

Queer Poetics

Mike Bode & Staffan Schmidt

Thus the reason why men enjoy seeing a likeness is, that in contemplating it they find themselves learning or inferring, and saying perhaps, 'Ah, that is he'. For if you happen not to have seen the original, the pleasure will be due not to the imitation as such, but to the execution, the coloring, or some such other cause.

Aristotle: Poetics, part IV, middle of fourth century bc

If artists are compelled into permanent reflection, then this reflection must be wrested from any arbitrariness so that it does not turn into random and amateurish pseudo-hypotheses, rationalized tinkering or uncommitted declarations of world views on what was envisioned.

Adorno, Aesthetic Theory, 1970

What distinguishes the ISAs from the (Repressive) State Apparatus is the following basic difference: the Repressive State Apparatus functions 'by violence', whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses function 'by ideology'.

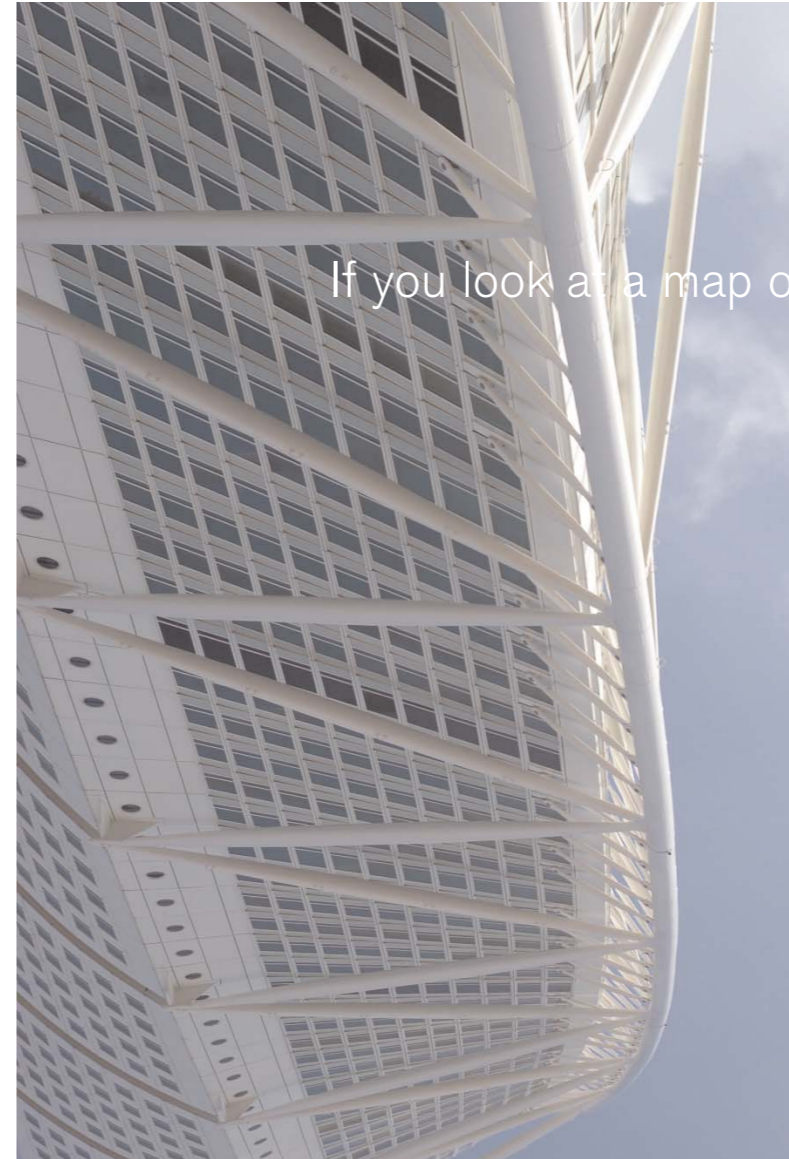
Althusser, Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses, 1970

In one word, it creates a world after its own image.

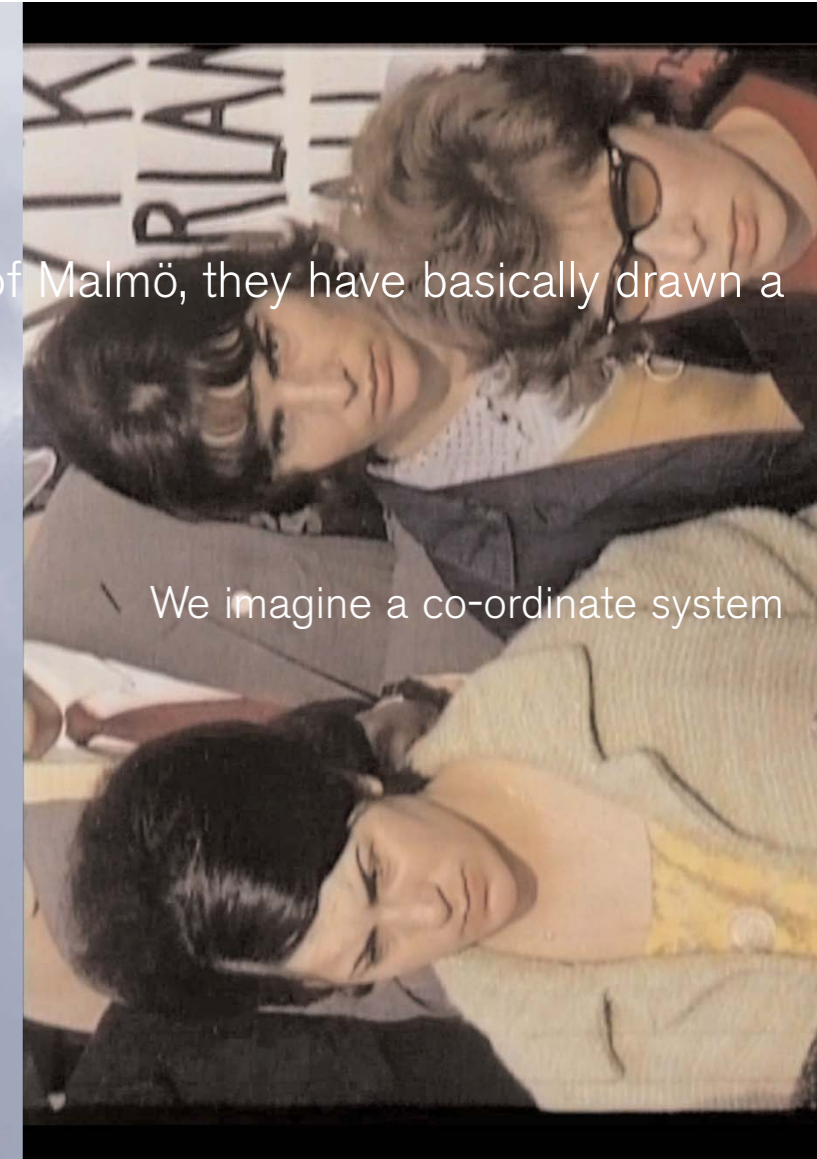
Marx & Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848.

