

Rationality, Intuition & Emotion
Exploring an Artistic Process

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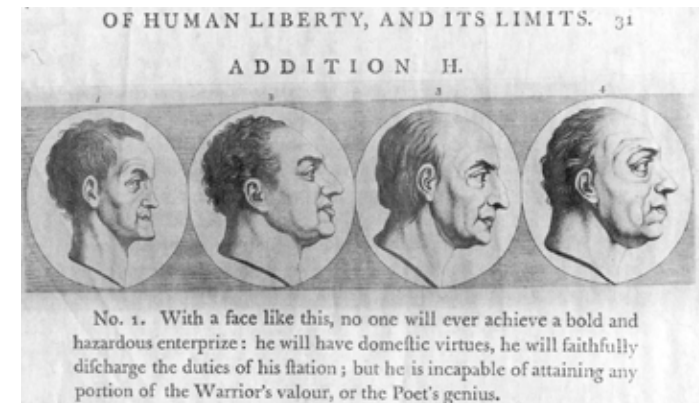
Rationality, Intuition & Emotion

Exploring an Artistic Process

"Love is the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real."
Iris Murdoch

INTRODUCTION

for many years I have worked with portraits, series of sculptures that are connected by a variation of themes, based on theories of how we perceive other people in regard to their outer appearance. For example, I have worked on a series that has its origin in an old-fashioned theory named Physiognomy, which was made popular by the Swiss philosopher and pastor Johann Kaspar Lavater in the 18th century. Lavater stated that there is a direct relation between outer appearance and inner self and that you can learn to read a person's character by studying his or her face. (Lavater, 1775) In



Picture 1, newspaper clipping
NRC Handelsblad, around 1992

his 'Physiognomic Fragments' one can find the engravings of J.H.Lips connected as illustrations of his texts: "With a face like this, no one will ever achieve a bold and hazardous enterprize: he will have domestic virtues, he will faithfully discharge the duties of his station; but he is incapable of attaining any portion of the Warrior's valour, or the Poet's genius" (picture 1).

The combination of images and an explanatory text fascinates me, and since this series on Lavater, I have often used this particular fascination as a strategy to create new bodies of work.

Physiognomy as a theory was commonly accepted from its invention until to the 20th century, when it was questioned due to its connections to eugenics, theories on race and the Holocaust, shrouded in shame it finally becoming obsolete as a scientific theory. Nevertheless, after WWII and even up to the present day, some people, including German authors Burger and Nöttling continued to propagate physiognomy as a matter of fact. (Burger-Nöttling, 1958)

A series of sculptures that arose from the series on Physiognomy is a suite on racial biology or eugenics. These figurative sculpture create a context where I problematise our ideas about race and "the Other". I became interested in this subject since I think that there is a direct relation between thoughts on physiognomy and thoughts about race. The subject of my work naturally evolved from physiognomy to race.

Over the years I have developed a very specific approach to sculpture, where I use images (i.e. photographs or drawings) of people who fit into my settings. After finding these images I model them as sculptures. For my series on racial biology for example, I went to the University Library of Uppsala, Carolina Rediviva and did research in the vast collection of photographs from the archives of the Swedish Institute of Racial Biology. This state institute worked between 1922 and 1958 to gather information on the Swedish population by taking photographs and measurements of over one hundred thousand people. Based on these measurements people were categorized according to their 'race'. (Hagerman, 2006: 370-375) For my series on racial biology I selected over

a hundred photographs from this archive to work with, trying to free these people from their category, by making their portraits in a personal and sensitive way (picture 2).

In everyday life it is a common practice to speak about different races; but with a foundation in genetic research, the scholar Joseph L. Graves, amongst others, argues that there is only one human race. The genetic variation between different ethnic groups is smaller than the variation within these groups (Graves, 2001: 147-150, 155-156). Psychologist Paul Ekman illustrates this beautifully, when he shows that there are a few basic facial expressions that are interpreted in the same way over the world, independent of culture and ethnicity (Ekman, 2003). Inspired by Ekman's theory, I made a series of sculptures of one man showing the different 'basic' facial expressions: i.e. anger, disgust, happiness, fear, surprise, sadness and contempt (picture 3).

At the moment I am working on a series of sculptures which I aim to use for this research project. The series, "French Children of the Holocaust", is based on a book with the same title. (Klarsfeld, 1996) This book has pictures of almost 2,000 of the 20,000 Jewish children from Paris, who were deported by the Nazis to Auschwitz. The relevance for this work has increased dramatically since I have children of my own.

I have recently returned to drawing again after a fifteen-year period of neglect. I was looking for a way to open up my process, since I had the feeling that I started to reiterate myself in my sculpture. My drawings hold a position of absolute contrast to my sculpture. They are non-figurative, black and white, and flat. There is no direct formal relationship between my sculptures and drawings. Different to my sculpture, where I try to get as close as I can to the person I depict, I simply start with a piece of paper on which I scatter some charcoal powder. The outcome is highly coincidental and I work until I am intuitively pleased with the result.

In contrast to the fact that there is no formal relationship between my sculptures and drawings, I feel that there is a strong emotional relationship. A relationship that I will investigate, delineate and contemplate in this exposition. For this reason, I believe that it is here I will find the key to the deeper motives for my work with portraits of victims



Picture 2. From the series on ***Racial Biology*** ceramics and pigments, 2011

of repressive systems. Through this investigation I will enter a very personal realm, but during this project I realized that entering this realm, and disclosing it, is essential to getting further in my process.

