

Olämplig placering
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Olämplig placering is a two-part installation work. Part one, which was exhibited in November 2016 and titled simply Olämplig placering. And part two which will be titled, Remain (Olämplig placering) and is to be exhibited sometime in the first half of 2017. I will be discussing part one (Olämplig placering) for this paper.

Adhocism, the dilettante and appropriation are the focal points of this interview stylised essay. The aims are to define and give myself as the artist, points of reflection which are seldom possible when engaged in the making process. A process which has a starting point in an engagement with various material. From this engagement, structures and meaning begin to reveal themselves.

Furthermore, I attempt to provide a reading of important strains found inside the project. These include bringing forward and investigating the meaning of my work's psychic territories, to ask myself the question: what I am trying to decipher through my practice? And to indicate the important points of entry into the larger meaning and understanding of my art for its audience.

I would like to start with the title of your work Olämplig placering. What was the reason for the name for the project?

The project started at my university, Konstfack, and began through engaging with different materials, chiefly painting and recycling wooden scenery from a failed video work. I see it in a context of taking and extracting an intelligence from impulse- like Beuys, Actionism etc, trying to make things sit together until they do or say something.¹



Fig 1

¹ Ronald Jones, Vitamin 3D New perspectives in sculpture and installation, Michael Beutler, Phaidon, first published 2009, p 38

Over time doodling and playing with the material, I became attuned to a negotiation between the bureaucracy of the institution and simultaneously maintaining the integrity of the work inside that space. I was having difficulties finding a place to work and store the pieces at the school. Eventually I received a notice on two larger works that stated Olämplig placering and they need to be moved or thrown out. I was moving these works every two to three days around and had pieces stashed in different rooms at the school so that I could continue working on them. However, in the end the only solution was to cut the larger works up with a wood saw after the exhibition, so that they would fit into storage. (This become the second part in the project, Remain (Olämplig placering). The Swedish title translates into inappropriate or improper placement, engaging with the English translation can talk about the legitimacy of placement inside of a space, not just physical but also psychic and ontological.

Are these spaces you are investigating about a personal narrative or is it the wider social sphere?

It is an investigation of both. The interplay of the interior and exterior is something that does happen in my work. The example of the house (fig 1), a structure which can symbolically refer to the narrative of home, warmth and protection, but could also be a place of someone's trauma or some other kind of negative event in their lives. Simultaneously, it also refers to urban planning, space and property - things that have a more political nature. The house was obviously not made to be lived in, and would not last too long outside in the elements, especially during the Swedish winter. It functions as an object that refers to reality or realities.

Are there hierarchies in this project? Are there elements which are more important than others?

I began with valuing everything the same. The possibility for the material, ideas or objects are not yet activated. But in time objects revealed the need to become placed in terms of their importance through the ability to speak about multiple issues simultaneously. Another important aspect is its presence, how something physically indicates a place to start a reading of the work. I see the objects as the sum of their parts and taking away these stronger elements and isolating them would start saying different things. The smaller elements purpose is to complicate the issues or materials which are more significant. A small piece of cloth folded on a large wooden base (fig 3) creates certain association when placed in relation to each other.

Are the aesthetics important?

I want to say no. Aesthetics are often viewed and read at face value. Aesthetics are seen, consumed and then an instant judgement is made. Aesthetics are coded, and I cannot escape that, so I need to use this to my advantage by breaking them open to make new forms and ideas. This is how I overcome the face value of these codes.

Mike Kelley was very effective at doing this. Understanding a vernacular inside of an aesthetic, then manipulating it into something else for his own work. He also describes not having a sole interest in visuals but is interested in questioning the conventions of a reading within a given genre.²

Adhocism³

I want to ask about the pragmatic aspect of this project? There are a variety of strategies and mediums that you've used. Video, sound, animation. But I would like you to discuss the

² Isabelle Graw in conversation with Mike Kelley, Mike Kelley, Phaidon, first published 1999, p 14

³ To use materials which are available and improvising a solution.

background in the making of the sculptures. Was there a principle or theory used while making them?

Money was the main issue regarding the sculptures. I didn't have much payed work over that summer, but I did have some tools which I owned and I was fortunate to be studying at an institution which had a lot of discarded materials lying about. I also wanted to work in a larger scale then I had before. The first thing was to assess what material and space I had access to. Starting with removing all the larger wood screws from other students discarded projects, collecting recycled 2x4 wood or reusing chipboard from projects I had done earlier which were stored in my studio.

