I WANTED TO BE YOUR WOLF, BUT YOU NEVER CRIED

Degree Thesis for Entrepreneurship in the Arts, Master of Culture and Art Therese Sunngren-Granlund



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Degree Thesis for Entrepreneurship in the Arts, Master of Culture and Art Master Degree Programme in Culture and Art Novia University of Applied Sciences Jakobstad 2016, Finland

MASTER'S THESIS

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Degree Programme: Master of Culture and Arts,

Entrepreneurship in the Arts **Supervisor:** Power Ekroth

Title: I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried

Date: 14.11.2016

Number of pages: 89

Appendices: 1

Summary

In this paper I aim to discuss the boundary between fiction and nonfiction within the field of arts. This is done by analysing and discussing the fine line in between fiction and reality in my own artwork I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried, and comparing it to other contemporary artists and works of art.

My study consists of two parts. In the first part I try to sort out the concept of narrative, the difference between fiction and nonfiction, and the characteristics of narrative art and confessional art. In the second part I reflect on the process I went through in *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried*, what it became, and what will possibly happen next.

Language: English

Key words: art, artist, conceptual art, conceptual artist, confessional art, contemporary art, contemporary artist, fiction, love, narrative, narrative art, nonfiction, photography, poetry, sound art, text, unrequited love, visual art, visual artist

CONTENTS

Introduction 1
PART I
Telling stories 4
Defining fiction and nonfiction 5
Narratives in art 6
Confessions in art
On confessions 9
Mingling fact with fiction13
My cousin Sophie Calle14
Emotions into context
PART II
I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried21
Unrequited love as an idea24
The photographs
The texts 64
The sound 68
The title 69
The final piece70
Meeting the viewer71
About dishonesty 75

CONCLUSION

What it became and what happens next
Bibliography83
Images
Appendix

"Remembering what it felt like to be 20 overwhelmed by feeling and sensation, lost for words."

Chris Kraus (1997, 241)

Introduction

I have for many years been interested in exploring "the extraordinary in the ordinary". Everyday life is a phrase we often use to refer to the ways in which people typically act, think and feel on daily basis. Daily life may be considered mundane, unremarkable, routine, natural or just plain normal. Most people sleep at night and are active during the day. Most people eat two or three meals a day. The time we spend working often follows a daily schedule, usually beginning in the morning, and the evenings are for leisure. Beyond these broad similarities, different people spend their days differently. If we agree on this, what else is then left in our everyday lives that could be considered ordinary?

In my artistic practice I have often put myself into different roles or situations, as a method for artistic research. For my master's thesis, I was intrigued by the idea of combining this with my personal interest in literature. As a reader I am more or less an omnivore, but above all I am fond of fiction, novels. In my master thesis project I wished to visualise the escape into other worlds and realities I experience in literature. Enjoying the escape into another world does not mean I am unhappy with what I have in reality, but rather that I'm interested in where the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction in a novel actually are to be found. Can the experience of reading fiction strengthen our experience of reality and vice versa? And what happens when this is done in visual art? Is it still credible? For my master's thesis project I wanted to create a narrative that seemed to be, or could be, autobiographical, without necessarily being that. I searched for a theme that is personal but still possible for many people to relate to.

I found my subject in the novel *I Love Dick* by Chris Kraus, and decided I wanted my project to be about unrequited love.

In addition to Chris Kraus' *I Love Dick* I have been influenced by other authors and artists during the process of working on *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried*. Sources of inspiration are for example Sophie Calle, Lena Andersson, Siri Hustvedt, Anna Odell and Tracey Emin. My thoughts have also been influenced by the writer and philosopher Alain de Botton and the literary theorist and philosopher Roland Barthes.

PART I

Telling stories

"There are countless forms of narratives in the world."

Roland Barthes (1975, 238)

In this chapter I try to sort out the concept of narrative, the difference between fiction and nonfiction, and the characteristics of narrative art and confessional art.

A narrative is usually used as a synonym to a story, and is normally seen as belonging to the category of fictional writing. Usually, this means that the story is based upon imagined events and characters. Characteristic of narratives is that they usually contain specific features. In every story there are characters, one of whom is the protagonist, the main character of the narrative. In addition to the protagonist there is usually also an antagonist, a character who is opposed to the protagonist. And for a story to keep going forwards, it needs a plot; events that occur and that the characters can react on. (Janovsky, 2013-2016)

In his essay *An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative*, Roland Barthes (1975, 238) writes that narratives take on many forms; in articulated language, either oral or written, as performed or in gestures, or visually, in still or moving images and/or in a mixture of all of these forms together.

Defining fiction and nonfiction

"It's always seemed odd to me that nonfiction is defined, not by what it is, but by what it is not. It is not fiction. But then again, it is also not poetry, or technical writing or libretto. It's like defining classical music as nonjazz."

Philip Gerard (1996, 3)

A simple way of defining fiction and nonfiction is to say that fiction is untrue, consisting only of imaginary things, imaginary people and imaginary events, things you cannot necessarily prove. And nonfiction, on the other hand, is true, based on real facts, real people, real things and events, things you can confirm by referring to a source. (Prabhat, 2011)

However, while many works of nonfiction are basically rooted in truth, they have a bias, which means that the person reading or viewing should not take the story completely literally. Examples of nonfiction with an agenda that often causes the author to twist the truth a little bit are biographies, autobiographies and documentaries. There is also fiction where only certain aspects of the story are fictionalised, for example the characters' thoughts and dialogues, while other parts might be based on real events and people. (Reference.com, 2016)

"There is really no fiction or nonfiction; there is only narrative.

One mode of perception has no greater claim on the truth than the other; that the difference has to do perhaps with distance —narrative distance — from the characters; it has to do with the kind of voice that is talking, but it certainly hasn't to do with the common distribution between fact and imagination."

E.L. Doctorow, 1977 (Nieman Reports, 2015)

Narratives in art

"As far as I am concerned, a painting speaks for itself. What is the use of giving explanations, when all is said and done? A painter has only one language."

Pablo Picasso (O'Brian, 1976, 121)

According to Picasso in the quote above, art, in this particular case a painting, does not need any further explanation or interpretation. The artwork itself already reveals everything the viewer needs to know. Picasso says that art has a language. It needs no further explanation because it already speaks for itself.

