PROBE
Probe
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Master Essay
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In the morning, just after getting up, I open a window and stretch my head out. While standing by the open window, a bird flies by. That very instant we share, yet through different fields of perception of time and the space around us. I try to understand what that implies, and realize that while the bird is moving (in its own timeframe), so is the very room I’m standing in through the earth’s rotation and therefore all of the spaces and bodies around and with me (all in different timeframes).
2.

Behind of my apartment, the forest starts. There’s a circular trail through the lower part, where I like to air my head out. I was walking along the trail today, through the stomped track, thinking about how to structure this essay. The branches of the pine trees were hanging low through the weight of the snow, the rocks and stumps blanketed and rendered into one unrecognizable soft rounded mass. The essay should be a reflection on my artistic practice and interest. Where to begin? The branches that don’t snap under the pressure of the accumulating weight of the past, need to wait until time passes, snow melts. So far the few people that crossed my way were gray haired and accompanied by their dog. They glared reproachfully through their sunglasses, and wouldn’t respond to a greeting. The trail begins having more and more marks of cross country skiers, but only a call of warning by a skier approaching me from behind suddenly lets me realize I’m not in the woods anymore. Rolling hills surround me, spotted with colorfully dressed skiers, bending their knees, hoping for boosts of speed in almost plan stretches of tracks. I walk along the tracks, amazed by the change of surroundings. I’ve never been here before. The further I walk, the larger the field seems to get, the trail branching off into more and more different paths. Slowly I start to get cold. I stop by a very small trail that leads off the main track to some bushes, and take out my phone for directions. It isn’t of any use for finding my way of course, these small trails aren’t worth marking for the digital world. The compass points to the right. I follow the small trail, and after a few minutes, I’m back on my trail in woods, and all signs of skiers ceased to exist, as if I had imagined them.
During my Master, I was asked once to recall my first art experience. After a while, this episode came to my mind. Around 12 years old, my crafts teacher took my class to the county art museum, where we were allowed to roam around freely. I was alone when I reached a large wooden doorway. The dark brown oak door looked very solid, being carved in a way that it resembled a brick wall with brass door handles. By the side of the door a sign implicated that visitors may open the door. The door handle was shaped as if someone had pressed it too hard, but I couldn’t get my fingers to fit into the creases. Only later I realized it was impossible to fit a hand around it, that it would only fit if one could grasp it from the other side of the door, if the door itself wouldn’t exist. The door was heavy, and silently closed shut after I entered the room behind it. The room was very large, square, with tall white walls. Across from the door that I had come from, stood a door that looked exactly the same, dark brown with a brick pattern. I stood in the middle of the room, reluctant to open the next door. What if the same thing happened again, I thought to myself. What if suddenly several doors at once appeared in the next room? Could it go on forever? Would I find my way back through the Mise en abyme of brick look-a-like doors? I didn’t have any breadcrumbs or anything similar so that I could leave a trail. Maybe I should go back before I get lost. On the other hand, it won’t hurt to just take a peek through the door. I’ll have a short look, but not walk through. Unless it’s only one door, then I could continue further? Curiosity got the most of me. The door was locked.
When sound, and movement and image come together as one, the imagination of the indefinite possibilities of putting them together can keep one’s mind busy, I expect for at least one lifespan. When installing video, there are several crucial formal aspects that need to be considered in order to underline in which way the work is intended to be read by the viewer. Of course the questions regarding form and material that are raised during the development of the work can be answered by looking at the content of the work, and then deciding what’s most beneficial. And yet in the process of making each work, I ask myself similar formal questions.

How should the work be shown? Projection or Screen? (With screen I mean as in TV screen or monitor). Of course, there are the possibilities of augmented reality, virtual reality, holograms etc., but I’ll leave those aside for now. Multichannel or single channel? Silent or with sound? Headphones or loudspeakers? Even if the audio is crucial for understanding the film, you cannot expect the viewer to put on headphones to hear the sound. Loudspeakers on the other hand are often not compatible with group exhibitions. How about speaking the text during a live performance, facing the video, instead of having a conventional voice-over?