METHOD

at the time of writing I have completed a few children's portraits from the series "French Children of the Holocaust", but I plan to make up to a total of forty pieces in this series (picture 4). For this exposition and the exhibition at Konstfack it relates to, I will introduce three sculptures, combine them with newly made drawings and investigate how the sculptures and drawings work together. I decided not to exhibit an equal number of pictures and drawings, since that would indicate that a specific drawing pertains to a specific sculpture, which is not the case. The sculptures and drawings should interact, but from their own position. In addition, as with arranging flowers in a vase, if there are only a few a more balanced exhibition is achieved with an odd number of works.

Parallel with the process of drawing and modelling, I will structure my thinking in a journal and reflective texts, in which I will describe my process, investigate my motives for working with portraits of victims and contemplate the relations between the abstract and figurative parts of my work. An earlier version of this text was part of the exhibition at Konstfack and I made it available to the public in the form of a booklet. Since I want my visual art to be understood by its visual means, it is for me of the utmost importance that it can be understood by a general audience without ploughing through a lot of text. In that sense, even though this text is essential for me and this project, it is complimentary.

Working with this project, some very personal memories from psychotic episodes earlier in my life became inescapably pregnant in my mind. These memories showed



Picture 3. **Portrait of a Man**
Ceramics and Pigments, 2004-2006

up as small fragments, which I wrote down as they came. Since my main objective for this project is to deepen my understanding of my motives and my process, I decided to implement these fragments as parallel texts, acting as interludes to the main text below. (For an example of a novel with parallel texts, see Louis Paul Boon, *Menuet*, 1955)

The main text consists of journal entries, which I kept up as I was working in the studio. In these I have tried to be open to underlying motives, which I expected to pop-up during the working process. These journal entries are written over thirteen working days, although I did not make an entry for every day I worked in the studio. There might be weeks in between the different days described. The actual date that an entry was made is irrelevant for this project and naming it would distract attention from the text, so I decided to number the days instead. Each day has its own topic; these are linked and succeed one another in a non-linear way, building a comprehensive description of my process. To make a clear distinction between the text fragments and the main text, I present them in a contrasting typeface.

The journal entries are followed by a reflective text in which I discuss the different elements of my work and arrange them into an integrated complex.

JOURNAL

day 1. My studio is a mess.

Some months have passed since I was here. I've been working in Denmark and doing other stuff, so I haven't been here. It has become a dump, into which I tossed everything I didn't need for the moment. It doesn't work for me to simply start in a mess. I need to feel undisturbed and focused. I need to see my references. It can be chaos, but it has to be mine. I start with making three different workstations: one for painting the last sculptures I made in Denmark, a large table for drawing and a table for writing.

As usual, I procrastinate before I even think of starting: settling my mind, wandering around, putting in order, choosing what to do. Taking in books and stuff I want to work with. Taking out whatever doesn't fit in. Deciding. Trying to get focused. Once I have started I am fine.

On my writing table lie a selection of books that will guide me in some way: Ellsworth Kelly, *Drawings on a Bus*, 1954; Silvia Bächli, *das*; Tetsumi Kudo, an exhibition catalogue with work from his show at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1972 (*); *The Big Five*, about psychological keywords; Boltanski; Karin Lindholm, *Knäppfinger*; John Coplans, *A Body*; Antonin Artaud, works on paper; Francis Bacon, an inventory of his studio; Ernst Friedrich, *War against War!*; Serge Klarsfeld, *French Children of the Holocaust*.

The last book is the major reference in the series of sculptures I am working on at this moment. I might or might not use the other books mentioned, but I want them at hand. I tend to pick them up, walk through and put them aside again, as a source of artistic reference. I don't read them. I look at the pictures. Some of them don't even have texts. I don't care about the texts, it's the visuals I'm after, although sometimes I read.

Part of my way of procrastinating is writing. I write about how to get going, about my mood, about whether or not I want to be in my studio and whether or not I feel blocked. I write about why I write all this. I write to kick myself to work: the "work" of sculpting or drawing. But with this project my attitude towards this writing has shifted paradigm and it has become work as well. Even though writing has always been a part of my process, as a way to gain focus, it has also been a way of postponing my work. Now this writing has become permissive, it feels like a liberation or a relief. I feel triggered to write, but since this text will be a part of a presentation, I have to bring it to another level: it has to be readable for others as well.

Who will I address in these writings? This is a journal, but unlike the diaries I am used to keeping, this one will not be private. It has to be more formal, yet personal



Picture 4. From the series: "**French Children of the Holocaust**": "**Anny-Yolande Horowitz** was born on June 2, 1933, in Strassbourg. Interned in the Lalande camp near Tours and then transferred to Drancy, she was deported to Auschwitz on convoy 31 on September 11, 1942, with her mother, Frieda and her sister Paulette, age 7."

Ceramics and pigments, 2011, life size.

at the same time. It has to be readable for people with a general interest in art, who happen to be interested in my work or in this research project. This will mean: not too much repetition and self-indulgence. But since I don't want to lose the openness that I normally have in my diaries, I will write freely and edit later in order to achieve clarity of my intentions and make it more readable for others.

