RATIONALITY, INTUITION AND EMOTION
exploring an artistic process

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“Love is the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real.”
Iris Murdoch

INTRODUCTION

For many years I have worked with portraits. Series of sculptures that are connected by a variation of themes based on theories of how we perceive other people by their outer appearance. For example, I have worked on a series that has its origin in an old-fashioned theory named Physiognomy, which in the 18th Century was made popular by the Swiss philosopher and pastor Johann Kaspar Lavater. Lavater stated that there is a direct relation between outer appearance and inner self and that you can learn to read ones character in his or her face. (Lavater, 1775) This theory was commonly accepted through to the 20th Century, though later questioned due to its connections to eugenics, theories on race and the Holocaust, thereby being shrouded in shame and finally becoming obsolete as a scientific theory. Nevertheless, after WWII and even up till the present day, there are and were people like the German authors Burger and Nöttling who propagate Physiognomy as a matter of fact. (Burger-Nöttling, 1958)

A series of sculptures that arose from the series on Physiognomy is a suite on racial biology or eugenics. Figurative sculpture put in a context where I question our ideas about race and “the Other”.

Over the years I have developed a very specific approach to my sculpture, where I use images of people who will fit in my settings. After these images I model my sculpture. For my series on racial biology for example, I went to the University Library of Uppsala, Carolina Rediviva, and did research in the vast collection of pictures from the archives of the Institute of Racial Biology. This state institute worked between 1922 and 1958 to gather information on the Swedish population by taking pictures and measurements of over one hundred thousand people. Based on these measurements people where categorized according to their ‘race’. (Hagerman, 2006: 370-375) For my series on racial biology I selected over a hundred pictures from this archive to work with, trying to raise these people from their category by making their portrait in a personal and sensitive way.
At this moment I am working on a series of sculptures which I am aiming to use for this research project. The series is called “French Children of the Holocaust” and is based on a book with the same title. (Klarsfeld, 1996) This book has pictures of almost 2000 children, from the 20 000 Jewish children from Paris who where deported by the nazis to Auschwitz. The relevance for this work has increased dramatically since I have children myself.

I recently returned to drawing again after a 15 year period of neglect. I was looking for a way to open up my process, since I had the feeling that I started to reiterate myself in my sculpture. My drawings hold a position of absolute contrast to my sculpture. They are non-figurative, black and white and flat. There is no direct formal relationship between my sculptures and drawings. Other then in my sculpture where I try to get as close as I can to the person I depict, I simply start with a piece of paper on which I scatter some charcoal powder. The result is highly coincidental and I work until I am intuitively pleased with the result.

In contrast to the fact that there is no formal relationship between my sculptures and drawings, I feel that there is a strong emotional relationship. A relationship which I will investigate and contemplate in this project. I think it is this emotional relation that could hold the key to my deeper motives for my work with portraits of victims of repressive systems. With this investigation I will enter a very personal realm, but its disclosure might be essential to get further in my process.

**METHOD**

At this moment I have a few children’s portraits from the series “French Children of the Holocaust”, but I plan to make up to a total of forty pieces in this series. In the short time that is given for this project, I will make one more sculpture and I will make drawings on a large format. For my presentation I will use three sculptures and combine them with newly made drawings - at least one for each sculpture - and investigate how the sculptures and drawings work together. Parallel to the process of drawing and modeling I will structure my thinking in a journal and a reflective text in which I will investigate my motives for working with series of portraits of victims and contemplate the relations between the abstract and figurative parts of my work.

Working with this project, some very personal memories from psychotic episodes earlier in my life became inescapably pregnant in my mind. These memories showed up as small fragments which I wrote down as they came. Since my main objective for this project is to deepen my understanding of my motives and my process, I decided to implement these fragments as parallel texts, interluding the main text below. The main text consists of journals which I kept up as I was working in the studio. In these journals I have tried to be open to underlaying motives, which I expected to pop-up during the working process. To make a clear distinction between the text fragments and the journals, I present them in a contrasting typeface.
The journals are followed by a reflective text in which I will discuss the different elements of my work and make an attempt to arrange them into an integrated complex.