Do you create a box (black, white, grey) to show the video in, or do you deal with the architecture of the exhibition space? Should the viewers dive into the video and forget their surroundings, or should they know where they are and what they’re looking at? Or a mix of the two (the slight reminder to you, who is a viewer in a black box, created to give you the illusion of a window into a different world, to know that actually are looking at a plywood board, is because you were forced to walk around it in order to see the video). How about painting the walls and floor dark green instead of black to underline the green hues in the projection? If the video is to be shown in a white cube, the quality of a projected image is often diminished.

To choose to show the video on a monitor is usually out of practical reasons, good image quality in a bright space. Or because one wants a frame for a moving image, a reference to paintings. Or it’s because the viewers should carry the screen with them through the space, as in a video walk. Instead of having a white wall how about making a tapestry with a pattern of orange peels as backdrop for the video? How about letting the two video tablets have sledge hammers as stands? Or one could replicate a camera obscura, where the video is projected through a reflection of a mirror on the tabletop, as it used to project landscapes for painters.

Should the video be seen in its total length, or is it ok for the viewer to leave after a few minutes (because that is usually their innermost desire)? If the viewers can sit, they do tend to spend more time with the video. Hard wooden benches, or large pillows on the floor? I agree with the critics of this trend in making lounge islands as sitting structures for video screenings. Why force a domestic vibe? Usually the video does not benefit from it. It gives the viewer a chance to rest from the exhausting experience of hurrying through a show.

