DEEPER, DEEPER, CLOSER, CLOSER

Between a language of inwardness and that of pure surface

– Trinh T. Minh-ha

Report

MA Visual Communication 2017

Channa Bianca Hjälmrud Hansén
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78 Film Scripts

In one case, 150 interviews were made for the film version.

What criteria?

... age, profession, economical situation, cultural region, critical ability, personal affinity.

Spoken, transcribed and translated
From listening to recording: speech to writing
You can talk, we can cut, trim, tidy up
The game often demands a response to the context is framed

Spoken and read

Between a language of inwardness and that of pure surface

Dear sister, there was something particularly pleasurable in going to an ice cream place to enjoy a drink in Vietnam. I feel no such excitement here, where ice cream shops have no ambiance. To find such pleasure again, one has to go all the way to Houston, Texas, or to Santa Ana, California, where the Vietnamese communities form their own towns and villages. It sounds like getting old and outdated.

The pose is always present, and accidents on film are known as “controlled accidents.”

The more intimate the tone, the more successful the interview.

Every question she and I come up with is more or less a copy of the question we have heard before. Even if the statement is original it sounds familiar, worn, threadbare.

By choosing the most direct and spontaneous form of voicing and documenting, I find myself closer to fiction.
THE ORIGINAL
MARBLE COVER-50 SHEETS

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2016 - 2017

PLAIN
Roaring Spring, PA 16673
Vadför behandlar han mig så här?
Inte berättar någ, berättar inte ens

ENORMUS EMOTION

Once upon a time
I was all alone

you curse
me you'll
curse me
Lying
Walks
Alone

sad
Spänklåtgos
inte smärta
ut på samma
sätt,
inte eft
samman
smärta.
MISTAKES

Keep the Ambivalence

UHUh

MORE RADICAL STRATEGY

SHAM

It's not only about knowing but also about a relationship
Alla känner sig så här
Discourse of happiness

BACK FROM PAPPAs

ON THE TOPIC OF BOYS!
FOUCAULT...

I DON'T EVEN CARE

RITA ZINE

SKRIV UT SCHUMA
LÄSA BÖCKER
SAMMA MATERIAL TILL PRESENTATION.

Antti

Discourse of trust

Brodber
Washcloths

Foot Kit

Bucket in plastic bag

Make up bag

Ship to boardskiva

Set up discussion

154 → 26
break rules
broken hearts
break a leg
take a break

break bread like hår står jag & smukar
never settle for crumbs always ask where the breads at
vem tärnar på dlt

bok biblio kort till ak
slå in present
matsäck
blommor

pass
pengar
biljett

bath later
Images of women are everywhere, it’s a cultivated, mutated and celebrated tradition turned obsession in the name of profit, ideology and affect. The vast majority of us have seen millions of images depicting women, but I have yet to hear a discussion that engages in the concepts of objectification and representation, that brings us beyond these very categories. Or maybe what I’m asking for is a discourse that engages us in the matter of objectification and representation, today. With little more than abstract knowledge on the subject our critical understanding halts at condemnation falling short of an analysis that can engage us in the new issues that arise. During the past ten years there has been a shift in how history is made, from books to Instagram, from realism to relationalism. With today’s circulation of data, images and capital — art, advertisement and social media seem to have lost a historical narrative. The context can be described as an inter-visual and mass-cultural referencing matrix. And the ironic, openly exclusive humor of the nineties and early two thousands were the last breaths of the sovereign critique dubbed distance, today replaced by an often superficial affirmative inclusion ushered in by “rights” and responsibilities in the name of individuality. It is in the light of these changes that I want to re-address what I have come to call “woman-in-image”. I don’t want to question what images do with us (that has already been addressed extensively), I want to ask what women-in-image can teach us.
The difference between mundane objectification and subversive portraits of women can be likened to the difference between the sun and its rays, or blood and bleeding. The short answer to this categorization, is the intention of the image. But intention is not enough. Who ever takes part in producing images of females will be influenced by a cultural legacy of objectification and sexualization with countless specific tropes depending on class, body and sexuality, whether it’s acknowledged or not. No matter the cause, because of this ongoing over-representation, in a culture of rampant racism and patriarchy, women in image inhabit the realms of both hypervisibility and invisibility. Every representation of women reminds us of the female-identified bodies that are excluded, either because they are, at large, cropped out, or because when we finally see them we are filled with emotions of both happiness to see, and a sadness to miss out on. Notions of both hypervisibility and invisibility are conditioned to miss out on.

If we stay in our feelings for a moment — we find new words for the changes we need — before we analyze them as symptoms of violence and power. It could mean that images with the intention to subvert traditional objectification could tell of, rather than hide, the painful, confusing and implicated experiences of objectification and (hyper) sexualization. I imagine it would also encompass a work that tells of a tension between feelings of attraction and rejection towards languages of objectification. What would staying in this intellectual and embodied confrontation look like? To use art to close in on feelings of attraction and appropriation is crucial if we do not want to hand ourselves over to pure ideology and dogma.