Possibly the most notorious claim that we make in our artistic practice, a manifest part of our projects and surfacing from time to time in this thesis, is *reserving the right to discursive self-determination*. This claim is not merely a discussion on the meta-status of the work, it goes right to the core of how we understand what we do. It surely needs its own legend, its history and politics. The concept of poetics is therefore helpful: we understand poetics as a deliberate delimitation of praxis. Poetics would then consequently also mean the delimitation of the understanding of our artistic practice by others, a manual to the recipient. Self-determination is both a myth and a reality; myth when it comes to the maneuverability of the self, reality when confronted with the manifold views of and interests in art. As Michael Ligner has pointed out we must be reminded that from one perspective we are all standing without anything vaguely looking like a normalizing myth or overriding concept that could shoulder the burden of keeping art together as one. The comfortable reign of institutional theory seems lately to have been undermined. In the 20th century modernist art theory was focused on the penetration of “ideological Schein” and rationality through art (Ligner, 1998). To reward ourselves with an exclusive right could therefore be seen superfluous in a situation that has fundamentally been unchanged since the romantics and modernism. The era of manifestos was proof of the lack of a fixed poetics, and aesthetics, of art. To appreciate difference we would have to identify a dominating context, a set of institutions, material and immaterial, that hinders and stalls, and then makes the claim that we are moving against the contextual stream. This is mostly achieved through applying rhetoric figures of us versus them. Oscar Wilde noted, “As it was, we always misunderstood ourselves, and rarely understood others. Experience was of no ethical value. It was merely the name we gave to our mistakes” (Wilde, 1891). In the end the praxis of self-determination must have its poetics not to end up in just a stubborn quest for normalization.

Discursive self-determination could be understood as the right to interpretative precedence. What does that mean? It would be qualified by pointing to a non-themed zone in the artistic practice, where interpretations are related to the praxis, and “results”, and the artworks, are seen as instances of the ongoing praxis. In this understanding the precedence of self-determination is always connected to a withdrawn zone that awaits the reactions from the given context of art institutions or the university structure for it to become activated. This mode of practice could be described as “articulation-reading off”: it’s like putting the tracks down just in front of our running train. A performative act that goes with the work, a non-separation and a continuous negation of the objectal separation between work and its reason. The “complication” is that this may be necessary, or, that this is what most people, through imagination, do all the time. It could perhaps be described as a relational counter-practice of its kind, challenging the culturally structured delimitation of art-as-object that, with Horace, is identified with “a monument more lasting than copper”. It is about practice that is not “naturally” confirmed by culture at large. It is about practice, and somewhat similar to the resistance in front of the television, that Michel de Certeau called *poaching*: “the silent, transgressive, ironic or poetic activity of the readers (or television viewers) who maintain their reserve in private and without knowledge of the ‘masters’” (Certeau, 1984, p. 172). This self-determination is not about turning the back on the art world and its naming and branding procedures, it is not about wiping the slate clean. It is about following a practice.



