

56°08'28.5"N 15°35'39.5"E
56°08'47.0"N 15°48'50.3"E
56°08'11.5"N 15°47'19.8"E
56°04'21.8"N 15°43'54.5"E
56°04'59.5"N 15°44'59.9"E
56°08'31.0"N 15°47'54.2"E
56°03'36.9"N 15°49'14.4"E

BIRDS
DON'T
TAKE
THE
TRAIN,
BUT
WE DO

Artists in retreat
Blekinge · fall 2021

ELISA

CUESTA

A RECORDING DEVICE WITH 5 MOUTHS, 12 EYES, AND MANY EXTENSIONS

I like to imagine that what happened in Blekinge in the fall of 2021 was like the awkward landing of a multi-headed migratory bird on a land only known by old tales.

Xenia had narrated some stories about the archipelago and its islands -our islands for a few weeks, but she didn't show us any picture, leaving plenty of space for imagination, as she always does. I avoid searching for images. I want it to remain a mysterious territory yet a bit longer. I want to perpetuate the extragenes until the right moment..

But still, I want to draw a map, because drawing maps is how I find my ways in and out. So I search the archipelago on Google maps:

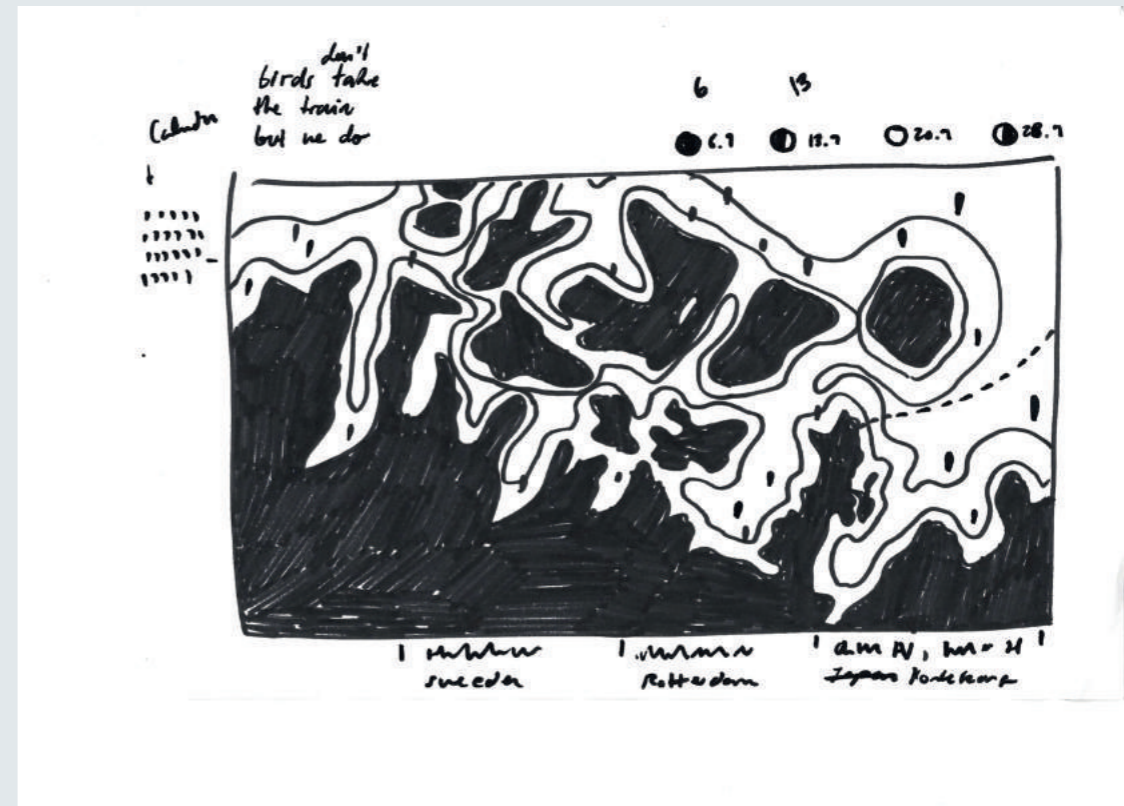
Tomtö _
Tomtö peninsula Blekinge _
Tomtö island Sweden _
no results

There's hundreds of islands; I get closer, trying to figure out which of the little fragments my island might be. But this vertical military looking kills the mystery once and again.