A large portion of the wood was bent or slightly twisted, this created an inherent limitation on how the project would turn out and helped the decision-making process. It gave me a concrete framework to work within and forced me to see myself playing the role of an ad-hoc problem-solver... or as a bricoleur⁴.

Could you expand on that? In what way are you relating to the bricoleur?

Levi Strauss describes it better than I ever could.

The bricoleur is adept at performing diverse tasks but unlike the engineer does not subordinate each of them to the availability of raw materials and tools procured for the purpose of the project. His universe of instruments is closed and the rules of the game are always to make do with whatever is at hand.⁵ Levi Strauss also discusses the bricoleur's means which is to be defined only by its potential use or the principle that something "may come in handy".⁶



⁴ French word meaning handyman or jack of all trades.

⁵ Claude Levi Strauss, *The Science of the Concrete, The Savage Mind*, the University of Chicago Press, English Translation first published 1966, p17-18

⁶ Claude Levi Strauss, *The Science of the Concrete, The Savage Mind*, the University of Chicago Press, English Translation first published 1966, p17-18

Fig 2 and 3

Adhocist strategy is an obvious approach in your work. The wooden pallet thrown away by another student and then using it as starting point to build the bar which people could sit and drink at inside your installation for example (fig 4 and 5).

This is not as a response to crises or shortage. But more in terms of a type of action which can be called retrieval adhocism, a preoccupation for finding new uses for leftovers.⁷ The translatability of material.

The movie Rocky when Sylvester Stallone used the hanging carcass as a punching bag is the most relevant analogy that I can think of to that statement. (Fig 6)

By using adhocism as a strategy it is acknowledging the idea of a limit and recognising that my work is not made in a vacuum. The work was made inside the real world and there is an inherent restriction in this way of working⁸. But simultaneously I have a range of possibilities, to work in rather than just a specific or singular approach. I can build from the leftovers of other people's wood, metal etc. I can buy paint and canvas and use it to become something sculptural.

My concerns and interests are broad, and can range from a book on Anthropology to watching a badly made series on Netflix.

When placing two themes together, they can become disjointed and this initially make things incomprehensible, however this allows the possibility and space for multiple ideas and subjects to create relationships, and this is what instigates a translation of possibility, usage and meaning.



Fig 4 and 5

Where is the meeting point for these concerns or ideas situated?

The borderlands of subjectivity can be elusive and it is difficult to say where it is situated. I often see that they are where the problems start to arise. Placing subjects together often creates conflict or dichotomies. What I mean by this is that different points of view or relationships can be difficult to hold

⁷ Charles Jencks and Nathan Silver, *The Spirit of Adhocism*, *Adhocism: The case for improvisation*, MIT press, expanded and updated edition (First published 1972), 2013, p113

⁸ Charles Jencks and Nathan Silver, *The Spirit of Adhocism*, *Adhocism: The case for improvisation*, MIT press, expanded and updated edition (First published 1972), 2013, p

in a neat closed system of thought and they are constantly shifting. This is also connected to what you referred to about the translatability of material.

Using an adhocist method is not however always the easiest way to extract coherency...

It is destabilising and stressful committing so much energy and time into something that is done to solve a specific problem without much foresight. I would estimate this project's material was 80 percent reliant on the idea of surplus or leftover from what other students in my own department or other departments discarded, and then using the material as a starting point. If that discarded material was gone I could not continue the project in the same way.

However, I see that there is a coherency inside of what is produced- an automated energy is focused into the objects and their production. The attempt to work with the process has a coherency. I observed that while doing this project, there was what has been described by Hal Foster as a headless way of working.