How will the viewer be confronted with the video? I think in a group exhibition, the different works should be
woven together to form a kind of line of continuity. At one point the installed video will appear and disturb the
viewers path by its own movement. The viewers way of walking towards and away from the screen can be
directed. If working with several screens, the movement of the viewer can be choreographed in correlation to
the movement in the pictures (not to mention their sound), so that, for example, the order of the videos creates
a narration, a Kuleschov effect, a montage through the movement of the viewers body instead of through a cut
in the video.
When showing video as part of an installation, together with objects/ sound/ images/ etc., the video can become
regarded as more a moving image, a gif, which requires only a short attention span. For me, the installation
is usually an expansion of video into space, and not a culmination of objects that together form a whole. The
video is not a layer that is added to the communication between other objects for complication or illustration,
but the rhizome with which everything starts and ends.
Several nights ago, I had a dream about a city that was on a moving train. There were wide streets and narrow alley ways that led in different directions, pillars and arches that held up cathedral high ceilings. By certain windows the outside world rushed past, and the ground was always shaking slightly. It was a bit like a medieval town, except that the different neighborhoods were called dining car, lounge area, and so on. It was ruled by a ruler, and when he came down the main road everyone who wasn’t on something square was to be executed. So that day, the trumpets proclaimed his soon arrival, and everyone started running in fear to the next square thing. A classmate was sitting on sofa with four corners, he was safe. I was looking desperately around, and noticed a red brick near my feet. Take that one, my classmate said, and pointed to a beige sandstone a bit further away. Meanwhile the ruler was pointing his finger at people with white faces, who had tried to hide in the shadows of corners. They were carried away by his guards. He turned around and started walking in my direction. I was on the red brick, but it was melting fast, soon I was standing on my tiptoes. Should I jump to the beige sandstone? Will the ruler notice? I woke up before reaching any decision.
A gigantic boat chased me on the way to school. It was higher than the hills that line the shore. I saw it first from the bus, but only got close to it about a half an hour later. I didn’t count the boat’s floors, but when we chugged past it in a small ferry (that I take to get to the island my school’s on), you couldn’t even see its railing. Finally, when I arrived in the studio (that had a view to the sea), it decided to depart, slowly and gracefully, and filled for a short while the entire window frame with its glossy body. Of course, the post card weather helped to increase the spectacle, but even nasty rain could have hardly diminished the bizarre impression. The next morning, we saw yet another humongous boat. On the upper deck laid big golden eggs.
In the exhibition “Celluloid”, a group show that was shown in EYE Filmmuseum in Amsterdam in 2016, the artist duo João Maria Gusmão and Pedro Paiva showed their video installation in form of a kind of labyrinth. You could enter and leave the maze from one staircase. The films they showed were on 16mm or 35mm celluloid film rolls, projected in a loop in different heights on the fiberboard walls of the maze. More than twenty projectors were in the space, projecting one or more short film, some peeping through holes in the maze’s walls, others sitting on a small shelf and projecting on what seemed like the backside of the wall, in between its support bars. The projections were to your left and right, in front and back, so when you chose to sit down on a bench, you could always see another video in the corner of your eye. It was easy to navigate through the space, but in the end I walked several times through the alleyways, to make sure I hadn’t missed anything. I spent an afternoon in the exhibition, most of it in this installation. I can’t remember much of what was projected. A peacock spreading its wings in slow motion. A fish helplessly stranded on a porcelain plate. A blinking Buddha statue. People eating with chopsticks. A turning tire of a bike. A washing machine with a leopard jacket inside. A leaping parrot. The films weren’t more than a couple of minutes long. The only sound was the humming of the machines, rattling the film around the spools.
In the summer after my first year at art school, I acquired the book “Ortverschiebungen, Zeitverschiebungen” by Bernhard Waldenfels, and it has accompanied me ever since. I think it’s safe to say that it’s one of the most important tools I own. It’s a small brown book with a couple of hundred pages, no images, good size to fit into a side pocket. I cannot claim that I understand everything that is written in it, but for me that’s not the most important task, to understand what Waldenfels exactly meant when he wrote the book. (I keep on trying to do so.) I use it more as a manual, a guidebook, for times when I’m at loss during a process and am in need of guidance for making a decision. In the back, behind the index of proper names (“Namenregister”), there’s the subject index (“Sachregister”), an alphabetically organized list of subjects/ themes, each accompanied with one or several numbers, which refer to the page in which they can be looked up. So when I have a problem, or a burning question without words, or am just stuck, I look through the subject index, and try to find the subject that relates the most with my inquiry. By finding a word that fits, that alone can already help to put my matter into a concrete state, from an ephemeral haze into something tangible, something I can talk about. For me to be able to formulate a question is usually a great relief and help towards figuring out the next step out of the process. I then usually go on to looking up and reading the referred chapter, with the question in the back of my head. It’s more a reading between the lines, a conquest of words that results in finding clues for the next step in the process of making a work.
9.

I am used to listening to the echoes of my own thoughts, playing the imaginary game of how-far-will-this-decision-take-me-and-what-happens-if-I-do-this-instead with variations of myself. In collaborations, suddenly everything has to be articulated, reasoned for, argued against, in a more elaborative manner, because usually another person can't be deceived so lightly as I can fool myself with non-sensical reasons. (Well it’s green because it can’t be blue.) Of course, it always depends on who you’re working with and in which relationship you’re in. It also depends on the size of the group. The bigger the group, the more important it is to share a table and coffee. Skyping with more than two people usually ends in a similar way it has begun. In any case, I believe in timetables, protocols, and all other things used by (philistine) small town associations run by babbitts.
A couple of weeks ago, I was for a short while in a land of queues. It was very early in the morning, the sun hadn’t risen yet, and yet over ten thousands of people were standing in line, surrounded by a snow covered no-mans-land in the north of Sweden. I was there to take the sound of a cheering crowd of a popular sport event. But that would only be several hours later. Now people were queueeing. There were all kinds of different lines for specific things, I didn’t really understand the system, but it seemed very well organized, for all the people around me had a determined, purposeful look on their face. Everyone had long legs and was wearing sports cloths, carrying skis or bags or suitcases. The queues went up and down or snaked around the long plot of land. Out of curiosity, I followed an exceptionally straight queue from start to end. It took me more than ten minutes, past a several groups of port-a-potties, past the parking lot, past two tents pegged to the snow, to get to the end (where the buses started lining up to leave). Because it was below zero degrees, those who weren’t obliged to stand in line, either grouped around the few campfires that had been put up, or rested on the floor of a sports cloths store, which was only there for the occasion of the event. I also spent over an hour there on the floor, and watched the people sitting between the clothing rails, eating sandwiches, wearing similar things that the store was trying to sell them, waiting for the event to begin.