Hopeless.

I close my eyes, and let my eyelids blur the contours and my imagination find more appropriate colors.

After more than 18 hours on bus, train, and the funky community taxi R and I finally have arrived. X awaited there, a proper host. H and V would arrive 2 days later. They came from the north, after flying from the south. It didn't seem weird then. S observed from the day before, always ahead, but always late -so hard to grasp her presence sometimes.

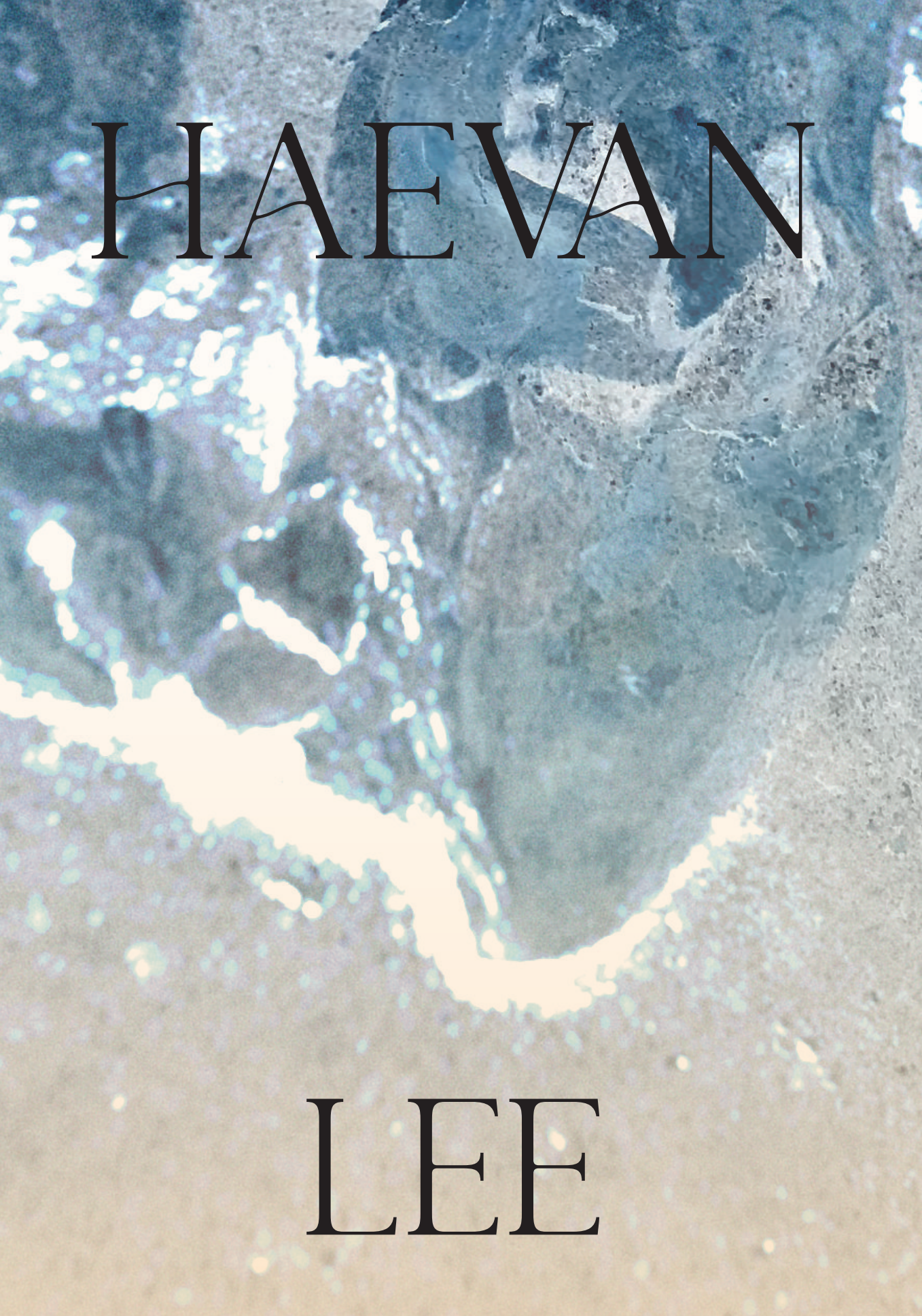


Together we gave shape to a particular kind of recording device. I say 'recording' because of the many things we did, some we documented:

We recorded the flavours.
We recorded our walks.
We recorded the songs.
We recorded the tides -this was tricky.
We recorded the birds.
We recorded the stars.
Too bad, we didn't find the way to record the smells.
We recorded our readings too.

And I say 'device' as I could have said any other word that contains a multitude. Because us were more than many, but sensed as a whole. Just like the archipelago, far enough but close enough, present enough and equally absent. And so, we could look to the past, and to the future from our present companionship. And so, we saw things that on our own we wouldn't have seen.

I often think of documentation as the action (in the present) of building an archive (for the future, from the past). It will always be incomplete. I think we understood this, so we sat every night by the fire to build our own a little bit. We could as well have weaved.



HAEVAN

LEE

We visited the Blekinge Museum's storage. The museum has an archived local culture as a project by collecting all kinds of household items, furniture, textiles, paintings, ships, etc. Christopher, of the Blekinge Museum, said that the collections vary slightly depending on the person in charge of the collection. Numerous boats and hunting tools were part of the collection. The many tools for fishing eels show that eel fishing is important for them in this region. The day before, we went to Hästhallen, a petroglyph from the Bronze Age (3300 BC-1200 BC). If you walk