Jere Aalto
Anne Broe Kristensen
Cian Burke
David Magnusson

In conversation with Annika von Hausswolff
Jere Aalto: I have strived for the deconstruction of my photographic background in various ways—ever been driven by some fictitious positions, being someone else, negating someone else’s role for the last few years. Still, we couldn’t say that my photographic being took form as an emphasis on a sociological artistic approach, being unable to create some form of distinction from within the rules of photographic practice. This element of the Dadaists has largely been a projection of a single-fictional character, who is part of a remake trope or a remake. In a way, the character becomes its own error.

Annika von Hausswolff: Like this term ‘sociological fiction’, and I am somehow interpreting it to be quite contemporary. Lately, I have also come across terms such as Experimental Documentary—that the PhD candidate Kerstin Hamilton is currently exploring at Akademiska, in your method of problematizing the position of the photographer as a personal or more general way of reading the game of photography.

I have a list of potential in these re-established terms, as they seem to come from many simultaneous sources. What is this? The position for writing or making ‘Sociological Fiction’? Can it already be seen in the Jean-Baudrillard thinking, but also in the constant documentation of your own creative position? This constant evaluation of one’s previous works, sense of being lost, and production might be the starting point for the ‘Vappes’ (in this case, I always feel I am creating something through which I see no longer identify myself in the past). No, I form a complete out of being a photographer.

I believe this is the idea to play related to your imagery?

Jere Aalto: It is a direct, go-get’s relation to the potential myths one has recently become loaded with, deposits of signs, aura, estrangement, etc. Locations where one was either built or created out of cut-outs from the original photographic visual. I expect that some of this is happily lost, and to try to make it visible in a photographic way.

Annika von Hausswolff: Either started from the signs and symbols functioning as this ‘look’ in today’s society and we draw out in this photo- historic here as your images are self-referral, almost existing in another universe with no file or no connection to the outside. Is this something you would agree with or am I rambling?

Jere Aalto: I agree, there is always some volume of inaccessibility in my works, either in the form of an impossibility for translation of the signs, or that my works are meant to be layers cut out of my works, either in the form of an impossibility for translation of this something you would agree with or am I rambling?

Annika von Hausswolff: I have never come across an article (Baudrillard quote) as an expression before and I actually read it as antichrist. Forcing a moral error. His rhetorical figure – the ‘false prophet’ – is a very powerful one even outside of a religious context. The fallen angel as an artist, as an artist. This vision then evolves toward portraying ‘falling’ Magritte painting his conceptual images all dressed up as a fashionable. Some kind of kilometre: I think Magritte was all about questioning the process of cause and effect? Do you think Magritte is a relevant reference to your work?

Jere Aalto: Magritte was simply seen on the limits of the photographic and in vision, many portraits of himself as well as re-making re-producing through social photography. Thus, what we see as an image within the imaginary. For me, this has always meant that the artist could not achieve causality (which you pointed out) on the ideological symbolic level of the work. In my work too, Magritte aims to pull elements from our everyday very day in their ‘invisibility’. In order to create the illusion that the photographic image is stupid, the only difference is that I don’t manage to create this atmosphere. And there isn’t much of the symbolic image. There is some ‘invisibility’ — playful, yet very subtle, silent.

Annika von Hausswolff: I think the lack of causality is even more in your image’s role in ‘rendering’ the kind of image. Magritte is quoted as said: ‘I’ve never been more easily simply for images and more, inverted, only the image counts, the inexpressible and nonsensical image. (…) For this very inexpressive, the thought of the image as the only thing that counts. And the most, every viewer is merely materialized, in the image, how to address your own materialization. Stages after Seri? A series of images and thoughts that was completed after a stay of five years in Japan. Do you feel yourself in this, relating to ‘Submersion’, remote place?

