

N-SPHERE JUNE 2010

EDITORIAL TRANQUILIZERS

Amidst the chaos of the 19th century, Baudelaire wrote about flowers in the bedroom and Poe was playing with kittens in the basement. It was a new dawn for aesthetics, a view from the opposite corner of the artistic rink, an immersion into a world of praising the ugly, the dirty, the sick and the broken. Le mal and the macabre turned into an aggressive flow by the end of the 20th century, as a multi-verse of endeavors made way to a new form of non-beauty: the recurse of the headless. But unlike all the zombie movies out there, the Frankenstein of today walks the fine line between shock and offense in what is known as transgressive art.

In Martin Bladh's world, fantasy and obsession are reciprocal, cumulative, clawing each other's eyes out, making up and making out, shoving themselves in a crowd of assertion. Shifting between true and false, the non-machine predicates of the body language can never settle to one extreme or the other. Be it appalled or intrigued, the outside view through the peephole Bladh created into himself is defleshing to the core the very nature of human perception.

Taking the eraser, quickly muffling out the borders of self, Hadewych's work fills the space with another concept: you are the peephole. Pointing out that all there is and all there isn't resides inside oneself, from the leaves covered special casings to the captivating stage performances, the music seems to take the listeners' hands, look closely into their eyes and whisper: transcend.

But what would life be without electrons oscillating? The Centre for Transgressive Behaviours orbits around primary functionalities. Taking disturbance at hand value and shoving the audience into the framework of the performers' minds, they strip bare social norms and expel a storm of raw obscurities.

The journey doesn't end here. Flip the pages, sink deep under the bed sheets and stare at beauty. Answer, impure corpse... the hateful man, whom you could not satisfy alive, did he spew on your inert submissive flesh the immensity of his desire? Did his fevered hand raise you by the hair? Tell me, frightful head, have your frozen lips received his final fire?

translation & adaptation | **Charles Baudelaire. Une Martyr**



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GLASS SHOWCASE RTIN BLADH

»THE ART OF DYING. THE ART OF KILLING«

Name:

Martin Bladh

Location:

Norrköping, Sweden

Occupation:

Unemployed artist.

Definition of personal sphere:

The outlet for a compulsive obsession

Artwork in 4 words:

Mind-body-light-sound

What is inspirational for you:

The role of the victim / the role of the executioner.

Currently favourite artists:

Antonin Artaud, Francis Bacon, Scott Walker, Rudolf Schwarzkogler, Yukio Mishima

Tools of trade:

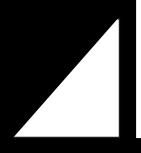
Paper, photographs, scissors, typewriter, art books, medical journals, blood, sperm, glue

Current obsessions:

The art of dying / the art of killing.

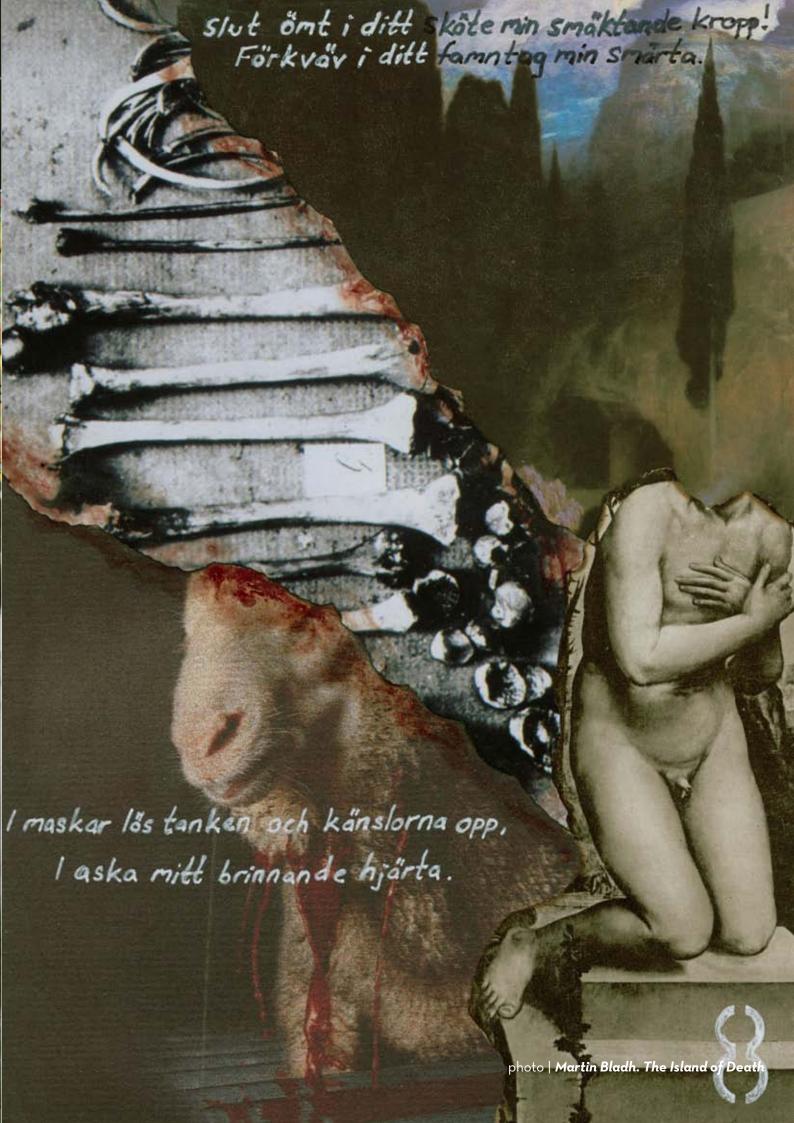
Personal temptation:

Immortality



supremacy of one being ation understand the willingness with which these boys, even as themselves to the cameras amanatomical panning and tilting. there is joggling for position, chosen, sty ockering and competition. for a moment, the fa reality of its filming seem one. Tese of their bodies boys are proud were ni there might be cent of inos and has escaped on against crime but as being who makes the 1 me with crime the photo | **Martin Bladh. Qualis - Artifex** me: himself has lost loses me he which discover mysel as him.









