

I LOVE YOUR MANNER FULL OF DECEIT

A Compendium

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compendium (kəm'pendiəm)

n, pl -diums or -dia (-diə)

1. (Literary & Literary Critical Terms) *Brit* a book containing a collection of useful hints
2. *Brit* a selection, esp of different games or other objects in one container
3. (Literary & Literary Critical Terms) a concise but comprehensive summary of a larger work [C16: from Latin: a saving, literally: something weighed, from *pendere* to weigh]

The works versus the texts

This exhibition at KNIPSU has to be experienced rather than analyzed. Its starting point was a curatorial play with the verbs 'to deceive' and to 'decipher'; there is a slight friction when reading the exhibition title. We do not usually think that 'to deceive' is something to be enjoyed, let alone, loved. Implied in the title is that 'to deceive' could be construed as something positive. We look at works of art often in an associative manner. Parallel with this associative experience you are being offered this humble booklet. A compendium: in the following texts you will be given hints and suggestions on what drives the artists in this exhibition. It is neither a justification nor an illustration: it is rather a small revolt. We have set the task to write with the purpose of bringing to the surface what matters when we are making, whereas the exhibition puts emphasis on the works (the materiality and visual structures that lay bare in front of you). There is a certain deceptive and cryptic quality to them, since there is the underlying assumption that the work relates directly to its maker and thereby to the world. If we, for a few seconds, forget about the maker and think about how the works relate to the world at large, these connections becomes rather blurred, ambiguous and estranged. However I think this awareness is important: the works are not indifferent, they are saying something about the world - not in numbers and stats but by offering alternative visualizations through the artists' engagement.

In a presentation on Human Rights professor of statistics Hans Rosling¹ explains why he had refused to give a lecture on the correlation between health, wealth and human rights. He says that although numbers and statistics are his passion and life, he believes that there is a limit to what numbers can measure. Although there is no clear correlation, he says, between human rights and culture and the wealth and health of a country (a rich and healthy country can still have poor human rights for example), they are still nonetheless important things a society should strive for. Another interesting point he makes is that it doesn't make sense to measure human rights with numbers since the main overarching umbrella factors are in flux. The best way to deal with this is on a case-by-case basis. Let me rephrase this in the context of the exhibition: although the level of human rights or culture statistically does not show to affect a countries health and wealth clearly, we still know that they are things to strive for. Whereas an increased income is a means for better health, human rights and culture should not be a means but rather a goal. They should be a value in and of themselves, in which society recognizes this as a value that is non-monetary or non-numeric, but nonetheless a key value we need to engage with.

¹ <http://www.gapminder.org/videos/human-rights-democracy-statistics/>

This booklet is a means to extend our effort at layering: this text lends itself more directly as a tool to signify an object or subject in the world. It is important to realize that the work might point in one direction and the text in another. Indirectly a cluster of inter-text will show itself to you. This inter-text is for you to relate to - therein lies your engagement and our deception. You might think that meaning lies entirely in the eye of the beholder but if this is true there would be no need for artists to choose one material or reference for a specific work. I argue that these artist decisions need to be taken into account for the purpose of closing in on what they have chosen to engage with!

Viewer's engagement

This exhibition proposes the following challenge: can you alter your initial mindset when first entering an exhibition space? Can we continue a process-based making, to a process based looking, writing and discussion? I think sometimes that viewers are not expecting much from going to see an exhibition. The initial mindset is one of indifference. I would ask of you upon entering to consider that the work is trying to meet you. When glancing at the work, the first thing you might do is start dissecting the title of the show to associate what you see with what is suggested (the presented with what is being represented). In a way this is what we want and expect you to do. Artists assign themselves seven days out of seven to the task of making and often they do not entirely understand: it is like waging war upon yourself. So lets think for a minute why it is important to make, to make something beautiful and/or dutiful. Think about why it is important not to understand sometimes and at other times to accept as a manner of play and participation. At certain points in time we (artists) might put something on display, in an exhibition space without being done with it. It is an experiment in time and this is a temporary final point. Do you feel deceived as a viewer that the work you see in front of you might not be the conclusion? That the work might not have so much to tell you as you expect it to do?

