

I rearrange images. I redraw, steal, copy and through this process I try to rewrite the meaning of the original image. My aim is to tell a different story from what was first intended.

In my work I use facts and information that have been created by others. From the flow of images and information I determine for myself what is believable, what best suits what I want to present. My work constantly moves between fact and fiction in an attempt to create logic in situations and events that seem illogical.

I see my drawings as an attempt to structure phenomena and events that I don't understand. By trying to fold time and find examples in history, new folds that fit together, I create the possibility of a meeting in the 'then' that can shed light on the 'now'.

I am fascinated by re-drawing pre-existing images. The distortion that happens while copying and the redirecting of the meaning of the original image allows me to tell stories from new perspectives. Using my process of re-drawing I give myself the right to cut loose the original image and move it around in history as I please.

My artistic background is rooted in an interest in social situations. I am interested in group dynamics and different ways of managing knowledge and fiction (1). When I worked in a site-specific and social way it was necessary to spend some time on site, in the mental state of those specific spaces (2). I have taken the experience of this way of working with me into my work with images and I choose to see the images I manipulate as a physical state, a place. My interest is and has always been conversations – be it a conversation between paintings, or between people and the architecture that surrounds them (3).

The images I work with create new dialogues in a place that was previously silent. An example is my final exam work: it is coincidence, intuition and dialogue with others that in the end make me bring together these two images and in the space between them I find something. It is a discussion about being aware of one's "image", one's "aura", an anxiety that is appeased when you start controlling how other people perceive you. The images speak of the person that has chosen to produce the paintings. And that which is said sets the tone for your conversation.

Introduction

This text has been written in order to allow you, the reader, to follow the special logic that is created while working in the studio. The logic of this way of working is double: on the one hand an intuitive decision-making process based on the knowledge I obtain by reading about the topics I choose and on the other hand a visual intuition based on moods.

The Discovery

I visit Documenta in Kassel in June 2007. The palace at Wilhelmshöhe is a part of Documenta this year and the curators Roger M. Buergel and Ruth Noack have chosen to intersperse a few new works within the permanent hang of the collection. This is my reason for coming here. A few hours into my visit I have moved in an ascending spiral and reached the upper level in the western part. There I have a shocking experience in the form of an encounter with a painting by Johann Melchior Roos (1663-1731), *Des Menagerie De Landgrafen Carl von Hessen- Kassel*, 1728.

What is it that makes this encounter so powerful? I think there are several reasons. Its size: the painting is six meters long and around four meters high. The positioning: the painting is placed in a narrow corridor, not wider than two and a half meters. It is impossible to back away and get some distance. It is dark and arresting and physical. I'm breathless. It feels as if the painting affects me even before I see it.

By the time I notice the subject matter of the painting I am already amazed by its atmosphere and content. The painting is, as the title indicates, a documentation of what is said to be a collection of animals owned by Landgraf Carl von Hessen-Kassel (1654-1730). The inhabitants of the painting look distorted, their relative sizes are not accurate – the polar bear is smaller than the lion, the porcupine is bigger than the monkey. This cannot be true. This is a display, a demonstration of some sort.

The animals don't care about each other, they are not aware of each other's existence. A monkey is perched upon a seemingly content leopard, digging its fingers into its flesh. A swan seems to be on a kamikaze flight into a tree. No animal wants to eat another, they coexist peacefully. The animals live in harmony in a menagerie in Kassel. Who was commissioned and by whom to produce this bizarre painting, which creates increasing unease in me the more time I spend with it?

I leave Wilhelmshöhe with a poster of the painting. It is this reproduction of the original that I have used as the basis of my (re-)drawing.

The Copy

The images I work with have always gone through some kind of transformation, perhaps from one technique to another or in the form of a reproduction in a book. What happens during the journey of the image is a kind of

translation. However, whereas a translation strives to clarify, the opposite often seems to be the case here. The new layers that are added to the picture muddy the contrasts. Newer techniques are mixed with the old. They become flatter. Information is lost and created in every new instance.