If you look at a map of Malmö, they have basically drawn a



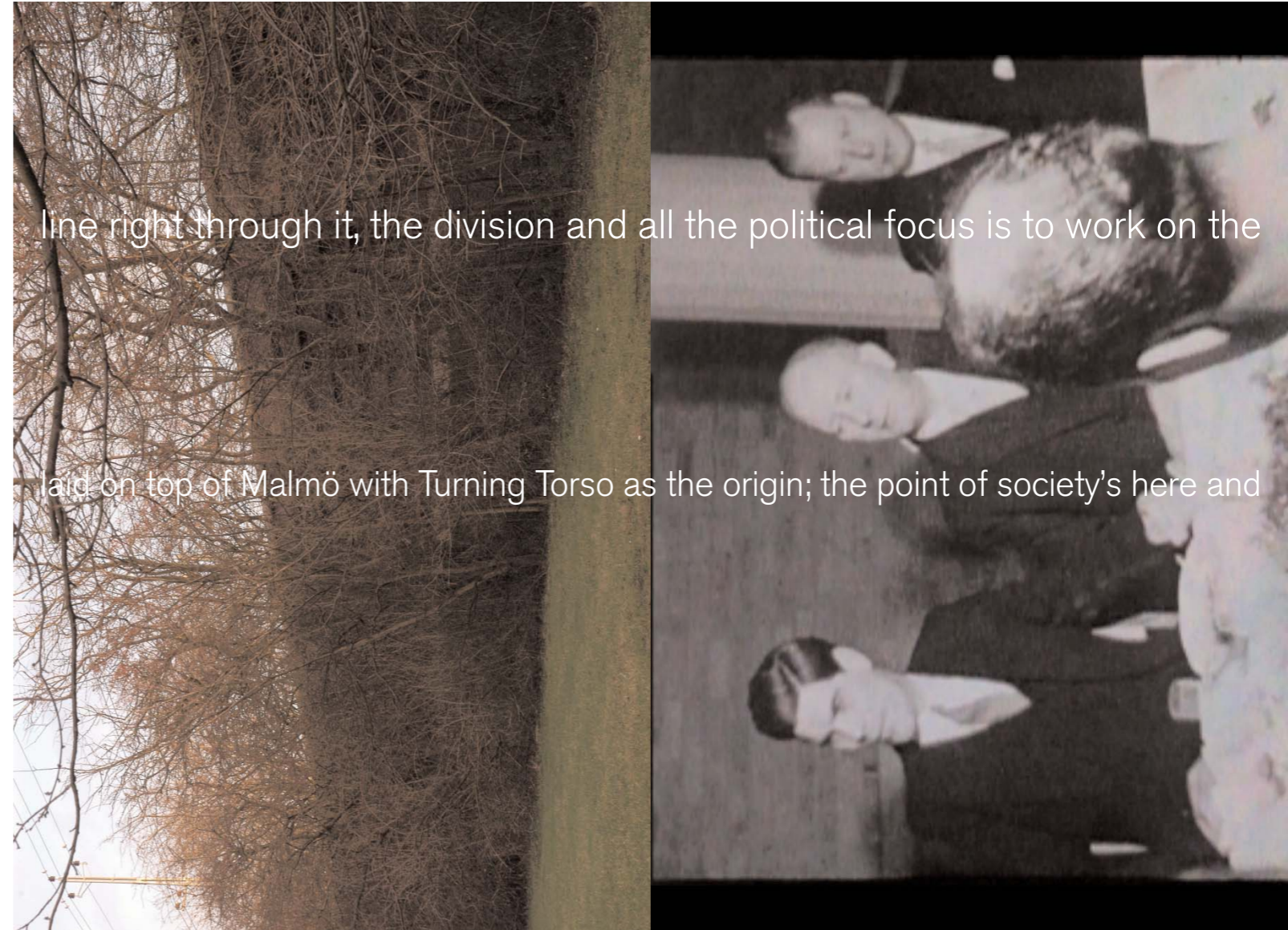
We imagine a co-ordinate system

Our intention with this passage is to point to some important factors that hopefully would make it clear that our efforts are not isolated to the appearance of our work, which for the sake of the argument could be understood as our “empirical data”. We must develop this position before moving on. Empirical data and artwork do not fit that easy, they seem to be at odds with each other, with different communicative strategies separated by what is or is not fixed and measured. In trying to achieve a *synthetic* artwork we are constantly struggling with this question; “what is the character of that which could be referred to as ‘empirical data’ in an artwork?” It is working against the common conception of art, but it is a tentative way of answering the question about the relation between discursive and non-discursive in the artwork. As we see it is about social expectations or the framing of the artwork – and time. Time both within the work itself (hence the role of “slide shows”, video and voices in our pieces) and how a work is understood here and now – and the possibilities for understanding given that we have our say on the interpretation (“self-definition”). At the first moment you may find something as “information” and in the next you don’t know what to do with it, and it may work the other way around that something met as an aesthetic experience turn itself over to become vital facts and information, or constantly moving in between. As with *Spaces of conflict* there is an ongoing stream of voices presenting “data” and “information”,

which is practically impossible to absorb. One sentence is followed by another. The experience, as a response to the over-determination, turns into something else: perhaps a “melancholic sense of loss”, as expressed by one professional visitor. This sense of not being able to digest and seeing the important point fly by would be in parallel with our experience during the interviews and meetings made through that project. It does also evoke a frustrated readiness to perform oneself according to a statement: being unable to respond correspondingly, to align oneself. A frustration that without doubt could be followed by deprecation and dissociation. To us this would mean that there is no clear divide or chasm between this treatment of “information” and “art”. As we see it their interrelation can be deliberated and described by poetics.

It would not be productive to start off from a given assumption, for instance that we are artists, and that what we do in some way qualifies us to perform (in) this discussion. It is about the way to “register” a work of art. Following Thierry de Duve, Margaret Iversen describes the *effect* of the readymade; “its legacy for subsequent art was to shift the artistic ‘discursive field’ away from questions about aesthetic experience and toward questions of what constitutes a work of art” (Iversen, 2004). It would be missing a constructive point presented by the readymade, which is a prototype for the “synthetical” artwork, in trying to respond to this classical shift within the conventional expectations and contextualization of “what constitutes a work of art”. Could the question here be turned somewhere else, still respecting its place of formulation? To be able to forge a way ahead where the identity is neither set nor given for either art or artist, we will be listening in to the queer philosopher and political activist Judith Butler, and one of her informants, Louis Althusser. It is obvious that their respective situation is different than ours, but we set out to “poach” inside Butler’s text since the idea of self-definition touches on similarities in the relation between “practice” and “power”. We are interested to see what Butler’s concept of “retro-actively” established identity could mean to our practice. And we are interested in Althusser’s interpretation of “practice” and “ideology”, how “in order to exist, every social formation must reproduce the conditions of its production at the same time as it produces” (Althusser, 2001, p. 86). Ideology is the imaginary that places everyone in their right position according to the “law” of the dominant productive forces; in our case the university and the art world, and its relation to production as a global phenomenon. It seems to us that the situation described by Butler where a stable and normative “normality” no longer is a viable option, but appears just as another story more or less successfully begging for adherents, is very close to the experience of alienation that we share with many *acteurs* in the field of art today. A wide spread sense of loss, that has forsaken any hope in, or orientation towards a Hegelian new form of human expression, all possible to see as a trivial reoccurrence of the usurpation of any search for perfection.

