Not Playing By The Rules

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Konstfack
Storytelling, Master2
VT 2014
THANK YOU!

Apart from the great support from my internal tutors at Konstfack, Joanna Rubin Dranger and Katarina Sjögren, I have had several talks and conversation with other people, who’s advises and smartness has inspired and influenced my work. A big thank you to Anette Andersson, Johan Hjerpe, Ramia Mazé, Johannes Deimling, Stina Dahlström and Camilla Blomqvist. Also thank you to Jenny Althoff who was my writing tutor during the research course in the fall semester, and Tia Marklund who helped me record and mix the sound. And of course thank you to Kinnabergs Wellpapp and Papyrus who sponsored my project with material.
We are children of our age,
it’s a political age.

All day long, all through the night,
all affairs--yours, ours, theirs--
are political affairs.

Whether you like it or not,
your genes have a political past,
your skin, a political cast,
your eyes, a political slant.
ABSTRACT

Departing from the infamous Fredric Jameson quote “It’s easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism” I have investigated the relationship between play, daydreaming and economical system.

Political scientist Wendy Brown has argued that we exist at a time in history where we have an urgent need for alternative spaces, both in the physical room and in the mind, where an alternative longing can grow. In my degree project I have taken a closer look at this space – what could it be, how does it work, what would it look like if it was made real?

By exploring play theory I try to understand how and if play can be triggered and how this can be translated into a space. By deepening my knowledge about imagination and the relation between imagination and social development, I try to seek answers to how play can be used as a starting point for change. By treating play as a space in a double sense – both as a physical room and a special place inside us, I explore the possibilities this space has for creating new dreams.

This is also a project where I try to restore my own belief in storytelling as something beyond escapism. Aiming to create an in-between, a fusion between scenography, illustration and installation, I seek to create a platform where my work can be the basis for new discussions and meetings. By exploring the performative elements of a room I want to invite the visitor to enter the image and merge with the content. I want to create a work that embraces the visitor and that can be experienced on many different levels depending on the visitor’s interest, age and prerequisites.
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INTRODUCTION

In my master project I have investigated the connection between economy and imagination. I have looked at the financial system we live within, and how this system affects what we create, how we dream and what we long for. I have tried to see my own role in this system, how I contribute to withholding this structure, no matter if I want it or not. And I have fantasized about alternatives, how we could use our imagination to build an escape tunnel – not one that leads us to another fantasy, but to another reality.

It all started with a feeling. The world around us spins at a very fast rate and I was starting to get dizzy. The economical crises, the decline of the public well fare, the rise of nationalism, the climate changes, the neo-Nazism and the endless flow of selfies streaming from social media - It all seem to be connected but I could not see how. But I could certainly feel something - a growing feeling of despair and hopelessness.

Playing is a fundamental human behaviour. A famous quote by Norwegian poet André Bjerke states “If you loose the ability to play, you loose life.”¹ One of the basic premises for play is that you feel somewhat safe and calm. Likewise, playing set your brain in a mode of pure happiness. Play is closely linked to our creativity and imagination, which is the basis for all change.

Through this project I have tried to deepen my understanding for how our imagination is affected by the society we live in, and how we can affect society by regaining the power of our imagination. To be able to start this research I felt the need for orientation, for a perspective that helped me see the whole picture – I wanted to know how the stories we tell relates to the system of our society. I wanted to know how I could use storytelling in a more conscious way.

The end product of this project is a fantasy, a materialized daydream, a longing for another place and an open invitation to the visitors of the spring exhibition to come and play. But it is also the starting point of a research that I hope to continue after I leave Konstfack. It’s a search that will go on and a way of working that has only just started.

¹ http://no.wikiquote.org/wiki/Andr%C3%A9_Bjerke
QUESTION AND INTENT

In this project I am investigating how our imagination is linked to the development of our society. By first examining how our current social system influences and limits our minds, I am trying to understand what we need to be able to re-establish the belief that things can be different.

I look for strategies on how to use fiction and imagination as tools of resistance. Is it possible to change the future just by regaining a belief in your own imagination? Can daydreams alone get us out of the current economical and environmental crises?

Knowing that these subjects are enormous, I have tried to narrow my investigation by focusing on play. Play can be describes as imagination in action. In this project I try to find out if play can be used as a method to establish an alternative space, both in the room and inside people that can host an alternative thinking.

On a practical level, this means I am trying to create a room for play. With this task at hand many questions follows: Is it possible to create a space that stirs adult peoples desire to play? Can you create a room that triggers the feeling of make-belief? Does adults even know how to play or is this ability long gone?

My hope has been that this project will help me restore my own belief in imagination and storytelling as important tools for change. And, consequently, restore my own belief in the future. In that sense, this project is also a personal manual for survival.

DELIMITATION

In this essay I have chosen to leave out much of my analysis of capitalism. The main reason to this is that the material is so large that there was not enough space left for every thing else. Instead I have attached an essay called I’ve never been fond of reality, written during the Konstfack course Writing Research, which serves as a background to this project as well as to my own practice.

When it comes to play theory, I have chosen to only include the theories most valid to my current work. Even if many other theories have been inspiring to my process and might be important to understand the bigger landscape of play, I have focused on theories relating to make belief and rule-less play.

I also had to limit my investigation of the gap between reality and fiction, and what happens when these two sides merge in the context of media, images and facts. I hope to be able to return to this subject in the future.
OVERVIEW

This essay consists of three parts, of which two mainly rely on facts and one mainly rely on fantasy.

My project started with an analysis of the current economical situation. In the first part of this essay I make a summary of this research, and give a brief background to my experiences working in the gap of storytelling and economics. To get the full story the reader is recommended to read the attached essay *I’ve never been fond of reality*, where I also talk more about my previous projects.

In the second part I will investigate the basic functions of imagination and play, and see how our longing is linked to the development of society.

In the third part I will talk about the physical outcome of my project - my process, choices, difficulties and conclusions.

For practical reasons I have choose to put all images in a separate appendix at the end.
PART 1
(DARKNESS)
Whatever you say reverberates,
whatever you don't say speaks for itself.
So either way you're talking politics.

Even when you take to the woods,
you're taking political steps
on political grounds.
IN-BETWEEN

I have never fully fitted in anywhere. Starting out with studies in the Humanities in the late 90’s, I have since moved across a wide range of fields and subjects. In my exploration of the world I have trespassed the borders of theatre, dance, opera, film, performance art, installations, writing, photography and illustration. Throughout this journey my main interests have been situated in the border between reality and imagination. I am driven by a desire to understand the world, how it functions and how we relate to the things we call real and unreal. I am fascinated by the power of imagination and how this fundamental human ability can be used in a wider sense. I am also interested in space and spatiality - may it be the stage, the public room or the personal space within each human. In a similar way as my foremost interest lies in the gap between two areas – the real and the unreal – I have also found that I myself prefer to be situated in-between practices. I do not see myself as fully belonging to any area that I have worked within. I prefer to float in the gaps between them.

To never make up my mind about where I belong has put me in a state of constant motion. During the last ten years, during which I have worked a lot with stage productions, I have moved across many different projects and constellations, in many different countries and contexts. As Konstfack advocates an interdisciplinary approach I was very happy to be admitted to the master group Storytelling. I saw this as a chance to stop for a moment - a chance to reflect on my own practice, to get a wider perspective and to deepen my understanding of visual expressions.

After years of working within the creative field I had namely started to doubt my profession. It felt like I only created escapism, at the time when the world desperately needed us to stay in reality.

SHOPPING THROUGH EUROPE

Between 2010-2013 I worked on various productions in Spain, France, Moldova, Estonia, Ukraine, Lithuania and Germany. During this period I spent an essential part of my time shopping for clothes and material, to be used in the productions, which made me see consumption in a whole new way. Many of these countries were deeply hit by the financial crises and I was making my way through strike rallies, demonstrations and starvation as I was searching for the perfect shoes or the right dress. The only place where nothing ever changed was in the shopping malls – no matter which country I came to, this was the glorious land of consumption and gentrification. The experience of buying 20 pairs of shoes in a mall, with full back up from staff who assume you are very rich and treat you like a star only because you speak English, or the experience of having to pass long rows of beggars as you walk back to the hotel overloaded with shopping bags - it all made me feel sick. I was ashamed of my actions even though they were part of my job - the notion that this kind of life style is what we idealize and strive for was making me more and more depressed.

Having lived and worked in the US I was already aware of the extreme social gaps that can exist within the market economy but the poverty and the desperation I met now felt different. The economical crises also seemed to have brought a wave of cynicism and coldness that frightened me. It seemed as if everything around me was foremost and primarily valued in terms of money. I felt I was at a point where I could no longer ignore the system that surrounded me.

Around the same time, I decided to read up on the current climate situation. I wanted, after years of ignoring the articles in the news, to finally get informed. I especially remember a lecture at Konstfack in 2011 with the British environmentalist John Tackara. He talked about how the main problem with lecturing about the climate changes is that you can’t tell people how bad it really is - because if you do, people panic.
POLITICAL DEPRESSION

In an article entitled *We are all very anxious*, published by the British Organisation Plan C, the authors make an analyse of capitalism and points at a number of public secrets – things that everyone knows but nobody talks about. To exemplify they show how the dominant view of capitalism during the nineteenth century was that it lead to general enrichment. The public secret of this was the misery of the working class. In the middle of the twentieth century the dominant affect of capitalism had moved to be the rising standard of living. The public secret was that everyone was bored due to jobs based on simple repetitive tasks that reduced the feeling of freedom.

Today, the authors claim, the public secret is that everyone is anxious. Capitalism has adopted techniques to push employees even further – We’re now expected to invest even our souls in our work. Simultaneously, the consumer society provides effective means of distraction. New products encourage the growth of the self, portrayed through social media and visible consumption, which demand constant maintenance. At the same time the authors claim “Anxiety has spread from its previous localised locations (such as sexuality) to the whole of the social field. All forms of intensity, self-expression, emotional connection, immediacy, and enjoyment are now laced with anxiety. It has become the linchpin of subordination.”

The authors connects the raised levels of anxiety with a wide number of different developments and tendencies, for example the increasing social surveillance, the neoliberal ideas of success, the shrinking amount of non privatized public spaces and the constant fear of being replaced, springing from the notion that the individual is disposable. Further, they argue that the feeling of not being in control of your own life propels the instinct to control whatever you can control – which has lead to an increased interest in parental management techniques, discipline and grading in schools, time management, anger management, self-branding etc. On a wider social level, they claim this kind of anxiety is fuel for projects of increased social regulation and social control, often aimed at minorities.

Still, they argue, these raised levels of anxiety are seldom discussed in public:

“...When discussed at all, they are understood as individual psychological problems, often blamed on faulty thought patterns or poor adaptation.”(...) “Then there’s the self-esteem industry, the massive outpouring of media telling people how to achieve success through positive thinking – as if the sources of anxiety and frustration are simply illusory.”

I recognize this kind of thinking from many discussions I’ve had with therapists and tutors when I was younger. When you tell someone that you worry about the world the suggested solution is often that you should learn to care less. Not one time have the real problems – the alarming future forecasts and the current inequality of the world – been acknowledged and discussed.

2 http://www.weareplanc.org/we-are-all-very-anxious/#.U0PWBsdnGO8
THE URGENT NEED FOR ALTERNATIVE SPACES

Swedish writer Nina Björk argues in her book *Lyckliga i alla sina dagar* that we during the last 100 years have been so soaked into our current economic system that we no longer can free our minds from it.³ We cannot distinguish our bodies from capital. We cannot think beyond growth and constant production. Our minds have been blocked from believing that any other way of living is possible. Hence, we acknowledge that the world is an ugly and unfair place but we don’t bother to try to change it. Even under the serious treat of the climate changes, with massive turbulence ahead, production is still going strong. Factories still work, planes still take of, we plan for more cars, more shopping malls and more consumption - it’s business as usual. We have since long lost our belief in change. Or to use a popular quote of our times:

*It’s easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.*⁴

Wendy Brown, Professor of political science at the University of California, Berkley, has stated that we have an urgent need for “alternative spaces - in the physical room and in the mind - where an alternative longing can grow.” She adds that this space should preferably not be organized according to the surrounding society.⁵

*A space that does not function according to the surrounding society. A space that allows us to dream about alternatives. A space where we can find and define an alternative longing.*

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³ Nina Björk. *Lyckliga i alla sina dagar; Om pengar och människors värde*, Falun, 2012, 24
⁴ The quote originally comes from the American political theorist Frederic Jamesson, and has over the last years been re-quoted by many others, for exemple Slavoj Žižek. It is also used in Mark Fisher’s book *Capitalist Realism: Is there no alternative?* (Zero Books).
⁵ Björk, *Lyckliga i alla sina dagar*, 35
Part 2
(Hope)
Apolitical poems are also political,  
and above us shines a moon  
no longer purely lunar.  
To be or not to be, that is the question.  
And though it troubles the digestion  
it's a question, as always, of politics.
IMAGINATION IS THE BASIS OF OUR SOCIETY

According to the Russian psychologist Lev S Vygotskij (1896-1934) humans have two basic kinds of actions. The first is reproductive (re-creative) and the second is combinatorial (creative). An example of a reproductive act is to draw a portrait or to revive a childhood memory. These actions does not create new material, they only reproduce what already exists or what has already happened. If we only would do reproductive actions our society would never develop, we would just recreate the same situations over and over.