When we encounter an image that catches our attention, we exist for a moment, not in our “selves” but between our bodies and the image. For a second, we are nothing more than seeing-feeling and feeling-seeing. This is a moment in which we forget ourselves, a connection with the picture that magically ends as quickly as it appears. Maybe this is the poetry of an image, a current that moves between pure surface and a language of inwardness. It ripples through the stability of inside/outside and teaches us that surface is not inherently superficial. The “between” tells of motion, because it actualizes existing in relation to this and that, and at its best it is a connection found.

Born in 1336, Japanese aesthetician, actor and playwright Zeami Motokiyo writes: “When your work that tells of a tension between feelings of attraction and rejection towards languages of objectification is crucial if we do not want to hand ourselves over to pure ideology and dogma. If we boldly ignore the given symbols of how to define women through image and surface, the insistence on a scenario in which we accurately re-define and re-shape, looses its importance. Asking what women-in-image can teach us, and we will only be met by the silent occupation of our phones, houses, literature, etc. etc. Are they telling us to stop explaining and start occupying? Or are they smiling their most innocent smile wondering if we’ll ever realize they’re shape shifters? Or is it what we are not seeing that requires our attention? I don’t know. Maybe the intention of an image is not to be found in its subject matter, but in how it takes shape. To record and document will always belong to the past and to representation. “So, if you start generating instead, then you have an option of what the future you are intending to generate is supposed to look like. / / / It’s a projection, not a representation.”

Images of women that surround us and that we surround ourselves with, might not have been made to conjure the formless or “the presence that is also an absence” — but it is found at the core of repetition. In the midst of producing and publishing, the likening of performing femininity to “a copy of a copy without an original” as Ulrika Dahl put it, contra intuitively radicalizes repetition with a focus on the difference that is made every time we quote and copy. When we stop relying on shape as truth, and truth as what’s right, when

So, what’s our place in this scenario, and more importantly, how do those of us who contribute with images of women in public spaces, want to continue the tradition(s) of women-in-image? Emotion is one of the realms of both hypervisibility and invisibility. Every representation of women reminds us of the female-identified bodies that are excluded, whether they are, at large, cropped out, or because when we finally see them we are filled with emotions of both hypervisibility and invisibility.

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2Minh-ha, Trinh T. Någon annanstans, här inne 2011, 2012 (p.137-138)
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7Steyerl, Hito. History in a Time of Hypercirculation in Spike Art Quarterly #42 2014/2015 (p.50-51)
Introduction:
My project aims to bring forward what it may mean to: identify oneself as a woman and portray women, in Sweden, today. My main challenge and question concerns depicting females beyond objectification without covering the experience of being objectified.

There exists a rich tradition dealing with these questions from a feminist and post-colonial perspective. This is a project in which I want to dive deeper into how the tradition can be used as a feminist strategy, as well as draw myself into and hopefully develop the traditions I find.

Intention:
I have drawn young women in my diary and in the margins of my notes my entire life. They have been at the core of my drawing but never at the center of my art practice. They majority are drawn from fantasy and reflect my thoughts and influences. These drawings are a sub-conscious translations of my longing, my hurt, my humor and my concern for a certain pose or look. They tell of a language between inwardness and that of surface.

In this project I will depart from my drawings of women to explore how emotions, depictions of women and surface converge. What questions do I need to ask myself that are relevant for feminist struggles of today in general, and for producers of images of women specifically?

Aim:
My aim is to make a series of drawings of women beyond fetishization without covering the experience of being objectified and the confusion, attraction and pain that comes with it. The challenge for my text is to phrase subversive aspects in a way that opens rather than confines my work to one correct understanding. In combination, the challenge will be to create work — visual and written that resonate with each other, or rather — that depend on each other.

I knew from the beginning that I wanted to make a work that came across as demanding, and that the images should communicate silently occupying the space in which they are shown.

References:
To get me here I have relied on Cixous’ *The Laugh of the Medusa*. In 1975 Hélène Cixous proposes an exclusively female way of writing. She urges us that we must write ourselves into history, that we must write ourselves, and that we must bring women to writing. Mara Lee’s *The Writing of Others: Writing*...

Acknowledgements
Thank you Joanna Rubin Dranger for your critical eye and strengthening words. Thank you Johanna Lewengard for always making time to listen and advice. Alexandra Falagaras – Chris Kraus wrote “Every question, once it’s formulated, contains its own internal truth. We have to stop diverting ourselves with false questions.” Thank you for asking questions, I learnt alot. Catherine Anyango Grünwald, thank you for recognizing the intersection of space and time when the discussion only concerned the features of my characters, and so much more. Elin Nilsson, thank you for collaborating with me <3. A big thank you to Jan Andersson who believed I could build the frames, and helped me make them better than I could have imagined. Thank you Moa Matthis for trusting in my writing. Thank you Mette Jensen Bystrup: “Ett etiskt drame”. Thank you Beata Boucht. My thanks to Hägerstens Glasmästeri. Thank you dad for always coming through, never slacking on the work ethics. Thank you mom, I could not have done this without you. My potatoes! I’m so happy I skipped a year 

(xx)

“What everybody asks me why I’m smiling out from ear to ear.../ nothing’s perfect but it’s worth it after fighting through my tears”. Learned a ton from you and feel lighter than ever.