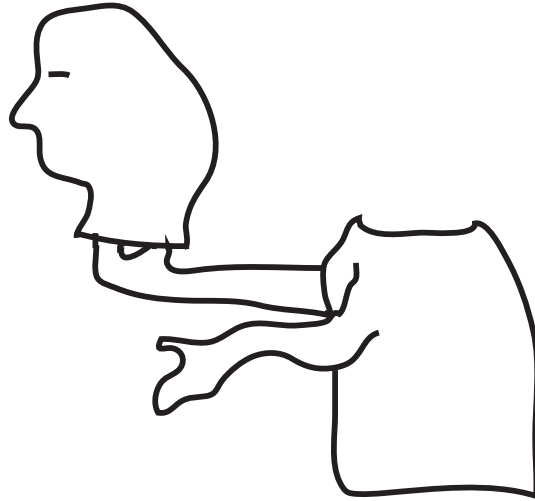
Fig 6

What do you mean by headless?

The headless, as a notion, is used to describe Thomas Hirschhorn's way of working. Work that escapes control, even the control of the one who makes it, for he finds a resistant character in his

headlessness too, which he describes as a position completely submerged but still unresigned, unreconciled and (of course) uncynical⁹.

I worked on this project using a type of headless adhocism. Which describes a semi unconscious way of taking whatever material I have access to and working with it with it inside the moment or situation.



Does this headless adhocism span throughout your entire body of work and practice? Can you give an example?

No, it is not the only way I work. I try to undermine my own working patterns, which is difficult and not always successful. But it was the approach for this project, working in step with associations of forms and continuation. For example, the ladder piece (fig 7) began with two equal sized pieces of wood along with other smaller pieces. It was an associative leap I made by asking myself “what can these pieces, when placed together, become”? After the ladder element was made I wanted it to be abstracted and expand it from its original purpose. This was done using wooden pieces that I found inside the scrap bins and leftover woodpiles at the school. A frame was built at the base of the ladder and I then bought and added wheels to the base frame to make it mobile. Along with two thicker pieces of wood, which I also bought to make the structure stable enough for me to climb on allowing for the possibility to do a performance work using the sculpture, which I never did, but it did give me the option if I wanted to. This is also an example of what I mentioned regarding continuation.

Adhocism as methodology can be questionable for some. Charles Jencks and Nathan Silver wrote in their book Adhocism (1971 and 2013) of the danger or criticism that Adhocism can be viewed as preservation of the status quo, sacrifices future goals for present expediency and could be seen as confused, arbitrary, cute and possibly complacent.¹⁰ How do you respond to this? What are the circumstances that Adhocism function within?

Yes, adhocism is not a unified world view and I do not see it as the only way to respond to a situation or a set of problems. It is not a meant as utopic way of creating, which is also stated in their book. It is a method firmly based inside the circumstances of the situation. The conditions under which it does function is based on the premise that the human condition is a perpetual plurality of questioned and

⁹ Hal Foster, Toward a grammar of emergency, Thomas Hirschhorn: Establishing A critical corpus, 2011, JRP/ ringier, p174

¹⁰ Charles Jencks and Nathan Silver, The Spirit of Adhocism, Adhocism: The case for improvisation, MIT press, expanded and updated edition (First published 1972), 2013, p35

questionable ends. This allows the possibility for immediate engagement and action.¹¹ It is here where one of its main strengths lie - allowing the individual the ability to work inside a framework of improvisation.



Fig 7

¹¹ Charles Jencks and Nathan Silver, *The Spirit of Adhocism*, *Adhocism: The case for improvisation*, MIT press, expanded and updated edition (First published 1972), 2013, p36

Dilettante¹²

The opposite of the adhocist many would say is the specialist. Someone who has high level of skill or is an authority inside a field of knowledge.

The specialist in whatever field, has always interested me. However I am not interested in becoming one. I am dependant on them as sources to learn new skills from and reapplying them to my needs. I play and try out different techniques and materials until I have either gained an intuitive intelligence with the material, which can be implemented as I need, or it is put away and I will figure out what to do with it at some later point. There is an element of role playing when I make my work.

I am one-part appropriator, but also there is a goal or desire to manipulate what I am using and what hybrid roles and aesthetics I am playing or making - a hermetic city planner for example. The paradox to playing these roles, is that my intentions are genuine. I have realised over time that there is an investment of my physical and mental energy into taking my projects further.

I read an interesting piece Kevin Buist wrote about Mark Dion for the art 21 blog where he spoke about mourning the death of the dilettante. While we've gained a lot by deepening specialisation, something is slipping away, as well. If an intelligent amateur cannot have a working understanding of the zeitgeist of both the arts and the sciences, are the futures of each discipline doomed to exponentially shrinking audiences of super-specialists? ¹³

I have read the same article.

