

The final selection of photographs for the exhibition does no longer solely consist of people. The woman who has been invited to write about these images, is relieved by this fact. Even though it means that she has to start again entirely from scratch.

Indeed, she had basically come to the very middle of her text when the artist emailed the new decision; one that—in the woman’s view—drastically changed the tone of the show; thus essentially forced her to begin anew.

Nonetheless. Now she’s here. Relieved, especially for the man’s sake, for an opening seems to be in the middle of happening.

In her previous text, she had lamented the fact that the photographs only contained people, no nature, not even a tiny tangible reference to the natural world—although the man must have grown up right in the middle of it. The woman has never been to Norway. Yet she imagines even industrial suburban towns in the middle of the country, away from the sea, must be surrounded by trees trees trees.

Trees that will haul back the self into being when it has lost touch with reality. When the self has once again become only mind. Mind mind mind that clouds the senses,

like a thick layer of dust erases—

What the woman intuits amidst this new set of photographs is that there’s now an active reaching for the outside. An (re)activated desire to break out of the room, the domestic, the interior. Leave behind thought and expectation.

Become one with what is.

No matter the pain or the glory.

The woman knows too well the trajectory of moving from thought into being, into feeling. Until fairly recently, she was only ever mind. Wherever she went, whatever situation she'd find herself in, she'd attend it with her emotions. Mostly these were sad ones, since not yet had she touched base with the core of her existence, touched base with what she is—a most sumptuous warmth, one that nowadays she can almost immediately begin to access as soon as she takes in one deep, thorough breath. One after the other; soon—her lengthening limbs extensively flowing out into the setting which an instant ago she still somehow tried to avoid, tried to change.

One breath after the other and eventually her mind ceases to allege the somehow tragic circumstances, convincing her that in some way she resides apart from the world.

Separation. This is what the sensation of loneliness could be best described as. What the woman would mostly experience as total mind—whether she was in love, hung out with friends or strangers, sat with family in a garden. Walked through the park, or the forrest, the streets in the city.

Separation: even throughout moments of sheer joy her mind would suddenly barge in and announce to her all kinds of terrible things. Tell her, for example, that soon the joy will end.

Fully aware she actually lived through such a moment precisely four weeks ago. Sunday, when she visited her parents for her birthday. In the evening living room, the wooden logs gently burning in the fireplace while the three of them discussed the upcoming winter season in a most trivial manner, round and round their conversation went, round and round they debated whether or not this year they could afford to go on a skiing holiday with the whole family, grandchildren included: again and again soft horrible whispers would

pierce the woman's head. Nearly inaudible whispers; inarticulate ones, in fact, now that she has started to get a grip on her slippery, wandering mind. Nonetheless she perfectly succumbed once more to the underlying message. Quietly, she let her body get flooded by long, slow waves of grief meanwhile the father in the white leather armchair ahead googled on his slim, black laptop prices for skiing passes and hotels—occasionally giving news if he had come across some kind of discount. Languorously, she mourned the inevitable extinction of these small precious moments of unspectacularity with her aging parents; sensing the mother having silently undertaken a similar somber journey—the other woman seated next to the daughter on the other side of the long, ample couch.

The other woman who too has lived the majority of life in her mind—most of the time has paid attention to the thoughts instead of remaining, in this case, inside the room, inside the moment—there with the gentle flames of the fire; there right within the gentle, sweet joy of father, mother and daughter seated together in the same room of the same house as the outside leisurely enveloped all of this homely bliss with its ever-darkening darkness.

No doubt it must have been the incoming darkness that had catalyzed the silent sadness within these two reclined women, both such sentimental creatures. The day was coming to an end. Any moment now, it would be time for them to climb into their individual beds, continue to meet their individual destinies.

How to love people without starting to need them, the woman seriously brooded as she got underneath the covers of her childhood bedroom, purposefully surrounding herself that night with a large number of books, one of which would hopefully soon help with getting rid of the almost burning nostalgia.

This ardent affection of hers that once again had transmorphed itself into a most monstrous desire. That of longing for the impossible. Permanence. The one and only place and condition where her utter attachment appears to find reprieve.

But the woman is no fool. No, never has she been delusional; already as a young child she had been instinctually awake to the fact that no moment in life, no person, no atmosphere, no nothing, will ever be a part of hers to the extent that she craves it to be. Always the object of her obsession would remain a little bit out of reach.

The more she clings to it, the more closer it would appear and yet the more unattainable it would become.

The agony, thus, my god, for since always the woman has been a voracious desirer. Memories; lovers; cities; the youthful body. Years and years. Decades.

Until the day came when the woman realized she could stop thinking. She could stop dwelling.

She could just learn to ease into reality. Relax her muscles. One breath after the other. Come back from the future and the past—

Come back, come back.

The first time the woman realized she has a choice in suffering, was when she grew aware of the double existence she has led: that of the mind and that of the living—that of the deep, thorough breath, which sooner or later would lead the way to the world.

