ALLT SKA BORT!

Bachelor Thesis Project
By
Carolina Nylund
Tack Sebastian för ditt tålamod och villkorslösa kärlek!
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INTRODUCTION

I decided to start writing this thesis considering mainly all the books and texts read during my Art Academy education that made a strong impression on me in order to analyze the essence of my work. The reason to study at Konstfack is after all, to find a context and a reference to my art production. When I started collecting all the thoughts and ideas that been significant to me I BECAME AWARE of that every time I found the words describing them became PHYSICAL. Every word has a strength and tone. I confront a difficulty writing in English, learning theory in Swedish and having as a native language Spanish. So, with all respect to the interest and passion I have for languages, I would like to dedicate the fear of writing this thesis to the “information generation” for ABUSING the “language” making it richer but making it harder in my attempt to describe the essence of my work.
Censored words in my thesis:

I decided censoring these words to make myself more specific about my thoughts and reflections. I realized that it is so easy to romanticize the artistic practice and process by the use of these words.

*Inspiration.* May be generally interpreted and understood as a “divine” word used by people in direct connection with a superior power.

*Sensibility.* Possessing a natural power. This word is often used to denote that somebody can feel or experience more than others.

*Talent.* Been born with a natural power. This word endlessly used ethnographically to compare the individuals, making “naturally” some superior than others.

I experience this words in the academic art realm as mystical and pretentious.

The common meaning unifying these words might be of course “natural power” and the almost invisible texture they adopt. Which makes them almost impenetrable.
The Essentiality of Quotidianity

In my work I reflect about how I or we became what I and we are today. Most of my works are made with low cost or waste materials in order to result a collage of what constitutes our identity.

I begin every work with the fascination about a material or phenomenon (personal experience, an observed behavior, a note, the news, a song, etc). When I find an object or material interesting I start cutting, bending, chewing, sewing, repeating, singing, building, writing, etc. This is also associated with the reason and my vision of making Art, PLAYING “a bloody serious” game.

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1 Quotidianity is a word that I mention referring to the French word quotidienne which not only specifies the everyday but all the habits and activities in the everyday. From Latin quotidie “daily”
Postproduction

I mentioned before, that according to texts and theory read in my academical (theory) education, I would contextualize my practice. A way to approach my method, reminds me of the Postproduction essay written in 2002 by Nicolas Bourriaud, curator and art critic where he analyses Art in the nineties and relates it with the word Postproduction. This is a term used in the audiovisual vocabulary (television, film and video). It refers to the set of processes applied to recorded material: montage, subtitling, audio, voice-overs and special effects. "(...) The material they manipulate (the artists) is no longer primary. It is no longer a matter of elaborating a form on the basis of a raw material but working with objects that are already in circulation on the cultural market, which is to say, objects are already informed by other objects."

I work with commentaries from You Tube considering that this forum has become a “public realm” stretching the boundaries of the concept “private life”. This media is also used by many as a mere functional space or for some others to portrait banality. I combine in a non-linear storytelling “technique”, slogans from different trades writing music and using these as lyrics to create a pleonasm reflecting their excessive existence within a trade. The excess of these sentences as a result of our desires contra our needs.

After reading the book “Det fula” (The Ugly) by Tom Sandqvist, I incorporate other disciplines as etymology and onomatopoeia to research about the meaning and perception of the word. I keep repeating words such as smuts all over again (smuts, smuts, smuts, smittan, smittan, smittan) and I associate them with “everyday activities” such as scratching off wallpaper or paint of the wall.

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Bourriaud, Nicolas, Postproduction, Culture as a Screenplay: How art reprograms the world. (Lukas and Sternberg, New York, 2002) p.13
I collect messages found on the floor in the street to rebuild my own visual story. I sample statements of women books to understand the roll of a woman and femininity.

I cast Ikea furniture in to concrete and write text on it, in an attempt to give another signifiant to the object and material.

According to the psychoanalyst Jaques Lacan, in his essay, *The Mirror Stage 1953*, the playing stadium in a child is the way of assimilating the absence and independence from the maternal body. This could be the reason that I use art to assimilate the changes of reality and *quotidianity* from one country (native country, Mexico) to another (Sweden). From a virtual reality in a computer to physiology.
“Despite massive development of the means of communication, the everyday escapes”

I call my method as the essentiality of quotidianity because “the everyday is then the medium, as the philosopher, intellectual and sociologist Henri Lefebvre notes, alienations, fetishisms, reifications produce their effects”.

The use of “home made” techniques might be my own reaction of giving significance to my everyday, in part, a common shared quotidianity that is ruled by technological development and electronic communication. An attempt to materialize a reality when the everyday puts our bodies in passivity with the stimulus of images transporting our minds into other non-physical realities.

