

Jens Pettersen
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Thesis Proposal

I've always worked from the weeds outward. I build up from fragments, inductively scratching and adhering to whatever surface with varying tools in search of a bigger picture, or maybe I never get to a bigger picture at all, Maybe a practice like this by nature stays in the B-side, staying at the grassroots, in the inchoate experience of the body as the organ of knowing.

Amy Sillman, Shape Zine

My art practice is rooted in intuition. I begin with assembling and layering, I pile together then reframe and edit until the work clicks into place. It is difficult to describe what works and what doesn't, but when I know, I know. As a maker, I am guided by my own trusted intuition. Amy Sillman muses about feelings that are sometimes impossible to describe outright. Feelings of dread or impassioned beauty rouse from a space that sits between everything else. It emerges from intent and delicacy -- secrets, myth and mystery.

In Norse Mythology the first humans Ask and Embla are created out of two pieces of driftwood. From intuitive and seemingly 'at random assemblage' humanity is created.

In a similar way, I translate this same drive of creating and crafting. Through production I am able to transform my ideas that encompass our minds into physical objects and images. By utilizing and commenting on an advertorial gimmick -- something which is funny and annoying, yet immensely intriguing -- I wish to invite the viewer into a space that has room for contemplation, yet at the same time has a 'banal' hook. In my work and material exploration I untangle themes of humanity, myth and nature. Myth as in creation narratives, or vignettes where the supernatural is laid on top of our own physical plane, myth is also something which through time has been stripped of its content. Sex, sensuality and violence has evaporated and have been either replaced or erased with elements that allow for a more 'easily digestible' distribution. Carl Jung's theory of archetypes assesses how the mythic and archaic characters from our heritage influence us in the present day. So no matter how many stories are deprived of their initial intent, they are still carried with us through the theory of the archetype. Through texts and images, both found and created, I wish to bring up the questions of drama, tenderness, humour and lust. The work that I aim to make is created to reflect the world in which the art lives, not the artwork itself -- who is watching, who is judging.

My proposal is to create an installation that has the potential of stacking and combining, assembling and rotating. I'm trying to think of ways to create 'collages' without incorporating a physical boundary, rather to let the viewers have control of what images they choose to put together, in this way I'm working outwards, constantly wishing to expand. In my material exploration I rediscovered an attraction to textiles and fabric. From quaint handcraft or industrialized Ikea mass assembly, the 'oeuvre' of textiles is still continuously fascinating, depictions from the Bayeux tapestry to the invention of the sewing machine, textiles helps us tell the story of humanity. Through assemblage I wish to assert narratives concerning the language of advertisements and the way in which it exists to require an immediate response and lasting impact. I want my work to be the same. My work is not necessarily an advertisement for anything at all, yet it still utilizes its trope of provocation and reaction. The finished work for my thesis will ultimately be a product, something which is there to be consumed by others -- contemplated, laughed at and finally judged. My work consists of objects constructed by someone I don't know, but in the end I am the sole assembler. In *Death of The Author*, Roland Barthes argues that: "The text is a tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture." A piece of textile does not hold one specific narrative, rather I aim to recontextualize the material into a composition where the different elements lean on each other to create new meaning. I adhere words and sew together fabric to try and formulate a conversation between artist and viewer and the work itself. The work has humour, darkness and anthropomorphic tendencies from and with varying forms. Masculinity can be fabricated -- and then it's broken. Like it is set up to fail.

There is something significant about a joke and its timing. Any good bit is supposed to be delivered straight. Any comic tries to deliver their punchline with confidence and any carpenter wishes to create something structurally sound. The display of my work is essential, as is material intonation. How can I expect other people to take anything seriously without putting effort into it myself? The juxtaposition of the formal and serious labor paired with the informal and banal or vulgar is an essential component in my thesis work. By delivering something straight you weed out any broken connections within the communication, which allows the artist to create something which demands attention. Through utilization of a pop cultural vocabulary -- which can simply be the use of a certain vernacular or typeface -- the communication is instantly recognisable, but considering the context, it is wrapped in something fun and secretive. As montage might suggest, the action is in the combination, within the margins of focus and outlines through which the viewer connects and transmutes ideas from lonely and confessional material forms.

