Letter to my examiners at Kungl. Konsthögskolan in February 2018

I tried earlier to write short stories about men as my essay, often failed men in the sense that their dreams and ambitions from younger years are not accomplished. But they aren’t for that sake broken or destroyed through their failures. They dream away into a different world, develop an odd interest and create a context that feels meaningful to themselves. But these dramas were not sufficient as fiction. They wouldn’t have contributed to my show in a constructive way, so I decided to throw them away.

But at the same time, when I sit here and write this letter to you, my critiques and conversation partners in the examination, I cannot fully let go of those stories. Those men and their shortcomings, with their alienation to themselves and to the world around them. I have no desire to further develop these stories here in detail since I decided to not include them in the show, but the theme itself – shortcomings or failure, the feeling of estrangement toward yourself and the escape into odd or what is considered strange interests - have a connection with my paintings. It might be that I make art just because I am aware that I am unable to live up to my own expectations and the ambitions that I have about myself.

It would be totally wrong to say “when I was young” since I am still young... To be an artist was however never something that I ever dreamed of. I dreamt to be the general secretary of the UN and to create peace. That I would migrate to the USA and work in the White House as an adviser to an American president or that I would be a Swedish diplomat and later the Swedish foreign secretary.

The common denominator of these dreams and aspirations is the great adventure. The desire to be the knight that sits on the white horse and rides into the unknown and slays the dragon, returns home and are to be considered a hero. But then you see that these wishes, or dreams are not based in a reality. A messianic complex of a young man.

But what is left then and where do you go? Art... if it is so that I am making art just because I know that I am not capable to live up to my own ambitions and dreams and therefore escape into another world, it is not so that the fantasy world is totally disconnected to the real world. The German artist Neo Rauch describes that he is himself walking around in his inner woodland finding new walking paths, but as times goes by it gets harder and harder due to the fact that he has, during the years, been at so many places in the woodland that it is hard to find a new place. I think that I have just reached the woodlands were this drama have an opportunity to occur. I have walked up from the beachhead and now standing in front of the woods where I will map my walkways.

One other way to let reality and fiction overlap is to create a character and let this person go on an endeavour with the society. I did that by creating a character that sends letters that had somewhat bizarre questions. I would like to continue this but to have a continuous flow of letters and not just one reply. To communicate like people and the society did before internet and the telephone. But I do not know what question to ask and to whom to send too. Maybe you can help me with that?

The side that I liked the most with this kind of communication is the time you have to compose a well put question and the time the receiver has to respond in the same manner. Because it is something
that I always have struggled with in my art. To reply to people’s questions, and in this format, I have time to really think what I want to say. In comparison when people ask me questions on a show and likewise, I think that I am never able to articulate a satisfying answer to the who person who asks. Often because I don’t know the answer or because that I don’t understand the question and it annoys me very much. I want to be able to answer people’s questions.

What I do know is that I want my paintings to have an impact on the viewer and in what way I don’t really care about. If a person completely breaks down, goes home and calls an ambulance and turn themselves into a mental institution or if someone goes home and asks their spouse to marry them I see as two equally big successes. I mean this without a hint of irony. The worst part is if people would be totally indifferent to my work. I know that I cannot have an impact on everyone due to the fact that all people are different. But if an overwhelming majority just didn’t care about my works I would be deeply disappointed. Is it not all artist’s dream regardless in what medium you work in to have an impact on your viewer?