**JOURNAL**

*day 1.* It is a mess in my studio. Some months have passed since I was here. I worked in Denmark and did some other stuff, but I wasn’t here. So it has become a dump, where I threw in everything I didn’t need for the moment. It doesn’t work for me to simply start in a mess. I need to feel undisturbed and focused. I need to see my references. It can be a chaos, but it has to be mine. I start with making three different workstations: one for painting the last sculptures I made in Denmark, a large table for drawing and a table for writing.

As usual, I procrastinate before I even think of starting: setting my mind, wandering around, making order, choosing what to do. Taking in books and stuff which I want to work with. Taking out whatever doesn’t fit in. Deciding. Trying to get focused. Once I have started I am fine.

On my writing table I have a selection of books that will guide me in some way: Ellsworth Kelly, Drawings on a Bus, 1954; Silvia Bächli, das; Tetsumi Kudo, an exhibition catalogue with work from his show at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1972 (*); The Big Five, about psychological keywords; Boltanski; Karin Lindholm, Knäppfinger; John Coplans, A Body; Antonin Artaud, works on paper; Francis Bacon, an inventory of his studio; Ernst Friedrich, War against War!; Serge Klarsfeld, French Children of the Holocaust.

The last book is the major reference in the series of sculpture I work with at this moment. I might or might not use the other books mentioned. But I want them at hand. I tend to pick them up, walk through and put them aside again. As a source of artistic reference. I don’t read them. I look at the pictures. Some of them don’t even have texts. I don’t care about the texts, it’s the visuals I’m after, though sometimes I read.

Part of my way of procrastination is writing. I write about how to get going, about my mood, about whether I want to be in my studio or not and whether I feel blocked or not, I write about why I write and all this until I kick myself to work. This “work” is making sculpture or drawings. But now this writing has shifted paradigm and has become work as well! Even though writing has always been a part of my process, it has been also a way of postponing my work. Now this writing has become permissive, it feels like a liberation, a relief. I feel triggered to write, but I have to bring it to another level: it has to be readable for others as well. Who will I address in these writings? This is a journal, but other than the diaries which I am used to keeping, this one will not be private. It has to be more formal, yet personal at the same time. It has to be readable for people with a general interest in art, who happened to be interested in my work or in this research project. This will mean: not too much repetition and self-indulgence. But, I don’t want to lose the openness which I normally have in my texts, so I will write freely and edit later.
(*) I saw this show of Kudo together with a friend - since we strolled the museums every weekend - and we thought it was so cool: a penis in a birdcage, a body smeared out over a chair, eyes in a bucket. We saw this exhibition several times and we were very impressed and excited 12 year olds. Kudo is probably one of the artists who influenced me to become one myself. Even after 40 years I still have a vivid memory of this show.

I am in a corridor. I need to visit the bathroom. It is dark. A note on the inside of the door says that the light will switch on if you close the door and lock it. I don’t (dare to) go in. (1986)

picture 1. Anny-Yolande Horowitz was born on June 2, 1933, in Strasbourg. Interned in the Lalande camp near Tours and then transferred to Drancy, she was deported to Auschwitz on convoy 31 on September 11, 1942, with her mother, Frieda and her sister Paulette, age 7.
**day 2.** Last year I worked on a series of drawings which I called "Pondus". A big, black curved form, a dot, on a white sheet of paper. It was about balance and weight. At one point the form hits the side of the paper, on the other side it runs off the paper. As I was working on the drawings, I realized that it was not a drawing which I was after. In my mind it became a huge, free-standing, abstract and flat, black sculpture. I have not come so far as actually making it. But I will. Later I developed the drawings into the opposite position: a white curved form left after making the rest of the paper as black as it can be. The curved form became the moon in the night sky. Since the drawings were meant to be presented together with a sculpture series on the Danish resistance movement - in particular portraits of assassins - the moon became a symbol for activities which under normal circumstances can not take place in broad daylight. That is where I start now: a negative form.

Black space around a white single-curved form. If I leave the paper white as it is, it remains two-dimensional. I need to do something in the white sphere. First I adjust the curve, since I am not pleased with it. It should not be perfectly round, but almost. Now it is sort of hanging.

Still not as close to a circle as I want. I use a pair of custom-made compasses and adjust the curved line. I have noticed before that I get a better feeling of 'a moon' if this moon is not a perfect circle. I will adjust once more.