along the lush forest road, you will find wide, flat rocks. The petroglyph have been painted red to make them more visible for tourists. In the written texts on the information board, it says that this is a place of ceremonies, and it describes their beliefs in magnificent gods and their conflicts in the ocean. However, we found the possibility that the drawings depicted would be different from this interpretation. The point is that the site could have been used as an eel market or as a teaching place, as the figures resemble the different tools for catching eels, and seem to depict an eel themselves rather than a spiritual creature (a sort of worm that carries the sun across the sky). On the bus going back to our basement, Elisa raised the possibility by comparing pictures. And I followed to draw the red lines on the drawings, and imagined what it is, What was the someone who drew these drawings trying to express and leave. I understood that this drawing depicted detailed instructions on how to catch eels. In Korea, people also like to eat eels, so I felt familiar with the culture. This made me imagine several scenes as past experiences overlapped with the drawing. And we talked together and said that some of the history related to this may have to be changed.

History and culture often remain sacred and unique. But the daily life of the past might also remain as a spiritual symbol. And then we imagine. It might make the people of the future come here.

When you do art, you go through a lot of omissions, editing, and re-creation. Then if you travel to a distant place to create a simple

daily life, smell the forest, see the leaves swaying in the autumn wind, sense the falling leaves, and listen to the birds songs, you might think and ask yourself whether many things are omitted or distorted while you are standing on the time that passes through your daily life.

Also, Christopher showed us the well-preserved skeleton of a dog buried about 8,000 years ago. It was buried next to the entrance of the house. It was laying on a bed of feathers and had small gifts laying on top of its body.