There is perhaps also another aspect to remember following Butler’s argumentation in relation to the historical realities of artistic production. Seen as the imperative right to self definition Butler’s vision that “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender”, and that “identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (Butler, 1990, p. 25), was not fully out of tune with the neo-liberal cry for freedom in the 1980s and 90s, whereas queer could be seen as the result of a subsequent de-regulation of identity conventions. The difference of course being the standpoint from where identity is stipulated and, most significantly, its critical relation to power,



line right through it, the division and all the political focus is to work on the

and on top of Malmö with Turning Torso as the origin; the point of society’s here and

and whereas the fulfillment of neo-liberal desires was to be continuously delayed and ultimately postponed (except for the always already privileged), the urgency in Butler’s argumentation never yields.

To us the discussions on queer identity is needed to shed some light upon the standpoints that we have made on art as “happy constructivism”, the work of art as “synthetic”, and the relation between art and politics as a “dialectics without teleology”. We understand by discursiveness the possibility and power to point to a field or subject as being of importance, and at the same time providing the means to appreciate, describe and analyze it. In other words: the discursive reaches the limit and blurs the difference between description and described. It becomes a matter of, in de Certeau’s sense, the *proper* use of power to proclaim something as something else: “[An] act of discourse with the power to create that to which it refers, and creates more than it ever meant to, signifying in excess of any intended referent” (Butler, 1993, p. 122). It would be hard to understand and to determine the meaning of such a declaration of independence if it was not for the relation an act of self-upheaval has in its context. But one must also determine the values and pleasure that is involved in such an act: what is the situated and interested meaning? Who will guarantee that the act of self-definition is not one of deception and false consciousness: it is the bourgeoisie that create the world after its own image in the quotation from Marx above.

Transposed onto our practice, the unlimited character of meaning and the impossibility to clearly draw the outer perimeter of a context, once again is brought to our attention as a prerequisite of art as social knowledge. On a practical level this means that is not possible for any final arbiter to meaningfully make distinctions between the discursive and that, which could be labeled as form-oriented without the interpellation of conventions and traditions. A distinction that cites or interpellates an interpretation of art will only call forth forever new and infinitesimal distinctions, but must refer to them in retrospect. The distinctions are fixed seen from a synchronous perspective, but on the move when seen over time. Invariably the only way left open – which would imply the analysis, application and possible transgression of new demarcations of form and content – leads to the remaking of this divisional line, separating unnamable from namable. We are dealing with a concept, which is social and political to its core, but with a history of being attributed to an eternal, natural or uncontested order. This divisional line is becoming more and more impractical, and Jacques Rancière’s pointed discussions on aesthetics informs our position about this distinction:

The aesthetic regime of the arts is the regime that strictly identifies art in the singular and frees it from any specific rule, from any hierarchy of arts, subject matter, and genres. Yet, it does so by destroying the mimetic barrier that distinguished ways of doing and making affiliated with art from other ways of doing and making, a barrier that separated its rules from the order of social occupation.
(Rancière, 2004, p. 23)

Still, we make use of the division as we go along, both as being “natural” to others and “conventional” to us, and we would need to point to a situated praxis to find an example to get out of the circular movement.

Within visibility it is possible to bring the most adversary, different and disparate materials together. In our project *Labour movements archive/Johnny saw it!* that was a part of the exhibition *Whatever happened to social democracy?* (Stenbeck, ed., 2005) we set out to incorporate historical material found in the archives of the city of Malmö, a city where social democracy first established itself in Sweden, and to trace the changes over the years in the built environment. Through applying a grid of co-ordinates onto the city, with the point of origin placed at the Turning Torso, a building playing the leading part in the establishment of a “new” city: the waterfront development *Western Harbour*. A city that traditionally had expanded, up until the 1990s, according to the peels of an onion. We focused on the ruptures in the timeline. These we found on the margins of the suburbs of the 1960s targeted during the general onslaught of the modern project, and on the recent social production and development of a city archipelago following the secession of the rich and the concentration of the poor in racified inland areas. We discussed these problems in an interview with the initiator of the Turning Torso, a former leading social democratic politician Johnny Örbäck, who saw that these areas shared a common problem: spatial isolation. An isolation that would be possible to overcome by constructive measures such as city planning, if it had not been for the deregulation of the planning permission structures in the 1990s.