The black space holds clouds, inclosed. They are in direct contrast with the very dense black space/form around, which has become a container. The clouds meet the dense surface, precipitate, sublimate.
Inside and outside are the same in a different quality, a different density, a different state of being. The moon has transfigured.

I am a self-murderer. We are rehearsing the Hell of Dante in an underground parking lot. I am doomed to burn in hell forever and ever. (1986)

day 3. Even though it is only an aspect in my work, my psychoses and how I will relate to them in this project has become dominant this last week. I need to find a convincing way to implement the small text fragments with the memories of my psychoses that have popped up recently, as parallel elements in my texts. This is in order to say something about the emotional layers in my work. And I need to formulate why I want to include these text fragments in the first place.

I have read about Anna Odell and the way she manifested herself through her BA degree project at Konstfack (University College of Arts, Crafts and Design) Stockholm (Odell, 2009) and I am reading and thinking bits and pieces of other artists who I could refer to. I am thinking of Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) the French writer/artist connected to Surrealism, who for the better part of his life went in and out of mental hospitals while continuing working, writing and drawing. (Rowell, 1996) I want to use him in my text as an example of an artist dealing with being mentally ill, put him in an opposite position to that of Anna Odell and relate these two artists to myself and how I approach my work.

day 4. New drawing. 70 x 100 cm. Though that might be too big for now. Smaller is faster and I want to work with a new form. But small doesn’t speak the same language as big and 70 x 100 is still just a step in between.

It is sort of the same curved form as the moon, but with a horizontal platform. A plateau. (one could jump from.) It’s an old idea, probably 20 years old, but I want to pick it up again, since it is still present. By then, I hardly ever continued working with a form to develop it further. I worked a little bit with it and went on to the next, knowing that there would come a time when I would continue. This time has come now. I have small sketches in a book and I want to work with them.

The abstract forms I use are quite simple. They always have been simple, in their apparent form, not so much in their context or content.

In my drawing I never developed the technical skills as I have with my sculpture. Drawing has been my older sisters domain since I was young. She had a hand for drawing, so I could just as well forget even thinking of it. I got convinced that it was not for me and I never even bothered to try. Later I did, but it always has been, and still is, loaded with fears of my inabilities. So I am easily locked and blocked, and it is precisely that which this is about. Motif and content are directly linked.
I drive a needle through his eye. The picture is a newspaper clipping and hangs on my wall. It is a part of a collage of which I don’t remember much. Except the needle. It has a black knob and I attached a black thread to it. He is a war criminal, responsible for the death of thousands. In my delusion it is me. Him. I commit voodoo on myself. (1986)

day 5. I am struggling to find a way to embed the texts about my psychoses in this project. I want to use these texts because they represent an important emotional layer in my work. Both in my drawings and my sculptures I use my emotionality to strengthen the expression of the content.

This means that my psychoses are not a subject in my work, as it is in that of Anna Odell. Odell faked and relived a psychosis as a part of an art-project in 2009. (Odell, 2009) She pretended that she would commit suicide and protested intensely to the people who wanted to help her, until she was drugged and forcibly removed from the scene. She had a psychosis 13 years
earlier in her life, and did this project to question the way psychiatric hospitals take care of people with an acute psychosis. With her project Anna Odell generated a massive media attention and a public debate. This debate was not about psychiatric healthcare as she had hoped, but about the legitimacy of her actions and whether her project was art or not. I don’t think this text is the place to discuss these questions. I name Anna Odell because she is an artist who explicitly used her psychosis as a theme in her work, to question what she thinks is a systematic failure in psychiatric healthcare. A political stance that I don’t want to take.

I use my experiences with psychoses to charge my work emotionally, to make it more powerful - but the psychoses themselves are not a subject in my work. They are a part the experiences that formed me to the person I am now. I do not feel the need to communicate these experiences in a political format as Anna Odell does in her project. Yet, I want to write about these experiences in able to get a deeper understanding of my motives to work with portraits of victims.

In my abstract work one could see a glimpse of my mental state during the psychoses, but only if this interpretation is explicitly given. Since these drawings are formulated in a fully abstract realm, they are open to any interpretation.

My intention is to make art. Other then psychiatric patients, who have an incurable urge to draw or who need to get hold of themselves through creative therapy. In my perception they don’t make art with the same intentions as an artist would do. Yet, the list of artists with psychiatric problems who managed their illness through their work is long. Thinking of Antonin Artaud. Compare Odell with Artaud. Odell replayed her psychosis with a political agenda. Artaud can’t be anyone else then who he is: a man with psychiatric problems.