STONE SHOWCASE OTTODIX

»THERE IS MUCH CHAOS IN ME. MUCH CHAOS IN OUR TIME«

Name:

Otto Dix

Lived:

2nd December 1891 - 25th July 1969

Location:

Untermhaus, Germany

Occupation:

Painter, Graphic Artist

Influences:

War and post-war experiences, German serial killers of the XXth century

Associated with:

Weimar Republic Decadence,

German Expressionism, Surrealism, New Objectivity, Berlin of the '20s Dada & Degenerate Art

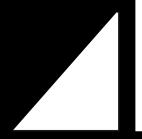
Connections:

George Grosz, Anita Berber, Sylvia von Harden, Rudolf Schlichter, Max Beckmann, Karl Hubbuch, Heinrich Maria Davringhausen

Obsessions:

Lustmord, Eros und Tod, war, trenches, the female body / corpse, sexual transgression, Metropolis, red, carnality, surgery, prostitutes

quote | **Otto Dix**





UN-PERSO

MOVING SHOWCASE NA-ANACTS

hat is the real difference between the acting experience and the immediate one?«, this is the question, dear reader(s). After films that revolved around the making of other films, or books, or even places - which had such a powerful effect on their viewers, that they were able to mutate their perception over the immediate reality - this question is inescapable. In the mouth of madness or Shining stand out as two of the most eloquent examples in this particular matter.

As far as I could gather, the line is a very thin one. It is just a matter of context, just the fact that in acting what we experience is of no physical consequence to us, nor to the viewer. If you take that out of the table, there are performances that move us and haunt us, and there are performances that may be ok, but with no effect upon us. There is acting as a game, and acting as a process of mutation. I have somehow David Cronenberg to thank for the latter, since his first movies, and not only, dealt with this particular subject on a regular basis. The first case usually occurs in the more domestic part of the cinema, where no one wants to step on any toes, no one wants to harm anyone, where things are peachy-creamy in the end; however, this part holds no real interest to the subject at hand. What's the point of a game if one knows all the way that it is a game and nothing more? What is the part of a simulation if everyone knows it is a simulation? Someone must not know or must not perceive it like this for the whole magic trick to work. Someone must really be the tyrant puppeteer and someone else the puppet..

So my real interest is directed towards that part of sinae(ni)ma in which the sun doesn't always shine and, even when it does, it does so to mess with







your head - joking, more or less. In this particular case, actors are not only acting, because such possibility disappears. I can't look at Emily Watson in breaking the waves and say that she is only acting, I can't look at a film that hammers all that rotten conventionalism and say »it is only a game«. Because it is not and if you do not believe me you can ask Georgia Brown (Village Voice) how she felt about this film. An the examples can go on with films such as The Shining, La passion de Jeanne D'arc (Carl Theodor Dreyer) and so forth.

In such frameworks, actors invest a lot more than they would when act-

ing in casual films, so the material to them becomes as real as it is to the characters they portray. Therefore, everything is articulated to the point where the film itself and real life are two separate narrative blocks. This is not only an acting-related issue. It is the visual aspect, as well. It is the overall mood that may draw the viewer even closer. After all, the film is as much about the visual aspect as it is about acting (you can see that the storyline itself comes in third).

Basically, raw storytelling is a writer's job more that it is a film-maker's. In movies, what matters is the way stories are developed, the

things that we retain from the bigpicture, the way we insert them, because, plot-wise, a film doesn't have the narrative consistence of a good novel so there is no

need to try to make cinema copy literature.

There is another thing: the active viewer nowadays, maybe even more present in film that in literature, is a viewer that doesn't need the whole picture drawn to tread the film's path, one that can improvise and on whose imagination the film really works. This happens more often in film because, while retaining a certain level of abstraction, there are more elements to plunge you



right in: a theme song you liked, a line, the expression of some character, the way a particular scene was shot, the fact that you can really hear someone say the things you always hinted to be true, even if it is, theoretically, a part of the act. To that viewer, the actor is the character, and in maybe many cases and even many more to come, an actor cannot pull such a stunt if - deep underneath his persona - he doesn't recognize the character presence inside him as well.

All identity is mutable, all information is the same, it just takes a little longer to put the pieces together and figure out what everything re-

ally stands out for. For there is a big difference between what we don't know, what we don't know we know, and what we know but cannot express. If you handle the latter two, you may find yourself in a surprising situation.

That's it for tonight. See you on the next transmission, fellow actors!

text | shade photo | La passion de Jeanne d'Arc. 1928. Screenshots

ABUSE SHOWVCASE HADEWYCH

»DESCRIBING TRANSCENDENCE OF THE CORPOREAL ATTACHMENT TO EXISTENCE«

"Welcome to the Spheres. After giving quite a few listenings to Hadewych's eponymous album, a couple of questions started to surface. I'm going to commence with the very obvious ones: who is behind Hadewych and how did this project come into being?

In the first 3 years of Hadewych's existence it was mainly me pulling the strings, assisted by some session musicians. After the release of the eponymous album, I started rehearsing with people I knew from the local neofolk/industrial/black metal scene - Dercksen, Scramasax and the enigmatic Didier. As the influence of rehearsals on new material has grown over time, I'd say, while I still write most of the music, a lot of

Hadewych's work is governed by and originates from this dynamic.

:: The name in itself seems to give some linguistic trouble to your listeners. Could you elaborate a bit on its origins and on the meaning that it holds for you?

Hadewych is an old Dutch female first name, related to the German »Hedwig«, most famously born by Hadewych of Antwerp, a medieval mystic. The band was however not named after her. There are speculations on what the word, or its two parts may mean or where it originated exactly. This for me is one of its merits; it supposes an epistemological shadow part that will remain





unknown. It's primarily inaccessible, obscured through the ages, though rooted in our culture. Uprooting it even a bit, after the soil falls off, a web of subtle connections becomes visible, like for instance the link to mysticism. Picking an English term that just sounds good wouldn't have done the same for me.

"Musically, the album covers a lot of territory: from neo-folk, industrial to black metal fragments, all absorbed by a ritual/ambient layer. Was it essential for Hadewych to blend in all those elements in order to form an integrated whole?

My intention was to create an organic album out of the diverse repertoire that was already there, whilst using a fixed set of instruments to unify the tracks. I tried to integrate stylistic influences - indeed ritual, black metal, shoegaze and neofolk to name a few - without actually allowing one of them to be most prominent. At the same time I was aiming for a more general essence or aesthetic to arise, which would be profoundly Hadewych's.

:: The album presents itself as a nice case of dark red cloth with a wooden gatefold, wrapped in incense-dried leaves. Is it trying to re-create the atmosphere of the music?

As I do not know how people experience the music itself, it's hard to say. But I hope there won't be too much dissonance between what is heard and how it is presented. Personally I think the sleeve accompanies the music in a proper way. A lot of work was put into the music itself, so the sleeve deserved no less.

:: How was the idea embraced by the label that released it, Tuchtunie?

Being a local CD-r label at first, it was quite receptive to an initiative that would get it onto a new level. It's all very DIY. And I had known the

guys behind it for quite some time already so all of that provided the proper conditions.