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Context

During the last years a wave of artist and designers have found in waste material a flow of ideas, some of them concentrating in recycling and some others criticizing our consumption habits. The condition in which this objects are found remind me of the definition of the abject by the philosopher and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva, when she describes in her book *Powers of Horror* the corpse as something asking for life instead of death⁵. I don’t mean the abject as pro-recycle concept, but as a second chance of filling up a function and then end up in the same place: the garbage, “its death”. The possibility that this “abject” opens is the opportunity to feel less guilty and keep consuming with “conscience”. That is because the advertising text seduces with a landscape of justice.

In the tone of seduction according to catholic church (moral) would find responsible the flesh and its desire. Most of the advertisement language teases human desire. It means that the only realm in which you are free to feel clean is the commercial one, where you can buy for example; a transformed abject either by looks or text, and feel clean!

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⁵ (…) "Liket är döden som hemsöker livet .Frånstötande/frånstött". Fasans Makt. Kristeva. Julia.. (Göteborg,Daidalos. 2002) p. 28 (as read in Swedish)
**MY WORKS...**

**Från rå till ytbehandlad** (From raw to polished) 2009

This was an installation composed by almost one hundred cast bottles of beauty products in concrete hanging in a hierarchical way from raw concrete on the floor to polished white concrete to the top of the rough along six meter height of the gallery space. In this project I wanted to study the language of seduction in beauty products such as shampoo, soap, conditioner, etc. analyzing the ritual of cleaning in relation to the promise that it is made after using this product, such as “shiny and glossy”, and some other offering a lifestyle in words as “explorer”, etc. I wanted to analyze the concept of heterotopia in relation to the "utopian" image of the body, in a descriptive product marketing sentence. This sentence that in the instant can give me a voyeur. This text that “transports” the consumer in to an ideal place or physical property offered by the description of a product. I pay for a bottle that promises to transform me in to something “clean and glossy” and therefore a better person. The action of polishing is the action of “scrubbing” the body.

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**Heterotopia** is a concept in [human geography](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_geography) elaborated by philosopher [Michel Foucault](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_Foucault) to describe places and spaces that function in non-hegemonic conditions. These are spaces of [otherness](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otherness), which are neither here nor there, that are simultaneously physical and mental, such as the space of a phone call or the moment when you see yourself in the mirror.
Workshop: Betong är INTE FULT! (Concrete is not ugly!)

Spring 2009

I was invited to lead a workshop at Helma, a little flower shop in Midsommarkransen, Stockholm. It was very attractive the idea of direct contact with people outside an institutional Art context, who got interested in the material even when culturally concrete has an “ugly” denotation in Sweden. The purpose of the workshop was to teach how to cast or make an object in concrete. The workshop got a lot of attention by the locals and got overbooked. I understood that most of the interest was raised from Design and Interior magazines as a ”do it yourself” activity. Most of the students wanted to cast a pot or a leaf. Before we started casting I made a little introduction with pictures of other artists and designers using the material in some other more expressive ways. The participants felt relieved when the saw the possibilities of concrete and the general opinion of the material being ugly was because it has been used in mass produced buildings most of the times in the suburbs. So, this meant that the concrete adopted the connotation of “ugly” according to a geographical urban division of the city based in the social “differences” of these areas.

One of the things that also fascinated me was the fear of making mistakes. Nowadays when we seat in front of our computers, the mistake do not leave any trace of existence but only in our minds for a very limited time. We can correct it immediately though a simple “click”. In programs as Photoshop you can regret what you regret. The mistake remains invisible, while using a physical material as concrete takes three days to see the result and maybe three more to repair it. The mistake in terms of an “organic” reaction of the material contra the dominion of a visual or ideal “perfection” in a sketch (ideal), an image, or texture.

In the workshop I discovered a new “social material” possibility. This means that this method becomes a “material” to study, may be a practical “low scale” way to make local statistics, according to the experiences remained in me.
**POLYISLAND**

Plastic is all around us! Plastic has a “material property function” **even in the language!** Quotidiane words as *plastmamma* (instead of styvmor) which means stepmother, *plastpappa* (*styvfar*) which means stepfather are used in Swedish referring to one of the properties of the material which is imitating and evoking an “original”, genuine, more exclusive and expensive material.

During the first grade at the Art Academy, I had a tutorial with Svante Larsson, photographer and teacher at Konstfack who showed me reports of “The Great Pacific Garbage Patch”, which is an “island” in between Hawaii and Japan. The “island” is a concentration of plastics not visible on the surface of the sea, but floating in the sea between the surface and the bottom. The size of the island is as big as twice the territory of France.
“It’s time to start filling up rockets and fire them in to the sun. But then the trash humans have left in space already is another story”
ThatLoopDiggah

My method to start working and reflecting about the island was watching all the clips and reading all the commentaries about it in You Tube. The only contact I had with the island was the internet. One of my first media interventions was commenting to the video at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8a4S23uXlCM  Pacific Garbage Dump- Nightline: “humans will disappear, but plastic will remain”. The answer that I received to this comment was by ThatLoopDiggah. By this time, I found The Piracy Manifest by the artist, Miltos Manetas (Palle Torsson) “(...) We all live in the internet, this is our new country the only territory that it makes sense to protect and to defend. The land of the internet is the one of information”.7 I started considering the internet and its forums as another public space. It means that I experience the You Tube as a “physical square” and the commentaries materialized in form of rumors around this space.