The weight and extent of the material in the archive is hard to re-enact,



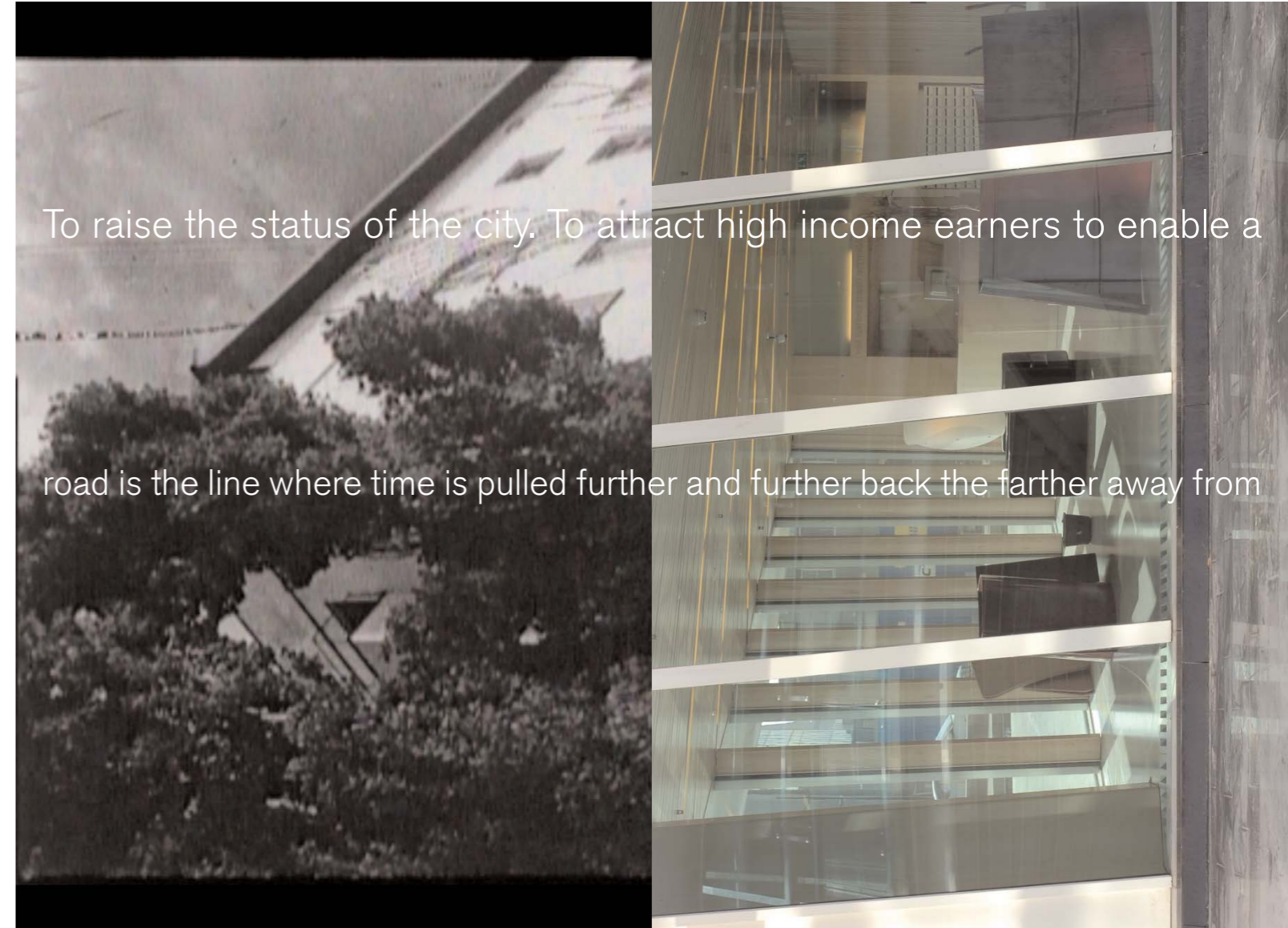
however the archive gave us the possibility to better understand how time and body movement affects experience. A year after the exhibition at the Rooseum we adapted *Johnny saw it!* to the web with a re-mix, *Point of origin*, and made use of the accumulated film material from the archives, consisting of election movies and party related documentaries stretching from the 1930s up until the late 1960s. We also included the map from the *Johnny saw it!* section of the installation at the Rooseum where we indicate a timeline with the Turning Torso as the origin of a grid and the point of a here and now. The Admiralsgatan road incarnates the movement out from the city but also the progression into the socially responsible social democratic version of society. In *Point of origin* we follow the stretch between the Turning Torso along Admiralsgatan to the suburbia built in the late 1960s, which is now, with an exception for the blocks with owner flats, mainly inhabited by refugees and immigrants. These housing estates are considered as areas of marginalization: individual and place alike. The film material from the archives enabled us to make this distance in space and time easier to grasp, but also more dreamlike. While the Turning Torso, the Western Harbour and the bridge to København are being projected and seen as the pride of the future Malmö, the former future of the planned society is today overlooked and abandoned by its leading groups.

Moving one third of the archive from its location in the basement under

the Folkets Hus (the Labour movement Civic Center) to the re-produced former machine hall of the Rooseum, we began to see the archive as a city proper: the folders as rooms and apartments, bookcases as buildings, sections as blocks. In relation to our point of origin we saw the relocation of the archive as moving it closer to contemporaneity. The break down of the successive growth of the city and the social responsibilities of the society coincided in time and space. Observing the ruins of industrialism, as the industrialism with Rooseum, becomes a point of orientation in the everyday. The ruins of social democratic politics were disclosed on the shelves through the difference between the yellowing, smelly and mouldy but radical minutes of more than a century ago, and the glossy contemporary material. The archives could be seen as a witness that conveys a sudden hope in turning the reading of it from a looking back along the timeline towards the suburbs, to looking forward towards the suburbs. If it was possible to thoroughly change society a hundred years ago starting from its demonized and silenced margins and against all the odds, then it should be possible to create a social and political movement for the underprivileged of today.

