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numb grounds gas



*stumma fält gas*  
*daggkropp*  
*mörk mjuk, en icke-*  
*tidsände*  
*och din nervtråd*  
*glöda<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> *numb grounds gas*  
*body of dew*  
*dark soft, a non-*  
*death*  
*and the axon of yours*  
*glows*

I believe I am disconnected from the land.

It is in my interest how the resources of the land are divided. Being part of global trade, I see the fruit in both export and import. I do not see the conditions behind these products, the human labor, and the monocultural landscapes that strongly affect biodiversity.

I am an object-maker, and I consider art a tool to understand the world. I attempt to dissolve this alienation between the land and me. I look at the physical material, its origin, and transformations from matter to a refined material. And what happens within me, as I witness flax grow, blue color appearing when an alkaline liquid is exposed to air, and a humid heath softens solid oak wood. There was a belief that to turn lead into gold, you must first turn your inside to gold.

I spent my upbringing in a rural environment with agriculture, forest industry, and manufacturing plants. It is a community I was once part of; I recognize that my position has changed since I left.

*nu blommar syrener  
och när ska allt brista  
och när ska vi sluta bära  
det vattenslukande*

*nu sipprar nektar  
från syrenhäckens alla blommor  
som ett sår töms på var:  
ge mig en sårskorpas gula hinna<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> *now lilacs are blooming  
and when will the breakdown arrive  
and when will we stop carrying  
the water devouring*

*now nectar is dribbling  
from every flower in the lilac bush  
like when you clear a wound from pus:  
give me the yellow coating of a scab*

It is an ecological interest of mine that has led me to this point; to imitate and make use of biological cycles and processes. A principle of permaculture, short for permanent agriculture, is about using the force and logic of nature: to make minor adjustments for maximal effect. It is something that I try to achieve within art and take advantage of what already exists in my surroundings. I have turned my gaze to my origin and access. What is it can I reach out with my bare hands? What are my existing resources regarding land, tools, and my social network, people that are willing to help me out?

I collect and work with material from my home area in the western region of Småland, Sweden. I paint with pigments that I have made from pigment plants I cultivate and harvest each year, make paper sheets from old newspapers, and build frames with wood felled by an arborist.

The alchemical term *solve et coagula* describes the two stages, *nigredo* and *rubedo*, of the refinement process that materials go through to transform into another form. In alchemy, “dissolution” is the initial separation of the elements in *prima materia*, the first matter. “Coagulation” is the final stage of this process where the elements once again solidify: they resuscitate.<sup>3</sup> This specific process applies to all alchemical recipes. I imagine how dissolution and coagulation can occur in painting and how I can manifest that physically. To show the multifaceted qualities of materials: they do not have a fixed form but always continue to change.

I investigate the limits of painting. My works hold textile and sculptural properties, at times resembling reliefs or collages. Linen, silk, and paper are materials I use as a foundation for my painting. The paint is applied either through brush strokes, dyeing or with already painted objects. I imagine the works being components of a larger unity. It is possible to break them all down and later put them together in new constellations.

I appreciate the labor of paint making; the process makes my racing thoughts slow down. I am given a measure of peacefulness. Each year I grow madder and woad to come by a red and blue pigment. I harvest birch leaves from bush wood to obtain yellow. There are different processes to receive each of these colors. Madder (*Rubia tinctorum*) is a clingy and gangly

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<sup>3</sup> *De oförlorades ekonomi*, Anne Carson, Stockholm, Bokförlaget Faethon, 2017, 155.

plant with small thorns on its body and has spiky, thin leaves. The garden slugs are fond of the madder plants, but they prefer eating the woad leaves that I grow next to them. In the end, what I want is its roots which contain the red pigment. It is a tardy and time-consuming process since it takes at least three years until the roots will produce enough pigment to make red paint. Woad (*Isatis tinctoria*) is part of the Brassicaceae family; it is a cabbage (that explains the slugs' appetite for them). A flowering, two-year-old plant with green, long leaves. It contains the same pigment as the Indian indigo (*Indigofera tinctoria*). But to receive this blue color, you first need to destroy its green chlorophyll by maceration in alcohol.<sup>4</sup> I grow these plants on a lot next to the railway close to where my parents live. My childhood friends, Fanny and Gottfrid, have also kindly set aside a part of their kitchen garden for my woad cultivation.