TRUE INNER OR OUTER EXCEPT FOR THE CONCEPTUAL DEMARCATION OUR MINDS HAVE DRAWN. EVERYTHING'S ALREADY HERE«

:: Should packaging and artwork be seen as an extension of the sound or do they occupy independent spaces by functioning in different mediums? As beautiful as I believe such a view to be, I think (at least in our case) the package couldn't be the expression of the sound in a different medium. Although it is as elaborate as I would like the music itself to be, I hold it as a way of »expressing« that is most definitely bound to its purpose as a »CD case«. Thus it is severely limited in its form because of its dominant function, whereas the music it contains could do anything within its range as »sound«, which is merely bound to being audible. Maybe the sleeve

is then like the sheath of a sword; secondary, decorated in its own way and with its own purpose. But it is meant to fit the sword nevertheless.

:: I liked a lot the idea of using dried leaves as part of the packaging. Do you think that this way, the listener is invited to engage with an infinite space (the album being a gateway) or is it rather the other way around - nature being interiorized and offered a secluded four-walls existence?

That's a good question. It is an invitation to remind people of where it all comes from and where it will go to in eventually. There is no true "sinner" or "souter" except for the conceptual demarcation our minds have drawn; everything's already here.

"What are your thoughts on the CD vs. vinyl/tape debate? You've done a nice job releasing Hadewych in a nonconventional CD format, should listeners expect something similar from your future albums?

I'm not keeping track of debates. For starters I think it's even absurd we think it's such a normal thing to 'own' music as predicates to embellish our blank identities with, let alone arguing about formats. 150 years ago it was just people performing and enjoying stuff they made. Except for sheet music as a medium there was no way to preserve anything audible. It's weird in a way that it has become a cultural necessity to be able to access art and information at any time. But on the other hand it's a good thing that it's here. It has enhanced our lives as well.

Regarding media themselves then and our position there; I hope to be able to use deviant modes of presentation again, but as it is picked up by more people, it becomes difficult to do this on a larger scale. So we'd love to do limited stuff again, but I think and hope we won't just keep it at that.



:: On a different level, the album could be seen as an ascension rite, both lyrically and thematically, in which »life mirrors eternity«. Where is music placed in that equation?

I think you're right about that. But regarding the music this would be quite subjective. I'm not saying it's not there; in a way I think music can mirror extra-musical things. And a lot of thought and theory has been used to draw up this album; looking upon it as being a collection of sounds and notes would leave out a mayor part of its embedment in culture and history. Still there's a subjective reality that belongs to the music which I think should not fall prey to conceptualism.

:: Prior to flight, everything seems pitch black: bodies are catacombs, lying with their faces down (in »Prone«). Could you elaborate a bit on these elements and how they relate to Hadewych?

The lyrical themes of most songs share the element of describing transcendence of the corporeal attachment to existence. In some cases this concerns a smooth meaningful transition, but it can also originate from a violent form of disembodiment. This is a grim and severe experience, as it shocks the self into facing its own accidental existence as part of a meaningless whole. »Prone« covers both ways I think; there's a darkness, a black confinement within the corporeal grid, but, once it is disconnected and neutralized for some reason, it allows one to let go of bodily restrictions.

" »Prone« includes the phrase »this city is sinking and swallowed by the ocean«. Both flood and incineration, repeated throughout the album, could be linked to cleansing. Is self-purification mandatory in making music?

I believe it's a virtue in live, so also in music. Everyone carries a load off cultural luggage; some decide to leave it for what it is and move on. For instance, part of my luggage would be the disapproval originating from a Calvinistic background that is still present in Dutch culture, to the extent that it acts as an internalized restraint on whatever you do. These constructions will eventually sink and without a notion of cleansing yourself of unfit elements and you will be pulled down too.

»EVERYONE CARRIES A LOAD OF CULTURAL LUGGAGE. SOME DECIDE TO LEAVE IT FOR WHAT IT IS AND MOVE ON.«

:: Starting from the Buddhist elements in Ava and continuing with Old Dutch biblical translations in later tracks, the album seems to comprise a vast array of influences. How do Christianity and Buddhism tie in thematically? Do you perceive them as antagonistic or with some points of convergence?

I believe they don't. Both are too profoundly dogmatic for that. And that's what religious systems are about I think, excluding all truth except for its own.

The Old Dutch mentioned is not used for the sake of Christianity as such. Although indeed first jotted down by monks, I used it both as a keepsake - one of the first manifestations of the Dutch language - and as an iconic universal, which again can be connected to this element of subjective cleansing; finding a way of transcending the darkness of the fear-ridden mind.

Moreover, I'd rather avoid any direct references to a religion that is so imbued with self-contempt and the depreciation of human capabilities like Christianity.

:: Is your geographical background important to you as an artist?

Well living in the Netherlands has its pros and cons like anything. Except for the dance and rock scene, the musical environment here seems rather meagre - especially the experimental genres. It sometimes feels like living a rural village from a cultural point of view. There are a lot of people involved in interesting stuff though, but there seems to be hardly any dynamic.

But of course there are few people who put a lot of effort in making these stray artists visible, like M of the infamous Enfant Terrible label and the guys at Roadburn for example.

From an artistic point of view I grew up near the forests of the Dutch Veluwe area, of which I see elements reflected in a lot of stuff I do. But nowadays I'm caught by a more general sort of awe; an admiration for the vastness of it all, which isn't bound to any geographical location.

:: In Buddhist religious discourse, Avalokitesvara splits his body in eleven fragments/heads in order to grasp human suffering. Drawing a comparison to that: is something similar happening to Hadewych through the creative process? Do you believe that



artistic fragmentation leads to more fruitful results?

I think the fruitfulness lies in being open to any influence that may trigger inspiration and to any forms this inspiration might yield. From this position on I do not believe in concepts of fragmentation of whatever enters in, just in layers or levels of application or usefulness. That's what works best for me now. But during the writing of the first album I used a lot of different methods.

When recording »Ava« for the first time, I knew this was the right path, as that track seemed unconventional and completely pure at that point. But somehow it was also clear that I shouldn't try to write more »Avas« in order to guarantee some kind of homogeneity. The track arose from a general openness, not from forcing any particular sound or style. Thus I think the creative process is an ongoing interaction between a technical/theoretical focus on the musical substrate and the way inspiration and its result act upon the musician.

:: To some extent, we still deal with similar issues concerning fear of urbanization and technology as people did at the beginning of the 20th century. Do you believe we can still turn to nature in an attempt of rebuilding a lost identity or do those concepts not function nowadays?

With the current amount of people hanging about I think becomes quite difficult to switch to a, what at least some people consider to be, more »natural« way of living. Personally I don't see us as being separate from nature at all; it's just a bunch of mechanisms and frameworks we use to hide the fact that we're actually natural beings. Not accepting this can lead to a romantic conviction of wanting to return to nature, or to a more holistic way of living. I think the solution there is being conscious about the things you do, the stuff you

eat the way you treat your own biology. There is no barrier between nature other than the concepts within your own mind that separates you from it. Then recovering this lost identity wouldn't be more than just flicking a switch.