C.

Kraus, 2006
Beyoncé, Love on Top, 2011
conceived as resistance, responsibility and time together is another key source of theory in relation to practice that has inspired my project. In 2015 Mara Lee writes that she considers her book *The Writing of Others* to be written in the tradition of the écriture féminine that Cixous articulated. Lee questions how we can develop this tradition by including a post-colonial analysis, she writes: ”... We must also take into account the (feminist) postcolonial theory in approximation to the ambivalences, contradictions, conflicts and emotions that are made visible when the word ”woman” is torn apart by white and widespread interests.” This book has been an influence beyond my recognition in providing me with an understanding of the relationships between artistic practice, language and subversive strategies.

I will also be referencing Trinh T. Minha-Ha *Elsewhere, within here* and Ulrika Dahl’s * Kopior utan original* to learn more about how duality, referencing and our current political climate is relevant in the construction of identity and image.

It’s not surprising that I’ve relied so heavily on text that deals with writing as a place of simultaneous telling and making. The use of intertextuality and a feminist tradition of referencing has given me tools to talk about the tradition of (re-)producing images of women.

This project relates to the vast repetition-like production of portraits of women made by artists like Marlene Dumas and Duda Bebek and illustrators like Jenny Mörtsell and Alexandra Falagara who return to the subject of girls and women without reproducing the deeply rooted judgement found in our culture.

**The report:**

In the report I want to discuss how my own practice and my habit of drawing girls intersect with the theoretical material and why I find this important. Writing the report will also give me a good chance to document my method and make clear what strategies I’ve used, and to analyze how they have, or have not affected the outcome.

**Why:**

Reflecting on my habit of drawing young female characters I realized I wanted to question how these images could both run the errands of patriarchy and be a strategic position to subvert the status quo. In my project I want to learn more about when and how this is done, both in my own practice and of other practitioners in the field. I’ve chosen this topic because it has been central to my practice since I began my art education yet I’ve never had the vocabulary to address and re-think this as a subject.
I aim to explore my visual language/my practice because I think that if we don’t interrogate how we use any language, we will probably reproduce the message of the master narrative.

Questions:
Can I make portraits depicting women that look more like persons than female tropes and what would this look like if I — instead of covering over the fact that women are exposed to the objectification of their bodies on a daily basis — can reflect this painful and often confusing experience?

How, when and where does the depiction of women do something subversive?

How do we engage in a dialogue on drawing and meaning that does not confine us, but rather opens the space of drawing?

Delimitation:
Since this project draws on the accumulated experience of facing depictions of women through all types of imagery, it can’t be narrowed down to that of drawing, but because drawing is my practice and the place in which I had to struggle with questions of representation, it is what I’ve chosen to discuss. Drawing is different to illustration in the sense that it stands on its own while illustration relies on another source. However, since drawing and illustration overlap in many ways I hope my arguments can be useful also to an illustrator. My analysis is based on contemporary and western cultural context, and all claims I make will only be in regard to this.
Background:
This project began with what I needed but couldn’t explain. During my teenage years my notebooks and drawings hosted a crowd of female figures. When I turned 20, I quit drawing girls. It was a conscious decision. I realized that most of the girls and women I depicted looked a lot like normative beauty standards: white, erotic, young and “pretty”. They did not align with my political ideas and I was afraid of what hidden part of my subconscious they came from. I discarded them and did not have to face the complexity and contradictions of my life, feminism and the artwork I valued.

About two years later the girls slowly started appearing in my diary, in the margins of my notes and sometimes in my studio. I realized I had missed them. I could also see that they were much more intimate and powerful, than the other work I called my practice. A part of this project is locating this intimacy and this power.

Even if I had marginalized my notebook doodles of women, my work clearly reflects a re-examination of the conditions that made them intriguing to me in the first place. During my first year at Konstfack I organized a group show that dealt with the double standards of attraction found in the term “sexy”. My contribution was, among other things, a text that was truly designated at facing internalized contradictions faced with when practicing feminism in patriarchal capitalist society.
(Unknown) photographs collected on my computer. Clockwise from left:
Susan Sontag - Rolling Stones cover, 1979

tumblr_n9k965GuyT1rum64no1_1280.jpg
tumblr_o6qak7LtSc1ql2abro1_540.jpg
tumblr_oi5tz4DKNY1r149eio1_1280.jpg
tumblr_ojs7l3JWso1thklrro1_1280.jpg
Images of women are everywhere, it’s a cultivated, mutated and celebrated tradition turned obsession in the name of profit, ideology and affect. The vast majority of us have seen millions of images depicting women, but I have yet to hear a discussion that engages in the concepts of objectification and representation, and brings us beyond these very categories. Or maybe what I’m asking for is a discourse that engages us in the matter of objectification and representation, today.

