

Valand Academy: Intervention

Photography between Indifference and Difference

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UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
VALAND ACADEMY



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Photography between Indifference and Difference

What would photography between indifference and difference be like? Sixteen graduates of the bachelor program in photography at the Valand Academy, University of Gothenburg in Sweden explore this question. In a time of exhaustion, art photography is capable of acting as a singular antidote. Consciously or unconsciously, it situates itself between circumstances, intervenes, intermingles in things, negotiates. It plays an active role in the present. What kind of photography could actually make a difference? And how can we cast aside apathy?

Hampus Bovbjerg-Grip / Dennis Burén / Azmir Cordic / Andreas Engman / Rebecca Eskilsson / Brian Frände / Elin Granath / Malin Griffiths / Mette Hartung Kirkegaard / Anja Linnea Hellström / Pia Johansson Goldmann / Elin Liljeblad / Sarah Oja / Sebastian Thomsen / Johanna Wallin / Leila Wegner

Intervention, from latin *interventio*. A mediator. Something that situates itself between circumstances, intervenes, intermingles or negotiates. An intervention is due to a factor that enters between one thing and another, influencing the space between them. A sense of gaining room. Room for... reflection, creation, innovation, exploration, protest or even betrayal. For patterns of movement, a choreography. For freedom. Intervening with words and actions that do change, how is this achieved, and what place does the image have in such a question?

One point of departure, a common denominator, must be the one that regardless what we aim for in our respective artistry, dependless of concern, hopes, political view or impression of Europe – we photograph, do art or something else, what ever we wish to call it. The fact that we *are* doing it, has a reason. *What* we are doing is not nothing but something. This something might make a difference. From there on, all other questions appear regarding the singular and the collective, questions that have to do with responsibilities and mission, resistance, activeness and consequences.

While working with the exhibition *Intervention – Photography between Indifference and Difference*, we used the occasion and space to reflect upon our diverging entrances to it. To me it seemed as if the initial questions themselves took on concrete shape. They came to life, were actually performed, and with considerable variation. The questions gained immediacy, as if they were appearing out of lack of answers or in the guise of not yet articulated objections. Herein resides perhaps some of the more important aspects of the theme of this exhibition.



The exhibition has served as a base for the claim. Our respective replies are made up by tentative, diverse and sometimes contradictory formulations:

Any photograph, or no single one, can make a difference. Crucial is the degree to which we are prompted to become critical subjects of our own and together with others. It is possible to understand the artistic practice as such, as a way to meet, analyze and visualize thoughts and questions and thereby oppose a kind of apathy; first and foremost the own, and thereby possibly that of another/others. In particular this may occur when you can sense that the photographer has something important to communicate and has an active and personal approach to the motif. One significant aspect of the matter, is the prevalence/incidence of creations emerging from/ out of connections to some inner boundaries/limits/marches.

When it comes to artistic photography, it is an excellent remedy for apathy if it manages to reach the viewer's inner space to inject compelling urgency. It tackles one of life's key areas, curiosity. The photograph becomes our eyes through someone else's. It is involved in a relational area between the self and something or someone in the world. Since it all is depending on the circumstances, meaningfulness may be achieved for someone while another is left unaffected. The artistic process and the reception of it, rather than the specific content of the photograph is what makes a difference. Most important is to communicate what matters to us, that might inspire others to make things that matter to them.

Yet another angle to the question, is how our memory bank consists of photographs. Not infrequently, we construct our stories around photographs. We can only cast aside apathy by talking, by words and pictures,

by stories. We could turn the question around; what would have been the scenario if we disregarded the many short fragments stuck to the film, that the camera has captured for us over years? Those who serve us as witnesses, and make up the source of knowledge from where we collect material for our stories. The photograph testifies of what we ache for; a thought, a place or a point of view.

Photography might visualize that we stand before choices, and that the effects may differ/shift, that even the slightest problem has a number of possible alternatives. Photography can take part in analyzing phenomenas. The artistically, fictitiously construed photograph can paradoxically come to provide us with a more accurate image of an object, than can be obtained (in the real world), *in situ*. Photography can be one component in profound analyses and hereby have an influence.