Last summer I collected birch leaves (*Betula*) with Fanny in her horse paddock. It is a land of small fields attached, including areas of bush wood and small fir trees. This work was interrupted when a wild boar caught our attention with a grunt while it stood a few meters away, staring at us.

That summer I also discovered a small museum with peasants paintings in Unnaryd. The earliest works were dated back in the 18th century. These paintings are picturing biblical scenes, the two most prominent are *Annunciation* and *Marriage at Cana*. Apart from the biblical references there was also an emphasis on picturing animals and decorative flowers. Even though these peasants sometimes painted with plant based paint like madder and woad, other pigments were also used as a result of the transatlantic import. For example, the Indian indigo, pigments such as ultramarine, ochre, umber, and harmful ones like lead and arsenic. The Swedish peasants were not excluded from global trading but very much intertwined within it, both as beneficers and exploiters.<sup>5</sup>

Unnaryd is a small town in southwestern Småland where I used to go each summer as a child visiting my father's aunt and cousins and their families. Fate is uncanny, his cousin of the same age committed suicide the autumn before my last visit. My father believed it was because of depression; his cousin had been unemployed after he lost his job when the local

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<sup>4</sup> *Natural dyes: Sources, Tradition, Technology and Science*, Dominique Cardon, London, Archetype Publications Ltd., 2007, 338.

<sup>5</sup> *The peasants paint*, Sigrid Holmwood, *The Rural* edited by Myvillages, Cambridge, Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2019, 44.

factory closed down and had been in deep debt for years. My great-aunt died a couple of months after her youngest son due to a long time of illness.

It was an intriguing encounter with the peasant paintings, as it was also strange to witness this pattern, how time is moving in cycles. How it intertwines my past connection to this place and what later brought me back.



*ramen,  
åter till en flytande form*

*viker sig undan  
från den tydliga  
bilden av dig*

*det som  
redan är  
förstört  
syrsätts<sup>6</sup>*

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<sup>6</sup> *the frame,  
once again a liquid*

*folds back  
from the clear  
image of you*

*what is  
already  
spoiled  
oxygenates*

Death is a component for something to transform. Biological waste decomposes into rich soil. In the first stage in alchemy, called *nigredo*, a material becomes darkened and dissolved: it *dies*. Everything, broken apart, to see beyond is an ability. Destruction is inevitable.

I love the process of extracting the blue dye from woad leaves. I cut off leaves from the plant, leaving enough left for the plant to recover and grow new ones. I rinse the green leaves and put them in a bucket of stainless steel, making a leaf soup by pouring boiling water, enough to cover all the woad. A red, shimmering surface appears after an hour or so. I add oxygen by pouring the woad soup between two buckets. I add oxygen by pouring the woad soup between two buckets about ten times. Afterward, I add something alkaline: slaked lime water. I will then continue the pouring between the bucket until a clear blue color appears.

*fettdroppe in-  
dränkt*

*styva  
lena karaktär  
ärr bildar dalar  
de ligger bredvid  
ådrorna*

*var är pulsen  
om inte  
längsmed*

*andan är inte  
hos mig  
låt mig vänta in  
det lätt svävande<sup>7</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> *globule of fat  
soaked*

*erect  
tender character  
valleys formed by scars  
located next to  
the veins*

*where is the pulse  
if not  
along the way*

*i am out of  
breath  
let me await  
the light and gentle  
floating*

Each physical object, break it apart to its core and elements, and you will find it in the land. As a thought, a dream, or a memory, it is part of the landscape of your mind. And like a word that exists in our social landscape.

I wanted to make myself a foundation. I wanted to make paper sheets to paint on. I collected piles of old newspaper, notes, and cardboards to make paper pulp. Out of the pulp, I made small paper sheets that I later patched together into bigger sheets.

