

#02 karriere

contemporary art & social life

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DK

Karriere er en cafe/restaurant/bar på Flæsketorvet i København. Internationale kunstnere har bidraget med kunstværker der indgår i stedets design og funktioner.

UK

Karriere is a café/restaurant/bar in the meatpacking district of Copenhagen. International artists have contributed with artworks that define the functions and design of the place.

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Leder

DK

Måske er det grundlæggende for kunsten altid at være alt-overskridende. Kunst er en mulighed og et værktøj for os til at komme ud over os selv. Kunsten kan konfrontere os med et spejlbillede af os selv, som er så hudløst ærligt, at den bevæger os til at foretage forandringer. Den kan åbne et vindue mod en smukkere verden og få os til at grib ud, at kaste vores blik og begær efter det, som er bedre og nærer vores drømme.

Med kunsten som den grundlæggende præmis for funktioner og indretning på Karriere danner stedet, restauranten, kunstprojektet, og baren ramme om flere former for overskridelse. Overskridelsen af afstanden mellem kunst og ikke-kunst, mellem kunst og design og arkitektur – og mest af alt er kunstværkerne på Karriere med til at påvirke og generere sociale redefinitioner af, hvad der er fælles. På Karriere overskrides grænsen mellem kunstværk og det sociale rum.

Her foregår vores snakken, drillen, slidren, scoren og skænderi som oftest gennem, over, under eller ved hjælp af et kunstværk. På Karriere kan man opleve kunst, som overskider kroppens fysiske grænser, for ud over at læse i lyset fra den, glide, gå og danse på den, kan man også spise og drikke den.

Anderledes formuleret er kunsten det, der på Karriere er den fælles og samlende faktor. Den er noget at mødes om, og noget at tale med hinanden om. Noget, der er til stede, nu og her, modsat at mødes om noget, der ikke er der – det nye samtalekøkken, den kommende ferie og dem, vi har set på tv.

Men hvad handler det om, overskridelse, hvorfor er det spændende, hvad kan vi lære af det, hvad er problemerne ved det? Dette nummer af Karriere handler om overskridelsen i dens ældste former: begær, konsumption og sex.

En af ideerne med Karriere er at undersøge, hvorledes kunstværkerne påvirker og bidrager til kommunikationen mellem mennesker fra det ædruelige morgenmøde til den natlige ekstase, eller forsøget på at nå den. I artiklen Det udsvævende liv – sat i system diskuterer Maria Kjær Thomsen med den franske filosof Georges Bataille ved sin side, hvad kunstværkerne på Karriere kan gøre ved os og for os i vores søgen mod at miste os selv i festen, rusen og sex.

Det skal ikke være nogen hemmelighed, at Karriere er blevet taget godt imod og er temmelig velbesøgt af gæster fra både ind- og udland. Stedet er hver dag ramme for et væld af sociale "scener", hvor mange forskellige grupper af mennesker mødes og krydser veje. Som perspektiv på det bringer vi første kapitel af Tirdad Zolghadr's stærkt underholdende roman Softcore [2007] om en ung kurator, som i de tidligere lokaler for en berømt cocktailbar i Teheran sætter sig for at etablere et smart udstillings- og projektrum for kunst, mode og firmareceptioner. Ligheden med Karriere er på mange måder slående og giver et satirisk blik på kunstens funktion som socialt bindemiddel i en international loungekultur, ligesom det giver indblik i den politiske og kulturelle virkelighed i nutidens Teheran.

Som lokal pendant til Softcore er Janet Cardiff og George Bures Miller's værk I'm a voyeur baby en fantastisk mulighed for at lytte sig til, hvad der optager folk i byens sociale liv. Den danske forfatter Helle Helle, har taget imod invitationen og klikket sig ind på I'm a voyeur baby [www.karrierebar.com/im-a-voyeur-baby] for med skyldig nydelse at lytte til den levende tekst, der udfolder sig online, som en gave givet af dem, der besøger bordet, til dem, der lytter, nu og her.

I forsøget på at give perspektiv til Karriere bringer avisens det nyeste kapitel i en føljeton om kunstprojekter med et eksplicit socialt omdrejningspunkt som definerende faktor. Niels Henriksen har skrevet historien om FOOD: en restaurant, et kunstprojekt, som blev drevet af en flok kunstnere med Caroline Gooden og Gordon Matta-Clark i spidsen, i begyndelsen af 1970'erne i SoHo i New York. Food var knudepunkt og vandingshul for nogle af efterkrigstidens mest progressive kunstnere, og dannede ramme for deres forsøg med dans, performance, konceptkunst, politisk kritik og social utopi. Såvel som at være et projekt, der i den grad overskred grænserne for, hvad kunst kunne, og kunne være, var Food også et projekt med mange forskellige agendaer, der til tider harmonerede og til tider kolliderede.

Historien om Food ledte Karriere til en kritisk overvejelse af en grundlæggende, men ofte fortjet, overskridelse mellem forskellige agendaer i de tidlige '70'ere. Det er overskridelsen mellem den generelle frigørelse, kunstneriske frigørelse og seksuelle frigørelse, mellem kritik og sex simpelthen. Et

Kolofon:

Udgiver/Publisher:
Karriere A/S
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All the way to paris / www.allthewaytoparis.com

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Karriere #2 udgives i / published in 14.000 ex./copies
Avisen er gratis/free - not for sale

Annoncer/advertising:
pe@karrierebar.com +45293 62486

Distribution:
Kanondistribution / www.kanondistribution.dk
Koenig Books / www.buchhandlung-walther-koenig.de

område, hvor den internationalt anerkendte kunsthistoriker og mangeårige redaktør af tidsskriftet *October*, Douglas Crimp, netop nu laver revolutionærende ny forskning. Karriere stiller Crimp et par kritiske spørgsmål og får et undvigende svar, som måske ikke er så undvigende endda.

Den thailandske kunstner Rirkrit Tiravanija er mest kendt for sine sociale skulpturer, hvor han tilbereder og serverer mad for gallerier og museers publikum, for så at lade det sociale samvær skabe kunstværkets indhold og betydning. Men i den kritiske modtagelse af hans værk spøger en helt anden form for social aktivitet, nemlig sex. Til Karriere har han bidraget med *Elephant Juice*, dansegulvet med tilhørende dancing-pole, der danner centrum for nattens udskjelse på baren. Karriere tager en snak med Rirkrit Tiravanija om baggrunden for hans bidrag til stedet og om spøgelserne i hans praksis: sex, surrealisme og Sponge Bob... [PKE]

One basic idea behind Karriere is to explore how art affects and contributes to interpersonal communication – from a sober morning meeting to nighttime ecstasy [or pursuit of same]. In her article Maria Kjær Thomsen takes the hand of the French philosopher Georges Bataille to take a look at what the art at Karriere can do to us and for us in our striving to lose ourselves in celebration, intoxication, and sex.

It is no secret that Karriere has been well received and attracts many visitors from both Denmark and abroad. Every day, the venue forms the backdrop to a plethora of social ‘scenes’ where people of many kinds, denominations, and persuasions meet and mingle. To provide some perspective on this, we bring you the first chapter of Tirdad Zolghadr’s highly entertaining novel *Softcore* [2007], which deals with a young curator determined to convert the site of a former, famous cocktail bar in Teheran into an cool exhibition and project venue for art, fashion, and company business receptions. The similarities to Karriere are striking, offering a satirical view of how art functions as a social binding agent and lubricant in an international lounge culture – even as it also offers insights into the political and cultural realities of present-day Teheran.

In what could be described as a local equivalent or companion piece to *Softcore*, Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller’s piece *I’m a voyeur baby* offers a fantastic opportunity to listen in on conversations, finding out what people are really interested in on the city’s social scenes today. Danish writer Helle Helle accepted our invitation to click her way to *I’m a voyeur baby* [www.karrierebar.com/im-a-voyeur-baby], listening with due guilty pleasure to the living, vibrant texts unfolding online, like a gift given by those seated at the table to those who listen in – right now and here.

Wishing, as has already been mentioned, to provide perspectives on Karriere, this edition brings you the latest chapter in a series about art projects with an explicit social pivotal point as its defining factor. Niels Henriksen has written a history of *FOOD*: a restaurant-cum-art project run by a group of artists headed by Caroline Gooden and Gordon Matta-Clark in the early 1970s in SoHo, New York. Food served as meeting place and watering hole to some of the most progressive artists of the post-war era, providing the framework for their ventures into dance, performance, concept art, political critique, and social utopias. A project which emphatically transgressed the boundaries for what art was supposed to do and be, *Food* was also a project with many different agendas; sometimes in harmony, sometimes on a collision course.

A history of *Food* prompted Karriere to take a critical view of fundamental, yet often overlooked or hushed-up transgressions between different agendas of the early 1970s. These concern the transgressions between the overall liberation, artistic liberation, and sexual liberations – quite simply, the boundaries between criticism and sex. An area which is just now the subject of revolutionary new research conducted by the internationally renowned art historian and long-standing editor of the journal *October*, Douglas Crimp. Karriere asked Crimp a number of critical questions and received an evasive answer – which might not be as evasive as that, after all.

Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanija is best known for his social sculptures where he cooks and serves food for guests at galleries and museums, letting the social interaction shape and create the content and meaning of his piece. Critical responses to his work, however, are haunted by ghosts of a very different kind of social activity: sex. His contribution to Karriere is *Elephant Juice*, the dance-floor with the pole, the focal point of nighttime excesses at the bar. Karriere talked to Rirkrit Tiravanija about the background for his contribution and about the ghostly presences in his works: sex, surrealism, and Sponge Bob... [PKE]

Editorial

UK

Perhaps transgressing all boundaries is a fundamental feature of art. Art offers us the opportunity – and tools – to go beyond ourselves. Art can confront us with a mirror image of ourselves so starkly true and honest that it moves us to make changes. It can open a window onto a better, more beautiful world and make us reach out, throw our gaze and desire after that which is better, that which nourishes our dreams.

Taking art as the fundamental premise for all functions and structures, Karriere the place, restaurant, art project, and bar forms the framework for several kinds of transgression. Borders are transgressed: the distance between art and non-art, between art, design, and architecture – and most of all, the art at Karriere helps affect and generate social redefinitions of what is shared, common to us all. At Karriere, the boundary between art and social space is transgressed. Here, our talk, teasing, gossiping, flirting, and fighting usually takes place through, over, under, or by means of art. Karriere is where you find art which transgresses the physical boundaries of our bodies, for you can not only read by the light of art, glide, walk, and dance on art – you can also imbibe art by eating or drinking it.

In other words, art is the common, unifying factor at Karriere. It is a rallying point, something to talk to one another about. It is something that is present in the here and now – a contrast to the practice of sharing thoughts on something that is not present: the new kitchen you’re planning, the holiday you’ve booked, people you’ve seen on TV.

But what is it all about, this transgression, why does it excite us, what can we learn from it, what problems does it entail? This issue of Karriere is about transgression in its oldest forms: desire, consumption, and sex.

DK

'Livet er i sit grundvæsen en excess, det er sin egen ødselhed - af alle kræfter stræber vi beslutsomt mod det, der bringer vort liv i fare.'¹

Dette citat er hentet fra den franske filosof og forfatter Georges Batailles bog, *Erotikken* [1957], som drejer sig om menneskets evige sonderrivning mellem det homogene, fornuftige, arbejdet, og så alt det, der i virkeligheden optager os: rusen, ekstasen, erotikken, kort sagt: Livets Overdådighed. Det handler om selve menneskets berettigelse som eksistens, so hang on:

Som adskilte væsener er vi blevet kastet ind i denne verden af kaotiske erfaringer. Det er den grundlæggende fællesmenneskelige erfaring; Ene og alene er vi i vores krop. For en kort stund i skabelsesprocessen, i det øjeblik, hvor den ene celle mødte den anden, oplevede vi dog en vidunderlig sammensmelting, som grundlagde vores eksistens. Sædcellen og ægcellen er

i sig selv separate enheder, men de forenes, sammensmeltes, og for et øjeblik opleves kontinuiteten. Men de to bliver dog til et nyt separat, diskontinuert, væsen. Denne dybe afgrund vil vi for evigt være drevet til at udfylde og ophæve - og i sidste ende er det en følelse af den oprindelige samhørighed, kontinuiteten, vi efterstræber. Heri den erotiske drifts første mål: en fysisk sammensmeltnings. Men der er skam mere på færde end det.

Det diskontinuerede vilkår skaber en evig drift mod at fyde huller ud, eller at blive fyldt ud: en drift mod en ophævelse af den fysiske

grænse i miniformat [for den endelige ophævelse er lig med døden]. I denne omstyrtelse af den 'normale væren i verden', gemmer der sig vores berettigelse som mennesker, mener Bataille. Det drejer sig om 'at søge højdepunktet', for denne drift mod at overskride egen fysisk kapacitet og åndelige erkendelsesmuligheder har i alt væsentligt skabt det humanistiske aspekt i mennesket og betinget dets udvikling som adskilt fra dyrene. Og på den måde er erotikken dét i os, der sætter spørgsmålstege ved vores væren, og som driver os videre: ud af den rolige hverdag, ind i ekstasen, videre i udviklingen. Det er kort sagt via ødselheden, overskuddet, overskridelsen, at det specifikt menneskelige opstår.

Et andet aspekt er arbejdet. Via arbejdet har vi sat orden i systemet, indgivet forbud mod det udsvævende, det vodelige, farlige og dyriske, og dermed skabt grunden til det homogene samfund. Men vi ville aldrig kunne beherske os, være produktive og lydige, uden en lovning på en udladning af ophobede energier i den anden ende - altså er festen uundgåelig!² Festen inkarnerer på den måde en evig drift, som har funktion af en benægtelse af de grænser i livet, som bestemmes af arbejdet. Det er denne rest af noget utæmmet, der kan drive os ud på randen af det menneskeligt mulige, få os til at miste os selv momentant, men som samtidig driver den menneskelige ånd og skæbne videre. Og det er her, kunsten kommer ind i billedet. Kunsten er nemlig på mange måder en videreudvikling af såvel arbejdet, det produktive, som den erotiske drifts fremmeste mål: at overskride isolationen mellem dig og mig.³

KARRIERE REVISITED

Det er netop intentionen om at bryde grænser, der præger størstedelen af de værker, der er blevet skabt til Karriere: grænsen mellem kunstværk og de øvrige omgivelser, mellem værket og beskueren, mellem den ophøjede Kunst og det helt almene liv.

Kunsten på Karriere skaber divergerende rumlige dannelser, der aktiveres ganske forskelligt i løbet af dagens og nattens timer. Barriererne er opløst mellem det homogene udstillingsrum, hvor enhver kender sin position, og kunsten indsats som element midt i et rum, hvor livet leves, mad indtages og lidenskab udleves. På den ene side rummer stedet altså løfter om luksus, overflod, umådehold, som hører festens sfære til. På den anden side er der allerede i navnet 'Karriere' et andet element på spil, et element, der indikerer, at fest og arbejdsliv ikke længere er så modsatrettede, som det engang var tilfældet. I det moderne storbyliv kan karrieren sagtens plejes, når man er på bar. Ingar & Dragset har på den måde subtilt indfanget denne evige splittelse i mennesket i deres navngivning af stedet. Civilisationen og barbariet mødes i et rum, hvor karrieren dyrkes i løssluppenhedens navn!

Karriere har åbent 7 dage om ugen, fra 7 morgen til sen nat. Allerede på dette niveau rummer stedet menneskets forskellige adfærdsformer - rituelt ordnet i tidszoner. Anstændigheden udfordres kontinuerligt af Rirkrit Tiravanijas dancing-pole, der står dér mit i rummet, og virker forstyrrende på øjet i dagtimerne - og egentlig også mest er i vejen. Men i weekenden og de sene nattetimer får den pludselig en anden effekt og virker aktiverende og inviterende på gæsterne. De færreste står og vrider sig rundt om stangen mandag formiddag, men lørdag nat er det en anden legitim, og dog stadig grænseoverskridende, sag. De grænser, der overskrides, er forbudtet mod selv samme aktivitet resten af ugen. Rirkrits dancing-pole er altså en evig påmindelse om Karrieres forskellige rumlige dannelser og rammesætninger. Den er samtidig et element fra en del af den erotiske indelukkethed, som vidner om en bornert kulturs 'anden',⁴ det vil sige stripperklubben. Erotikken indeholder de ultimative forbud, og der vil i et forbud altid ligge en uforbeholden lyst til overskridelse: Forbuddet skaber simpelthen lysten - for syndens erfaring er som bekendt nydelsesfuld.

Gardar Eide Einarssons har med en hurtig, destruktiv gestus med ét overskredet det hvide rums

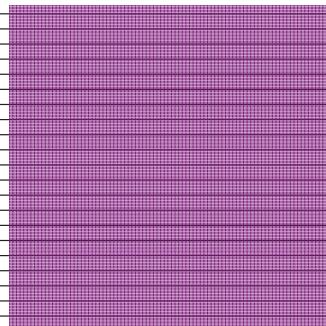
Maria Kjær Thomsen

...

Det udsvævende liv – sat i system

Dan Graham: *Dividing Wall*
2-vejs spejlglass, perforeret
rustfrit stål, træ /
2-way mirror glass, per-
forated stainless steel,
wood.

Foto/Photo: privat



normalitet og renhed: Det forbudte [at overmale toilettet] bruges her som selve det udsmikkende princip. Han æstetiserer med en grænseoverskridelsens pondus og vender det rationelle på hovedet. Orden, arbejde, produktivitet, det er som nævnt nogle af de menneskelige kvaliteter, der har fjernet os fra dyrene og skabt det unikt menneskelige. Samtidig er vi dog konstitueret således, at uden irrationalitet ingen rationalitet, uden det vanvittige ingen normalitet. Uden sort intet hvidt. For at blive bevidste om vores menneskelige erfaringsdannelse er det for Bataille afgørende at lade sig rive med af den proces, der hedder 'at miste sig selv': I en verden funderet i diskontinuitet drejer det sig om at indføre al den kontinuitet, som det er muligt [uden at miste sig selv i vanviddet].⁵ Einarssons gestus er et enkelt greb, gentaget uendeligt, men med en radikal effekt: ødelæggelsen af det rene og hvide - men med udsmykning, og ikke blot destruktiviteten i sig selv, som målet. Her skabes altså en forskydning af det normale grænser. En grænseoverskridelsesdynamik, der er helt afgørende for vores udvikling, for ikke at ende i stagnation - og ak, kedsomhed.

Et af de mest effektivt grænsesættende fysiske fænomener er muren. Hertil og ikke længere. Dan Grahams Dividing Wall bryder den grænsesætning, som en mur normalt symboliserer og tjener til. I en zig-zaggende struktur [mimende tagformationerne på den anden side af gården] virker den opdelende, og skaber nye rum mellem dig og mig på den anden side - mellem dem og os. Et symbol på, at grænsen kan være produktiv: Muren, der tjener som den ultimative grænsesætning, opbrydes her i et mønster, der skaber nye og flere rum. Både mellem dig og mig, og mellem Karriere og resten af Den Hvide Kødby. Opdelingen er samtidig let genåbenlig, sådan at du kan se livet på den anden side, og da overfladen er genspejlende, kan du se dig selv se de andre - og se dig selv blive set.

Dan Grahams spejlforskydninger har rod i den franske psykoanalytiker Lacans teori om spejlfasen som subjektskabende. Samtidig inddrager Graham den sociale præmis: at møde sig selv blandt andre. Hos Lacan er subjektets dannelse afhængig af følelsen af lighed mellem kropsop-

Georges Bataille [1867–1962]

...