What happens to the image is like a game of Chinese whispers. (You are seven years old. The child on your left whispers, "Caroline has a red bicycle that she cycles on" to the child on her right. The sentence is passed on through whispering mouths and attentive ears and ends up with you: "The garbage man's circus on the beach was different, so it so". From then to now in a minute.) A game that amuses because change, and the role of the imagination, become evident. Every individual (layer) transforms the meaning. It is no longer what it was. It is what it has become.

It is not an original I work with, but the documentation of an original and it is not with me that the whispering starts. I am just another person with the intention of re-working. In this sense I see myself as a link in the chain that forms the history of the image. It is this that makes me choose titles based on the reproductions that I work with rather than the original. My starting point is a collectively transformed image.

In the Studio

At this point I am convinced that I will rework the painting. I can't exactly say why and I can't argue for it, but I have a feeling that the painting contains everything I have looked for in an image. This is an incredibly strong and intuitive experience. I KNOW that I must reproduce this picture. There are so many layers in it that are non-verbal and I am convinced that I will arrive at them if I work my way through the image.

Here it is important that I define what I mean by the term 'intuition'. The intuition that I mean is the one that happens when experience is laid on experience in layer upon layer. The conviction of one's own ability, which becomes apparent when one has knowledge based on experience, an empirical knowledge and the ability to visualize. Hence I am not talking about inspiration and certainly not about the divine. To me intuition is a combination of empirical knowledge and the ability to bring together the verbal/theoretical knowledge that has been accumulated under practical work.

In September I start my work with the copy of *Des Menagerie De Landgrafen Carl von Hessen- Kassel*. The size of the drawing – 220 cm long and 120 cm high, about a third of the original – makes it necessary to build a drawing board made out of a thread construction with the possibility of increasing the size of the board during the working process. The paper I am using is 150 cm wide – this makes it impossible to draw from the longer side. Instead I work from the shorter side, which means that I copy the painting sideways. It takes seven months to complete.

The Introduction of David

During a studio visit by Andrea Geyer, a professor at the art academy, I speak of what I see in the image. Of how the painting is a demonstration of power, cultural capital, money and grandeur. About how it is made so that the guest is met by the painting before encountering the person, in this case Landgraf Carl von Hessen- Kassel. We talk about how I have, over an extended period, worked with projects that in different ways are more or less linked with some form of collecting or cataloguing. She makes me aware of the phenomenon of "Gallery Paintings", a genre of painting often used to document mostly private collections hung according to the salon tradition. This means that those paintings classified as "Gallery Paintings" are often interiors of private homes with paintings hung from floor to ceiling in neat rows. I find a painting done by David Teniers the Younger (1610-1690), *Archduke Leopold Wilhelm in his Picture Gallery in Brussels*, 1651, which is a documentation of a room with the painting collection of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm (1614-1662). When Andrea leaves my studio I sit and study Teniers' painting and find interesting connections between it and the one by Johann Melchior Roos. It is also a show of possessions, which enhances the owner's – the man's – social status. The images speak the same language, both saying: Look how great I am.

I also copy the painting by Teniers – I have become interested in the conversation between the two drawings. I spend my time with Johann and David and start to feel more and more connected to them.

The Reproducing

When we look at an original and a copy we compare. Is there a likeness? Is it correct? We act as if the only ambition of the copy is to be as similar as possible. To be a copy is to imitate without a will. As if the actual ambition of the copy was to be a forgery. It is as if it does not have its own value and the journey undergone during the process of recreation is uninteresting.

I don't re-draw the painting in order to come as close to it as possible. I re-draw in order to repeat the work that was done. The perfect copy is not of interest to me. You may recognize the image. I can come as close as possible but to me that which was added and that which has disappeared is more important than being true to the original.