_Demonerna kaller mig._
_Det är skuggor av fåglar överalt._
Över mig, under mig, på sidorna, bakom mig. 
(Berny Pålsson, 2004)

_I wake up in pain. It is dark. I lay naked on a bed. It is a metal spiral, no mattress, no sheets. I’m cold. Black creeps out of tiny holes in the wall. I am chained and strangled, cooked and roasted and quartered. I cannot scream._ (1986)

**day 6.** Painting a sculpture from a recent series “War against War!” based on a book with the same title of the German interwar author Ernst Friedrich. (Friedrich, 1924) With his book the pacifist Friedrich, wanted to take a stand against war. He collected over one hundred and eighty photographs from German military and medical archives and published them in this book to make the public aware of the horrors of war. This book contains a collection of pictures of destroyed cities and vehicles, endless amounts of dead bodies scattered around on the battlefields, cumulating in a se-
ries of close up pictures of soldiers whose faces are partly blown away by grenades, but who miraculously survived. Some of the pictures are of man who's faces are 'restored' by the primitive plastic surgery of the early 20th century. (Sontag, 2003: 13-14) I have used some of the pictures from this book to make a series of sculptures since I was fascinated and horrified by these pictures. The sculptures themselves are more free-style than my series on Racial Biology and French Children of the Holocaust. In the latter two series I wanted to depict specific individuals, the first series is about anonymous war victims. I wanted use a more free style to open up my way of working.

But why do I want to make these sculptures in the first place? What is my interest in them? Is it to shock and provoke the audience? Do I think that the contribution I make with my art will help to put an end to war? Just as Friedrich thought? Actually not. I am not so naive that I think that a private discussion initiated by my work here in Sweden will help to put an end to the war in Afghanistan. Yet, war seen from the perspective of war victims, is one of the recurrent themes in my work. Mutilated faces represent mutilated souls. With this work I relive some of the aspects of my past, transfigure those aspects into sculpture with a thought-content tangible to others. With this work I tell my story through the stories of others; I tell their stories through my experiences, through my eyes. Though my private stories remain untold in these sculptures. My personal interest is that I feel purified, slightly redeemed, after making these works, while at the same time I feel that I can focus on a topic that is bigger than me. This is to salvage the Calvinist in me.

Thinking of Louise Bourgeois in the way she brought her experiences into her work, saying something both very personal and of common value at the same time.

I smash my head through the glass. It is like an eggshell. I need to be reborn. I open the window and put myself on the sill. I am naked. I let go, but there is an angel catching me.

(1986)

day 7. Sometimes there are frustratingly long periods between the days I can work in my studio. Like now: I have worked and I have traveled and I have even been in my studio, but I was unable to do any artistic work. So, here I am, trying to get focus again, but there are many things and thoughts pulling me in all kinds of directions. Not the least the reading and writing for this project. I permit myself a small amount of idling in able to get back on track.

Yesterday I was for a short while in the studio and started a new drawing. It is big, 230 x 145 cm. Other then the drawings I discussed before, I have not started with a clear form, but I sprinkled some charcoal powder on the paper to start with. There is a connection to previous abstract work I made: two blocks (fields) hovering over a third. Just black ink, nothing else. The
lines and sides are drawn by hand, which give the blocks a somewhat more organic character on closer study.

I think of some of the works of Brice Marden, for example: “Dark”, 1963. (In: Garrels, 2006: 134) Two dark grey fields, put together. It is the expressive way Marden applied his paint, that brings this painting to life.
“If you’re not working with preconceived forms and thinking, then you can concentrate on expression. It is possible, I think, to make art on this instinctive level, out of a deeply felt response. The longer I paint, the more I think this is true.” 
(Brice Marden, 1987)

Something like this I would like to achieve in my drawings: a direct emotional expression on an instinctive level, connected to a deeper layer in myself. Which means that I cannot simply go to the studio and start with a new drawing like starting the lawn mower. Which is why I procrastinate to get focus.