Georges Bataille er fransk filosof og forfatter, optaget af grænsefænomenerne ved tilværelsen. Erotik, vold, orgier, ofringer, det uregulerbare og det heterogene som forsøges udskilt fra vores homogene samfund, er alle elementer som Bataille finder helt væsentlige ved såvel udviklingen af mennesket, som af vores personlige erkendelse. Inspireret af så forskellige personer og retninger som Marquis de Sade, Nietzsche, Freud og surrealismen, forfatter Bataille selv pornografiske noveller som fx L'histoire de l'oeil [1928], og udvikler sine filosofiske betragtninger omkring erkendelsens betingelse af overskridelser i L'Erotisme [1957], og i L'expérience intérieure [1943] – sidstnævnte et værk der er under stærk indflydelse af surrealismen. Batailles forhold til kunst udvikles bl.a. i det lille værk Les larmes d'Eros [1957], hvori han bl.a. erklærer at manierismen er den stil, der har frigjort maleriet – og at det er den mest erotiske form for maleri!

fattelsen og synet af sig selv i spejlet - samt tilbagerefleksionen af andres blikke på en. En tre-leddet størrelse, som har mange lakuner af forskydninger i sig, som på subtil vis er indlejet i Grahams værk.⁶ Grahams værkpraksis skaber via grænser nye rum [både fysisk og mentalt], og kan på den måde siges at synliggøre det aspekt af overskridelseserfaringen, der drejer sig om at fortæbe sig i sig selv - her i sit eget konkrete spejlbillede!

Noget af det, der fylder allermest på Karriere, både visuelt og mentalt, er Olafur Eliassons lamper. De er skabt sådan, at de mimer det fysiske øje med lameller, der spejler omgivelserne, og bryder lyset. Lamperne virker konkret som store øjne, der ved nattetide hiver den løsslupne, grænsenedbrydende stemning, som findes i visse værker, og i visse gæster, i en anden retning. Eliassons kunstneriske projekt fungerer på den måde, som et reelt 'oplysningsprojekt', som handler om at gøre beskuere af værkerne bevidste om deres egen oplevelse. Som effekt i rummet bliver de symboler på 'den homogene' verden, hvor det dunkle aldrig får lov at herske. Karriere bliver ved Eliassons lamper et 'oplyst' sted. Som vågne øjne i natten fungerer de helt konkret ved at holde folk på dydens småle sti. Eliassons oplysningsprojekt kolliderer derfor med nattegæsternes behov for mørke og hengemmelse - der opstår et clash, der ikke bekræfter den berusede tilstand, men forsøger at modarbejde den, og hive den i en anden retning. Hvor dancing-pole'n i den ene ende inviterer til umådeholdenhed, hænger de årvågne lysobjekter for oven og holder folk på måtten. Tab af beherskelse inden for rimelighedens grænser - for at undgå vold, vandalisme, hærverk og ukontrollerbar rus.

Bataille taler om 'øjets blinde plet' som betegnende for al erfaringsdannelse. Et nulpunkt af ikke-viden, hvorfra al betydning skabes. Hvor Bataille ønsker at formørke synet, forsøger Eliasen at skabe erkendelse via oplysning, hvor

AVPD: Passage
Foto/Photo: Anders Sune Berg



man 'ser sig selv sanse'. Bataille vil ikke se sig selv sanse - han vil fortæbe sig i mørket.⁷

Øjets blinde plet aktiveres helt konkret i AVPDs passageværk. Det har skabt forvirring, panik, frustration og forundring. På mange provokerer værket med de dobbelte og spejlende døre især som en frustration for den berusede gæst, der bare skal finde toilettet [hvor værket forstærker gæstens fornemmelse af tab af kontrol] - og kan i sidste ende måske endda skabe en form for panik og angst i den fortalte sjæl, der er endt i en blindgyde. Værket vil i denne henseende ikke blot virke fysisk genspejlende [de mange ens døre og rum], men også afsmitte sig som en indre fortalt erfaring midt i kaos. Passageværket kan på den måde anskueliggøre begrebet om 'øjets blinde plet' hos Bataille: Den blinde plet indebærer fortabelsen, at man mister sig selv, og rejser ud på randen af det mulige, idet man her overvinder dagligdagssprogets begrænsninger. Men for Bataille betinger den blinde plet klarsynet, gennem ikke-viden opstår viden, og her kan man for en stund erfare intethedens ekstatiske nærvær: For enden af famleriet findes forløsningen!

Evnen til at fejre Livets Overdådighed: at være ødsel med sig selv - og søge viden i overskridelseserfaringer, dette er det, der, ifølge Bataille, berettiger vores eksistens:

'Vi søger et højdepunkt! Det står frit for enhver at lade denne sægen upåagtet. Men menneskeheden i sin helhed higer efter dette højdepunkt, som alene definerer den, og som alene er dens berettigelse og mening.'⁸ [MKT]

1. Georges Bataille: *Erotikken*. Gyldendals Bogklubber, 2001. p. 100 [originaltitel/år: *L'Erotisme*, 1957]

2. Op. cit., p. 80

3. jvf. Georges Bataille: *Les larmes d'Eros*.

4. *Erotikken*, p. 130

5. *Erotikken*, p. 23

6. Jvf. bl.a Claire Bishop: *Installation Art*. Routledge, 2005. pp. 72-76

7. Jvf. Georges Bataille: *L'expérience intérieure*.

8. *Erotikken*, pp. 324-325

Georges Bataille [1867–1962]

...

Georges Bataille is a French philosopher and writer concerned with the liminal phenomena in life. The erotic, violence, orgies, sacrifices, the unregulated and heterogenous, all that which we seek to separate out from our homogenous society is what Bataille finds crucial to our development as a race as well as to personal growth and awareness. Inspired by people and schools of thought as widely different as Marquis de Sade, Nietzsche, Freud, and Surrealism, Bataille himself wrote pornographic short stories such as *L'histoire de l'oeil* [1928] and developed his philosophical musings on the necessity of transgression in *L'Erotisme* [1957], and in *L'expérience intérieure* [1943] – the latter piece is strongly influenced by Surrealism. Bataille's relationship with the arts was developed further in e.g. the small volume *Les larmes d'Eros* [1957], where his many statements include a declaration that Manerism is the style which liberated painting – and that it is the most erotic form of painting!

UK

'Life is essentially an excess, it is its own extravagance - with all our might we strive determinedly towards that which endangers our lives.'

The quote is lifted from a book by the French philosopher and writer Georges Bataille, *Erotism* [1957], a tome about how Man is eternally torn between the homogenous, the sensible, and work on the one hand, and all the things that truly capture our interest on the other: ecstasy, intoxication, the erotic; the Extravagance of Life, in short. All this is about the human condition and our *raison d'être*, so hang on:

We have each of us been hurled into this world of chaos as separate beings. That is a basic, universally human experience: We are all alone in our bodies. However, for one brief moment of conception, the point where one cell met another, we experienced a wondrous merging; one which founded our very existence. The sperm cell and the ovum are in themselves separate entities, but they unite, merge, and for a moment continuity is achieved. Together, however, the two become a new, separate, discontinuous being. We will forever be driven towards filling in this deep ravine - and in the final analysis, the thing we are chasing is a sensation of the original union, of continuity. This, then, is the first objective of the erotic urge: A physical merging. But there's more to it than that.

The basic condition of discontinuity creates an eternal urge to fill out holes or to be filled out; an urge towards a small-scale abolition of our physically bound existence [for complete abolition equals death]. According to Bataille, inside this disruption of the 'normal being in the world' we find our *raison d'être* as human beings. We must 'seek the summit', for this drive towards reaching beyond one's own physical capability and spiritual levels of awareness has, more than anything, created the humanistic aspect of man and shaped its development as separate from animals. In this sense, the erotic

is that which queries our existence and drives us forward: away from calm everyday existence, into ecstasy, onwards in our growth. In short, the specifically human arises through voluptuousness, exuberance, and transgression.

Work is another aspect. Through work, we have imposed systematic order, prohibited the loose, the violent, the dangerous, and the animal, thereby laying down the foundations of the homogenous society. But we could never control ourselves, being obediently productive citizens, without the promise of a release of our pent-up energy at the other end - hence parties are unavoidable!²

Thus, to party is an incarnation of an eternal urge which breaks or refuses to acknowledge the boundaries in life that are determined by work. This remnant of something untamed can drive us to the edge of what is humanly possible, make us lose ourselves for a moment; but it can also drive forward the human spirit and destiny. This is where art enters the picture. In many ways, art is a continuation of work, of the productive, as well as of the ultimate objective of the erotic urge: breaking down the walls that keep you and me isolated.³

KARRIERE REVISITED

The intention to break down barriers is a feature shared by most of the works of art created for Karriere; barriers between the work of art and its surroundings, between art and audience, between exalted Art and ordinary life.

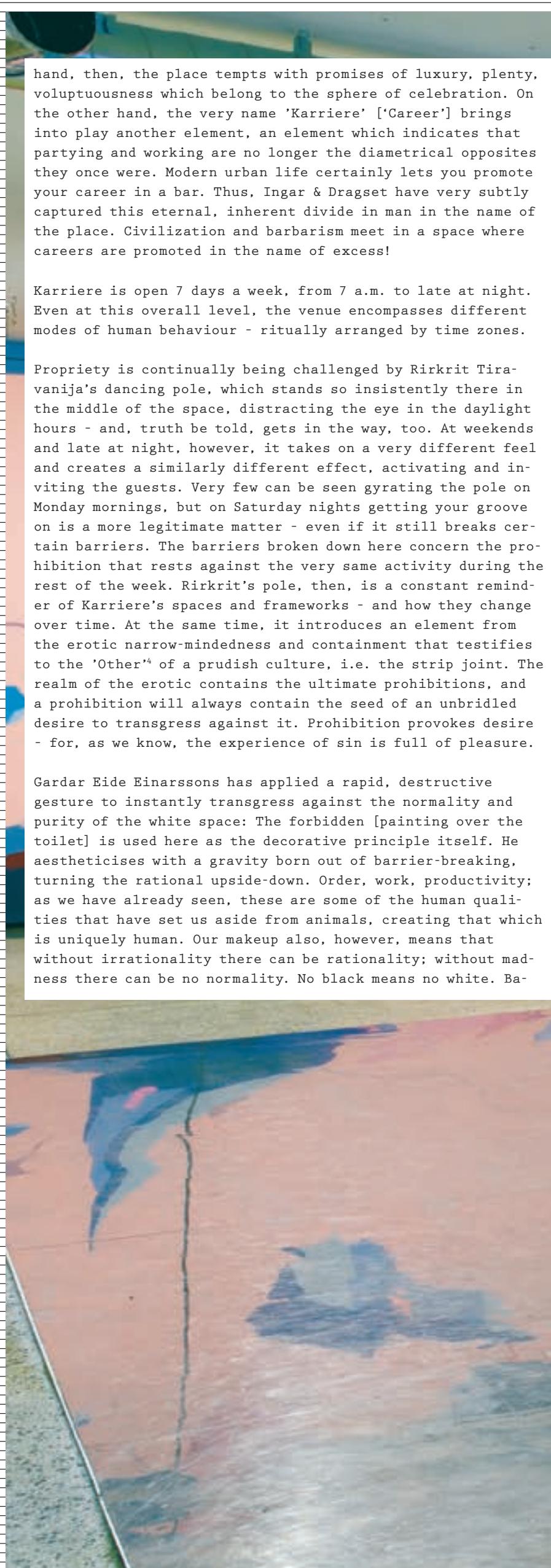
The art at Karriere creates spaces that differ over time, becoming activated in highly diverse ways over the hours of day and night. The barriers are broken down between the homogenous exhibition space where everyone knows their positions, and art posited as an element in the middle of a space where life is lived, food consumed, and passions given free rein. On the one



Olafur Eliasson:
National Career Lamp
Foto/Photo Anders Sune Berg

Club Rio [Berlin] på/at
Karriere, i/in XXL Bathroom
af/by Gardar Eide Einarsson

Gardar Eide Einarsson:
XXL Bathroom. Foto/Photo
Anders Sune Berg



hand, then, the place tempts with promises of luxury, plenty, voluptuousness which belong to the sphere of celebration. On the other hand, the very name 'Karriere' ['Career'] brings into play another element, an element which indicates that partying and working are no longer the diametrical opposites they once were. Modern urban life certainly lets you promote your career in a bar. Thus, Ingvar & Dragset have very subtly captured this eternal, inherent divide in man in the name of the place. Civilization and barbarism meet in a space where careers are promoted in the name of excess!

Karriere is open 7 days a week, from 7 a.m. to late at night. Even at this overall level, the venue encompasses different modes of human behaviour - ritually arranged by time zones.

Propriety is continually being challenged by Rirkrit Tiravanija's dancing pole, which stands so insistently there in the middle of the space, distracting the eye in the daylight hours - and, truth be told, gets in the way, too. At weekends and late at night, however, it takes on a very different feel and creates a similarly different effect, activating and inviting the guests. Very few can be seen gyrating the pole on Monday mornings, but on Saturday nights getting your groove on is a more legitimate matter - even if it still breaks certain barriers. The barriers broken down here concern the prohibition that rests against the very same activity during the rest of the week. Rirkrit's pole, then, is a constant reminder of Karriere's spaces and frameworks - and how they change over time. At the same time, it introduces an element from the erotic narrow-mindedness and containment that testifies to the 'Other'⁴ of a prudish culture, i.e. the strip joint. The realm of the erotic contains the ultimate prohibitions, and a prohibition will always contain the seed of an unbridled desire to transgress against it. Prohibition provokes desire - for, as we know, the experience of sin is full of pleasure.

Gardar Eide Einarssons has applied a rapid, destructive gesture to instantly transgress against the normality and purity of the white space: The forbidden [painting over the toilet] is used here as the decorative principle itself. He aestheticises with a gravity born out of barrier-breaking, turning the rational upside-down. Order, work, productivity; as we have already seen, these are some of the human qualities that have set us aside from animals, creating that which is uniquely human. Our makeup also, however, means that without irrationality there can be rationality; without madness there can be no normality. No black means no white. Ba-

taille believes that in order to become aware of how we as human beings form our experience, it is crucial to let oneself be swept away by the process known as 'losing oneself': In a world founded on discontinuity the objective must be to introduce as much continuity as possible [without losing oneself in madness].⁵ Einarssons' gesture is a simple move, endlessly repeated, but its impact is radical: the destruction of the rational, of the pure white - yet its objective is not simple destruction, but decoration. Here, then, the boundaries of normality are displaced. This dynamic of breaking or going beyond barriers is crucial to our development, preventing us from stagnation - or, shudder of shudders, boredom.

One of the most effective physical markers of boundaries is the wall. Thus far; no farther. Dan Graham's Dividing Wall breaks with the demarcation that is the usual symbolic and concrete function of the wall. Its zig-zagging structure [mimicking the roof formations across the yard] divides the venue, creating new spaces between you on one side and me on the other - between them and us. A symbol of how a boundary can be productive: Here, a wall - the ultimate marker of boundaries - is broken up in a pattern that creates more spaces, new spaces. Between you and me, and between Karriere and the rest of Meatpacking District. The divide is also easy to see through, allowing you to see life happening on the other side, and because the surface is reflective, you can see yourself seeing the others - and see yourself being seen.

Dan Graham's mirror displacements are rooted in the French psychoanalyst Lacan's theory of how the subject is created through the mirror phase of infancy. At the same time, Graham incorporates the social premise: meeting oneself among others. In Lacan, the formation of the subject depends on the sensation of likeness, of identity between the infant's sense of their own body and the sight

of themselves in the mirror - and on the reflection of the gazes of others resting on them. A tripartite entity encompassing many lacunae of displacements, all subtly embedded in Graham's work.⁶ Graham's practice uses boundaries to create new spaces [both physical and mental in scope], and in that way it could be said to render visible the aspect of the experience of transgressing which has to do with losing the sense of self - here, specifically in one's own mirror image!

One of the things that takes up the most space at Karriere, both visually and mentally, is Olafur Eliasson's lamps. Created to mime the physical, human eye, they feature slats which mirror their surroundings and break the light. The lamps very concretely act like big eyes, and at night they pull the loose, barrier-breaking feel that characterises certain works, and certain guests, in another direction. In this sense, Eliasson's artistic project becomes a 'project of enlightenment' that aims to make those who view the works aware of their own experience. As effects in space they become symbols of the 'homogenous' world where the dark, the ill-lit is never allowed to rule. Karriere, by virtue of Eliasson's lamps, becomes an 'enlightened' place. Like ever-watchful, ever-wakeful eyes in the night they very concretely help people keep to the narrow pathway of virtue. Eliasson's project of enlightenment collides with the night-time visitors' desire for darkness and obscurity - a clash occurs, something which does not reaffirm the state of intoxication, but seeks to counteract it, dragging it in another direction. Whereas the dancing pole at one end invites excess, the unblinking light objects above keep people on the straight and narrow. This is loss of control kept within the limits of the reasonable - in order to avoid violence, vandalism, and unmanageable intoxication.

Bataille speaks of 'the blind spot of the eye' as being a basic condition for the formation of experience. A point zero of non-knowledge from which

all meaning is created. Whereas Bataille wants to darken our sight, Eliasson seeks to create awareness by shedding light, letting one 'see oneself sensing'. Bataille does not wish to see himself sensing - he wishes to lose himself in the dark.⁷

The blind spot of the human eye is activated quite concretely in AVPD's passagewerk [Work of Passage]. It has created confusion, panic, frustration, and wonder. Many find the work with its double and mirroring doors provoking, particularly intoxicated guests who simply wish to find the loo [here, the piece accentuates their sense of loss of control], and it might ultimately even create a form of panic and fear in the lost soul who has ended up in a dead end. In this sense the piece will not only mirror the world in physical terms [with its many identical doors and spaces]; it will also reflect itself as an inner sense of being lost in the midst of chaos. In this way, the Work of Passage offers a concrete embodiment of Bataille's concept of the blind spot. According to Bataille, the blind spot has to do with becoming lost, with losing oneself, with venturing out to the edge of what is possible as one conquers the limitations of everyday language. To Bataille, however, the blind spot is also the harbinger of clear-sightedness; knowledge arises through unknowing, and here it is possible to experience the ecstatic immediacy of nothingness - if only for a moment: At the end of fumbling, ecstasy and release beckons!

Our ability to celebrate the Extravagance of Life: to be lavish with oneself - and to seek knowledge in experiences of transgression, that, according to Bataille, is what justifies our existence:

*'We seek a summit! Each is at liberty to never venture out on this search. Yet humanity as a whole yearns for this summit, which is all that defines it, all that gives it justification and meaning.'*⁸

[MKT]

1. Georges Bataille: L'Érotisme, p. 96, Les Editions de minut, 1957.
"La vie est en son essence un excès, elle est la prodigalité de la vie....
A l'extrême, toutefois, nous voulons résolument ce qui met notre vie en danger".

2. Op. cit., p. 76: "...dans le temps profane du travail, la société accumule les ressources, la consommation est réduite à la quantité nécessaire à la production. Par excellence, le temps sacré est la fête."

3. cf. Georges Bataille: Les larmes d'Éros.

4. L'Érotisme, p. 125: "...le gaudriole a le sens de l'érotisme inhibé, changé en décharge futives, en dissimulations plaisantes, en allusions."

5. L'Érotisme, p. 25: "Il y a dans le passage de l'attitude normale au désir une fascination fondamentale de la mort."

6. Cf. e.g. Claire Bishop: Installation Art. Routledge, 2005. pp. 72-76

7. Cf. Georges Bataille: L'expérience intérieure.

8. L'Érotisme, pp. 304-305: "Nous sommes à la recherche d'un sommet. Chacun, s'il lui plaît, peut négliger la recherche. Mais l'humanité dans son ensemble aspire à ce sommet, qui seul le définit, qui seul en est la justification et le sens."