Until the twentieth century, Western art has mostly been narrative; depicting literary, historical, mythical, religious stories or legends. The stories referred to were usually well-known and already familiar to the audience. During the seven-teenth century, scenes and stories from everyday life became popular and genre painting became a concept used to describe this. (Tate, 2016)

In the twentieth century narrative became a subtler part of the artworks, and private events and political and social issues appeared more often in the form of coded references. Such works are typically seen as modern allegories, Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* (1937) being one example of this. (Tate, 2016)

Even though I can admit that the term "narrative art" is very descriptive, it is also a bit limiting. Hasn't art always reflected upon its own time? On the other hand, labelling things, events and movements in some way is only done afterwards, in order to categorise them, in order to understand what happened. A simple

Confessions in art

Confessional art is a type of contemporary art that spotlights a deliberate disclosure of the private self. Confessional art makes possible a private examination of the artist's, the subject's, or the viewer's own, often private and sometimes controversial, feelings and experiences. Autobiographical visual arts and writings are often affiliated with confessional art. (Jacksson & Hogg, 2016)

The artist Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010) is said to be "mother of confessional art" (Ain, 2015), basically inventing the whole genre. As the mother of confessional art, she is the "spiritual grandmother" of Tracey Emin (Dorment, 2010). To Bourgeois, art was a "guarantee of sanity" and she talked about her own art as a confrontation with her past to achieve self-knowledge in the present. Even if Bourgeois' art is autobiographical it is at the same time investigating human and universal subjects (Müller-Westermann, 2015, 12). This, in my opinion, is why so many can relate to her art. Her practise was doubtlessly an unending, lifelong exorcism. According to Bourgeois, "artists repeat themselves", "because they have no access to a cure". (Searle, 2010)

Tracey Emin (1963), is a British contemporary artist, recognised for using introspective methods in her artworks. Her installation My Bed (1998) was mentioned as "one of the most contro

versial readymades ever created" in a blog post on The Guardian's website by Jonathan Jones. If Duchamp's famous *Fountain* (1917) is a statement of irony, disconnected from romantic feelings and stating that anything and everything can be art if the artist say so, Emin's bed is all about feelings. In the artwork, Emin shares intimate, real details about her life, doing this by showing her own bed, covered with empty bottles, used underwear, clothes, cigarette butts and blood (Saatchi gallery, 2016). The work has become an icon, described as a "monument to the heartache of relationship breakdown" (Ellis-Petersen, 2015). *My Bed* was controversial in its own time, but today it is like time machine, a document from a yesterday. (Jones, 2016).

In a Dutch neuroscience study, scientists discovered that if we are told an image is an artwork, the brain automatically downgrades the emotional response to it, and vice versa, if we are told an image is nonfictional, our emotional response is higher (Science-Daily, 2016). Does this mean that knowing Tracey Emin's bed is a work of art makes the emotional impact less intense? The work is definitely not removed from reality, it is taken directly from reality, reality is lying all over the bed. Maybe the scientists are simplifying their results too much? I think Jonathan Jones says it well in his blog:

"... it is human and healthy to see art as less intense than reality itself. Yet that does not mean art is cold or cannot move us. Rather, that removal from the world is the frame that allows art to make us see reality more clearly and with fresh emotion."

Jonathan Jones, 2016

On confessions

One of my main sources of inspiration for *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried* is the book *I Love Dick* (1997) by Chris Kraus. *I Love Dick* is about Chris Kraus, a 39-years old, not so successful, experimental film maker who is married to the 17 year older academic Sylvére Lothringer. During a dinner in Los Angeles with the cultural critic Dick, and acquaintance of Sylvére's, Chris happens to fall in love with him. Since Chris and Sylvére no longer have a sexual relationship, Chris confesses her feelings about Dick to Sylvére the day after, and soon they are writing letters together to the subject of her passion. Letters that are partly ironical and partly deeply intimate.

Chris' obsession increases and Sylvére abandons the project, and the letters change character. The letters become diary entries and essays on art history. But Dick fails to respond Chris. He is not doing this to be mean, he's just ignoring her. Eventually they have sex and afterwards he says:

"I don't owe you anything.

You barged in here, this was your game,
your agenda, now it's yours to deal with."

Chris Kraus (1997, 163)

That is exactly what Chris Kraus does. She uses him as a stepping stone, from which she can think freely about art, aesthetics, politics and everything else, things that don't actually have anything to do with Dick. And just like that, he becomes a dick. Transformed from a subject into an object. (Kärde, 2016)

In The Guardian Books podcast (2016) Kraus says, in a conversation with Claire Armitstead, that she was surprised by how polarising the book was when it first came out. A lot of people who read the book really hated it, but on the other hand, that made others defend it even more passionately.

"Really, has no-one never left a husband before? Has no-one ever had an affair before? What's so shocking here?"

Chris Kraus, 2016

Then again, when the book got republished in 2015, almost two decades later, it got an avid reception and people really loved it. It became a feminist classic. Kraus herself thinks the reason for this is that people today are much more comfortable with privacy. *I Love Dick* does not seem so bad anymore compared to when it was first published, back in 1997.

According to Kraus, in an interview in the Swedish magazine BON, what she wanted to make visible when she wrote I

Love Dick was how to make the most intimate accessible. In the interview she says that if all these feelings and events, which are usually seen as embarrassing even when they're really not, are released in public, they lose their power. (Schunnesson, 2016)

Furthermore, she says that she also believes that women today are rejecting the idea that there is a need for discretion, meaning that women have now completely claimed their right to speak about their own experience.

"I mean, this idea that women take a vow to patriarchy, to never speak about the men they are involved with, that's over."

Chris Kraus, 2016

In other words, it is time to put all the things that earlier went on under the table on top of it, and actually look at them.

Another recurring theme in *I Love Dick* that Kraus is talking about in these interviews is the attitude that women are not able to create "universal" art. Creating personal art and talking about emotions and intimate matters has been used as a reason for why women have so often been written out of history. According to Kraus this attitude is not completely finished with, there is still a tendency to talk about female art, female writing, female artists, always described and referenced by gender in a way that male work never is.

"No matter how dispassionate or large a vision of the world a woman formulates, whenever it includes her own experience and emotion, the telescope's turned back on her. Because emotion's just so terrifying t he world refuses to believe that it can be pursued as discipline, as form. Dear Dick, I want to make the world more interesting than my problems.

Therefore, I have to make my problems social."