I am in a fog. They put me there. There is no way out. I am numb.

day 8. What is happening in the drawings I make? They are a kind of reiterative. There are two or three or four dark organic forms with multiple nodes, cores that are meeting, touching, merging, dissolving, separating, enclosing - each other and themselves. There is a flow, a movement, a genesis, a growing, a becoming. But this becoming is as well a start for something (prodigiously) heavy.

In the early years when I made abstract drawings, I could literary feel salvation from the pains and fears I had suffered during my psychoses. I could transient these emotions in my drawings and felt catharsis afterwards. But I could only work for a limited amount of time and on a small scale. I lacked the energy to move on. It was an exhausting experience.

Now I might have the capacity to work on a large scale (and maybe I even have to), yet I wonder if I have the capacity to transient the same emotional energy. My psychotic experiences are more then 20 and 25 years ago; the immanent emotionality is still strong, is still a threat, but this threat is no longer persistent.

I am a chicken. I lay on my nest and scratch the surface with my leg. My feathers are itching. I am in an egg and I need to get out. (1986)

day 9. Today I’ll start with a new portrait. Actually I had planned to work in this project with existing sculpture and focus in my texts on my drawings and the combination of sculpture and drawing. But if I want to describe the whole process, then I also have to make a new sculpture.
I have selected a picture from the book “French Children of the Holocaust”. It is a picture of Jacques Jakubowicz, deported when he was 13. (Klarsfeld, 1996: 1586) He looks like a very sweet Arian boy with blond hair and a little bit of a melancholic smile on his face. I go for his melancholic smile plus the fact that he has a Star of David mounted on his coat, which is a strenuous contrast in which I am interested.

I have to work fast, since there is not so much time left. At the end of next week it has to be done. First I have to decide on the size of the sculpture. The picture of Jacques was taken when he probably was 12 years old. At this age he was somewhere between 140-170 cm, according to a standard growth-curve. He looks frail to me, so I put him at the lower part of the scale, around 145-150 cm. The next assumption is that his head is around 19-20 cm, which implies that the actual sculpture has to be approximately 42 cm, if I follow the picture. Which means in its turn that I have to make the sculpture around 46 cm high, since the clay will shrink with about 9%. This means that I have to multiply every measurement on my picture with 1.7. Since I want to have my sculpture a naturalistic appearance, I measure every little detail in his face and body and transfer that to my piece of clay.

Over the years I have developed this particular working method, and I have become seasoned with it, which might be both its weakness and its strength. In a way I repeat myself, but this reiteration has meant that I have developed very specific skills, which I now can apply to my sculpture. These sculptures are like actors in a play that I direct, serving my needs in a presentation. But sometimes I question the creativity of this process and it can feel that I am in a sense more a craftsman then an artist. Even though these are not opposite positions - an artist is also a crafts person, a crafts person can be an artist.

I have only one picture of Jacques. He looks straight into the lens, but his body is slightly turned away. A classic and traditional way to photograph a portrait. I have to estimate the depth of his face and features, which I only can get accurate by approximation. Here my experience comes in. Even though I try to get as close as I can to portraying Jacques Jakubowicz as the person I think he was, I have only limited information. The question is not whether I make an accurate portrait of Jacques, but whether or not this portrait is credible.

I wake up in a white room. There are no windows. I lay on a mattress with a plastic cover. I am naked. There are no sheets. The door is locked. I am not cold, but tired. I need to poop and there is only a white pot on the floor. I nearly throw up from disgust. I bang the door and point at the pot to the one who is opening. He takes it out and comes back with some food. I sleep again. Later, he brings me my clothes and I can follow with him. We walk through a corridor and come to a room where there are some people eating. I scream at them with all I can. (1990)
**day 10.** Even though I have made dozens of portraits, I never take it for granted. It doesn’t always come naturally to me. Sometimes I have to struggle, because it simply doesn’t work the way I want and sometimes it floats out of my hands. Which is much better. If I struggle, I might as well stop and do something else, since it never will be good. The best pieces I make comes with flow, the mental state where I feel confident, secure and challenged at the same time, but unfortunately I can never force myself into this mental state. I can only create the space where it can happen. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1998: 39-41, 61-62) That is where my procrastination comes in. It can go wrong when the pressure is too high. For example when I had to perform at the Artist in Residence place Guldagergaard in Denmark last autumn. Working in a shared studio space on a commission, I struggled for four weeks with a piece that never became really good. The next piece - no commission - I did in three hours and it was more interesting to look at. Flow is an absolute necessity in my work.