Rirkrit Tiravanija: Elephant Juice, [2007]
Foto/Photo Anders Sune Berg

Courtesy of the artist and Kurimanzutto,
Mexico City



Monica Bonvicini: still from
No Head Man video material
Courtesy of the artist, Emi
Fontana Gallery, Milan & West
of Rome Inc, Los Angeles.
© the artist and VGBildKunst



DK

Caroline Gooden var fotograf og danser i Trisha Browns kompagni for moderne dans. Manden, Gordon, som hun mødte til sin egen fødselsdagsfest, i april 1971, og derefter dannede par med, var kunstneren Gordon Matta-Clark. Og Food var en restaurant, et kunstprojekt og et samlingspunkt for den eksperimenterende kunstsscene, der var rykket ind i det nedslidte og forladte SoHo på Manhattan i New York. På Food stod Robert Rauschenberg tit i køkkenet, danseren og koreografen Yvonne Rainer og mediekunstneren Laurie Anderson kom og spiste, avantgarde-musikeren Richard Peck vaskede op, og

Niels Henriksen

...

En historie om FOOD

I threw a party at my loft to celebrate my 31st and asked everyone to bring flowers. Gordon brought edible flowers. It was right in line with his work: he had been frying photographs. I was a photographer and I loved to cook. Gordon said, "You should start a restaurant!" Right there, April 8, 1971, Food was born.

[Caroline Gooden]

fotografen Robert Frank dokumenterede det hele på film. Stedet er dog ikke alene spændende som mødested for kunstnere, men også som ramme for den eksperimenterende med performance, nye medier og sociale strukturer, der foregik i 70'ernes kunst.

Udover Gordon Matta-Clark inviterede Gooden sine tre venner til at være med i projektet: Suzy Harris, Rachel Lew og Tina Girouard, der alle var dansere og gode kokke. Som følge af deres forskellige gastronomiske udgangspunkter var maden, der serveredes på Food, en højt progressiv, ofte økologisk og vegetarisk, blanding af alverdens forskellige køkkener. Matta-Clark, der havde en uddannelse som arkitekt, stod i første omgang for indretningen af restauranten, som var elegant, men ekstremt enkel med et stort åbent køkken langs den ene væg. Snart blev han dog også motor bag rækken af performances og begivenheder, der kom til at foregå på Food. I 1971 var Matta-Clark endnu ikke begyndt at skære i bygninger, som han siden blev mest kendt for. På daværende tidspunkt arbejdede han næsten udelukkende med mad i form af store blokke af agar-agar, en gelé lignende stivelse udvundet af alger, hvori han blandede alt fra Yoohoo-chokolademælk til forskellige kemiske agenter og objekter som galvaniserede stål pander, metalkroge og bladguld. Disse værker rådnede under afgivelse af en ulidelig stank, og

i et enkelt tilfælde eksploderede et agarværk af uvisse årsager under en udstilling på et galleri. De stegte fotografier, som Gooden nævner i citatet ovenfor, var del af samme praksis.

Matta-Clark så fra starten en mulighed i Food for at præsentere den slags praksis og lavede derfor søndagsarrangementer, hvor han selv eller en anden kunstner forberedte et måltid. Blandt de urealiserede planer for måltider finder man konceptkunstneren Mark di Suveros forslag om at servere ved hjælp af en kran, der rakte ind gennem vinduet. Dette som en ironisk kommentar til den store skala, som samtidige Land Art-kunstnere, deriblandt Robert Smithson, der var en stor inspiration for Matta-Clark, arbejdede med. Kunstneren Lee Jaffe blev også bedt om atstå for en søndagsmiddag, det var dog ikke som kok, men som måltid. "Lee - just imagine what a fabulous treat you would make [...] You would not only be well remembered but superbly catered...", lokkede Matta-Clark i et brev. Blandt de realiserede måltider var Matta-Clarks egen Matta Bones. En hel middag af mad i og med ben, der afsluttedes med, at benene rensetes og sattes på snor, så gæsterne kunne gå hjem med dem om halsen. Matta Bones og måltidet Alive, som bestod af udhulede hårdkogte øg fyldt med levende rejer, er blandt de mest huskede, men de mange knap så spektakulære måltider, der blev tilberedt på Food, er dog ikke mindre bemærkelsesværdige.

For de mange kunstnere, der boede og arbejdede i området omkring Food, var restauranten nemlig ikke kun et sted, hvor man kunne mødes og få noget at spise. Det var også et sted, hvor man kunne tjene til livets opretholdelse ved at arbejde i kortere eller længere perioder. De kunne sige op, når deres arbejde som kunstnere krævede deres fulde opmærksomhed, og komme tilbage,

når de igen havde mere tid og færre penge, og på den måde aspirerede Food til at være en slags socialt sikkerhedsnet. Hvor de ovennævnte madeeksperimenter beskriver en slags formel overskridelse af kunstens grænser ved at bruge noget så forgængeligt og hverdagsagtigt som mad som medie, så beskriver Food som social konstruktion en anden form for overskridelse. Spørgsmålet melder sig, om hvorvidt Food var et kunstværk, og dermed om kunst kan være en social eller økonomisk sammenhæng snarere end et objekt. Her er der altså tale om en anden slags overskridelse af kunstens grænser, en ny slags kunst, som man dengang betegnede 'system-æstetik', men i dag kalder 'relationel æstetik' eller 'social æstetik'.

Ikke dermed sagt, at Food udgjorde et enestående, kunstnerisk nybrud. Som det oftest er tilfældet, havde Food også sine fortilfælde. Det specielt blandt projekter lavet af konceptkunstnere som Daniel Spoerri, der arbejdede med mad fra begyndelsen af 60'erne og frem. Et af Spoerris første sådanne projekter foregik faktisk i 1961 i København på Galerie Köpcke, hvor han gensolgte varer fra et nærliggende supermarked, påstemplet beskedet: "Attention: Work of Art". Senere skrev han frikadellens interkulturelle historie og åbnede restauranter i Paris [Restaurant de la Galerie J, 1963] og Düsseldorf [Restaurant Spoerri, 1968], med kunstnere som

Joseph Beuys og Antoni Miralda som gæstekokke og kritikere som Pierre Retany og John Ashbury som gæstetjenere. Et andet eksempel er Les Levines restaurant Levine's, der åbnede i 1969 i New York. Levine's var indrettet med futuristiske plastikmøbler og et videokredsløb, som gjorde, at gæsterne konstant kunne overvåge sig selv og hinanden i realtid, og den var ejet af restauratøren bag natklubben og restauranten Max's Kansas City. Max's Kansas City var ikke et kunstprojekt, men snarere et sted, der blev noget specielt, fordi berømte kunstnere kom der. Først Robert Rauschenberg og Larry Rivers og senere Andy Warhol med hele sit følge af drag queens og 'glitter-rock-stjernerne' David Bowie, Iggy Pop, Lou Reed med flere. Les Levines rolle i alt dette er uvis, men han havde allerede markeret sig som en kunstner, der arbejdede meget tæt op ad de markedsøkonomiske strukturer. Der var under alle omstændigheder en verden til forskel mellem Levine's og Food.

Med sin placering i SoHo rundt om hjørnet fra udstillingssteder som 112 Greene Street, det nuværende White Columns, Holly Solomons loft i "98 Greene Street", Alanna Heiss' "10 Bleecker Street", som efter en række transformationer blev til det nuværende P.S.1., Clocktower, Artist Space og A.I.R., lå Food i centrum af 1970'ernes alternative bevægelse i New York. Disse udstillingssteder var på hver deres måde forsøg på at definere en position uden for markedet, institutionen og den etablerede kunstverden. Her udstilledes kunst, som ikke fik plads på det kommercielle marked og i museerne, fordi det var for mærkeligt, kritisk eller lavet af repræsentanter for grupper som kunstverdenen bare havde mindre tilltro til som kunstnere, som kvinder og afro-amerikanere. I denne sammenhæng var Food langtfra det mest kritiske eller radikale

projekt. Goodens motivation lå i høj grad i forlængelse af hendes interesse for madlavning, mens Matta-Clark i første omgang så stedet som ramme for hans kunstneriske forsøg med mad, og i anden omgang som ramme for hans mere diskursive tiltag i form af diskussionsgrupper. De andre kernepersoner havde også givet deres agenda'er, og som sådan var Food et eklektisk projekt, der mest af alt var bundet sammen af troen på kollektivismen, og på at man i fællesskab kunne skabe et alternativ til den etablerede orden, som var smukkere, bedre og mere retfærdigt. Muligvis var Food en succes på de områder, men økonomisk var det en fiasko. Fra starten havde Caroline Gooden finansieret stedet med penge, hun havde arvet. Food blev dog aldrig en bæredygtig forretning, og da Goodens arv i 1974 var brugt op, måtte hun sælge.

Det kan dog ikke siges at være enden på historien.

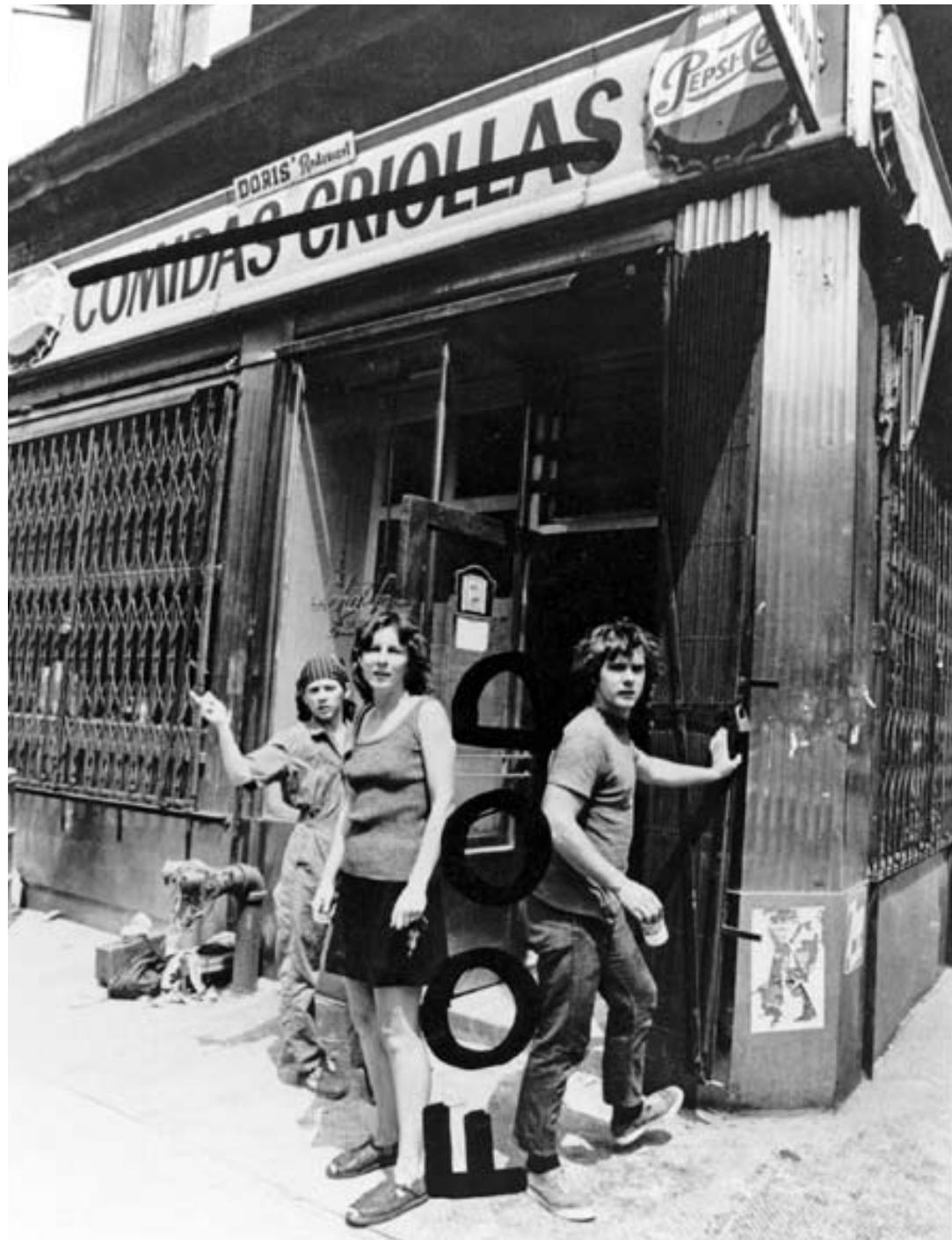
For det første kørte restauranten videre i mange år under samme navn, men som et mere kommercielt foretagende, og lukkede først endeligt i slutningen af 80'erne. Derudover kan man sige, at

Gordon Matta-Clark
Food, 1972
Documentation photograph
Courtesy the Estate of Gordon
Matta-Clark and David Zwirner,
New York

Gordon Matta-Clark [1943-1978]

...

Gordon Matta-Clark var søn af den chilenske surrealist Roberto Matta og gudsøn af Marcel Duchamp. Han blev uddannet arkitekt ved Cornell University i Ithaca i New York, læste en kort overgang litteratur ved Sorbonne i Paris i 1968 før han vendte tilbage til USA og begyndte at arbejde som kunstner. Først som assistent for flere af de store Land Art-kunstnere, som Robert Smithson, og dernæst som en frontløber i den mærkelige og nu næsten glemte kunst-genre food-art. I starten af 1970'erne kom gruppen Anarchitecture, som Matta-Clark selv var initiativtager til, til at virke som en katalysator for hans tilbagevenden til arkitekturen. Og i de følgende år udviklede han sin særlige måde at skære en slags negative skulpturelle former ud af bygninger på. Udeover disse værker lavede han mange film og projekter som Fake Estates, der gik ud på, at han opkøbte små, ubrugelige, indeklemte grundstykker på Manhattan. Gordon Matta-Clark døde pludseligt i 1978 af kræft i bugspytkirtlen, da hans karriere var på et højdepunkt.



Food overlevede i de samarbejder og grupperinger, som opstod på restauranten mellem dens kernefigurer. Bladrer man i tidskriftet Avalanche, der fra 1970 til 1976 dækkede den konceptuelle, kritiske, performative og alternative del af New Yorks kunsscene, dukker de samme navne fra kernegruppen omkring Food op gentagne gange i forskellige konstellationer. Matta-Clark startede 'Anarchitecture' [en blanding af ordene anarki og arkitektur på engelsk], der mestendels var en diskussionsgruppe, men som også lavede udstillinger sammen. Hvor agarværkerne var en slags antiskulpturer, begyndte Matta-Clark i kontekst af Anarchitecture-gruppen at tale om 'non-uments', altså negationen af 'monuments'. Dette beskriver også skredet i Matta-Clarks interesse fra den performative og kropslige madkunst til en mere kritisk, politisk motiveret interesse i rum, arkitektur og urbanitet. I 1972 lavede han Open House, en transportabel bolig til fri afbenyttelse, i 1973 i Italien lavede han de første to værker, hvor han skar i bygninger, og i 1974 det definitivt 'non-umentale' værk Splitting, hvor han skar et træhus i New Jersey midt over.

Måske kan Food beskrives som et 'non-ument'. Som et relativt kortlivet projekt, der synes at falde uden for alle kategorier, har det ikke efterladt sig mange spor i form af dokumentation. Hvilket kun forstærkes af den dramatiske forandring, området, hvor Food lå, siden har gennemgået, og som har slettet alle fysiske spor. I hvad der dengang var et forladt og forfaldent kvarter, finder man nu Chanel- og Burberry-butikker; i Food's gamle lokaler ligger der en kædebutik for børnetøj. Kunstscenen har for længst fortrukket. Samtidig har Food en kæmpe fascinationskraft. Fænomenet Food er omspundet af, ofte modstridende, fortællinger og historier om, hvad der foregik, hvem der kom hvornår, og hvad de lavede. Måske bidrager den sparsomme dokumentation til denne mytificering, men tiltrækningens kraften ligger også i, at Food i den grad beskriver mangetydigheden og kompleksiteten i en kunstscene, som har dikteret kunstens videre udvikling helt op til nu.
[NH]

Brev fra Caroline Gooden til Corinne Diserens, 5. september 1992. Se Food, Catherine Morris red. [New York: White Columns/ Köln: Walter König, 2000], s. 44.

Pamela M. Lee, Object to be Destroyed [Cambridge, Mass./ London: MIT Press, 2000], s. 43.

Brevet er reproduceret i sin helhed i Catherine Morris [red.], s. 14.

Judith E. Stein, 'Spoerri's Habitat', Art in America, Juli 2002.

'Scenes', Village Voice, 20. marts 1969, s. 12.

Niels Henriksen

...

A History of FOOD

I threw a party at my loft to celebrate my 31st and asked everyone to bring flowers. Gordon brought edible flowers. It was right in line with his work: he had been frying photographs. I was a photographer and I loved to cook. Gordon said, "You should start a restaurant!"

**Right there, April 8, 1971, Food was born.
[Caroline Gooden]**

UK

Caroline Gooden was a photographer and dancer with the Trisha Brown Dance Company. Gordon, the man she met at her own birthday party in April 1971 and who became her romantic partner there and then, was the artist Gordon Matta-Clark. And Food was a restaurant, an art project, and a rallying point for the experimental art scene that had colonised the dilapidated, largely abandoned SoHo on Manhattan, New York. At Food, Robert Rauschenberg would often take up position in the kitchen, the dancer and choreographer Yvonne Rainer and the multi-media artist Laurie Anderson dined there, the avant-garde musician Richard Peck did the dishes, and the photographer Robert Frank documented the whole thing on film. Being a meeting place for artists is not, however, the venue's only claim to fame; it also served as a framework for and backdrop to the extensive experimentation with performance, new media, and social structures that blossomed on the 1970s art scene.

In addition to Gordon Matta-Clark, Gooden also invited three of her friends to take part in the project: Suzy Harris, Rachel Lew, and Tina Girouard, all of them dancers - and excellent chefs. They had very different gastronomic points of departure, and as a result, the food served at Food was an eclectic, highly progressive, often organic and vegetarian blend of cuisines from every corner of the world. Matta-Clark, who had trained as an architect, began by being in charge of the interior of the restaurant; an elegant, extremely simple affair with a large open kitchen along one wall. Soon, however, he also became the driving force behind the range of performances and events that would take place at Food. In 1971 Matta-Clark had not yet begun cutting and carving buildings, the work that would later bring him the greatest fame. At this point, he worked almost exclusively with food in the form of large blocks of agar-agar, a jello-like starchy substance derived from algae. He mixed this substance with everything from Yoohoo chocolate milk to various chemical agents and objects such as galvanised steel sheets, metal hooks, and

gold leaf. These works would rot, emitting an awful stench in the process, and in one case an agar piece even exploded during a gallery exhibition - the reasons are largely unknown. The fried photographs mentioned by Gooden in the quote above were part of the same practice.

From the very outset, Matta-Clark saw in Food an opportunity to showcase practices of this kind, and so he staged Sunday events where either he himself or another artist would prepare a meal. The list of never-realised plans for meals included the conceptual artist Mark di Suvero's proposal to serve the food by means of a crane reaching in through the window. This would be an ironic comment on the large scale employed by contemporary Land Art artists, including Robert Smithson, who was a major inspiration for Matta-Clark. The artist Lee Jaffe was also asked to supply a Sunday dinner, albeit not as chef, but as the main dish itself. "Lee - just imagine what a fabulous treat you would make [...] You would not only be well remembered but superbly catered...", were the enticing phrases used by Matta-Clark in a letter. The list of realised meals included Matta-Clark's own Matta Bone - an entire meal consisting entirely of food served in and on bones, concluded by the bones being cleaned and drawn on strings so that guests could leave wearing them around their necks. Matta Bones and the meal Alive, which consisted of hollowed-out hard-boiled eggs filled with live shrimps, are among the best remembered, but many of the less spectacular meals prepared at Food are equally worthy of note.