Chris Kraus (1997, 196)

This makes me wonder whether *I* wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried will be perceived as a particularly female work of art, since I am an artist working with a subject that is highly associated with intimacy and emotions, and because I am a woman? At the time of this writing the artwork has not yet been shown in an exhibition context, which means I can only guess how it will be received by the audience. In any case and whatever happens, I am questioning the idea that topics that deal with emotions and personal experiences should be perceived as one-sided, gender-specific, and not universal. As if only one sex can have feelings.

But this is not about whether one or the other sex may or may not experience feelings. I think I can say that most people do have feelings. The question is rather whether these feelings and personal reflections are accepted as universal.

Mingling fact with fiction

In the novel *Leviathan* (1992) by Paul Auster, one of the characters, the artist Maria Turner, is based on the conceptual artist Sophie Calle and her practice. In the novel Auster uses a number of episodes and ideas from Calle's practise, putting Turner through the same rituals as Calle already had done. He also invents two new works of art for his character, works that Calle then borrows and carries out in order to bring the character Maria Turner and herself closer together. The artworks that Auster borrows from Calle to shape Maria Turner are The Wardrobe, The Striptease, To Follow..., Suite vénitienne, The Detective, The Hotel, The Address Book and The Birthday Ceremony. And the works that Auster invents for Turner that Calle then uses in her own practise are *The* Chromatic Diet and Days Under The Sign Of B, C & W. Taking the the game to next level, Calle then asks Auster to be the author of her actions, asking him to create a fictional character that she could resemble. But Auster did not want to take responsibility to what could happen to Calle during such circumstances, instead he sent her directives to follow, which resulted in the artwork Gotham Handbook (Calle, 1999, 2-3, 9-10).

There are many layers to this work of art: Auster is borrowing works from Calle's practice for his novel *Leviathan*, acknowledging his debt to her in the dedication where he thanks her for letting him "mingle fact with fiction", resulting in Calle taking the fictional artworks from the novel and carrying them out literally, and ultimately she asks Auster to create a fictional character for her to act out during a certain period of time. Auster does not go along with that, but he gives her instructions to follow instead.

The whole process, every layer of it, is then assembled in the book *Double Game* (2000), in which Calle in her dedication thanks Auster for letting her "mingle fact with fiction".

This intricate game of layers, exploring the boundaries of fact and fiction, is in my opinion a remarkably sharp way of mixing up fantasy and reality and in the end, no one really knows what is what. In the process of making this work, Calle and Auster made fact out of fiction and vice versa.

My cousin Sophie Calle

In a one-to-one discussion with the artist Juan-Pedro Fabra Guemberena in February 2016 we talked about having artistic cousins, meaning that your artistic practise resembles of someone else's. Sometimes in a more conceptual way, other times visually. In either case it's important to be conscious of your cousins and how and in what ways their work resembles yours. In my case, I share a lot of similarities with Sophie Calle. When Guemberena associated my practise with Calle's it didn't come as a surprise to me, at the same time as it was flattering. I have admired Calle's practise for years already, and it is no wonder if it has come to influence mine.

On the other hand I am always very conscious about being too closely associated with Calle's practise. You need to be aware of that you are never alone and seldom the first with your thoughts and ideas, but at the same time you still want to have a unique mode of expression. What's more, I would prefer my works not to be perceived as copies of Sophie Calle's.

I first came across Sophie Calle through Paul Auster and his book *Leviathan*. I wanted to know who the real artist behind Maria Turner was and there and then I found Sophie Calle. I find Calle's practice fascinating, the way she is using events from her own life for her art, and how she is in a way living her life through her art and the other way around. It seems to me as if she's not making any difference between her art and her life, it's all the same.

Emotions into context

Even though *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried* is a fictional piece, the work could easily be interpreted as a true story. This is of course because I, as the artist of the work, am telling a story from a subjective first person perspective, in a way that could easily be confused with me being the main character in the narrative. In reality, neither the protagonist nor the antagonist is a self-portrait.

The artist Anri Sala has already put words on my thoughts when he talks about his work *Intervista* (1998) in an interview in *Flash Art International* (Gioni, Robecchi 2001, 104-107), where he says:

"I'm very often working with problems that are or could be mine; therefore, I deal with them in a personal way. There are times when I'm dealing with somebody else's problem, appropriating it, because I believe that there is a very small step that could bring each of us into everybody else's situation."

Anri Sala, 2001

In the same interview Sala also says that when you work like this, you allow things to get into your head, and even though it wasn't personal in the beginning, it gets personal and that's why it feels unfair to speak about them in the third or second person. The only way to do it is in first person. This is something I feel I can relate to. It's not my personal heartache I'm describing in *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried*, but since my main character is completely fictional, I have to step in myself and play the role of the brokenhearted.

The Swedish scriptwriter Kjell Sundqvists writes about the same thing in his book *Att skriva för film* (1999, 15-16), where he says that there's a significant difference between writing about something and writing with it. A journalist is often writing about events, but as a scriptwriter you have to be a part of what is happening and be in it together with your characters, and when working on *I wanted to be your wolf*, but you never cried I had to take the role of the scriptwriter. To write about something is to take distance, limiting yourself of taking the part of the viewer, but as a scriptwriter, you really have to go into your characters and take part in their drama and get totally involved. This is also what hits the audience the most, when you get to follow the characters in every little step and through every choice to the (uncertain) end.

Sometimes an idea can grow too strong, taking over the whole story. There's usually nothing wrong with the idea, but if it's emphasised too much the narrative gets run down and the audience feels like it's being underestimated. Here it's also important to talk with your characters instead of talking about them. Lack of intimacy trivialises both the narrative and the characters. (Sundstedt 1999, 16-18).

According to Barthes (1975, 261) there is a difference between the narrator and the author, even though it might seem logical to assume that the narrator and the author is the same person.

"The one who speaks (in the narrative) is not the one who writes (in real life) and the one who writes is not the one who is."

Barthes, 1975, 261

When putting Barthes' theory in the context of *I wanted* to be your wolf, but you never cried, it means that the one who speaks (in the narrative) is my protagonist, and the one who writes (in real life) is me as the artist and the one who writes is not the one who is, means that I, as the artist or author, is not to be confused with the protagonist in *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried*. Even though the protagonist is a creation of my mind, and we might share some similarities, we are not the same.

PART II

I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried

In this chapter I will talk more about the process I went through with the art project *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried*, what it became and what will possibly happen when the artwork meets the viewer.

The ideal way of writing is to have an ideal listener, who never really responds to anything, but you think they understand everything."