For me, writing is a time-consuming occupation. That is to say, I write very slowly. I use introspection as a method, I try to capture my inner voice. Due to this, I enter a contemplative state of mind where I can be aware of thoughts that otherwise are too ephemeral to notice. It is thereby a writing from within, a reflective writing, like the writing Emma Göransson and Roland Ljungberg describe, rather than an analytical writing. (Göransson, & Ljungberg, 2009) Writing in English, which is not my mother tongue, brings down the speed of this process even further, creating time to develop my thoughts. My vocabulary in Dutch might be much larger; writing in English forces me into a more reflective attitude, where I weigh each and every word.

(* I saw this exhibition of Kudo together with a friend when I was an adolescent, since we strolled around the museums every weekend, and we thought it was so cool: a penis in a birdcage, a body smeared out over a chair, eyes in a bucket. We saw this exhibition several times and we were very impressed and excited as twelve-year-olds. Kudo is probably one of the artists who has most influenced me to become one myself. Even after 40 years I still have a vivid memory of this show.

I walk in a park. Ephemeral existences disperse from trees. I am not afraid.

day 2. Last year I worked on a series of drawings, which I called "Pondus". A big, black curved form, a dot, on a white sheet of paper (picture 5). It was about balance and weight and the apparent ease some people, especially dominant white males, have about themselves. At one point the form hits the side of the paper, on the other

side it runs off the paper. As I was working on the drawings, I realized that it was not a drawing I was after. In my mind it became a huge, free-standing, abstract, flat, black sculpture. I have not come so far as actually making it, but I will.

Later I developed the drawings in the opposite direction: a white curved form, left behind after making the rest of the paper as black as it can be. The curved form became the moon in the night sky. Since the drawings were meant to be presented together with a sculpture series on the Danish resistance movement, in particular portraits of assassins, the moon became a symbol for activities which under normal circumstances cannot take place in broad daylight. That is where I start now: a negative form (picture 6).

Black space around a white, single-curved form. If I leave the paper white as it is, it remains two-dimensional. I need to do something in the white sphere. First I adjust the curve, since I am not pleased with it. It should not be perfectly round, but almost. Now it is sort of hanging.

As it is still not as close to a circle as I want, I use a pair of custom-made compasses and adjust the curved line. I have noticed before that I get a better feeling of 'a moon' if this moon is not a perfect circle. I will adjust once more.

The black space holds clouds, enclosed. They are in direct contrast with the very dense black space/form around, which has become a container. The clouds meet the dense surface, precipitate, sublimate.

Inside and outside are the same but of a different quality, a different density, a different state of being, another state of mind. The moon has been transfigured.

I am a self-murderer. We are rehearsing the Hell of Dante in an underground parking lot. I am doomed to burn in hell forever and ever.



Picture 5. '**Pondus**',
Charcoal on paper, 2011
70 x 70 cm.

day 3. Even though it is only one aspect of my work, my psychoses, and how I will relate to them in this project, have dominated this last week. I need to find a convincing way to integrate the small text fragments in the memories of my psychoses that have popped up recently, as parallel elements in my texts. This is in order to say something about the emotional layers of my work. And I need to articulate why I want to include these text fragments in the first place.

I have read about Anna Odell and the way she manifested herself through her BA degree project at Konstfack (University College of Arts, Crafts and Design) Stockholm (Odell, 2009) and I am reading and pondering bits and pieces of other artists whom I could refer to. I am thinking of Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) the French writer/artist connected to Surrealism who, for the better part of his life went in and out of mental hospitals and all the while continued to work, write and draw. (Rowell, 1996) I want to use him in my text as an example of an artist dealing with being mentally ill, put him in an opposing position to that of Anna Odell and relate these two artists to myself and to how I approach my work.

I am in a corridor. I need to visit the bathroom. It is dark. A note on the inside of the door says that the light will switch on if you close the door and lock it. I don't dare go in.

day 4. New drawing. 70 x 100 cm. Although that might be too big right now. Smaller is faster and I want to work with a new form. But small doesn't speak the same language as big, and 70 x 100 is still just a step in between.

It is sort of the same curved form as the moon, but with a horizontal platform. A plateau. (One could jump from) (picture 7). It's an old idea, probably twenty years old, but I want to pick it up again, since it is still present. Back then, I hardly ever continued working with a form to develop it further. I worked a little bit with it and went on to



Picture 6. '**No title, Moon**',
Charcoal on paper, 2011
100 x 70 cm.

the next, knowing that there would come a time when I would continue. This time has come now. I have small sketches in a book and I want to work with them.

The abstract forms I use are quite simple. They always have been simple, in their apparent form, not so much in their context or content.

In my drawing I never developed the technical skills as I have with my sculpture. Drawing has been my older sister's domain since I was young. She had a hand for drawing, so I could just as well forget even thinking about it. I became convinced that it was not for me and I never even bothered to try. Later I did, but it always has been, and still is, loaded with fears of my inabilities. So I get easily locked and blocked, and it is precisely that which this is about, the Pongus-motif and content are directly linked.

I drive a needle through his eye.