To the many artists who lived and worked in the vicinity of Food, the restaurant was not just a place to meet and have a bite to eat. It was also a place where they could make a living by working for short or prolonged periods of time. They could quit when their artistic work required their full attention and come back when they found themselves with more time and less money on their hands, and in this way

Food became a kind of safety net, a makeshift social security setup. Whereas the culinary experiments mentioned above constitute a kind of formal breaking of the boundaries of art insofar as they use something as transient and mundane as food as their medium, Food viewed as a social construct represents a different form of transgression. We face the question of whether Food was a work of art; the question of whether art can consist of a social or financial context rather than being an object. What we find here, then, is a different kind of breaking of the boundaries of art, a new kind of art which at the time was called 'system aesthetics', but which is now known as 'relational aesthetics' or 'social aesthetics'.

This is not to say that Food was a unique experiment, breaking all-new artistic ground. As is so often the case, Food, too, had precedents. Particularly among projects made by conceptual artists such as Daniel Spoerri, who worked with food from the early 1960s onwards. One of Spoerri's first projects of this kind took place in 1961 at Galerie Köpcke in Copenhagen. Here, he resold merchandise from a nearby supermarket, now stamped with the message: "Attention: Work of Art". Later he would write the intercultural history of the meatball and opened restaurants in Paris [Restaurant de la Galerie J, 1963] and Düsseldorf [Restaurant Spoerri, 1968], featuring artists such as Joseph Beuys and Antoni Miralda as guest chefs and critics such as Pierre Retany and John Ashbury as guest waiters. Another example would be Les Levine's restaurant Levine's, which opened in 1969 in New York. The interior of Levine's included futuristic plastic furniture and a video loop which enabled guests to constantly

Stills from *Food*, 1972
En film af/a film by Gordon Matta-Clark

Courtesy the Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark/billedkunst.dk





Stills from *Food*, 1972
En film af/a film by Gordon Matta-Clark

Courtesy the Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark/billedkunst.dk

view themselves and each other in real time, and the place was owned by the restaurateur behind the nightclub and restaurant Max's Kansas City. Max's Kansas City was not an art project as such; rather, it was a place which became something special because famous artists would go there. First Robert Rauschenberg and Larry Rivers, then Andy Warhol and his entire retinue of drag queens and movie-stars, then the 'glitter rock stars' David Bowie, Iggy Pop, Lou Reed, and others. Les Levine's role in all of this remains uncertain, but at the time he had already made his mark as an artist whose work was closely tied to structures of the market economy. At any rate, there was a world of difference between Levine's and Food.

Located in SoHo, just around the corner from exhibition venues such as 112 Greene Street, the current White Columns, Holly Solomon's loft at "98 Greene Street", Alanna Heiss' "10 Bleecker Street", which after a number of transformations became the current P.S.1., Clocktower, Artist Space, A.I.R., it is clear that Food lay in the very epicentre of the 1970s alternative movement in New York.

Each of these exhibition venues represented, in its own way, an attempt at defining a position outside of the market, outside of the institution and the established art scene. They exhibited art which got no space in the commercial market and the museums because it was too strange, too critical, or made by representatives of groups which simply garnered less respect on the art scene, like women or African Americans. In this context, Food was not the

most critical or radical project by a long shot. Gooden's motivation was very much fuelled by her interest in cooking, while Matta-Clark saw the place as a backdrop for his artistic experiments with food first, and secondly as a vehicle for his more discursive initiatives such as discussion groups. The other core persons involved with the project each contributed their own agendas, and in this sense Food was an eclectic undertaking held together by a faith in collectivism and the idea that together, it was possible to create an alternative to the established order of things; an alternative which was more beautiful, better, and more fair. Food may have been a success on those terms, but financially it was a failure. Right from the outset Caroline Gooden funded the place with money she had inherited. Food never became a financially viable business, however, and when Gooden's inheritance had been spent by 1974, she had to sell up.

That wasn't the end of the story, however.

First of all, the restaurant continued for many years under the same name, albeit as a more commercial business, and only closed its doors for the last time in the late 1980s. It could also be said that Food survived in the collaborative efforts and groupings which arose among the key figures involved with the restaurants. As one leafs through the pages of the journal Avalanche, which covered the conceptual, critical, performative, and alternative part of the New York art scene from 1970 to 1976, one finds the same names from the core group around Food popping up numerous times in various constellations. Matta-Clark started 'Anarchitecture', which was mainly a discussion group, but its

member also did stage exhibitions together. Whereas the agar pieces were a kind of anti-sculpture, the context of Anarchitecture group saw Matta-Clark beginning to speak of 'non-uments', i.e. a negation of 'monuments'. This also describes the shift in Matta-Clark's interest from performative, body-oriented food art towards a more critical, politically motivated interest in space, architecture, and urbanity. In 1972 he did Open House, a mobile dwelling designed for use by passers-by; in 1973, while in Italy, he did his first two pieces that involved cutting in buildings, and in 1974 he executed the definitive 'non-umental' work Splitting, where he cut a wooden house in New Jersey in half.

Perhaps Food can be described as a 'non-ument'. As a relatively short-lived project, appearing to fall outside the scope of all categories, it has left few traces in terms of documentation. This shortage of documentation has only been exacerbated by the dramatic change that has since occurred in Food's old neighbourhood; changes which have erased all physical traces. What was once a dilapidated neighbourhood shunned by the masses is now home to Chanel and Burberry stores; the former home of Food now houses a chain store that sells children's clothes. The art scene has long since moved on to pastures new. At the same time, however, Food exerts a powerful

fascination. As a phenomenon, Food is surrounded by - often contradictory - stories and narratives about what went on there, who was there and when, and what they were doing. Perhaps the dearth of documentation has fanned the flames of this myth-making, but the attraction of Food also resides in the fact that Food very much describes the variety and complexity of an art scene which has dictated the ongoing development of the arts right up until our present time. [NH]

Letter from Caroline Gooden to Corinne Diserens, 5 September 1992. See Food, Catherine Morris ed. [New York: White Columns/Köln: Walter König, 2000], p. 44.

Pamela M. Lee, Object to be Destroyed [Cambridge, Mass./ London: MIT Press, 2000], p. 43.

The letter is reproduced in its entirety in Catherine Morris [ed.], p. 14.

Judith E. Stein, 'Spoerri's Habitat', Art in America, July 2002.

'Scenes', Village Voice, 20 March 1969, p 12.

Gordon Matta-Clark [1943-1978]

...

Gordon Matta-Clark was the son of the Chilean surrealist Roberto Matta and the godson of Marcel Duchamp. He majored in architecture from the Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, briefly studied literature at the Sorbonne in Paris in 1968 before returning to the USA and taking up his vocation as an artist. He began by working as an assistant to several of the great Land Art artists, such as Robert Smithson, and then moved on to become a front runner in the strange and now largely forgotten genre of "food-art". In the early 1970s the group Anarchitecture, of which Matta-Clark was one of the driving forces, became a catalyst for his return to architecture. In the years that followed he developed his trademark way of cutting or carving out a kind of negative sculptural shapes out of buildings. In addition to these works he created many films and projects such as "Fake Estates", which consisted in him buying small, useless plots of land on Manhattan. Gordon Matta-Clark died suddenly in 1978 of pancreatic cancer, snatched away at the high point of his career.



Prince Street at Wooster Street,
New York, 2008
Foto/photo: Niels Henriksen





Alvin Baltrop, Untitled, black-and-white-photograph, 1975-86.
©The Alvin Baltrop Trust. Used with permission.
[foto af/photo of Gordon Matta-Clark: Day's End, 1975]

DK

I februarudgaven [2008] af kunsttidsskriftet Artforum finder man en artikel af den amerikanske kunsthistoriker Douglas Crimp, som handler om fotografen Alvin Baltrop. Alvin Baltrop dokumenterede gennem 10 år, mellem 1975 og 1986, livet på molerne på det sydlige Manhattans vestside, altså ud for Meatpacking District og SoHo, hvor Food lå. Molerne var allerede blevet forladt af industrien, da en bro i 1973 styrte sammen og afskar området endnu mere fra byen. Herefter blev molerne et fristed for byens homoseksuelle mænd, dagdrivere, solbadere og hjemløse, men også et farligt sted, hvor røvere og voldtægtsforbrydere fandt deres ofre. Baltrop var specielt interesseret i miljøet for homoseksuelle, der i takt med en generel frigørelse udfoldede sig på molerne. I sine sort-hvide fotografier skildrer Baltrop mændene, der 'cruiser', eller har sex midt i forfaldet. Ligesom han i en række portrætter fokuserer på konsekvenserne af et hårdt liv på gaden, i form af mærkede ansigter eller et lig, som bliver hevet op fra havnen.

Niels Henriksen

...

Postscript; Food, sex og historie – brev fra Douglas Crimp

Om forholdet mellem den seksuelle frigørelse – eller snarere de seksuelle frigørelser, kvindernes, de homoseksuelles, de transseksuelles og så videre – og så kunstens kritiske, samfunds-omstyrtende projekt i de tidlige 70'ere.

Kunstscenen, som Food var en del af, så også hurtigt mulighederne i de forladte moler. I 1971 lavede Willoughby Sharp, redaktøren for Avalanche, en serie aktioner på mole 18, med bl.a. Vito Acconci, Mel Bochner, Dan Graham og Matta-Clark,

i 1972 lavede Joan Jonas sin performance Delay Delay på mole 20 og 21, og i 1975 lavede Gordon Matta-Clark sit værk Day's End på mole 18. Således overlapper de to scener, kunstscenen fra SoHo og bøssescenen på molerne. Day's End, som bestod af tre enorme måneformede snit i molen, figurerer på Baltrops billeder af solbadende mænd, mens Matta-Clark i forbindelse med sit værk udtaler, at "Day's End nu er overrendt af homoseksuelle". Douglas Crimp underer sig over, om ikke de homoseksuelles brug af molen faktisk var præcis den legende situation, som Matta-Clark sagde, han ville skabe med sit værk?

En af de få samtidige dokumentationer af Food er den film, som Gordon Matta-Clark og fotografen Robert Frank lavede sammen om projektet i 1972. Filmen kredser hele vejen igennem om mad og konsumption, men også om den løssluppenhed, der præger stedet. Midt i middagssamtalen råber Gordon Matta-Clark, "I just want to go around licking everybody's vocal cords," og man underer sig over, hvad han snakker om. Det er, som om samtalerne om mad i filmen er konstant flirtende, og den eksalterede stemning ladet. Fotograferingen – og det kan meget vel være ved den hedonistiske Robert Franks hånd – er opportunistisk, som en hjemmevideo af værste skuffe. Når Tina Girouard børjer sig efter noget på gulvet, stiller fotografen straks skarpt på hendes bagdel. Det er svært at sige hvordan, men filmen handler ikke udelukkende om mad, den handler også om sex. Måske fortæller den, at den frihed, Food var et forsøg på at skabe, også var en seksuel frihed, og den energi, der drev projektet, også en seksuel energi.

Det afføder en række vanskelige spørgsmål: For det første, hvis frihed er der tale om – fotografens eller Tina Girouards? Men det rejser også spørgsmål på et mere overordnet niveau. Hvad var forholdet mellem den seksuelle frigørelse – eller snarere de seksuelle frigørelser, kvindernes, de homoseksuelles, de transseksuelles og så videre – og så kunstens kritiske, samfundsomstyrtende projekt i de tidlige 70'ere. Der er en parallelitet mellem de homoseksuelle og kunstnerne i New York i 70'erne, idet begge grupper søger ud i randområdet for at få plads og lov til at gøre, som de vil. Samtidig er der en verden til forskel. Kunstnerisk positionering kan man trods alt løbe fra på en anden måde, end man kan fra sin sekualitet. Kunstnerne kunne gå hjem ved mørkets frembrud, de unge homoseksuelle, der boede på molerne, fordi deres forældre havde smidt dem ud, måtte blive.

Douglas Crimps sammenstilling af de to separate fænomener er således på samme tid meget givende og højst problematisk. Derfor valgte Karriere at henvende sig til Douglas Crimp med de samme spørgsmål, nemlig hvorvidt han syntes, at sammenligningen kastede et kritisk lys over den rolle, sex spillede i Matta-Clarks del af kunstscenen og på Food, hvorvidt han syntes, at man kan sammenligne de homoseksuelles strategier med kunstnernes, og hvad det kan lære os om sammenhængen mellem rum, frihed og autonomi. Her trykker vi hans svar i dets fulde længde:



Alvin Baltrop, *Friend*, black-and-white-photograph, 1977.
© The Alvin Baltrop Trust.
Used with permission.

"I think I can only answer your questions in one way - and I'm afraid it might seem like an evasion of the questions altogether - and that is to explain something about the memoir project I'm working on.

If there is an overall argument or purpose of the project, it is to try to think together the experimental activities in political, sexual, and cultural spheres that took place in the first ten years I was in the city - 1967-1977. 1977 is the year of 'Pictures' exhibition that I organized for Artists Space, and is probably the work through which I became known. So I'm calling the memoir 'Before Pictures.' I'm trying to write it in such a way as to put the two worlds that were most important in my life - the post-Stonewall world of gay liberation and the developments in the art world that came to be associated with postmodernism - in juxtaposition.

I want to show these worlds as I experienced them - as simultaneous, sometimes overlapping, sometimes mutually exclusive. It was a time of enormous ferment and transformation - of the city, of art, of gay sexual culture. I'm weaving together anecdotes and research, personal stories and criticism, the past and the present. All of these things are meant to be mutually informing and in some sense also to be mutually de-forming, to unsettle the ways in which their usually separate discourses understand them. I'm doing this in ways that I hope are suggestive to my reader, but only suggestive. Because of the strangeness of my method, it's impossible to say that I'm arguing anything so simple as that the art world was ignorant of the gay world, or vice versa, or that the art world was homophobic or the gay world Philistine.

All of these assertions might be implied at one moment or another, but always in ways that are too complex to be stated flatly. Perhaps another way to say this is that, for much of my critical career, I've written polemically, and now I'm trying to write non-polemically. One short portion of this project has been published. It's an essay called 'Back to the Turmoil', in The Eighth Square: Gender, Life, and Desire in Art since the 1960s, the catalogue of an exhibition at the Museum Ludwig in Cologne from 2006. If you read it, I hope you'll get a sense of what I'm trying to explain here.

Best regards,

Douglas Crimp"

Så vidt som Douglas Crimp selv kalder sit svar for "undvigende" og sin metode for "mærkelig", er det måske også den eneste måde han kan svare på. Crimp vil begynde at beskrive nogle sammenhænge, som er ekstremt komplekse, men som samtidig er relevante langt ud over Manhattans grænser til byer som London, Amsterdam og København. Det er nemlig sammenhænge mellem byens udvikling og de subversive strategiers, mellem fysisk sted og kritisk standpunkt, seksuel identifikation og kunstnerisk positionering; og måske vigtigst af alt, mellem de forskellige små frigørelser, der tilsammen udgør den store, moderne frigørelse. Sådanne sammenhænge kan man ikke andet end nærme sig sidelæns og på en "mærkelig" måde. [NH]

Douglas Crimp

[*1944]

...

Douglas Crimp er professor i kunsthistorie ved University of Rochester i New York. Han har arbejdet som kritiker og kurator siden midten af 1970'erne, og var mellem 1977 og 1990 redaktør for det kunsthistoriske tidsskrift October. Derudover har Crimp været aktiv i den amerikanske aids-bevægelse. I sin forskning har han beskæftiget sig med institutionel kritik, fotografi, aids-aktivisme og queer-teori, og har blandt andet udgivet bøgerne *On the Museums Ruins* [MIT Press, 1993] og *Melancholia and Moralism: Essay on AIDS and Queer Politics* [MIT Press, 2002]. For tiden rejser Douglas Crimp verden over med sit foredrag *Action Around the Edges*, som med udgangspunkt i Gordon Matta-Clarks værker beskriver de parallelle scener for seksuel og kunstnerisk frigørelse i New York i 1970'erne.

UK

The February issue [2008] of the art journal *Artforum* includes an article by the US art historian Douglas Crimp about the photographer Alvin Baltrop. Over a 10-year period, from 1975 to 1986, Alvin Baltrop documented life on the piers on the west side

of southern Manhattan, i.e. near the Meatpacking District and SoHo, the home of *Food*. The piers had already been abandoned by the industries when a bridge collapsed in 1973, cutting off the area even more emphatically. From this time on the piers became a sanctuary for the city's gay men, slackers, sunbathers, and homeless, but also a dangerous place where muggers and rapists found their victims. Baltrop was particularly interested in the gay

scene that unfolded itself on the piers, increasingly so as a general liberation gained ground. In his black-and-white photographs Baltrop depicts men cruising or having sex in the midst of the general decay. He also created a range of portraits which focused on the consequences of a tough life on the streets; consequences which took the shape of marked faces or a body dragged up from the harbour waters.

The art scene of which *Food* was a part was also quick to see the potential of the abandoned piers. In 1971 Willoughby Sharp, the editor of *Avalanche*, staged a series of actions on pier 18, featuring Vito Acconci, Mel Bochner, Dan Graham, and Matta-Clark among others. In 1972 Joan Jonas created her performance *Delay Delay* on piers 20 and 21, and in 1975 Gordon Matta-Clark created his *Day's End* on pier 18. Thus arose an overlap between the two scenes: the SoHo art scene and the gay scene on the piers. *Day's End*, which consisted of three huge moon-shaped incisions in the pier, appears in Baltrop's images of sunbathing men, while Matta-Clark, speaking about his work, said that '*Day's End* is now overrun

by gay people.' Douglas Crimp wonders whether the gay men's use of the pier wasn't in fact precisely the playful situation which Matta-Clark said he wanted to create with his work?

One of the few contemporary pieces of documentation concerning *Food* was the film about the project created by Gordon Matta-Clark and the photographer Robert Frank in 1972. Throughout, the film is about food and consumption, but it is also about the spirit of excess and abandon that characterised the place. In the middle of a dinner conversation Gordon Matta-Clark shouts out, "I just want to go around licking everybody's vocal cords," and one wonders what he is talking about. It is as if the conversations about food in the film are relentlessly flirtatious, and the frenetic atmosphere seems highly charged, not to say loaded. The camerawork - which may well have been conducted by the hand of the hedonistic Robert Frank - is as opportunistic as the grossest kind of home video. When Tina Girouard bends to pick up something from the floor, the cameraman immediately focuses on her behind. It is difficult to say exactly why, but the film is not exclusively about food; it is also about sex. Perhaps it tells us that the freedom which *Food* sought to create was also a sexual energy - and that the energy which drove the project ahead was also sexual in nature.

This raises a number of difficult questions. First of all, whose freedom takes priority here - the cameraman's or Tina Girouard's? However, questions on a more general level also present themselves. What was the relationship between the sexual liberation - or, more precisely, sexual liberations; those of women, homosexuals, transsexuals, etc. - and the critical, subversive project of the arts in the early 1970s? There are parallels at play between the homosexuals and artists of 1970s New York; both groups sought out fringe areas in order to be allowed to do as they wished. Yet at the same time there is a world of difference. After all, one can escape one's artistic positioning rather more easily than one's sexuality. The artists could go back home when darkness fell; the young gay people who lived on the piers because their parents had kicked them out had no choice but to stay.