I will now return to my drawings and see if it works to switch just like that. Going from vacuum cleaning to cutting the grass. I have been looking at the drawing for a couple of days while it was hanging at the wall. I did not interact with it and I sort of know what to do next. The different fields have to meet and work together; I will slowly move forward to the point where I think it should be. I will also start with a new and smaller piece, 140 x 148 cm. I don’t want all the drawings to be the same size, so each of them has a more distinct character. The new drawing has only one field, as I plan it now.

The two fields that looked like kissing heads are gone. Instead I seem to have a standing figure in this drawing. These associations are OK for me. It is like looking at the clouds in the sky and discovering elephants, faces and cars. The mind wants control and interpretation. I don’t want it to be too obvious though. The abstract/non-figurative quality should prevail, so that the contrast with my sculpture is maximized.

I continue with the second drawing because I want the other to rest. Next time I can work on them is in a week. I feel that these drawings have to grow in my mind and I don’t want to impose myself on them. They need to tell me what is next.

**day 11.** My method of drawing is very different from my way of working with portrait sculpture.

In my sculpture I have one or two pictures that I use as a reference. I try to get as close as I can to the person I depict. Through the years I have developed a descriptive working method, where I measure the head and all its features and their positions and relations to each other. At the same time, while looking at the pictures I have, I try to feel the person I depict on an emotional level and I try to catch that feeling in my sculpture.

I hardly ever use my hands to articulate my sculpture. Instead I use tools as an intermediate between my hands and the clay. I apply clay and take it away as I think is needed. I can go back and forth in this process of model-
ling and start all over with a detail if needed. I use tools for measuring and
modelling in a rational approach, together with my sensitivity to get the
portrait “right”. During this process I measure and compare the sculpture
with my reference picture(s) and I am done when I think I cannot go further in creating a credible likeness.

In my drawings I take another position. My references are not outside of me, but inside. I don’t use mimesis, but introspection. There is no way to get it “right”.

I cast some charcoal powder on the paper, or I draw a line and I try to see what happens, the process is highly coincidental. I hardly ever work with tools in my drawings, but I use my fingers and hands to spread the charcoal over the paper. I might use a glove to protect my hand from wearing out, as I have worked several times till my hand started to bleed.

I work flat on a table, hang the paper on the wall and see what is happening. It is an intuitive seeing. I make decisions on where to apply changes, take the paper from the wall and put it on the table again to work further on it. Since it only can become more black and seldom less black, it is a one way process of a drawing getting darker and darker. White is the space which I leave untouched. There are a lot of nuances in grey. I work till I am intuitively pleased.

I lay in a bathtub that is filled up to the top. The water is warm and welcoming. I look how my naked body is floating and consider to drift away. (1990)

day 12. Starting with my sculpture is considerably easier than starting with the drawings. Since I know where to go with my sculpture, I can simply continue where I left off the last time I worked on it. I can easily see what needs to be done. This is more complicated with the drawings: I have to sit down and look and feel first, before I can make any decision on how to proceed. Where my attitude toward my sculpture is conceptual, toward my drawings it is contemplative, the drawings pull me deeper into my process, deeper into myself. The rational process of modelling allows me to excel technically; drawing challenges my intuition. The differentiation between my drawings and my sculpture interests me, since it triggers a broader spectrum of my personality - it satisfies both my rationality, intuition and emotionality.

The drawings embodies and visualizes deeper emotional layers within myself that are partly formed through the prodigious emotional experiences during my psychoses. My sculptures bear a similar emotional drive, though the expression is diametrically different and under the surface. The emotional content is merely disclosed in the selection of the subjects I work with.