The picture is a newspaper clipping that hangs on my wall. He is a war criminal, responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands. In my delusion it is me. I am he. I commit voodoo on myself.

day 5. I am struggling to find a way to embed the memory fragments of my psychoses in this project. Since they are very private, I hesitate to integrate them in this text. Yet, if I want to go beyond my fear, I need to use these fragments in view of the fact that they represent important emotional layers in my work. These emotional layers are present in both my drawings and my sculptures as a part of the expression and content. Though in my sculpture they are not directly visual, since I try to conceal them. In my recent drawings the emotional layers come more to the surface.

My psychoses are not a subject in my work, as they are in that of Anna Odell. Odell faked and relived a psychosis as a part of an art project in 2009. (Odell, 2009) She pretended that she would commit suicide and protested intensely to the people who wanted to help her, until she was drugged and forcibly removed from the scene. She

had a psychosis 13 years earlier in her life, and did this project to question the way psychiatric hospitals take care of people with an acute psychosis. With her project Anna Odell generated massive media attention and public debate. Yet this debate was not about psychiatric healthcare as she had hoped, but about the legitimacy of her actions and whether her project was or was not art. I don't think this text is the place to discuss these questions. I name Anna Odell because she is an artist who explicitly used her psychosis, as a theme in her work, to question what she thinks is a systemic failure in psychiatric healthcare. A political stance that I do not want to take.

I use my experiences with psychoses to charge my work emotionally, to make it more powerful, but the psychoses themselves are not a subject in my work. They are a part the experiences that formed me into the person I am now. I do not feel the need to communicate these experiences in a political format as Anna Odell does in her project. Yet, I want to write about these experiences in order to get a deeper understanding of my motives to work with portraits of victims.

From my abstract work one could construe my mental state during the psychoses, which would be a valid interpretation of these works, but only if this interpretation is explicit. Since these drawings are conveyed in a fully abstract realm, they are open to any interpretation.

My intention is to make art. Unlike psychiatric patients who have an incurable urge to draw or who need to get hold of themselves through creative therapy. In my perception they don't make art with the same intentions as an artist. Yet, the list of artists with psychiatric problems who managed their illness through their work is long. Consider Antonin Artaud. In contrast to Odell, who replayed her psychosis with a political agenda, Artaud can't be anyone other than who he is: a man with psychiatric problems.

Demonerna kaller mig.

Det är skuggor av fåglar överallt.

Över mig, under mig, på sidorna, bakom mig.



Picture 7. **No title, (Jump)**
charcoal on paper (detail), 2012

*Demons are calling for me.
There are shadows of birds everywhere.
Over me, under me, beside me, behind me.*

Berny Pålsson, 2004
(the english translation is my own)

I wake up in pain. It is dark. I lay naked on a bed. It is a spring steel base, no mattress, no sheets. I'm cold. Black creeps out of tiny holes in the wall. I am chained and strangled, cooked and roasted and quartered. I cannot scream.

day 6. Painting a sculpture from a recent series "War against War!" based on a book with the same title by the German author Ernst Friedrich who was active between the wars (picture 8). With this book, and his anti-war museum, the pacifist Friedrich took a stand against war. He collected over one hundred and eighty photographs from German military and medical archives and published them to enlighten the public to the horrors of war. The book contains a collection of pictures of destroyed cities and vehicles, endless numbers of dead bodies scattered about the battlefields, cumulating in a series of close-up pictures of soldiers whose faces are partly blown away by grenades, but who miraculously survived. Some of these pictures are of man whose faces are 'restored' by the primitive plastic surgery of the early 20th century. Friedrich hoped that his book would give a face to the war and as such function as a deterrent, preventing wars in the future. In 1933 he was chased away by the Nazis from his hometown Berlin, forced to leave his museum which the Nazis seized as their hangout (Friedrich, 1924: 14-15; Sontag, 2003: 13-14). I have used some of the pictures from this book to make a series of sculptures, since they fascinated and horrified me. The sculptures themselves are freer in style than my series on Racial Biology and French Children of the Holocaust. In the latter two, I wished to depict specific individuals, whereas the

former deals with anonymous war victims. I wanted to use a freer style to open up my way of working.

But why do I want to create these sculptures in the first place? What is my interest in them? Is it to shock and provoke the audience? Do I think that the contribution I make with my art will help to put an end to war? Just as Friedrich thought? Actually not. I am not so naive that I believe private discussion initiated by my work here in Sweden would help to put an end to the war in Afghanistan. Yet war seen from the perspective of war victims is one of the recurring themes in my work. Mutilated faces represent mutilated souls. With this work I relive some of the aspects of my past, transfigure those aspects into sculpture with a thought-content tangible to others. With this work I tell my story through the stories of others; I tell their stories through my experiences, through my eyes. Nevertheless, my private stories remain untold. My personal incentive is to feel purified, slightly redeemed, having created these works, while at the same time I feel that I can focus on a topic that is larger than me. This is to salvage the Calvinist in me.

Thinking of Louise Bourgeois in the way she brought her experiences into her work, saying something both very personal and of common value at the same time.

I smash my head through the glass. It is like an eggshell. I need to be reborn. I open the window and put myself on the ledge. I am naked. I loose myself, but there is an angel to catch me.

day 7. Sometimes there are frustratingly long periods between the days I can work in my studio. Like now: I have worked and I have travelled and I have even been in my studio, but I was unable to do any artistic work. So, here I am, trying to get focused again, but there are many things and thoughts pulling me in all directions. Not the least the reading and writing for this project. I permit myself a small amount of idling in able to get back on track.