A distinct discovery which started to gradually transpire when she went with her father to the philharmonie after several months earlier having undertaken the same exact journey on her own.

As if it was nothing, she remembered thinking the following day while she recalled the outing alongside her father.

As if it is nothing, she had somewhat unknowingly announced to herself as she stepped out of the car, walked through the big silver doors, sat down on the velvet seat and patiently awaited for the performance to begin.

As if it was nothing.

Months before, on her own, in the sole company of her actively talking mind, the entire endeavor until the auditorium lights would finally dampen and the music would start, had struck her as a slow, infinite march towards death; the hour-long walk to the brick factory an infinite going and going, as if forced to cross one endless barren, cold land—it was winter, just the outset: her long blue cashmere coat fluttering in the occasional gusts of wind; then the endless stepping-through the big, grand entrance, making it past the endless tall glasses of champagne and skirts and wool tights, to then finally reach her designated seat where her heart actually exploded into a million tiny pieces: her heart pounding in her small, narrow chest, flickering wildly as if made up of a million little flying insects gathered around a summer street lamp, the woman praying to god as she took off her coat that the people looking at her would not notice that she had tried to look pretty, had put on a little bit of blush on her eyelids and carefully combed her eyebrows.

Yes, that would be the worst—

People beholding her as a lonely woman trying to look beautiful. Appearing as if trying to be loved.

Dreads and fears the woman did not have, not one tiny bit, when seated months later in the same space, nearly on the same seat—just a few rows behind; wearing almost the same exact outfit.

Next to her father: her mind right then perfectly soothed, perfectly protected by the human company inside a public, social setting.

The profound difference it made when she was alone as to when she was accompanied especially during these types of closely-contained social activities—these events that up until recently her mind had somehow always turned into events about people, about personhood.

People is what she thought. Is only what she ever saw.

Shortly after reminiscing the concert with her father, she then recalled another first solitary trip to the movies, another trip to hell, until the lights turned off and she embarked on a kind of mystical experience—was moved to tears; just like it had eventually occurred at the philharmonie, and at the opera in a stranger city many many moons ago.

Lively soft tears welled up from inside the woman, so moved was she by human existence. Her unyielding resilience—right then—above all? The eventual relief only further heightening the beauty that was currently unfolding on stage?

Perhaps.

Now is not the time to make a deep inquiry into why, despite the initial reluctance, the woman basically forced herself to undergo these solitary expeditions. Despite the initial discomfort. Despite her mind—

Despite her heavy mind, something deeper and far more powerful pulling her in, for by now (two or so years after that particularly dreadful concert on her own) the woman has deciphered her soul's nature-given urge to experience from time to time certain occasions by itself, so in utter essence the music can be attended.

So the exchange—a collaboration?—between her soul and that of the film or that of mountain or that of morning can thoroughly take place.

When she is alone, she is open. Open, open, open.

Nowadays that the voices have started to quiet down, she sits in the theater no longer dwelling on the possibility of people assuming she must be lonely. She looks past their inquisitive gazes, emphasizing with a sheer plain fact that she manifests a rather odd scene in this whole world where everything is about advertising, about surrounding oneself with tangible, visible tokens that exclaim or rather shout stability, definition; her childlike face and figure not helping in the matter of wishing to disappear inside a crowd of mostly older people, balding heads and cardigans and heavy watches and rings resting on softly-protruding folded sheets of belly.

She sits here now, breathing, just like she has learned to sit on the park bench—another fairly-novel favorite undertaking that took some time to come into fruition due to her inexhaustible mind. Year upon year she'd walk the park with headphones plugged in, off and on pretending to speak on the phone in order to disguise her walk of leisure as a conference call—anything that would not make it seem like she is just a woman who had come here to the park to get some fresh air. It was soon after the concert with her father, past spring, perhaps already in the middle of summer, when the woman suddenly found herself approaching a bench, and then, to her own surprise: she sat down, she sat. She was genuinely startled by her own doing, for until then never had she conceived the idea of turning the park into a living room. Not once, no, had the idea occurred to her that she could also come here to the park to relax. To not do or be anything. Not even a woman who walks. Perched on the edge of the bench, not yet trustful with her newly-approaching form of being, cautiously she moved the

headphones from her ears to her neck to her pockets—where they tend to stay ever since, should she actually bring along the phone on her daily stroll. Everything was so quiet, she realized, tranquilly stunned. Not at all was it harmful anymore to sit here, not be or do anything. There she was amongst the gently swaying trees and the occasional people cycling by the river, and the enthusiastically sniffing dogs rummaging with their noses through fields of wet grass.

She, her self, didn't actually exist.

She sat on the bench—soon leaning back into her new home—and absolutely nothing about the setting made her think about her life circumstances. Suddenly nothing made her compare herself to what everything else was, is, doing.