Art in many ways exist in the terrain of disagreement: we do not have to 'like', agree, or favor in order to co-inhabit or coexist. Many of us (makers) favor subjectivities in order to justify that ours is a history that needs to be written. This exhibition consists of seven makers: I recognize a belief and work ethic that is impressive. They show exemplary manners of engagement through conversations, decisions and through the works produced. They are part of this exhibition because of their rich and layered frame of reference and the particular visual language through which they show their engagement. I could tell you for example that J. Davidson has an interest in technologies that distort and effect our ability to communicate - that C. Holloran is investigating social bonds - that N. Barnett, R. Nesbitt and M. Yeh are exploring the relationship between the eye of the camera and the eye of the director - that M. van Geest is playing with the thin line between art and life and that B. Mortensen is subverting our expectation relating to utility objects while also referencing art history. It would all be true and it would all be extremely simplified. Worst of all it will make you lazy. I don't want to tell you what the works are about, I want you to participate, reflect and engage.

When I just started my bachelors in Fine Art, I was fascinated by I. Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: I reread it five times and still struggled to understand. This dense text gave me the impression that the beautiful and the sublime are not indifferent categories, they talk about the ethics of being human. Consequently, I naively

thought that form understood or experienced as beautiful must have a rather straightforward link with what is moral or good. Simultaneously I was infatuated with Form versus Content written by Susan Sontag, wherein the proposal was that we would not get closer to the work by analyzing it, but rather we should describe and experience the work for ourselves. We should have an erotic relationship to the work. In this erotic relationship lies a play that needs the viewer's participation. The point is that, as a maker, I have always believed in the fact that art was essentially a 'good' thing to do, since each work is a proposal to have a non monetary value system: each strategy exemplifies a way of partaking in the world that does not let economy or profit determine the outcome. Ever since graduation that belief has undergone an intensive corrosion due to trying to fit a process-based activity into a product based economy, such as applications for example. I often sit in my studio feeling genuinely depressed that I am not sure what it is that I am doing and sometimes, often while writing applications I feel an itch due to a sensation of self-repetition, repeating the same thoughts and remaking its outcome. Very often practices become formulaic, and form becomes the goal. In a way we have forgotten the inter-text of an exhibition, the things unsaid but suggested, the things that cannot be measured or accounted for. In a way I would argue that all makers are formulaic/strategic: that is how we become better at something. Subjectively it is not about a piece of clay or wooden constructions or a layered projection. It is through affect, intuition and play that we get closer to a cluster of meaning. By being in the world, the works are signifying endlessly to the world.

When form/product becomes the main focus - we are acting with the idea of getting better at something. It is a subversive and competitive point of departure. Most destructive of all: toward every exhibition and towards every application makers have to fight the urge to present something well rounded and 'final', a summarized outcome either through texts or works. It requires more work to present a point in process or research. Often it is a contradictory process: we are asked to make an estimate of how things will evolve, and the truth of the matter is that there is no way to know other than the making of the next unknown.

Partake!

The works in the exhibition have been chosen because they are exemplary, either of a work method or a kind of engagement. They are in my opinion 'good' art: visually successful, the materiality is convincing and it has reached one of its points of presentation. Most importantly however is the fact that there is an underlying motive: to declare an engagement with the world as well as with the arts. You might say, doesn't all art do this already? I think not and on top of that I think we have slacked in favoring and saying out loud what is good and what is by default bad, indifferent or plain boring. Lets try to get back to the point where decisions do matter and engagement is key. This partaking needs to happen both while we are making, while we are writing and during dialogue. This type of engagement does not happen in an isolated terrain. In this exhibition the artists propose six ways of working, but they have a common denominator - there is a care involved. In what follows they will hint at this care and engagement.