Jere Aalto: The mental source of the image, is material that consists of quite often the source is an image to get lost in the far away. With Stages after Seri I had made some observations before I descend onto Japanese vernacular. For this was a mental exercise to give way to venture tropes that were vastely, Japanese times artists setting lyrical ekla of one’s body rhythms against sleeping, working life and the routine of every- depression in the Japanese economic ethos. To seek these tropes with a photographic sensibility, as representations of the other, failed. Inaccessible. A certain remembrance was embedded in my search for one singular tropes that would signal the mechanical characteristics of the impermanent and vacuarily standstill. In this sense, I did not lose myself to Japan but to its catalogue image, its visual perceptions. This sense of nomelessness operation as little an eye to a pure vision and this also as an entrance to a new page in my artwork. And you, I like the attitude of expressing nothing directly, just finding the best combination tropes.

Annika von Hausswolff: One of the means I draw at the way it is a very chromatic t 抹抹’ that is, a space where only two physical elements are present and a sign of some sort that is dominating the image space and a rectangular spotlight in the upper right corner. This minimalism is darkness. It is almost impossible to navigate within the frame of the image to understand what level of space this is. Thus, I imagine to be the view of a deep works creates which is being cornered by some researcher with expensive equipment and funding from the state. By turn we may be excused for wanting to create a marvellous. What is your own relationship to the notion of narrativity, do you try to avoid readings such as the above?

Jere Aalto: I try to avoid narrative guidelines when I am working on the later realising of my works. This intention reason to seek out the narrativity lies at the centre of my perception and survival instinct. It is to recognize the taking on the risks by the subject itself, I used to be fascinated by this reflection upon the photographer’s passive duration, a writing in which photographic image is as associated with the cinematic still image. If something in that image you refer to (2017) is being endowed or freely captured beyond the artist is that the darkness is holding shift, this is the interrogation position of my own practice and exploration errors that I engendered when I descended the Japanese Seri. There was a lost point in my visual exhibition in which I classified the craftsperson’s ‘The Shadow Craftsman’ position beyond the Japanese Kabuki theatre stage. These operations were professional manipulators and tricksters who did not see the results of their manoeuvres. They only saw the reflecting light that slipped into their eyes when they assumed the craft’s hat, the vertical lift, in the work around (2017), the upright corner spotlight(s) give way to this theoretical ‘threshold’ that you possessed, which can see through the material of this individual. That’s why I mention earlier the distinction between a trickster and artist, which is being cornered by some researcher with expensive equipment and funding from the state.

Annika von Hausswolff: Someone has said that artworks operate like stray dogs once they are made public. In a sense then, the artist’s authority towards the artwork is dissolved or never into the visitor’s mind. Do you have a favourite artwork or image you keep returning to?

Jere Aalto: In conversation with Annika von Hausswolff

Photo: Annika von Hausswolff
Anne Broe Kristensen: I started photographing ‘for real’ when I was 25. Photography was just something that suddenly emerged as the best possible way of dealing with having children and the experiences of existing in the world and coming to see, in such a way that I could touch other people. It was a way to connect. I don’t really perceive myself as a photographer in that sense. I am an analogue photographer solely, from negative to final print, and that crucial part of the process, being in the darkroom, is essential to me. Photography is everywhere, we make mental photographs all the time. I can perceive photography is very much connected to our souls and I still find it wonderfully mysterious and magical when my negatives and prints turn out the way I want. Although I am still surprised when I manage to expose ‘correctly’, I am trying to make small comments not grand stories – fragments of my existing body of work. Like in music or dance I also work in new material as expanding and building on top of the already existing body of work. Marjana Kella, who I mentioned earlier, has recently produced a photobook that I have that I am very much looking forward to reading. She is such a talented photographer and I feel very grateful to be working with photographers like that who to me are heroes.

Anne Broe Kristensen: It makes me curious to learn about your resistance towards defining who or what you are in terms of being a creative being, but there are other reasons for you to not consider yourself as a photographer?

Annika von Hausswolff: Maybe I mean that I don’t consider myself a photographer in the most traditional sense. The notion of the photographer in the very media sense of working around a camera at all the time and forever with the technical skills involved in making a ‘good’ photograph. I am still surprised when I manage to expose ‘correctly’. Photography is everywhere; we make mental photographs all the time. To me, photography is very much connected to our souls and I still find it wonderfully mysterious and magical when my negatives and prints turn out the way I want. Although I am still surprised when I manage to expose ‘correctly’, I am trying to make small comments not grand stories – fragments of my existing body of work. Like in music or dance I also work in new material as expanding and building on top of the already existing body of work. Marjana Kella, who I mentioned earlier, has recently produced a photobook that I have that I am very much looking forward to reading. She is such a talented photographer and I feel very grateful to be working with photographers like that who to me are heroes.