»THERE IS NO BARRIER BETWEEN NATURE OTHER THAN THE CONCEPTS WITHIN YOUR OWN MIND THAT SEPARATES YOU FROM IT«

:: Is the Hadewych atmosphere re-created in your live shows as well? What plans do you have in that area?

We're currently rounding up rehearsals for a series of live shows. We will play tracks from this album and the forthcoming one, as well as different versions of older tracks. As for the atmosphere; I think that it is essentially there - some pieces will retain that typical ambience - though the rendering of other tracks will be more grotesque and harsh.

:: You seem to be involved in a lot of projects, including Red Velvet Corridor, Distel and Volksweerbaarheid. Are some left in the shadow or are you trying to dedicate yourself equally to all of them?

Well all of them have different agendas, that's for sure. Distel for one thing has been taking up a lot of time lately, due to live shows and a new album. I had some plan for reviving RVC about two years ago, as there's been new material on the shelf for some time now, but at this moment all effort is put into the other three bands. And then there's also the work I do under my own name...

:: Are you trying to branch out and use different artistic mediums as well or is music your main focus?

Well, I like to write from time to time. Both long and short rants on philosophy and aesthetics - as this should be my main occupation - and some poetry. I'm also involved in some short film- and performance-related stuff, but again, that's on the musical spectrum...

:: What should we expect from the next release?

First the new 2LP compilation on Enfant Terrible will feature an exclusive new Hadewych track. And we're currently recording a new album and some additional material as well, which will be more »direct« in its aesthetic approach. And I had also planned on working together on releases with both Dead Letters Spell Out Dead Words from Sweden and my fellow countryman Machinist.

questions | **Diana Daia** answers | **Peter Johan Nijland**





LOCKWORK SHOWCASE C.T.B.

»THE CENTRE FOR TRANSGRESSIVE BEHAVIOURS: IT WILL HURT YOU MORE THAN US«

The Centre for Transgressive Behaviors was a gathering of semidisturbed individuals in and around Raleigh (N.C.), that were fed up with the lack of creative cultural activities in the area. Instead of conforming to the musical trends we stole influences from every obscure corner of history and household. A major aim was to inhale these influences and exhale them with a primal energy that would break down the barriers between audience and performers. From some quite ascetic first performances, enacted by a handful people, we grew both in size, strength and lunacy.

Describing a typical C.T.B. show is tricky, since each show was created with different ideas and motifs in mind, but certain elements sure stood out. These included four meter tall puking giants in gold, screaming lunatics on big-wheels, a Butoh show accompanied by erotic limericks read by Siamese twins, and of course the earthquake show where the ceiling fell down over the audience. Consequently, the old C.T.B. device wit will hurt you more than us« stands firm.

C.T.B. | 1998-2004



MEMBERS:

Staffan Persson Craig Hilton John Dawkins





OT. HOGRISK FESTIVALEN MALMÖ, SWEDEN 2003

»A very ascetic show in which one coverall clad gentleman created a new face for another coverall clad gentleman. The face was assembled onto the latter gentleman's face by using shrivels of 100 copies of his face, and wall paper glue. The show was accompanied by the frequent use of a document destroyer, and a sledgehammer periodically crushing rocks.«

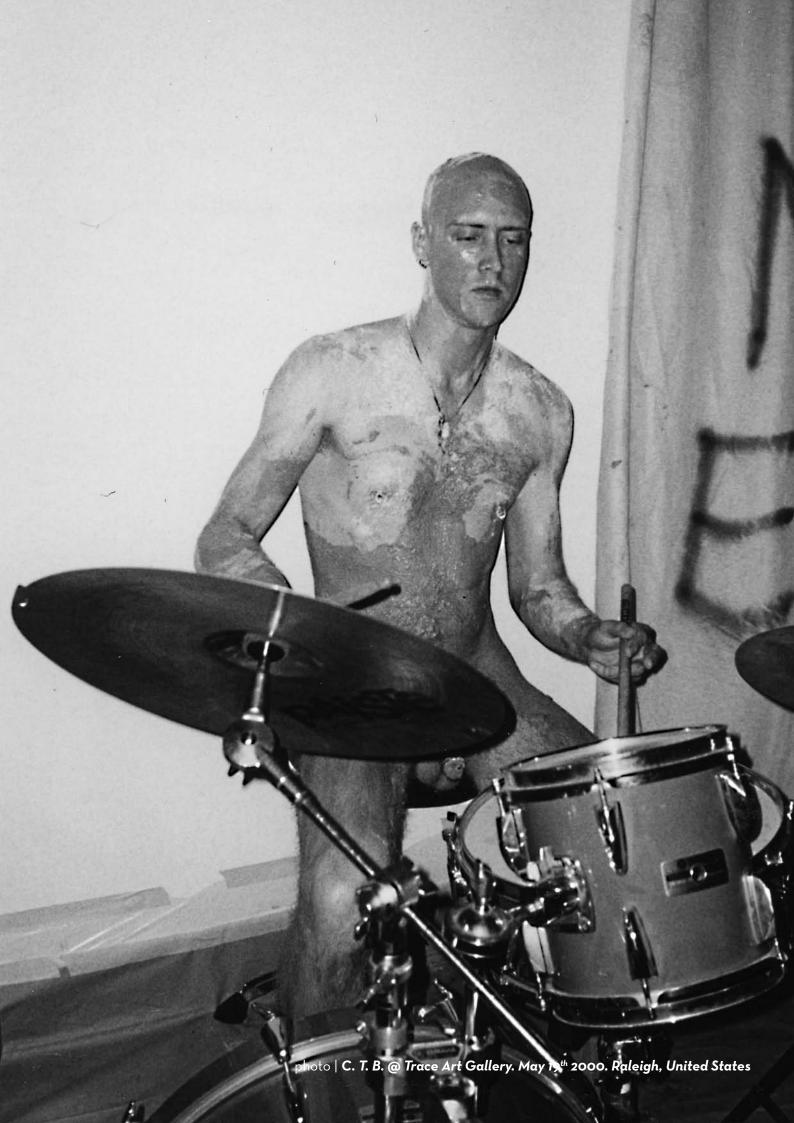


02.

TRACE ART GALLERYRALEIGH, UNITED STATES 2000

»The show was simultaneously held in seven rooms, each hosting various acts. These included paint pukers that dispensed paint over people dragged beneath them, a battle-room where two antagonists on swings attempted to knock each other out with giant fly-swatters, and a three meter tall chair holding a demented bacon-clad transvestite in front of a phallic altar. The performance was accompanied by three saxophone players, a guitar and a naked drummer, and came to an end with a pagan wedding.«







03.