I find the phenomena of waiting curious, for it is the only time we’re really forced to deal with ourselves, our own thoughts and being. It’s closely related to boredom, but waiting has a purpose. And until the purpose fulfills itself, we are doomed to do something else with the time between, with a constant itch behind our ears, telling us “not yet”. I think that feeling is very close to one I’ve had since I started my artistic practice. As soon as one work is finished the next one has already begun (if not earlier), there is never a period of rest, I never really reach a final conclusion, but always hope the next artwork will get me closer to whatever I’m longing for.
I have two plants in my studio, one dark purple, with jagged magenta striped leaves that become green now and then. It is small and I’ve tried to direct it into growing bushy. The other one is a massive green stem, several hands high, with thick, fleshy, hairy leaves that have started to curl lately. By its former owner it was mishandled a bit, so many of the older leaves are scarred, making the plant resemble an old rhinoceros. Both plants propagate through regeneration, so if a leaf is torn off and put into a glass of water, it grows after a while into a resemblance of the plant it was taken from, without any further ado. It becomes its own entity by simply being removed from its parent. I’ve been wondering about the different implications there are and could be if one adapts this principle to art production. Where do my ideas come from? In what way have my finished artworks set a fundament for future projects? I’ve usually regarded a newly finished work as a hybrid between what I’ve learnt so far, influences from people and events around me, and something foreign that can’t really put my finger on. Cross-pollination. But maybe I’m fooling myself, and there’s no way out of the closed circuit of my mind, my experiences, my background, and the only change is their growth and demise in different directions.
On October 28, 1953, Cinema 16 held two sessions of a symposium with Maya Deren, Parker Tyler, Dylan Thomas, and Arthur Miller. Willard Maas acted as chairman. The following quote is therefrom.