It reminded me of my dog that was buried in the ground three years ago. The day was special, because all the family members were at home at the same time. My dog had not been able to move herself. Suddenly, I noticed that she was breathing unsteadily and losing focus in her eyes. We were next to her, crying and saying the things we wanted to say: 'Thank you' and 'I love you'. Then when she stopped breathing for a few seconds, I shouted her name, and then she exhaled her last breath. I remember her last long breath following my voice. After hearing her last breath and her last answer, we wrapped her up with care and buried her with the toys she loved.

Beyond a long time, human beings live their daily life, and we love.

In Autumn 2021





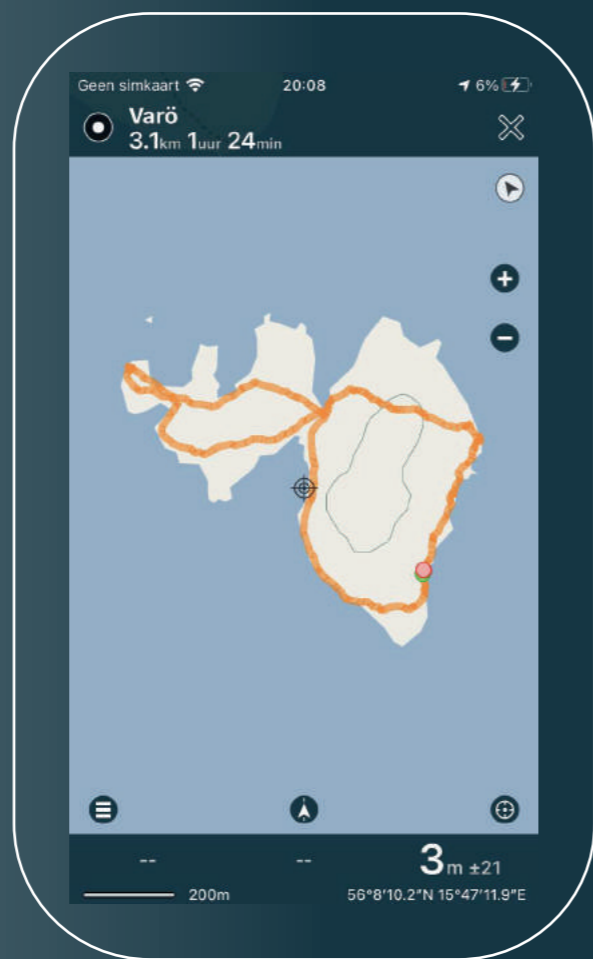
ROSA

VAN
WALBEEK

ROWING ONESELF BACKWARDS INTO THE FUTURE

Was I really in Blekinge? I wonder if I really was. Was it only four months ago? I wonder if it really is. A parallel universe, a parallel reality, reachable so easily by taking a bus or taking a train or taking a bike or taking a walk. When shall I be there again? I wonder if I shall.

Lives lived separately, swirled, tumbled, moved simultaneously towards a little house in Blekinge. Experienced a togetherness, a closeness, a warmth. We visited the archive of the region, it's past stuff. We visited the carvings, it's past history. We visited the forrest, it's past and current living creatures. We talked, we listened. We taught and learned. So easy to feel at home in this parallel life. And the order in which things happen is of uttermost importance yet all memories of the trip seem outside of a linear order. They exist simultaneously. All the islands we visited, all the food we shared, all the water we crossed, all the stories we told, all the sun we felt and all the stars we counted, live simultaneously in my mind.



My island, not mine of course, a person can not own land as land is its own and this land definitely not mind. I am a visitor to this island Xenia invited me to explore. It was across the water across the house where we stayed. I saw it every day and yet we only reached it the day before we left. As you row, the destination is in your tback, looking at the past you move towards the future. As we were rowing I thought about what the island would be like as well as my life in this place I call home, so far away from a rowing boat in a Swedish archipelago. I thought of the days we had spend together. The joys and the frustrations which inadvertently arrive when living closely together with former strangers. Frustrations are easily blamed but then lost as an opportunity to learn about yourself.