The other kind of action is the combinatorial – we use this action when we -for example- imagine what is was like to live under a certain historical time that we don’t have any practical experience from. During this action our brain creates new material by combining elements of our previous experiences in new ways. To create an image of what it’s like to be in a desert, our brain might combine our previous experience of being thirsty, our previous experience of sand, and our previous experience of wide landscapes.

The combinatorial action is the basis of our imagination. All human inventions - all scientific, artistic and technical creation - are made using combinational actions. As a result, you can say that human culture is based on imagination. From a scientific point of view, everything in our society that is not part of nature is a creation of our imagination.

Using this perspective, the only thing that is really real on earth is what existed before humans came along - meaning nature. What we today refer to as reality should more accurately be called imagination.

LONGING FOR THE OTHER OTHER

Vygotskij claims that all creativity is utterly based in the human need to adjust to the environment. If the surroundings would not challenge us, there would be no need for creation.

"A creature that would be perfectly adjusted to the surrounding world, such a being would not want anything, would not strive for anything and would, of course, not be able to create anything." 

The German philosopher Ernst Bloch calls our longing the most profound and the only honest of human qualities. We constantly long for something; for a better life, for another place. You could say that our longing is the force that makes the world move. What we dream about is what sets the course of our society.

Today, as we live in a world that praises money, it seems like a majority of the human population dream about similar things; A life of fame and excess - to be admired and surrounded by luxury. Yet, we are painfully aware that our planet cannot handle this lifestyle. We need to change. But how do you change the dreams and the longing of an entire world? What should we dream about instead? How do we

6 Lev S Vygotskij. Lev och Kreativitet i barndomen, Borgå, 2013, 11
7 Vygotskij. Lek och Kreativitet i barndomen, 12-13
8 ibid, 13-14
9 ibid, 35
10 Björk. Lyckliga i alla sina dagar, 28
replace our current longing? Is it even possible to dream of something else while we still exist in this society?

It’s easy to believe that our imagination is a subjective process that is isolated deep within us and only affected by our own feelings and needs. But according to Vygotski the surrounding society has a big influence on our imagination. It is the society we live in that sets the limits for what we can imagine – we cannot reach outside of our own civilisation.  

British writer and poet S. C. Lewis detects two different kinds of longing in his essay On three ways of writing for children. The first kind is closely linked to our real world, primarily manifesting itself in daydreams about personal success. It’s a kind of fantasy that satisfies the ego where "the pleasure consists in picturing oneself as the object of admiration".  

The other kind of longing is the dream of the fairyland, which according to Lewis is very different. The child does not necessarily want the fairyland to be real – for example few children would want the danger of real dragons in their everyday life. Instead this is about the longing for the unknown, for something that is beyond our reach. Further it’s a longing that rather than emptying the real world, gives it a new dimension of depth. A child who has read a fairy tale about an enchanted forest does not think the real forest boring, au contraire the reading ”makes all woods a little enchanted”. Opposite to this is the longing for personal success, which makes our every day life look dull and boring as soon as we leave the fantasy.

In a response to adults who believes that fantasy stories could be harmful for children Lewis writes:

“The real victim of wishful reverie does not batten on the Odyssey, The Tempest, or The Worm Ouroboros: he (or she) prefers stories about millionaires, irresistible beauties, posh hotels, palm beaches and bedroom scenes —things that really might happen, that ought to happen, that would have happened if the reader had had a fair chance.”  

Nina Björk spends a chapter in her book analysing Disney’s movies. She finds that dreams often are a central theme here: particularly the dream of a better life. The main character often fights through a number of challenges and makes a class journey— from poor to king, from misunderstood to celebrated. Over and over again it is the story of one individuals quest for success. And in Disney movies, the dream always comes true. The message is clear: As long as you work really hard you can make it. The lowliest can rise to become the highest. But it’s always about YOU. The other poor people are still poor when the story ends. The basic structure does not change. You might become the king, but this also means there is still a hierarchy. The stories we feed our children are often stories of individualism – the main message is to care about yourself.

Björk claims this is also the foundation of the attitude towards life in our Western society. We have replaced religious faith with the faith in the Individual. The art of waiting – to stand back and follow the shifts of nature, a behaviour that was essential to the old farming society – has almost completely been lost. We have grown used to instant satisfaction, to get what we want at all times. In many ways we are better off than ever. So why do we still want more?

The basis of the capitalist society is the idea of constant growth. For this to work in reality,

\[ \text{11 Vygotski. Lek och Kreativitet i barndomen, 36-37} \]
\[ \text{12 C. S. Lewis. On three ways of writing for children, http://mail.scu.edu.tw/~jmklassen/scu99b/chlitgrad/3ways.pdf} \]
\[ \text{13 Lewis. On three ways of writing for children, http://mail.scu.edu.tw/~jmklassen/scu99b/chlitgrad/3ways.pdf} \]
\[ \text{14 Jonas Frykman och Orvar Löfgren. Culture Builders, A historical anthropology of middle-class life, New Brunswick, 2008, 28-29.} \]
We - the consumers - must constantly buy more things, at an ever-increasing rate. To keep us motivated shoppers, society must put all it’s energy in constantly making us *long for things we don’t need*. Or, as Björk puts it, ”to make sure people who are full still feel hungry.”  

C.S. Lewis ends his paragraph about longing with these words:

“For, as I say, there are two kinds of longing. The one is an askesis, a spiritual exercise, and the other is a disease.”  

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**ADULTS HAVE A RICHER IMAGINATION**

A common misunderstanding is that children have a richer imagination than adults. We often see childhood as the period with the most developed imagination and think of this as a quality that later declines and disappears. According to Vygotskij it’s the other way around: Adults have a much richer imagination. As children have fewer experiences than adults, they have less favourable conditions to

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15 Björk. *Lyckliga i alla sina dagar*, 49
create new combinations in their brains. Children hence can imagine less than adults, but they believe more in the products of their imagination, and have less control over them. Imagination does not reach its full development until we are adults.\textsuperscript{17} The only things that change along the way are our interests and our belief in reason.

Humans are - as far as we know - the only creature that can imagine things that does not exist and the only creature that can create imaginary worlds in their minds for the sake of dreaming.\textsuperscript{18} The Cultural Historian Frederic L. Polak describes this dualistic thinking as a as a fundamental feature of human nature:

\begin{quote}
Homo sapiens is, (\ldots), a creature that can, in a meaningful way, exist in two different worlds at the same time, the actual world that they share with other creatures, and a fictitious one that they themselves make up.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

This human ability to exist in two places at the same time is also practiced when children play. British psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott (1896-1971) has described play as a room of it’s own, situated between the inner and the outer reality.\textsuperscript{20}

**LET’S PLAY!**

The questions about play – what is and why we play - has puzzled researchers for centuries. Not only children play, and not only humans - almost every living being, even snakes, fish and turtles, do play. As play is a well developed phenomena among all creatures one can make the conclusion that it must be of some importance. If it was not important it would have disappeared through natural selection a long time ago.\textsuperscript{21}

Originally, play theories often had an evolutionary perspective. It was believed that the only purpose of play was to get rid of excess energy or practice skills needed in the future life as an adult, such as motor skills.\textsuperscript{22} Today, we know that play is far more complex.

The American neuroscientist Jaak Panksepp has shown that while playing, our brain activates a specific system called the play system. This system is connected to joy – in fact, no negative feelings can exist parallel to play: the play system immediately shuts down if anyone is upset or hurt. Only feelings of joy and care can be activated simultaneously. Further more, when we engage in play, nothing else matters. There is no right or wrong in play, no competition and result is always subordinate process. The end result does not matter; it is play itself that makes us feel good. One could almost argue that when we play, we are free.

There are many different kinds of play: motor skill based play, play with objects, social play in groups, make-belief and rule play.\textsuperscript{21} The kind of play that is generally considered most difficult tog grasp is make-belief.

\textsuperscript{17} Vygotskij. Lek och Kreativitet i barndomen, 40-41
\textsuperscript{18} Ronny Ambjörnsson. Fantasin till makten! Utopiska idéer i västerlandet under fem hundra år, Stockholm, 2004, 10
\textsuperscript{19} Ambjörnsson. Fantasin till makten!, 2004, 10.
\textsuperscript{20} Mikael Jensen. Lekteorier, Lund, 2013, 168
\textsuperscript{21} Jensen. Lekteorier, 27
\textsuperscript{22} Jensen. Lekteorier, 37
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid, 44
Make-belief is a mental activity that involves beliefs that deliberately are projected onto something. For example, a child might hold a stick and pretend it is a sword. While doing this the child has an internal image of a sword that is being projected onto the outer object, the stick. The child’s inner images, or fantasies, are blended with the physicality of the reality.

The relation between imagination and reality is very complex. Imagination cannot exist without reality. Fantasy cannot be created out of nothing. Our imagination is always based on material from reality. Although, as it has been decomposed and reworked, it might not look like reality.

Further, imagination generates real emotions. If you get frighten by your imagination you experiences real fear. It’s not imaginary feelings.

The play area is situated outside the child’s mental world but is not the same as the outer reality. Rather it is a fusion between the outer and inner. This makes the play slightly dreamlike, which sometimes makes it difficult to follow; for example when the objects of the outer reality does not match the inner dreamlike experience.

Donald Winnicott describes play as a free space. He claims it is the only place where we fully can be our selves. When the child has entered the play area it experiences a feeling of a magic control over the surrounding.

According to Winnicott there are creative and non-creative humans. Creative people automatically wants - and can- find themselves as well as the meaning of life. Non-creative people are less interested in finding themselves and do not care about the meaning of life. When we play the conditions to become creative are the best. Through this activity we have the biggest chance of finding ourselves, and become more interested in the world around us.

From the child’s perspective play is a journey of discovery in an unknown world, and along this road lays the possibility to discover the self and the meaning of life. While playing children can trespass to the next level of development without even noticing it. The child suddenly appears and acts as if it was older. The act of playing makes the child use it’s full potential, making it reach much further than it can in the every day life in reality.

By entering the play area and accessing our creativity, Winnicott claims playing can lead humans to freedom. Or to use a quote from the play theorist Joseph Chilton Pearce:

"Play is the only way the highest intelligence of humankind can unfold."

24 Ibid, 52
25 Ibid, 79
26 Ibid, 170
27 Ibid, 172
28 Ibid, 78
29 http://en.thinkexist.com/quotation/play_is_the_only_way_the_highest_intelligence_of/211774.html
Part 3
(The future)
To acquire a political meaning you don’t even have to be human. Raw material will do, or protein feed, or crude oil, or a conference table whose shape was quarrelled over for months; Should we arbitrate life and death at a round table or a square one?
The British writer Neil Gaiman has often stressed the importance of allowing children and teenagers to daydream as it improves their empathy and establish the notion that the world can be different. Gaiman points out that there is a difference between reading a book and watching a movie as the movie will serve you all the facial expressions and emotional responses – when you read or day dream you must imagine these reactions yourself which trains your emotional understanding as well as your imagination. Through the use of simulations, play functions in similar ways. In a simple simulation, a child might pretend to cook on a toy stove – an environment that has a direct connection to the action. In a complex simulation there is no connection or resemblance between the environment and the action. For example, the child could use a book as a frying pan and a chair as an oven. In this example the child must create all the images in its mind.

To help us navigate the outer world, we carry mental representations – or maps – inside our minds. For example, we have an inner map of the cord that runs between the lamp in the ceiling and the switch, to help us remember to look for the switch on the wall. It is these inner models or maps that help us motivate our actions in the world. A secondary representation is a map which is disconnected from the world here and now. It’s the ability to imagine what the world could be like, and the foundation for make-belief.

It has been said that to create change you must start with people’s minds. The French philosopher Julia Kristeva has argued that revolt must precede revolution to make a lasting difference. Kristeva differs revolt from revolution, claiming that revolt is a state of mind, a freedom to question everything:

“Today the word ‘revolt’ has become assimilated to Revolution, to political action. The events of the Twentieth Century, however, have shown us that political ‘revolts’—Revolutions—ultimately betray revolt, especially in the psychic sense of the term. Why? Because revolt—psychic revolt, analytic revolt, artistic revolt—refers to a state of permanent questioning, of transformation, change, an endless probing of appearances.”