“MAYA DEREN: I’m going to do something which I think is a bit risky, and that is to go a little bit into the question of what is poetry, and what distinguishes what we would call poetry from anything else, because I think that only if we can get this straight, can we sensibly discuss poetry in film, or the poetic film, or anything else. Now I say that it’s risky because this is a subject that has been discussed for many, many centuries, and it’s been very difficult to pin down. But the reason I’m going into it is not because I think distinctions are important as formulae and as rigidities, but I think they’re important in the sense that they give an audience, or any potential audience, a preparation, an approach, to what they’re going to see. In the sense that if they’re thinking they are going to see an adventure film, and if they are confronted with a poetic film, that’s not going to go very well. I don’t think one is always predisposed towards poetry; the whole notion of distinguishing and, if you will, labeling things is not a matter of defining them so much a matter of giving a clue to the frame of mind which you bring to them. In other words, what are you going to be watching as this unrolls? What are you going to be listening for? If you’re watching for what happens, you might not get the point of some of the retardations because they’re concerned with how it happens. Now poetry, to my mind, consists not of assonance; or rhythm, or rhyme, or any of these other qualities which we associate as being characteristic of poetry. Poetry, to my mind, is an approach to experience, in the sense that a poet is looking at the same experience that a dramatist may be looking at. It comes out differently because they are looking at it from a different point of view, and because they are concerned with different elements in it. Now, the characteristics of poetry, such as rhyme, or color, or any of those emotional qualities which we attach to the poetic work, also may be present in works which are not poetry, and this will confuse us. The distinction of poetry is its construction (what I mean by „a poetic structure“), and the poetic construct arises from the fact, if you will, that it is a „vertical“ investigation of a situation, in that it probes the ramifications of the moment, and is concerned with its qualities and its depth, so that you have poetry concerned in a sense not with what is occurring, but with what it feels like or what it means. A poem, to my mind, creates visible or auditory forms for something which is invisible, which is the feeling, or the emotion, or the metaphysical content of the movement. Now it also may include action, but its attack is what I could call the „vertical“ attack, and this may be a little bit clearer if you will contrast it to what I would call the „horizontal“ attack of a drama, which is concerned with the development, let’s say, within a very small situation from feeling to feeling. Perhaps it would be made most clear if you take a Shakespearean work which combines the two movements. In Shakespeare you have the drama moving forward on a „horizontal“
plane of development, of one circumstance--one action--leading to another, and this delineates the character. Every once and a while, however, he arrives at a point of action where he wants to illuminate the meaning to this moment of drama, and at that moment he builds a pyramid or investigates it “vertically,” if you will, so that you have a “horizontal“ development with periodic “vertical“ investigations which are the poems, which are the monologues. Now if you consider it this way, then you can think of any kind of combination being possible. You can have operas where the “horizontal“ development is virtually unimportant--the plots are very silly but they serve as an excuse for stringing together a number of arias which are essentially lyric statements. Lieder are, in singing, comparable to the lyric poems, and you can see that all sorts of combinations would be possible. Now it seems to me that in many films, very often in the opening passages, you get the camera establishing the mood, and when it does that, cinematically those sections are quite different from the rest of the film. You know, if it’s establishing New York, you get a montage of images, that is, a poetic construct, after which what follows is a dramatic construct which is essentially “horizontal“ in its development. The same thing would apply to the dream sequences. They occur at a moment when the intensification is carried out not by action but by the illumination of that moment. Now the short films, to my mind (and they are short because it is difficult to maintain such intensity for a long period of time), are comparable to lyric poems, and they are completely a “vertical,“ or what I would call a poetic construct, and they are complete as such. One of the combinations that would be possible would be to ,have a film which as a dramatic construct, visually, accompanied by a commentary which is essentially poetic; that is, it illuminates the moments as they occur, so that you have a chain of moments developing and each one of them is illuminated. It’s things of this sort that, I believe, occur in the work of Mr. Maas who has done that to a certain extent in his last film, „Image in the Snow,“ where the development of the film is very largely „horizontal,“ that is, there is a story line, but this is illuminated constantly by the poetic commentary so that you have two actions going on simultaneously. Now this, I think, is one of the great potentials of film and something which could very well be carried and developed much further, and I think that one of the distinctions of that film and also of „Geography of the Body,“ is that it combines these principles. I think that this is a way of handling poetry and film, and poetry in film ... I don’t know how the other people feel about it.”
13.

Every June, in near proximity of the Basel Art Fair, one can visit the exhibition of the Swiss Art Awards, one of Switzerland’s oldest art competitions. In 2017 each participating artist was asked to answer the question if art must be sellable. The following statement is a quote from Tobias Madison.

“Must art be sellable? The question would rather be: Can art not be sellable? Can you be more cynical than capitalism? When they go low, can you go lower? Art’s immersion in the financial market is disgusting, but there is also the thrill, the excitement about an artwork in these broader conditions, something that is set within the mathematical variables of the market. There are certain parts of art that can’t be bought, sensibilities that you just can’t develop, no matter how hard you invest. I think a lot about perversion recently. Times are sour, fascists babbling empty syllables into the air, the media supporting or reacting against – which are basically the same – because they’re structurally bound to doing so.