Another approach to the question is to pay attention to those artistic strategies in which photography can be involved in. Combining photographs and mixing up locations and geography, by taking things out of their original context and putting them together in a new, is one method with which we can make an attempt to see things not just *as they are*, but how they *maybe* are, how they could be, or how they never were. That is photography modifying the possible. A way to intervene, is by reconstructing historic places, rearranging images in order to recall them and win them for the time to come.

In our present situation, where art often is asked to justify its existence in terms of usefulness, pay off and accessibility, one critical advent would be to remove usefulness from the work. Acceptance for the quest is inversed creatively into and through "active" apathy.



Photography that makes a difference? One reluctance towards the question may be the experience and sense that the artistic community to a great degree is stuck in the logics of neo liberalism, and that the only act of resistance remaining, is to refrain from meaning, since all meaning is lost or has been perverted by commerce. If this is the case we withdraw far from an historic position where art is considered to be "sinnerfüllte Form erlebter Existenz". Meaning itself, der Sinn, seems suspect, becoming understood as the offspring of ulterior motive, self-interest and profit.

There we are, with the question of exhaustion. The discharged, over-nourished – or – with the tired prospect that the philosopher Byung-Chul Han provides with his *Fatigue society*. A fundamental, perceptive weariness – a friendly greenery.

Yet other things, most of it, is not easily indited.

The artists through and with
Anja Linnea Hellström
Berlin, October 2014



Intervention, från latinets *interventio*. Mellankomst. Något ställer sig mellan förhållanden, ingriper, beblandar sig eller förmedlar. Intervention sker medels en faktor som inträder mellan ett och ett annat och ger upphov till ett rum mellan dem. Anskaffande av rum. Rum för... reflektion, innovation, skapande, exploration, protest eller svek. För rörelsemönster, en koreografi. För frihet. Intervention, de ord och handlingar som förändrar. Hur ser de ut och vilken plats har bilden i en sådan fråga?

En utgångspunkt, en gemensam nämnare, måste vara denna, att oavsett vad vi vill med våra konstnärskap, oavsett ärende, förhoppning, politisk åskådning eller syn på Europa, så fotograferar vi, gör konst eller något annat, vad vi nu väljer att kalla det. Och detta att vi gör det, har en orsak. *Det* vi gör är inte ingenting utan något. Och detta något kan komma att göra skillnad. Från den utgångspunkten som i sig är av betydelse, så uppstår alla övriga frågor som har med den enskilda och kollektivet att göra, som har med ansvar och ärende att göra, som har med motstånd, aktivitet och konsekvens att göra.

Medan vi arbetade med utställningen *Intervention – fotografi mellan indifferens och differens*, använde vi tillfället och rummet till att reflektera över våra olika ingångar till det. Mig tycktes det som att frågeställningarna själva delvis antog konkret form. De fick liv, utspelade sig rent faktiskt, och det med stor variation. Frågorna vann aktualitet, som om de så infann sig i avsaknad av svar, eller i form av invändningar. Här ligger kanske några av de viktigare aspekterna av utställningens tema förborgade.



Utställningen har fungerat som en plattform för anspråket. Våra respektive gensvar har prövat sig fram med skilda, ibland varandra motsägande formuleringar:

Vilket fotografi som helst, eller inte ett enda, kan göra skillnad. Helt avgörande är den grad till vilken vi förmår bli kritiska subjekt i oss själva och tillsammans med andra. Det är möjligt att förstå själva den konstnärliga praktiken som ett sätt att möta, förstå och visualisera tankar och frågor och genom det motverka en form av apati; först och främst den egna, men i förlängningen kanske även, därmed, någon annans. Här märks i synnerhet fotografen som utvecklar ett energiskt eget språk, där det är kännbart att ämnena är förankrade och tilltalet personligt. En betydelsefull aspekt av frågan, är skapandets säte i det egna förhållandet till gränser.