Thus, Douglas Crimp's correlation of the two separate phenomena is both very fruitful and highly problematic. This is why Karriere chose to approach Douglas Crimp with the same questions: whether he thought that the comparison shed a critical light on the part played by sex in Matta-Clark's segment of the art scene and at *Food*, whether he thought that gay strategies could be compared to the artists', and what this can teach us about the correspondence between space, freedom, and autonomy. Here, we reproduce his reply in its entirety:

Niels Henriksen

...

Postscript; Food, Sex, and History – a letter from Douglas Crimp

Concerning the relationship between sexual liberation – or, more precisely, sexual liberations; those of women, homosexuals, transsexuals, etc. – and the critical, subversive project of the arts in the early 1970s.

The art scene of which *Food* was a part was also quick to see the potential of the abandoned piers. In 1971 Willoughby Sharp, the editor of *Avalanche*, staged a series of actions on pier 18, featuring Vito Acconci, Mel Bochner, Dan Graham, and Matta-Clark among others. In 1972 Joan Jonas created her performance *Delay Delay* on piers 20 and 21, and in 1975 Gordon Matta-Clark created his *Day's End* on pier 18. Thus arose an overlap between the two scenes: the SoHo art scene and the gay scene on the piers. *Day's End*, which consisted of three huge moon-shaped incisions in the pier, appears in Baltrop's images of sunbathing men, while Matta-Clark, speaking about his work, said that '*Day's End* is now overrun

Douglas Crimp

[*1944]

...

Douglas Crimp is a professor of Art History at the University of Rochester, New York. He has worked as a curator and critic since the mid-1970s, and was editor of the art history journal '*October*' from 1977 to 1990. Furthermore, Crimp has been active within the American AIDS movement. In his research, he has worked with institutional criticism, photography, AIDS activism, and queer theory. His publications include the books '*On the Museums Ruins*' [MIT Press, 1993] and '*Melancholia and Moralism: Essay on AIDS and Queer Politics*' [MIT Press, 2002]. At present, Douglas Crimp is travelling around the world with his lecture '*Action Around the Edges*', which takes Gordon Matta-Clark's work as the point of departure for describing the parallel scenes for sexual and artistic liberation in 1970s New York.

"I think I can only answer your questions in one way – and I'm afraid it might seem like an evasion of the questions altogether – and that is to explain something about the memoir project I'm working on.

If there is an overall argument or purpose of the project, it is to try to think together the experimental activities in political, sexual, and cultural spheres that took place in the first ten years I was in the city – 1967-1977. 1977 is the year of "Pictures" exhibition that I organized for Artists Space, and is probably the work through which I became known. So I'm calling the memoir "Before Pictures." I'm trying to write it in such a way as to put the two worlds that were most important in my life – the post-Stonewall world of gay liberation and the developments in the art world that came to be associated with postmodernism – in juxtaposition.

I want to show these worlds as I experienced them--as simultaneous, sometimes overlapping, sometimes mutually exclusive. It was a time of enormous ferment and transformation – of the city, of art, of gay sexual culture. I'm weaving together anecdotes and research, personal stories and criticism, the past and the present. All of these things are meant to be mutually informing and in some sense also to be mutually de-forming, to unsettle the ways in which their usually separate discourses understand them. I'm doing this in ways that I hope are suggestive to my reader, but only suggestive. Because of the strangeness of my method, it's impossible to say that I'm arguing anything so simple as that the art world was ignorant of the gay world, or vice versa, or that the art world was homophobic or the gay world Philistine.

All of these assertions might be implied at one moment or another, but always in ways that are too complex to be stated flatly. Perhaps another way to say this is that, for much of my critical career, I've written polemically, and now I'm trying to write non-polemically. One short portion of this project has been published. It's an essay called 'Back to the Turmoil', in *The Eighth Square: Gender, Life, and Desire in Art since the 1960s*, the catalogue of an exhibition at the Museum Ludwig in Cologne from 2006. If you read it, I hope you'll get a sense of what I'm trying to explain here.

Best regards,

Douglas Crimp

Insofar as Douglas Crimp himself calls his answer 'evasive' and his method 'strange', this is perhaps also the only way that Crimp will be able to describe correlations that are extremely complex, yet also relevant far beyond the boundaries of Manhattan - to cities such as London, Amsterdam, and Copenhagen. For they concern links between the city's development and that of subversive strategies, between physical location and critical position, sexual identification and artistic positioning, and - perhaps most importantly of all - between the various small-scale liberations which together form the great modern liberation. It is impossible to approach such correlations in any other way but in a sideways, 'strange' manner. [NH]

Helle Helle is a Voyeur Baby, too

• • •

DK

Janet Cardiff og George Bures Miller har med lydværket I'm a voyeur baby skabt muligheden for at tale og blive hørt, og for at stille den evigt tilstede-værende nysgerrighed om, hvad det dog er, de andre taler om. En mikrofon i bordpladen på et af Karrieres borde transmitterer til Karrieres hjemmeside, hvor man under titlen www.karrierebar.com/im-a-voyeur-baby kan klikke sig til en live lytter. Gæsterne på Karriere bliver informeret om kunstværket, når de bliver sat til bords, ligesom dem, der 'klikker under' på at være voyeurer må siges at være sig vilkårene bevidste. Intet optages eller lagres på nogen måde, og værket kan derfor kun opleves i nuet.

Vi bad den danske forfatter Helle Helle lytte med på værket. Kendt for sit absolute gehør for det talte hverdagslige sprog har hun senest brilleret med romanen Ned til hundene (2008). Her er hendes tekst skrevet ud fra oplevelsen af at sidde foran skærmen og være voyeur. >>

UK

Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller and their audio piece I'm a voyeur baby have created an opportunity to speak and be heard - and to satisfy our ever-present curiosity about what other people could possibly be talking about. A microphone in the tabletop of one of the tables at Karriere transmits the conversation at the table to the Karriere website, where the tagline www.karrierebar.com/im-a-voyeur-baby entices you to click your way to a bit of live eavesdropping. The guests at Karriere are informed about the work of art when they are seated, just as those who 'click-confirm' their voyeurism can only be said to be aware of the terms. Nothing is recorded or stored in any way, meaning that the piece can only be experienced in the now.

We asked the Danish writer Helle Helle to listen in and become a voyeur, too. Known for her absolute pitch as far as everyday spoken language is concerned, her most recent offering to adoring readers is the novel Ned til hundene (2008). Here is the text she wrote on the basis of I'm a voyeur. >>

Undskyld til Lone. Undskyld til Niels. Undskyld til Palle, sådan er jeg slet ikke. Undskyld til Ida igen. Enhver pludrer med sit næb. Undskyld til Dennis og Mads. Pia fortjener hver en krone. Undskyld til Pia. Undskyld min håndtaske. Undskyld mit hyl. Undskyld rygtet, undskyld det pludselige fravær. Mørket var stort og tomt. Undskyld til Mette. Undskyld det med håret. Undskyld for at sidde og nikke. Undskyld for ikke at høre halvdelen. For at sige sandheden, undskyld jeg siger det. Undskyld for misbrug af denne anordning.

Apologies to Lone. Apologies to Niels. Apologies to Palle, I'm not like that at all. Apologies to Ida, again. It's not what you say, it's how you bray it.

Apologies to Dennis and Mads, Pia deserves every penny. Apologies to Pia. Excuse my handbag. Excuse my howl. Excuse the rumor, excuse the sudden absence.

The darkness was huge and empty. Apologies to Mette.

Apologies for the hair. Apologies for sitting and nodding. Apologies for not hearing the half of it. For telling the truth, excuse me for saying so. Apologies for the misuse of this device.

By Helle Helle
(Translation: Mark Kline)

Tirdad Zolghadr

...

DK

Tirdad Zolghadr har siden 1999 beskæftiget sig med feministisk teori i Mellemøsten, modernistisk arkitektur og samtideskunst. I 1999 var han med til at starte det Teheran-baserede feministiske onlinetidsskrift <http://www.badjens.com>, og siden 2002 udgør han sammen med fotografen Shirana Shahbazi og den grafiske designer Manuel Krebs designkollektivet Shahrzad. Som kurator har han blandt andet lavet udstillingerne Ethnic Marketing [Geneve, 2004], som omhandlede den måde, kunst markedsføres, og forstås, ud fra vestlige ideer om etnicitet og kulturel forskellighed. Og Lapdogs of the Bourgeoisie [London/ Stockholm/ Cairo, 2007], som handlede om samtidskunstens højst ambivalente forhold til klassetilhørighed. Ud over sit kuratoriske arbejde bidrager Zolghadr som skribent til en række internationale kunsttidsskrifter. Gennemgående temaer i Tirdad Zolghadrs arbejde er transporten af viden og ideologi mellem Europa og Teheran, samt de underliggende mekanismer i samtidskunstens internationalisme. Tirdad Zolghadr bor i Zürich og Teheran.

UK

Tirdad Zolghadr has worked with feminist theory in the Middle East as well as modernist architecture and contemporary art since 1999. In 1999 he was involved in starting the Teheran-based feminist online journal www.badjens.com, and since 2002 he, the photographer Shirana Shahbazi, and the graphic designer Manuel Krebs have constituted the design collective Shahrzad. In his capacity as curator Zolghadr has staged exhibitions such as 'Ethnic Marketing' [Geneva, 2004], which was about the way in which art is marketed – and understood – on the basis of Western concepts of ethnicity and cultural diversity. Also 'Lapdogs of the Bourgeoisie' [London/ Stockholm/ Cairo, 2007], which was about the highly ambivalent relationship between contemporary art and class associations. In addition to his curatorial work, Zolghadr is a contributor to a wide range of international art journals. Recurring themes in Tirdad Zolghadr's work include transport of knowledge and ideologies between Europe and Teheran as well as the underlying mechanisms within the internationalism of contemporary art. Tirdad Zolghadr lives in Zürich and Teheran.



Image by: Manuel Krebs / Norm

Tirdad Zolghadr

Softcore

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London San Francisco Beirut



*My deepest thanks
to Charles Buchan
and Khavar Zolghadr*

ISBN 10: 1-84659-020-5
ISBN 13: 978-1-84659-020-7
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Manufactured in Lebanon

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26 Westbourne Grove, London W2 5RH
825 Page Street, Suite 203, Berkeley, California 94710
Tabet Building, Mneimneh Street, Hamra, Beirut
www.telegrambooks.com

Patronage

I'm standing in a side alley somewhere in downtown Tehran. On this February afternoon, I'm wearing a duffle coat over a polo shirt, blue jeans, tinted glasses, unfashionably lavish sideburns and a sparse, scruffy beard. Though actually much younger, I appear to be in my mid-thirties, underweight, short and slightly hunched, with striking, full lips and a Caesar's cut of red hair over a high forehead. Even if I'm actually rather sure of myself, I never fail to look self-conscious. I'm the type to make you wonder whether the difference between shyness and reserve, or charm and condescension, was as obvious as you'd always assumed. I'm nursing a hangover from a housewarming party the night before. Before climbing into the taxi behind me I lean back, taking in the concrete façade on the other side of the street. Through the swinging glass doors on the ground floor I can make out a round, tube-like corridor, painted over in black-and-white zebra stripes. The winding corridor makes a sharp turn to the left, then immediately to the right, before slanting downwards, into a large salon which has remained unused for two decades.

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The zebra motif continues across the walls of the salon and much of the furniture, including the Eames surfboard tables, the polyethylene chairs, and the barstools surrounding the circular chrome bar in the symmetric center of the room. The glaring stripes are soon to be replaced by untreated cement in varying shades, from dusky white to brute, concrete gray. An occasional sprinkle of designer neon, matched with a scattering of Turkoman pillows, early Safavid miniatures and black-and-white Qajar photography, will ensure just the right blend of ethnic marketing and cosmopolitan obeisance.

Upon arriving in Tehran the month before last, I quickly decided to re-open the family establishment, the Promessa, not as the restaurant and cocktail bar it once was but as a showroom of sorts, a space for art exhibitions, catwalks, launches, readings, screenings, student workshops, talks, corporate receptions, film sets, dance parties and such. The room is to remain mostly vacant, polyfunctional, presumptuous in its lavish use of space, displaying little at a time, when it's showing anything at all. Upstairs by the entrance is an unframed black-and-white portrait of Zsa Zsa, matron and matriarch who founded the Promessa some forty years ago.

There will be not one but two openings: an official vernissage early on a Wednesday afternoon, an unofficial one later the same day. The official opening shall be the more entertaining by far. Bureaucrats in loose-fitting gray suits, shapeless, gassy trousers flowing over cheap black leather shoes onto the floor. The government brand of canonical humility, of the people for the people, bulky glasses, and six-day stubble carefully trimmed. They'll be sipping on Fantas and smiling, always careful to take

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long, thoughtful, suggestive pauses before speaking.

Friends from the clergy will also be invited. Camel-fur capes, black turbans or white, gray and light-blue robes reaching down almost to the ground. The effect is superb. Mullahs always look like they're floating, hovering two inches above the floor. They, like the bureaucrats, choose their words carefully, but tend to speak in strenuous hypotheses and confident conclusions, not in candy-coated, officious formulae.

There will also be the art scene, or the official rendition thereof. National museums, international *cinéma d'auteurs*. And artists in Nike running shoes and CK shirts elaborating on their *instaaleshens*, and their *performances* to French reporters and Lebanese curators. And there could well be a reading. Your visiting journalist-writer with his written impressions of the country, paying homage to the particular, gentle allure of the lascious Persian melancholy, the cultivated religiosity and smiling self-denial that are brought to bear these days in Iran. And there should be celebrities, of a comfortably wide range, if possible. Anything from Neil Diamond to Michael Moore to someone more artworld. And there will also be my friend and mentor Stella.

Stella is a historian, specializing in postwar art brut, whom I met in the US some ten years ago. It would be hard to overestimate the impact Stella has had on my life, from my politics to my personal tastes to my everyday habits, none of which have remained untouched since that first, chance meeting at an espresso bar on Houston University Campus, following a lecture on Richard Greaves. Stella, with her limitless web of devoted artworld contacts, her impeccable sense of dress and the way she seems

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to have an answer to everything from the discrepancy between a latte machiatto and a latte *tout court* to conflicting histories of urban guerrilla warfare in twentieth-century Chad.

Stella is an heir to old, mature money and has also been the only source of financial support for the showroom project to date, although this, she has made clear, is bound to change sooner or later. The fact is, despite her considerable standing in academia, I'd never heard of Stella until I was introduced to her by an old family friend, a certain Tan Christenhuber, or 'Uncle Tan', an oil engineer from Hamburg.

At the opening, I'm hoping Stella will offer her typical celebrations of Third World megalopolises as adorable swirls of plastic glitz, to then affront and galvanize with select historical revisionisms, cheap, brutal and unfair, reaping unending discussions with alternating bureaucrats sweetly smiling over their Fantas.

The unofficial opening: raisin vodka, a dozen entrées, crystal meth or second-rate cocaine in the restrooms, opium and sweet black tea in the back garden to impress Stella. Many associate opium with Lewis Carroll, dream-like euphoria and de Niro in *Once Upon a Time in America*. But the local variety offers a very mild effect, hardly more bewildering than a hot bath.

I turn and make for the cab, avoiding the patches of damp snow on the sidewalk. The driver nods and mumbles politely as he turns the key in the ignition. He's wearing a light gray polyester suit and looks like a young Leonid Brezhnev. Very much my idea of an essentially characteristic Russian (or Ukrainian, perhaps) – pale cheeks and dismal shadows under St Bernard eyes – which

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reminds me that Stella is to leave St Petersburg next week and will soon, hopefully, be flying on to Tehran.

The driver switches on the tape recorder, to what sounds like Neil Diamond, live in concert somewhere. *Hep-Hep*, says Neil Diamond. *Hep-Hep – you want me. And I can't deny I'm a man.* The driver is looking at me through the rear-view mirror with his depressing, watery, blue-gray eyes.

'So you grew up abroad, didn't you?

I don't answer.

'What's better? Here or there?

I ignore the question and start cleaning my glasses with a used Kleenex. Ever since moving to Tehran, everyone from the plumber to the dentist to the janitor has been keen on hearing how I would personally compare Iran to the rest of the world. I put on my glasses again and reach for my packet of Super Golden Love Deluxe, a local brand with gold and lilac packaging, and light a cigarette, tossing the match out the window.

Owing to my parents' multinational careers in corporate pharmaceuticals, I grew up visiting various polyglot schools in Central and West African republics. After which I spent several years working part-time in cafés and sports bars in Oregon and Texas, which is where I met Strella, who persuaded me to move to the East Coast and study Hebrew and Arabic, along with a minor degree in Art History and a certificate in Criminal Forensics.

I came to Tehran for the first time just over a month ago. When questioned about motives for 'coming back', I refer to various lines of kinship, or my 'cherished mother tongue', and something about the light, the landscape, roots. The more I make myself sound like a palm tree, the more people are touched. It was

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of course Stella's idea that I move here in the first place.

The taxi heads down Revolution Avenue, towards Freedom Square. From the very start, I was struck by the fact that in central Tehran you're rarely more than twenty feet away from a pizzeria serving *chizzberger* in a setting of purple bathroom tiles, fake black marble and pink neon, with syrupy Iranian soft rock in the background.

But the city's appeal, I decide, as the taxi turns into the freeway leading to the Zirzamin housing estate, where both I and most of my acquaintances have studios or apartments, or both, must be the fact that Tehran doesn't try to please, consisting largely, as it does, of sand, dust, glass, neon and eight-lane motorways running straight through concrete housing projects. Surrounding the official city center are scores of satellite towns and villages that are very similar. Over the past twenty years or so, eight million locals have joined the preceding four, most of whom were newcomers themselves.

Swifter than speech, as I like to put it, somewhat theatrically. Lighter than language. To describe Tehran would be like spelling out a frenzied, hour-long quarrel over dinner to a newcomer at the table. Personally, I would take Tehran over Isfahan flower gardens and donkey bridges any day and find a smug sense of satisfaction in the fact that there are many who would beg to differ.

Very recently, European architects in Prada dinner jackets and Le Coq Sportif have been here, reciting statistics from Dutch coffee-table catalogues, of the new avant-garde status of Third-World metropoles carelessly breaking urban records, proportions, aesthetic standards. Western concepts and terminologies, they

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say, trying to sound apocalyptic, ominous, touched, enthusiastic and nonchalant at the same time, can no longer do justice to the many Tehrants of this shifting world.

I take out a small Moleskine notebook, 'a pocket format for everyday use, the same legendary notebook of Van Gogh and Matisse, of Hemingway and Chatwin', which is what I do after every situation, performance, exhibition, news programme or snippet of conversation I consider gainful for the Promessa in some way, specifying the date and place and archival epithet, Patronage, Bygones, Friends, Travel, Fashion, Administration, Hearsay, Opening or Closing. I prefer to give everything in my notebooks a narrative flow, a coherent storyline to frame and embed the material. This is more important than chronology or psychological realism. I've always hated loose ends, whether in essays, living-room scenographies, journals or notebooks. Be that as it may, most of what ends up in the notebooks is determined by Stella herself in the end, along lines and parameters she has never taken the time to spell out, and I've never insisted on knowing, preferring to see the whole thing as a private joke between the two of us, a modish play on fact and fiction and archival theories and the post-contemporary condition and such.

'You see, my little possum,' I remember her telling me on the very day we met, in the teacherly, protective tone I was soon to cherish and look forward to, 'we can no longer set out to represent the historical past. We can only represent our ideas and stereotypes about that past. Is that something you can understand?' I open the notebook to the last page, to a floor plan of the Revolutionary Courthouse on Shariati Street, then flick back to the beginning. 'The bourgeois artist now acts without clearly

formulated reasons or intentions, which means that anything can become an indication of his authorial motivation, and that the whole planet has become one big collection of possible hints, clues and innuendos. Josef Stalin, 1944. Olympics 2000. Weightlifter Rezazadeh screws up fleshy, heinous face, lifting 1040 lbs. Olympic gold. Defeated favorite Ronny Weller: can't remember what he looks like, nor what his name is. Iranians are appearing out of nowhere. It's like being in a Spielberg. I slowly rip out the page and throw it out the window, then instantly regret having done so.