Anyone interested in media and its languages must appreciate this strange new world of fake news, memes, instant leaks, ISIS cat videos – its like a Dada wet dream, sadly operating against us. Irrationality occupied, what’s left to do is to mutate media in an even more pervert direction, to make it weirder than in the moment. There is a variety of sexual practices that are able to translate oppression into empowerment, lust. There is the weirdness that disarms prudeness, single-mindedness. Sorry, this is not some bizarre Bataille argument, I’m talking about the interpersonal relationship that media always penetrates. The microfascism of images on a cellular level between you and me.”
In the handout of Miriam Bäckström’s show at Marabouparken, there’s an interview between Bettina Pehrsson, the artistic director, and the artist. I find her approach and thematics very interesting, even if our practices are very different. Miriam Bäckström begins by defining the word perception, and how it differs from the word perspective. Perception is about how we see things, and what we choose to see, she states. It’s a political choice, and has to do with our construction of how we regard ourselves and others around us. I went to the artist talk Miriam Bäckström held with Peter Cornell, an art theorist. It was held in Swedish, so I didn’t catch everything they said. But they also discussed the notion of perception versus perspective, and she said that with her Gobelin (tapestry), she aims to dissolve the perfect point of view. She does that by using several hundred pictures of one item out of different perspectives and then digitally meshes them together. The end result then gets mechanically woven into one very large tapestry. The viewers are therefor forced to stand in different places, to move around the tapestry. The viewers can never see everything at once, but their memory weaves together the different ways of seeing the motive, just as the different colored threads are physically turned into one work. The several large rectangular tapestries hung from the ceiling diagonally in the exhibition space, rather close together, facing either corner of the room. The visitor had to walk in between the tapestries hanging in the front to look at the ones in the middle, that could only be seen by standing very close to them. When I try to describe their more or less abstract depictions, I have to look at the picture I took to recall what they looked like. One was woven with shimmering threads, so the tapestry look a bit like a giant glitter shower, an other one resembled a pile of multicolored bits and pieces of torn paper. Even though I can’t remember exactly their resemblance, I can call in mind their mesmerizing appearance. I’m not sure if it has to do with their size, or with the slight wind that made the tapestry billow in low waves, but during the talk I could barely get my eyes off the tapestry nearest to my seat. It was a very calming, hypnotic experience, to watch the glittering strands slowly move back and forth, back and forth.

In the other exhibition room, a one channel video was screened before some sofas. The video showed several actors reading from a script, with an audience sitting among them. In the corridor towards the room, the script of the film was pasted to the walls, with a set of rules. As I understood it, Miriam Bäckström had written the script, with a clear amount of characters (stereotypes like Mother, Son, Baby, etc.) in mind, but did not define which character says what. It is up to each actor to choose which sentence fits best with their character. The identities in the play are exchangeable, and each time its reenacted they are defined anew, by using different words in reference to who they think they are. In the talk Miriam Bäckström remarked that language is an idea of society, that we can think together. A character is a developed out of language, and as words change so does the character, just as the backsides of the tapestries are a consequence of their frontside.
One of the telling signs of an exhibition space are white floating walls. They’re made out of plaster or plywood and are designated to protect the architecture from the constantly new drilled and refilled holes, the fast repainting jobs, the art itself. They hover lightly over the floor, creating a thin black line that frames the room. The walls resemble the role of words around my artistic practice. They are required by the Other, the third entity in the triangle connected to the artist and the artwork. They stand in front of the structure, can give hints to what lies behind, sometimes they can open a window, but mostly they just do their job of blocking a true grasp of what’s at stake.
For the spring exhibition catalog, everyone in my class was asked to answer this question: If the academia is the inside, what is the outside? We had to answer it in English, in around 100 words.