During the past ten years there has been a shift in how history is made, from books to Instagram, from realism to relationalism. With today’s circulation of data, images and capital — art, advertisement and social media seem to have lost a historical narrative. The context can be described as an inter-visual and mass-cultural referencing matrix. It is in the light of these changes that I want to re-address what I have come to call “woman-in-image”.

There are of course, depictions of women that counter the state of hyper-(in)visibility; in which the portrayed is simply visible. Being “visible” and breaking with the hyper-(in)visibility is not subversive in itself, an image is subversive when it moves us, shifts our perception, raises questions and embodies an answer, an image that connects what we are conditioned to miss out on.

Process - strategies:

As I began the second year of my masters, I promised myself to go deeper into my work, to loosen myself and let go. This was a commitment to following the work rather than my idea about what kind of work I should be making. It was a time-span in which I allowed myself to trust my work. During this time intuition, lust and discussions were the most rewarding modes of working. I began making drawings of "notes" a performative act that allowed me to repeat and teach myself these ideas. One of them read: DEEPER DEEPER CLOSER CLOSER, which later became the title of my project.

Maybe I pressured myself too hard to "let go" as in being free to experiment since I didn’t let go of my expectations on myself to produce work. I wonder what would have happened if I, during this time had produced less. Would that have meant truly letting go, and trusting the work? Not always but definitely sometimes. The pressure was partly because I found it hard to draw at my desk at Konstfack. By keeping a project-related diary I began recognizing patterns of stress and pressure. The diary has helped me see my strengths and weaknesses and the clarity that text enables helped me stay motivated.

I have a method, which could describe how my thinking through text influences my drawing; I will write down a wish, or a goal. Then I leave it, I don’t try to apply it directly to my work. I have learnt to trust that if it is something I’m interested in and think about it will manifest in the work sooner or later. For this project, the idea to go deeper and closer is such an abstract wish. Vulnerability and humor are two other concepts that are important to me.

In the early stages of the project I used a feminist reading of the myth of Eurydice to access the metaphor of the underworld and an artistic practice. During my first tutorial Alexandra Falagara suggested that maybe what happens in-between these worlds is more interesting; that we need not totally discard a rational (etc.) way of thinking which belongs to the upper world. She also pointed out that I’d situated myself between diary and editor. This conversation made me re-consider my direction and I began focusing more on the possibilities of what not going anywhere could mean. Later this would prove to be a crucial decision as I realized that my concern was not so much to not objectify, but to engage in the connections and confrontations of what’s between objectification and “not objectifying”.

Contextualization

During the past ten years there has been a shift in how history is made, from books to Instagram, from realism to relationalism. With today’s circulation of data, images and capital — art, advertisement and social media seem to have lost a historical narrative. The context can be described as an inter-visual and mass-cultural referencing matrix. It is in the light of these changes that I want to re-address what I have come to call “woman-in-image”.

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DEEPER
CLOSER
DEEPER
CLOSER

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Självhjälpstider, 2016
Självhjälpstider, 2017

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Stress-diary, 2017

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Maddison, Vill. och
Anningarna, Laboratoriet
Scanna Smiley - Two Lips,
Göteborg, 2016

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STRESS CHECK

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1. Vad har jag gjort på fredagen?
2. Vad skriver jag om Gather?
3. Vad skriver jag om the werf?
4. Vad skriver jag om the werf?

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Stress-diary, 2017

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Maddison Vill. och
Anningarna, Laboratoriet
Scanna Smiley - Two Lips,
Göteborg, 2016

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Stress-diary, 2017

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Maddison Vill. och
Anningarna, Laboratoriet
Scanna Smiley - Two Lips,
Göteborg, 2016
Installation view of the images I made in relation to my reading of the myth of Eurydice, Konstfack November 2016
Within a feminist tradition emotions have often been traced back to structural injustice and violence. Thus, the emotions become symptoms of violence and power and the problem is re-located outside of us. But if we stay in our feelings for a moment, if we consider the pain or the confusion a personal problem because of how they make us feel, the time we spend reflecting on our well being will lead to new strategies and hopefully stronger practitioners. Applied to my drawing this meant recognizing my own fascination and attraction to a language of objectification and sexualization, but not negotiate it as a feminist strategy per se. I began thinking about what staying in this intellectual and embodied confrontation could look like in my drawing.

I have used my drawing to explore is the strange feeling of dis-identifying with my gender. To dis-identify, according to Judith Butler is the feeling of estrangement when we recognize that we stand under a sign we simultaneously belong and don’t belong to.