It is obvious when I copy Johann Melchior Roos's *Des Menagerie De Landgrafen Carl von Hessen- Kassel* that those parts which Johann did not master are hidden under a brown nothingness which can be seen either as earth or falling shadows. We are not meant to discover his technical weaknesses. This trick of concealment is not what I am interested in repeating. I want it to be clear how I have worked with the different parts of the image. It should be possible to see, if you look closely, where I lost my concentration. In this way the drawing shows without an inner hierarchy those sections that work and those that would best be hidden under a layer of foliage. It shows up the unsuccessful, as well as the successful.

What is important is the process and my time, the fact that I sit and do this in my own way, without a commission from anyone other than myself. I am the one giving the orders. I re-draw from a different

position than my predecessor. A position where I have neither a patron nor an employer's silver medallion around my neck.

David, Leopold and Theatrum Pictorium

In my research I find out that David Teniers is the royal painter of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm and that *Archduke Leopold Wilhelm in his Picture Gallery in Brussels* was one of his earliest commissions. The painting is to be sent to the Archduke's cousin, Philip IV of Spain, in order to give him an idea of the fantastic paintings that the Archduke owns.

In the painting one can see how Archduke Leopold Wilhelm paces through the room, throwing a glance at Raphael's *Saint Margaret*. Opposite him stands Fuensaldana, the Archduke's highest ranking military man, sent there by order of Philip IV of Spain to assist the new governor, with hat in hand and sword by his side.

This image seems obviously arranged in order to please the Archduke's cousin. His advisers are present and as the most centrally placed work we find a painting by Titian, previously the royal painter at the Spanish court. I start to suspect that this painting is not exclusively the documentation of a milieu but also a scene staged to create a feeling of worthiness and trust. This painting is meant to be proof of the fact that the king chose the right man for the right place. This is a constructed scene with a clear aim.

Together Archduke Leopold Wilhelm and Teniers start the process of compiling a catalogue based on the Archduke's private art collection, which is given the name *Theatrum Pictorium* (*Theater of Painting*). It starts off as being a representational work for Archduke Leopold Wilhelm but ends up being David Teniers' own work. Teniers is forced to finish the book himself when the Archduke leaves his position in Brussels in order to move to Vienna. Not only does he take his art collection with him, but he stops funding the book. David Teniers is forced to take care of the entire production process as well as the financing of it.

At the time when Archduke Leopold Wilhelm leaves Brussels for Vienna in November 1656 David Teniers has finished the first phase of his work. He has copied the chosen paintings by producing small oil on panel copies, so-called *pasticci*. Now the work of finding the craftsmen to transfer the paintings to etchings begins. For that he goes to Antwerp, his hometown. Here he wants to find craftsmen who are skilled but not too established, since he now has to pay for the project himself. In the end he employs fourteen young engravers.

Four years later the *Theater of Painting* goes to print for the first time. Containing texts in four different languages – Latin, Spanish, Dutch and French, as well as 247 etchings based on Archduke Leopold Wilhelms' collection of 1397 paintings, the *Theater of Painting* is a very impressive book for its time.

The Conversation

In my studio I try harder and harder to understand David Teniers and what drives him. I am fascinated by his strong will to complete his project. This is not only about the different artistic roles we have, it is also about our position in relation to the powers that be. I start to see Teniers and Archduke Leopold Wilhelm's relationship as a metaphor for my relationship to the school system that I have been part of. In order to understand my, their, our relationship I write a letter.

David.

With a piece of paper in hand at a table filled with the signs of artistic activity you stand in one of the paintings that you and Leopold have arranged. You seem important to Leopold, your position in the picture is central. You fascinate me, Leopold and you. You seem to be enjoying yourselves. In the painting you are busy. You seem to look up from your paper as if you have been interrupted by something and as if you are reading something important. Leopold is making his way across the picture. The dogs are playing in the foreground.