Picture 8. From the series on **War against War!**
ceramics and pigments, 2011

Yesterday I was in the studio for a short while and started a new drawing. It is big, 230 x 145 cm. Unlike the drawings I discussed earlier, I have not started with a clear form, but I sprinkled some charcoal powder on the paper to start with. There is a connection to previous abstract work I made: two blocks (fields) hovering over a third. Just black ink, nothing else. The lines and sides are drawn by hand, which upon closer observation, give the blocks a more organic character (picture 9). I think of some of the works of Brice Marden, for example: "Dark", 1963. (In: Garrels, 2006: 134) Two dark grey fields, put together. It is the expressive way Marden applied his paint that brings this painting to life.

"If you're not working with preconceived forms and thinking, then you can concentrate on expression. It is possible, I think, to make art on this instinctive level, out of a deeply felt response. The longer I paint, the more I think this is true."

Brice Marden, 1987

Something like this I would like to achieve in my drawings: a direct emotional expression on an instinctive level, connected to a deeper layer in myself. Which means that I cannot simply go to the studio and start with a new drawing like starting the lawn mower. This is why I procrastinate to get focused.

I am in a fog. They put me there. There is no way out. I am numb.

day 8. What is happening in the drawings I make? They are kind of reiterative. There are two, three or four dark organic forms with multiple nodes, cores that are meeting, touching, merging, dissolving, separating, enclosing—each other and themselves. There is a flow, a movement, a genesis, a growing, a becoming. But this becoming is as well a start for something prodigiously heavy.

In the early years when I made abstract drawings, I could literally feel salvation from the pains and fears I had suffered during my psychoses. I could convey these emotions in my drawings and felt catharsis afterwards. But I could only work for a limited amount of time and on a small scale. I lacked the energy to move on. It was an exhausting experience.

Now I have the capacity to work on a large scale (and maybe I even have to), yet I wonder if I have the capacity to convey the same emotional energy. My psychotic experiences took place more than twenty years ago, and yet the immanent emotionality is still strong, is still a threat, but this threat is no longer persistent.

I am a chicken. I lay on my nest and scratch the surface with my legs. My feathers are itching.

day 9. Today I'll start with a new portrait.

I have selected a photo from the book "French Children of the Holocaust". It is a picture of Jacques Jakubowicz, deported when he was 13. (Klarsfeld, 1996: 1586) He looks like a very sweet Aryan boy with blond hair and a hint of a melancholic smile on his face. I go for this melancholic smile whose contrast to the Star of David mounted on his coat captures my interest (picture 10-11).

I have to work fast, since there is not much time left. At the end of next week it has to be done. First I have to decide on the size of the sculpture. The picture of Jacques was taken when he was probably 12 years old. At this age he was somewhere between 140-170 cm, according to a standard growth curve. He looks frail to me, so I put him at the lower part of the scale, around 145-150 cm. The next assumption is that his head is around 19-20 cm, which implies that the actual sculpture has to be approximately 42 cm, if I am to follow the picture. Which in turn means that I have to make the sculpture around 46 cm high, since the clay will shrink by about 9%. This means that I have to



Picture 9. **No Title**
Ink on Chinese paper, ca. 1993, 137 x 68,5 cm.

multiply every measurement on my picture by 1.7. Since I want my sculpture to have a naturalistic appearance, I measure every little detail in his face and body and transfer that to my piece of clay.

Over the years I have developed this particular working method, and I have become seasoned with it, which might be both its weakness and its strength. In a way I repeat myself, but this reiteration has meant that I have developed very specific skills, which I now can apply to my sculpture. These sculptures are like actors in a play that I direct, serving my needs in a presentation. But sometimes I question the creativity of this process and it can feel that I am in a sense more a craftsman than an artist. Even though these are not opposite positions, an artist is also a craftsman, a craftsman also an artist.

I have only one picture of Jacques. He looks straight into the lens, but his body is slightly turned away in a classic and traditional photographic portrait. I have to estimate the depth of his face and features, which I only can get accurate by approximation. Here my experience comes in. Even though I try to get as close as I can to portraying Jacques Jakubowicz as the person I think he was, I have only limited information. The question is not whether I make an accurate portrait of Jacques, but whether or not this portrait is credible.

I am in an egg and I need to get out.

day 10. Even though I have made dozens of portraits, I never take sculpting them for granted. It doesn't always come naturally to me. Sometimes I have to struggle, because it simply doesn't work the way I want, and sometimes it floats out of my hands. Which is much better. If I struggle, I might as well stop and do something else, since it will never be any good. The best pieces I make come with flow, the mental state where I feel confident, secure and challenged at the same time, but unfortunately I can never force myself into this mental state. I can only create the space where it can happen.

(Csikszentmihalyi, 1998: 39-41, 61-62) That is where my procrastination comes in. It can go wrong when the pressure is too high. For example when I had to perform at the Artist in Residence Guldagergaard in Denmark last autumn. Working in a shared studio space on a commission and struggling for four weeks with a piece that never became as good as I wanted it to be. I did the following piece, no commission, in three hours and it was more interesting to look at. Flow is an absolute necessity in my work.