Chris Kraus, 2016

I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried consists of photographs, both digital and analog, written texts and a sound piece. These three components together form the work I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried. The body of work resembles of a fragmentary memoir, my protagonist is telling her side of the story by reflecting upon her memories, thoughts and experiences.

I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried is an artwork about unrequited love. The work bears a certain likeness to a narrative, with the protagonist telling the story as a subjective first person narrator. But it's a narrative without an obvious beginning and end. Instead of that, I want the work in itself to convey a certain feeling or atmosphere. I try to do that without underestimating my audience. I want the work to be frank and poetic, intimate and universal, all at the same time. I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried is a one-sided story and it never really tells the antagonist's side of the course of events.

Even if the artwork is not based on a true story, it's still possible that the work is inspired by real life events, but there is no way to tell when they took place or if they ever did take place at all. If the work is based on a true story or not is not important. The question that I think is more interesting from an artistic point of view is *if* it could have been true.

In the film *The Reunion* (in Swedish: *Återträffen*) from 2013, the Swedish artist Anna Odell is working with different realities on several levels.

The Reunion is a film about a school reunion, and the first half of the film shows the actual reunion. Everyone is in good spirit and the atmosphere is joyful. Until Anna destroys everything by talking about how she was bullied and humiliated during her time in school. Ultimately it becomes too much for her former tormentors and she is literally kicked out of the party. The second part of the film is a meta film, where some of Anna's "real" tormentors are confronted with the first part of the film (Johansson, 2014).

What is, in my opinion, really interesting in the film *The Reunion*, is how Odell is managing the different fictions within the film. Originally she got the idea of making the film when she heard her former classmates in the suburb Enskede were going to have a reunion. A reunion to which everyone except Anna Odell was invited. The first half of the film, consequently, is actually a staging of the reunion, created as if Odell had been invited. In reality, Odell's version of the reunion never happened. In the second half of the film Odell's former classmates are confronted with the

fictional reunion, but what is shown in the film is actually a recreation of these confrontations, with actors playing the roles of the classmates.

Throughout the film Anna Odell is constantly in three different roles, she is herself, Anna Odell, she is acting herself, as Anna Odell in the reunion, but she is also acting when she plays the part of herself in the recreation of the confrontations, and last but not least, she is the director of the film.

In the case of Turner and Calle, Maria Turner is a fictional character based on a nonfictional character, Sophie Calle. In contrast to this, in *The Reunion* Anna Odell's different characters are based on real characters in imagined, what if-contexts. In *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried* I, as the artist, created the protagonist. The protagonist is an entirely fictional characters, having a fictional love affair. An affair where the passion is actually unrequited, so it's not even real within the narrative. And if the protagonist is not based on a real person, does that then mean that I as the artist, am the same person as my protagonist? No, not necessarily, but in a different context I could have been.

Unrequited love as an idea

To come up with completely new and unique ideas is a more or less impossible task. One reason for this is that there will always be someone else, somewhere else, that has come up with the exact same idea as you. This is because we're all prisoners in our own time, which also means that we all have an urge to reflect upon it. Another reason is that all narratives, if you peel the outer layers off, are, at their core, already old. Humans have at all times been afflicted by eternal dramas. And at all times and in all societies, it's love that has created the most dramas. According to Sundstedt in *Att skriva för film*, an audience is immediately more susceptible and empathetic when it's implied that there are feelings between two characters. (Sundstedt, 1999, 12-14)

In *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried*, the feelings between the protagonist and the antagonist are actually only one-sided. Just like Dick never answers Chris's letters, the antagonist never responds to the protagonist in *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried*. However, I believe I can more or less assume that most people have some kind of personal experience of unrequited love, meaning they can identify with the protagonist in the artwork. Maybe some people also share experiences with both Dick in the book and the antagonist in *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried*?

Roland Barthes describes the agonies of (unrequited) love so precisely in his book the *A Lover's Discourse* (1977):

"Am I in love? --yes, since I am waiting. The other one never waits.

Sometimes I want to play the part of the one who doesn't wait;

I try to busy myself elsewhere, to arrive late; but I always lose at this game.

Whatever I do, I find myself there, with nothing to do,
punctual, even ahead of time.

The lover's fatal identity is precisely this: I am the one who waits."

Roland Barthes (1977)

Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse* is, in my opinion, a beautiful analysis on (unrequited) love. Barthes builds the whole idea for the book on one thought: that the lover's discourse is extremely lonely.

The protagonist in *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried* is also very lonely. She's waiting for someone who is not responding. Sometimes I wonder if the antagonist in *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried* is even aware of her passionate feelings. Just like Dick in the book, he is either ignorant of her feelings, or ignoring them.

Another theory about unrequited love I have been working with during the process with *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried* is my belief that one reason why some relationships fail to even start is that the object of desire never really can complete or fulfil the other's preconception of what true love should look like and be. In his novel *On Love* (2006) the philosopher Alain de Botton writes:

".. if you asked most people whether they believed in love or not, they'd probably say they didn't. Yet that's not necessarily what they truly think. It's just the way they defend themselves against what they want. They believe in it, but pretend they don't until they're allowed to. Most people would throw away all their cynicism if they could. The majority just never gets the chance."

Alain de Botton (2006, 30)

And in the novel *Egenmäktigt förfarande* (2013), Lena Andersson explains it like this (my own translation into English; the novel has later been published in English under the title *Wilful Disregard*):

"Happiness is rarely found in the experience of happiness. It lives in the expectation of happiness and almost only there."

Lena Andersson (2013, 127)

What I think Andersson is saying in this quote is that her protagonist, Ester Nilsson, who has fallen in love with Hugo Rask, is actually more in love with her own idea of love than with the antagonist Hugo.

So, if cynicism is the opposite of love, maybe we fall in love in order not to become (more) cynical? (de Botton, 1996). And perhaps, what if I, in the conceptual tradition, am more in love with the idea of my master's thesis project than with the actual result?

I am aware of that the idea behind *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried* is neither new nor unique. It's a story that has been told a thousand times before in a thousand different ways.

It is truly one of those eternal dramas that have afflicted humans forever, but I also think there is something comforting in old and familiar stories, a feeling of homeliness, when there is something in them that you can recognise in yourself.

I think my colleague and former classmate Susanne Kass pinpointed it when she said:

Art doesn't do anything that it hasn't already done already before, it has new shapes, it may address a particular topic or theme that people have stopped or avoided talking about openly. But if you start to look, all the themes are somehow present because everything of human interest is also of interest to art.