British designers and professors Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby have a similar idea with their work: “To achieve change it is necessary to unlock peoples imaginations and apply to all areas of life at a micro scale. By acting on peoples imaginations rather than the material world, critical design aim to challenge how people think about everyday life – to keep alive the possibilities of that everything could be different.”

In the preface to their book Speculate Everything, the duo’s methodology is described in this way:

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31 Jensen, Lekteorier, 2013, 53-54
32 Ibid, 82
34 Anthony Dunne & Fiona Raby, Speculative Everything, Design, Fiction and social dreaming, Cambridge, 2013, 44-45
(...) Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby propose a kind of design that is used as a tool to create not only things but ideas. For them, design is a means of speculating about how things could be—to imagine possible futures. This is not the usual sort of predicting or forecasting, spotting trends and extrapolating; these kinds of predictions have been proven wrong, again and again. Instead, Dunne and Raby pose “what if” questions that are intended to open debate and discussion about the kind of future people want (and do not want).

Dunne and Raby contend that if we speculate more about everything reality will become more malleable. The ideas freed by speculative design increase the odds of achieving desirable futures.35

Dunne and Raby talk about how we are facing a historical shift. They say that we, as designers, have to be brave enough to abandon realism and replace it with idealism. That we have to start designing for the world as it could be, not for the world as it is. We need to control the future by convincing the industry to take other paths than the ones it’s using today.36 They think we need to leave what we today perceive as reality, and move towards a place built from ideas. By speculating more and fantasizing about what the future could be like, we could, through imagination itself, actually strengthen the odds for a better world.

TAKE THIS LONGING

Every invention made by humans builds on earlier thoughts. We constantly develop and build on what has already been created to make improvements. It is impossible to tell who invented the plough - generation after generation has added their improvements and thoughts, based on what had been done by people before them.37 Our society rests upon our communal creativity.

In her book Nina Björk points out how Capitalism for centaurs successfully has fed us the idea that nothing can change. The message has been implanted in us until we absorbed it: This is the way things are. This is the way we are. This is the way it must be. Hence we have allowed capitalism to dictate what we should dream about. We seem to have lost the ability to formulate our own longing.

Lev Vygotskij’s description of our imagination tells us there is a limit to how far we can think – we can not extend the limits of our civilisation. But maybe play can? We have earlier seen how play can make children reach further than their own development. If capitalism has taught us to not believe in change, maybe play can teach us how to regain belief in our imagination, they same way children are able to believe in their fantasies. Maybe something as simple as the act of playing can make us temporarily free from the structures of our society.

Vygotskij claims that one of the basic functions of creation is that our imagination constantly strives to take real shape. Every creation of our imagination – originally made up of different components based in reality - strives to make a full circle and take shape in reality again.38 When something has been created through imagination it ceases to be imaginary and takes real shape. Examples of this could be a painting, a piece of music or a story, which are all real things.

If we fantasies about something it suddenly is more likely to happen. This is similar to what Dunne & Raby claims when they say that merely speculating about the future will raise the odds for better solutions. They propose that we should care less about the accuracy of the work we do and more

35 Anthony Dunne & Fiona Raby, excerpt from web page http://www.dunneandraby.co.uk/content/books/690/0
36 Dunne, Anthony, notes from the lecture Speculate Everything given at Konstfack, 20130419.
37 Vygotskij. Lek och Kreativitet i barndomen
38 Vygotskij. Lek och Kreativitet i barndomen, 49
about the idea. Because “(...) once we move away from realism and, rather than mimicking the world as it is, construct a novel reality, all sorts of fresh possibilities emerge”. 39

This is in line with what Wendy Browns talks about when she calls out for alternative spaces that are not organized according to the surrounding society – spaces where a new kind of longing can grow. A place that would allow us to dream differently. Because if we could make the collective creativity of our society to move in a new direction, reality would quickly follow.

39 Dunne & Raby, Speculative Everything, 124
WHAT I WANT TO DO

Throughout this process I’ve been dwelling about whether I should make this a personal project, where I portray my own relation to imagination, or if I should attempt to make it a public space, trying to pinpoint what triggers the imagination for a larger number of people. At the end of the research period I had landed in the decision to primarily make it my own space. Partly because there was not enough time to make the kind of tests that would be needed to create a public space, and partly because I was longing for a specific kind of space, based on my own needs. Once the piece was built and open to the public things turned out to be a bit different from what I had anticipated, which I will return to in the chapter about the exhibition.

The starting point for the practical work was my aim to create a place where you feel invited, welcomed, safe and yet challenged. A place that is playful and very serious. A place that is full of humour and sincerity. A place where you want to stay, where you can fantasize and where you can feel hopeful – even just for a little bit.

In my notebooks I have further written: I want to create a situation that manifests and celebrates play, with a focus on the rule-less make-belief. I want to create an on going thought, a process, an incompleteness. I want to create a beginning rather than an end. I want to create a fantasy that is open to the public. I want to open the door to play and leave.

The positive intent has not always been easy to uphold. Working with quite heavy subjects I have considered changing perspective more than once. Looking at the method demonstrated by Dunne and Raby, their projects often provide a worst-case scenario, painting very dark pictures of the future. The purpose is to stir a debate about ethics and to influence the opinion to take a stand against their proposal. But leaning on my own research on play – and my own experience of anxiety – I partly disagree with these nightmare scenarios.

When you panic you stop being creative. You freeze, get paralyzed, you close your eyes. The anxiety becomes your main focus. The threats this world currently are facing are so overwhelming that it is hard to know how to react, and even harder to know where to start. The fact that the main message from society to the citizen is to keep calm and carry on is not very satisfying. And yet, if we all panic it surely won’t help us. We need a third alternative. We need another way to deal with this.

I believe many people right now, just like myself, thirst for feelings of hope, sincerity and solidarity. Knowing that creating a feel-good project might be a lot trickier than pointing out existing flaws in the system, this is still the challenge I’ve choose to take on. After having spent several years fighting the feeling of hopelessness, I strongly feel the urge for a positive project.

Dunne & Raby talks about the importance of allowing enough room for the viewer to make their own interpretation. The trick is to invite the viewers to a make-believe – rather then asking them to believe. 40 In my project I planned to invite the visitors to my fantasy, my own daydream, but I still hoped that many people would relate and apply their own fantasies. I’ve made it a conscious choice to try to get rid of all subjectiveness, to not focus on me as a person or a story with characters but merely a place, or a state of mind.

40 Ibid, 93
HOW CAN I MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

My very first ideas revolved around the concept of playgrounds, where the visitors would be able to interact with different materials or structures. These spaces would be open to the public and in need of instructions and explanations. At an early stage I planned to invent a game with set rules. To create clear instructions to avoid any kind of misunderstandings seemed like a necessity. I was afraid that leaving the space “too open” would lead to an emptiness, a great void that easily would fill up with disappointment. I feared that I wouldn’t be able to meet the expectations the visitors might have of being entertained. But the more I’ve been thinking the clearer it has become to me that this needs to be a place without rules, without instructions and without right or wrong. My first intentions were also to aim for people to really play in the space. Soon it became clear that to find the mechanisms that would make adults play in public would take much time and need many investigations with different test groups. As I did not aim to use established play tools that most people have a relation to, like slides or swings, my space needed to change. I realised I might have to settle with the sensation – or even the memory – of the magical feeling of an imaginary world. Knowing that a memory is not fully an act of creativity, it still felt like a starting point to make people approach their imagination.

Dunne and Raby suggest the use of design speculations as thought experiment-constructions – crafted from ideas, expressed through design – that help us think about difficult issues. My project is not speculative in the sense that Dunne and Raby advocate, but it might respond to the idea of a thought experiment-construction expressed through design. 41

Using play as a method, I decided to allow my knowledge on play to set the conditions of the space. To be able to play you need to feel safe, you must be well rested, well fed (hunger cease the instinct to play) and you cannot be sick. The environment needs to be free from stress, free from threats, free from conflicts, free from social structures and free from requirements. Play easily starts in a well-known environment, with well-known objects and inspiration from every day life. There need to be a connection to reality and there need to be unfulfilled desires. Play also benefits from trust, openness (but not open space), spontaneity, optimism and variation. 42

After letting go of the idea of an open playground I began investigating rooms that could withhold different worlds or imaginary universes. My first physical sketch was a model of a simple pathway, lined by a flat forest silhouette, leading in a circle to a central point. Everyone I talked to kept referring to it as “the maze” even though there wasn’t really anything mazy about it – there was only one way to follow and it had no blind alleys. After working with this idea for a while I decided to change the structure as the focus became too big on what was going to happen in the centre. Instead I started to experiment with a more linear structure, with two different entrances, putting a bigger emphasis on moving through the space. I liked the idea that the visitor fully would emerge into something, and that the walls would create a shell that shut out the surrounding exhibition environment. I wanted to create a feeling of mystery about where the path was leading, hoping to spark the visitor’s own imagination. Also, in my research I learned that children often prefer to play in places which provide a shield from the surrounding environment - behind a door, under a table, among the trees.

I decided to add carpet to give it a softer, more embedded feeling and to be able to request that people would remove their shoes – a strategy to make them less stressed and more aware of their senses. The carpet was later replaced by a hand painted double-layered paper floor, to make the work more cohesive. It was also a result of my discovery that walking on the thick corrugated

41 Ibid, 80
42 Jensen, Lekteorier
cardboard created very special feeling in the foot. To make the entrance and exit to the installation clear and visible, I hoped to minimize the use of instructions.

CHOICE OF AESTHETICS

We often talk about things being playful but what does it really mean? A quick search in a couple of online dictionaries defines playful as “fond of games and amusement, light-hearted, funny, cheerful, comical, flirtatious, whimsical, lively, spirited, mischievous, good-natured”. Clearly play it is not considered to be heavy and dark, which might be good considering my aim to make this a positive project. I was also thinking that using an aesthetic that people associate with childish activities might help people to relax, as they would not expect it to be “difficult art”. If they would enter the space with open minds and a positive attitude expecting “a playful, childish experience” the chance would be bigger that they could connect with their own creativity.

Playfulness has throughout history been used as a protest of the established ideals, for example through Dadaism in the early 20th century. Still, I decided to not make any clear references to previous existing aesthetics or movements.

To gain a better understanding of the aesthetics of play, I used my 2 years old daughter as a “playometer”, going with her to different playgrounds to study her reactions. A big question has been if the aesthetics of the playground affects the way the child play. Do children play different games depending on what playgrounds we provide them with? If so, does this mean they develop different sides dependent on the environment they play in? Does style at all affect play or is play it only a matter of function?

According to Michael Jensen, there is an inverse relationship between object and function in play. When playing, it’s the idea that rules. The idea of a phone overrules the look of the phone – anything can be used as a phone as long as it follows the idea that you talk in it. 43 In ordinary life reality rules – objects come first and meaning second.

As of my daughter’s reactions, it was quite hard to tell. She is still so young that she greets most things with the same enthusiasm. Although she did not react in any special way to the big animal shapes in the playground at Kristinebergs Slottspark, Kungsholmen, designed by the acclaimed Danish design team Monstrum. She had a much stronger reaction to the traditional wooden play houses in Blecktornsparken, where she immediately started to pile up stones in a corner and loudly

43 Ibid, 74
acknowledged, “This is my house!” This could of course have more to do more with the two year olds natural love for stones - maybe the big owl will make a stronger impression in a few years. But there is also a connection to the play theorist’s quest for familiar environments and links to everyday life. A small-scale house might relate more to her present reality than a giant owl. No matter how much the mother appreciated the design choices made in the owl.

**CHOICE OF MATERIAL**

My first thought was to build the walls of the installation out of Masonite, mainly because it is a very cheap material. I soon realised this would need lots of planning and a very early start of construction.

To be able to prolong my artistic process (and delay the date for final construction) I decided to explore the possibilities to work with paper instead. I also liked the idea of paper as it provided a clearer connection to GDI and the master group Storytelling. It seemed nice to work with such a simple material, to boil down all the complex theoretical layers to a project executed only by paper and pen. It also felt connected to the idea of play, as it would allow me to explore a naive aesthetic that might be associated with children and children’s drawings. But most of all it seemed like a good idea because it strengthen the notion that the project was foremost an exploration about ideas and process, not about a perfect end product or a beautiful object. The fact that the paper structure would be quite fragile, and might get worn down and torn during the use over the exhibition period also added to this feeling. As corrugated paper primarily is a packing material, used for transportation of delicate goods, it also felt like it had a connection to the material I worked with in some of my previous projects, where I used packing material to make a subtle comment about consumerism. The corrugated paper felt linked to the production society and to the general idea of a system.

