

### 11.3.2016 Hupia and half of Jakt by Benedikte on A-Venue

As I enter A-venue I see fox skins, big cock, old ladies hand craft with sexual texts from horny women and pussy prints made by women visiting the festival. I am not against equality, I might even call myself feminist due to choices I've made in my life. Yet I felt overwhelming statement, instead of art that would move me, mold my heart and thoughts. What is it they are trying to do, to raise questions? Or to state that women are like men? Or by making women act like men, to show how stupid is the way men have acted and have been wished to act in order to be these "manly men"?

Sounds.. There is a forest in an old tv screen, and sounds of terrified womans breathing in a speaker. I get interested and I am waiting for the performer to arrive. I have been waiting 15 minutes before I start to realize that she may not come at all. I look closely to a carpet close to the TV screen, wolf skin jacket, pinoculars, cards, coffee, banana, "kommer strax" sign and the forest on the tv screen. The performance should have started 15 minutes ago. I am a bit confused, is she saying something by being absent or is she just late?

There is a woman in a forest with a gun on the TV screen. The breathing sounds start to sound like an escaping animal, even the woman's position on the screen is like on of bears. And then again appears the woman with gun and pinoculars. Hupia means fun in Finnish. Is this piece of art speaking about hunting for fun? I doubt it, it's too obvious. The woman lays down the pinoculars, and then Benedikte arrives to A-Venue, from a distance I realize that in the video someone is shooting something.

Benedikte is wearing a wolf skin jacket and head of a pig. She goes inside a glass box positioned on the street, and she lays down on top of another wolf skin. People gather to look at her. Her corset is covered with plastic as she lays motionless inside the glass box. Outside the box is sound of a man speaking all the time.

Are women treated like pigs or are women like pigs by letting themselves to be treated that way? Or is she actually a victim, helpless, not being able to defend, isolated inside the box that she is unable to break? Sounds of a street guitar player seem to get sadder as the performance and helplessness spread in the atmosphere of the observers, at least this one observer.

On the video intestines of a pork are being shown, examined as the man speaks about them like of any daily rutine. She is wearing the porks head.. I am starting to get the image of helpless living beings, animals, women, men, all the same. It makes me sad and angry that something like this needs to be shown, in order for us to consider our responsibilities towards the weaker ones. And still she just lays down, motionless, helpless, out of her own will, or forced? Are we really this cruel, every day? Is being still and using time ith symbols this effective? Why then in music we often have a tendency to fill every second with as many details as possible, if less is really more effective and maybe even more meaningful?

People are passing by and being part of the scene, not being able to look at her for a long time. This might be too much if you don't want to face yourself and the choices you've made. I could not watch this for long, I feel like opening the glass box and taking her out. Strong image and questions is what she is laying in front of my heart.

More people are passing by, filming the cool and unexpected performance but not really staying and letting it sink. There comes a man of Benediktes filming crew to ask if he can film me while I am sitting on the street and writing down my thoughts as I watch this performance. I of course answer yes, although I notice that I immediately start to criticise my writing as he films me. You can criticise afterwards a sentence but not while you are writing it. My writing becomes so slow that I need to stop for a while, just look at Benedikte and breath.

In a performance all counts and nothing seems to be separated from the performance itself. A sound of a man in the speaker speaks of a baby and a mother. It all starts to make sence, the sounds inside A-Venue, the video of an half animal half woman, and the hunter woman. We should understand that we are all part of this world, not being able to affect everything but affecting with everything we do or not do. The stronger we are, the more responsibility we have on the ones our choices affect. Even a choice not to react on something is a choice.

There comes a woman in a fox jacket to look at Benedikte, then soon putting her sun glasses and walking away , crossing the street in her fancy and stylished way. I'm not sure if this was planned or not, but it all works for the performance as a contrast and mirror. If we would just stop for a while rushing, drop what we are doing and let what we see and hear affect our feelings and thoughts.. It is a strong image what she is painting. At the same time I realize that I am freezing, sitting on the street and I need to go inside. The performance will continue another 20 minutes. I will see it from the inside.

I don't want to read the text description of the performance before I write. I sit down beside the video. On the video the same woman hunter and woman excaping and in the end a man shooting towards a woman, taking her pinoculars that she has left behind. On the video the forest gets cold and white. The scene of the video, of the carpet she's laid down at A-Venue and the scene of the glassbox on the street are ditstant, close, empty, layered, sad, absent, cold, and motionsless. Main characters in the sound environment, is the man in the speaker outside of the glass box speaking of the intestines and the scared womans breathing sounds in a speaker next to my ear.

I realise that the performance should last 10 more minutes and then I should run to my next lesson. I believe these images keep on affecting and speaking to me about the laudness of our silent gestures and visual things that symbolize so much of our inner thoughts and values. As a performer I should be aware of these, to use these with the purpose of communication.

I see her in the glass box and look at the video for the last time. There is an old tv, 2 videos of a forest layered on top of each others. Man is shooting the woman again, and the coldness of the white and still forest is being shown a while. Someone comes to tell me that this video is for her second performance, Jakt. But to me, an observer, positioned in the middle of all these things, all the things I see affect the experience of her performance.

I focus again to her, laying down in the glass box. People are passing by, some staying to watch longer than others, young guys and girls staying the longest period of time. I'm curious what she will do in the next performance with the video. Are these two

performances related? Am I missing the whole point since I can not stay for the next performance?