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"Soviet Montage Theory." Film Theory. June 7, 2014. <https://www.filmtheory.org/soviet-montage-theory/>

An overview of the techniques of montage used by the Russian filmmakers in the Soviet Union. The site gives a good overview of the five different methods of montage laid forward by Sergei Eisenstein.

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In this Essay, art critic Clint Burnham proposes the concept of "Problematized Fun" relating to Cosima Von Bonin's solo exhibition at MUMOK art center in Vienna, Austria. The author proposes the notion that Von Bonin's work -- while fun and cute -- offers elements of darkness and introspective banality.

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Book that covers Jung's essential theory of the different archetypes

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Written Representation

INTENT

I am in the passenger seat at a Sonic drive in outside of Austin, Texas. It is a December afternoon. I have never been somewhere where it is warm around Christmas time. The sunset reminds of a late summer night, yet the grass and trees around me are brown and barren. I order a large chocolate milkshake along with my jalapeno poppers. Look at how big this shake looks laying in my hand. I take a picture of it to save for later, a memento of course. And sitting there looking at it I am the prototypical image of a foreigner scoffing and laughing at the extremes American beverages go to. But in my head I do not want to appear as someone who is only there to laugh, or to make fun, minimize or ridicule. The shake is banal, funny and heartfelt as to how it contrasts to my hands. How its grandeur and size doesn't seem to fit, and how it anthropomorphically subjects itself to someone caught on the fringes of acceptability.

There is beauty in peculiarity. How something presents itself where they are not necessarily going along the most scenic route, the touristy one. Rather, they're back roads that lead to desolate places that still bear the mark of man. Places where billboards along the highway are deteriorating as they solemnly stand alone in conjunction with the haunted and melancholy landscape surrounding it. Places that are seldomly seen and where their marks exist due to the lack of touch. They reflect a restrictive aesthetic. These places do not inhabit only themes of the dramatic and solemn, there is humour in this too. The contrasts and banality of the display of an advertisement campaign in a place where no one goes as you are maneuvering through your own road that falls in and out of where you think you belong.

I moved to Portland from Norway when I turned 19 and was done with high school. And for the past 6 months or so I had been going through the tedious process of getting ready to move, getting a visa and figuring out how I was gonna get there. I was gonna go to a school called the Oregon College of Art and Craft. The urge to move

had been festering in me for the past year or so and the google search “Art School, Portland” concluded in me viewing an aerial photo of the wood clad campus. I started the application process not soon after with a perfect understanding of this being the only school I ever applied to -- never having visited, never having left Europe.

PHOTOGRAPHY

My first two years of College were spent as a photography major at the OCAC under the tutelage of Mark Rupert. I first started getting serious about photography when I was 16 or 17 and found myself fascinated by how a simple image of something you see everyday can cause an intense and bewildering reaction. The conflation of something that is inconsequential and unimportant requiring your utmost attention shifts your perception of what surrounds you. Everything can now seem more romantic and impactful as you’re maneuvering through the world in search of something that fits your own parameter of sensual and beautiful, yet plain and unassuming -- the combination of all of these creating delicious images. Mythical, yet entirely real.

Photography also taught me about the importance of presentation and the game that occurs where you have to convince others of the importance of an image -- especially when the image you’re showing could exist anywhere and go totally unnoticed. When presenting a picture of something completely normal, how you go about presenting it brings the addition of you -- the maker -- into the image. And again, there is a game of conviction that happens. By placing an image within a nice frame, perhaps with a tiny mat board window and glass cover, you’re screeching out an almost desperate cry for attention, sometimes humorous, yet sweet and formal. I don’t think other people should have the right to care, unless you care about it yourself. Every image I present is important to me, and I wish to present it in a flattering way, sometimes it is for my own sake, but also as a way to create agency for the images I am representing.