The paper I choose turned out to have a life of it’s own – it had a sound, lots of movement, and a very specific way to curve. I soon had to abandon my original idea to work with a silhouette of a pine forest, as that shape was fighting the nature of the paper. I decided to spend a few days just playing with the material, to see what it could do. As I only could find studio space during the weekend I had to bring my daughter along. While I observed her instant fascination with the paper I realised that just the size and the material itself was enough to make her start playing. She quickly invented a paper bed with a paper blanket, she built a hut, she rolled herself into it, she played hide and seek, she drew on it, she tore it apart. When I made her path for her she immediately went on an excursion. When I called it a forest she did too, and she started to look for forest animals. I begun to think that if her imagination was so easily activated by the material, maybe others would be too. The simpler I could keep it, it would probably be the better. As the paper had a natural tendency to roll and curve, I started to investigate these shapes, exploring the possibilities of tree trunks and circular patterns.
The forest can be interpreted in many ways. It’s traditionally a symbol of the unknown, of the mysterious and the adventurous. It can be seen as a place for transformation. In many plays it’s used as a symbol for sexuality and desire, where entering the forest may mean leaving the rules of the surrounding society (ea. A midsummer nights dream, Into the Woods etc.). In fairy tales it’s often loaded with magic and mythical creatures. In Folk stories like Little Red Riding Hood, it’s a dangerous place, especially for young women – a theme I’ve used in many of my previous projects. At the same time the forest is a rough reminder of our roots and a symbol of something we are about to loose due to the climate changes.

I grew up in a forest outside Lund in Skåne. Being the only child in an area without many neighbours, I spent an essential part of my childhood playing alone in the woods. Back in the 1980’s when childhoods were still free and unregulated, no one seemed to think it was neither strange nor dangerous to allow a child to wander off on her own. I often was accompanied by our dog, a Border collie that I had grown up with and who I treated like a sibling. I still remember the magic worlds that would open as soon as I stepped onto the green moss with my (often bare) feet.

Traditionally, the forest has been a natural and important place for children’s play. Lars H Gustafsson writes in his book Leka för livet that one important aspect of playing in the forest is that there is no agenda. There is no manual, no tools, and no rules. Still, children tend to play in similar ways when they come to a forest. They seem to seek big stones, symbolic trees, water, and places to build huts.  

Gustafsson also describes what he calls “moments of wonder” or epiphany’s – a psychological sensation that occurs everything feels “right” or “in balance”, and which often happens in relation to

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44 Lars H Gustafsson, Leka för Livet, Stockholm 2013, 164
experiences in nature. Gustafsson draws the conclusion that an epiphany is more likely to happen when we receive something with all our senses than through a computer or TV-screen. The forest has also been an important place for play as it provides a rich variation in material and activates all senses. The forest provides natural training for motor-based skills as well as it heightens smell, hearing and sight.

WHAT SHOULD IT FEEL LIKE?

During a session with designer Ramia Mazé in the course A public space for the Mind we discussed experience prototyping. Mazé argues that an experience automatically makes people more involved (as compared to a design object) since it is something you feel instead just watch and debate. When you experience something you use all of your senses and you receive the information in a more diverse way. My intention has been to create an installation that you can experience through your body as a first interaction. I would like to create the feeling that the visitor emerges into the image and disappears into another world.

It has been said that there is a difference between watching art and experiencing art. My experience of the previous Spring Exhibitions at Konstfack has been that it is quite a stressful event with a lot of people and a lot to see. In that kind of atmosphere I personally appreciate projects that reaches out to me, embraces me and talks to my senses. I think that reading a lot of text in a room full of people can be very stressful.

Dunne and Raby claim we must make speculation move from behind the screen or from the pages of a book to coexist in the same space as the viewer. In my case, I want the visitor to enter my – and hopefully their - imagination. But to play takes a lot of courage. The distance between play and reality can be large. Lars H Gustafsson often notice what he calls “the moment of hesitation” – he see how even small children hesitate to take the leap into imagination, knowing that it is a risk to trespass the gap between reality and fantasy. Gustafsson writes “in the borderland where reality and play touch each other it is as if the air is electrified by the friction.”

According to Dunne and Raby one of the advantages with design is that it exists here and now, which makes future speculations present. Play can happen in many different tenses. Children who play often talks in the past tense. Play is imagination in action, and while children are playing ideas rule over actions. This means that you can try out many different actions without the risk of any bigger impacts. This is a unique situation. For example, a child who plays good-bye might wave to its friends as if it was departing. But the child is only pretending to depart. The idea of departure rules over the real action. Children who are about to play often start with orientating themself in the physical room by exploring the possibilities of the toys or objects at hand. After this examination they start to play. While planning the layout of the installation, I tried to take all these things in account.

45 Gustafsson, 162
46 Dunne & Raby, 86
47 Gustafsson, 151
48 Ibid
49 Jensen, 78
SOUND

Early on I knew I wanted to experiment with sound in my work, to add another layer and activate another sense. The paper already had a very specific sound, and when someone walked by the walls shivered, which almost sounded like the wind in a treetop. I used this as a staring point and began to play with forest sounds made by the material I had worked with. The scissors sounded like birds or crickets, the turning wheel on the paper knife sounded like a frog. The sound created by stretching a piece of tape sounded like a strange owl. Shaking a piece of paper became thunder, ripping a paper apart became a cracked branch. All together it created a strange orchestra of imaginary forest creatures, with a strangely calming effect. I recorded all the sounds one by one in the studio of my friend Tia Marklund, who also mixed all sounds and helped me find the perfect rhythm and timing.

We then decided to focus the main sound in the biggest room in the paper structure, using a pair of hidden active speakers and a mixing table, while separate sounds, like a single knife frog or a lonely scissor bird would be heard along the path through the use of small blue tooth speakers controlled by a number of borrowed cell phones.

SMELL

I also wanted to use smell as an ingredient as I thought it could help creating a relaxing atmosphere. I tried many different smell-sources: burning oils, scented candles, incense, fabric dipped in different things, I even bought a Wonderbaum. But even though I focused on smells that were said to be relaxing and that had a natural connection – like lavender, cedar wood, pine tree etc., everything just smelled synthetic. I gave up after my master presentation when I had prepared the room with lavender and everyone who entered, with panic in their eyes, exclaimed, “What’s that smell! Is something burning in here!?”

PRESENTATION

A big struggle has been to decide how the work should be presented – in what context and with what kind of framing. Most difficult was the decision about what text to use. How much of my research should I add, how much should I trust the work to speak for itself? My fear has been that the audience would miss the point, that they only would see a childish, playful installation. And if so - would that be ok? On the other end was the fear of explaining too much, not leaving room for the visitor’s own interpretation and overloading the work with information that was hard to digest.

As I wanted to minimize the text, the title of the installation became increasingly important. For the longest time I was dwelling between four different titles (Not Playing By The Rules/I’ve never been fond of reality/We’re in this together/Free Play), without coming to any conclusion. Finally I returned to the title I had used as a working title during the project and as the title for my background research: “I’ve never been fond of reality”. I was worried that it sounded too negative, and that people would interpret the piece as being only about escapism. But during the exhibition many people had positive reactions to the title, and quite a few visitors commented on how they really liked it.

Another big challenge was how to limit the written instructions but still make it possible for the visitors to understand how to interact with the piece. To wrap my head around this I set a meeting with Stina Dahlström who is a dance producer at MDT in Stockholm. She is used to working with big audiences and guides them through interactive stage works. We decided to get rid of my previous thoughts of a booking or queuing system where only 2 people at a time would enter the piece.

Instead I decided to be present to personally instruct people who felt confused, in combination with a few written sentences on the floor around the piece, which only stated “please take off your shoes”. I also drew four boxes on the floor and placed a pair of my own shoes in one of them, to further help people understand the idea.
DIFFICULTIES

Ironically, as my project centred on spatiality, it turned out to be close to impossible to find a space to work at Konstfack. As the paper I was using with was 2 meter high and 75 meters long I needed at least 5 square meters of free floor space to be able to sketch on the structure. And, no matter how big Konstfack might seem, this was not possible to find. Every single corner and corridor with more than 2 meters width was being used for exhibitions and course work during the spring. ALL rooms were booked. From the beginning of January until the end of March, I sent approximately 40 emails within the school regarding my request to book a space to work. I contacted people outside school, I wrote to the landlords of the surrounding buildings, I even became member in an organisation aiming to find working spaces for artists. Meanwhile I was getting more and more desperate. As I study without funding I did not have enough money to rent a big space outside of Konstfack, and my own studio was much too small. When I realised I had spend almost three weeks of work only looking for a space, I was close to giving up. I finally managed to get a cancelled weekend slot in one of the art department’s studios, but as I had to bring my daughter the work was less efficient than I had hoped. Later a classmate suggested I should occupy the photo studio at Konstfack, to which we have unlimited access, and so I did. Even though the room was not big enough for me to build the structure I could at least make experiments with shapes and paint. Thanks to this I found out that I could not fully paint the standing paper walls, as they eventually collapsed from the weight of the paint, an experience that would have been very painful to make during the exhibition. Due to the lack of space I was mainly forced to work with small-scale models and to try to solve the project on paper rather than through practical work. This made the balance between theoretical research and practical work a bit off, and left me with a large amount of practical work for the last period before the exhibition opened.

I was also struggling to make my personal life endure the sacrifices in time that the project needed. As I was the only parent during long periods of the spring I was left to work during the night, primarily between 22-04. This gave me very little sleep, and together with the stress caused by the scale of the project, my fear of not being able to finish it was growing. During Easter I had a physical collapse and for a few days it was not certain if I was going to be able to continue the work. But my curiosity of how it would be perceived by an audience was too large to cancel it. I simple enjoyed the project too much.

RESULT

I only had 10 days in the exhibition space before the exhibition opened. In this time I needed to make the final plan for the pathway, figure out in what order I needed to build the construction, invent and build a support for the walls, lay out and paint the floor, mount the walls, paint the walls, place and mount the speakers, find an arrangement for all technical equipment, build and paint all objects that should go inside the pathway, invent a system to communicate with the visitors and make signs at entrance that made the installation clear to the visitors.

Time was of course short to do all of this, which I knew but choose to ignore. As a result many choices were made at 4 in the morning, and many decisions were taken mainly due to necessity to move on. A big challenge was to make the installation look simple even though the construction was quite complex. I had to build everything in a revered order, for example I had to paint the floor before I mounted the walls. And to know how to paint the floor I needed to mount the walls and mask everything, then re-mount the walls again. The whole installation was made out of two whole pieces of paper, approximately 75 meters each. To figure out what end should go where to create the desired paths was quite an intricate matter. Also, before the support was fixated the walls easily could fall over, risking to seriously damage the material.

Most affected by the lack of time were the aesthetic choices. As my research had told me that the aesthetics of play were subordinate to function I had put all choices about the style last on my to-do-
list. I had vaguely planned to use a simple painting style limited to lines and with just a few colours. But due to the lack of time all the final choices became on site improvisations. I did not have the time to make samples for all parts of the path nor to try it out in full scale before I painted on the original walls. Also, as the walls constantly moved as I painted them I became extremely seasick, which made the work move very slow. After a few days I came up with the idea to eat seasick pills while I painted, which worked surprisingly well and brought me back to speed. I managed to finish the installation just in time for the opening and during the first days of the exhibition I was still a bit confused about the way things looked. As most things exhibited at Konstfack are extremely well designed and pretty I was worried that people would read my hand painted scribbling as lacking craftsmanship rather than a manifestation of play. But the fact that the function was more in focus than the aesthetics seemed to work well on the visitors. Even though I can’t help wondering what it would have looked like if I had spent more time developing an aesthetic specifically for the project, others have claimed that the work really benefitted from – and needed - the lack of a strict design.

What worked best was that the installation evoked people’s curiosity – very few people passed by without considering to enter. The fact that you could not see what was inside, but you could hear the sounds and see how the walls moved, made people stand on their toes and stretch to the sides to get a glimpse of what it could be. This often lead to a very nice tug of war between peoples curiosity – the urge to know what was inside – and their laziness – it’s a bit of a hustle to take of your shoes. 9.8 times out of 10 the curiosity won. I think this can be compared to Lars H Gustafsson description of how children sometimes hesitate to take the leap into imagination. Many peoples decision to take their shoes off was accompanied by a sigh of relief and/or a comment in line of “oh, what a heck”.

Another thing that worked really well was the positive energy the installation produced. Almost every person came out smiling. This created a great atmosphere in the room and I really enjoyed spending time in the exhibition. The piece also created very nice meeting between people, for example when someone was laying on the floor to peak into one of the low peaking holes while someone else entered, or when two unknown people met in the first big peaking hole.