I can vaguely remember hitting on various women last night, none of whom showed any interest in me, not even after the cocaine. I can also recall House music remixes of early Madonna tracks that caused the neighbors to knock on the door around 4 AM, although whether they were meaning to join in or complain I never found out.

The air flowing in through the open windows is cold and unpleasant. The driver takes a highway exit leading into the Zirzamin housing estate, an enormous assemblage of right angles, functional voids and horizontal strips of glass and concrete, the stuff people refer to as 'Stalinist', although Stalin, if I remember Stella's point correctly, actually preferred gigantic wedding-cake architecture, playful squiggles and pointed turrets. Designed in the mid-seventies, at the peak of the hysterical optimism of the Shah era, Zirzamin is said to be the largest housing estate in the Middle East. At an opening at the Tri-Tap gallery in north Tehran last week someone claimed it had more inhabitants than Sweden.

I immediately spot Mehrangiz sitting on a park bench in the outer courtyard of block 39A of the estate, not far from my own studio apartment in 44D. Mehrangiz watches the taxi approach, waiting for it to come to a complete halt before shutting her paperback and rearranging her headscarf and sunglasses. Only then does she stand up and head for the car. Mehrangiz is an up-and-coming video artist with a perfect gap between her front teeth. She's wearing olive green army pants, Charles Jourdan pumps and, by way of Islamic *hejab*, a Lonsdale scarf and an oversized Fred Perry polo shirt under her cashmere coat.

I watch her from the cab crossing the smooth concrete courtyard in the faint afternoon sunlight, realizing she is without question more attractive than Stella. Most people would find her plump, overweight even, but this doesn't bother me in the slightest. On the contrary. I appreciate the big cheeks and 'fuck me eyes', as Stella would put it, the women who differ from the average, proto-anorexic daddy's girl you see in north Tehran or thereabouts.

I try to relax the muscles in my gut by taking several deep breaths, as if to pull the air all the way down into my stomach. This is a technique I learned in acting classes as a teenager, for stage fright.

Mehrangiz climbs into the cab, smelling of some musky men's aftershave, and the driver and I both mumble a standard greeting before resuming the journey towards my grand-aunt Zsa Zsa's country estate in Karaj. I'm silently hoping Zsa Zsa will not embarrass me when we get to the farm, although presumably she will. With her corduroys, denim shirts and handsome, arrogant features, you might have seen a gentleman farmer in her, if it

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weren't for her high-pitched giggle and her pubescent sense of humor, despite being almost ninety years old. Zsa Zsa likes to surprise you by sticking her little finger in your ear and making obtrusive clicking and whistling sounds. Or by suggesting she recently had sex with one of your close relatives, out in her apple orchard somewhere.

Over the last fifty years or so, Zsa Zsa has earned the reputation of a skilled and distinguished hostess, clicks and whistles and other conversational gambits notwithstanding. She usually speaks very little and is considered an outstanding listener. During the many afternoons I've spent at her estate I've witnessed army officers, political dissidents, Kurdish Sufis, folk musicians, housewives, farmers, Swiss journalists, Arab tourists and a TV newscaster sitting on the veranda, mumbling to Zsa Zsa as she sits with her hands folded in her lap, head cocked to one side, doing a fantastic job of appearing to be sympathetic.

During the Iran-Iraq war, when Baghdad and Tehran were pelting each other with Soviet and American missiles, dozens of families moved out of the city center to stay at Zsa Zsa's. Long walks in the orchards, volleyball, date liquor, eleventh-century poetry. *The dust on your doorstep / a paradise to me / a fervent pheasant / I fling myself / on searing arrows of your glance.* Or suchlike. In the evening, there was cheap Goa technotrance, as remixed in LA or Istanbul, blasting from a tiny tape recorder. But also opium with sweet tea and sopping honey pastries.

As Mehrangiz and I arrive at the farm, we find a small group of visitors having a late lunch on the veranda. They all interrupt their meal to awkwardly stand up and shake hands. *Khoshhakhtam*

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khoshhakhtam haleh shoma. In a confused fit of coquetry – compounded, indeed, by the enduring hangover – I decline to join them for lunch, looking on as Mehrangiz is offered cucumbers in yogurt with raisins and fresh mint, along with lamb and eggplant sauce on saffron rice, with sour berries and a baked crust.

Later, over black tea, honey pastries and pistachio-saffron ice cream, Mehrangiz praises me for the ideas I've been pursuing since my recent arrival, the showroom in the making, the many ingenious little plans for the Promessa website, the merchandising, the behind-the-scenes Promessa documentary.

'In Iran, such things are just so totally unexpected, so completely new to everyone. It's so much more appreciated than anywhere else.'

I nervously assume Mehrangiz is coming on to me, but then realize with disappointment that she isn't, so I snidely tell her that to impress the locals with flashy gadgets and cosmopolitan prattle, I could just as well move to Wimbledon, but then stop, seeing as she's not really listening. She smiles at me, rubs my elbow absent-mindedly and goes and sits down next to Zsa Zsa at the other end of the veranda. I light a cigarette and watch them chat as they carefully sip their hot black tea from small, gold-rimmed glasses.

Like most of the art scene here, I'm not exactly of proletarian ancestry myself, what with the family owning the small town of Ozgalabad in its entirety, only two hours northeast of Tehran. In the late twenties all of my paternal great-grandfathers and great-granduncles were officers under Reza Shah. Reza was the Iranian Atatürk, keen on modernizing the country by any means necessary. Iran, he insisted, was to be taken seriously. Reza found

the term 'Persia' embarrassing – it smacked of water pipes and flying carpets – and had it replaced by 'Iran', which refers to the country's Aryan heritage.

According to Stella, the Aryans were little more than a despairing mob of hungry Siberians who had settled in what is now Iran a very long time ago. Most had long forgotten they had ever existed, when a small flock of German Romantics in wigs, white stockings and puffy shirtsleeves suddenly decided the Aryans had successfully colonized vast parts of Asia and Greece and declared them the 'Cradle of Civilization'. Apparently, Reza Shah very much approved, as do many Iranians nowadays.

Reza, in any case, found nomadic tribes at least as embarrassing as water pipes, if not more so, and took to luring the tribal leaders to peace talks or religious ceremonies, where he had them imprisoned or shot. This was the line of work my ancestors were in, before settling down in what was still a village a good stretch away from Tehran. Here, the family proceeded, rather typically for military stock, to bully, threaten and buy out the locals until they finally owned the village as a whole.

Unlike my father's side of the family – very *Blut-und-Boden*, very happily belligerent – my mother's was more affected and self-conscious but just as blessed, if not more so, with government connections, a healthy sense of opportunism and a more or less feudal standing, at one point even running a private railway on their estate. The family fortune was closely related to Shell discovering oil on the property in the early twentieth century. At this point, the only child, Zsa Zsa, had barely learned to walk, talk and ride horseback, when it was already decided that she was to

learn four languages and study six more, including Latin, Greek, Aramaic and Sanskrit.

To this day, I do not know where precisely this piece of land might lie. In an interview with *Paris Match*, Zsa Zsa mentions Surkhana in east Azerbaijan. Various aunts and uncles, however, insist it wasn't Azerbaijan at all, but somewhere in Georgian Abkhazia. I sincerely suspect they may be purposely misleading me, for reasons I cannot know. Stella has offered to contact friends in Baku who'd help find and perhaps even retrieve the estate, with the help of her own family lawyers if needs be. But I assume this would irretrievably place the land, and the resulting perks of all possible kinds, at the service of Stella and her many little schemes, networks and joint ventures, and am not quite convinced by her suggestion. At least not yet.

Be that as it may, one crisp November morning in 1917 the entire family leaves discreetly for France. Paris in the twenties is a confusing place, and the family soon blows everything it has on social clubs, fashion and cocaine. On 25 November 1941 Zsa Zsa becomes the third woman to join the French Foreign Legion and, over the next twenty years or so, she has a dazzling career as a driver and explosives operator in Algeria and Indochina, during which she loses half a lung, a part of her liver and four ribs, along with any sense of respect for human life, though she does win a *Croix de Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur* and an interview in *Paris Match*.

In the early sixties Zsa Zsa moves to Tehran to open the Promessa on what was then Palace Street, on the corner of Queen Elizabeth Boulevard, now renamed Palestine Street, on the corner of Farmer Avenue. Even in her sixties Zsa Zsa liked to spend

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most of her time entertaining her guests by the bar, or guépard hunting in southern Iran, or taking long evening walks with her nieces, including my mother. Every last Wednesday of the month she would buy them dozens of tiny wooden cages stuffed with disfigured, undernourished sparrows, so the girls could send them flying off into the sunset. The nieces all agree to become lawyers when they grow up.

Zsa Zsa also spends many an afternoon with friends from the SAVAK secret service. Together they sip Turkish coffee in her office, listening to Beatles and Bob Dylan tracks on her tape recorder. *The pump don't work cause the vandals took the handles.* In the meantime, many other friends and acquaintances of Zsa Zsa's – mostly smugglers, Maoists, Leninists, Trotskyists, Stalinists, "Third Way" Communists, Social Democrats or Islamic Socialists – patiently hide from the SAVAK officers in the cellars of the Promessa. They smoke black-market cigarettes and struggle to keep their voices down as they debate the role and relevance of the Soviet vanguard within Iran, or bitterly accuse each other of countless forms of collusion and collaboration with all sorts of enemies within and without, the soothing sounds of the tape spools occasionally wafting down from the office above their heads. *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club band.*

Stella tells me my colorful background – armed violence and *dolce fariente* – is exactly what she looks for in a friend and, especially, she adds warmly, in a colleague. She makes me tell the anecdotes over and over, demanding more and more details, sometimes expressing angry disappointment over facts revealed.

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'The desk was walnut? Walnut? Oh my God, walnut. OK, never mind.'

I've long realized these are the only occasions I'd ever see Stella moved by anything other than her own professional ambitions.

From its very opening night, the Promessa is frequented by Russian and Georgian exiles, disco glitterati, modish members of the gauche caviar, including the occasional Maoists, Neo-Leninists, Trotskyists, 'Third Way' Communists, Post-Stalinists and the odd Social Democrat; but also US Vice-president Spiro Agnew, the Shah and his Queen, the delightful ex-Queen Soraya and her alternating lovers, and Errol Garner, who indulges in an *amour fou* with Zsa Zsa. Rock Hudson is said to have very much enjoyed the onion blinis with sour cream and once tipped the waiter with an imitation gold Rolex. Freddy Mercury's parents, the Bulsaras, are rumored to have met at the bar over Kir Royales and honey-roasted peanuts.

Late in the evenings, Zsa Zsa and her chums take to singing rueful Georgian gypsy songs, and together they cry and moan until they can't lift their heads from the table anymore, so the microphone is propped up between two glasses and nudged into Zsa Zsa's face while she sings and slobbers on the tablecloth.

Every once in a while the Shah insists on having the entire salon to himself. Simon, *chef de cuisine*, is obliged personally to taste the exclusively prepared appetizers in the presence of SAVAK officers. After his visits, the *shab-n-shab-e-aryamehr*, King of Kings of Aryan Virtue, a gentleman whose tie-pin collection costs more than Belgium, habitually leaves without paying. His spouse, Queen Farah, on the other hand, prefers to have

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an aperitif among her subjects and appears incognito, in a gigantic pair of Christian Dior shades. But the SAVAK invariably secure the premises before she arrives, and the only subjects present are strategically seated agents and the family relatives themselves, obliged to pose as customers, politely enquiring about the *vin du jour*. This was pre-revolutionary Tehran, before things took a turn, not necessarily for the worse, in many ways indeed for the better.

The hangover is finally subsiding. Zsa Zsa's swimming pool lies in the shade of an enormous oak tree, from which an occasional leaf or twig plummets down into the cool, dark water. Two men with shaved chests, gold chains and perfect tans are floating around on inflatable mattresses shaped into oversized cellphones. Visibly bored, they collect the twigs and stick them between their toes. A pop diva from Uzbekistan makes pleasant cooing noises from within the tape deck.

During the course of the evening, as the air cools down and mosquitoes and cicadas make their appearance, a drunken discussion on politics unfolds, reformism pitted against conspiracy, reformism as conspiracy, conspiracies *tout court*. Mehrangiz categorically stands up for the Iranian cause, the exemplary character of the Iranian model, the dignity of the Iranian people and the maturity of the Iranian masses, getting caught up in contradicting moral platitudes, until she finally falls quiet, staring down at her Charles Jourdan, sporting a furious expression on her peachy face.

Recently, in an uptown Hare Krishna restaurant, I watched Mehrangiz scream at a helpless waiter, a slender young man in

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fashionable spectacles and a dark orange T-shirt, for a period of almost four minutes.

'A reservation? A reservation. Listen. Listen to me, darling. I'm *not having any* of your *fascist* propaganda.'

The restaurant fell silent, except for the waiter's faltering apologies and George Harrison on the hi-fi. *Gooh - vinn - daaa*, said George Harrison.

Later, I can see Zsa Zsa standing by the garden gate, her ivory walking cane in hand, talking to five young men surrounding a small, bearded figure in a traditional kafan frock. Having now given up trying to catch Mehrangiz's attention, I walk over to Zsa Zsa, who introduces me to her 'new neighbor', who turns out to be the famous revolutionary clergyman Tarofi himself.

In the years following the revolution, Tarofi was a notorious political figure, a cleric, traveling judge and henchman in one. Along with other supporters of the budding Islamic Republic, Tarofi took it upon himself to rid the fledgling state of its enemies in an uncomplicated, down-to-earth manner. I recently learned that these enemies of the state – mostly the very Maoists, Neo-Leninists, Trotskyists, Post-Stalinists, Social Democrats, 'Third Way' Communists or Islamic Socialists who mingled in Zsa Zsa's cellar and, later, at the Promessa – were betrayed by their own comrades, desperate to save their necks.

At the time, one of Zsa Zsa's closest drinking buddies was an emphatic Trotskyist, who annoyingly insisted on calling himself Leo and who would sit on Zsa Zsa's patio reciting early Soviet poetry, Supremacist machismo in delicate verse, duly translated into Farsi. One summer afternoon, Tarofi paid Leo a brief visit

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and dealt him a shot to the head in his own backyard.

These days, Tarofi is known to wear the same pair of vintage Kojak sunglasses at all times. His beard is remarkably thick, wooly and amorphous. For security reasons, he is continuously accompanied by his many sons. Tarofi insists on speaking English. He sounds a lot like Joe Cocker.

'Europe: very good nice. Very nice, very good,' he croaks. 'Learn English in Birmingham.'

'Birmingham. So you've been to England?'

'Yes. Switzerland for gun.'

'Gun.'

'Yes. Switzerland. Engineers ABB. Brown Bovering.'
'Guns for who?'

'Guns for Iran. Very good nice.'

'Yes. So you've been to Switzerland. Zurich or Geneva?'

'Go Bern.' He hesitates, smoothes his beard and adds, 'You know Stella.'

I feign mild *ennui*. 'Yes. Yes, I do know Stella.'

'And Mr Badbakht? Have you met Mr Badbakht?'

'I don't believe I have.'

So we chat, in Farsi now, and all of a sudden Tarofi doesn't sound half as imbecilic as he does in English, and I'm actually a little shocked to find him perfectly sharp and articulate. I eventually venture something like, 'Mr Tarofi must have many anecdotes to tell about his exploits in the name of the revolution, he put in such great effort, may God give him life,' and other standard platitudes, but Tarofi refuses to go there.

'We've made mistakes, as everyone very well knows. What do you expect me to say? We believed in what we were doing.'

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But things have changed. And so have we. Just be grateful for the mercy of a tardy birth, my friend. Do not judge history. Be grateful, that's all.'

According to popular legend, after the victorious World Cup soccer game against the US some years ago, Tarofi saw dancing couples and unveiled womanfolk on the street and wished to express his approval. 'I share your happiness,' he grunted at them. When the dancers recognized him, they formed a circle around Tarofi, clapping their hands and jeering, 'Hajji's gotta dance, Hajji's gotta dance.' Tarofi, confused and disappointed, returned home to his many sons. Now, he turns back to *Zsa Zsa*, asks her a long list of questions on irrigation techniques – getting so expensive, how are we supposed to manage, I remember when a precision spraying pump was half, no, a third of the price, and do you have any idea where I can get those German pruning scissors, simply the best – then waddles quickly off into the Karaj twilight, his sons scrambling after him like keyed-up groupies.

On the way home from *Zsa Zsa*, the taxi follows the Alborz mountains until it reaches the Haussmannian boulevards of west Tehran. It's three in the morning, and the radio is playing a keyboard version of '*El Bodeguero*'. The landscape is punctuated by small concrete sheds and brightly colored neons of pink and green.

As we approach Zirzamin, I look up to my apartment, fourth from the right on the twentieth floor, and I am, as always, relieved to see the lights are switched off. Ever since moving here, I cannot shake the fascinating, compulsive fear of arriving home one night to realize someone has been, or still is, inside the apartment.

Since first hearing of Zirzamin, only months ago, I'm amazed to find it evolving into a playground not only for international architects in *Le Coq Sportif* but also for budding political scientists and their doctoral theses. What we have here, they like to say, trying to sound apocalyptic, enthusiastic and nonchalant at the same time, is a remarkable example of the urbanization of consciousness in Iran and the re-inscription of the concept of a modern civil society as we know it. Note that in Zirzamin, inhabitants from completely different backgrounds, rather than live in separate parts of town, share a single space and are actually forced to get along. Gradually, a common discursive practice emerges, you see, that does not bear itself as a grand narrative, but sets itself apart from the *grands discours* of both High Modernism and the Islamic Republic.

That's if they're the Anglo-American, cultural-studies types, with light brown Manhattan Portage backpacks. If they're French, they walk around making diagrams and surveys on Heroin and Unemployment in the Ghetto Wastelands of west Tehran, *C'est vraiment le Bronx*, then publish it in the *Monde Diplomatique*, with an illustration by Edvard Munch. I am seized, captured by an overwhelming notion of lyrical acumen, gushing prose, seductive and smooth. But already sensing that, when the taxi stops in front of my block, I'll be finding myself staring blankly at a motionless 0.4 mm Staedtler rollerball in my hand, I leave the notebook unopened in my inside pocket.

I wonder whether I shouldn't move the gallery showroom to Zirzamin, *Zsa Zsa the genius loci* notwithstanding. Of course house and ghost went together, and of course it's always thrilling to witness past dreams and nightmares weighing on the living.

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NH: Når man ser på, hvad der er blevet skrevet om dine ting, synes det som om at temaet sex løber som en understrøm gennem den kritiske respons på dit arbejde. Det primære tema har at gøre med at tage sig af folk, med at give dem husly og mad, men det andet tema dukker også op hele tiden. Er det noget, du genkender? Er det noget, du har tænkt over?

RT: Jeg har ikke bemærket det selv, men jeg ved godt, hvad du mener. Jeg forsøger at arbejde med underliggende budskaber i mit arbejde, så jeg kan sagtens forstå en respons af den art.

Niels Henriksen taler med Rirkrit Tiravanija

...