DIALOGUE

My work is intended as a dialogue, but rather than an entity that is there to tell you something, it exists as any first encounter with whoever is watching. Sometimes shy, sometimes curious. How do you even start a conversation? Your eyes meet each other as you are feeling each other out, dissecting and maneuvering through

the motions of pleasant conversation. In bewildering ways the work craves a form of reaction, but is perhaps stunted when trying to explain itself. I am interested in this motion -- the hesitancy of trying to figure something out when struck by an impactful impression. I conflate it with someone or something that wishes to garner attention. And I want to emphasize that I do not connect 'wanting attention' to someone being selfish, shallow or in any way superficial. Rather I think of it as a necessity in our culture, sometimes to feel cared for you have to shout it out yourself. There is in a way a dialogue implicit in the mark. In my work too there is also an underlying dialogue waiting to happen, because it has not yet started. The work is not necessarily about trying to tell you something, rather in this anthropomorphic way it talks about the underlying mystery that is connected to human interaction and how full of embarrassment and excitement it can be.

GIMMICK/CUTENESS

When making the work I've been trying to figure out how to best describe the tools I am utilizing in my communication. How do you represent signs and symbols that might seem undermining, familiar or subdominant in an assertive way. Or in other terms how do you convince someone to take something that is merely cute -- serious? The same can go for the idea of a Gimmick -- a hook that is there to shift your attention onto something which you might deem as important, or maybe it is completely arbitrary. Sianne Ngai's book *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute and Interesting* reflects on how these unassuming, conversational words are some of those that speak most directly to "everyday practices of production, circulation, and consumption. Aesthetic experiences often revolve around a form of inconsequentiality. The quiet and difficult to notice 'flicker of affect' that accompanies our perception of 'minor changes to a norm' are often described as either interesting, as in physical diminutiveness and vulnerability or in the case of cute -- a flailing helplessness and unproductive exertion. I take base in these themes, then try and shift them into something that reminds me of the positive qualities I noticed in my initial impression, but through creation -- these initial outlooks have now been reduced and distilled to create one image where visual impression and material weight has been considered to create a more solid, impactful impression. The utilization of the gimmick + cuteness, moves the work or object away from the naivety of cuteness which in some instances can appear as very fleeting and inconsequential -- in the wrong way. The gimmick as a tool can shift the aura from cute and powerless to cute and assertive. I find the latter to be more interesting. The gimmick appears as deliberate choices by whoever the artist is. I have for example found mounting and installation of work to function as a sort of gimmick, because it translates to an

astute shift in how we perceive the artwork. The work when it is larger, or framed becomes harder to dismiss as merely naive. Rather the now assertive cuteness becomes even more enticing as it plays with the differences and similarities of the cute/beautiful/sensuous -- the presentation makes the work somewhat unattainable, but the subject still hints at a strong approachability. The work is now fully in control of itself and its agency.

CRAFT

Craft is discussed in two ways, with or without air quotes, as in craft or “craft” -- sometimes even with the abject and demeaning “S” suffix -- “crafts”. I often find myself and the work stuck in between all of these various monikers. I’m not a craftsperson as I’ve never really dove deep enough into a specific discipline to learn about all the rules, then have the wherewithal to deliberately break them. Sometimes to the chagrin of those around me, I ultimately start with breaking the rule, or doing it wrong, or the ineffective way. I never aim to fake naivety, I’m just like this. Not very handy, not very patient. However, I am particular about what I want and have a deep respect for the history and traditions of the materials and tools I utilize. I also find my precision to work in tandem with some craft characteristics. There is a need for balance in most craft disciplines. I seek the same thing with my restrictive and planned aesthetic. Whenever I find myself content with a piece it is because it reads as “easy” and snappy -- ultimately they are just objects existing in a space and are intended to be read as such -- might as well have the first impression be a good one.