**REACTIONS DURING THE EXHIBITION**

The first day of the exhibition I had a hard time to find my place. Should I be present at all times, inviting the visitors to the installation and giving them instructions on how to perceive it? Should I be standing opposite of the work, merely observing it and only getting involved if there was a problem? Should I leave the room completely, allowing the visitors more freedom in their explorations of the piece? I swung between feeling like a barker, a police and a museum guard. But after a few days things begun to fall into place. As the installation was based on experience people seemed to have a need to talk about it afterwards. Many visitors came up to me to tell me what they had experienced, even when I was not standing next to the work. They wanted to tell me what feelings they got inside, what thoughts they associated it with. They wanted to talk about how it could be used, what it was, things it reminded them of. During the 10 days the exhibition was open I spent approximately 50 hours standing outside the installation, talking to hundreds of people. It was exhausting but a very nice experience. It also became clear that when I was present, people slowed down and became much more observant to what was around them. At times when I was not there people often walked into the installation at a high speed with their shoes and jackets on, while talking on the phone.
The most common comments, both from children and adults, were:

- I want to go back in!
- I want this at home!
- It was like being in a world of it’s own!
- It was really exciting!

It is hard to tell how many of the nice comments that were said because I was there and they knew it was my work. It could of course be an expression of courtesy. But most people seemed genuinely happy. “And you thought it would be boring to go to an art exhibition”, a mother told her son while she tried to make him depart from the installation.

Other typical reactions were the man in his 50’s who outburst: “I felt like I was five years old again!” Another middle age man, with excitement told me, “I got so scared, I met some one else in the peeking hole!” “I immediately felt like a wanted to build a hut!” a woman in her 20’s told me. Two other women around 20 who did not know each other came out laughing loudly as what they had believed was a mirror was in fact the others persons face. These kind of spontaneous reactions, and the instinct to tell me about it, reminded me of the reactions of children who has engaged in play and wants to tell someone about it. The only difference was that the children who visited the installation had a bit more elaborative stories: “First we crawled through a dark cave, then we came to a big room filled with wood and a tiled stove. “ “It was like a secret city!” a group of 5-year-old preschool kids told me.

More reactions from visitors were: “it was like a kinder version of Richard Serra” (a man in his 50’s), “I never thought about the fact that corrugated cardboard is so beautiful” (a woman in her 50’s), “it was like being inside a fairy tale” (a man, 25), “I could never build something like this” (a girl, around 7), “this makes me think about unemployed teenagers and what it must be like inside their heads” (a woman, 45), “there is a mouse somewhere inside!” (a boy, around 4), “this is so important!” (a woman, 30) “This makes me think about New York Hall of Science in Queens” (a man, 45), “Wow!” (an old lady, 75), “Imagine to do this on acid” (a man, 20), “what a shame to get back out in reality” (a man, 30), “all of the exhibition should have been built like this” (a man, 30), “this was the most fun I had today” (a woman, 30)

As many people smiled when they came out people on the outside became even more curious, which encouraged them to take off their shoes and go in themselves. This way the installation worked best when the exhibition was quite busy, so there was a constant exchange of people. To have 5-6 people walking through the installation at the same time turned out to be the perfect balance. The biggest effect came when two people entered from different sides at the same time, making the timing perfect in the peeking hole and the big room.

Many people who visited the installation later returned with friends and family to show them the piece, and many people came back several times. Some times people stayed inside the installation for a long time, one day a couple of gentlemen who did not know each other got engaged in a long conversations in the big room, others stayed to rest for a while from the crowded exhibition. Parents with babies let them play on the floor in the big room, where they could explore the piles of painted wood sticks and roll the tree trunks around. When I closed the exhibition in the evenings there was almost always some things that had moved or switch place inside the installation, as the visitors explored it. Some of my classmates started to use the installation as an escape when they needed a rest from their own work. Many people expressed that the experience had a calming effect on them.

But there were of course other reactions as well - people suffering from claustrophobia did find the narrow walls frightening. Approximately one person per day referred to this feeling and two people said their claustrophobia was so strong they did not dare to go in at all. One young woman said the
experience reminded her of walking through a forest alone at dusk, which scared her and made her walk faster. Another woman said she felt lost and confused inside. Two children around the age of 3 got scared, even though they were walking with their parents, and did not want to walk back in. Apart from these children, the most common problem was to get the kids out of the installation as they insisted on going again and again and again, which often forced their poor parents to either carry them away or bribe them with sweets. The children quickly became my best guides as they persistently tried to get their parents – and other adults- to enter, and made the adults play in more elaborate ways. Still, it was a fine balance as children who were left unattended by their parents quickly started to test these limits and played more and more violently, running faster and faster. This put me in a tricky situation – I did not want to interrupt their games, but at the same time I did not want them to damage the installation. Originally I had planned to have a rule that children under 10 only could enter together with an adult, but as many children kept coming back over and over I did not want to deprive them the joy of having found something they liked in an art exhibition. Instead I tried to talk to all children who entered the piece, telling them that the walls were fragile and that it would be good if they did not run, but that they were most welcome to explore the piece in other ways. Often it worked well, as kids are generally very smart and cooperative. But a few times when there were several children in the same age - often around 7-10 years old - things got a bit out of hand. What surprised me the most was that the parents, who often were nearby, did not tell their kids to stop even though it must have been clear to them that they very close to ripping the whole thing apart. Instead I had to remind both children and parents that the reason they could not chase each other wildly inside was that the whole thing was made of paper hence fragile. Still, these occasions were exceptions and over all the children were fantastic visitors.

A surprising observation was that people who studied or worked within psychology seemed to have a direct understanding for the project, interesting because much of my research on play was based on the work of psychoanalysts. Also, people who worked or studied to be art teachers or worked with children in other ways were very interested in the project, especially for how it could be used within education. Others suggested that libraries to be a good place for the piece, but even more people suggested it should be put in a public space, like a public square. The frequent and repeated references to a public space were interesting, as I had been dwelling between the private and the public during my process. Not a single visitor referred to the work as a private space or a personal interpretation of imagination. Still, through out the exhibition people were very involved in trying to figure out what is was, and how it was to be used. Maybe some of this engagement came from the fact that we, as adults, not are very used to places where we are allowed to –just – play. We instantly want to add another purpose to make it more valid. Yet, in play it’s play itself that is the point, and playing makes us feel good – many visitors expressed that they got a good feeling from the installation but did not seem to understand why they felt this way.

Even though I knew that the installation would probably work well among children my main target were adults. Therefore I put most of the peaking holes in eye level of adults. Some adults reacted to this, thinking that it was unfair to the children. Others thought it was refreshing that it – for once - was not adjusted for children. The kids themselves did not seem to care; they were busy with their games.
DISCUSSION

During this project I’ve choose to see the installation as a work of it’s own, as one part of my master project, where the research and written text make up the other part. I choose to separate the installation from the text during the exhibition, as I wanted to see if it managed to speak for itself without too much explaining. I made the installation specifically for the Spring Exhibition, taking in account that people would be exhausted and too tired to think or read too much. I am still battling the question if I should have merged more of the research into the final piece, making the connection to society more clear. Would this have made more people see beyond the playful experience? And would that have been desirable, or would it just have gotten in the way of making people connect with their playful, childish side? Judging from the reaction in the exhibition, people interpreted the project very differently, depending on their own interests and knowledge. Many people did not bother to read the text in the end, and mainly talked about their physical and emotional experiences, while the once who did read the text often wanted to talk about the quotes that I had used and how play is linked to social development. This made me think about the old discussion in stage art, whether it always should be a goal to reach as many people as possible, or if are there are projects and subjects that are more suited for a smaller audience. My ambition with this project was to reach both groups – and in one sense I think I succeeded to do this. The people who expressed the biggest enthusiasm were either people from outside the art world, who seemed relieved to find a joyful experience that they were not asked to “understand”, or other artists, who both had previous knowledge and a big interest in the subject. The group whose opinion I know the least about are the people in-between - critics, curators, frequent art-goers.

Another question is how much that would have been different if I had had a place to work with the piece and could have built it all before the exhibition. For example, then I could have brought in test groups and made changes and adjustments based on their reactions. Now the exhibition became the first test and the visitors on the vernissage became my first test group. Another thing that could have been different if I had had a working space is the aesthetic – maybe the paintings on the walls would still have looked the same but if I had been able to make them prior to the exhibition it would have been less stressful. During the critique at the end of the exhibition I also got an interesting suggestion from a professor that I could use the patterns to hold the visitors inside the installation for a longer time, by developing them further and giving them a subtle meaning.

Yet another interesting aspect of the project is that I’ve learned how easily discussions about dreams and longing slips into questions of moral, where people think that they are being criticised for their lifestyle. I’ve written more about this in my background research but I think it worth mentioning here as well. As daydreams are something very personal people tend to be very defensive when they feel that you question the content of their dreams. The fact that my project was aiming at the structure controlling this longing was hard to communicate as people in the exhibition instinctively started to defend their dreams when we discussed these issues. This is something that I’d like to work more with and develop further in the future.

CONCLUSION

One of the questions I had when I started the work for the exhibition was if it would be possible to create a room that stirred adults desire to play. Of course, the level of engagement varied between the visitors of the exhibition but I do think that the piece managed to create a playful atmosphere. The positive energy and the number of people smiling and laughing were also signs that people had reached a different mind-set compared to when they entered. I don’t know if I managed to activate their play system, but at least they – for most part - seemed to be calm and happy after the experience. People seemed to experience that they were removed from their every day reality, if ever so short. To use the visitor’s curiosity as a starting point worked very well, and the peaking holes
throughout the installation made people bend, stretch and even lay down on the floor. Many people seemed interested in the project and wanted to know more about the background. More than ten visitors were interested in reading the final report. Through the background research I have gained a much bigger understanding of how imagination works, and how important it is for the development of our society. The doubts I earlier had about working with fiction and/or imagination are now gone. I feel very motivated to continue this research, and to keep developing my work. I also feel more hopeful about the future, which was a personal goal. I have learned that an effective way to fight the feeling of despair is to work actively with imagination and play, and to invite others to this feeling. Even though it in many ways was a crazy project to take on – especially as the physical size was so big and I lacked finances and a working space, I feel very happy that I managed to pursue it. It is so rare that you get to do a project in this large scale and I really wanted to take advantage of the facilities at Konstfack. I also feel like I managed to merge my diverse background into a new form, which really became the in-between of scenography, illustration and installation that I had hoped for. I plan to continue working with this project in many different forms – I want to develop the text-based research further, as well as improving the physical installation. But first, I want to go out and play with my daughter.
Meanwhile, people perished,
animals died,
houses burned,
and the fields ran wild
just as in times immemorial
and less political

All short texts used in this essay, like the one above, are stanzas from Wislawa Szymborska’s poem Children of Our Age.
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Part 1
Sketches

Early sketches exploring different ways to create an image that is also a physical experience; a walking track that divides the body from the mind, a room in the room, an easily accessed but yet closed off universe.
Soon leaving pencil sketches and starting to sketch in 3D, making simple paper models of different paths, shapes and forms that could be achieved through the use of corrugated cardboard.
Part 2
Material play

Exploring the material in full scale to find possibilities and limitations. Each paper roll is 2 meter high and 75 meters long, and weighs 22 kilos.
Part 3
Paint samples

Trying different kinds of paint and different methods of painting.
Moving into the empty exhibition space and starting to map out the shape of the installation.
Above: Putting down the first layer of the floor with help of my assistant. Below: Masking out the shapes with tape on the final layer of floor + paint samples.
Painting the floor: the different rooms and environments are painted onto the floor before the walls are mounted, turning the floor into a gigantic ground plan.
Trying to match up the walls with the painted floor to make sure everything fits, before removing the walls again to finish the floor. + Late night work with patient assistant.
Placing the stakes with sand bags on critical points of high pressure + starting to unroll the walls for their final placement.
Part 6
The exhibition
Please take off your shoes
Front of the installation, side view.

Right side entrance.
Views from inside the installation, walking down the path.
Looking through the large peeking hole.
The big room at the center of the installation.
One of the smaller peeking holes, containing the treefigure images.
The treefigure images, seen through two of the peeking holes.
The peeking holes at the exit, containing a short text about the work.

Maline Casta
I've Never Been Fond of Reality

Med utgångspunkt i det välkända Fredric Jameson-citatet "Det är lättare att föreställa sig jordens underkant - där är jag utomhus förhållande mellan lek, dagdrömmar och vårt ekonomiska system."

Statsvetaren Wendy Brown menar att vi lever i en tid med ett akut behov av alternativa rum, både fysiska och mentala, där en alternativ längtan kan växa fram. I mitt masterprojekt har jag titst närmare på detta rum - vad skulle det kunna vara, hur fungerar det, hur skulle det se ut?
A person reading the text in the peeking hole before exiting.
The installation seen from above.
I’ve never been fond of reality

Writing research in search of a degree project
Chișinău 2012

It’s almost 40 degrees Celsius in central Chișinău, and the market place is huge and bazaar like. A swarm of tightly placed marquee roof stalls and tiny, narrow passages spreads out like a never-ending labyrinth. It’s easy to get lost. You can find anything here; clothes, shoes, nylons, plastic containers, screws, nuts, fishing equipment, tape, showerheads – there is no order but still those who live here know exactly where to look.