Concerning the inside and outside of academia, I don’t think there is any apple where I can shoot an arrow through. The path I’ve chosen so far as an artist has not led me to a simple binary in which I can choose sides or even distinguish them. My artistic education has developed mostly in the bosom of institutions, and even when leaving school, I cannot get rid of my past behavior. I greeted the hat (unknowingly) when I started with my practice. Therefore my future as an artist will always be interwoven with academia, active or passive, in one way or another.
A title is usually the last thing I give a work before it’s finished. Giving the work a name is equivalent with letting it free to the world, giving it out of my hands to the viewers to do with it what they want. With choosing a title, I try to build a ladder, or a bridge, for the viewer to access my work with, a tool that may draw a line towards something other then what first meets the eye. As ladders serve for different purposes, so can also titles be directed in different ways.

The title can be directly connected to the work itself. It says what it is. *Three Screens Based On A Dream. Bowl. Sounds from the underground, above and around. Suitcase.*

It can be a work in itself. *KL1780.*

It can be a quote taken from the voice-over or text of the work. *When you turn right, you see a door. No smoke from the chimney. Point of Reference being the moon.*

Or it can be a reference to an other artwork, event, item, word, person etc. that is related to the content of the work. *Priming. Empathy Stone. Die Nacht. High five you survive. Following Spectrum.*
When I start a new work, it usually begins with something I observed, some phenomena, a sentence of a story, a dream, or similar. Something bothers me or interests me, and that leads to a question, research, and usually after many twists and turns to the finished work. As a teenager, I was laying ill at home on the couch, and spent an afternoon looking at a poster of a painting of Paul Klee. I drifted in and out of sleep, waking up to continue starring at the poster. If you look at a thing for a long time, it starts to change. The different color fields started dancing, loosing their edges, becoming blurry, having different heights on the plane paper. This experience made me, a while later in my first year of art school, spend a lot of time with reading up on how eyes work, biological explanations of perception, fields of vision. I started trying to recapture what had happened, while figuring out why it had happened and what that might mean. That led to my first video installation, a silent two channel projection.
On the unknown stage of our psyche lies the immeasurable and unexplored reality of our dreams. We all dream, create images, fragmentary narratives: only partially remembered records of seductive, mysterious, unexpected expressions of our fantasies and desires. Our dreams, those weird nocturnal films we somehow project onto the inside of our skulls, manifest in a kind of cinematic language. Consequently, memory can be regarded as a place of organized past, and film as an aesthetic exploration of it. Memories can detach themselves from the current situation and reconnect with other memories. Reality and memory become interchangeable and can no longer be kept apart. One is put back into pure memory, goes through memory as through time, which does not follow a chronological order. Instead of in the past, even in the present, independent moments of remembrance can be shown in which the present is split up and a single event would become of several moments from the future and the past.
The art schools I’ve been to so far haven’t really encourage combined practices. If it comes to a collaboration or not, I once thought that it had to do more with the architecture of the school building, then the accessibility and custom surrounding interpersonal contacts, having smalltalk, asking for help, etc. My former school in Bern has one big atelier for all art students. Thin wooden walls divide the space into singular booths or smaller rooms for several people, but there are no doors, people use curtains if they want solitude. If I wanted to or not, what I did was usually visible to other students, and it was easy to strike up a conversation about my/ their work without having to plan it, if I/ they wished so. People usually tended to walk by my studio now and then.

The studios I’ve had during my two years at Mejan were both on the 3rd floor of the main building. They’re wonderful studios for 1-2 people, big, bright, nice view – but there is a policy of closed doors, that does not nurture much informal contact. There are also barely any meeting points in the building. Almost all bigger spaces can only be accessed by a special card. When I discussed my theory at lunch, that the architecture is the reason to blame for the ego fighter spirit that sometime gallops the hallways, one of my colleagues argued that Mejan has historically always been more interested in the multitasking solo artistic genius, and still has a lot of that old fashioned thinking engrained in its structures until today.