I will now return to my drawings and see if it works to switch just like that. Going from vacuum cleaning to cutting the grass. I have been looking at the drawing for a couple of days while it was hanging on the wall. I did not interact with it and I sort of know what to do next. The different fields have to meet and work together; I will slowly move forward to the point where I think it should be. I will also start with a new and smaller piece, 140 x 148 cm. I don't want all the drawings to be the same size, to lend each of them a distinct character. In the new drawing I plan there to be only one field.

The two fields that looked like kissing heads are gone. Instead I seem to have a standing figure in this drawing. These associations are OK for me. It is like looking at the clouds in the sky and discovering elephants, faces and cars. The mind wants control and interpretation. I don't want it to be too obvious though. The abstract/non-figurative quality should prevail, so that the contrast with my sculpture is maximized.

I continue with the second drawing, because I want the other one to rest. The next time I can work on them is in a week. I feel that these drawings have to grow in my mind and I don't want to impose myself on them. They need to tell me what is next.

I wake up in a white room. There are no windows. I lay on a mattress with a plastic cover. I am naked. There are no sheets. The door is locked. I am not cold, but tired. I need to poop and there is only a white pot on the floor. I nearly throw up from disgust. I bang the door and point at the pot to the one who is opening. He takes it out and comes back with some food. I sleep again.



Picture 10. From the series: "**French Children of the Holocaust**": "**Jacques Jakubowicz** was born on April 15, 1931, in Nancy (Meurthe-et-Moselle). Arrested in the UGIF Lamarck-Secrétan children's center, he was deported on July 31, 1944, on convoy 77".
Ceramics and pigment, 2012
life-size.

Later, he brings me my clothes and I can follow him out. We walk through a corridor and come to a room where there are some people eating. I scream at them all I can.

day 11. My method of drawing is very different from my way of working with portrait sculpture.

In my sculpture I have one or two pictures that I use as a reference. I try to get as close as I can to the person I depict. Through the years I have developed a descriptive working method, where I measure the head and all its features and their positions and relations to each other. At the same time, while looking at the pictures I have, I try to feel the person I depict on an emotional level and I try to catch that feeling in my sculpture.

I hardly ever use my hands to articulate my sculpture. Instead I use tools as an intermediary between my hands and the clay. I apply clay and remove it as I think is needed. I can go back and forth in this process of modelling and start all over with a detail if needed. I use tools for measuring and modelling in a rational approach, together with my sensitivity to get the portrait “right”. During this process I measure and compare the sculpture with my reference picture(s) and I am done when I think I cannot go further in creating a credible likeness and the sculpture itself seems to be in balance.

In my drawings I take another position. My references are not outside, but inside me. I don’t use mimesis, but introspection. There is no way to get it “right”.

I scatter some charcoal powder on the paper, or I draw a line and try to see what happens. The process is highly coincidental. I hardly ever work with tools in my drawings, but I use my fingers and hands to spread the charcoal over the paper. I might use a glove to protect my hand from wearing out, as I have on several occasions worked until my hand started to bleed (picture 12).



Picture 11. Detail

I work flat on a table, hang the paper on the wall and see what is happening. It is an intuitive seeing. I make decisions about where to apply changes, take the paper from the wall and put it on the table again to work further on it. Since it only can become blacker, it is a one-way process of a drawing getting darker and darker. White is the space which I leave untouched. There are a lot of nuances in grey. I work until I am intuitively pleased.

***I smash the glass. It scatters in small fragments all over the room.
I hide with my blanket under the bed.***

day 12. Initiating work on my sculpture is considerably easier than starting with the drawings. Since I know where to go with my sculpture, I can simply continue where I left off. I can easily see what needs to be done. This is more complicated with the drawings: I have to sit down and look and feel first, before I can make any decision on how to proceed. Where my attitude toward my sculpture is conceptual, toward my drawings it is contemplative; the drawings pull me deeper into my process, deeper into myself. The rational process of modelling allows me to excel technically; drawing challenges my intuition. The differentiation between my drawings and my sculpture interests me, since it triggers a broad spectrum of my personality; it satisfies my rationality, intuition and emotionality.

The drawings visualize and embody deeper emotional layers within myself that are partly formed through the prodigious emotional experiences during my psychoses. My sculptures bear a similar emotional drive, though the expression is diametrically different and under the surface. The emotional content is merely disclosed in the selection of the subjects I work with.

Until recent years I could only scratch the surface of this content through rational and analytical articulation. I found it difficult to define the underlying motives and to search beyond my self-created concepts, mainly because I didn't want to mention my

experiences with psychoses. Consequently, I have never seriously formulated what this content is about; I wanted to describe my work without referring to these experiences, which made it into a dragging exercise. Obviously, since I have started with these writings, I dare to access deeper formations within myself, visualize them in my drawings and connect the drawings to my sculpture, without having to hide a crucial component. Now I can begin to verbalize their interrelations on another level.

I lay in a bathtub that is filled up to the brim. The water is warm and welcoming. I see how my naked body is floating and consider drifting away.

day 13. Reading Judith Butler's critique on Julia Kristeva (Butler, 2006: 79-80), I can think of the rational-conceptual approach that I have in my sculpture as a representation of a paternal system and the intuitive approach in my drawings as maternal. Though this might be obvious, it describes another aspect of my work. I have thought of these kinds of connections a long time ago, but Butler brings it back to the surface with great clarity.