Mara Lee writes: "Konsten och litteraturen måste förnöja människan att möta också det som är förkastligt i henne själv, annars är det inte litteratur värd namnet, utan bara programdikt, bara ideologi." (p. 20, 2014). I wish I had a more radical conclusion but in this project the very combination of femininity, surface and emotions in image was what I wanted to get as close to as possible – without re-enforcing stereotypes about feminine women being specifically emotional and superficial. On one hand I wanted to deal with this from a place of not agreeing with or fulfilling internalized ideals about womanhood, on the other hand I wanted to problematize a feminist position that assumed a critical distance towards images of women that reproduced femininity and even objectification. To be clear, it is not so much about being a woman today, but about what patriarchy, racism and capitalism leaves me with.

In December I understood how my work could tell of vulnerability: I realized that if I stood by the drawings of girls that I was making, saying: "this is what I’ve done", which felt like a risk, then taking that risk was also an act of vulnerability. To have found this way into vulnerability made me work more focused on drawing women.
Who Walks Alone

I had booked the Student union gallery for the second week of February and as the date came closer I decided to make a series of 20 drawings during two weeks, and to quit writing because I didn’t want to channel my creativity into theory. I was keen on developing the quick and searching line found in many of my drawings. The characteristics of a sketch were appealing to me because it tells of prioritizing: needing to get something on paper to communicate. When I was finished with the 20 drawings, I became the editor. Spreading out all the drawings on a table I looked at them with my classmate Hanna Stenman. I had included two drawings with the same motif, and she suggested that I make two versions of every drawing. I ended up deciding to duplicate 11 of the drawings for the show.

The majority of my drawings measured 21x29 which created an intimate viewing of my work. I would keep fingerprints and other marks in the drawings as a reminder of my hand at work.

I called the show Who Walks Alone, not so much because many of my subjects are depicted alone but because I have to be alone to do this work, requiring a very privileged situation. It is taken from the text on the back of Agnes Martin’s collected essays.¹ I wanted to explore the duality of being alone, because as much as it is a privilege it is also isolating and I wanted to raise questions about the conditions of working like this and who can do it without blaming oneself, or being isolated through social and cultural norms. The duplication was successful because it centered a labour of drawing, and the comments my drawings had recently received for the looks of my subjects was replaced by a keen interest in the shift that appeared between the two of them.

I had planned to include a series of my "notes" but as the show drew closer I became more confident in focusing on this as an opportunity to see how much meaning the drawings could carry on their own. Having worked with (English) text in my work earlier I know it draws a lot of attention as it holds a lot of power. I therefore decided to keep it off the walls.

The idea to turn them into benches was in part a nod to the riot grrrl movement and the do-it-yourself / do-it-together publishing that results in many stacks of paper placed around the bedroom for organizing before distribution. It was also a reference to a female stereotype I’ve been interested in, I call her "crazy post-it lady", an ironically dismissive title for the phenomenon of debasing female-associated knowledge production such as self-help books, horoscopes and quotes. Tools when at their best are used to not go crazy that ironically end up earning you the "crazy" title, thus isolating you and your hard work (worst case scenario all the notes etc. are not for inspiration, but attempts to not go insane because of (structural) pressure and oppression). The notes I included read:

Enormous Emotion, Deeper, Deeper, Closer, Closer and Once Upon A Time I Was All Alone.²

I chose to not include my research because I didn’t want to legitimize the drawings with a theoretical agenda and I needed to hear reactions to my work free from the narrative I had constructed. I asked graphic designer and artist Elin Nilsson if she could write a fictional text for the show and I was so happy when she said yes. Her text was as fleeting in describing it’s characters as my work was specific, and as detailed with the surroundings and actions as my drawings where ambiguous.

When I curated the show I kept the words breathing and integrity in mind, without knowing why. This mainly applied to hanging and lightning. To book the gallery and have this show was a great opportunity because it was an important dead-line. Many of the decisions I made to get the work together for the opening helped me enormously when I planned the final degree work. While the show was up I made sure to speak to my professor Joanna Rubin Dranger, Cathérine Anyango Grünewald and Sara Kaaman focusing on how I could develop this for the spring show. Almost everyone I spoke to suggested that I should enlarge my work and I decided on three options:

• To print them in a much larger scale
• To draw details of them in a larger scale
• To draw them in a larger scale

¹Agnes Martin, Writings, 1998
²Vulnerable (DAW is my Sewer) Tinashe M.E.S.H edit, 2014
The first two duplicates that inspired the idea to keep making copies, 2017
Being Mary-Jane, BET, 2014

Right page: My own attempts at getting an overview of my production in November, 2016
Installation view of *Who Walks Alone*, Student Union Gallery Konstfack, February 2017
Every drawing was duplicated but there was no logic to how they were placed around the gallery space.
"Once upon a time I was all alone

Deeper, deeper, closer

Enormous emotion

"Note benches"
Omgivningarna luktar vatten, vi befinner oss i en slags stad. Karaktärerna som är av betydelse för fortsättningen vilar placerade invid ett varsitt torn som de alla hämtar kraft ur och har personlig relation till.