I mostly feel seasick. People turn around as I walk past, whispering, pointing. I’m shopping for costumes and shoes for fourteen dancers and that doesn't go unnoticed in a small city with a bad economy. With all these bags, it’s hard to be discrete. Most garments are only available in one size and almost all of them are made of polyester. Few of the market traders speak English. The rumor spreads quickly between the stalls. "Where you live?" yells a woman while I inspect a sweater, "America?" And when I establish that the size is too small and turn away. "Please, buy something else!" Please, please, buy something.

I soon discover that there are more market places of this kind in the city, lots more. Old, wrinkly ladies sit along the streets with buckets filled with walnuts and plums that they have plucked outside of the city. In the outer regions people put their belongings on blankets directly on the ground, everything is for sale. We travel by car through the different parts of the city, and I’m struck by the amount of market traders, the amount of articles, the tiny shopping malls with stairs up and down, and shops only a square meter in size, where the owners sit, bored, on a chair waiting for customers – because if there is anything missing it’s just that. It’s like everyone here has things to sell, but no one can afford to buy them.

When I finally find the city’s one modern shopping mall just outside the city center, the contrast is enormous. Here, you can shop for western designer clothes on three climate controlled floors and finish on the fourth, where big fast food chains jostle with concept restaurants. I receive full support from the staff. They open doors, laugh, present me with things. Without introducing myself, I’m excused of every regulation. "No, no, it's okay for you", assures an older guard in the mall when I try to check in my bag. It’s okay for you. Money talks and English is the language. When I’m about to leave I notice people snapping photos of each other in the escalator – it is the only one I see during my stay in the city.

The executive director at Chișinău military museum makes about 220 euros a month. It’s a good wage. Many here earn about 1 000 Moldavian Leu a month. That equals 700 Swedish Crowns. Still, the prices are not remarkably lower than in Sweden. Imported items in the big food stores in the center of the city are about the same price as in my local Konsum store back in Stockholm. Locally produced products are cheaper. A pair of shoes cost 220 Leu at the market, a pair of suspenders 200 Leu. The Nike's I end up buying cost 1 500 Leu.
This place could make you feel immensely rich. You could live out all sorts of fantasies about being wealthy. Although I only feel dirty and a bit sad. I feel shame when I notice young girls following me to see which clothes I look at. I feel shame when the Moldavian dancers realize that the trousers I dress them in cost more than they earn a month. I feel shame for myself, I feel shame for the world, I feel shame for all of Western Europe.

Abstract

How can you justify working with fiction at a time when the world is facing the worst environmental threats ever known? Wouldn’t it be better if we all stayed in reality? And what is reality today? Why does it seem like the border between reality and fiction is blurrier than ever?

After working with stage design for several years I began to feel I was part of an industry that only created escapism. It felt like people around me were more interested in the next episode of their favorite show than what was going on outside their windows. I began to wonder if more fiction really was what the world needed. My doubts grew into a moral crisis where I even considered abandoning creative work for the benefit of activism. For this essay, I decided to focus on the balance between reality and fiction. I try to outline the world around me to gain perspective and to better understand the system I am a part of. I also look for strategies of how to use fiction and imagination in a more conscious way. I ask myself if it’s possible to change the future just by using people’s imagination.

Preface

After nearly ten years of working within performing arts, I applied to Konstfack. My reasons were many: I felt the need to think, to rephrase, to take a break from the strenuous and unsettled life as set designer. When I made it to the Masters program in Storytelling, I knew I wanted to be immersed in my own stories and create my own fictitious worlds instead of designing others’. But suddenly, it was as if it wasn’t possible. Not because I in any way lacked ideas or inspiration. Instead, it was because reality kept getting in the way. And reality in 2012 seemed to be of a brand new kind. Climate change, the dismantling of the welfare state, and the consumption carousel seemed so absurd it was impossible to turn away. It became increasingly hard to justify my own work. It literally felt like the world was collapsing around me.

You could call it a moral crisis. How would I be able to focus on fiction with the world being as it was? How could I defend working with fantasies instead of fighting for a better future? I didn’t find any answers. When trying to discuss the issue with people around me, they didn’t understand what I was getting at. They were fully occupied with their lives, following TV-series, picking up their children from day care and buying new furniture.
So I decided to make the research period about precisely that issue. An investigation of reality. To make the analysis of the contemporary moment the starting point for my Master's project. An investigation of that which gets in the way. But also a search for strategies, for contexts, and for answers to the question: How to relate to reality in one’s artistic work?

For there is something about reality that is jarring. Something that seem to be skewed. Something that is dissolving. Maybe it's something about the digital. With all the edited images. With the lack of critical thinking. Something with media. Maybe it’s something with you and me.
The dreaming animal
A progress report

Karl Marx once wrote that the most specific ability of the human species is the ability to dream.¹ In her book *Lyckliga i alla sina dagar*, Nina Björk uses the image of the human as the dreaming animal as a starting point. It’s a beautiful image. Humans dream and humans change. We are capable of planning for a future radically different from the present.² Intellectual historian Ronny Ambjörnsson also connects to this image in his book *Fantasin till makten!*

> Out of all living creatures, the human is the only one who is capable of imagining that which does not exist. Dogs can yearn, cats can follow invisible traces: but humans can build imagined worlds, enter into them and forget, if only for a short while, about their surroundings.³

Ambjörnsson describes this human dreaming as something that has existed in all times, and he continues with a quote from the cultural historian Frederik L. Polak:

>(Polak) sees the dualistic thinking (...) as a fundamental feature of human nature. Homo sapiens is, (...), a creature that can, in a meaningful way, exist in two different worlds at the same time, the actual world that they share with other creatures, and a fictitious one that they themselves make up.⁴

Here, Polak makes a distinction between the actual world – reality – and the fictitious one, and says that we can exist on both levels at the same time. Our need for fictitious worlds has hardly escaped anyone’s attention. We have never watched more movies than now – the average in Sweden is 80 titles per person a year – and TV-series and computer games generate billions.⁵ However, we rarely take a closer look at this behavior. Exactly where do we go when we leave reality?

Nina Björk interprets the dream as an expression of lack. She says that every dream originates from discontent. We determine: I am not happy. I want something else. If we dream of other places, it consequently means we are discontented with the present. Or as Björk would put it: Longing for something is also longing to get away from something.⁶

An illustrative example are Disney movies, where the dream almost always is an important part of the story. Here, the dream always belongs to an “I “— it is the main character of the movie that is dreaming of something better, something else. A person looking for a change. And in Disney movies, the dream always comes true. The main character reaches their goal. The message is clear: Everything is possible if only I work hard enough, if only I fight for it. The lowliest can rise to become the highest. It is, as Björk puts it, the revolution of Western modernity, the foundation story of modernity, an appeal against subordination.⁷
It is also the foundation for an attitude towards life in Western society. We have replaced religious faith with the faith in the individual. The main message to the citizens is that they should do something with their lives. The world lies wide open, the possibilities are endless. Everywhere, you can hear the echo of the career mentality: "Hurry up and make something of your life, seize the possibilities, calculate, invest and expand.\textsuperscript{xviii}\textsuperscript{wii} The art of waiting – to stand back and follow the shifts of nature, a behavior that was essential to the old farming society – has almost completely been lost. Adjusting to the seasons and thinking ahead has been replaced by consumption and instant gratification.\textsuperscript{ix} We are used to getting what we want, all the time. In many ways we are better off than ever. So why do we dream of something else? Why do we always want more?

According to the German philosopher Ernst Bloch, longing is the most profound and the only honest of human qualities.\textsuperscript{x} Still, the fact that dreaming is in our nature does not explain the content of our dreams. Nina Björk finds that we dream according to our societal organization:

Capitalist society relies – to make it simple – on peoples ability to work and purchase products. However, the relation between production and consumption has changed during the course of the 20th century.\textsuperscript{xii} If we used to live in a society of producers – human bodies were required to work in the factories and to go to war – we now, due to technical invention, live in a society of consumers. Physical work is no longer central. Instead, it is the soul that should be remodeled.\textsuperscript{xvi} For it is no longer enough to purchase what is necessary for our survival. The capitalist system requires constant growth in order to function.\textsuperscript{xii} It requires us to consume, burn, wear out, replace and throw away products in an ever-faster pace. It requires that we produce products, the life span of which has been systematically shortened by built-in faults. It requires fashion to change with the wind, so that consumers constantly feel the need for something better, something else.\textsuperscript{xiv} But most of all, it requires us to constantly long for things we don't need.\textsuperscript{xv}
It is never enough.

According to sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, the consumption society strives to keep its citizens eternally unsatisfied.\textsuperscript{xvi} Or, as Björk puts it, to make sure people who are full feel hungry.\textsuperscript{xvii} 

Philosopher and psychoanalyst Slavoj Žižek describes a world where we live under a constant pressure to enjoy ourselves. Those who break this pattern might even be punished. It has become our human duty to dream about goods and services.\textsuperscript{xviii}

In Disney adventures, the main character strives for a better life and the dream comes true. Still, the over-all structure of society stays the same. The servant may become the king, but the kingdom stands. Disney movies never contain any revolutionary ideas about society. The hierarchy remains, only the I changes position. The dream of a better
life goes hand in hand with the capitalist system. However, the capitalist society rejects all thought of a different reality.\textsuperscript{xix} \textit{It can never change.}
New York 2005

It is late summer and I'm staying in an apartment on Greenpoint Avenue together with E and two other American friends. The contract is illegal – the building is still under construction and only certain parts are habitable. The ground floor is crowded with construction workers, dust and cement mixers. However, we have just finished NYU, we are poor and honestly, do not care much about regulations. The apartment is enormous and in all ways amazing, and the rent is – thanks to the circumstances – very low. When signing the contract, we make an oral contract with the landlord where we agree that we understand the risks with the accommodation, and that we cannot talk aloud about it.

After installing ourselves, it doesn't take long before our cultural differences start making themselves heard. I want to shop in the only "health food store" in the neighborhood, where they sell organic vegetables and eco-friendly household goods. My friends think I'm crazy. They want to shop at the local low price store, a classic supermarket with pale blue fluorescent lights and long rows of frozen food merchandise. The food there costs a third as much. I have very little money, and give in. However, I have a hard time finding items that I want to buy. The meat doesn't really look like meat, the vegetables are rock hard. I wander restlessly up and down the isles.

One day, E tells me that she didn't hear of the word "environment" until she was a teenager. She tells me this in confidence, clearly embarrassed. Not once during the course of her childhood – preschool, elementary or middle school – did she hear anyone utter that word. Nobody talked about the environment. Or, for that matter, about pollution. "I barely knew there was something called nature".

E grew up in Ohio, the part of USA that is called the Midwest. "Where all fish had three eyes", she usually adds, referring to years and years of pollution scandals. When E's parents come to visit, her mother comments on the recycled toilet paper I stubbornly have dragged home, like this: "I don't understand why you would want to wipe your ass with someone else's old news."

E and me were born the same year. While I spent my Sundays in Mulleskolan or at some numbingly boring bird-watching trip with my parents, E's memories of Sunday activities take place at Dunkin' Donuts and McDonald's drive-in restaurants.

Our perceptions of reality are so immensely different.

All of us struggle with our economy during our year in the apartment on Greenpoint Avenue. None of us makes much money. By spring, E has overdrawn almost all of her cards. At the same time, the construction is coming to an end and the landlord starts talking about raising our rent, in case we would like to stay. One day, while paying our bills, E suggests that we sue our landlord. We assume that she is joking. But she repeats: We could earn a lot of money. It's illegal to rent like this, you know.
My friendship with E comes to an abrupt and sad ending. She falls in the stairs, injuring her foot. She returns from the hospital on crutches. There is a fracture. She is outraged and she keeps blaming the landlord for the accident. At this point, she really wants to sue him. I say it's probably a bad idea. E doesn't agree. She has no insurance. To her this is a disaster. When summer arrives the construction work is finished, and the apartment is put up for sale. I move back to Sweden. E sues the landlord. She writes me an email asking me to provide testimony to strengthen her case, to confirm that we were tricked into renting the apartment and that the landlord was intimidating and often aggressive. I tell her that unfortunately I can't do that. E writes back that she will never talk to me again.
Longing for Neverland

In 1516, Thomas More wrote a story about the imaginary land *Utopia*. The name derives from Greek and means no and place, a non-existing place – a *Neverland*. The title has become a generic name for a whole genre of literature dealing with imaginary, non-existing societies.