With my first two years of college stemming from OCAC, I learned that craft is also not a particularly defined thing. Craftsmanship is something that needs to be practiced, but it can come about in a myriad of ways. A material move can be read as confident and assertive while not necessarily being proper or correct.

Craft is to me an involvement and dialogue that is based out of materiality and the necessity of making. It is a way to make the objects speak in a way which is accessible to everyone because of our ability to read into what materials mean as they are malleable and convey various feelings. Yarn is warm and fuzzy, but it can also disguise itself as a way to detach from its assumptive qualities. Thread should be incorporated with paint too -- why not? As a way to assert its performance and to embrace its inherent qualities. The yarn by simply being there is saying something in how it interacts with the painted surface and acts a symbolic and anthropomorphic addition. In my work I utilize old traditions of making that are thought of as craft based, hobby-esque and private, while mixing them with contemporary themes of alienation and the amalgamations of many truths conflicting

simultaneously. I go about my work in a sort of amateur esque style. The embroidery or sewing doesn't follow any particular techniques or processes. In some places it doesn't look perfect, but frankly I find it hard to care as long as my presentation is solid. I'm only asking the viewer to look at the front of the piece, not necessarily the back. The back can be full of my embarrassments and failures and I'll be fine with it as long as it is covered by a front facing expression that conveys confidence and control -- perhaps an allegorical translation of how we wish to appear.

TORBJØRN RØDLAND, COSIMA VON BONIN, LILY VAN DER STOCKER, ROSEMARIE
TROCKEL, STEPHEN SHORE, WILLIAM EGGLESTON

I'll briefly go over a handful of artists who I've found myself looking back at throughout this year and who have helped me along whenever I've felt stunted.

Rosemarie Trockel's multimedia installations taught me to look for connections and acknowledge the allure of conflicting images. Her masterful textile works signalizes the perfect symbiosis of art and craft. Lily Van Der Stocker and Cosima Von Bonin treat the aesthetic category of cute with weight and consideration, while acknowledging that the work should not be taken with dead seriousness. Von Bonin also works with silhouette images and plays with their allure, mystery and sensuousness. Rødland also says that a backlit object is a pregnant object -- whatever that may actually mean. Stephen Shore and William Eggleston were artists I looked at alot between the ages of 17 to 19. The cliched way of talking about this group of photographers is that they 'capture the everyday' which is of course true, what I have been infatuated with however is how you start to notice patterns in the work. Through the photographs there is an image of impactful industrial design that peeps through. Roadside cafes and motels with beautiful lettering and tiled floors are the elements which *actually* capture the images, not the other way around. Shore, Eggleston and others are sometimes merely providing an orientation and distribution of the art and design that occurs outside of our normal gaze.

I relate to Torbjørn Rødland a lot because of our shared nationality. And he as I grew up with the same sentiments and stories concerning the mythical and natural. There is something in his images that bears the mark of old folk tales that tell of forest elf and trolls. His conflated images and the way in which he pairs things together make his images slippery and dreamy. Rødland currently lives and works in LA and captures the

romanticism and drama of Los Angeles in a perfect way because I think that he believes he is capturing an entirely mythical place.

COLLAGES

These works stand as a companion piece with my entire thesis year starting from back in August. All of my ideas obviously didn't manifest itself into 'finished works' so this is a solution for representing fleeting ideas, words and phrases that I have explored alongside images that supply me with endless inspiration. I also think they act as fun puzzles that are as resolved as I wish them to be and have worked as more 'low stakes' parallels that have been fun things to tinker with when working with the more serious, larger works that sometimes bring about a grueling self exerted scepticism. Pencil marks and self captured photographs from my archives create a weighed and balanced composition that still might not take itself too seriously.