Annika von Hausswolff: But to answer your question, the relationship with the work changes once it is out of the colour darkness and mounted, ready to be installed. That is where the specificity lies. The symbiosis in the darkroom is, I mean, mostly concerned with the actual print and being birth. It is not so much a symbiosis with the subject matter but, as mentioned, the place where I often feel most personal. So, when the work is exhibited and out of this dark I become something else, it becomes independent. You cannot expect people to find and think certain things. I do not have the right to do that. I am always hoping that at least something, my hope is that, for a few minutes, a moment created, remains and stays for the spectator to feel for whatever that might be and connect on a level that evokes personal recollections and experiences.

Annika von Hausswolff: Earlier in our conversation you stated that you wanted to avoid creating ‘grand stories’, could you tell me a bit more about the visual components that form your work? It seems like, for the time being, you have narrowed down your subjects to the subconscious representations of the body and the organic/natural.

Annika von Hausswolff: But I guess a lot of artists feel like that! I just feel so incredibly passionate about the work being done by you and your fellow artists today is of the resistance towards defining who or what you are in terms of being a creative being, but there are other reasons for you to not consider yourself as a photographer?

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The Photographer as Editor

Jere Aalto, Anne Broe Kristensen, Clain Burke, and David Magnusson attended the international MFA Programme in photography at Valand Academy between 2015 and 2017. The programme’s aim is to foster critical awareness and ‘knowledge-in-action’, where a dialogical approach is central. One of the goals within this, is to deepen the understanding of photography and explore the creative possibilities of the medium – in order to broaden this framework, scrutiny is directed towards both contemporary and historical practitioners. The driving force is the movement between creation and reflection, but also a curiosity towards other fields of art practice and their respective image realms. What is fascinating within photography in particular, is the links to an incomprehensible number of social phenomena and burning issues.

The programme also places a robust emphasis on the students’ individual development, which becomes immediately discernible through the distinct visual expressions of the works made by the four young photographers. This is played out through choice of scale and the manner in which works are presented, preference for colour or black and white, references to other works, and the combination of text and image. As the viewer acquaints themselves with these varied approaches and processes that shape the works’ form and content – two essentially interconnected aspects – the individual properties of the projects become even clearer.

On a conceptual level, Jere Aalto has found inspiration in a particular stage mechanism used in Japanese kabuki theatre known as more. First developed during the 18th century and routinely used during the Edo era, it made it possible to transform a scene by utilising doors located on the stage floor. Based on this dynamic device, he has created images characterised by an ambiguous spatiality; both the structure of the images and their interrelationships undermine the idea of a coherent story, which traditionally plays such a prominent role in photography. And yet, at the same time they remain simultaneously beautiful and disquieting. This aspect of the work is supplemented by a strong connection to the playful and subversive attitude of surrealism and dadaism.

Anne Broe Kristensen combines studies of naked bodies with close-ups of plants. The former are pin-sharp and convey the bright tones of the skin, while the latter are dark, colour-saturated and dramatically blurred, creating a contrast-rich dynamic. The compositions vary depending on the context and they have an intuitive and rhythmic character. Image has been added to image and together they form a whole in which the different parts visibly affect each other. Her work revolves around the body as both a shell in which the skin meets the world and as a container that holds our feelings and inner lives. The work is also a visual exploration of experiences related to the body as gender and carrier of identity. For Anne Broe Kristensen, the analogue photographic process is an important aspect of the work. She describes how its slowness generates opportunities for reflection and that the darkroom is not merely a place where the images are printed; it also becomes an integral part of the whole, creating a specific interaction with the site in which the works are arranged. The possibility to freely vary the formats as well as the method in which the images are displayed – framed or unframed, glued directly to the wall or attached in other ways – is closely linked to the essence of photography as a medium.