In my early twenties I experienced an identity crisis. In the "Symbolic" environment in which I was schooled, I worked as a laboratory assistant and was trained in a strict template of how to think and work, I discovered that I had developed myself unilaterally and that I was cut off from my maternal side. My quest for this side within me, which encircled my sexual and later even my gender identity, was triggered by the film *Querelle* by Rainer Werner Fassbinder (Fassbinder, 1982). I was knocked out by this hypnotic film about masculinity and gay life and I soon found myself questioning the whole cultural-symbolic system in which I had grown up and in which I never had been at ease. I questioned this white-male dominated disposition, which I call *Pondus* in this project, through making art of all kinds (visual arts, singing, writing, poetry, theatre, dance) to find an alternative form in which I would thrive better. Through this I returned to the interests and spirit that I had as a child. This artistic questioning, that can



Picture 12. From the series:
'Naive and Sentimental Drawings'
Charcoal on paper, 2012
240 x 135 cm.

be read as an attempt to return to the maternal body, disrupted the fundamentals of the world in which I lived to such an extent that I became psychotic.

After these psychoses, I continued making art, but considerably more at my guard for the possible consequences of 'her' disruptive powers. The rational-conceptual approach to my sculpture proved to be a safe choice, but doubts over the unilateral tendencies of this method remained. Which is one of the reasons why I took up my drawings again. If I include both drawing, sculpture and writing in my process, as I have done during this project, I will generate a multi-faceted attitude, which I find highly compelling.

REFLECTIONS

texts When I started with this project, I expected to have two elements in my work to consider, my sculpture and my drawings. However, early on I realized that a third element had entered and would take a significant place: namely my writing. Notwithstanding that I knew from the start that I would write about my work, I thought this writing would be secondary, in the service of my art, about my art and with the purpose of a deeper understanding of my art. But to my surprise it took a position of equal importance next to my drawings and sculpture. It became another part of my process, another entry into my work, though with a non-visual focus. These writings became decisive for a deeper understanding of my process, since it is through delineation of my process that I can reach deeper grounds.

One of the first things that happened in my writing became of crucial importance to the rest of this project: once I decided to write down whatever of relevance came up, memories of my psychoses became very dominant. I experienced psychotic episodes between when I was 26 and 30 followed by 10 years of depression and recuperation. These experiences have played a critical role in the development of the person I have

become. The memories of these events dwell in my body and mind as significant undercurrents in my daily life and in my art. Yet I hardly ever make them public, or at least only occasionally and to a small selection of people. This is partly because of their private nature, but also because I don't want the spectator to interpret my work mainly through the filter of my psychiatric past.

Consequently I always chose to avoid referring to this content and it became banned. However, these references are so crucial that I often found myself in trouble explaining my work, since I had to stay away from a side of the content that is actually undeniable. In the beginning of this project I did not foresee that I would start to describe this hidden content. It happened because I opened up to the unexpected.

Bringing fragments of memories of these psychoses into this text has given a twist to their interpretation. The text fragments grate uncomfortably with the main text and break its flow. They allude to elements in the main text. They evoke the underlying content to surface. Since the worst has been said, there is no more shame and a subsequent flow can arise to be formulated. In the journals I have tried to maintain this flow and verbalise the specific importance of flow in my process.

The text fragments are adjacent to the drawings used for this project. Just as the drawings have a strong corporeal presence, the text fragments verbalize this physicality with a clear magnitude. All the fragments start with an "I" who is placed in a specific situation from which there is no escape. The emotional body induced by these fragments finds its visual counterpart in the drawings.

drawings Even though they are very physical, these drawings have a fully abstract and non-figurative quality. They are on the verge of being without form. One can even question if there is any form at all. In so far as there is form, it appears and disappears. There might be an opening, but it dissolves (Kjellgren, 2011). Fifteen years ago, when I worked with abstract drawings, I considered it to be problematic that I could not find a distinctive way to know whether a drawing had to look one way or another. Since it might as well be both, I started to feel that the whole exercise of making abstract work



Picture 13. From the series "**French Children of the Holocaust**": "**Jacques Wisznia** was born on October 15, 1937, in Paris, where he lived at 108 rue de la Folie-Mericourt (11th arr.). He was deported to Auschwitz on February 9, 1943, on convoy 46."

Ceramics and pigments, 2011, life size.

was pointless, since everything became indiscriminate. That is partly why I changed my working concepts into figurative sculpture where I sought this distinctive quality. Now I find the openness of my drawings essential and I thrive on it. The drawings allude to a corporeal and complex emotional presence.