Utopia is a thought experiment, it only exist in theory. That is why utopias often seem grandiose. Because, like Ronny Ambjörsson puts it, why settle for the mediocre? Utopia is in itself a perfect state, which means that changes can only make things worse, according to the utopist. Therefore, the utopist tries to create built-in defense mechanisms to preserve Utopia in its original form, to protect it from change. Such mechanisms could be, for example, a secret police force or surveillance system. Therefore, a leap to a totalitarian and non-democratic society is not far. But there are those who try to develop different sorts of utopias, utopias that are open to change and can be abandoned when they are no longer useful.xx

The idea of utopia is exhilarating. Ambjörsson says that ideas about another way of life, a better way, have existed in many, if not all, societies and cultures. Myths have always been important for humans. Already early on, myths made speculations about other societies possible. It allowed people to put the contemporary in perspective and opened up new ways of thinking. Myths showed that one’s own society was not the only one possible, since other people could live in completely different ways.xxii

And if the act of dreaming mostly concerns the longings of one individual, utopia is a fantasy of a better society. Nina Björk explains the difference this way: *The dream is about an I, while utopia carries a we.*xxii *The dream says that I deserve another destiny, while utopia say that the world deserves another destiny.*xxiii

Therefore, Björk says, the capitalist society is a society that rejects utopia.xxiv When we start dreaming about what’s best for the collective, we start caring less about ourselves and more about the group, which makes us bad consumers.

The word utopia has gotten a bad connotation and is mostly used as a derogatory term for unrealistic projects. The fact that Hanne Kjøller, editorial writer at DN, describes *the ambition for change through politics as utopian*, is only one of many examples of this.xxv The capitalist society cannot tolerate change. This is the real message in Disney’s movies: *Nothing can be different.*xxvi

Or, to use one of the most famous quotes of the 21st century: *It’s easier to imagine the end of the world than an alternative to Capitalism.*xxvii The system seems to have bogged down. Björk writes:

The immanent power of the fact that the human is a historical being – conscious of their own history and able to change their future – is tamed to a state of the domestic animal, where the only approved will for change is the one concerning
their own life. On the political arena however, history has come to an end, the future only being a prolonging of the present.\textsuperscript{xxxviii}

Simply put: You can change yourself but not the world.

So, what happened to Marx’s belief in the human ability to imagine that, which does not yet exist? Why is it that we suddenly can’t seem to imagine one single alternative? Is it really so that the capitalist system won’t allow us to think outside it’s own frames? Are we locked within a mould?

When Slavoj Žižek spoke at the Liberty Square in New York during the Occupy Wall Street-movement in October 2011, he described the situation like this:

\begin{quote}
\textit{(...) In mid-April 2011, the Chinese government prohibited on TV, films, and novels all stories that contain alternate reality or time travel. This is a good sign for China. These people still dream about alternatives, so you have to prohibit this dreaming. Here, we don’t need a prohibition because the ruling system has even oppressed our capacity to dream. Look at the movies that we see all the time. It’s easy to imagine the end of the world. An asteroid destroying all life and so on. But you cannot imagine the end of capitalism. (…)}\textsuperscript{xxxix}
\end{quote}
**Odessa 2013**

Veronica is 27 years old, fluent in English, and has a degree in economics. She is newly wed, and just moved to Kiev to live with her husband, who sells luxury yachts for a living. However, currently she is in Zatoka, a small seaside resort a couple of miles outside of Odessa where she serves as my interpreter and assistant for a couple of weeks. We travel back and forth between Odessa and Zatoka, Veronica playing sad love songs on the car stereo.

– I don’t like to cook, she says. But now I’m married, so I have to.

She drives fast, often while being on the phone. We pass three quite serious car accidents within a ten-minute drive. It’s rush hour in Ukraine.

After her studies, Veronica has been working mostly as a production assistant at different events, for example big weddings.

– I like to work as an assistant to people, she says. But there’s a problem. Men always come with suggestions. I don’t know if there is something wrong with my behavior. But in Ukraine it’s very common that women sell themselves – even in big institutions, like universities – they try to survive, to get money for studies or to stay in Kiev. It’s sad and awful but it’s everywhere. So men assume they can ask anyone. And when I say no they get really… surprised.

She pauses to think for a while.

– I think the women are to blame. I really do. They should not make it such an easy access. Men are just men.

When we get closer to Odessa, there are policemen standing in the roundabouts, waving cars in.
– What are they checking? I ask. Driving licenses?
– No, Veronica replies, they just want money. You give them some bills and then you can keep driving. I was stopped on the way here, I paid 100 Hryvnja and continued driving. It’s just how it works here. You always have to calculate for that when you’re going somewhere.

When Veronica was in Germany for the first time, she tried to give money to the nurses at the hospital.
– They thought I was really weird! she laughs.
Veronica’s dad is ill with cancer and Veronica often accompanies him for his treatments, as an interpreter. Both of her parents are chemists.
– They were still studying at the university when they had me. When my brother was born, my mother had started at the factory. My brother was born almost entirely
without skin. Veronica’s father worked with carbon processing until he got cancer. It’s both in his liver and his lungs.

– Is it because of his work? I ask.

– Of course. Most people in that city are sick. The factory is located at the centre of the town.

– Does he get any compensation from the company?

Veronica laughs again.

– This is Ukraine, not Sweden.

Each treatment at the German hospital costs around 60 000 Swedish Crowns. Most families can’t afford that.

– A lot of people die in Ukraine that could have been saved, Veronica says.

When she talks about the political situation in Ukraine, she steps on the gas without thinking. The car is shaking and jumping on the bumpy road. There is almost no asphalt left on it.

– One day I will be really rich and buy a Mercedes! she yells through the rattle. Design cars are an important status symbol here, as are designer clothes. Ploughing through the shopping malls of Odessa in search for dance costumes, Veronica insists on carrying all of the shopping bags. When we leave the mall, loaded with bags, she laughs and exclaims: It’s like a movie! And then, in a playful, theatrical voice: Spa! Spa! Massage!

We pass a supermarket and decide to get lunch there. Veronica warns me about the fruit and vegetable section.

– You should not eat fruit from the stores in Ukraine. They are full of chemicals.

Going back to Zatoka we drive pass the notorious seven-kilometer market place, the largest in the whole country. Goods are delivered by ship, enormous containers are standing around outside of the market.

Lana del Rey sings from the car stereo: I wanna run away run away run away run away.

– Have you seen that TV show, Veronica asks me, what’s it called... Best Shopper! They get 2 000 Crowns (Fråga till Maline: Svenska kronor?) each to buy as much as they can possibly manage in two hours. It’s very funny. They run around, sweaty, pulling at things. We would beat them, easily!

I ask whether she wants to continue working with what she is trained to do. She gets quiet.

– It’s not so easy for me, you know. Of course, every one dreams of working in the EU or in America.
She thinks for a while.

– You know that guard in the food store, who wanted to check your bag? I told him "leave her alone, she’s from the European Union!" Nobody would think that someone from the EU would steal anything. It’s different here. No one wants to pay for anything in Ukraine. Why pay when you can get it for free?

– Why don’t you go ahead and move?

Veronica's eyes darken.
– This is not Sweden, remember. Getting a visa is not easy. You have to know the right people. You have to pay a lot of money. I can’t go anywhere. I am stuck here.
The Glitch
On gaps in the system

In their book The Ecological Rift, environmental sociologists John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark and Richard York describe how, as a result of the capitalist system, a deep rift has appeared between man and nature. Human society has ended up so far removed from the ecosystem that we no longer feel attached to it. We don’t recognize our own origins. We have forgotten how to live in tune with nature. We find nature weird, sticky, uncomfortable. It is something tedious and obsolete. Something we no longer need. Further, the writers describe how we live in a culture where the line between what is real and what is not is constantly overthrown. Where a dying ocean can seem less real than an interim report. Their experience is that many climate analysts seem more interested in saving capitalism than saving the planet, even though we know that capitalism is the source of the problems in the first place.

When most people in this culture ask, “How can we stop global warming?, that’s not really what they are asking. They are asking “How can we stop global warming without significantly changing the lifestyle that is causing global warming in the first place?” The answer is that you can’t.

Nina Björk finds a similar "system failure" in capitalism. She describes how an obvious discrepancy occurs between theory and practice when the principle of human equality is combined with capitalist economy. We say that we believe in an egalitarian community, but still we accept these huge misallocations. We say that all people have the same rights, but we accept that some people live in poverty and starvation. According to philosopher Kate Soper, the bourgeois society legitimizes social injustice by asserting that humans are equal by nature. The difference between those who succeed and those who fail in the world thus lies, according to this theory, only in how hard they work. Again, this belief in the ability of the individual. The faith that the individual is the lord of their own destiny, regardless of their original social status. The Disney fairytale on repeat.

Thus, we live in a society full of rips and gaps. There seems to be a rupture between reality and the system. An enormous ditch. Something in this interests me. Something in the very precipice. Something in the rift between the human society and nature. There seem to be secret spaces here. A no mans land. A void. A no place. A Neverland.
Madrid 2010

I am alone in a hotel room in Madrid. It’s late September, but still as hot as in July. At midday it's almost impossible to be outside. I'm sitting in front of my computer, following the news reports on the riots. My school Spanish is poor, but after a few hours the news has spread to the international media. I’m stressed, I'm only here for two days and the plan was that I should have a look at the market and buy shoes for some of the dancers. Now I’m not sure I can even get to the city centre. Masked people are throwing bricks through the windows of the stores in Puerta del Sol. It's Wednesday, but the theater is closed, there is no one I can call. Finally I go down to the reception and ask them. "No, stay at the hotel" they advice me, "it's not safe to go outside today".

I don't have time to wait. The metro is closed, so I walk to the city centre. Everywhere I turn, shuttered windows, empty streets.

Spanish trade unions have started a major strike to protest the government’s austerity package. It's the first strike in eight years. The country’s whole production has been standing still since early morning, and eggs have been thrown at trucks trying to deliver goods. According to the unions, 10 million people have joined the strike. It is certainly not the best day for shopping.

Still, when I reach Puerta del Sol, the demonstrations have dissolved. The ground is covered in a sea of red flyers, saying hulega general. Riot police are protecting the few businesses that have kept open; McDonald’s, H&M, Zara... The stores along the largest shopping street, Gran Via, are opening again, but the owners only open the shutters halfway. I have to crouch to get in. Every now and then a group of protesters passes outside on the street, carrying signs and banners. I wonder what they would do if they saw me sneaking around with my shopping bags. If they would see me as a traitor.

Unemployment in Spain has reached a new record this spring, 20 percent, and according to media over half of the population below the age of 30 is economically dependant on their parents. There has been talk about the lost generation. There has been talk of a housing bubble.

When I return to the hotel a couple of hours later, it's as if nothing has happened. The glass fragments have been swept away, there is not a red flyer in sight. The metro runs as usual. Other news are on the headlines. There is no sign yet that this country will soon have unemployment numbers of 27 percent and growing fast, that Puerta del Sol will be full of homeless people and that violent protests will be a part of everyday life.
Reality
On the dissolution of borders

I have always found it difficult to distinguish the private from the public. My private life keeps seeping into my working life. Feelings and thoughts about my family, the future, the world, can't be scheduled to certain hours after picking up my kids from daycare. They are with me at all times. In the same way, it can sometimes be hard to distinguish reality from imagination. My daughter's teddy bears alter between being living things and dead objects all the time. When playing, she moves freely between different worlds. She has not yet learned how to separate imagination from reality. Even in my grown up life, at this point the borders seem unusually blurry. In social media, I have a lot of friends that I'm not sure I actually know. I know all about their lives, but when I run in to them on the street, I'm suddenly uncertain – should say hi or not? More and more often, I find news articles online that turn out to be years old, or even pure lies. I find these articles even in the daily papers. I learn that everything I read should be taken with a grain of salt. I learn that many people lie. I learn that e-mails from strangers could contain viruses and should be opened with great caution. I learn that even e-mails from the bank, the phone company and old friends should be opened with great caution. Suspicion permeates everything.

The one thing that can be trusted, it seems, is advertizing. I know that all incoming calls after 8 pm are from telemarketing companies. I know that the text message tone Friday afternoon is most probably H&M Club. I know that my one and a half year old kid is already tempted by ice cream clowns and teddy bear tooth paste. I know that my Facebook page is filled with ads for diet pills, while my partner’s is filled with ads for dating sites.

Nina Björk writes in her book that we've reached a point in history where it has become impossible to draw a line between people and the economy. \textsuperscript{xxxvi} We are so pervaded with capitalism that it has become part of us. The border between product and human, object and subject gets blurrier every day. \textsuperscript{xxxvii}

A couple of years ago I noticed that I had, subconsciously, started editing my photos in a new way. Without thinking, I removed details that bothered me from the image. Electrical sockets, a big rock or a pair of legs. With the new Photoshop tools it was so easy. Whoosh, and it's gone. The image looked better, and soon I had forgotten that it had ever looked different.
It's remarkably simple to adjust reality, just a tiny, tiny bit, so that it fits our own preferences better. Is this a good thing or a bad thing? Is there a danger in the habit of being able to edit everything around us, so that reality always looks better in our photo albums than before our eyes? That we increasingly strive for advertizing ideals even in our private sphere? I don't know. Maybe it will lead to us feel less and less comfortable in our everyday lives, since they can't live up to our expectations. Maybe we want to spend more and more time in imagination, dreams, where everything is a little better, a
little tidier, a little easier.