Until recent years I could only scratch the surface of this content through rational and analytical articulation. I found it very difficult to define the underlying motives, to search beyond my self-created concepts; mainly because I didn’t want to mention my experiences with psychoses. I wanted to formulate the content without referring to these experiences, which made it into a dragging exercise. Obviously, since I have started with these writ-
In my early twenties I experienced an identity crisis. In the “Symbolic” environment in which I was schooled - I worked as a laboratory assistant and was trained in a strict template of how to think and work - I discovered that I had developed myself unilaterally and that I was cut off from my maternal side. My quest for this side within me, which encircled my sexual and later even my gender identity, was triggered by the film Querelle of Fassbinder (Fassbinder, 1982). I was knocked out by his hypnotic film about masculinity and gay life and I soon found myself questioning the whole cultural-symbolic system in which I had grown up and in which I never had been at ease. I questioned this male dominated disposition through making art of all kinds (visual arts, singing, writing, poetry, theater, dance) to find an alternative form in which I would thrive better. By this I returned to the interests and spirit that I had as a child. This artistic questioning, that can be read as an attempt to return to the maternal body, disrupted the fundaments of the world in which I lived to such an extent that I became psychotic.

After these psychoses, I continued making art, but considerably more at my guard for the possible consequences of ‘her’ disruptive powers. The rational-conceptual approach to my sculpture proved to be a safe option, but doubt over the unilateral tendencies of this method remained. Which is one of the reasons why I took up my drawings again. If I include both drawing, sculpture and writing in my process, as I have done during this project, I will generate a multi-facettetted attitude, which is highly compelling to me.
texts When I started with this project, I expected to have two elements in my work to consider, my sculpture and my drawings. However, early in this project I realized that a third element came in and would take a significant place: these being my writings. Notwithstanding that I knew from the start that I would write about my work, I thought this writing would be secondary, in the service of my art, about my art and with the purpose of a deeper understanding of my art. But to my surprise it took a position of equal importance next to my drawings and sculpture. It became another part of my process, another entry into my work, though with a non-visual focus. These writings became decisive for a deeper understanding of my process and my motives, since it is through the formulation of my process that I can reach deeper grounds by verbalizing both my intents with sculpture and my intuition in my drawings.

One of the first things that happened in my writing became of crucial importance to the rest of this project: having decided that I would write down whatever would come up I considered to be of any relevance to this project, some of the memories of my psychoses became very dominant in my mind. I have had some psychotic episodes when I was between 26 and 30 and an aftermath of 10 years with depressions and recuperation. These experiences have played a critical role in the development of the person I have become. The memories of these events dwell in my mind and body as significant undercurrents in my daily life and in my art. Yet, I hardly ever make them public; only occasionally and to a small selection of people I have talked about these experiences. This is partly because of their private nature, but not in the least because I don’t want the spectator to interpret my work mainly through the point of view that I once was a psychiatric patient. Consequently I always had to avoid to refer to this content, so it became banned. However, these references are so crucial that I often found myself in trouble explaining my work, since I had to stay away from a content that is actually undeniable. In the beginning of this project I did not foresee that I would start to describe this hidden content. It happened just because I opened up to the unexpected.

Bringing the fragments of memories of the psychoses into these texts, has given a twist to their interpretation. The text fragments grate uncomfortably with the main text and break its flow. They prelude to other elements in the text. They evoke underlying content to surface. Since the worst has been said, there is no more shame and a subsequent flow can arise to be formulated. In the journals I have tried to maintain this flow and verbalize the specific importance of flow in my process.

Conceptually the text fragments are adjacent to the drawings I have used for this project. Just as the drawings have a strong corporeal presence, the text fragments verbalize this physicality with a clear magnitude. All the fragments start with an “i” which is placed in a specific situation from where there is no escape. The emotional body induced by these fragments finds its visual counterpart in the drawings.
**drawings** Even though they are very physical, these drawings have a fully abstract and non-figurative quality. They are on the verge of being without form. One can even question if there is any form at all. As far as there is form, it appears and disappears. There might be an opening, but it dissolves. Fifteen years ago, when I worked with abstract drawings, I considered it to be a problem that I could not find a distinctive way to know whether a drawing had to be this or that. Since it could be both this and that, I started to feel that the whole exercise of making abstract work was pointless since everything became indiscriminate. That is partly why I changed my working concepts into figurative sculpture where I sought this distinctive qualities. Now I find the openness that I have in my drawings essential and I thrive on it. The drawings allude to a corporeal and complex emotional presence.

The drawings in this project are titled “Naive and Sentimental Drawings” after the composition “Naive and Sentimental Music” of the American composer John Adams. (Adams, 1988) Adams based his title on an essay of Friedrich von Schiller, “Über Naive und Sentimentalische Dichtung” (Schiller, 1795) in which Schiller describes two types of poets: those “who are not conscious of any rift between themselves and their milieu, or within themselves; and those who are so conscious.” (quote of Isaiah Berlin on the website of John Adams) Those who are not conscious are naive, those who are conscious sentimental. My drawings balance between this conscious and unconscious state of being.