Susanne Kass (2016, 31)

They say one reason why history tend to repeat itself is the human inability to remember and understand anything that happened more than 100 years ago, and perhaps that is one reason why some topics seem to be constantly present.

The photographs

In my previous works of art I have often used photography as a method. I don't feel exceptionally comfortable with the camera nor do I have great technical skills in photographing and editing, but I do find that the camera is a very convenient tool in my practice. The process in my works is often very performative, meaning that the actual physical making of the art is as important as the actual result of it. Sometimes the artworks are not time resistant, which means that documentation is the only physical remains of

the art piece. Recently I have also started to document my works with a video camera, sound recordings and writings, in order to have a more diverse set of documentation. This also gives me more space and freedom when it comes to choosing what to show when exhibiting my artworks.

I read somewhere that Sophie Calle, even though she often uses photographs in her pieces, is not a photographer as such. It's not unusual that she pays a professional to take the photos in her pieces, and you can apparently see a significant difference in the photos taken by Calle herself and a paid professional. I feel related to Calle in this matter. The photographs are often only a documentation of the actual art piece, the idea of the work is more important than the final piece of art. Something that categorises both Calle's practise and perhaps parts of my own as traditionally conceptual, which is a contradiction in itself since conceptual artists wanted to avoid categorising. In his essay from 1967, Paragraphs on Conceptual Art, the artist Sol LeWitt wrote: "The idea itself, even if it is not made visual, is as much of a work of art as any finished product." (MoMaLearning, 2016). LeWitt said that conceptual art is a reversed way of working, by bringing the concept of the artwork into the forefront while the actual production of the artwork becomes secondary. (Farthing 2011, 500-501)

In the artwork *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried* there is a total of seventeen (17) photographs in variable dimensions, most of them taken last summer with this project in mind. Some of them are just snapshots, while others are specifically and intentionally composed for this project. Six (6) of the photographs are found and bought at a flea market in Jakobstad

and eleven (11) are my own original artworks. The photographs from the flea market are taken by an unknown artist. All of the photographs except the ones bought at the flea market are digitally printed. Seven (7) out of seventeen (17) photographs are framed, and the remaining prints are meant to be hung directly on the wall with small nails.

I wanted the photographs to be fragmentary, resembling memories. That means they do not individually carry the narrative, and that they need to be viewed together with the texts and the sound piece in order for the viewer to understand their context in this project. Without the texts and the sound piece I feel that, at least some of the photographs become only images.

When I gathered all the pictures together and looked at them individually and in correlation to each other, I realized that many of them contain a travel theme. It is very much about being on the road somewhere, maybe to something new or maybe it's a documentation of something ephemeral, something that has been, but now is over. ON A CLEAR DAY, 2016. 50 x 70 cm, digital photography



EVEN IF IT'S SHIT IT'S ALL I WANT, 2016. 60 x 40 cm, digital photography



EVEN WHEN IT'S SHIT IT'S ALL I WANT, 2016. 60 x 40 cm, digital photography



I'M LOST AND FOUND AND LOST AGAIN I-VI, 2016.

17,7 cm x 12,7 cm.

Photographs by an unknown artist, found at a flea market in Jakobstad, Finland.



NO, 2016.
70 cm x 50 cm, digital photography



NO FLOWERS I, 2016. 30 x 20 cm, digital photography

NO FLOWERS II, 2016. 30 x 20 cm, digital photography

NO FLOWERS III, 2016. 30 x 20 cm, digital photography

NO FLOWERS IV, 2016. 30 x 20 cm, digital photography









BUT YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW ME, 2016. 45 cm x 30 cm, digital photography



THE BEST DAY OF MY LIFE, 2016. 45 cm x 30 cm, digital photography



AND THEN YOU SAID, 2016. 15 cm x 22,5 cm, digital photography



DRIVING HOME, 2016. 13 cm x 14,4 cm, digital photography



The texts

I wanted the written text parts of the work to reveal the personal and intimate thoughts of my protagonist, resembling a private diary.

Sometimes the texts strengthen the course of events that's presented in the photographs, at other times they stand alone, functioning almost as single pieces or poems.

Some of the texts are completely my own, at other times I have borrowed sentences from other writers or artists. Which parts of the text are mine and which parts are quoted from someone else is explained and mentioned source by source in this text. If the parts of the texts that I claim are my own writings resemble someone else's work it's not done intentionally. I am aware of how very rarely any thoughts are completely one's own, and someone else might have thought the same as me before I did, maybe even written it down, maybe even published it.

 On a clear day I can see forever And I realise, It will not be you and me, ever Surprise, surprise ...

On a clear day I can see forever is the title of an artwork by the Swedish artist Ulrika Sparre, I borrowed the sentence from

her work for my poem. Except for that one sentence, the rest of the poem is my text.

On a Clear Day You Can See Forever is also the title of musical by Burton Lane and Alan Jay Lerner (Broadway Musical, 2012). It is also a musical/romantic fantasy film directed by Vincente Minnelli (IMDb, 2016). In my poem and in Ulrika Sparre's artwork, "You" is changed to "I".

2

I'm lost and found and lost again
Because every now and And I find myself
Drinking champagne in the capital of Bahrain,
please, don't leave me in Spain
I'm insane, sane, sane, same

This text is completely my own. The first sentence is inspired by one of my earlier art projects, titled *Lost and Found*.

3. Even when it's shit it's all I want

Even if it's shit, it's all I want

This text is my own.

4.
And sometime, somewhere, in the in between with everything else
I fell in love with you
and I wanted you to do so too
(with me)

This text is my own.

5.
I didn't tell what I should've told you that I wanted to tell you
I never said what I wanted to say when I should have said it

This text is my own.

6.
And then you said, "But you don't even know me"

This is a quote from *I Love Dick*, page 158.

7.
At that time in your life, you said, you were experimenting with never saying No
(this was the best day in my life)

The first sentence is a quote from *I Love Dick*, page 145. The second sentence, (this was the best day in my life), is my own addition.

8. I got no flowers

Even though I have no exact source for this, I cannot claim it as my own writing. However, in context with the photographs I think the text becomes more of an ascertainment. The protagonist did not get any flowers, and probably did not get much at all.

When shown in an exhibition, some of the texts are written or painted directly on the wall, while others are written on paper and nicely framed. Depending on the architecture of the space the work is shown in, I will decide which texts are framed and which are painted or written on the walls.