It was inside the huge space of the Rooseum that we understood the importance of “being there”. The effect that we had been looking for had nothing to do with aesthetics, rather, it came to be formulated to confront Adorno’s tenet that a work of art only can have a political effect as politically dead. Walking through the doors of the large hall the first impression of the installation was that of form, of something non-discursive. With all its details it *appeared as a visual object at a distance*, but as *discursive at close quarters*: to feel the weight of the folders, to read the handwriting, and to appreciate the idea/weight ratio between the documents from now and then. The progression of zooming in on the material from the entrance and up to the shelves, from form to use, corresponded perfectly to the walking distance between entrance and shelves! This was the aesthetical point being made in space that could not have been grasped otherwise. How many steps does it take to move from one aesthetical position to its opposite? At what point as you move along can the different aspects produced by the archive be kept separate? This could perhaps be understood as a reversible spatial dialectics.

The difference between discursive and non-discursive is regularly understood as immediately obvious, and not as a sequential experience *from* non-discursive to discursive and back to the non-discursive and so on. We shall return to this problem more thoroughly in another text, set in the context of dialectics, Ludwick Fleck’s use of “thought-collective” and “thought-style”, as well as Mary Douglas’ discussions on institutions. For now we just need to comment on the citation from Butler above on the relation between the referent and “surplus of meaning”. If there is no obvious or “seen” referent, as in the quotation from Aristotle above, then the interpretation of surplus meaning is bound to follow established practices and standing interpretations. Moving the surplus from one context to another, as we are trying to do, does entail that the appreciation, understanding and analyse of the surplus of meaning changes. The liberation within the language system corresponds to the distance between the, by social hierarchies imposed, stories and the practices of “imaginary or meditative flights taking off from a few words, overlapping of spaces on the militarily organized surfaces of the text” (Certeau, 1984, p. 170). But the surplus could also, in a tradition linked to high modernism through Adorno, be seen as an



immanent threat, as with the readymade, to become totally productive or constructivist, and expand in disregard of the limits set in aesthetics and poetics. In this tradition it is only the aesthetic surplus evokes *utopia*.

Already at this level a problem of different perspectives on the discursive arrives. Must not a discursive position be linked to a generalized effort to understand the production of social conscience in the vein of Althusser, Rancière and Butler, moving our efforts into something similar to that of a *queer aesthetics of self-delimitation*? Or, is it rather something that first has to bring forth its “empirical” base, the work of art – so that it becomes localized, historized and situated – to make sense? Is the claim to self-determination productive without a subtext that links up on declarations of independence that in the end would render the relational character of discursiveness void, which seems to be the predicate of a discursive strand? Or is the key rather linked to the performative praxis? An utterance such as “this is not a woman” does something particular in Butler’s context, as “this is not art” does in ours and something different in an institutional situation, say, at a university course in gender and art history, or in a court hearing. An institutionally proclaimed value measurement is not operational in the same way as a meaning creating practice. This difference creates a liminal, or curbed freedom that could be compared with Lefebvre’s distinction between built and socially produced

space, that opens for the possibility of different behavior in a once forbidding built frame. A practice that creates meaning precedes the question of value.

A form can be seen as a convention: any discursive method could well function as a form. It seems inevitable that once again a conflict appears over the jurisdiction between the two, form and discursiveness: simultaneity – i.e. the intersection between the synchronous and diachronous – in artworks needs to be more fully discussed. Judith Butler proposes an elegant solution by bringing up J. L. Austin’s speech act theory, and thereby finding a *performative* way of addressing the problem. Butler deals with gender and sex and suggests that the idea of identity is not “expressed” by actions, gestures, or speech”. It is the other way around; the performance of identity “retroactively produces the illusion” that there is a core or an essence (Butler, 1997, p. 144). Butler’s examples and field of research is of course different from that of ours, but we would argue that our experience of the art world has more in common with her descriptions of the fluctuating relation between normality and individual belongings, than most explicitly art oriented theories do. Butler maintains that “gender is created as a ritualized repetition of conventions” (Ibid.), which in their turn is based on a compulsory “normality”. Exchange the word “gender” for “art” and the likeness is more than apparent! Art as a specific value is created by a comparable mechanism and is invested in by a similar thrust for normalization of the symbolical and imaginary realm in society. Gender and art, as it is played out on the public scene, are both functional objects in the ideological reproduction of the dominating productive forces, but seeing things this way is not a *Todtenschlag* for change. That they both must reproduce the forces of production to “exist” does not signify that this relation, as intimidating as it seems, is anything else than a conventional construction. The reproduction of ideology and conventions will be most markedly significant in the discussions on what art can or cannot *give, lead to or be*, but this again does not condemn the individual to silence. Speech act theory tells us that language is not about description, and neither about being true or false, but about performative acts and their usefulness. We take this as support for our conviction that writing ourselves *about* our own work is not consistent with the role of language *in*, or perhaps around, our works. It is not a case of writing from a different, and only through language, reachable outside. The text will remain a task for the reader to interpret and insert into the context of a whole, which we claim is our terrain. A text that is neither explicatory, nor “poetic” in a limited romantic sense of the word, but which performs a queer part in the art world. It addresses two sides simultaneously, over a chasm that we choose not to recognize. Moving between “language” (as description) and “art” (as described), our works do not take sides over this distinction. This means that maintaining the right to a discursive self-determination is actively shown by presenting this text under your eyes.