Ett medel mot apati är fotografiet till den grad det lyckas beröra och hitta till betraktarens inre rum, där det injicerar angelägna ämnen. Det letar sig in till en av livets kärnpunkter, nämligen nyfikenheten. Fotografiet är våra ögon genom en annans. Det är involverat i det "relationella något" som finns i zonen mellan mig och någon eller något i världen. Emedan omständigheterna avgör, kan mening skapas för någon samtidigt som en annan lämnas oberörd. Den egna arbetsprocessen, eller betraktarens reaktion, snarare än fotografiets specifika innehåll, är vad som gör skillnad. Det viktigaste är att använda fotografiet till det som är väsentligt för oss. För om det betyder något för oss, så kan det inspirera andra.

Ytterligare en aspekt är den, att vår arsenal av minnen innehåller fotografier. Inte sällan konstruerar vi våra berättelser kring dem. Endast genom ord, bilder och berättelser, kan vi lösgöra oss ur

dödlägen. Vi kan vända på frågan och undra vad som skulle ha hänt ifall vi bortsett från de hundradels korta fragment som kameran fångslat genom tiderna, och som därigenom kunnat vittna åt oss och bilda den kunskapskälla, ur vilken vi hämtar till våra berättelser. Fotografiet vittnar om vad vi ömmar om; en tanke, ett minne, en plats eller en synvinkel.

Fotografi kan åskådliggöra att vi står inför val och att resultaten kan skifta, att även de enklaste problem har en uppsättning av möjliga alternativ. Fotografiet kan alltså ingå i ett utforskande av fenomen, där visualiseringen är en del. Det konstnärligt bearbetade, redigerade fotografiet, den fiktiva konstruktionen, kan paradoxalt nog komma att förse oss med en mer precis bild av något samtida objekt, än vad vi förmår uppfatta på plats, *in situ*. Fotografiet kan på så vis vara en komponent i djupgående analyser vilka i sig kan göra skillnad.

Ett annat sätt att möta frågan är att se till de konstnärliga strategier i vilka fotografi kan ingå i. Att kombinera fotografier på sätt som förväxlar orter och ändrar geografi, genom att ta saker ur sin kontext för att placera dem tillsammans i en ny, kan bli en metod med vilken konsten gör att vi kan se saker, ej blott som de är, utan hur de *kanske* är, kunde bli eller aldrig kommer att bli. Detta är fotografi som modifierar det möjliga. Ett sätt att intervensera genom, är att rekonstruera historiska platser, att rearrangera bilder för att återkalla dem och vinna dem för nya tider.

Givet vår dagsaktuella situation, där konsten ofta ombeds att rättfärdiga sin existens i termer av nyttovärde, lönsamhet eller lättfattlighet, kan ett kritiskt förhållningssätt innebära att avlägsna

användbarheten som sådan. Medlöperi vänds i kreativitet, genom ett slags aktiv apati.



Fotografi som gör skillnad och upphäver apati? En viss motvilja mot frågan kan vara erfarenheten och upplevelsen att det konstnärliga fältet sitter så fast i den nyliberala kapitalismens logik, att den enda motståndshandlingen framstår som den att avstå mening, eftersom all mening gått förlorad eller perverterats i kommers. Därmed befinner vi oss långt ifrån en historisk position, tanken på konst såsom "sinnerfüllte Form erlebter Existenz". Själva meningen, der Sinn, verkar suspekt, verkar vara barn av baktankar, egenintresse och profit.

Så är vi då vid frågan om tröttheten. Den uttömnda, övergödda – eller – vid den trötta förhoppning som filosofen Byung-Chul Han inger med sin *Müdigkeitsgesellschaft*. En fundamental, klarögd trötthet – en vänlig grönska.

Åter annat, det mesta, låter sig inte enkelt präntas ned.

Konstnärerna, genom och med
Anja Linnea Hellström

Hampus Bovbjerg-Grip (SE)



Untitled (iRhein II), 115x61cm, LightJet print silicon mounted on glass



This Artist, 6m 21s, Video loop (DVD)

In Bovbjerg Grip's work the focus is shifted back upon art itself, existing imagery is used to create pieces that try to illustrate or examine different structures, stereotypes and ideals within the art world. The piece *This Artist* is a video lecture in art history where a whispering voice presents arbitrary facts while black and white portraits pass by. *Untitled (iRhein II)* depicts a broken iPhone presenting photographer Andreas Gursky's image *Rhein II*, also known as the worlds most expensive photograph.