'My' island, as we walked up, not all the way to the top as that is not the point of walking, we chatted, so lovely to spend time and enjoy the warmth. I expected the island to be round but as we reached the other side and walked down again we could see a narrow strip of land forming a bridge to an extra part of the island. Bright green grass and birds, many birds. That other side seemed another world, so different. We finished our round and walked back to the boat. Magically sunny as if only the island was summer and we swam. So cold but so lovely. Wet hair and we laughed imagining telling the other we fell in the water. They had warned us that morning to take care. To not drown and freeze in the cold. What a contrast to our actually summery adventure.

As I remember the colors in the sky when it got dark and the coldness of the night as I left the stove warm inside of the house to sleep in my tent outside, I see the stars again. The endless amount of stars in a clear sky and the moon, slightly bigger every night, putting myself and my surroundings in perspective. A silent and solitary experience every night but feeling very connected to the living beings inside of the house. On the last night there was a speculation of aurora borealis, northern lights would be visible in the far south of Sweden. We waited outside on the dock in the water. It was not a clear sky and we soon realized it would not happen. Still we stayed outside, physically cold but found comfort in the magic of being outside in the night. And surprise over the not as dark as we thought from the inside evening. The earth keeps moving and for a while Serene (from a distance), Xenia, Elisa, Haevan, Vicky and me moved together in the same reality.

Leaving again, swirling, tumbling, moving away from this parallel life towards our own again we separated but from now on shared a past. You are visiting this past through photos, video's, drawings and writing and may decide for yourself if we really were in Blekinge. If it really was only four months ago. And if we really will be there again.

The Hague, March 02022

I heard and I read about potential rewriting of a small anecdote in history
The eel, the eeeeeel.
The potential from a creature from nature so mundane so simple,
That bound people's thoughts together - swimming through past and future,
culture and history.
I was inspired and impressed.
The next evening I headed home, awaited for a second evening of the day to come,
On my way I grabbed myself sushi-to-go for dinner,
2 pieces of eel sushi, one for myself one for my mother,
an exceptional choice in many years to my habitual configuration of a sushi box.

We have long used to structure events
It is now the events that structure us.
Whereas we are made to believe we are in charge,
we now know we never were.

We are so used to live under the conditions given to us from the moment we are
in.
The happiness and unhappiness of those conditions cannot be measured,
but if we continue to think about them,
we can crawl out of our daily lives and breathe a little more.

We began on an ambiguous but ambitious premise.
I still imagine gathering by the fire, supporting each other on the arms
crossing the rivers, greeting kisses and sharing food.
I still imagine in being together and holding each other's hands,
I quietly anticipate a time to come where I may know nothing,
but happy again to be an attendee.

*And I won't tell you where it is, so why do I tell you
anything? Because you still listen, because in times like these
to have you listen at all, it's necessary
to talk about trees. **

03

寂寞很美麗 像一部沒有了字幕的電影 **
Desolation is beautiful just as a movie deprived of subtitles

In the beginning I contemplated an experience as how to make things happen
(as if anything can be art)
As time went by the group have vividly painted the place in words,
in laughs, in travels, in stories, in the poses how they rest in the house, in
the conversations how they think through the past and present, and in silence
I started to understand,
To experience can also be to observe,
To listen and to anticipate,
As a modest witness.

The Hague, Recollections of Hong Kong, Winter 2021

* excerpted from Adrienne Rich, What kinds of Times are These

** excerpted from the lyrics of the Canto pop song by Eason Chan, Solitude Sonata

SERENE

HUI

00

I have never set foot in Blekinge,
Nor have I heard about this name before
2021.