Despite the fragile quality of paper, it is rewarding that it is a flexible material that you can repair. And as I joined the pieces together, I sooner or later discovered the joy of sculpting with paper. I started to paint with paper on canvas. And paint paper on paper. To me, these reliefs slowly began to resemble scarrings.

*arket,  
blek landskapsvy*

*där ordet är*

*löser sig  
menings-  
skavning*

*vid munnens hörn  
stavelsekedja*

*muskelfiber  
böljande  
du tar  
form*

*och ryggtavlas uppläsning  
kota kota kota  
skuldran stryker sig  
mot var "o"*

*köttet är oskrivet<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>8</sup> *the sheet,  
view of a pale landscape*

*where the word is*

*dissolving  
attrition  
of a sentence*

*at the corner of the mouth  
syllable chain*

*muscle fiber  
wavily  
you  
solidify*

*and a reading of the back*

The function of framing a painting: it creates edges and sets limits, similar to mapping out an area of land. If so, the canvas would be a field, a territory.

Like I was present growing plant pigments to paint with, I wanted to take part in such a transformation of wood for a frame. To fixate this paint onto the silk fabric, I need to steam the material. While being surrounded by the vapor, I imagined how this process also could be applied to wood. A wooden frame is going through *nigredo* and dissolves into a liquid or steam.

I currently work together with an arborist, Gottfrid, and an interior architect, Adrian. They are two craftsmen that handle and treat wood in different ways. To work transdisciplinary, I want to receive a deeper understanding of the properties and possibilities of wood. I steam bend wood to get smooth curves, a process where it is necessary to work along with the wood fibers on their terms for the material not to break.

To come by wood through my local resources, I reached out to Gottfrid. I knew he stored wood from trees he had felled to dry and also is a skillful carpenter. I am glad that he wanted to help me and found interest in steam-bending himself. Together, we are making a wooden sculpture out of steam-bent material. I intend to relate to the frame of a painting, where I consider both the function of framing and stretcher bars.

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*vertebra vertebra vertebra*  
*the shoulder brushes*  
*against each "o"*

*the meat is a clean slate*

COAGULA

*Auch deine  
Wunde, Rosa.*

*Und das Hönerlicht deiner  
rumänischen Büffel  
an Sternes Statt überm  
Sandbett, im,  
redenden rot-  
aschengewaltigen  
Kolben.<sup>9</sup>*

Paul Celan<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Rosa, your  
wound as well.*

*And the hornlight of your  
Romanian buffaloes  
instead of stars above  
the sandbed, in  
the talking, red-  
ember-powerful  
rifle butt.*

Translation by Micheal Hamburger  
*Poems of Paul Celan*, New York, Anvil Press, 2007.

<sup>10</sup> *Det sena verket: Från andningsvändning till Tidsgård*, Paul Celan, Stockholm, Albert Bonniers förlag, 2020, 154.

The Romanian-born poet Paul Celan wrote about the fate of Rosa Luxemburg in his poem *Coagula*.<sup>11</sup> In this poem and its sister *Solve*, Celan considers linguistic usage and the murder of Luxemburg, among other subjects, in an alchemical form. The wound of Rosa coagulates while what remains after the fire is nothing but red ash and ember. In *Economy of the Unlost: Reading Simonides of Keos with Paul Celan*, Anne Carson describes what distinguishes the alchemy in *Solve* and *Coagula* apart from the traditional idea of the alchemical process, is that it is not a refinement that results in fortune.<sup>12</sup> I do not consider the idea of development to be the supreme model for our living conditions, not for the better nor worse.

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<sup>11</sup> *De oförlorades ekonomi*, Anne Carson, Stockholm, Bokförlaget Faethon, 2017, 154.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.



*vårt avstånd,  
det våta*

*reducerar  
ditt tal till  
en saltlösning*

*lämnar  
en koncentrerad linje<sup>13</sup>*

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<sup>13</sup> *our wet  
distance*

*reduces  
your speech to  
a saline solution*

*leaving  
a condensed line*