FENCES

In email threads throughout the year I have referred to these objects as either gates or fences. To me they are stuck in between, because they lack the intended purpose of either. There is no opening or closing mechanism and if they were to be pushed, they would simply fall over. They are objects intended for display, and act as metaphorical representations rather than examples. But these make shift objects are still important, because of their lack of function. And as objects intended for display they also have an innate theatricality. In a way they are there to be shown off and are then hoping for a response back.

They are created out of memory, and are attempts at recreating what you might think that you have seen. Your past or present -- walking along the roadside, looking at the cows grazing along the green landscape. One is painted, the other is not. Perhaps under construction, or maybe even they're real but not real and works as a stage set of sorts as they are dipping in and out of function and illusion.

Behind them are painted objects that act as supports, again, there is no function to be asserted rather it is a sort of trust exercise almost, as the larger object is leaning against a smaller one for support. Relying on each other.

To me they are perfect, there's nothing more or nothing less. No expectation, or troubling thoughts that gnaw on you until the issue is solved. It's easy, free flowing and a snapshot taken at a certain moment that hints at possible events preceding or succeeding it.

PAGEANT/HEARTTHROB

Two large eyes enveloped in a shadowy darkness are staring up and out -- rejecting an initial greeting as they're searching for the proper words.

The dark color comes from the labored process of gessoing and painting a peculiar purple burlap fabric. The symbols are created out of a soft, cotton fiber. That has been filled with poly-fil, sewn shut, then again hand stitched onto the painted burlap. Now -- soft sculptures act more as objects rather than just 2d representations. There is depth within the painting itself as it's eyes are literally bulging outwards. The 'pillows' are now inviting for touch, but the context of the painting hanging on the wall contradicts this initial gesture. The painting is being perceived as a painting even though it might not be.

These rendering of Eyes and flowers are the way they are because of their recognizability and immediacy. In a way that is all I'm looking for -- someone to be able to say "those are eyes" that is a "flower". A connection is established. This replicates a sort of advertorial vernacular, that is working off of pure instinct, and will use any method of reaching out and engaging with the whoever is watching. Again, assertive cuteness -- a coyness that acts as a tool for engagement.

UTAH -- AS IN ROAD TRIP

Utah is embroidered with a red yarn atop a painted surface. A couple of years ago I got the pleasure of taking a road trip from Austin, Texas up to Portland. In a red 2008 Chevrolet Impala we drove through the landscape of the southwest and up through Colorado, Utah and Idaho. The breathtaking scenes and the history of the places we traversed seemed magical and In west Texas, the barren landscape had collided with societies' need of renewable energy so giant windmills appeared as alien colossi that reached out endlessly throughout the horizon,

basking in the Texas sun. The New Mexico desert with its specks of red and green was only interrupted by Fast food chains and gas stations, perhaps a gauche visual intrusion on the landscape, yet, there was still something interesting about the story that unfolded when pairing the two images together -- stoic landscape paired with convenience food that don't adhere and frankly reject any notion of 'the organic' or 'pure'. Made and built by the people who live there. We drove out on the 4th of July and ended the night in Monticello, Utah after driving throughout the night in the barren landscape, the only light we saw when we got closer to town was the sky lighting up in an exuberant display of fireworks.

People from Utah talk in a strange way. They don't necessarily have an accent, it's just a cadence that is very puzzling. The way in which they speak seems to be in conflict with the nature that surrounds them. Their tone is sometimes questioning, longing and full of doubt. Maybe I would talk that way to if I was surrounded by nature that seems so alien, yet familiar. However in this instance my familiarity comes from visual representation in fiction. I think of Stagecoach by John Ford -- I haven't seen it, I merely know of it as a cultural phenomena or the abstract background paintings in *Wile E Coyote And the Roadrunner* cartoons -- I have seen that one. Here, the embroidery that says *Utah* can exist anywhere -- it is just a representation that doesn't adhere to the physicality of a landlocked state. Rather, it can move about and be placed atop of an object as a way of borrowing a connotation but also a memory.