The nearest I got to this place is Malmö.
For a long while I kept thinking writing
about a place that I've never been to would
not seem genuine.
For instance, as a South-East Asian, I
thought I could never measure up
to write any fiction set in the European
middle ages, or the wild west of America, of
the feudal times in Japan.
I believed that I did not have the proper
authority, knowledge or genuineness
because I lived in a different place from
the setting of my story.
Never a great storyteller, I thought I could
articulate a bit better
if I use places I am familiar with,
like my hometown or dwellings that I have an
affinity with.
I could not have been more artless.
So I said yes.

01

(Field notes and thoughts : literally on
birds)

Boundaries become liminal zones
a source of social anxiety, a space of
ambiguity,
a producing zone of abjection,
one which should be eliminated in order to
reduce anxiety.
But it may not always be possible,
especially when nonhuman beings do not
conceptually adhere to such construction.

Creative tensions exists in lines, a sensing
of edges.
But lines can always remain unfinished.
We emerge in moments, encounters and
relations
that develop throughout one's lifespans,
And the inherent implications that arise
when confronted with 'another's' history.

Bodies become intersections of large and
small scale spatial practices,
But if bodies are an intimate location of
effects and agencies,
Air is the substance that bathes and ties
the scales of bodies, regions and worlds
together.

Tender bodies, enmeshed;
Radical alterities.

OUT OF PLACE, OUT OF TIME

02

Blekinge, "a small county with great archipelago adventures",
8,498.61 km from where my body is situated,
7 hours ahead but 8,500 km behind,
my every day ends early but recollections always arrives in delay.
Some days I have this opportunity to live the same day twice,
with mind and body torn apart, in both place and time.
Well, dislocation is something I am no stranger to!

Torhamnaskär is assigned to me.
How beautiful I got to own a place in a country where I would blissfully dwell.
(But you must not forget it. You become responsible, for what you have tamed...)
So I became responsible for my islet.
This islet which the name I can not even pronounce,
All I know is it is probably the island in Blekinge that received the most attention when the submarine
U137 ran aground there,
It was notable for that moment in history.
Before and after, it would be all up to my inventiveness.

Christoffer said there are as many as 118 nature reserves in Blekinge archipelago,
(Screenshot) Information saved, anticipation imprinted.
He went on, Blekinge is ideal for hiking.
Immediately I thought,
The closest experience I could throw myself to being at a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve,
Is precisely by going on to another UNESCO Global Geopark.

Sharp Island can be seen as a small archipelago,
itself surrounded by seven islets,
Kiu Tau, Pak Sha Chau, Tai Tsan Chau, Siu Tsan Chau, Cham Tau Chau, Yau Lung Kok and Tuen Tau Chau.
So I arranged myself a sampan boat ride from Sai Kung,
Headed towards Sharp Island, I assigned myself the closest islet Kiu Tau.
My islet offers me some of the clearest water, beautiful beaches, an undulating trail, volcanic remnants,
and immense singing of the birds
Far in reality but close enough in sensory, I thought.
This is the closest I could get to Torhamnaskär,
in place and in time.

Now I could recall the experience in Torhamnaskär,
but there are things that I could not remember properly,
As I was more concerned about where to place my foot, catch my breath,
rather than the scenery around me,
the general atmosphere of the place, or the feeling of being on a remote island.

That week I read and I hear about Varö, Hästhölm, Långören, Tomtö and Godnatt,
about encounters that happened with locals, Tim, Christoffer, Roger and Lena,
and I couldn't stop imagining Oscar Ro as a name of a person.
I tried to remember these names and repeating them in my head,
Looking at pictures and trying to drag my tiny orangish avatar into the spot and see it all-dimensional,
Maybe also walk a few steps on the periphery of the images.
As if by doing so I could be part of these memories, when I engulf recollections not of my own.

There are parts that I hold in a tight grip,
Bedtime stories, glimpses of here and there of Oscar Ro,
the Korean song that didn't last long but long enough to make me smile,
the debate between when does one call a meal lunch and dinner.
It is not possible to forget,
the delicately-preserved skeleton of the loving dog at Blekinge Museum,
I hold back to announce to the group I have just farewelled my beloved doggo a month ago.