The trees were just the trees. The settling sun just the settling sun. People just people. And she just sat amongst of it all. She just sat.

She just sits—

Here at dawn.

Wishing to somehow transfer this pleasant mindless dimension onto the faceless woman and the suspended-looking man—onto their photographer, the artist who at least in part was compelled to report such scenes of human drama.

Of disconnection.

How well she recognizes her former mindful-self especially in the woman, her back turned. Eyes most likely facing the ground. Oblivious to what is out there. Absorbed by her thoughts and emotions, that actually always always change. These reactions, they fluctuate, the woman has come to notice.



Are not to be trusted. Interpreted for what is real, for what actually lasts:

feeling: love, the woman sheepishly writes, sheepishly means, somewhat embarrassed by this seemingly oversentimental sentiment.

But it's true. If she were to behold once again every single dread and resentment and disappointment she has so keenly hosted in regards to whatever moment or person—lovers, friends, family, neighbors, editors, friends of friends, strangers—underneath all that mental garbage, that redundant noise—there's a prevalent stillness: an ongoing silence, a kinship with all things. One that nowadays she clearly feels responsible for sustaining. For building and cultivating. For expanding. For flowing further into. No matter the circumstance.

Especially her relationship to people, the interconnection that on a daily basis proves as the most demanding to embrace.

How to love without starting to need.

How to love without starting to close off—trying to avoid sorrow.

Practice, the woman writes, for she wouldn't want to miss experiencing any part that involves the act of appreciating, of actual living.

Practice, the woman writes as she remembers the recent childhood bedroom incident, her eventually deciding to close the door and decisively moving on to one of the opened books straight ahead; practice, she writes, remembering the celebration dinner where her sister preferred after all to sit next to somebody else; her friend who has stopped calling, now that he has a new girlfriend; the other friend who's not curious enough to ask questions, to listen.

Lying underneath a canopy of trees, to regard her lifted wrinkling hand and wrist the same way as she regards the majestic brown branches hovering in the background—no judgement, just life. Noble

instruments; noble companions, all of this. So she will continue practicing. One day at a time. Breathing, accepting. Welcoming. That peculiar sensation of eternity gently pouring through her fingertips onto the keyboard, into the glass of water on the nightstand; the orange peel and the fly on the kitchen counter.

That peculiar relaxed warmth that has begun to unexpectedly originate and flourish ever since she has begun to step out of her mind, into the world.

As if inside now she's an ocean.

Everything she loves one continuous entity.

Her friends, her dead uncle, the sandstone country trail alongside her grandmother's old garden hedge. The moss, the stars in the sky. In one form or another, all there cosily swirling around within her belly. Less and less frequent that unbearable anguish to retain an atmosphere. For it's all right there! Inside.

To feel it, have it: all she must do, is let go—

Amongst the portraits of the man and woman, there's the sun now. Mildly ablaze, so we can absolutely bathe in its luminous presence. And the long, blue night sky. And the swan with its black, rubbery feet; the photograph—she realizes—that has changed in her mind during these past weeks and days of hanging out together.

Yes. Upon its first many encounters, it imparted a most burdensome energy. Only that. The swan's head hiding, like the faceless woman. As if blind, dead. Literally beheaded.

Amongst the dread of the man and the woman, why not give us the swan fully alive, let us experience its joyous natural vigor, she may have thought, a little annoyed at the somber mood the decapitated,

wingless swan furthermore bestowed onto the exhausting setting of domestic turmoil.

Yet the more time she has spent with the image, the more the image seems to have become lighter, livelier, truly dynamic, the swan seeming to become more and more what it actually is: a bird, an animal, not sad, nor lonely—somehow doomed—but simply an animal in the middle of cleaning or scratching its feathery body.

Yes, she realizes, earnestly amazed: now, right at this very moment, she can firmly feel the swan about to lift its graceful long neck with its mysteriously human gaze, and confidently waddle on with its journey; is maybe headed for a swim on a pond or a lake.

Sheer light life, yes: unfolding right in front of her eyes, unfolding right there inside her heart, her less and less darkly aching thinking heart.

And what about that sun, actually? Hasn't this image too altered in meaning? That initial apocalyptic glaze now lifted—now mostly making her consider the immense beauty of the star which is around 300,000 times heavier than earth itself.

The wall—no longer an emblem for isolation, an impossibility, something that necessarily ought to be tresspassed; just a plain brick wall now, its foreground serving as a ballet studio. Women and men, leaping through the air; others able to bend with their chest and chin all the way to their knees and thighs.

What does he see, she wonders, the photographer who several times mentioned that he tends to change his mind.

Does he too find himself in the middle of getting tired of being sad, by and by directing his attention outside the self, outside

personhood, towards the animals and the sky, by and by recognizing the underlying lightness of things, of being human.

What is it that the gallerygoers see, project? In what ways have they been alive or dead these days, these years, this lifetime—

by Lara Konrad, Munich, September 2024