Although I enjoy reading, I am not too comfortable with writing. With this project, though, I needed to overcome that, since I think the text is an important part of my art project. It's odd, though, how supposedly fictional writing can feel so private. On the other hand, the feeling of intimacy is exactly what I aim for in this piece. In the same way as Sophie Calle tried to come closer to the character Maria Turner in *Leviathan* through (re)creating Turners artworks, I am approaching my protagonist through the photographs and the text. Almost like I'm snooping on my own work of art.

The sound

Sometime during the final stage of the process with *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried*, I started to ask myself if the artwork was still lacking a layer. I decided to try to do a sound recording of some of the text. I read and recorded several texts in my own voice, and after I had listened through the material I decided to only use one single sentence; "I just want to kiss you". I did not want the sound to be a parallel narrative on its own, just to underline the story in the rest of the artwork.

Over and over again, in different ways and in various tonal ranges the words: "I just want to kiss you" are heard. The sound piece is preferably installed in such a way that the audience cannot determine from which direction the sound is coming. To me the voice reminds me of someone who is talking to herself. Perhaps she is daydreaming, putting words on her innermost desire right now. Or maybe it is a chant, and if she is says it enough times it becomes true. Talking to yourself is also considered a bit crazy, something that is associated with being enamoured, an alleged psychotic state.

Even though I am quite happy with how the sound piece turned out and I think it does give that extra layer to the artwork that I felt was missing, I also find it a bit problematic. I recorded the sound myself, using my own voice, which means that the viewer probably recognises the voice, as not necessarily mine, but at least as female. That means that the sound piece reveals the protagonist's gender. On the one hand, it strengthens the connection to me as both the creator of the artwork and as a private person, amplifying the uncertainty of the borders between fiction and

fact, which is a theme I want to study in the artwork. On the other hand there is also a risk of genderising the work. This is something that I'm unsure of whether it's a good or a bad thing for the piece, or if it matters at all in the end. Maybe I could have reversed these expectations by recording a male voice instead of my own, but by doing that I would not only have revealed the protagonist's gender, I would also have demystified the artwork by revealing to the audience that the protagonist is certainly not me.

The title

The title *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried* is a reference to the Aesop fable *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*. The original fable is about a shepherd boy, tending his sheep, close to a dark forest, but still not far from his home in the village. The boy felt lonely and bored and in order to get some entertainment and human company he cried "Wolf! Wolf", whereupon the people from the village came running in order to save him and the sheep from the beast. The boy was so pleased with the attention that he got that a few days later he tried the same trick. And once again the villagers ran to his help. Shortly after this, a real wolf actually did come out of the forest, but when the boy cried "Wolf, Wolf!" for the third time, the villagers, who had been fooled twice before, did not believe him and the wolf got himself a good meal. Moral: "A liar will not be believed, even when telling the truth." (Aesop, 1867)

When the protagonist identifies herself as the wolf, hoping for the boy, the antagonist, to cry for her, is she then suggesting that the artwork is not what it seems to be? Or is the title insinuat ing that the feelings the protagonist has for the antagonist might be some way inappropriate or even taboo? And when putting the fable's moral into the context of the artwork, who is then the liar? The protagonist, the antagonist or the artist? I wanted to use the title to put yet another layer into the artwork, in an attempt to further move the boundaries between fiction and reality.

The final piece

Originally I wanted the work to be displayed in the same way as a book is read, i.e. in the western way of reading from the left to the right, but during the process I realised that it is not necessary. The narrative did not come out in a chronological way and therefore there is no need for it to be displayed that way anymore. I decided instead to focus more on creating an atmosphere, reflecting a sentiment and not so much on making a chronicle.

When I did a test hanging of the piece in gallery GRO, Campus Allegro, I realised that all the parts of the work do not need to be hung on walls. Some of the framed photos and texts can just be placed on the floor, leaning onto the wall. The text parts that are written directly on the walls do not necessarily need to be written at the same size and height or with the same pencil, and some of them may even be written on the floor or on the ceiling.

This also means that the artwork can quite easily be adjusted to the space it is shown in, since the different parts of the piece does not necessarily need to be hung in a certain order.

What I wanted to try out with the test hanging was to see if the work needs to be hung in a certain order to make sense, or if the order can vary from time to time and place to place. Certainly some of the photographs and texts need to be hung together in order to make sense, but what I found out from the test hanging was that despite some inner connections the whole piece is quite flexible and can be presented in different ways without losing any information. I also noted that the piece works well in a relatively small space, where it could spread everywhere without any external factors to take into consideration. Documentation of the test hanging can be found as an appendix to this paper.

I have not yet tried to hang the piece in a bigger space, or in another context, like it would be shown in a group show for example, meaning that if and when this happens I will probably encounter other challenges that are specific to that context. On the other hand, the flexibility of the design is something I think is one of the strengths of the artwork.

Meeting the viewer

When the borders between fiction and nonfiction are vague, it's up to the viewer to determine what is true and what is not. A simple rule for cases like this is that facts presented with a reliable source are generally true. That, on the other hand, does not mean that stories without sources based on facts, not could also contain parts that are true or even be entirely based on a true story. In *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried*, I wanted to obtain exactly that feeling of uncertainty.

In a lecture held in Jakobstad in September 2016, the artist and philosopher Göran Torrkulla talked, among other things, about the viewer as a co-creator of the art piece. The artist addresses the artwork to whoever is interested and wants to answer, and the viewer gives a response to that. The artwork is a dialogue between the address and the response. The artist addresses her/his thoughts and experiences through the artwork and the viewer responds with her/his thoughts and experiences. This means that the way the artwork is perceived is not only dependent on the artist but also on the viewer as co-creator. Putting this into the context of my own work, I can only guess how *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried* is going to be perceived by the audience, but I cannot know since I have no knowledge about what individual context my viewers will put the work into.

Siri Hustvedt also discusses the relationship between the viewer and the artist in her essay *Embodied Visions* from her essay collection *Living*, *Thinking*, *Looking* (2012).

"The experience of looking at visual art always involves a form of mirroring, which may be but is not necessarily conscious... The reflective quality is there because we are witnessing what remains of another person's creative act, and through the artistic object we find ourselves embroiled in the drama of self and other. This back-and-forth dialectic between spectator and artwork occurs despite the fact that a painting, sculpture or drawing is also just a thing, an object like any other in the material world"

Siri Hustvedt (2012, 338-339)

What Hustvedt says is that looking at visual art is not a passive act by the viewer, instead the artist and the viewer meet in a space in between, i.e. the artwork, where they together construe a meaning of the work. Both Hustvedt and Torrkulla emphasise that what that meaning is, on the other hand, is totally dependent on which individual backgrounds, experiences, knowledge, beliefs, feelings and thoughts we all have as our starting point – and this is why the same artwork can and will be interpreted both differently and individually.