Sfären är privat. Att stå utanför samhället är inget begrepp som existerar här, vallgraven är igensatt av avfall och karaktärerna kan ströva fritt från vad som brukade vara den ena respektive andra sidan.

Inuti var och en pulserar en strävan, en pirrande hoppfullhet om att få nå in i tornen de bara känner utvändigt. Utan att veta vad vinningen består i vill de in.


Under tiden springer jag med kniven i luften och skär ett tunt snitt i himmelen.

Elin Nilsson

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A Copy of a Copy

I chose the last option to make sure that I spent the last coming three months drawing. I decided on four images to remake in the size of 85 x 120 cm. I knew I wanted something less rectangular than an average A-format and paper on a roll made it possible for me to decide on my own measurements. The classroom was too small for this work and I got the chance to work in a vacant room behind the screen-workshop. Occasionally the room was used by other people, but to not working in the open-office type environment of the classroom was crucial for me to develop my drawing with focus and care.

When making the duplicates I followed the same procedure as with the small version: I recalled the order in which I had made the four drawings and decided to not make two of the same in a row, but to make all of the four drawings and then begin on the second version. I found the procedure of making two helpful and reminiscent of drawing girls in my notebooks. Because I knew I could make new version I became more carefree with things I wanted to change, but since I was not making them consequentially I didn’t get bored or over-conscious about the act of copying.

The biggest challenge when making the new duplicates was keeping the tension and the humor in each drawing. I had to pay close attention to when the drawing challenged me, without losing my confidence. I did this by never taking the line for granted but keeping in mind that I needed it to do what I wanted it to do. Sometimes I tried to make the line as beautiful as I could, or I would follow my impatience by drawing fast, rough and a little bit ugly. I was serious with some lines, and some lines humored me.

Drawing has it’s different stages in which I enjoy the last stage the most. When I begin I do so intuitively not knowing what I’ll do, yet I am often hyper-conscious of my expectations, which leads to judgement and a loss of confidence and direction. On a good day this stage is followed by starting over or elaborating on what I didn’t like in my first effort. As I keep on working my mind will wander and the challenges in drawing start to entertain me. At this stage I can again become aware and precise with what I’m doing but this time in a dialogue of sorts with the drawing. Drawing larger images required more time before I found a meditative place or the “last stage”. Drawing big was such a challenge in itself, so I could never really take the relationship between my mind, hand and the line for granted.

I was still not writing but I kept reading and found a theoretical framework I was keen on exploring in the larger drawings. During a tutorial with Catherine Anyango Grünewald she advised me to start writing again, as she said this would influence my drawing. I decided to write an essay that did not depend on my personal journey or relied on seeing my work but explored the questions and conclusion this project had raised for me.

Results

Planning for the spring show I struggled with how to show the drawings, especially if I wanted to frame them. The alternatives I looked into were not in my budget but the paper was too curvy and heavy (200 g) to simply pin up, in my opinion. I spent two, three weeks contemplating framing, trying different alternatives with cardboard. First I had an idea about framing the drawings in pairs, I began researching sponsorship for the glass and brought my sketch to the wood workshop. Pretty soon I realized this would be almost impossible to build, so I decided on framing them individually instead. This increased the number of frames from four to eight, and I had to reconsider the number of drawings I was making. Eight was a magical but also chaotic number and I would need almost 10 meters of wall space to exhibit them. After discussing the my options with my friends and classmates I decided to make six drawings.

When I decided to include six and not eight drawings I had only made one version of the punk* and I was unhappy with it so excluding this character was an easy decision. I was working seven days a week, approximately 10 to 12 hours a day, except for weekends when I was in school four to six hours. Even with one less drawing to complete my schedule didn’t allow for much other than drawing, making frames and sleeping.

For the last feedback session I presented my six (unfinished) drawings. The main topic of discussion was whether or not I should frame them. I wanted to make box frames because I think they provide a beautiful way to show works on paper, but I had never framed anything myself before. When I was still unsure of whether or not I should frame them Hanna Stenman said: you seem to be most excited about framing them so I think you should. I agreed. I also wanted to present the drawings in a way that emphasized the chaotic and precise lines of the drawing, I wanted their presence to belong to the drawing and not the curation.