RALEIGH, UNITED STATES 2000

»This show was held in conjunction with Innovations fetish party in front of a seated audience at the Holiday Inn hotel in Raleigh. The show was built around a butoh performance by three persons and a dead butoh body that gave birth to various irrelevant commodities during the show. An intermission show-cased a striptease by two girls wearing seven pairs of panties, Siamese twins reading erotic limericks, and two golden butts squirting blue liquid.«





O4. LILLA TEATERN LUND, SWEDEN 2004

»The show was a small tribute to William S. Burroughs. A glass of apple juice was extracted from apples by means of various household devices. This glass was put on top of a crucified doll wearing a demented version of Burroughs' head. A planted spectator emerged from the audience carrying a gun and shot down the glass.«







HANGING CAGES NFINISHED BUSINESS

»THE ABOMINABLE CARNAGE WE LEAVE BEHIND«

hey appeared out of nowhere, in a split second, brethren of the same dead leaf, not knowing what they have in common or what they share. If such a thing indeed exists.

»Run around rooftops on your tiptoes; be careful not to awake the dormant mind. I would say this is a fair warning.«

»You always put your heart into it don't you? It is somehow ironic, since your heart is 'safely' locked away in a place even you cannot remember. It's almost amusing to see you struggle against imaginary dilemmas and 'handmade self-torments'. I see you are quite the craftsman.«

»Now, now... There will be again time to play in the sand, to laugh at the fire, to build castles out of ash. But for now you have to play the main character at our funeral. Caution: the »I am the Way« line doesn't suite the prosperity of the abominable carnage we leave behind.«

»Must I? I would like to linger some more at the corners of apathy, contemplating the bizarre designs of the mother earth. It soothes me. Even better than Valium or Prozac.«

»Yes you must. After that you can go play with the fireflies, shoot down the stars one by one, give offerings to the night's chilly air, or do whatever it is you like to do.«

»Do you take me for a child? If I do this and that you'll give me candy or let me be? The infant in me died long ago you know. Misjudging me again, you are...«





BO

SHOWCASE BSCHATTE

NAME:

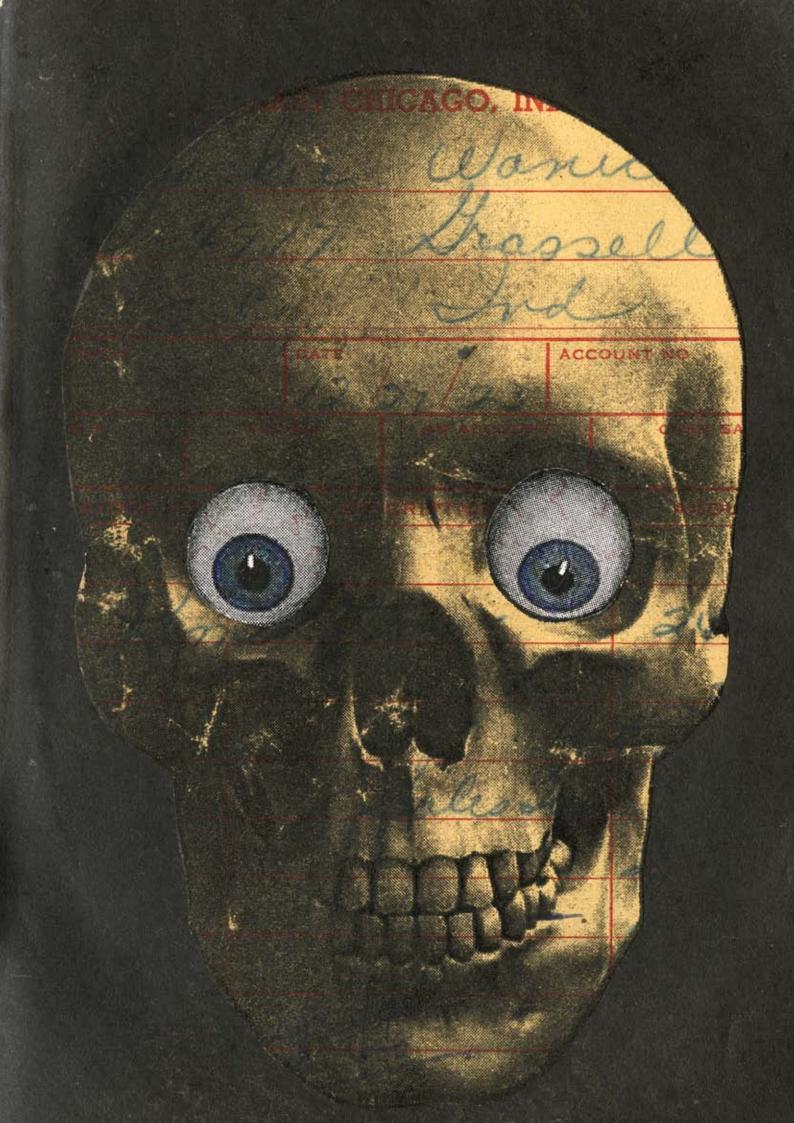
BOB SCHATTE

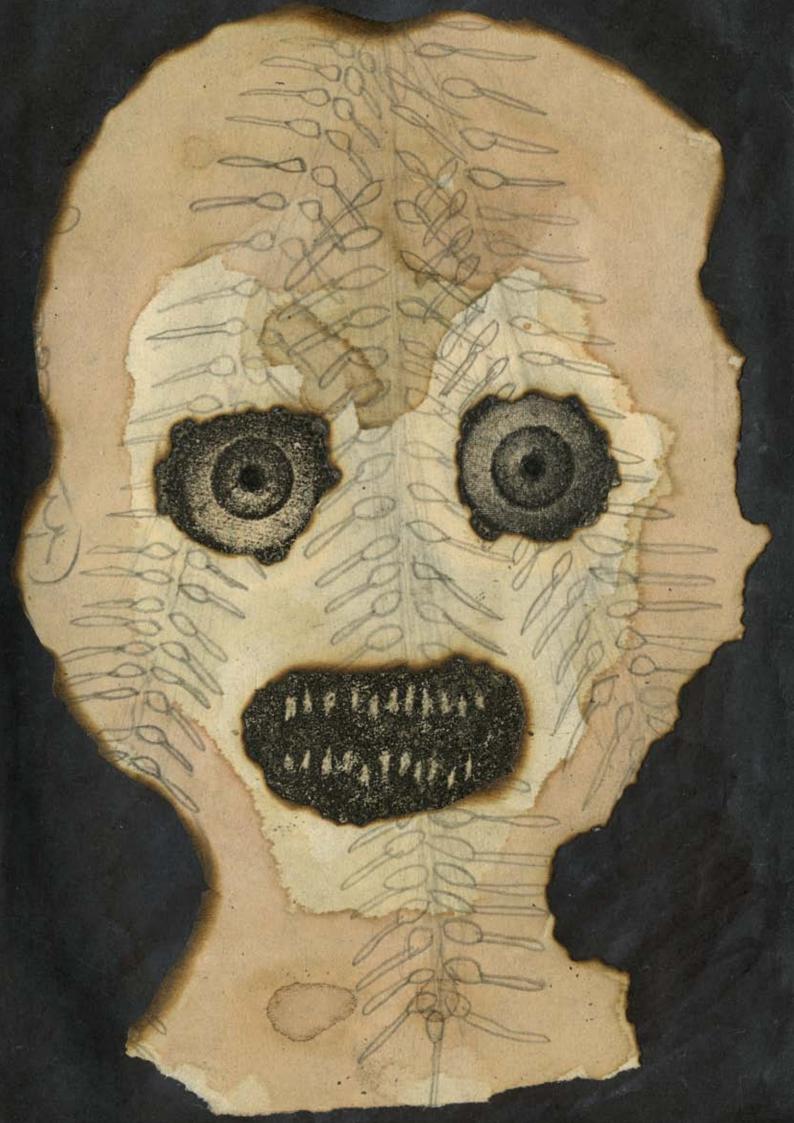
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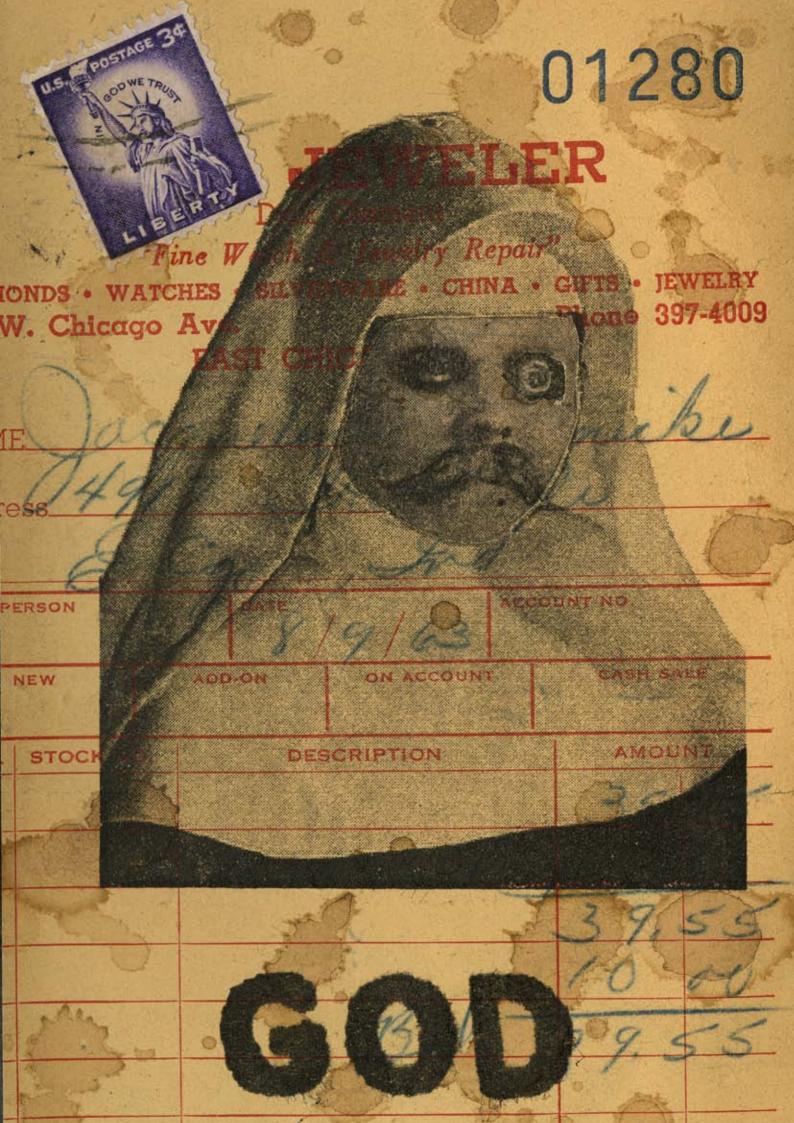
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA, UNITES STATES

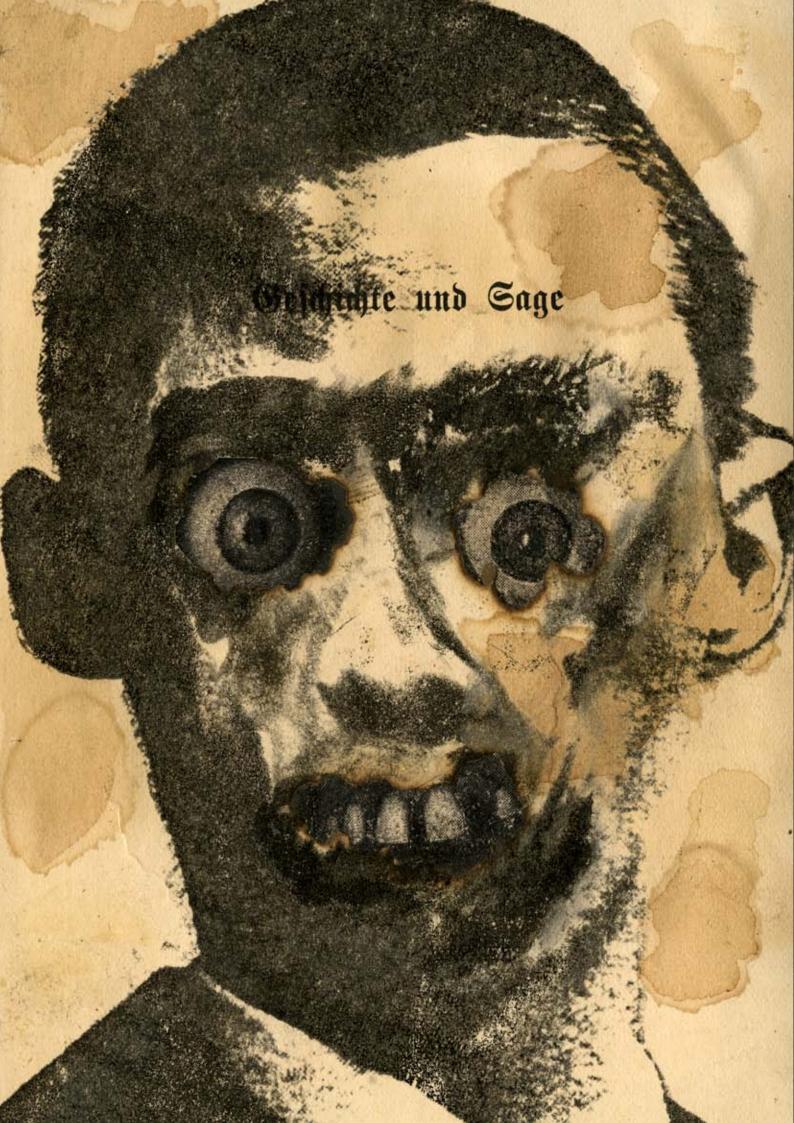
SERIES:

»THE BLACK BOOK«
FROM THE PRIVATE COLLECTION OF
STAFFAN PERSSON, BERLIN











S

LOCKWORK HOWCASEII ERLAPPING REALITIES

»ON THE ARTISTIC PRACTICE OF ION GRIGORESCU«

ung, Lacan, Dada and Eastern Christianity - all meet up in Ion Grigorescu's work, that spans for more than four decades. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the manifold manifestations of Grigorescu's artistic practice are intimidating, broaching almost any known media, from video, performance and photography to lithography, fresco or oil painting. Probably as a consequence, most of the works selected for exhibitions from the artist's modest studio consist of iconic images of his early performances, now imbued with an aura of legend and subversiveness. Associated with body art and the '70s neo-avantgarde, his works are highly regarded

in the art world, being currently exhibited in both the Berlin and Bucharest Biennale. But how can one contextualize the religious paintings or digital collages recently finished? In his cluttered and dusty studio, the Romanian artist remains silent, moving slowly between piles of photographs, paintings and sculptures. Amidst the towering works, a question arises: how can one trace the fine lines that connect art, politics and religion in this conceptual arabesque?

Reality in its different forms appears to us as a key to decipher this issue. The immediate, unstaged reality that of the body, the studio and quotidian existence - functions in parallel







photo | Ion Grigorescu, Dialogue with Ceausescu. 1978. videostill. Courtesy of the artist.

with the simulated, artificial reality of communist Romania, that of cultural schizophrenia, of hidden meanings and propaganda. Due to the difficult socio-political climate in '70s Romania, the simple, everyday gestures become courageous acts of ego assertion in a world where collectivity is constantly reinforced. The symbolic had been corrupted and irrevocably assigned to the field of propaganda. It has become a farce that needs to be exposed. »Politics is sharp and cuts the hands which hold it« notes Ion Grigorescu in his diary. His solitary actions, performed in the intimacy of his own apartment, under the close scrutiny of the camera lens, enacted this inherent trauma of political activity. As the body - the ultimate limit of the private sphere - became the locus of a radical reality assessment, the oppressive state apparatus was translated in his actions into a meticulously masochistic drive. By mirroring the political organization of life, the self-imposed violence rearticulated and annulled

at the same time the power structure. Like reflected light on a glass surface, terror turned in on itself.

»POLITICS IS SHARP AND CUTS THE HANDS WHICH HOLD IT«

Simultaneously, the invalidation of authority set the stage for another major focus of Grigorescu's practice, the concern with transcendent reality, that of mystical explorations, through yoga or Orthodox spirituality. Since the communist regime viewed religion as a superstitious manifestation, a necessary step in this investigation was the delegitimizing of the estab-

lishment. The totalitarian government was seen as a breach of the deeply ingrained byzantine tradition, characteristic for this area of Eastern Europe.

Continuing to underline the schizophrenic character of authority, the self is doubled in works such as Dialogue with Ceausescu in 1978, during which Grigorescu acts as both dictator and common citizen. A recurrent theme in his practice - ambivalence - is linked with gender identity, as noticeable in his 1976 video »Masculine/ Feminine« that attempts a destabilization of fixed roles through the use of camera movement and mirrors. In the context of a conservative society. the mere gesture of exhibiting the naked male body constitutes a political action. Piotr Piotrowski, in his essay »Male Artist's Body: National Identity vs. Identity Politics«, claims that in a conservative society such as the Romanian one, the simple exposure of the naked male body becomes,



photo | Ion Grigorescu, Dialogue with Ceausescu. 1978. videostill. Courtesy of the artist.

through undermining the subjectobject gender roles, a politically subversive practice. By revealing the conventional character of gender, Grigorescu addresses the conventional quality of authority itself.

Naturally, the political police, called Securitate, was not keen on these experimental endeavors. This, along with other problems, determined Grigorescu to abandon his artistic practice during the troubled decade of the '80s. Despite being commissioned to paint socialist realist portraits of the »beloved leader« Nicolae Ceausescu, his works were refused on the basis that they were »too realistic«. In the meantime, he dedicated himself to the restoration of religious mural paintings, which he considers of utmost importance, since these images can reach simple people, in contrast to the elitist audience of Romanian galleries. After the fall of the communist regime, in 1989, the interest in Orthodox spirituality became a strong commitment of his work. Member of the Prolog group, that created the basis for the neo-orthodox tendency in Romanian contemporary art, and one of the founders of the now defunct Catacomba Gallery, inaugurated in the '9Os, Grigorescu demonstrated an unyielding concern with spirituality.

Unmistakably, the inquiry initially posed still remains valid. This immensely rich body of work cannot be described in a few laconic sentences, but this article may attempt at inviting the reader to ponder and wander through the layers of meaning in this labyrinthine structure which constantly surprises the viewer.

Further reading:

- · Ileana Pintilie, Actionism in Romania During the Communist Era, Idea Design & Print, 2002
- · Laura Hoptman, Tomas Pospiszyl (eds.), Primary Documents: A Sourcebook for Eastern and Central European Art since the 1950s, MIT Press, 2002
- · IRWIN, East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe, Afterall Books, 2006

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AGENTS

ABUSE HOWCASE^{II} DEGRINDER

»A TWO-WAY SHIFT BETWEEN CHAOS AND ORDER«

:: Hallo and welcome to the Spheres. Agent Side Grinder seems to have moved from the direction of »new band« to a well-established project that is gradually becoming more popular. How do you feel about that change? Do you consider yourself more experienced now after the release of three well-received albums or still in the process of expanding and experimenting?

Thank you. Well, as I see it, it's a little bit of both; after three albums and a lot of liveperformances we start to feel more sure in what we're doing but the important thing is to never get comfortable. The core for us is to always improve and take new paths, there wouldn't be any point in do-

ing this if we ever felt contempt with what we have achieved.

:: In defining your style, a lot of people have made comparisons with bands such as Suicide, Joy Division, Cabaret Voltaire and so on. How do you feel about those associations? Would you describe your technique as being in the same vein as them?