Dennis Burén (SE)

Reform – React

2014

Azmir Cordic (SE)



Yugoslav People's Army – People from my country

2014

50x50cm

Photograph on Plexiglass

Azmir Cordic works in different genres. With archive images, remembering of a state that disappeared, identity, origin, childhood, his own family and migration. War changes landscapes and borders – places are renamed. When photographs are taken into a new context, in another time, they change. They change us and our ideas through the energy they are containing.

"I would like to construct and reshape moments that look the same as when I once had my country."

Andreas Engman (SE)

A Line Made by Swimming

Documentation of sculpture

Instant film photograph, 11 x 8cm

An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Berlin (work in progress)

Installation

20 Instant film photographs, 11 x 8cm

An installation is being made by photographing a wall space in the gallery. The photograph of the wall is being put up on to space that has been photographed. That photograph is then being photographed and put on top of the first one and the procedure is repeated until 20 photographs is being presented on top of each other.

I see my role as an artist as one in opposition against the common sense in our capitalistic and neo-liberal time that suggests economic growth and individualisation before all. A way to interrogate this situation might be to investigate and perform different ways of work or to down right refuse it. Examples of critical methods might be practicing the removal of usefulness in work and art, working in collaborative forms, the refusal to simplify your practice and to stay opaque. The act of occupying time and place is to oppose forces of rationalisation and effectivisation.

Rebecca Eskilsson (SE)



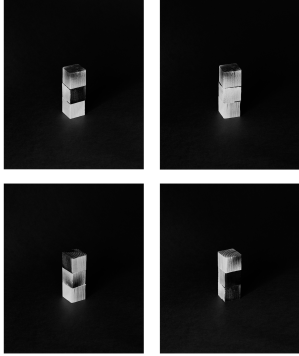
Convertere

2014

Collage/Photography

Rebecca Eskilsson works with multiple mediums to create fictive worlds of mystism and space. It is a step into another world where time and space cease. Convertere is to change or adapt the form, character, or function of; transform, to cause someone to change in opinion, belief, etc. With the theme "indifference and difference" Rebecca has convertet and transformed multiply pictures and symbols to change the form and appearance. Using ancient symbols and pictures from history books she has created her own forms and symbols of the statues, they tell stoies of how they changed over the years as they have been standing. The world around us is changing even if we dont want to, like the statues that has been standing for several 100 of years we have to adapt and change with the world.

Brian Frænde (DK, 1988)



Construction IV (#1-4)

2014

Series of 4 photographs

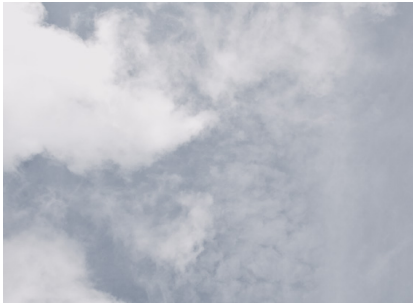
52x43 cm

Edition: 3 + 2 ap

When one is faced with the task of finding a solution, one is also faced with a numerable selection of different possible outcomes. When considering Europe today, and Europe in the past, one might also start to consider where the present day of today might lead us. What is going to be the answer to e.g. the financial crises? The four photographs in the work Construction IV (#1-4) can be read as four different outcomes of the same problem. With each cube being an entity in itself, how are they best united to suite their purpose? Whatever that might be.

The work is most of all a thought experiment. But never the less, a thought experiment, that can be projected onto real life, and hopefully make a difference, by reminding the viewer, of the many possible answers there are to even the simplest problems.

Elin Granath (SE)



The sky is blue

2014

Photography

A paradoxical mirroring, an utopian sky ending up in a dystopian fall from it. Reflections from a windowpane are misleading birds who believe they are flying towards a sky that in fact is a deadly rendering of the same. Granath photographs the bird corpse at the ground it hit and the sky from which it fell.