I think that is a reason why I’ve really started to engage with people through my projects during my master. For every work, I’ve met up with specialists to talk in depth about the specific thing I was interested in. With geologists about the history of local stone structures, with an IT guy about data loss, with a fountain builder about his choice of material, with archivists about loosing an object. It didn’t always end up being a part of the final work, or was necessarily a successful conversation. But it’s good for me to get out of my own head.
The other day, I was on the phone with a friend, talking about how we’re connected to the content our works. Why do we do what we do. A mutual friend of ours deals with his own personal history in the film he’s making. It’s necessary for his well being and important for society at large that the thematic he’s dealing with is publicly discussed. The friend I was talking with and I do not have that kind of approach towards our artistic practices. This concern is not new. The question sneaks up on me now and then. I continued the discussion with an other friend. She said, that she also sometimes thinks of that, most of us do, but who says that her paintings don’t make the world a better place?

Maybe we are like libraries. There’s this story I once heard about a researcher who went to the New York Library. She picked up a book for reading up on some background info, and saw that the book had never been opened, although it had been bought sometime in the 1920’s. At the counter she asked the librarian, so how come you’ve kept this book for so long, if it’s never been lent? We kept it for you, the librarian said, and handed over the checked out book to her.
Footnotes

1. Trail near Gamla vägen, Gustavsberg
2. I could not find out the name of the artist or exhibition. It was in the museum of art in Lucerne.
3. A thing I did not mention, that I think about a lot, are the possibilities of combining objects/requisites with film, making seeing a film more a sculptural experience.
4. “If you have dreamed that you were on a train, it may be a symbol of the journey of your life. Actually, this dream means that you have chosen the right track in your life, so there is a lot of good things in front of you. But, there is also another meaning of this dream. It can means that sometimes you worry about something that you don’t have the reason to worry about.” https://dreamingandsleeping.com/dreams-about-trains-interpretation-and-meaning/
5. SL ferry, Slussen - Skeppsholmen
8. I sometimes renaissance about my year in the film department in Hamburg (HfbK). The film department consisted mostly of one room with a very good projector. Seminars, group crits, screenings – everything took place in that one room. The christmas party was held in the outside of the room, in the small nearby kitchen and the hallway. In spite, or because of that, everyone was constantly collaborating with each other. It is a necessity of course, you can’t do the lights, camera, catering, acting, sound etc. all by yourself. If I asked someone to be the driver, I wasn’t asking for a favor. It was a win-win situation, because both parties had to gain from the experience of working with the production of a movie. Therefore I was engaged in many film set of other film students, in different roles. And learned more than in any other year how it is to plan, go through and succeed with a project, all through the good and bad examples that I was able to be part of.
9. Start Vasaloppet, Transtrand, 04.03.2018
10. This essay wasn’t written by choice, but I’m happy it helped me put words around certain observations.
13. swissartawards.ch/~journal/participants/tobias-madison/ (last accessed 12.10.2017)
15. The positive thing about speaking a second language with other non-native English speakers, is that there is always some room between the words.
16. Question from Petra Bauer and Asier Mendizabel, the professors guiding the spring show. In between my bachelor and master, some friends and I founded the self-governed artist collective “Schwob-Haus”. The studio house we were in was bound to be sold, but we prevented it by a lot of blood and sweat in corresponding with the public, the media, the town officials, and other art institutions. The statement refers to the legend of Wilhelm Tell, who, by refusing to greet a hat on a pole in the town square that represented the ruling governor, was condemned to shoot an apple off his own son’s head.
17. The titles mentioned are from my own works.
18. In a way it was the first stone to the wall I’m still building on.
20. Hochschule der Künste Bern (HKB), Royal Institute of Art (Mejan)
21. Conversation with Philip Ortelli and Olivia Petterson Fleur
Where is the outside of the symbolic? I'll come back to that.
Filmstill: Death on the Nile, 1978
At this point, I would like to express a sincere thank you to all who helped me with this essay: Emma Kihl for the careful reading, the help with grammar and her advice, Henrik Jonsson for listening, and everyone mentioned in the text for letting me lend their voices.