WHO RESCUED WHO

This was my latest painting and perhaps reflects an ongoing inquiry in my cooperative relationship between embroidery and painting. The painted checkers harkens back to the images of Eggleston, Shore, and how suddenly the colors of a tablecloth or tiled floor can unveil itself in front of you as beautiful, balanced and harmonious diagrams. I am however still using paint and not trying to hide it. I enjoy the fast brushstrokes and what that might convey to someone looking at you. Brush marks and strokes can give personality to whoever created them. In this context, the gesture might speak of a sense of urgency, which I think holds true.

Contrasting with the paint mark is the embroidery which as a technique is long and tedious, demanding on your hands and fingers, but yet ultimately rewarding. At least, my interpretation of embroidery can still be quite fast, but that does not mean the work gets finished quickly. Rather, I think of it as urgent rather than careless. The embroidery creates a raised surface that physically stands out from the canvas. When viewing the work up close there is a clear material contrast, but when standing far apart all sense of material gets erased and you are left

with what I think is an almost 'contextless' amalgamation of words and symbols -- an intriguing one at that as the words *Dead End* are connected to the image of a silhouetted puppy.

WHY ARE THEY PAINTINGS

Then comes the question -- why are they paintings at all? I love the motion of painting and the physicality it allows for. Seeing large brush strokes form an image in front of you is an intoxicating exercise as you feel an incredible sense of creation. Painting also allows for size. The paintings in this collection of work are 64x54 inches. The tradition of painting alludes to a kind of authority -- a stamp of approval by others as real art. I like using these connotations as a tool. By making large paintings and placing them on a wall, you are projecting out a canonization of what you are making. This in turn, forces other people too to pay attention and engage with the work.

There is something very different between presenting in the gallery and having pictures of you work in the gallery. The replication of authority that the images try to convey is certainly attributed to a theatrical quality that is sometimes enhanced through the medium of video or photography. Like, something that hangs on a wall is for display but if it hangs on the wall and is getting its picture taken at the same time, it's really on display. Like, Give me your best smile, and show off your proper angles!

The paintings are deliberately hung quite high up. This is to make sure the fences in front are not intervening with the paintings, in this way thinking intentionally of the picture that is supposed to represent it all. But the atypicality of the placement also sticks a (fun) wrench in how to proceed with reading the work -- a curveball as it is both making itself bigger by being higher up and in a way trying to establish assertive dominance and conflating between a move that slightly exists on the spectrum of peculiar and domineering

ENDING

After looking at the work for a long time your eyes get blurred as you're trying to figure out if what you're making is anything at all. I am constantly trying to figure out ways to look at the work with fresh eyes. Stashing it somewhere for a bit where it can't be seen, looking at it through the corner of my eye. Deliberately taking bad

pictures of it of my phone, the way any other person would take a picture. Sometimes I return to the question of 'what the fuck even is this?' as I try and place myself within a canonical organization of art and artists. But when stepping back and looking at that same question -- it can be a good one to ask oneself while not knowing the answer to it. Murkiness and befuddlement is a feeling that stands out. And when somethings are left up in the air it entails a feeling of freedom -- breeziness like a warm, comforting indifference.

I have a built-in confidence in myself but which I am at the same time constantly questioning. If it is good enough for me, is it good enough for others? What if I don't feel as if it's good enough. I think that might be some of the nature of this process as I am constantly looking for new images and pairing that might spark a sensation and feeling within someone. exploring this wishful connection. like a Pinky Promise -- said out loud like a juvenile handshake agreement, still pinky promise acts like a spell, a bond and commitment. To making and creating while grappling with Solitude, embarrassment and conviction. Obviously a thesis doesn't mark and end point, but in a clear cliched way it exudes something different. I find it difficult to hold a steady opinion, my mind changes all the time. Yet, what persists is an inborn wish to create and form in conjunction with others. A pinky promise is a bond and commitment.