Well... you always play your part in the mirror of history but we have never expressed any concrete wish for sounding like certain bands. I guess it's hard to make music entirely forgetting your influences but the interesting thing with ASG is that we all come from very different musical backgrounds, and when I joined the band I listened almost exclusively to Roxy Music!





": Do you believe we could talk about a revival of the minimal wave / postpunk scene nowadays?

I don't know; for many years now there have been a lot of bands out there sounding more and more like bands from the '8Os, but for me most of them just wear it as a costume made out of trend and nostalgia. I don't think the few really interesting acts are enough to make out a scene.

:: In making your music, do you feel there is also a certain nostalgia for old sounds and gear or do you opt for a complete abandonment of old values and techniques?

We use old equipment in making our music for sure, but this has never been a goal in itself. We use it as it fits our style and works very good when playing live, but it is important to remember that we, as a band in 2010, make music TODAY, not 20 years ago. Some bands tend to forget about that.

:: What has been influential for the Agent Side Grinder? From writers to events/movements?

William Blake has been a huge inspiration for me personally, concerning his way of zig-zagging between the known and the beyond.

:: You are often described as a Stockholm-based band, do you consider yourself being part of a Swedish scene? I couldn't say.

:: Are you trying to push your music further and push geographical boundaries or do you see yourself part of an European/Scandinavian culture, musically as well?

We would love to expand in other countries and territories. Of course, it's easier to reach people in your own surroundings, but there's no point in limiting your focus to a certain crowd in any way.

:: Are there any promising new acts in Sweden nowadays in the area of minimal electronics?

Honestly I don't really know what minimal electronics mean, but there are a lot of good and interesting bands around in Sweden, though very few of them would consider themselves part of a certain scene.

:: What gear do you use in producing your sounds?

Analogue synths, drum machine, electric bass-guitar and tape loops. A set completely compatible with playing live and we see ourselves very much like an old school punk orchestra, although the guitars have been replaced.

". There seems to be a tendency towards analogue in choosing your instruments. How does that feed in the Agent Side Grinder identity?

It is crucial, the beauty with analog equipment is that it has this element of chaos. It's organic in a way, and it becomes very evident when you see us live. When you play everything live, the equipment becomes an extension of yourself and the possibility that things can fail on stage gives the performance a nerve that you cannot get with backtracks or computer-programs.

:: Are you also building your own instruments? If so, how does that process begin and develop?

Henrik builds his own filters and Peter experiments with a lot of things when creating his tapeloops, but apart from that it's more a question of assembling already existing parts into a working unit.

:: Are you tempted to experiment more and also blend with more digital sounds in the near future? Keeping in mind that you've recently released your self-titled album in CD format...

I don't know, we experiment all the time in order to develop but on the question upon digital sounds... I don't think so.

:: How does the creative process usually take place in making a track and later an album? Is it a joint practice of everyone getting involved in the fragments or do some of you focus on a specific part and later add layers to that?

Usually it all starts with a very brief idea, then everyone brings their own section to it, often while jamming in the studio. I, for example, usually concentrate upon the lyrics and the mood of the vocals while the others all have their own part





to work with. But in the making of some tracks, some members have a more clear idea than the others and alas becomes more dominant.

:: Lyric-wise a large number of words or structures are repeated constantly. Would you put repetition in terms of compulsion and erasure, both being a necessary part of the creative process?

On stage I transform completely into a very distilled version of myself and I think that the repetitive part of the lyrics was born from that. While on stage it is a tool to bring the audience in, to see a part of the state that I'm in. When writing lyrics, this way of thinking has leaked into even the more organized songs of ours, say »Die to Live« for instance. It's a kind of two-way shift between the chaos of performance and the order of writing.

:: »Pulse« frames the beginning of your new album, »The Irish Recording Tape«. »I watch you« is echoed throughout the track, could you elaborate a bit on the meaning of that? What does Agent Side Grinder see and focus on as an »observer« of what is out there? ASG is a band quite hard to define, as we leak into and combine a lot of different ideas and situations, constantly developing but maybe never really completely fitting in anywhere. Much like a Trickster, seeing things a bit from the side, seeing the cracks in the foam and the rooms behind.

:: Later, in »Die To Live« »Faster faster reaching down« is mentioned. Would you argue that the crashes are inevitable and somewhat compulsory to transgress? Would you see music as creatively destructive and self-destructive, as well?

Actually it's »dawn« that I sing. It's a song about the need for speed and

movement to be able to stay alive. It's about a certain Swedish writer who used to drive very very fast at night in order to be able to write. A destructive theme, yes, and I have to admit that it's much more interesting to write about complicated matters than to write about the bright ones. In a sense I think crashes are very important to be able to reach further, but it's all about setting yourself info a certain state of mind; if you're focused enough you don't need to crash to see clearly.

:: Still focusing on the »Irish Recording Tape«, a pattern related to age, shifts and differences between old and new generations is noticeable. Could you develop on that theme and how does elements function in the context of your project?

Its themes mostly drawn from my own life. I've felt this shift concerning my place in time and space ever





since I was a very small child, and the uncertainty has only grown with the years. At its best it is a feeling, timeless, but more often it's like being a constant anachronism. With the years I've learned to deal with it somewhat, but it plays a huge part in how I perceive the surroundings. I guess it is a quite common state in our age in time; the world is moving fast and old memories still lingers.

": You've been mostly releasing on the Dutch label Enfant Terrible. How did that collaboration start?

We played in Amsterdam four years ago and after the gig the host of the club; Martijn, asked if we wanted to release a 7" on his label, and that label was Enfant Terrible.

"Concerning the visual aspect of your music: a couple of your videos have gained attention online lately. Were you directly involved in their making? Do you want to involve more elaborate videos as a constant part of the Agent Side Grinder aesthetics as well in the near future?

In some of them; we were. I think that videos are an interesting way of spreading the music so it's very likely that we explore it further.

:: How do you feel about including background visuals in live performances? Would you be interested in incorporating that or do you feel that the music solely is enough to engage the audience?

The music is enough for us, visuals are a very powerful tool and it easily takes over the show. Music is powerful enough without hiding behind blinding aesthetics.

:: Related to your future releases: what are your plans for the next material coming out? Any major changes in style/approach? We continue in the same manner, which is to say; constantly moving forward.

:: Do you have some collaborations or separate projects going on at the moment?

Not at the moment.

:: And as a final question: how would you describe the sphere of Agent Side Grinder. What elements are part of it? I think that's a question for the listeners actually, I find it very hard to define, I know that it IS but I don't know WHAT it is.

> questions & photos | **Diana Daia** answers | **Kristoffer Grip Agent Side Grinder**





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