Malin Griffiths (SE)



Asocial Framework

2011-2014

photography

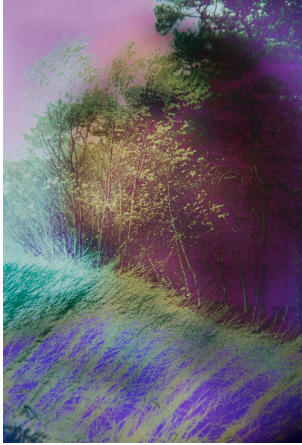
www.malingriffiths.com

malinhellson@hotmail.com

Together we should all gather in the woods

We need to talk about this brave new world

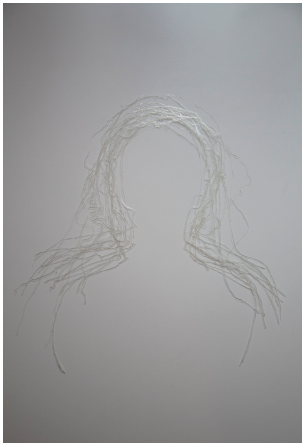
Mette Hartung Kirkegaard (DK, 1987)



Equally Infinite (Signe)

2011-2014

Archival Fiber Print, 70 x 105 cm, edition 5 + 2 AP



The one and the many

2014

3D glaze, clear film, podium, 70 x 90 cm

mettehartungkirkegaard.com

Anja Linnea Hellström (SE)



Akademie der Wirtschaftswissenschaften zu Berlin

2013

photograph

www.alh.nu

anja.l.hellstrom@gmail.com

Pia Johansson Goldmann (SE)



I can't live if living is without you

2014

video

"You know it seems like your heartbeat and the other persons heartbeat they're in the same rhythm you know and it feels like your brain and the other persons brain they're in the same wavelength it's quite simple if i feel good with you then we're gonna like eachother"

Quote Herdem Alacebek, swedish mma-fighter from the Swedish mma tv-series "Beat him up".

"No I can't forget this evening or your face as you were leaving But I guess that's just the way the story goes You always smile, but in your eyes Your sorrow shows Yes, it shows No I can't forget tomorrow When I think of all my sorrow When I had you there but then I let you go And now it's only fair that I should let you know What you should know I can't live If living is without you I can't live I can't give anymore I can't live If living is without you I can't give I can't give anymore Well, I can't forget this evening or your face as you were leaving But I guess that's just the way the story goes You always smile, but in your eyes Your sorrow shows Yes, it shows I can't live If living is without you I can't live I can't give anymore I can't live If living is without you I can't give I can't give anymore

Song by Badfinger, performed by Mariah Carey.

Elin Liljeblad (SE)



f-84

2014

video

Sarah Oja (SE)



Without Titles

2014

96 photographs

10x15 cm

inkjet print

www.sarahoja.com

hello@sarahoja.com

96 is the approximate number of seats occupied by radical rightwing parties in the European parliament today”

Sebastian Thomsen (SE)



Sunday Morning

2010

Affected Places

2013

In many places it is clear how the architecture in some areas can characterise class society. In the suburbs, buildings still stand just as grey, tall and stiff as when they were built in the 60's and 70's. Meanwhile the middle class are more likely to move into modern complexes, whose architecture is created with ideas of colour and form, designed to influence people in a positive way through different impressions. How are people affected by their surroundings? *Sunday Morning* is a project made in Biskopsgården, a suburb of Gothenburg. I turned to my memories, revisiting various places where I spent a lot of time as a child. How does a place change over time? In this case, everything was just like before, nothing new had been built and the grey scale remained the same. In contrast, the second work titled *Affected Places* questions how we are affected by our homes and surrounding environments.

Johanna Wallin (SE)



The Sun will come out Tomorrow

2013-2014

photographs

www.johanna-wallin.com

My story is about the silence of a rainy day, the wait for something else to happen, the search for something more.

Leila Wegner (NO)

Om att resa och aldrig komma fram

2014

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