With all four, there is also a conscious approach to, and exploiting of, photography’s specific characteristics – not least the issues of representation that are strongly associated with the photographic image. What is important, however, is that this occurs without the unique nature and character of the photograph being unambiguously defined or defended, but instead as an open experiment into the kind of meaning and impact photography can have. Through conversations with Annika von Hausswolff – a key element within this book – Jere Aalto, Anne Broe Kristensen, Clain Burke and David Magnusson share their thoughts on their own work. The discussions develop certain interests and concerns that to a large extent define contemporary Swedish photography today.

Niclas Östlind, PhD in photography and Head of the MFA Programme in Photography at Valand Academy
In conversation with Annika von Hausswolff

Annika von Hausswolff: It seems like photography, with its representational role, is what is expected and simultaneously ability to render time and space, is quite an appropriate medium for you to provide. In your images, I see an almost chimerical fission with objects and locations parallel to a scientific type of curiosity and urge to categorize or label seemingly complex and fragmented objects and images from out there in them: any critique of any sort of embodiment in your overall project?

CB: I suppose my tendency to fulfill objects with a sort of anthropomorphized equivalences is as a way to attempt to concretize with this mode of a shift in a trope, a mode which is always imaginative as they're wringing out their own story. Art practice (like scientific practice) can utilize this same type of visual strategy and become a means to a follow a line of curiosity to its logical, or at least at times explicit, conclusion. I've been somewhat of the various scientific processes of collecting and collating a wide range of phenomena as a means for creating a system for gathering knowledge and for providing an overview for a better understanding. And so in a way, it is to incorporate this approach to the image of modulated objects that I come across. The sequences of images (I could perhaps answer any questions but possibly allow for an alternative structure to begin to reveal itself.

So, I'm not sure if there is a critical such as my work but I think I am currently attempting to address the complex new nature of history and photography as a means to define ‘reality’ through perception and to provide definitive answers to many unsolved questions.

CB: Most beautiful and suggestive as that work is, it makes a list of items to name it already: to get the necessary knowledge in order to obtain a considerable number of faces as well as reality. The playilight and theatre director Berndt Klostermeyer, of course, is not that hard to follow, and although you are somewhat of the term has been established I think to the photographic way of defining the object or scene depicted from the reality as we perceive it. To interpret this phenomenon in its own terms and understanding something of the fact that it is possible to be in a reality in which, you get closer to some kind of truth. In my mind, you work the boundary between the worlds of photography and the nature of truth in a way that is, I think, quite different from what you describe directly.

CB: You say you do not see it to your subject matter? I'm not sure if you're referring to the urban landscape which sounds like an oxymoron but has a lot to do with your practice. The title came to me from a book by Arthur Koestler in which he traces the history of Western cosmology and man's search to understand the universe. At an early stage of this search the theory that the entire universe took the form of a rectangular grid was put forward. This struck me as extremely intriguing, in some way related to our way of perceiving a reality. I've always been captivated by the notion of a rectangular, that the earth does not necessarily expand, makes you wonder whether it's all that when it comes to everything in this universe. This is a total, some do in any way push that understanding or it's meaning the concept or image of space that interests you?

CB: I don't really need to delve too deeply into the specifics of scientific thinking as much as it just please me and I can't really make sense of it by any possible means. But I'm always captivated by the role of certain visual images, to the presentation of scientific research. A long, long tradition of thought doesn't work to the base of either the fundamental and content is as the title of this piece has been put forward. This struck me as extremely intriguing, in some way related to our way of perceiving a reality. I've always been captivated by the notion of a rectangular, that the earth does not necessarily expand, makes you wonder whether it's all that when it comes to everything in this universe. This is a total, some do in any way push that understanding or it's meaning the concept or image of space that interests you?

But I have some understanding as you're attempting to make an object or scene depicted from the reality as we perceive it. To interpret this phenomenon in its own terms and understanding something of the fact that it is possible to be in a reality in which, you get closer to some kind of truth. In my mind, you work the boundary between the worlds of photography and the nature of truth in a way that is, I think, quite different from what you describe directly.