Benedikte starts to move inside the glass box. She cuts off the plastic cloth covering her body, the motion is similar to having a surgery or caesarean section. People are gathering closer to the glass box. On the speaker a man speaks of a mother and a child. Baby monkey is screaming as Benedikte rises to sit on the edge of the glass cage having no shirt. She takes off the porks head, and enters A-Venue sitting down to a carpet next to the video. I'd say she is one strong woman.

Then starts the second act, Jakt. She puts on a woolen dress, make up lotion, lipstick, a side ponytail and leaves to cover her hair. She is drinking coffee, putting on a wolf skin jacket, revealing a gun and pinoculars, the same from the video. Sounds of birds. She aims towards the audience, again and again. Voice of the man is commenting on a background, closer are the womans breathing sounds. She starts to eat a sandwich, like she doesn't care that she is soon killing something. She is focusing, enjoying, aiming and waiting, as I need to run to my lesson. I am sad to leave this second performance, there is a strong presence while she is performing.

Strong is the word for this performance. Strong is she doing this. Strong is the affect, as she drinks her coffee in her nice jacket with leaves on her head to hide her from the animals, to blend in with the nature. Are we like animals for doing something like this, for real? Woman is shouting short burst on the background as the video of the forest goes on, and the continuous drums and electronics with the womans breathing sounds start to circulate in the space. With no guilt Benedikte is waiting for her animal to come, and with a guilt I leave A-Venue before she has finished her second performance.

I'd like to know what happens in the end. My guess is that she shoots herself. Because that is what we do by distroying our nature. But again, that would be too obvious, too strong, too intimidating. Would that pass by or go straight to my heart, since I'm waiting for art to do that? But is that a purpose at all in a performance where you need to face yourself?

Sincerely, Heidi Ilves, 18.3.2016

Benedikte answers 2017-03-21

Dear Heidi

Thank you soooo much for an invaluable detailed reflection! You bring in so many aspects and perspectives that both inform and empower my aim to continue problematize around the issue of violence, oppression and structures of power. Of course, it would have been interesting to have a similar text from a “male gaze” perspective. When I looked at the documentation, I realized that a man was filming me with his iPad very close to my naked exposed body. Why?

It’s always a risk to be the commodity within a performance like this. The issue of how female bodies still have to struggle to get equal rights as men. Long history of trafficking and abuse of the female gender.

I’ll give you my story of the process within the making of Hunt and HUPIA.

Hunt

I was invited to create an immersive performance 2015– the audience should enter a space where they become witnesses, part of the scene and somehow establishing the tension to make the performance activated.

I got the image of death when I met the man who arranged it. Something led me to create the first part: the video of shooting in the forest. The fur was costume from an older performance problematizing evil tests on animals at Röhsska museet 2012 in connection to a big exhibition on the topic of “evil design”. The fur was given from a help-organisation that sells second hand clothes but as a principle they don’t re-sell furs.

I bought the rifle. It’s was a horrible thing to do. I felt very bad. I had anxiety and it made me slowly understand what I was about to re-enact.

My aim was to visualise the female body captured in/by the patriarchy (so simple...) power structure where we often are treated and exposed as the “Whore versus Madonna”. I seldom, or never, decide in forehand the “What?” it’s built during the process of “How?” and sometimes I can’t really see the full picture of “What?” until it’s been performed.

During the making of the Hunt video in the forest. I followed my intuition, which I always do. I trust my artistic voice. But the insight of what I was establishing came as a total chock in an unexpected situation.

(This is not a published story)

I was lying at the floor in a sense of decadency with the rifle pointed at the entrance/exit. Just when I was about to do the first performance of HUNT I realized I was doing an re-enactment of my childhood. I grew up in a very violent home. Like very very violent home. My mother was very keen on keeping up a perfect surface to the society. She even had that type of fur I wear in the performance. We lived under

threat of death during my whole childhood and early teenage. I was taught how to kill and also aware of the possible scene: being killed. I lost all trust to those who were expected to protect me.

I realized I had to go through this re-enactment in an embodied way to find what was there. I trust my art and know it has essence of topics that brings people to the possibility to adopt, react or just reflect upon the pictures I establish.

Within this insight I realized that there were elements of it in to my political agenda of women, life and art. I suggested it to a-venue.

## HUPIA

The title is a play with letters. HU(man) PI(g) A(pe).

I construct a lot of hybrids some people would call it personas. HUPIA was created for an art festival in public space 2015.

I found since talking about that human are hybrids from ape and pig. (the report is on my website)

I played implicit with sexuality and exotism of the female body. Again, from the experienced male gaze obsessions and desires to own and harass it. Our society is structured in male/female values and it makes an unbalanced situation.

I re-enacted the scene of a body with “figures” of female (high heels, the fur, exposed nude etc), animal(pig has a similar genetic content as humans, pig meat-pork- has a strong history in history of food in Sweden) , zoo(humans treating animals like commodity and entertainment just like in the red light districts in big cities) mimics from the bible (the religious aspect of the accused and punished woman getting stoned). Audience were asked by an assistant to throw bread crumbs down where I was performing. They re-enacted the picture of a mob. The audience got excited and there was a man getting totally obsessed by (his own words) fucking me, killing me, love me, eat me, torture me etc. He screamed out his whole life story and started to throw big things at me. I had hidden guards on the bridge, but I was scared, for real.

Ok so

From those two performances and installations, I was asked by a colleague:

- Do they have anything to do with each other?

I appreciated the question because then I could approach them in a new way and not just do re-enactments of them.

I decided to order the glass box, which was constructed especially for the performance at A-venue. (it's a commode in my home now).

This is how I work, I continue to explore my art in different rooms and discourses.

Link to the material. Best

<https://benedikteesperi.com/hupia/>