During the process with *I wanted to be your wolf, but you* never cried, I had to take into consideration how the viewers of the piece might react to it, especially my own family and friends, since I cannot readily assume they can tell the difference between reality and fiction without being involved in the process or informed about it in beforehand. In discussions about my artwork with others during the process I got quite polarising reactions. On one hand people got intimidated or even a bit provoked by the fact that the piece is fictional and asked why anyone would be even remotely interested in a story that, so to speak, was not true? Others were concerned about my privacy – what if the viewers wouldn't be able to separate my artwork from my real life? Some on the other hand could not understand my dilemma, to them it was obvious the artwork was not literally based on a true story and they were even relieved that that was the case, otherwise the work would not have been as intriguing to them or they would even find it utterly embarrassing. The different reactions indicated, though, that unrequited love is a subject that engages people.

According to Kjell Sundstedt in *Att skriva för film* (1999, 16) many authors use autobiographical events as inspiration for their narratives. Private experiences and memories are used as inspiration or as source material in their productions. Scenes can be based on a true feeling or a real event, but they are interpreted or composed in a different way, with a new angle or put in another context. "Stealing" or recreating ideas as something else is something that artists have always done. Under some circumstances it might seem immoral, but for an author reality is there to be used. Being artistic doesn't always mean to have good ideas, sometimes art means to be able to recreate and shape the ideas you have into something new.

Other people's reactions on *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried* were both surprising as interesting to me – which aspects of the artwork are provoking somebody? Is it the fact that the story is made-up? Or is it the recognition factor within the narrative? According to F. Diane Barth on the website Psychology Today, 98% of us suffers from unrequited love sometime during our lifetime. Everyone who has had that experience knows that rejection hurts and being reminded of the pain is certainly not pleasant, especially when rejection in itself is so closely associated with failure and feelings of shame.

In the interview in BON by Tone Schunnesson, Chris Krays says that she finds it disgusting how today's culture is only open to showing happiness. It makes us not to talk about failures at all. What makes failing so degrading? The idea that life is a triumphal procession is at the same time terribly neoliberal and wolf-like, where showing any sign of weakness means you will be eaten

by the pack. So maybe it's the neoliberal views common in our society today that make some people so provoked by the protagonist's obvious failures in love in *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried?* No, I think that would be an oversimplicifation. What I believe is provoking people, if the work is perceived as provocative at all, is maybe that the protagonist so openly reveals her failure in an intimate area. The viewer experiences vicarious embarrassment, a sort of secondhand embarrassment where you feel embarrassed for someone else. According to the research article "Your Flaws Are My Pain: Linking Empathy To Vicarious Embarrassment" (Krach, 2011), the discomfort we feel when watching someone making a fool out of themselves affects the same part of the brain that is used for processing our own pain (Hartmann, 2011).

About dishonesty

In the documentary (Dis)Honesty: The Truth About Lies (Melamede, 2015) Dan Ariely, a behavioural economist, conducts a social experiment proving that creative people are in fact more dishonest.

"Put simply, the link between creativity and dishonesty seems related to the ability to tell ourselves stories about how we are doing the right thing, even when we are not. The more creative we are, the more we are able to come up with good stories that help us justify our selfish interests."

Dan Ariely, 2015

If it is a proven fact that creative people are more dishonest, supposedly they would then also be better storytellers. So maybe one reason why *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried* is perceived as provocative to some people is the feeling of dishonesty. I, as the artist, am deceiving my viewers into believing that the protagonist in the artwork is suffering from a broken heart, and then it turns out she/he is not. When the artwork's true nature is exposed the roles are demolished. The protagonist that the viewer got so involved with is not even real, and as an empathetic fellow human being the viewer feels fooled.

When the Swedish artist Anna Odell recreated having a psychosis on Liljeholmsbron in Stockholm as a part of her artwork *Okänd, kvinna 2009-349701* (2009), she wanted to draw attention to one certain question, psychiatric custodial care, which was an issue she felt should be debated in public (Åsbrink, 2015, 5-7). The debate afterwards was huge. In the beginning, after Odell was reported to the police by the hospital where she was brought after staging her psychosis, the debate was not about how patients in psychiatric custodial care are treated in Sweden, but instead focused on whether Odell did something morally or legally, wrong when she faked having a psychosis. Odell even received death threats that only stopped after she revealed to the public that she had herself been a psychiatric patient and that the events on Liljeholmsbron was a recreation of a real psychosis. (Åsbrink, 2015, 10-13)

When she was perceived as a mentally ill person, even suicidal, Anna Odell was perceived being right at the bottom of society's hierarchy, but when she admitted she was not insane the roles were shifted, and it was the authorities that took the place at the bottom and everyone, including the public, questioned Odell's intentions. When Odell revealed she had been mentally ill earlier in her life, and that the events on Liljeholmsbron was a recreation of a previous psychotic episode in the form of an art project, the roles were once again shifted, back to Anna Odell's advantage (Åsbrink, 2015, 15-16).

Trying to put *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried* in a similar context, is it possible that the audience of the artwork could have the same reactions? When people believe the protagonist and the author are the same person and that this person is in (emotional) distress, a situation they also can relate to, they feel empathetic. At the moment the truth is revealed to them, their feelings become the opposite. But, if they were later told that it was a recreation of a real event, would they then soften again? I don't know yet, but as a mind game it is intriguing.

Conclusion

What it became and what happens next

One of the things that I wanted to investigate in the art project *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried* was whether the fiction can be confused with reality or vice versa in an art project. When thinking logically on it, it's obvious that it can. For example, bethink the speculations that went on in media about who the character Hugo Rask in Lena Andersson's novels could possibly be based on. In an art context it really does not really matter. What is in my opinion interesting is the artwork itself, the process behind it, the result of it and whether how and if it created debate and how it possibly affected its audience. When the work of art meets its audience and what happens in that meeting, if anything happens at all, is what I think the most interesting part of the whole process.