Buist did go on to refer of instances where he sees dilettantism as alive and well (through examples of architecture blogs). And I agree.

Coming back to this notion of the adhocist or Bricoleur. Taking two examples from the internet in YouTube.com and instructables.com, these are invaluable resources of information and "how to" culture. This collects a variety of fields of knowledge in the one space. Learning to make the world's best Mojito shares space with painting portraits like a 17th century master or learning to how to repair a damaged stereo. I am slightly apprehensive however of the utopic lens applied to this.

Yes I would totally agree with this.

This leads me to think about the example of the Cabinet of curiosities or wunderkammer, the laying out diverse objects in the same space forcing a collapse of borders. ¹⁴

The wunderkammer is a perfect example.

Can there be any parallels to your own making process and the function of the wunderkammer?

Yes, I do see parallels. The cabinets of wonder were seen as ways of affirming power of family dynasties¹⁵. When I make work, it functions as an assertion of me politically. When writing about the

¹² Hobbyist or amateur.

¹³ Kevin buist, <http://magazine.art21.org/2011/02/11/what-ever-happened-to-the-dilettante/#.WLQjprGZORs>

¹⁴ Christine Davenne, *The cabinet of Wonder as Theater of the World, Cabinets of Wonder*, Abrams 2012, p 111

¹⁵ Christine Davenne, *The cabinet of Wonder as Theater of the World, Cabinets of Wonder*, Abrams 2012, p 111

history of craftsmanship, Richard Sennett describes the makers mark as a declaration, "I made this", "I am here in this work, which is to say, "I exist".¹⁶

What existence means is something for another discussion.

But the ordering and self-implemented systemising of knowledge and narrative are things that could be compared with this project and how I work in general. Idiosyncratic linkages are established to be looked at and be reflected upon.

The cabinets were also sites of education, though not in the way someone is formally educated today. And as you said, collecting knowledge and learning is something that is part of your process.

The historical purpose of collecting in the 17th and 18th century was driven by a strong desire for social ascent¹⁷, knowledge was used as a way to legitimise yourself inside a certain social order. So, as a road to empowerment it is important. But the question is what I am learning, to what purpose and who am I learning from need to be asked. Because it is imperative to question where this legitimacy comes from.

Do you feel yourself to be legitimate as an artist?

I have started to realise that what I do is legitimate to me. It has taken a long time to get to this point, there is always the awareness of the line between cultural production and saying something through that production. It was when I realised it was equally important for me to take my work as seriously as I would my day job, that began to look at what I did was important. Though I still cannot quantify this importance. I still don't know where this legitimacy resides.

Appropriation¹⁸

The rupture and re-combining of materials, objects and techniques are seen in Olämplig placering's installation. The collagist, as John Kelsey has described, is an experienced guerrilla having nothing of its own, it infiltrates ready-made territories and makes do with the enemy's readymade power.¹⁹

I see a real power knowing what you are for and against and where you position yourself. What can be disempowering for myself is when I cannot negotiate a confident position.

Collage is a powerful strategy to work through this. It puts forward a disordering of reality, by mining and manipulating aesthetics, ideologies, techniques which are placed together. This is the same inside my own work though on a larger and more open scale than the tradition of scissors, glue and paper.

How does appropriation fit into your practice?

It is something that needs to be thought through and considered. I try and ask the difficult question - is it appropriate to use this image or object. The term appropriation stands for the relocation, annexation

¹⁶ Richard Sennett, *Material Consciousness, The Craftsman*, Penguin Books, 2009, p130

¹⁷ Christine Davenne, *Scientificae: The scientific cabinets, Cabinets of Wonder*, Abrams, 2012, p 165

¹⁸ Taking pre existing imagery, text or ideas and re-using them for your own purpose.

<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/appropriation>

¹⁹ John Kelsey, *Collage and Program (Rise of the Readymetal Maidens)*, Rich Texts: Selected Writing for Art, Sternberg Press, 2010, p 61

or theft of cultural properties - whether objects, ideas or notations.²⁰ I don't want to take this idea lightly.

The appropriation that subsists in my work is the extraction of elements that I then re-manipulate into something else to fulfil a function. For *Olämplig placering* I extracted a drum part from a song by the Melvins, which was then slowed down and played throughout the exhibition every 15 minutes.