VICTORIA

DE LA
TORRE

FROM TIME

Sometimes, a decontextualization is needed in order to re-contextualize oneself again. This could be a side of the word retreat: putting notifications aside, pausing major activities for a week. It took us more than twelve hours to get far from pandemics, traffic rush, academic requirements, impositions, obligations, contradictions, pollution. In the cottage of Oscar's Ro we found ourselves surrounded by nothing but nature, acknowledging the vestiges of a culture familiarly unknown, exchanging and questioning our own roots, exploring the islands of the archipelago, allowing ourselves the pleasure of experimenting, talking, living, discovering, inspiring together. For a week, the cottage was the basecamp of our oasis in time.

Strokes of golden yellows, tile browns, ocher greens and fire oranges portrayed the ephemeral explosion of life that precedes the languid fall. A silent scenario carefully set to say goodbye to the flock of birds, busy making their final preparations before their migratory trip started. The air carried the smell of fallen leaves, wet mud and icy air. We had traveled to the heart of autumn.

The islands of the Blekinge archipelago also live this connection/disconnection phenomena in their own way. During the periods in which the weather allows the waters of the sea to maintain their liquid vocation, the islands keep themselves isolated, far from each other, only reachable by boats navigated by experienced hands. In the moments when the weather gets inclement and a layer of ice covers the waters, new paths may emerge for animals and even humans to travel by foot from one land to another, as a pop up land created only to be melted with the sky once again.

The artists in retreat were assigned an island according to their characters, interests and practices. I was assigned Langören, the most extreme island before the open waters of the Baltic Sea. An old refuge of sailors, now host of summer

holidays in pleasant cottages. By November, the ghostly absence of the tourists was present in every corner of the tiny village that surrounded the deck. In the first winds of the fall, humans also migrate, looking for the easier life of the more connected land. A choice not available for everybody; the only option for others.

The rest of the island was wild, populated by trees, bushes, algae, sheeps. Peaceful nature only disturbed by some stone structures that appeared every once in a while, abandoned, closed: the remains of some old bunkers built during the Cold War, raised along the coastline. A whole defense infrastructure that emerged from the fear of an invisible enemy hidden behind the vast horizon; silent witnesses of a battle that never took place in the field, but that surely carved tight knots in the tracheas of the islanders. It will never cease to impress me how war can be so absent in a territory, but how can fear be so present in the traces left.

Fears, but also illusions, hopes, beliefs and maybe dreams that were also left imprinted on the stones carved by prehistoric ancestors, that found on a clearing of a forest nearby their perfect canvas to compose a symphony of figures. Emotions, stories and feelings also present in the vast amount of objects stored in the entrails of the Blekinge Museum's Archive, now opened up for those curious eyes to have a walk through ancient manners and traditions. A sort of (de)contextualization that invites us today to understand how life could have been yesterday, reconsider how it is now, and imagine how it could be tomorrow. The tender burial of a recently found Bronze Era dog ignited in us some hope.

TO TIME

XENIA

KLEIN

1 BY 1

one by one they came
together they came
by day and night
I welcomed we welcomed

we made dinners and lunches
had breakfast by ourselves
and rested in ourselves, under blankets in our
rooms,
like you do when being a little bit lovely alone

I bought ingredients, coffee and cookies
I rested
I looked at the sea and the water was cold
I went inside and I waited

and I thought
it was wonderful intense
sharing moments with friends and friends to be.
maybe. becoming something together,
maybe already the day we came to Blekinge

it was autumn and it was beautiful
but I thought maybe the summer would have been
more pretty
maybe winter more tensely exotic maybe spring
more hopeful
a restless mind sometimes, am I, a mind with a
lot to learn about time

but we had dinner and food, and I change with
us when
we had Korean and Spanish foods. a lot of
Spanish food.
actually. I did Swedish recipes, trying to be
there
we boiled water for tea and did some Dutch
interpretations and other translations

we talked, we thought and I learned a lot, I
enjoyed a lot
and that is the most shameful-feeling for me as
curator
That I did not know enough,
That I don't know much, while at other
times too much

and everything was as it should, it was okay, it
was good
I thought. I was happy, I was content
but I felt, I should have known better, to make
it better, make it bigger,
marketing and publishing, be more to be more,
and to be all things I'm not