Aristotle says that there is – not to be passed over – *enjoyment* in the connection through a “likeness” with the referent, but that this pleasure also works without a referent. If the referent cannot be established, the joy settles for the highly contested concept of quality, or suchness, of the presentation. (Quality in a situated context is always transitive: given the situated individuals relation to his or her culture, when confronting the artwork, the reaction will develop according to internalized cultural patterns, sedimentations and structures, along with experience and expectations.) It seems that there is a common ground for mimesis that includes a radical openness; it is radical



stronger economy and to channel it over into Malmö.

the origin that you get and closer to suburbia.

because it disregards the elaborations on the difference between what is fantasy and what is real! This unusual and unequivocal openness is in art policed by poetics and aesthetics, or, in Butler’s case, by the institutions of heteronormative society: either real or unreal, male or female. As soon as there is a referent, and there always is, it immediately opens an ethical dimension of representation.

This section would in fact reconnect to Aristotle, which through his idea of “morphogenesis” turns our attention from an idealist or ideogrammatical understanding of the formation of reality, and thus experience, to conceive of form and meaning as immanent in matter. Materialist philosophers such as Spinoza and Deleuze have developed this theory further. A true deleuzian as Manuel de Landa states that

From the morphogenetic point of view, realizing a possibility does not add anything to a predefined form, except reality. The distinction between the virtual and the actual, on the other hand, does not involve resemblance of any kind /---/ and far from constituting the essential identity of a form, it subverts identity /---/ (de Landa, op cit)

So what is added in the performative act in the form of “reality” is then necessarily linked to the context, or community in which the artwork is presented. The

Text excerpts from Point of origin
Mike Bode & Staffan Schmidt 2006

Thanks to the Labour Movement Archives
in Malmö and Johnny Örbäck

position seems to work well with Butler's stance, as does an even more general producer of reality and virtuality alike behind the idea of identity: difference.

In art there is no way around the proclamative and performative. Writing and talking about art is in itself a part of a performative speech act that is described on its most general level as "acts of communication" (Bach, undated entry). Speech acts have also, and more interestingly, a stake in the appearance of what we may or may not call art, then as actively constructing affective relations between an utterance and an action. Seen from that point of view a speech act is clearly situated, and linked to a whole set of institutional agents and social actions. Words matter, especially in a situation of contested identity, where no one actually "knows" what art "is". These statements are often legislative by nature, and thus linked to poetics, and aimed at "affecting institutional states of affairs". (Ibid.)

Butler links identity to loss and mourning and cites two texts by Freud: *Mourning and Melancholia* (1915) and *The Ego and Id* (1923). Butler expresses a certain understanding for "The emergence of collective institutions for grieving" that are "crucial to survival, to reassembling community, to rearticulate kinship, to reweaving sustaining relations" (Butler, 1997, p. 148), which in fact forms the necessary argument for institutions. The difference being that we are dealing with institutions that find their legitimacy through an ontology that does not recognize any primal or primordial identity. It is not a question of denial, in that case we would be discussing resistance and thereby relating efforts back to the ideogrammatical ways. An aesthetic discussion based on Butler would be beyond such needs, but seems like an invitation to communities to perform their art within the highly ideological institutional frame.

This recourse to the institution is seemingly less than radical, and after Butler's harsh critique of the heteronormative it looks like a last resort. We will soon return to this question. An often-sounded conviction is that art should accept a role where it *asks questions, without aspiring to answer them*. This view on art directs it away from the factual and that which is, by binary and dichotomic conventions, excluded as "real", and towards the virtual. Perhaps the question here is where difference, in a positive sense of the word, is contained and protected by such an institution as Butler suggests. An institution which would answer to the needs of a heterogeneous group that has in common that it is vigilant and critical towards social conventions. This apprehensive attitude towards a normality-ridden sociality is indeed very close to a discursive and synthetic art practice. It is possibly an idealization, but the idea of institutionalized self-criticism – not as an exceptional state of affairs, but as a tentative and (non-theological) doxological perspective – seems to fit in well with an enlightenment tradition aiming at the liberation of the individual. And it must be stressed that this is an individual, and consequently an art, which has no alternative than to stay open to the surplus of meaning in the flux of possibilities between a fixed and an open referent.

In a brief text on Protagoras' *Man-Measure* statement the Swedish philosopher Mats Rosengren writes, "Each and everyone have their *logos* and even so *logos* is common to all humans. *Logos* is perhaps the most important among the tools by which we chisel out our nature – our own human as well as that of the world – and at the same time chiseled out us as humans" (Rosengren, 2002, p. 22. Our translation). Rosengren enters the discussion by making the mistake of following the distinct traces of semiotics, in leaning to an interpretation of

logos as language, whereas it seems more likely to see it as the crossroads of situated and individual practice and the actual and potential horizon of the nameable. It is interesting to see an institution for melancholic identities, as the one Butler envisions, as a fundamentally and importantly conflicted measurement, and thereby the expressed need for another language. There can be no *one* scale; everybody is still unconditionally a part of *logos*. This implies that the meaning that one turns against is possible on the condition that it is being reiterated, and so possible to surpass – by letting our practices form another content to be reiterated. Deviance must also be repeated, or stay within its practice and become aware of its deviant identity through its context, i.e. through a parallel interpellation of normality. The new question which arises is then: where does the possibility for difference and change open up to, on what grounds, and why?