Was it important to pick this particular drum passage?

The pre-linguistic response is important, anything I pick needs to create a response with me to begin with. Right now, it is sounds and music which I try to re-realise into something to be put inside my work which can function pre-linguistically. The drum part worked in terms of its ability to be placed inside the installation and function effectively in reaching the audience, and having my own personal relationship to music I appropriated in the first place.

Why does the dislodging or relocation of previous meaning interest you?

It allows for the fields of my interests to come into my art making. It is not a because of a disinterest in art history - appropriation's place in art and art history is entrenched heavily into its discourse. But art which only speaks about art is not interesting for me.

In this case it was the band and heavy music genres that I have been attracted to since I was a teenager. This vein or slither of information has been abstracted and the meaning is transformed into something else, but simultaneously there is still a connection to its origin. I am interested by a back and forth between what something is or was and what it becomes.

Taking and dislodging fields of ideas and objects is sometimes the most effective mode for me to communicate, because there is something concrete and a relationship to reality inside the work. John C. Welchman quotes the Cuban writer Gerardo Mosquera in regards to a number of Latin American and Los Angeles-based artists who have 'maximized the complexity of implications wrapped up in transcultural citation and appropriation', and along with their associated critics, have therefore served as transgressors and transferors (*trasvasadores*) of meaning, developing a theory of appropriation as anti-hegemonic cultural affirmation²¹

Summary

Are these three elements adhocism, the role of the dilettante and appropriation - inherent in how you work or are they specific just to this project?

There is always a willingness on my part to use these methods, although It is not the rule. I find it does work for me right now in terms of my situation as an artist. Money, time and other types of support are a limited resource. Adhocism, dilettantism and appropriation are great tools when working with constraints. But I assume this could change as I continue to make work over time. I am not loyal to the methods; I am loyal to the project or artwork.

²⁰John C Welchman, *Global nets: Appropriation and Postmordernity, Appropriation*, Co-published Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2009, p194

²¹ John C Welchman, *Global nets: Appropriation and Postmordernity, Appropriation*, Co-published Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2009, p194
John C Welchman references Gerardo Mosquera, *Stealing from the global pie: Globalization, difference and cultural appropriation*, *Art Papers*, vol 21 (march-april 1997), 13-14
see also Nelly Richards, *La estratificacion de los margenes* (Santiago de chile: Francisco zegers editore, 1988)

Would you consider restriction or limitation to be something the work also speaks about?

Yes. I see limitation is an initiator. Again, I refer again to Levi Strauss, he writes about what is not there, it forces me to see what I do have, familiarising and learning what exists and what its potential can be inside the closed universe.

Do you want the audience to interpret the work on there own terms?

No, not completely. I do have lines of thought and anchors or elements which are important entry points into the work. But that does not mean that they are to stand there looking at it passively, I encourage interpretation, disagreement etc. But it is important that to understand I am not making empty work. It is not about giving the message and telling an audience what something means. I try to make something that can initiate a dialogue. The house for example, I used as notion or a desire of home and belonging, along with a common understanding that associate it with ideas about the domestic and shelter. Another example is in the title itself as an entry point. The title Olämplig placering states that something does not belong or is in an inappropriate place. I am trying to give entry points into the work which become abstracted by layers of ideas and meaning.

It is important that there are entry points. From there, ideas can be expanded and lead into other things to be discussed. But it is not always through conscious or thought-out intentions that meaning comes to the surface of the work. And this makes me aware that I can never have total control over my work.

What is your practice about? What are the reasons for making the work?

The more actively interested I become in different fields, whether it is social, political and cultural, the more complex and indecisive I become.

By making art I am trying to create a coherency for myself to decipher and form a larger meaning. It is a complex pursuit and needs a sufficient amount of time and space. I do it using whichever means can communicate my thinking process. When I talk about the linages of adhocism and appropriation in the Olämplig placering project, I don't think of them with any sentimentality. It is through these methods and materials that I attempt to communicate something. Tomorrow could be the day that I paint small canvases for the rest of life only because I find it the most effective way to speak through my work.

In the end, what I am trying to do is break open face value and extract layers of ideas and meaning. This is what my practice is about and my reasons for making art.