Towards the end of her book, Nina Björk calls out for reality, and she does so by referring to the UN declaration of human rights – she says that equality already exists in our minds, but that the step from theory to practice is still missing. That we still haven't learned how to realize our ideas.\textsuperscript{\textit{xxxviii}} She is probably right. And it is exactly that, the interest in reality, that I was missing, and that was when I became doubtful of my profession. When I felt like we had started spending disproportionate amounts of time in the fictitious world. Yet, we're reluctant to think that it's more reality that we need. After all, there's a reason why we don't want to be there. Why we feel more comfortable in the fictitious. Maybe, the solution can be found in our dreams. If we stop dreaming about the perfect kitchen or the straightforward career path, reality will follow. But how does one change one's dreams? Perhaps we need to open the door between imagination and reality first.

During the spring of 2013, Konstfack presented a lecture series under the name \textit{Transitions}, with the subtitle \textit{Reality – Fantasy: A controlled mind-set versus subconscious unfettered thinking}. Several artists with an interest in what lies on the verge of what is real, took part. Erik Bünger gives something called performance lectures, a way of lecturing where fact is mixed with subjective experiences, and sound and light can work as mood setters. Agnieszka Kuran presented her work \textit{The unknown unknown}, in which she, among other things, had books that only exists as fiction designed and produced. During the class \textit{writing research}, Andreas Gedin presented parts of his doctors thesis where he, among other things, tried to alter history by burying Swedish coins from the 19th century in a part of Russia where Swedes had never set foot at that time.

Apparently, there is something in our relationship to reality that is changing. Something that is about to dissolve.

Anthony Dunne is a professor and head of Design Interactions at the Royal College of Art in London, and one half of the design studio Dunne & Raby.

At Konstfack during the spring of 2013, he speaks about how we are facing a historical shift. He says that we have to be brave enough to abandon realism and replace it with idealism. That we have to start designing for the world as it could be, not for the world as it is. We need to control the future by convincing the industry to take other paths than the ones it’s using today.\textsuperscript{\textit{xxxix}}

In the (not yet released) book \textit{Speculate Everything}, the duo describes their methodology in this way:
Today designers often focus on making technology easy to use, sexy, and consumable. (...) Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby propose a kind of design that is used as a tool to create not only things but ideas. For them, design is a means of speculating about how things could be—to imagine possible futures. This is not the usual sort of predicting or forecasting, spotting trends and extrapolating; these kinds of predictions have been proven wrong, again and again. Instead, Dunne and Raby pose “what if” questions that are intended to open debate and discussion about the kind of future people want (and do not want).

Dunne and Raby contend that if we speculate more about everything reality will become more malleable. The ideas freed by speculative design increase the odds of achieving desirable futures.xi

Dunne and Raby thus say that we need to leave what we today perceive as reality, and move towards a place build from ideas. By speculating more and fantasizing about what the future could be like, we could, through imagination itself, actually strengthen the odds for a better world. In a similar fashion, political scientist Wendy Brown speaks about winning back the future by

creating spaces, in the physical sphere and in the conscious mind, where an alternative longing can take hold and be practiced, so that it does not seem impossible even to ourselves.xii

According to Brown, this place should not be organized according to the surrounding society's way of working. Thus, it's a way of finding a place where it is possible to imagine a future, a space that lies outside of the traditional society. A space beyond realism.

A rift is described as a steep, narrow empty space between two cliffs. If we picture one cliff as reality/nature and the other as society/system, we get a pretty clear image in our heads. Between those cliffs, there is an empty space. That is the void we're falling down into.

I imagine that this nowhere, the void between society and nature, between the reality and the system, can be used as a free zone. That this no place is exactly the place we need. A place outside of the surrounding society's way of functioning. A space where an alternative longing can take hold. I imagine that this rift can turn into an escape route. A secret path, a culvert taking us away. But where to? The surrealist André Breton once wrote: To deport imagination to a state of slavery, is to betray every sense of absolute justice inside oneself. Only imagination can give me a conception of what could come.xiii
Stockholm 2013

The traffic at Hornsgatan has almost come to standstill. I am looking down at the grey mass of cars slowly moving through the morning mist. It's just after ten and every single table is occupied by people with laptops, tablets, and well-organized economy. Soft lounge music comes out of discrete speakers in the ceiling. The room smells of freshly baked bread. Suddenly, the calm working atmosphere is disturbed. Something else has entered. Something else has pierced through the pleasant sound of clicking keyboards. A man in worn clothes, carrying a plastic bag. Another reality cuts through all the softness. He approaches table after table. Holds up a rugged, laminated note. Points to the blurry photo of two children. Points to himself. Holds out his hand. Says please, please. Please help me.

Like an eyesore. Like gravel in the shoe. The air is suddenly strained. People move in closer to their computers, try to sink deeper into the text on their screens. Into the news reporting about something else entirely, somewhere else. Far away from here. The man is rejected at all of the tables. Nobody meets his eyes. Everyone chooses to stare at their screens. Everyone chooses to pretend that they can't see him. That they can't hear him. That he doesn't exist. Only two tables to go now. The woman at the table next to me is in her forties and dressed in discrete but neat office clothes. When the man approaches her, she instinctively moves her cappuccino cup. Annoyed, she stares into the screen. But the man, now rejected by an entire room filled with strangers, a room that has closed in an unspoken pact against him, won't be turned down this time. He stays put. Holds out the photo of the two children. Says Please. Please. Please. Finally the woman looks up from her screen, looks at the man. Says no. The man stays put. Repeats his please. Please. Points to his mouth. Points to the plate with a half eaten salmon cream sandwich. The atmosphere in the room is unpleasant. People cling convulsively to their café tables. The woman is frustrated. I said no! She speaks to him in Swedish now. Her voice is sharp. Please. Please. Please. Can't you hear me? I said no! You have to be able to accept it if someone says no! The woman is almost screaming. Red spots have spread over her neck. Do you understand? You have to be able to accept a no!

When the man finally leaves, the room sighs with relief. A man in a suit leans over from the table across mine and says with compassion Phew, that was annoying. The woman with red spotted neck nods. Indeed. She laughs. It's so annoying when they don't listen to what you say.
Conclusion

In my work as a set and costume designer, I often get the chance to study the consumer society closely. I spend a lot of time in stores and shopping malls, and meet both consumers and store personnel. The result of my work seldom reflects the reality I just met. Instead, I create illusion and fiction. A few years ago, a feeling of doubt started to grow inside me. I wondered whether the world really needed more escapism. Around the same time I started creating my own works. The first pieces I made were collaborations with different stage artists, and were all placed outside of the theater. The subjects circled questions about economics, individualism, consumption and responsibility.

I had been interested in the relation between economy and storytelling for a long time. In 2004, when I made my theses project at Tisch School of the Arts in New York, I presented a staging of Puccini’s opera Turandot, where the setting was a large industrial cake factory in China, which produced fortune cookies to be exported to the US (fortune cookies of the kind that we get in the West are fully an American invention) The peoples chorus where the workers in the factory, Turandot was as a angry young woman about be forced into an arranged marriage and the design aspect of the project dealt with the problem of exoticism and stereotyping of foreign cultures in western society.

In 2007 I collaborated with dramatic writer Camilla Blomqvist and wrote a play that we staged inside the furniture store R.O.O.M. in Stockholm. Every prop used in the production was for sale and everything had the price tag left on. The audience was seated in very expensive sofas and chairs that were also for sale. The story was an abstract and poetic tale about a couple that struggles to find the passion that’s gone missing among the furniture’s inside their well-designed living room. The aim was to find a playful way to question the relation between relationships and economics - and humans and furniture’s.

In 2008 we continued our collaboration with the spatial piece Sudden Comfort. In this production the audience was invited to a room filled with white packing chips – the kind of packing material originally used to protect new electrical equipment like TV’s and Stereos. Guided by two comfort hostesses the audience was instructed to participate in a series of relaxation exercises, that encouraged them to focus more on themselves.

In 2013 I was invited to make a site specific performance by Sommarscen Malmö, a summer theater organization similar to Parkteatern in Stockholm. They had collaboration with Malmö Nordic, a local focus on contemporary Nordic art, in which they invited acts that were situated in-between stage art and visual art. The conditions were to create an outdoor event that could host a large number of people on a drop-in basis and serve as an introduction to more experimental art forms. I decided to place the piece in Slottsparken and make the event an afternoon tea party. I did a lot of research on the history of parks and garden architecture, the history of porcelain and
the history of tea - all imported ideas brought to us by western colonialism. The result was an afternoon tea party, a kind of tea machine, or tea-path, where the visitors followed a pathway outlined by white fences to retrieve their condiments.

Even though all the above projects were done using both humor and warmth, we noticed that the audience easily felt accused. To even talk about these subjects seemed impossible without stepping on the toes of our generation.

Nina Björk writes:

Even in the public discourse, the words that could present some resistance to the calculation have become more difficult to use. Every time one refers to concepts such as truth, authenticity or value, one risks being accused of being conservative, nostalgic, retrograde, reactionary, religious or even a follower of biologist. (...) In a cultural climate soaked in economism, where we have no problem talking about attempts to sell services like they were attempts to create friendships, we should avoid the word authentic! To me, that is the same as making us defenseless. To speak in terms of quality, moral or value, is to offer some resistance to the rationality of economy. It is to set a limit to the calculation, to offer a different language and a different logic. If speaking about other values than purely economic ones – that no one needs to talk about since they are practiced on a daily basis – are rejected as moralizing, the power, the money wont be silenced. That way, only the humane will be silenced.

This is not a simple topic to discuss. One easily sounds moralizing, people easily feel singled out or criticized. I don't want to be the one pointing a finger. I don't want to interfere in how people live their lives. Although I think we must be able to discuss these subjects.

The last couple of years, I have been experimenting with the form of performance art. The directness of the expression has allowed me to explore different aesthetic approaches and to test ideas without having long periods of preproduction. As I primarily have worked in public spaces, I have been able to collect the direct reactions of passer byes and audiences. I have become very fond the artistic possibilities of this art form, as it easily allows me to create short visual poems where the boundaries of reality can be tested. Another thing that appeal to me is that performance art doesn’t create an object that is put out for sale – it’s all about the here and now, and afterwards there is nothing left.

A common interpretation of Marcel Duchamp’s manifesto “The creative act” among performance artists states that

“The act of creation is the most important, not the artwork. The painting is not as important as the act of painting; the sculpture is not as important as the act of chiseling
and carving into stone or wood. Art is not about the product; it is the moment of creation» xliiv

As a continuation of my experiments within performance art I have started to explore the performativ possibilities of spaces. One of the less attractive properties of performance art is that it often is more interesting for the artist than the viewer. The pieces are often long and slow, and to endure a full performance festival one must be very dedicated to the art form. Still, being inside a performance piece is a very interesting experience. Accordingly, I am trying to remove myself from the pieces, leaving room for the spectator to explore and experience the piece.

With my Masters project, I would like to combine my previous experience to find a new perspective. I would like to examine how imagination can be used as a force of resistance. According to the ideas of Dunne and Raby, I would like to examine what possibility for other realities lies in imagination, rather than focusing on reality itself. Most of all, I would like to examine the place both Björk and Brown are searching for, a space where thoughts about another future become possible.

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1 Nina Björk, Lyckliga i alla sina dagar: Om pengar och människors värde, Falun 2012, p. 6-7.
ii Björk, 2012, pp. 7
v Forskning.se, interview with Johan Fröberg, SFI 2012-12-13 http://www.forskning.se/nyheterfakta/julspecial/julnyheter/viskiftadefranvstilddfdochserid agmerfilmnanoqonsin.5.5c256cfa13b82fc6e6a331.html.
ixi Frykman och Löfgren, 2008, pp. 36.
x Björk, 2012, pp. 28.
xii Björk, 2012, pp. 41-42.
The origin of this quote has been debated. Konstfack referred to Frederic Jameson at their web page before the lecture, while Dunne himself referred to Mark Fisher, who, in his turn, referred to Jameson & Zizek.


Dunne, Anthony, notes from the lecture Speculate Everything Konstfack 2013.

Dunne, Anthony, excerpt from Dunne and Raby’s web page
http://www.dunneandraby.co.uk/content/books/690/0fotnot.

The quote is taken from a text on performance art written by the german performance artist Johannes Deimling. The text was published online by the artist in 2011 but might be difficult to find today. I do have a copy of this text on my computer.
LITTERATURE


Žižek, Slavoj, Ideologins sublima object, (Glänta, 2001).

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IMAGES FROM MY PREVIOUS PROJECTS

The girl and the forest part 1 (2013)
The girl and the forest part 1 (2013)

The girl and the forest part II (2013)
My old China (2013)
The physical sensation of Sudden Comfort (2008)

Du och jag och barnen, älskling - ett drömspel för kvalitetssäkrade vardagsrum (2007)