Althusser has defined praxis in general as "any process of *transformation* of a determinate given raw material into a determinate *product*, a transformation effected by a determinate human labour, using determinate means (of 'production')" (Althusser, 1969, 166 f.). Surely there are no limitations to what the *product* could signify; it could be an object, as well as a social fact. We would say that there is a real choice to be made, based on the assumption that practice generates value, and solves the impasse of dichotomic lockdown: first the establishment of the repressive normality, and opposed to that (born from the head like Pallas Athena?) the anti-establishment-establishment, and so on. It seems probable that practice, if we leave repetitions of the "normal" behind, establishes itself in a relation to *logos*: that praxis operates on the horizon of possible and situated meaning. It makes sense by doing what it does. If practices of individuals are only to be understood from a situated perspective, then the referent could be trusted with *logos* and rid itself of dichotomic definition. Transposed to the region of art, would this mean that praxis comes to re-ignite traditions of secession and the avantgarde? Well, no, since praxis already, given by *logos*, has the possibility to describe its own trajectory. This then would be the affirmative moment for discursive definitions!

The problem is still the "right", delimited as it is by context and language, to define oneself and one's own identity. The political scientist Steven B. Smith complains about Althusser's discursive view of science, as a "self-contained 'theoretical practice', with its own set of epistemological premises" which in the end is "antiscientific" because of "the view that the theorist 'produces' rather than discovers his results" (Smith, 1989, p. 507 f.). We would argue that this position of "producing" results is at the core of artistic production, and also, at the heart of all discursive practices. Obviously this productive or constructive way of reaching results is linked to Sartre's progressive-regressive method. Althusser's idea of how one reaches a "result" does imply a view of the individual that surfaces again in Foucault, and Barthes and their understanding of the relation between the author and the context. Smith notes the suspicious tone in Althusser's *Reading Capital* as it is "founded on the assumption that behind the 'explicit discourse' of a text there is a second, 'silent discourse', the meaning of which is 'unconscious' of its author and must therefore be 'dragged up from the depths'" (Smith, 1989, p. 495).

If we stay with Althusser, and his view on ideology and interpellation, we are inclined to notice the similarities between the discursive and the ideological, and between interpellation and *logos*. Ideology in Althusser's sense is ubiquitous

with the capacity to construct individual conscience as a subject. What then separates ideology from the logos of Protagoras? It is of course that particular undertone with Althusser, that where logos stands in the service of humans, ideology is a repressive function subjecting the individuals to any given order of society. Ideology seems exempt of those emancipating properties that the more social concept of logos with Protagoras contains. Mary Klages writes “Because ideology is a structure, its contents will vary, you can fill it up with anything, but its form, like the structure of the unconscious, is always the same. And ideology works ‘unconsciously’. Like language, ideology is a structure /system which we inhabit, which speaks us, but which gives us the illusion that we’re in charge” (Klages, 1997). Althusser’s “suspiciousness” describes his restrictive view of the individual. Ideology must be compared with Fleck’s thought-collective. But whereas Fleck does not fail to point out the tragic and human in the situation where collective knowledge always surpasses the individual, Althusser’s ideology remains true to Marx and to the idea of false consciousness. This would mean that to Althusser there is a right understanding and an outside, an unadulterated view of reality – if only as a vision. One could say that in the final deliberation the normative neutrality of the structuralist descriptions gives itself over to an ethical and normative utopia, where the veil of ideology disappears. There is in one word a marked difference between ideology and the general conditions of human thought. Rosengren makes an interesting note in this context: “knowledge becomes unintelligible or at least seems unfounded, but an expression of ideology and opinions outside its scientific or (if it is not about scientific knowledge) everyday domain, field or thought-style” (Rosengren, 2002, p. 54 f. Our translation). The all-encompassing concept of ideology opens up to the more flexible notion of convention.

The role of the individual is to “cite” the standing order, or thought-collective. In this, one could say that Butler agrees with Fleck. The concept of “performativity” opens up to an understanding of the social that seems to agree with experience: there are no limits to the forms, among them change, that knowledge can take as long as there are adherents ready to reiterate. As we return to the same citation as in the beginning of this text, we have moved from the “discursive act” as a possibility to define something more than an individual position, and the discursive seems embedded in the context of power. Butler stresses that the “repetition of the law into hyperbole, a rearticulation of the law against the authority of the one that delivers it. Here the performative, the call by the law which seeks to produce a lawful subject, produces a set of consequences that exceed and confound what appears to be the disciplining intention motivating the law. Interpellation thus loses its status as a simple performative, an act of discourse with the power to create that to which it refers” (Butler, 1993, p. 122). And the reason for that was, as we saw, the fundamental instability that occurs within the chain of signification, but also in the relation between the signification and the individual performative citation: practices that create meaning. The concept of “interpellation” that Butler found in Althusser has, thanks to the speech acts under an empty signifier, opened a field of secondary use, for instance, in anthropological and ethnographical studies. It has become clear that we in our work with *Space Divided*, which evokes spatial politics and the idea of uneasy foreigners in the suburb Husby north-west from Stockholm, we will be in need of arguments, such as Anne-

Marie Fortier’s, that makes use of Butler when studying identity politics of immigrants. Fortier interestingly finds that Butler

argues that performativity is primarily about citationality, that is that it is ‘through the invocation of convention’ (1993: 225) that ‘acts’ derive their binding power. Performativity is about the ‘reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer’ (1993: 234). Performative acts include ‘legal sentences, baptisms, inaugurations’ and other forms of ‘statements which not only perform an action, but confer a binding power on the action performed’ (1993: 234). Viewing identity as performative, then, means that identities are constructed by the “very ‘expressions’ that are said to be [their] results” (Butler, 1990: 45). (Fortier, 2000, p. 45)

Finally we should be so prepared that we can begin to see how the right to define oneself and ourselves, the ethical aspect of the choice of belonging, the theoretical productive approach, the political decisions of public life and the distinction between discursive and non-discursive in art are tightly knitted together.

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