The drawings in this project are entitled “Naive and Sentimental Drawings” after the composition “Naive and Sentimental Music” by the American composer John Adams. (Adams, 1988) Adams based his title on an essay of Friedrich von Schiller, “Über Naive und sentimentalische Dichtung” (Schiller, 1795) in which Schiller describes two types of poets: those “who are not conscious of any rift between themselves and their milieu, or within themselves; and those who are so conscious” (quote of Isaiah Berlin on the website of John Adams). Those who are not conscious are naive, those who are conscious, sentimental. My drawings balance between this conscious and unconscious state of being.

sculpture The portraits are done in a plain naturalistic style. They depict ordinary people, in this case children. Over the years I have refined my technique, especially for crafting the eyes, so that looking at these sculptures gives a very life-like experience. I emphasize this experience by painting them with watercolours and presenting them life-size. So a girl of seven years will be met at a height of 123 cm, a boy of 4 at 98 cm. Regarding these sculptures of children can be an ordinary aesthetic experience, with regards to expression and technique, except the emotional content is concealed. Once the title of the sculpture is read, there is no escape: these are not ordinary children, but children abducted from their parents, from society, and indiscriminately put to death. The title is essential: “Jacques Wisznia was born on October 15, 1937, in Paris, where he lived at 108 rue de la Folie-Mericourt (11th arr.). He was deported to Auschwitz on February 9, 1943, on convoy 46.” (Klarsfeld, 1996: 1361) This is as dry and descriptive as the portrait itself (picture 13).

Some of these portraits have a more clearly told story. Seeing that a child holds a sign with a number, you start to wonder what it is about; but seeing another child with a Star of David on his coat leads to no other association than the horrors of the Holocaust. The



Picture 14. Detail

fact that these portraits are of children charges them with an emotional energy I could not imagine before I myself had children. Their fate is incomprehensible. Working with portraits of grown-ups would not have generated the same emotional impact.

By making an appealing portrait, I catch the attention of the spectator. Once I have their attention, I burden them this very uncomfortable story from which there is no escape. That makes this work subversive by nature. Through the strategy of telling an uncomfortable story in this way, I try to redeem the dignity of these victims.

Working with this subject channels my emotionality. Giving shape to the experiences I endured in my psychoses. Redeeming myself by telling the stories of others. Seeing them through my experiences, seeing mine through theirs. Realizing that something other than myself is real.

relations My sculptures, my drawings and my texts interrelate in a complex way. The emotional presence that is incorporated in my sculptures is perceived subliminally. The drawings visualize this subliminally perceived emotional corpus, as if it is projected upon them. The drawings also allude to the emotional experiences of the subject in the text fragments: another emotional body. The clarity of the texts is mirrored by the clarity of the sculptures. The fates of those who are portrayed in the sculptures are as inescapable as that of the subject in the texts. There is a trinity in which the drawings are intermediate (picture 14).

CONCLUSION

research has long been a part of my process, ever since I started to work in a more thematic way. I explore a theme, visit libraries and websites to find images and information around the theme I have chosen; I read about it and think around it. But I have never used this research as artistic practice, to model my process. My research

has been explorative and documentary, after which I took the next step to use the material I had collected as a basis for my artistic work. So too, this work has a strong documentary input.

I have used writing in my artistic practice as a tool to understand my psyche, to ease the pain that attends an artistic process and to overcome artistic blocks. It has helped me to keep going. I have tried to write about specific bodies of work; texts that I invariably considered difficult to conceive. In this project my thinking about my writing has shifted from therapeutic to investigative, creating a fundament for a deeper understanding of my work. This makes me very eager to continue; there is a lot more to explore.

Gert Germeraad, 2013

I wrote this text during the course 'Artistic Research Processes' at Konstfack, University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, Stockholm, 2012. Tutors: Emma Göransson and Roland Ljungberg

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Picture 15. Examination exhibition for the course "**Artistic Research Processes**" at Konstfack, University College for Arts, Crafts and Design, Stockholm, June 2012.

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PICTURES

Picture 1. Newspaper clipping, NRC Handelsblad, circa 1992.

Picture 2. From the series "On Racial Biology - Eugenics", Ceramics and pigments, 2011, life size.

Picture 3. Portrait of a Man, Ceramics and Pigments, 2004-2006

Picture 4. From the series: "French Children of the Holocaust": "Anny-Yolande Horowitz was born on June 2, 1933, in Strassbourg. Interned in the Lalande camp near Tours and then transferred to Drancy, she was deported to Auschwitz on convoy 31 on September 11, 1942, with her mother, Frieda and her sister Paulette, age 7". Ceramics and pigments, 2011, life size.

Picture 5. 'Pondus', Charcoal on paper, 2011, 100 x 70 cm.

Picture 6. No Title, (Moon), Charcoal on paper, 2012, 100 x 70 cm.

Picture 7. No title, (Jump), Charcoal on paper (detail), 2012.

Picture 8. War against War!, Ceramics and pigments, 2011, life-size.

Picture 9. No Title, Ink on Chinese paper, ca. 1993, 137 x 68,5 cm.

Picture 10. From the series: "French Children of the Holocaust: Jacques Jakubowicz was born on April 15, 1931, in Nancy (Meurthe-et-Moselle). Arrested in the UGIF Lamarck-Secrétan children's center, he was deported on July 31, 1944, on convoy 77". Ceramics and pigment, 2012, life-size.

Picture 11. Detail

Picture 12. 'Naive and Sentimental Drawing', Charcoal on paper, 2012, 240 x 135 cm.

Picture 13. From the series "French Children of the Holocaust": "Jacques Wisznia was born on October 15, 1937, in Paris, where he lived at 108 rue de la Folie-Mericourt (11th arr.). He was deported to Auschwitz on February 9, 1943, on convoy 46".
Ceramics and pigments, 2011, life size.

Picture 14. Detail

Picture 15. Examination exhibition for the course "Artistic Research Processes" at Konstfack, University College for Arts, Crafts and Design, Stockholm, June 2012.

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