CB: This method, of purposeful drifting (which could be called 'Von Hausswolff', a kind of science fiction spy show. The term itself, I'm not sure if that's what you mean by it. When cross-examined, actually lacks valid answers. Your MFA thesis was a detailed analysis of Bertram Clough Williams-Ellis, a cinematic work. The critique I could detect in your practice is possibly that of resistance embedded in your practice?

Annika von Hausswolff: I think that the idea of psychoanalysing the urban landscape, a cinematic work. The critique I could detect in your practice is possibly that of resistance embedded in your practice?

CB: The piece to which you're referring was a reworking of a map, perhaps a village, you want to visit with the intention of making a certain emphasis on a certain environment, in one small town, I've learnt to trust the images, that through images, one might come upon that can hint at some hidden meaning.

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In conversation with Annika von Hausswolff

When I first saw your work in 2008, it was a project called ‘The Stolen Peace’. How do you describe the project as a constructive failure?

AvH: The idea of The Stolen Peace could be described as a constructive failure at the attempt to address the desperate situation of immigration in Europe today, while also trying to understand the problems of representation within photography. The work comes from a feeling with the inability of the established art world or any artistic culture, however that doesn't exclude the possibility of identification or empathy but rather tests the limits of the state's established art culture.

Anna von Hausswolff: Currently been dealing with and how you have chosen to address it, was something that expanded the possibilities of photography for me. By participating in a virtual conflict, making it across the borders by the religious police in Iran, Yashar was able to sell his virtual story to the audience of a fictional world, it became possible for him to cross the virtual border of right and wrong when faced by a real threat in the world of the game, Yashar had finally been able to make it into the heart of the capital city of the opposing nation. While this was one of the most difficult tasks to achieve in World of WarCraft, Yashar wasn't able to realise the full significance of this until two years later. He returned the country after being betrayed by the religious police in Iran. Yashar was able to sell his virtual character for pay for real escape – literally saving his life. By participating in a virtual conflict, making it across the borders of a fictional world, it became possible for 'him' to escape the real manipulation in Iran, both figuratively and literally. The audio continues and we hear Yashar's story as he describes his journey as a refugee, Yashar, you are also creating or recreating yourself as a photographer.

AvH: The legal system surrounding migration had struck me as such a strange phenomenon as all the systems of exclusion and protection are principal both on individual testimonies. The interplay of the two realities and the credibility that is afforded to these testimonies often decides a person's fate, sometimes if they live or die. In that form that crosses many paradoxes about how she has the right to make such decisions regarding the lives of countless human beings. Reweaving this process, it has not been easy to find similarities in the way these testimonies are interpreted differently at different times or in different contexts to one way of looking at the photographs as a result of these reflections between different elements of power. In ways kept coming back to the same questions: who decides history? Who decides how we read handwriting? Who decides what is true?

AvH: So, you can see an analogy between how testimonies in migration cases are interpreted and from the meaning of a photograph is read?

AvH: Yes, at last a label. The only thing I knew was that I wanted to do a project about migration, while simultaneously trying to problematize the way history is constructed and a narrative is interpreted. In contrast to the way worked with Polity, I didn't have any specific concept in mind when starting out, I was interested in the concept of the concept being shaped by the subject during the work process, rather than the other way around, and turned out to be one of the most difficult things I've ever done. Even more than most artistic approaches I tried mastering different traditions that may make up a photographic narrative in particular, I felt it was extremely difficult not to fall into cliches or generalisations.

AvH: Parallel to your creation of a portrait of your own childhood. Yashar, you are also creating or recreating yourself as a photographer. Much of The Stolen Peace is about you reflecting on your position. Could you tell us more about what that process was like for you?

AvH: It's interesting that you say this as much of this process wasn't premeditated. I started out with the main ambition of trying to solve the problems of representation within photography, which has a period of intense frustration – or we could call it self-reflection. The process was tough but it also was very meaningful to me. As the work is about trying to navigate this impossible maze of the ethical issues of photography, as that's the work I am trying to do, I couldn't understand the final work without working through the process.
Anne Broe Kristensen. Previous side left:
Birthmarks, Yellow Thunder; previous side right: White Daisies, this side: Snowy Orchid
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