Apart from Stenman’s comment my friends (artists and curators) and most of my tutors agreed against framing the drawings. I received the comment that framing was contra productive, and that the drawings felt “free” taped to the wall. My intention was never to portray freedom or any utopian scenario in which women are not oppressed. And as my work progressed I was more and more certain that this work was less about identifying as a woman, and more about (my implications in) the production of images of women. On the other hand, had I known how much work I had to put into making my own frames, I might have thought otherwise.
The eight drawings from *Who Walks Alone* I decided to make in larger versions:
Sketch on transparent paper for the Overhead machine I used to project my drawing on the wall (where I had attached my paper)

Sketches for the big drawings
Trying different background options, and returning to older ones.

Left page: me having fun :--)
I was happy to hear that I could be sponsored by Hägerstens Glasmästeri on the condition that I picked up the glass myself. Luckily I could ask my dad for help. And as far as making the frames I could not have done it without the time and dedication of woodwork technician Jan Andersson.

The exhibition

Hanging my drawings in the exhibition was a smooth operation because of what I had learnt from my exhibition in the student union gallery. One thing that was crucial was that I asked for advice and spent almost half the time arranging the drawings trying out different constellations. I had to build a wall to fit my work in the space I had been allocated, again, I could never have made it without the help of Mette Jensen Bystrup in the master one class and my dad. My plan was to ask a student from the master one to build a new larger “note bench” during the week when the exhibition was built, but that was before I knew I had to build a wall and unfortunately had to give up the bench. I was planning on painting it white with a grey note and black text that read: DEEPER DEEPER CLOSER CLOSER. If I show the work again I will build the bench.
*The Punk that I chose to not include in the show

Right page: Framing!
Enormous Emotion I & II
pencil on paper 96x124 (2017)
Screaming, Politickin’ and Pure Talent I & II
pencil on paper 96x124 (2017)
Gender studies professor Ulrika Dahl likens performing femininity to being “en kopia av en kopia utan ett original” (Kopior utan original 2008). In my work I wanted to reflect on how femininity is practiced and re-invented in image by referencing the visual language surrounding us. Dahl concedes that there are copies that are more successful than others – copies that manage to cover the act of quoting, and expressions of femininity that are deemed flawless. In my work I wanted to explore how the translation from fantasy to image, and the repetition of chosen attributes of femininity could speak of the less successful acts of copying; in which I failed in managing the flawless. In the same text Dahl writes: “Subversitet är alltid en intentionell politisk strategi vilket i sin tur kräver ett kritiskt (feministiskt) medvetande och insikten om att misslyckande inte är det värsta”. The majority of images of women that we are faced with “create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled.” (Foucault, 1967) I am speaking of the space that images of women occupy, and the potential subversity of failing (or maybe ”fake” is a better word) that I’m interested in locating – is one that creates – “a space of illusion that exposes every real space, / as still more illusory.” (Foucault, 1967) Such a position does not negate, diminish or ignore the practice of perfecting but it includes the fake, the labour and the insincerity of structure.

In this project I have localized the potential for subversive strategies in repetition. The repetition of references that can be found in the gestures, clothes and poses is the core of something unsettling (of shape) in my drawing. I heightened the feeling of the unsettling by challenging myself to make the drawings express a double character. In this project I wanted to develop the serious and silly characteristics I found in my style when I find my drawings at their best. Early on I realized that even if I wanted to address subversive strategies in image in relation to time and space (tradition) this would require a PhD position, and what I needed to do was focus primarily on my own practice.

This meant that I fully indulged in my own experience of femininity and the often intuitive process of putting it on paper. To not objectify, but tell of that very experience: was for me to make drawings that belonged in two places at once. I did this by focusing on a style of drawing that was as meticulous as it was sloppy. I also prepared myself mentally while drawing to take this ambivalence by making the drawing reflect something I myself cannot claim, embody or perform but have internalized and sometimes long for. The women in my drawings practice a femininity and a rejection of it, beyond my own situation.

I wanted to reduce a number of oppositions to a scenario in which they remained truly inviolable, because to recognize this difference in myself could mean recognizing difference every where. I am speaking here not of the dif-
ference that is used against us, but in a political sense. To engage in a deeper understanding of difference as strategy against patriarchy and racism is delivered in the speech *The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House* by Audre Lorde (1984), but I’m primarily thinking about Chantal Mouffe’s *On the Political* (2005) and *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically* (2013) in relation to the current Swedish political climate were parties dismantle their different political agendas to make a united decision concerning the threat of terrorism in the aftermath of the person who crashed a truck into Åhlen’s City (Stockholm, 2017). I am not going to elaborate on their decision, but the context in which I find myself working: every difference that stands in the way of “efficiency” (in it’s most neo-liberal meaning) is addressed as a threat that needs to be eliminated.

To locate the differences I could not dissolve, and to make work in the tension between them rather than negotiating their presence became a key strategy. This series of drawings explore how to express opposite feelings without compromising the meaning. My drawings are both hypnotizing and secretive, and I strived for the viewer to be both drawn in and made to feel uneasy. Looking at the work in the space, I was a bit disappointed. I had hopes of them being more disruptive in their presence, but then I thought that the fact that their presence made me feel awkward after all of the time I spent with them proved that they did do something.