Beskridt modernisme – SvampeBob, krom og sex

i forhold til dit arbejde og kritikernes respons på det blandt andet dukkede op i debatten om relationel æstetik. Her pegede Claire Bishop på dette aspekt i Jerry Saltz' kritiske respons på dit værk og brugte den til at argumentere for det begrænsede potentiale i denne form for arbejde i det hele taget. For eksempel nævner Jerry Saltz en flirt med en fremmed over middagsbordet, og ud af dette konkluderer Bishop at Saltz kunne lide udstillingen fordi den gav mulighed for at score kvinder. Det værk, du har bidraget med til Karriere, er en metalstang som dem strippere bruger - og for mig at se forekommer det at omhandle sex og seksualitet på en andledes, langt mere åbenlys måde end tidligere værker. Hvorfor?

RT: Mine arbejder har aldrig været meget klart formulerede på dette område; seksualitet har snarere været noget, der dukkede op, når jeg arbejdede med begreber som "det at leve". For så vidt at jeg tænker over det overhovedet, er jeg interesseret i sex og seksualitet på samme måde som en surrealist ville være det.

NH: Surrealist...?

RT: Én af de skikkelsler, som har haft den største indflydelse på mig og mange af de ting, jeg fortager mig, er Luis Buñuel - men jeg har aldrig talt meget om det.

NH: Hvordan har den indflydelse taget form?

RT: Jeg vil sige at den har at gøre med undertrykkelse. I buddhistiske kulturer, og endnu mere præcist i den thailandske kultur, er seksualitet på den ene side noget meget undertrykt og på den anden side meget tydeligt. I den thailandske kultur kan man opleve hvad jeg fortolker som en parallel struktur, hvor man er i stand til at kunne sælge sig selv som en form for tjenesteydelse, fordi man ikke har et egentligt Selv. Jeg kan også prøve at forklare det på en mere buddhistisk måde: kroppen er kun et hylster, en skal; til syvende og sidst er det bare

materie. Vi er mere interesserede i det ikke-kropslige, altså i aspekter af tilværelsen der rækker hinsides dette materielle plan, og det frisætter os, så vi kan bruge vores krop på andre måder. Værket, der nu står på Karriere, blev faktisk lavet til en udstilling i Mexico, og er ligesom de fleste af de ting, jeg laver, altså udtænkt i forhold til et bestemt sted og en bestemt sammenhæng.

NH: Hvilken sammenhæng indgik værket i dengang?

RT: Det var en udstilling jeg lavede sammen med venner i Mexico, og historien om det oprindelige værk var, at jeg gennem disse venner mødte en danser - en pole-dancer - og at jeg på en Buñuelsk måde bad hende om at danse omkring stangen klædt som en nonne.

NH: Klædt som nonne?

RT: Ja.

NH: Skete det så?

RT: Det endte med at hun ikke gjorde det, fordi det var meget vanskeligt at gøre. Så på sin vis føler jeg, at værket ikke er komplet.

NH: Det kan jeg godt forstå.

RT: Jeg kan også tilføje, at jeg med "Buñuelsk" henviser til en bestemt måde at se på troens institutioner på - og en bestemt måde at give dem noget røg på; det synes jeg kendtegner mange af Buñuels tidlige værker.



SvampeBob Firkant /
SpongeBob SquarePants
Photo credit: Nickelodeon

Rirkrit Tiravanija
[*1961]

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Rirkrit Tiravanija er en thailandsk kunstner, født i Buenos Aires. Tiravanija blev kendt i 1990'erne for en kunstnerisk praksis, der gik ud på, at han tilberedte og serverede mad for publikum, ofte thailandske wok-retter. Det var med eksempel i disse værker, at den franske kritiker Nicolas Bourriaud opfandt den forkæltrede og kritiserede, men for 90'ernes kunst helt centrale betegnelse, 'den relationelle æstetik'. Senere begyndte Tiravanija at arbejde med arkitektoniske installationer, såsom en kopi af kunstnerens egen lejlighed eller af en kendt villa. Disse stillede frit til rådighed for publikum under udstillingsperioden, nogle gange døgnet rundt, således at publikum kunne flytte ind i museet, hvilket de også tit gjorde. I 1998 grundlagde Tiravanija sammen med kunstneren Kamin Lertchaiprasert the land, en slags kollektiv og fristed i det nordlige Thailand, hvor kunstnere kan komme og bo og arbejde i kortere eller længere perioder. Rirkrit Tiravanija bor i New York, Berlin og Bangkok.

NH: Hvordan har du det med stangens nuværende placering, hvor den indgår som et element i baren i København?

RT: Der er selvfølgelig tale om en anden kontekst; jeg foreslog netop det værk, fordi der var tale om en bar. Men jeg tror, det fungerer, fordi værket også er lavet som en skulptur. Det har gjort sig sine egne skulpturelle overvejelser... Værkets nuværende sammenhæng rummer også et potentiiale i og med at jeg har bedt Jeppe om at invitere min veninde, pole-danceren, til at komme til baren og udføre den performance, jeg nævnte. Jeg vil gerne se den til-tænkte performance ført ud i livet på et tidspunkt, og det var en del af min plan med at anbringe værket der. Men jeg ved ikke engang hvordan tingene ser ud i København, og hvor langt fremme projektet er.

NH: Stangen er sat op og nogen gange bruger folk den. Når der er fest i baren bruger gæsterne den spontant, og på den måde har stangen opnået en ganske fremtrædende position.

RT: Værket havde altså en specifik tanke bag sig, men som vi kan se, har det også en funktion inden for dens nuværende sammenhæng i og med at folk bruger det, og dermed har det andre potentialer i andre sammenhænge. For mig er det det samme som at bygge en lejlighed og så derefter se, hvad der sker i den. Den underliggende mekanisme i mine værker er hele tiden den samme: de lader folk sidde side om side med den slags ting, tanker og vilkår.

NH: Angående værket har jeg også bemærket at både stangen selv og gulvet rundt omkring den er lavet af krom, og det får mig til at tænke på din tidlige brug af krom i dine arbejder - som for eksempel den kopi af arkitekten Rudolph M. Schindlers modernistiske villa Kings Road House, du lavede i krom. Jeg har læst et sted at du fik ideen til at bruge krom på denne måde fra et afsnit af børne-tv-serien Svampe-Bob Firkant, hvor een af figurerne siger, at i fremtiden vil alt være af krom.

RT: Ja; ja, kilden er egentlig et citat af en af mine venner - rent faktisk galleristen Gavin Browns sén, som jeg passede, og som da sagde det til mig. Jeg fandt først senere ud af, at han egentlige citerede Svampe-Bob.

NH: Schindler-bygningen og Buñuels arbejder, som du henviste til tidligere, kan begge betegnes som ikoniske eksempler på modernistisk æstetik. Er brugen af krom en del af din strategi for dit arbejde med disse modernistiske strukturer?

RT: Når jeg beskæftiger mig med modernisme, er jeg interesseret i en form for beskidt modernisme. Hvad angår min brug af krom, har jeg flere forskellige ting i tankerne. På den ene side genspejler materialet alting, og dermed bliver det til en del af alting. På den anden side kan jeg godt lide fornemmelser af materialet i sig selv. Jeg kan godt lide hvordan det på en og samme tid er massivt og har masser af substans og tyngde, men samtidig også synes at være ved at forsvinde fordi det absorberer sine omgivelser. Der er velsagtens lignende forhold på spil med spejle eller glas, men det er bare meget anderledes med krom. Det, som jeg godt kan lide ved krom, er at det har en overflade og enhver form for interaktion med materialet efterlader synlige spor. Alt dette har at gøre med den tanke om beskidt modernisme, jeg henviste til tidligere, for så vidt at det står i modsætning til det traditionelle modernistiske ønske om at "holde det rent". Jeg har altid været mere interesseret i de spor, der efterlades.

NH: En sidste ting: når du henviser til Luis Buñuel, tænker du så på nogle specifikke værker?

RT: Hvad angår Luis Buñuel står valget egentlig mellem L'Age d'Or, som han lavede sammen med Salvador Dalí, og Phantom of Liberty.

NH: Jeg kender ikke den sidste, du nævner.

RT: Det er en halvfjerdserfilm, der handler om nogle spidsborgere, der hele tiden prøver på at komme ud at spise, men aldrig kommer til det, fordi ting kommer i vejen eller sker for dem.

NH: Det lyder interessant: vil du lave noget specifikt i den anledning?

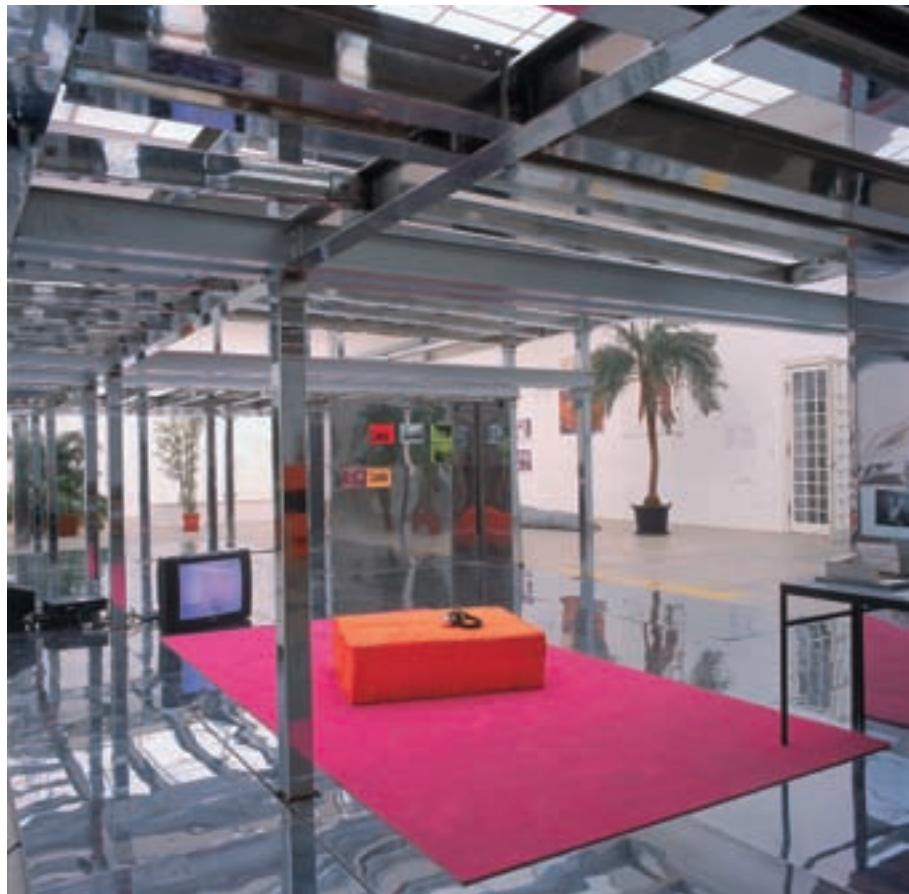
RT: Lad os lige tage det roligt, det her er nok første gang jeg overhovedet taler om det.

NH: Mange tak for din tid.

Rirkrit Tiravanija:
Untitled [Tomorrow is another day] [1996]
floorplan, photo, key, woodbox.
12 1/4 x 8 3/4 x 2 inches
Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1996

Courtesy Gavin Brown's enterprise





Rirkrit Tiravanija:
Untitled 2002 [He promised] [2002]
chrome stain and stainless steel, 12x6x3m
Wiener Secession July 5 - September 1, 2002

Courtesy Gavin Brown's enterprise

Niels Henriksen talks with Rirkrit Tiravanija

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Dirty Modernism – SpongeBob, Chrome and Sex

like undercurrent through the critical response to your work. Meaning that the primary theme is issues of hosting and feeding people, but this other theme keeps popping up. Is that anything you can recognize or have given any thought at all?

RT: Well, I haven't noticed that, but I know what you mean. I try to work with a subtextual level in what I do, so - sure - I would be able to understand that kind of response.

NH: I don't know if you read reviews of your own shows?

RT: [laughs] hardly ever...

NH: Well, the whole issue of sexuality with regards to your work and the critical response to it, came up in the debate about relational aesthetics, where Claire Bishop pointed out this aspect of Jerry Saltz' critical response to your work, and used it to argue the limited potential of the this kind of work altogether. As in, Jerry Saltz mentions a flirt with a stranger over the dinner table and Bishop concludes from that, that Saltz liked the show because it offered the opportunity of picking up women. Now, the work that you have contributed to Karriere is a pole for pole-dancing and - to me at least - that seems to deal with issues of sex and sexuality in different and much more overt way than earlier works. Why?

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NH: Looking through what has been written on your things, it seems as if the theme of sex runs

RT: In dealing with these issues my work has never been so transparent, sexuality has more been something that came up, when I was working with concepts like "living". To the extent that I do think about it, I am interested in sex and sexuality like a surrealist would be, in the way the surrealists were interested in it.

NH: The surrealists...?

RT: One of the big influences for me with regards to a lot of the things I do, but which I never really talk about, is someone like Luis Buñuel.

NH: Yes, in what way?

RT: I would say that it has to do with oppression. In Buddhist culture, and even more specifically in Thai culture, sexuality is on the one hand something that is very oppressed, while at the same time being very blatant. In Thai culture you will find, what I interpret as a parallel structure, between being able to sell yourself, as a kind of service, because your self is not existent. To try and explain that more in the ways of a buddhist: the body is just a body or a shell, in the end it is just material. We are more interested in aspects of the existence that go beyond this material level of things, and that makes us free to use our body in other ways. The piece that is in Karriere, was actually done for a very specific show in Mexico, like most of the things I do are specific...

NH: What was the context of the work back then?

RT: It was an exhibition I made with friends in Mexico, and the story of the original piece was that through these friends I had met a dancer, a pole dancer, and I - in a kind of Buñuel-ish way - had asked her to dance on the pole dressed up as a nun.

NH: Dressed up as a nun?

RT: Yes.

NH: Did it happen?

RT: In the end she didn't do it, because it was a very difficult thing to do. So in a way I feel like the piece is not complete.

NH: No, I can understand that.

RT: And by "Buñuel-ish way" I mean a way of looking at the institutions of belief and taking a shot at them, which I feel is very much the approach of some of the early works by Buñuel.

NH: But how do you feel about how the pole is placed now, in the context of the bar in Copenhagen?

RT: Of course it is a different context, I suggested them that piece because it is a bar. However, I think it works out because the work is also made as a sculpture. It has its own sculptural consideration... The current setting also holds a potential in that I have asked Jeppe to have this friend of mine come to the bar and do the performance. I would like at some point for the performance to happen, and that was part of the plan I had with putting the work there. But I don't even know what the situation is in Copenhagen, and how far the project is.

NH: The pole is up and sometimes people use it. At parties guests at the bar will use it spontaneously, and so the pole has gained a certain prominence.

RT: So the work had a specificity to it, but - as you can see - it fills a function within the context that it is placed now in that people use it, and so there is a potential for it in other ways. For me it is the same as building an apartment and then seeing what happens in that apartment. This underlying mechanism of my works is the same, because it allows people to sit side by side with such things or with such ideas and conditions.

NH: Regarding the work, I also noticed that both the pole and the floor around the pole is in chrome, and that made me think of the ways that you have previously used chrome in your work. Like the copy you made of the Schindler House in chrome. I read that

you had the idea to use chrome in this way because of an episode of Sponge Bob, where someone says that in the future everything will be chrome.

RT: Yes yes, it is a quote from a friend of mine, Gavin Brown's son in fact, who I was babysitting, and then he said it to me. It wasn't until later I found out that he was quoting Sponge Bob.

NH: The Schindler House as well as the work of Buñuel, that you referred to before, would qualify as icons of modernist aesthetics. Is the use of chrome part of your strategy in working with these modernist structures?

RT: In dealing with modernism I am interested in a kind of dirty modernism. In my use of chrome there is a couple of different things that I am thinking about. On the one hand, it is reflective of everything and so it becomes part of everything. On the other hand I like the quality of the material. I like how, as massive and substantial as it might be, at the same time it seems to be disappearing, because it absorbs the surrounding environment. I guess, there is that relationship to mirrors or glass as well, but it is just very different with chrome. I like about chrome that it has this surface on which everything becomes a trace, when you interact with it. All this has to do with the idea of dirty modernism, that I mentioned before, in that it is a contradiction to the traditional modernist desire to "keep it clean". I was always more interested in what was left behind.

NH: One last thing: in quoting Luis Buñuel, are there any particular works that you are thinking of?

RT: Of Luis Buñuel, it is really between L'Age d'Or, which he made together with Salvador Dalí, and then Phantom of Liberty.

NH: I don't know that last one.

RT: It is a 70s film, where these bourgeois are constantly trying to go and have a meal and then they just never get to it, or something happens to them.

NH: That sounds interesting, are you going to do some work specifically on that?

RT: Slowly, this is probably the first time I am even talking about it.

NH: Thank you very much.

Rirkrit Tiravanija

[*1961]

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Rirkrit Tiravanija is a Thai artist born in Buenos Aires. Tiravanija became famous in the 1990s for an artistic practice which consisted of cooking and serving food to audiences, often Thai wok dishes. Taking these works as examples, the French critic Nicolas Bourriaud coined the much-contended and criticized, yet to 1990s art crucial, designation of 'relational aesthetics'. Later Tiravanija began working with architectural installations such as a copy of the artist's own flat or of a famous villa. These were placed at the disposal of audiences during the exhibition period, sometimes around the clock. Thus, audience members were free to move into the museum, and this happened frequently. In 1998 Tiravanija and the artist Kamin Lertchaiprasert founded 'The Land', a kind of collective and sanctuary in northern Thailand where artists can come to stay and work for short or longer periods of times. Rirkrit Tiravanija lives in New York, Berlin, and Bangkok.



Foto/Photo: Lilith Performance
Studio, Malmö. Mis United
støttet af/supported by Kunst-
rådet/Danish Arts Council.
Courtesy Kirkhoff

DK

Fortællinger fra de varme lande kombineret med den moderne tilværelsес komplekse problemstillinger [identitet, kærlighed, karriere] er Lilibeth Cuencas kunstneriske afsæt. I hendes nyeste performance mest sidstnævnte. Mis United er allerede blevet opført i Sverige og New York, men det er første gang, vi i Danmark kan opleve den seks sange lange performance, hvor en udklædt Lilibeth med sin vanlige stakato-amatør-rap vil indføre os i tilværelsens ulidelige lethed.

I centrum af Lilibeths værkpraksis ligger en fortløbende udforskning af identitetens skabelse - i et spænd mellem traditionelt stabile markører som køn og kultur, og så en moderne mentalitet med tilsyneladende frit-valg-på-alle-hylder. I denne sammenhæng trækker Lilibeth på sin egen blandede baggrund som halvt dansker/halvt filippiner og på sin position som kvindelig kunstner.

Det var med den politisk ukorrekte, farverige og hotte video/performance Absolute Exotic [2005], Lilibeth første gang kastede sig uprøvet ud i rappen. I et eksotisk set up med pangfarver, palmer og bastskørt, rappede Lilibeth om at blive forladt til fordel for en mulatpige. Teksten var rå, hård og lige på - Lilibeth skøn, eksotisk og dansende. Det er kritik med et frækt glimt i øjet, og hard core udsagn rappet en smule ubehjælpsomt af en smuk kvinde. En kunstnerisk strategi, der kombinerer popkulturens lækkre sugarlady, med rappens politisk ukorrekte statements.

MIS UNITED

Hun er en fryd for øjet, Mis United, når hun træder ind på scenen iført et skrud af et kostume. Men så snart hun påbegynder sin rap, bliver vi klar over, at det hverken er en publikumspleaser, en traditionel koncert, eller en skønhedskonkurrence, vi er vidne til. Lilibeth halvt synger, halvt rapper, men hendes rap er ikke helt i sync, hendes musikalske fremtoning ikke lige i øjet. På denne måde opstår der et clash mellem hendes kritiske budskaber og hendes smukke ydre, de skønne kostumer og teksterne mørke udsagn.