Considering the name of this “man made” just as a technical and commercial description again, of the plastic, I made a research of the chemical name of plastic. Most of the names started with the Greek prefix poly which etymologically means many. I thought that we are taught to think of an island as a paradise and this island due to its “abjectal” character was described by most of the commentaries as something catastrophic. Most of the commentaries shared by the users described fear and the will of cleaning something that it is impossible to clean. I related this with one of the essays written by the artist Robert Smithson about the irreversibility of entropy: “Picture in your mind’s eye the sand box dived in half with black sand on one side and white sand on the other. We take a child and have him run hundreds of times clockwise the box until the sand gets mixed and begins to turn gray; after that we have him run anti-clockwise, but the result will not be the restoration of the original division but a greater degree of grayness”.8

7 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KCThTeLZy9I The Piracy Manifest
8 Smithson, Robert,  A Tour of The Monuments Of Passaic New Jersey,1967. P. 74
http://www.bwk.tue.nl/stedeb/studentinformatie/offthemap/smithson.pdf
This concentration of “polys” floating around the sea was created by all of us as a sign of our “modern commodity”.

I wanted to create instead something that could represent the island, considering all the time its “original” name: “The Great Pacific Garbage Patch” as a spectacular noun giving with the words “Great” and “Garbage” the perfect dialectical combination for sensationalism.

I made something as a “monument” abstracting the essence of the chemical common name of plastics (poly) in inflatable black plastic bags of the letters P, L, Y and in between the P and inverted L, I added a little display with the shape of a minor “o” of removable tattoos with pictures of species affected by the change of this new “man- made” ecosystem.

To keep the “totems”(they were 5 m tall) inflated was a full time job. I had to inflate them every two hours during a week. I used cheap re-chargeable air pumps to keep them inflated. Now when I think about it, it might have given a more “organic” effect to the sculptures if I had invested in an industrial pump to keep them inflated all the time. The space in which the exhibition took place was an open room with a lot of alternative entrances and corridors which made the hanging of the piece very difficult. If you came from the main entrance you could not read correctly the word. One of the critics that I got from teachers and visitors was the lack of a text explaining the piece. I was not ready then to explain the historical and the series of steps and decisions to take about this work either physically or media interventions. I thought that it was enough with its monumentality, choice of material and title.
Smuts är bra! (Dirt is good!)

This is a song written and recorded by me and produced by the musician, Sebastian Nylund, my husband. Smuts är bra is a non-linear song lyrics made out of sampled slogans, some of them collected while the transmission of the American reality show: "The Biggest Loser" and some other from advertisements on the street. Slogans that refer to food and identity. Smuts är bra! Is the official slogan for a Swedish washing powder. I reflect about, the meaning and symbolic connotations of the word smuts (dirt) associating it with the body, in a way of fetish; in the language and music, singing out of tune (technically, I am not a singer) with a foreigner accent.

I want to create an immediate archeology of "the new". I use only slogans to make a song pretending (visionary) that everything has been said, the last word has been written and all the objects have been created. I use typography representing letters with the human body to give them a performative context in the video of the song. I use music to give an emotional atmosphere to the exhibition. This is my attempt to experiment with the mixture of concrete and textile, paper, plastic and music in an arbitrary way.

I feel limited in the sharing of the whole experience of this exhibition, because this has not been performed yet. But in an "expectation" stage this is the idea.
CONCLUSION

In the terms of style, I find in this “residual trend” a clear parallel to the 60’s when plastic was the “new” promising material giving hope and positivism to society. The invention of a material which besides functional and revolutionary, would democratize accessibility of certain products and services. Maybe, the thought of class homogenization is poisonous and unreal!

But in this case what we might experience as pessimist, and sometimes even apocalyptical in the use of “waste/trash/residual” material, could be merely a “creativity spectacle” through a “Do it yourself!” (amateur) giving birth to a new style: The Post-Rustic which converts residual material in to something critical (has its mental function) and ornamental.
The trash as the “new romantic” material.
The technical skills, perfection of the finish is no longer important but the act of elaborating your own “something”, which can be related with the uniqueness of the hand craft that characterizes the Rustic Style.
The Post- Rustic might play with the impression of “primitivity” when actually there is a whole process in the production and function of these “raw” materials, such as paper, plastic, etc. as a result of an industrial society.

In my artistic practice, I would like to keep creating new words to contextualize my work considering the frames language and material contra functionality and how it forms our habits and concepts of lifestyle.
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