One of the most burning questions in my process has all the time been whether or not *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried* would be confused with my own private life and how that in that case would affect it. Since I only did a test hanging of the artwork in a closed gallery context (the only viewers who had the possibility to react on the artwork where the ones who happened to visit the gallery during that time the artwork was there, which was two days), I cannot say for sure that the *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried* would not affect my life in any way if and when I show it in a more, for the viewer, accessible context. But, based on the indications that I got from the experi-

ence with the test hanging, it seems that most people who saw the work in that context, naturally separated me as the artist, from my artwork. Meaning, they did not automatically assume that the protagonist in my artwork is me, however some of them did ask if the events in the artwork is connected to reality. On the other hand I can also assume that the viewers who saw the artwork in the test hanging context also had at least some information about me, both as an artist, and as a private person. Which, then again, could mean that my indicators are misleading.

In the beginning I did not really understand why I even should be concerned whether I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried could affect my own private life negatively or not. This was something that came up during discussions with other people about the artwork. Maybe I am naive, but this has of course to do with the context I am in and how that context is perceived by others, as in people not being or living in the same context as I am. I'm not saying this is an absolute truth, but perhaps it may be that one generally has a preconceived idea that there is a certain social pressure on small communities in remote locations. Or that everyone know everything about everybody. And in some aspects that is certainly true, but on the other hand, in this particular case that only meant that people did not confuse me as the artist as the protagonist in the artwork I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried. When the work of art is put in a different context I cannot know how it will be perceived, but I can assume when this happens most viewers will not able to that easily distinguish me as the artist of the artwork from the protagonist in the artwork. On the other hand, since the viewer most likely do not know me privately, does it even matter if they can distinguish me from the protagonist or not?

And that is, in my opinion, what is the most interesting question in this whole art project, can *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried* be perceived as a true story? And is it important at all that it is perceived as a true story? In the end, what I hope *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried* is percevied as, is an artwork about unrequited love, regardless of whose love story it is, or not is about.

As the next step, I'm planning to exhibit *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried*, either in a gallery, a group show or both. Hopefully the response I receive from showing it to the public will be something that I can use both for developing the work, and for developing my own thoughts about it further.

Time and the passing of time (inevitably) changes how an artwork is received and perceived. *I Love Dick* got a poor reception when it was first published in 1997, but a standing ovation the second time around in 2015. Obviously, after almost 20 years, things have changed and the book's context has changed. But still, after so many years, the book retains its ability to engage. When Tracey Emin's *My Bed* went on display at Tate Britain for the first time in 15 years, Emin said:

"Back in the 90s, it was all about cool Britannia and the shock factor and now I hope, 15 years later, people will nally see it as a portrait of a younger woman and how time affects all of us."

Tracey Emin, 2015

It's an interesting thought, how the meaning of an artwork can change through time, almost as if it's a living object, living its own life after the artist released it. And in a way, that is exactly what happens to every artwork as soon it's out there. Or is it the other way around, art is the only constant when time is passing us by?

In September 2016, Göran Torrkulla talked about noticing or observing the individual and his/her individual peculiarities without considering them as anomalies. This, according to Torrkulla, is an area where art has an important task in today's society. Maybe Chris Kraus overstepped an invisible line back in 1997, when she exposed intimate details about her private life in *I Love Dick*, but in my opinion, she was actually a pioneer. Today we're hopefully more willing to consider subjective views and experiences as important and even universal.

Within art, every little phenomenon can have its own place. And the question about art and its right to exist cannot be discussed as an isolated phenomenon. Art is always rooted in and interlaced with its own community and should be discussed in that context. At least for me, art helps me to understand my context.

If women have failed to make "universal" art because we're trapped within the "personal", why not universalize the "personal" and make it the subject of our art?

Chris Kraus (1997, 211)

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IMAGES

COVER:

DRIVING HOME, 2016.

Photo: Therese Sunngren-Granlund

PAGE 31:

ON A CLEAR DAY, 2016.

Photo: Therese Sunngren-Granlund

PAGE 34-35:

EVEN IF IT'S SHIT IT'S ALL I WANT, 2016.

Photo: Therese Sunngren-Granlund

PAGE 38-39:

EVEN WHEN IT'S SHIT IT'S ALL I WANT, 2016.

Photo: Therese Sunngren-Granlund

PAGE 42-43:

I'M LOST AND FOUND AND LOST AGAIN I-VI, 2016.

Photographs by an unknown artist, found in a flea

market in Jakobstad, Finland.

Photo: Therese Sunngren-Granlund

PAGE 46-47:

NO, 2016.

Photo: Therese Sunngren-Granlund

PAGE 50-51:

NO FLOWERS I, 2016.

Photo: Therese Sunngren-Granlund

NO FLOWERS II, 2016.

Photo: Therese Sunngren-Granlund

NO FLOWERS III, 2016.

Photo: Therese Sunngren-Granlund

NO FLOWERS IV, 2016.

Photo: Therese Sunngren-Granlund

PAGE 54-55:

BUT YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW ME, 2016.

Photo: Therese Sunngren-Granlund

PAGE 58-59:

THE BEST DAY OF MY LIFE, 2016.

Photo: Therese Sunngren-Granlund

PAGE 61:

AND THEN YOU SAID, 2016.

Photo: Therese Sunngren-Granlund

PAGE 63:

DRIVING HOME, 2016.

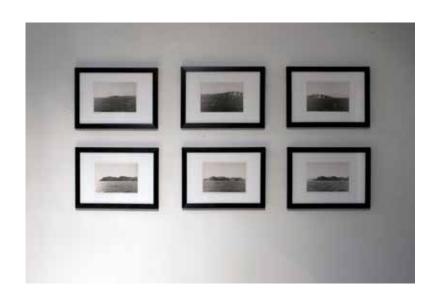
Photo: Therese Sunngren-Granlund

APPENDIX

PHOTO DOCUMENTATION:

Test hanging of *I wanted to be your wolf, but you never cried* in Gallery GRO, Campus Allegro, Jakobstad, Finland 2016.

All photos are taken by the artist: Therese Sunngren-Granlund.





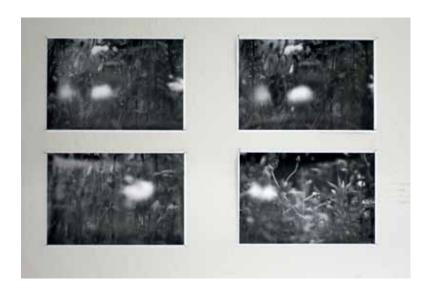
II





IV V





VI





VIII



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