**sculpture** The portraits are made in a plain naturalistic style. They depict ordinary people, in this case children. Over the years I have refined my technique, especially for making the eyes, so that looking at these sculptures gives a very lively experience. I emphasize this experience by painting them with water colors and presenting them life-size. So a girl of 7 years old will be met at a height of 123 cm, a boy of 4 at 98 cm. Regarding these sculptures of children can be an ordinary esthetic experience, considering expression and technique, except the emotional context is concealed. Once the title of the sculpture is read, there is no escape: these are not ordinary children, but children taken away from their parents, from society and indiscriminately put to their deaths. The title is essential: “Jacques Wisznia was born on October 15, 1937, in Paris, where he lived at 108 rue de la Folie-Mericourt (11th arr.). He was deported to Auschwitz on February 9, 1943, on convoy 46.” (Klarsfeld, 1996: 1361) This is as dry and descriptive as the portrait itself.

Some of these portraits have a more clearly told story. Where a child holds a sign with a number, you start to wonder what it is about, another child has a Star of David mounted on his coat, which leads to no other conclusion then the horrors of the Holocaust. The fact that these portraits are of children, charges them with an emotional energy I could not imagine before I had children myself. Their fate is incomprehensible. Working with portraits of grown-ups would not have generated the same emotional impact.

By making a appealing portrait, I catch the attention of the spectator. Once I have their attention, I put upon them this very uncomfortable story from where there is no escape. That makes this work subversive by nature. With
the strategy of telling an uncomfortable story in this way, I try to redeem the dignity of these victims.

Working with this subject, channelizes my emotionality. Giving shape to the experiences I endured in my psychoses. Redeeming myself by telling the stories of others. Seeing them through my experiences, seeing me through theirs.

relations My sculptures, my drawings and my texts interrelate in a complex way. The emotional presence that is incorporated in my sculptures is perceived subliminally. The drawings visualizes this subliminal emotionality, as if it is projected upon them. The drawings also allude to the emotional experiences of the subject in the text fragments. Another emotional
body. The clarity of the texts is mirrored by the clarity of the sculptures. The fate of those who are portrayed in the sculptures are as inescapable as that of the subject in the texts. There is a trinity in which the drawings are intermediating.

CONCLUSION

Research has been a part of my process for a long time. Ever since I started to work in a more thematic way, research has accompanied my process. I explore a theme, visit libraries and websites to find images and information around the theme I have chosen, I read about it and think around it. But I have never used this research as tool in an artistic way, to model my process. My research has been explorative and documentary, after which I took the next step to use the material I had collected as a basis for my artistic work. This work has a strong documentary input.

I have used writing in my artistic process as a tool to understand my psyche, to ease the pain that an artistic process can bring and to relieve artistic blocks. It helped me to keep going. I have tried to write about specific bodies of work if needed for a presentation of some kind, texts that I invariably considered difficult to conceive. In this project my writing has shifted paradigm from therapeutic to investigative, creating a fundament for a deeper understanding of my work. This makes me very eager to continue, since this is only a part of the story.

Gert Germeraad, 2012

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PICTURES

picture 1: “Anny-Yolande Horowitz was born on June 2, 1933, in Strasbourg. Interned in the Lalande camp near Tours and then transferred to Drancy, she was deported to Auschwitz on convoy 31 on September 11, 1942, with her mother, Frieda and her sister Paulette, age 7.”, ceramics and pigments, 2011.

picture 2: “Pondus”, charcoal on paper, 2012, 100 x 70 cm.

picture 3. no title (moon), charcoal on paper, 2012, 100 x 70 cm.

picture 4. no title (jump), charcoal on paper, 2012, 100 x 70 cm.

picture 5. no title, ink on Chinese paper, ca. 1993, 137 x 68.5 cm.


picture 7. “Jacques Wisznia was born on October 15, 1937, in Paris, where he lived at 108 rue de la Folie-Mericourt (11th arr.). He was deported to Auschwitz on February 9, 1943, on convoy 46.” ceramics and pigments, 2011

All photo’s: Gert Germeraad, 2012.