In a self-portrait, which you painted a few months later you are almost completely facing the viewer, just a hint of a twist to the right. In profile you meet my eye. The portrait is intended to show your new position – you have been working for Leopold for a while now and you are closer to each other than you had dared hope. You have been awarded more commissions and even received the symbolic golden key. It is actually just to show this off that you paint a new portrait. You have a silver medallion with Leopold's portrait hanging around your neck. You want to pay tribute to Leopold by wearing the medallion in the portrait but at the same time you do not want it to be too visible. You want to be his equal but you are not, and that is dangerous. It is a fine line. You solve the problem by allowing the medallion to be partially obscured by your waistcoat.

Are you friends, you and Leopold? Are you on a first name basis?

I reproduce your work and try to understand who is my Leopold. I understand that you continue with your labor of love, the Theatrum Pictorium, by yourself even after your employment has been terminated. You have decided that it will be completed and you pay the engravers yourself in order to carry it out. Whose medallion do I bear around my neck? Will I also pretend that we are friends, as I believe you have done at times with Archduke Leopold?

Why do you choose Leopold as your child's godfather? Maybe you are more important to him than I have understood. You have fun together, create a mood. You act the educated gentlemen and raise the feeling of ownership to something fantastic. You have a common goal, to create the Theatrum Pictorium. Or are you perhaps only there so that Leopold can say:

- See what I own! And then you can answer like an echo:
- See what I organize.

You change the relative size of the paintings in your large salon paintings because it strengthens your composition. You choose to abandon the original size of the paintings because you have another intention. It is when I read this that I understand that you are not only interested in documenting. You also have ideas about composition and what the painting is able to express on a purely emotional level. By changing the relative size of the paintings that you reproduce you emphasize the sense of the importance of the collection. You give the collection a greater sense of homogeneity and your composition becomes clearer. You want to do something grandiose. I can see that.

How does it feel when Leopold leaves for Brussels? Is it a sense of liberation? Do you fear for your future economic situation? At what point do you feel that the material that you have been working with for such a long time is yours? That all the prints, paintings and originals are suddenly yours? That this will be your product, that the Theatrum Pictorium will be David Teniers'?

The Grid and the Gaze

Working on my drawings I allow the method and physical necessity to take over. I start in the upper left-hand corner and work my way slowly but surely through the image ending up in the lower right-hand corner. This has a purely practical reason – if I were to draw in the other direction my hand would smudge the pencil mark. This would leave a boring grey field instead of an image with clear contrasts. The result of my technique is that I discover the image gradually, as the drawing develops.

Most often I work with a grid of squares drawn onto both the image to be reproduced and the paper onto which it will be transposed. This grid enables me to see what is happening in the picture more easily, how the shapes twist across the paper. When I draw using the grid I strive to concentrate on the abstract shapes that are formed in the squares. I try to train my gaze into abstract vision. My aim is to stop seeing *what* is there but instead to see *how* it is, in an attempt to draw what actually is in the picture not how I interpret it. This is difficult and despite my intention I constantly translate those small parts that I try to focus on into representational wholes. And suddenly the pencil, the extension of my arm, is no longer following form without interpretation.

All these mistakes and faults caused by lack of concentration are a part of the process. I refuse to re-work those areas that are skew. I refuse to correct them. I show it like it is: too much coffee, distracted, time pressure and too many hours spent drawing. I am not interested in the perfect copy connected with perspective rulers and craftsmanship.

Our Roles

After a few failed studio conversations I realize that I am not expressing myself clearly. Confusion seems to set in for some people when I make conceptual decisions that influence the technique. It becomes clear to me that if I am to work in visual art I must explain that I prioritize the conceptual over the technical. I am forced to talk differently about my project. I can no longer present my work as based in an interest in the image but rather present my work as an interest in relationships. It is the relationship between us, David, Johann and myself, those parts of me and them that meet in the image, that are interesting, their choice of animals and form that I adhere to and the grid system that I force their composition into.

