitter and the receiver and the struggle with communication between the two has driven my practice to be more a concern with the relationship between the *gesture of a proposal* and the *carried content*, as a way of investigating communication.

This began when I was studying painting. I was working with the tradition of realist art which by itself is a field where a work is more judged by its materialistic execution than anything else. What I painted was not as important as how I painted and this made me explore my relationship with the viewer closer by stressing the lack of content. I started to make paintings where I pushed the craft as far as I could towards *perfection*, inspired by the art of trompe l'oeil and photorealism from the sixties and onwards with its almost *styleless style*. I depicted nonsense, but painted it well. I've always been concerned about details of perception but at this time I started to really force my attention to the overlooked. The smallest things that caught my attention were thoroughly processed in my studio. I was doing a lot of paintings depicting the surface of different walls to a point where I was almost making precise replicas of the them. I formulated rules in my method to ensure that I was as perceptive as possible.



(detail of "Wall IV", oil on wood panel, original size 120x70cm, portrait)

*"[...] Scale 1:1, let the flattest surface of the wall be the same size on the panel, adjust objects of depth accordingly. Light, choose a time of the day, document, remove original light source and recreate artificially. [...]"*

## You read my gesture, not my words. Pt 2

Quotation has become one of my primary ways of communicating in art. The small notebooks I always carry with me, the text messages I send to my own phone number when I don't have a notebook at hand and the mantras on my tongue consist of quotes; things I've picked up and started to repeat. There is something thrilling in quoting, to work with a sequence of words that is already decided leaves me with just working with gesture and the idea of reinterpretation. I try to treat my text works as an extension of my painting practice. The texts I chose have a quality to become the fastest way of creating imagery. Just like how I chose different physical material to fit certain needs I think text is good for creating complex and personalized images. I also think that text, or maybe I should say *language*, is an effective tool to force imagery on and in to a subject. Once a string of text is read it is difficult to unread it. Images usually take longer time to absorb and the complexity of visual material is often reduced to mere concepts of the depicted objects. The bits of text are in many ways alike any of the other building materials I work with.

*"[...] Concrete is composed of coarse aggregate bonded together with cement, it's hard and cold to the touch. "cum shower ass fucking" is six syllables with a consistent rhythm, it's suggest something of sexual nature. It feels nice to say out loud. [...]"*

I take advantage of the fact that text on one hand is treated as being the most formal way of communicating but on the other hand, just like painting and sculpture, also is subjected to interpretation. I often pick up texts that possess the quality of working as a bridge across the gap between the formal and poetic.



(detail of "People must be punished", lacquer on steel plate, 60x40cm, landscape)

## Package

In order to explain the part of my process that I call "packaging" I need to continue to talk of the relation between the *what (is being said)* and *how (it is said)*. The materials (*or what*) I work with (images, texts, forms) are always borrowed, bootlegged or stolen. It's convenient in my practice to process preexisting material because it enables me to focus on the packaging. Packaging is the *how* something is said. It's the visually available body of a work. In the example above, the text content is stolen from a work by the artist Michaël Borremans. The sentence hung on to me from the first time I saw it. It has that quality of being somewhere between poetic and formal. I noticed that the text, looked upon as literature, had this quality of suggesting a large narrative that fluctuated depending on the context it is presented in, and with very small effort. The problem was that Borremans had incorporated the text within a drawing that sealed the interpretation into being a part of his own pictorial word and all the notions within it. In this case I wanted to re-suit the text into a piece where it could work in several contexts and be read in a broader way. The body is consisting of a metal signboard with the quoted text written on it. The physical material was chosen so the sign could work in or outdoors and the format is one typical for signs as well as paintings.

This action could either be seen as an appropriation of the original work or a use of found material.