I received the comment that the duplication made the work manipulative; that it maneuvered the viewer to keep looking. This was not what I had in mind when I wished for the work to be demanding, but I think it’s very close. To demand and to manipulate is to steer someones actions, with or without their consent. I don’t think my drawings are too obvious, therefore I am glad that they are perceived as employing such a “cheap” tactic. Because it is a little bit stupid – I’ll make two drawings and then you have to look at them twice as much! – it also becomes powerful.

In a recorded discussion on the topic of ”History in a time of hyper circulation” film-maker and philosopher Hito Steyerl says that we can think of our position in terms of engagement:

> It’s a military term: you engage people in a military situation, you confront them, and have some kind of contestation with them. It also means that you have to react inside the situation: you are never outside this situation because you are a part of it. (2015)

By engaging in the production of images of women, I can confront issues and act within the situation. By not documenting, but engaging in the production I have the power to project an image of how I imagine the future. Steyerl con-
cludes: “So, if you start generating instead, then you have an option of what the future you are intending to generate is supposed to look like.”

As the summer came to an end and I was about to begin my second year I promised myself to – in Swedish – “flippa” (with drawing). I write it in Swedish because the pronunciation of the word encourages action, it has a “no turning back” sound to it. The closest translation I can think of is “loosing it” or “taking it there”. It partially means doing something that is crazy - something not easily explained. Looking at this series of drawings I’m not surprised, because I am surprised. I did do something I couldn’t foresee, and this was my goal.

It’s too soon to really know much about this final work, or how I came to make it, but I know I’m happy with it because for the first time, in a long time, I think I did my best. A genuine change in my practice, that I’ve learnt in this process is to stay with the work. To repeat a few drawings made me trust my subject matter. Having cherished the differences and tensions between different intentions I can conclude that this was a project in which I could not separate the (in) famous idea of heart and mind. As the project came to a close I felt that I have been motivated both in theory and intuitive practice to keep developing my ideas through my drawing.

Is to not settle, to unsettle, to keep being a problem? Right now, implementing this in my practice and my writing occupies my thoughts, and the working title “Loyally Illoyal” might be the direction of my next series. I was concerned that it would be contra productive to write about not being loyal, but like Lewengard commented: “to tell is a feminist strategy”.

"My final prayer: O my body, make me always a man who questions!” Frantz Fanon wrote in 1952. I found that my drawings embodied a hundred questions and a hundred answers. I did not always like what I learnt, but it is exactly in this preference, in this judgement, I need the words, traditions and images past and present that can teach me what I thought I knew.
Reflections on the examination

The opponent of my degree work was Beata Boucht and she said that my drawings reminded her of Untitled Film Stills by Cindy Sherman (1977-1980). A series of photographs depicting Sherman as if she was the actress in a film noir, and the photo we see is a film still. There are perhaps several things that could serve as entry points for discussing Sherman’s work in relation to mine, like how these photographs embody the glitch of repetition. But what really struck me is that Untitled Film Stills tells of the formless in its own way. In this body of work Sherman portrays what is, and what isn’t at the same time. This series depict a presence that is a non-presence. The photographs work as non-existing by recalling an existing tradition of film, of which they are not a part (the films do not exist), yet because we have seen so many like these before, and thus understand the tradition in which she places herself, her act(ion) exists through our collection.

Before bringing up Sherman, Beata Boucht mentioned how my drawings made her think of Kim Kardashian. Boucht confessed that it might not be my work revolved around Kardashian and her use of photography, but that she liked to think about her. I agreed, Kim Kardashian is not a first-hand reference, but she is an icon, that I too like to keep in mind. In the text accompanying my work at the degree show (the only text that Boucht received about my work), MA Graduate in gender studies Sara Litzén wrote:

The image of the female figure is present, yet she is in constant need of being produced in order to persist. Images of women are everywhere, but simultaneously she is nowhere near, caught up in hyper-(in)visibility. In these drawings Channa explores the motions and emotions of looking closer and going deeper, in order to demonstrate that the woman is only a copy of a copy without an original. The act of re-claiming, re-inventing and re-signifying the concept of womanhood is doomed to be both exclusive and inclusive. By centering the unsettling, yet liberating insight that resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power, Channa questions the act of intervening; how the intervention itself must construct the image it wants to deconstruct.

When responding to Boucht, I returned to this text to talk a little bit about how Kim Kardashian can be described as copying femininity successfully, and how the “copy of a copy without an original” can be culturally deemed, as more or less successful. For this series of drawings I became more and more interested in how the terrain of femininity does not allow for many mistakes. If you do not perform femininity within the narrow concepts of what is appreciated as correct, which is by covering the labour of this very act, then you might as well not try at all. This is too vast a subject to go into here, but it allowed me to address the negotiation of performing femininity as labour, and how it can be covered or expressed in the act of repeating.