Lilibeth – Miss World Out of Sync

Mis United en karakter skabt af en kultur med fokus på fleksibilitet og overskud. En kompleks figur, der udviser evig foranderlighed, symboliseret af et kostume, som

effektfuldt forvandler sig fra sang til sang, men med sangtekster, der afslører en essentiel tomhed under den skønne facade. Hun er personificeringen af en moderne nomade, som aldrig kan vælge ståsted, som altid er på farten, og som hele tiden er omskiftelig. Figurens personlighedsspaltning bliver understreget af det visuelle og musikalske element i performancen. Genrerne skifter

melleм electronica, rock, hip hop og punk, og de mørke tekster akkompagneres af hver sit nye udtryk og kostume.

'To unite' betyder at samle, at føre sammen. Det engelske præfix 'mis' ophæver dog det helende indhold, og vi ender med noget fragmentarisk usammenhængende, der undergraver det stabile: mis-understanding, mis-fortune, mis-information.

I fem sange udfolder Lilibeth Mis United sin verden for os. Sangen Hypnotize handler om dette selvopløsende individ, der ingen faste stæder ejer, mens Choices or Voices tematiserer livets uanede muligheder. Muligheder, der viser sig svære at gøre, når drømme fordufter og opløses - og hvor der aldrig bliver satset, for tænk, hvis det var på det forkerte.

'Hocus, Pocus, Focus Love', synger Lilibeth - iført en skøn blomsterkreation. For kærligheden er nok allestedsnærværende, men alligevel er den umulig at få greb om. Hun fremfører det evige ønske om at kunne fastholde, putte i ramme, sikre sig tryghed - vel vidende at det netop er dér, vores fascination ophører. I sangen Hollow føres vi videre til den elendighedsfølelse, som vi alle gribes af til tider, og som vi ikke kan leve med - andet end som underholdning på TV. En hul kultur, hvor sorg bliver til underholdning, mens vi tager piller for at deale med vores egen smerte.

I sangen Lilith lyder det: "I Do what I want, get what I can." At det er på bekostning af andre, og at en udradering af såvel samvittighed og empati er forudsætningen, er en anden sag. Fremføreren af denne sang har nemlig fundet ud af, at det er langt sjovere at følge sig selv, end at skulle tage hensyn til andre: "vice is funner than nice".

Følg med på Karriere 14/5 kl 22.00 og oplev Mis United synge: Hypnotize. Choices or Voices. Hocus, Pocus. Hollow. Lilith.
[MKT]

Performance, tekster og concept,
Lilibeth Cuenca
Musik af Anders Christoffersen
Kostume design af Lise Klitten

Performance, Lyrics and concept
by Lilibeth Cuenca
Music by Anders Christoffersen
Costume design by Lise Klitten

UK

Tall tales from warmer climates combined with the complex issues of modern life [identity, love, career] forms Lilibeth Cuenga's artistic point of departure. In her latest performance piece, she focuses mainly on the latter. Mis United has already graced venues in Sweden and New York, but this is the first time that Danish audiences can experience the six-song performance in which a costumed Lilibeth applies her habitual staccato-amateur-rap to the task of giving us insights into the unbearable lightness of being.

At the centre of Lilibeth's practice we find an ongoing exploration of how identity is formed - somewhere between traditional, stable markers such as gender and culture and a modern mentality where it seems that we can pick and choose whatever we want. In this context, Lilibeth draws on her own mixed background - she is of half Danish, half Filipino descent - and on her position as a female artist.

Lilibeth's first untutored venture into the world of rap took place in the politically incorrect, colourful, and hot video/performance Absolute Exotic [2005]. In an exotic set-up, com-



Foto/photo: Lilith Performance Studio, Malmø. Mis United støttet af/supported by Kunstrådet/Danish Arts Council. Courtesy Kirkhoff



plete with garish colours, palms, and a straw skirt, Lilibeth rapped about being left for a mulatto girl. The lyrics were tough and straight to the point - Lilibeth herself gorgeous, exotic, and dancing. This was criticism with a saucy tongue placed firmly in check, and hardcore statements somewhat ineptly rapped by a beautiful woman. An artistic strategy that combines the sultry sugarlady of pop with the politically incorrect statements of rap.

MIS UNITED

She is certainly something to see, Mis United, when she steps onto the stage wearing her fabulous costumes. As soon as she starts rapping, however, we realise that we are not witnessing a crowd pleaser, a traditional concert, or a beauty pageant. Lilibeth half sings, half raps, but her rap is not entirely in sync, her musical delivery not quite spot on. Thus, a clash arises between her critical messages and her lovely appearance, the fabulous costumes and the dark statements of her lyrics.

Mis United is a character created by a culture which focuses on flexibility and energy. A complex character which is constantly in flux, constantly changing, as symbolised by a costume which transforms itself from one song to the next to great effect, yet with lyrics that reveal an essential emptiness underneath the lovely façade. She personifies the modern nomad who can never pick a firm position, who is always on the move, always changing. The character's personality split is accentuated by the visual and musical element of the performance. The music shifts from one genre to the next - electronica, rock, hip hop, punk - and the dark lyrics are accompanied by their own idioms, their own costumes. 'To unite'

means to bring together, but here, the prefix 'mis' nullifies the healing aspect, and we end up with something fragmentary, something which subverts stability: mis-understanding, mis-fortune, mis-information.

In five songs Lilibeth introduces us to the world of Mis United. The song Hypnotize is about this self-dissolving individual who has no firm platform, no starting point; whereas Choices or Voices addresses the endless opportunities of life. Opportunities which turn out to be difficult to capture in real life as dreams dissolve and vanish - and where we never go all in, for what if we bet on the wrong thing?

'Hocus, Pocus, Focus Love', sings Lilibeth - wearing a gorgeous ensemble of flowers. For love may well be all around, but even so it is impossible to pin down. She presents the eternal wish to be able to freeze the moment, frame it, ensure safety for oneself - knowing full well that this is where our fascination vanishes. The song Hollow takes us on to the sense of misery that affects all of us from time to time, and which we cannot live with - except as entertainment on TV. A shallow, hollow culture where sorrow becomes entertainment while we pop pills to deal with our own pain.

The song Lilith says: 'I Do what I want, get what I can'. The fact that this is at the expense of others, and that it requires one to erase one's conscience as well as one's empathy, is another matter. The character performing this song has discovered that it is far more fun to follow one's own path than to take others into account: 'vice is funner than nice'.

Join us at Karriere on the 14th of May at 10 pm and experience Mis United perform: Hypnotize. Choices or Voices. Hocus, Pocus. Hollow. Lilith. [MKT]



Alhassane Amoussale
Foto / Photo: Kenneth A.
Balfelt

Således også på Karriere hvor Alhassane indgår som en del af stedet med sin traditionelle blå klædedragt. Alhassane serverer te for Karrieres gæster alle tirsdage og torsdage kl 14 - 16 og weekender fra kl 10 - 16, indtil 26 maj, 2008.

DK

Billedkunstneren Kenneth A. Balfelt har inviteret Alhassane Amoussale til Karriere for at udføre Touareg te performance.

Alhassane er Touareg, en nomadestamme som i århundreder har levet i nordafrikas ørkener. En vigtig del af Touaregs sociale liv er te drikning. Tilberedningen og drikningen af te er et ritual som danner ramme for tale og samvær. En Touareg rejser derfor aldrig uden te, sukker, glas - og han giver sig altid tid til at servere et glas sød te for en fremmed. Få en snak med Alhassane over en kop te. Teen er gratis.

The artist Kenneth A. Balfelt has invited the Touareg Alhassane Amoussale to Karriere. Alhassane is Touareg, a nomadic people descended from the Berbers of North Africa. For hundreds of years, they have operated caravans across the Sahara desert, trading in dates, perfume and spices.

An important part of the Touareg social life is tea drinking. The preparation and drinking of tea is a social ritual related to conversation and relaxation. Therefore a Touareg never travels without tea, sugar and glasses. Enjoy a conversation with Alhassane over a glass of tea, at Karriere.

At Karriere Alhassane will be wearing his traditional indigo gown and turban and serve tea for the guests every Tuesday and Thursday from 2 - 4 pm and weekends from 10am - 4pm, until the 26th of May, 2008.



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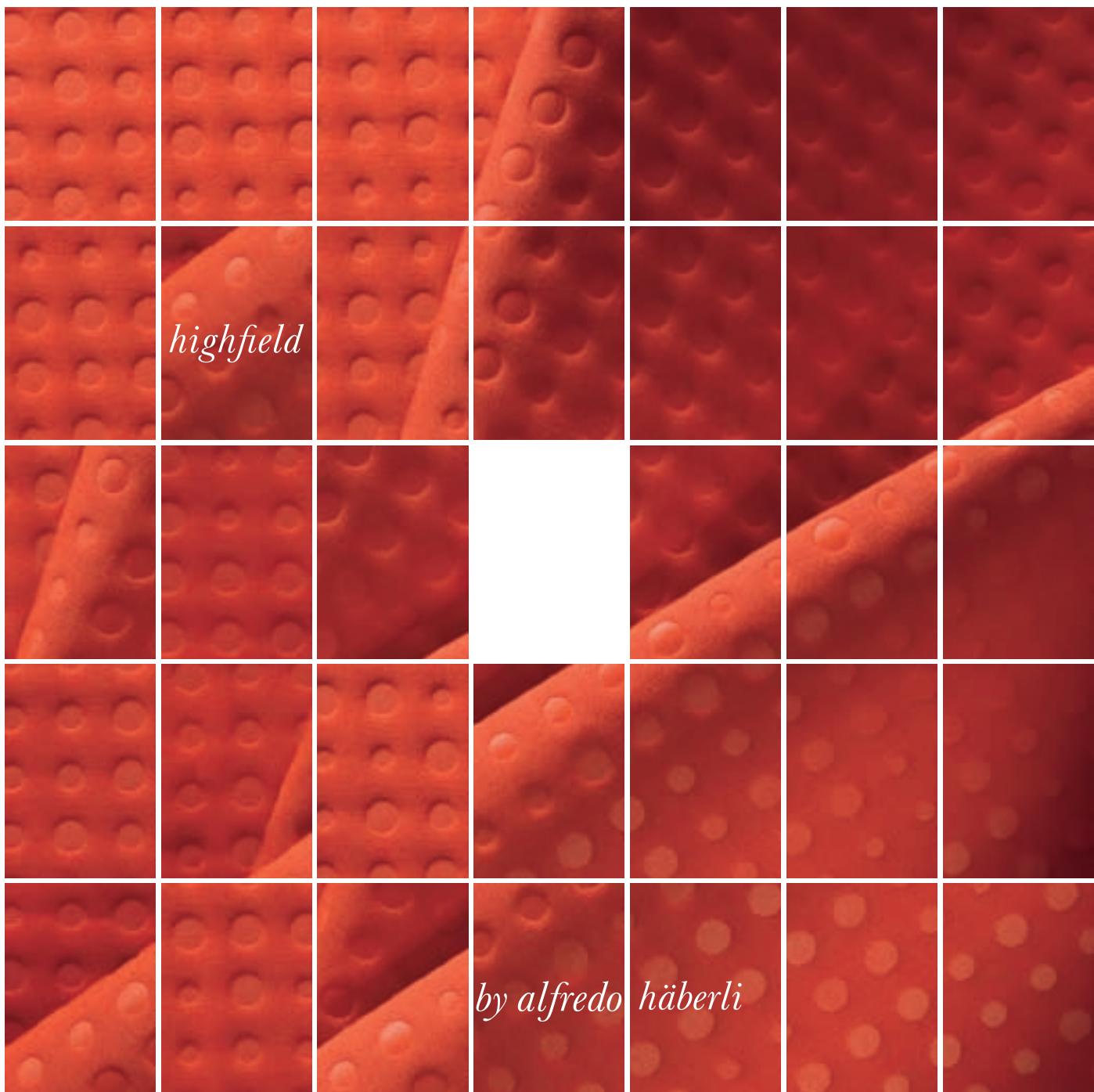
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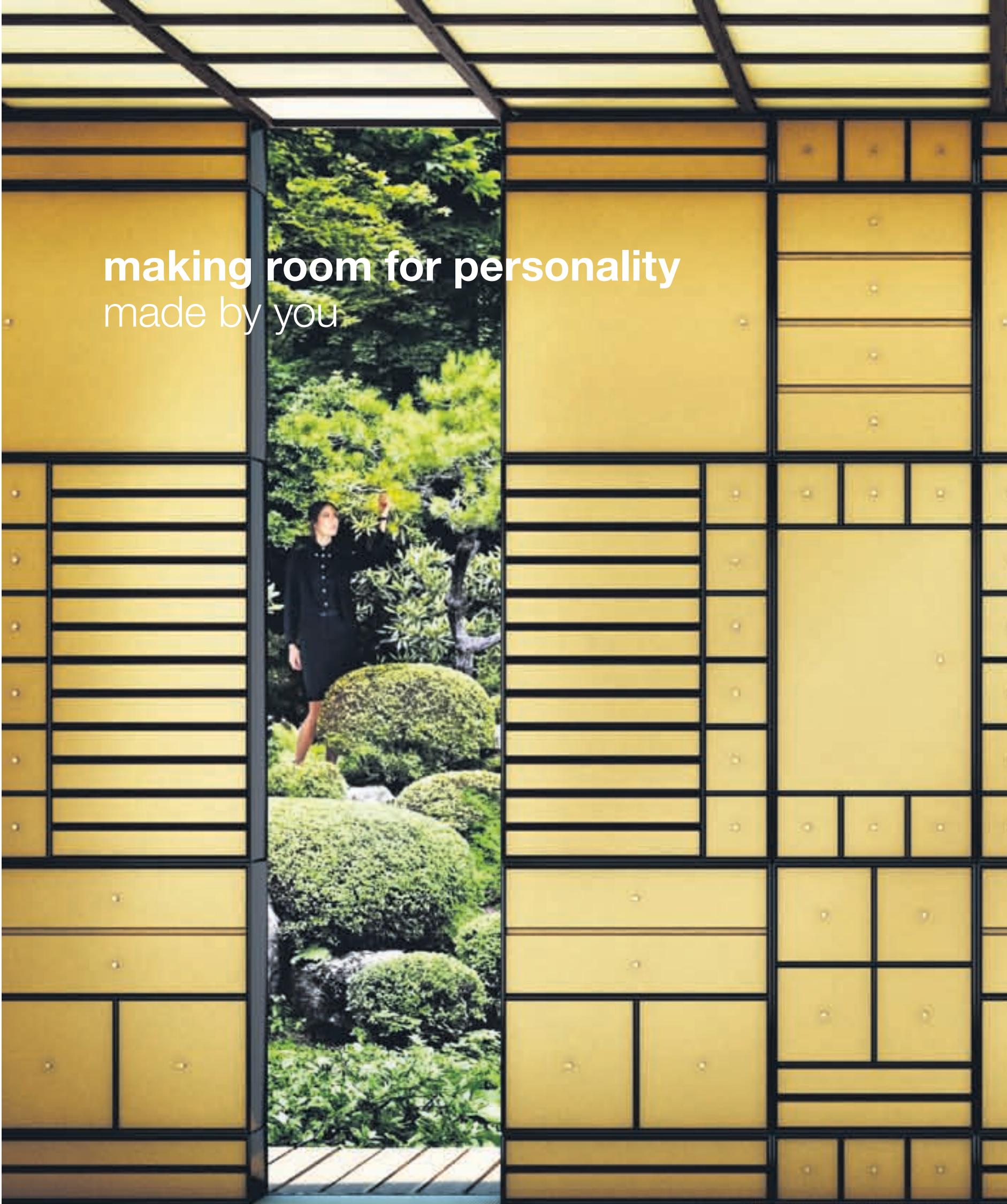
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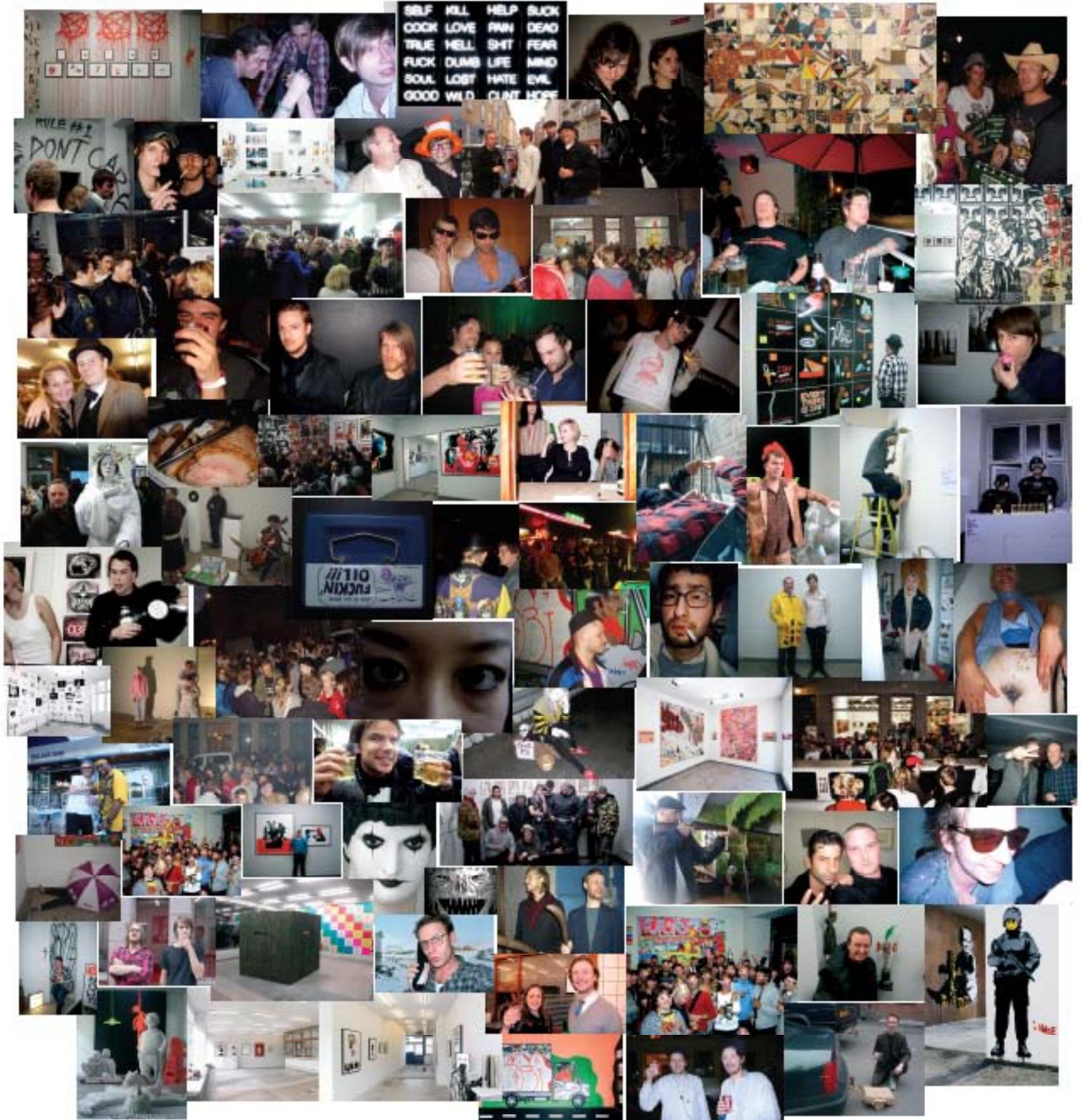
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