The packaging is in many cases a play with the semiotics of cultural objects and their materiality. *The painting* is the one that I've been using the most because *the painting* is probably the most affirmed cliché of all art objects. It has this ability, due to its history and archetypal *art object aura*, to establish a focus between the sender and receiver. There aren't many people that have no experience in reading a painting, and the appearance of a painting is therefore a usable transmitter of information. It will be read carefully and with focus. I relate this unspoken knowledge of how to read painting as how we are programmed to relate to subtitles in movies. The subtitles actual author is trusted to always work in our favor and, without influence, redistribute the words of the actor and screenwriter. Although the visual semiotics of the subtitle consists of a very few and easy rules (placement, size and readability in font and color) the utilization of the form is very potent.



(Subtitled (panel 1/3), lacquer on steel plate, 99x38cm)

## Content

I enjoy processing material that already works. What works or not is most of the time measured in arbitrary, non-empirical ways. It's just that kind of material that hangs on to you, that takes control over your being whether you want it to or not. The images you reproduce when you close your eyes, the overheard conversation on repeat. I try to separate the material itself from its author, by leaving information out or lie about its origin and establish a non-hierarchal attitude towards where it comes from to not mix up a *credible source* with *good material*. What I'm looking for is a situation where the receiver has to be subjective. There are no answers to find, just reaction and reflection.

The best material to fit this need is often a kind that has no ambition to pose as art in the first place. The unpretentious and spontaneous.

I don't believe that the artist can create *ex nihilo* and in my own practice I'm not concerned about producing *original* work. I think that the ways of communicating and unveiling individuality today, such as sharing, reposting and up-/down-voting, creates interesting opportunities for artmaking. Is for example the assemblage and curating of a group show with artists of my choosing maybe a better way of expression than claiming a space for my own pieces? And if my pieces are created in direct relation to the artists around me, is there even a difference? I think a good way of talking about this is when the conceptual artist and poet Kenneth Goldsmith claimed that the selection of material should be considered a more expressive act than the efforts of creating new.

*"The suppression of self-expression is impossible. Even when we do something as seemingly "uncreative" as retyping a few pages, we express ourselves in a variety of ways. The act of choosing and reframing tells us as much about ourselves as our story about our mother's cancer operation. It's just that we've never been taught to value such choices."*

Goldsmith has a good point. The problem however, is how to enable a reading of these choices in the first place. The reestablishment of material has to utilize attention craving elements to make its way in through the *information chaos*, it has to call for attention and claim space before anyone can listen.

## Remix

In a lack of word for explaining my artistry I often talk about it as something similar to working as a DJ. I work with different already established forms to transmit content of my choice into a specific setting. The re-contextualization, the moving content from one form or room to another, and establishing a dialogue between transmitter and receiver, is the essential work of the DJ. Nicolas Bourriauds formulations of *the post-production artist's* similarities to the DJ is useable to affirm that the gesture of moving information, and thus mapping out the trajectories in a cultural landscape, is by itself an important gesture. It can also be seen as a natural evolution in not just artmaking but in the capitalist society at large to, as Bourriard puts it, "finding a means of insertion into the innumerable flows of production". The change of mental space and access of material after the introduction of the internet, has created a situation where trying to make something out of nothing may seem ineffective. However, when I use the term DJ I do so to talk about art as something unsensational, a form of recreational entertainment. It is a way of disarming art and works against the idea that the artwork is a termination point of a series of critical actions by the artist.

The artist/DJs job is to direct attention towards material and provide a space for the receiver to be critical, and on subjective conditions. An artwork has to be concerned about how it calls for attention upon itself, about its appearance, to not lose a potential *what* due to a careless *how*.

### You read my gesture, not my words. Pt 3

I think a lot about how you read me when I speak. To the extent where the subject matter becomes irrelevant and it's all about the gesture. It's a claustrophobic sensation to realize that the words I write are not the same as the words you read. I can choose my words carefully, but there will always be a transition where my words become yours. To steer your reading I have to work outside of the words, in the semiotics and the setting, with the things we have already agreed on.

*"I can leave the lights on for you, but that's about it."*

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Credible sources

*Kenneth Goldsmith – Uncreative writing. Managing language in the digital age*

*Nicolas Bourriaud – Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay : how Art Reprograms the World*