I should have asked for help but I didn't know
better
and I didn't know what I know now
but okay it was as it should be, I was me
I was human and humane

it was small, it was cozy, and we made fire in
the stove,
we saw the beauties and particularities of the
everyday
and we felt how wonderful it is being alive
sometimes,
being a human is a gift, feels like a gift
being human

when we talked we started to feel
how it was big and great
because it was small
it was for everyone and it was for us

and we learned and we traveled and we went to
islands and to each other
and to museums with ships that smell like ships
do,
in the archipelago where ships sometimes smell
like earth can smell, like forests at autumn
smell
when you suddenly stop /stop/
and breath and have a look around

and we felt calm, and we felt Blekinge and we
felt how life is,
everywhere it is and we met strangers, we met
Christopher, we met Lena and the priest in
Torhamn
and many other people I know and don't know,
and we talked with Tim and Tim had a dog,
a king's poodle named Rex, and Rex met us when
we met each other

I asked:
were these weeks too pleasant for us, for art,
for life?
can art be this nice, be lovely and smile?
and is this even allowed?

and I tried to see how I could make it a little
bit less perfect so it could feel right and
just,
appropriate like work and just like organising
papers in folders feel professional,
but I said to myself: we have to refuse all our
childhood fantasies of being grown-up,
of being legitimate and right and
stop being boring and dull

so I said it's okay, it's okay being paid for
being, for Being alive
because by being alive we build, we do, we
create:
an archive over the joys of everyday,
of the islands of Blekinge, over the
inspirations that lead to art

a virtual place, a space, to visit revisit to
see to explore,
I felt I could see my home in new ways,
and every time someone from Torhamn, Jämjö and
Karlskrona,
from Sturkö, Aspö, Hasslö entered the site
I was happy

I smiled and I said *Hi!*
and they said *Hej hej* neighbor neighbor
and it was not as silly as it sounds,
it was beautiful,

it was people seeing their home,
their roots in new,
but not strange and distant, ways
they could see the power in their own everyday,

and they felt inspired to write, to think, to talk, to draw and to walk
or just to be, to be
and they made things and they inspired us, me, and also you
to write, to talk, draw, walk and think and be

So, we had a GATHERING on zoom
around a table in the same room we sat
and we talked about various things in the middle of things,
we talked while doing and we talked while doing an archive over what we were doing

and we understood that we had found a method
not only for art but for bearing witness
and it sounds pretentious very much
but I feel that was how it felt

and a mother to a girl said I had a pretty smile when I talk,
I was online for her and she was online for me and yet we saw each other
into each others eyes and we smiled, and also that was beautiful
Thank you for your smile, and thank you for telling me about mine

I love humans very much sometimes

and we left, by train, by buss
through Malmö and Copenhagen, through Hamburg
and many other places was left
but we kept in touch, and we continued and we wonder how this can be further done

we had coffee and chocolate pralines in the Hague one day
and we said a foldable house a portable exhibition
we said that everything is a publication
and by saying it we wrote it we communicated and created

and it was here,
and it was just as it should
when it is what it was
the archive, the website

refigured and rethought in a new
totally new form and body of work
an exhibition you can put on tables or on walls,
on floors, pavements and even on shores

for you, for me, for them for us
to be, just right now and later
much later than this very moment
I say: it is it is is is is



Seat 31 C
Somewhere over Europe

22 December 2021