It seems to be about different artistic roles that I touch on in the studio. About a familiarity across time and different roles, about finding a comfortable position in that which is seen as technical/craft, and at the same time being able to make decisions dictated by conceptual ideas. Those decisions related to the drawing, for example to only use one kind of pencil, has consequences for how technically perfect a work can become. To reveal one's shortcomings is a conceptual decision, which also goes beyond the technical. It is uninteresting to view my work in purely visual terms – you need to enter into the world that I have been in.

I realize that I have tried to find a position for myself based on the two separate roles of artist and craftsperson in the course of my final piece. I allow myself to be part of both. I have

realized, through my practical work and conversations, that I do not need to choose the one over the other.

Bonds of Friendship

By March I have been working with the pictures for seven months. I choose my title in order to enable the viewer of the installation, which will be presented at my final exam, to understand the notion of relatedness that I have finally come to. I add a third work based on the self-portrait that David Teniers paints at the beginning of his employment by Archduke Leopold Wilhelm. I get a silversmith to make three silver medallions with our profiles on them. In silver chains we will float together just above the ground – in a threesome of gazes my profile meets their gaze.

Somewhere there we meet: Johann, David and I.

EvaMarie Lindahl 2008 –05 –08

Appendix:

1. *The Club of Interests.*

The club of interests was a space of knowledge and interests, which I ran from my studio at Umeå Art Academy in the spring of 2005. It was aimed at a closed group, students at the academy, who were invited to tell each other about their interests. The idea was to create a space for telling and sharing, in contrast to the way we usually interrelated.

It can be difficult to get beyond the obvious, the common denominator of the moment – like a job or an educational context. My aim was to provide a space with the opportunity of showing other parts of one's identity. Behind each working individual there is always another affiliation, a hobby, a competitive dancer.

We met five times altogether and created a small archive of what those 10 people that told of their interests left behind: a film, a model airplane or a book. Included in the archive is also a transcript of our meetings.

I am interested in Roy Andersson's ability to see those whom he himself calls 'the little person'. To me he is great at using seemingly banal dialog to show human beings' attempts to get closer to their surroundings, and how difficult it is to live in a world of communication with others. As when a father chases his family around the table with a crawfish in his hand. A failed attempt at a joke, which reveals the father's searching role in the family structure.

2. *Taking Care Of.*

During Elin Wikström's project *Retailator*, in London in the summer of 2004, I was an assistant and a participant in the accompanying workshop *Public Space – the artist and the spectator*. During my stay I discovered several things in the area where I was staying which did not work quite as they should: an unreadable bus schedule, a bench that had been broken for many years, a destroyed flowerbed. I spoke to those living in the area to find out what had happened and for how long things had been like this. On a Sunday afternoon I went out with a rope, some sticks and detergent in order to repair the objects for those living in the area and using them.

Elin Wikström documented her London project by letting participants write notes, small diaries, about what we had been through and the different roles we had occupied. At this point I realized that the more subjective experience, the personal perspective, can encompass all that needs to be said about a work.

3. *At the Zoo.*

At the Zoo is a series of drawings based on a visit to Berlin Zoo in the spring of 2006. In the series I allow the men that stand and watch the animals from a safe distance, like voyeurs, to meet that image of man which is expressed by the architecture. Through ornamentation the alpha male is accentuated, the image of the strong, manly hunter. The men become part of the staging of the zoo. A scene in which you as an individual become implicated and co-producer of a staged gaze, a gaze which makes you dominant over that which you see. I am interested in how journalists such as Günter Wallraff and Barbara Ehrenreich work. They explore the world by taking on the roles which are necessary to physically and emotionally experience that which they write about. They are not interested in trying to understand from a safe distance the mechanism which they are investigating, but rather try to understand the mechanisms they are experiencing up close. They draw near and choose to stay in a situation for a long time in order to understand it. Günter Wallraff does this by changing his eye-color from blue to brown in order to work and write as a Turkish immigrant. Barbara Ehrenreich works and writes from the situation of being an underpaid woman holding down two jobs in America.

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