

Much of your work seems integrate fantastic elements with very real places. Can you tell us a bit more about the interplay between reality and fiction in your work?

A:

I am very interested in how the spaces we live, think and see through works. How cultural, political and social structures are generated and fixed by an interplay between architecture, history and ideology. I have tended to claim that what I am working with is a form of spatial research, one taking its form and media through the spaces that I am investigating, be it public, institutional or pictorial space. In the work that I am currently doing, I am pendulating back and forth between site-specific physical interactions with, or investigations of, actual spaces, and a continuous image production, that, even if not always directly, feeds on the physical interactions. The reason for trying to work this way is a desire to make things that collage lived space and abstract discourse. To make things that are both concrete reflections, and allegorical expansions, of my surroundings. One of the subjects that I keep returning to, is the liminal and ambiguous spaces, the ones that either fall outside of the schema of stringent planning, or which serves as vessels and thresholds for an order outside of themselves. The spaces that that we either dont see, or which define the way we see. In focusing on this, there is generated an attention towards concepts of presences and absents, as two of the basic questions that can be asked of any space. What do we see, what does it mean and why is it so? And vice versa. But as my field of work is art, and not anthropology, sociology or philosophy – I try to frame the questions within a formal aesthetic structure. By taking things and ideas from “the real” and breaking them down into fragments and layers of fictionalization, I find that they tend to expand beyond themselves. They enter a condition of fluctuation, where the perimeter for their identity and meaning are shifted, it grants them the possibility for new constructions of explorations and meanings.

All of the work that I am doing at the moment have a connection to the idea of bricolage; of taking forms, concepts, ideas and things, that are not necessarily connected, but which through their collections and combinations, either expand or circumvent one another. In the image collage work, the approach is used in one way, usually connected to a tradition of the media, and always with the intend to make something that both serves to create an image, and formulate something outside of the image. In the pseudo-documentary works, the approach of fictionalization is another. In these there is a hovering question of where the actual work lies? Is it in the original in-situ interaction with a place, or is it in the process of documenting this? Since the documentation become another way of image fabrication, I try to use a certain schema to fictionalize this documentation, giving the pictures a specific aesthetic value, framing them as only part-real. Thereby I am trying to give the viewer the possibility of doubt, as to what is going on, when and how, and whether or not it is actually going on at all.

But one of the things that combine both the image collage and the documentary images, is that while always with a fix-point in actual places, events and images, they are searching for exactly the fantastic elements that are to be found in very real places, the vague terrain between fact and fiction. A space where everything serves as allegory, and must be read as a sign. It is a semiotic and pictorial process of mythologization.

What characteristics define a place for you and how do you choose a place you would like to work with?

A:

The first is actually somewhat difficult for me to answer, as it is a very broad question. But taking a longshot, I would say that space is a thing of quantity, place is one of identity, and to add on that, site is where something is situated - belonging to something else. What I find interesting is, trying to ask what the collective definition of a place is, and why it is so. In all the stories we tell each other to define and engage society, we use the fixtures of space, place and time to make what we tell comprehensible. But at the same time we live in a “real” saturated by hyper - objects and structures. Things that expand and extends beyond these concepts. As I mentioned before I am very interested in liminal spaces, spaces that are “either or”, or not what they seem. So when I say that I try to work site-specific it is actually not altogether the truth. I am both trying to work in “This street” and “A street” at the same time. In choosing a place I would like to work with, it is usually done by its possibilities of becoming this, concrete and allegorical at the same time.

In both your earlier graffiti and more recent interventions, you act on and insert things into the urban environment. Is this a violent/aggressive act, an act of collection and preservation, or the re-introduction/highlighting of the mysterious element of the cityscape?

A: There is not one schema to how I think that the work with the city should and could function. All of the above mentioned approaches have their qualities, justification and purposes (there is a time and place for everything). I would say that I am simultaneously trying to de-, re- and construct, if nothing else, then at least my own assumptions of how stuff works. As an act of being in the world, in a specific geography and environment, as an act of producing, deconstructing and reproducing meanings and things. In specific relation to the city, I think that there is a general desire among all of us (dangerous assumption as that ever is) to make mythologies of the place and concept, simply to cope with its inherent brutality. The same could perhaps be said about history. Or any other socio-spatial construction. To make an attempt at both grasping, navigating and getting lost in concepts as complex as the city, I think a good point of departure is searching for the possible intersections of materiality and immateriality. The points in our everyday where the tangible and its production of meanings meet.

What role do you take on when examining and investigating with a place?

A: I would love to say that I have a fixed gallery of personas or roles that I could apply to a give situation of space, but its not the case. I take on the role of the artist. But within that, there is a broad field of possibilities of stealing from other positions of form and subject-matter. I have done some projects where I have used anthropological terminologies and references, urbanist ideas and socio-philosophical lingo. lately I have been having this off-hand relationship with archaeology. Right now I am pretending to be a student of architecture, but this is mainly amounting to me building scale-models of ruins.

You created the installation *UNSITE* specifically for the exhibition *Let's Pretend We Live Here*. Can you provide some insight to the choice of title and working method? Could you also tell us more about the connection between the video and the collage, which refer to and reflect upon each other, you show at Atelier 123?

A: The title, *UNSITE*, is a contraction of the words “unearth” and “non-site”, which are both terms related to an archaeological and philosophical context. Unearth means to excavate something, but also to expose meaning, or matter, through extensive search. Non-site refers to both archaeological findings done outside of a designated field or space of research, but also to a place that doesn't exist. The project consists of two works, a film, or films - which are a semi-fictional archaeological investigation in the periphery of urban planning and memory, and a collage, which suggest an ambiguous utopian space of past futures. I am right now, independent of this exhibition, doing several works which relates to the concept of ruins, and wanted to work with this idea of pseudo-site-specificity. The ruin as a concept holds a lot of interesting potential when discussing spatial and historical ideas. The ruin is the collapse of time into space, it is a contraction of material and history, as a dialectical image - both capable of de-mystifying and obscuring. It is a vessel for ideologies and their destruction at the same time. The ruin as such is not necessarily a fundamental other to architecture, but rather a point of dissolution, where the object undergoes a shift in meanings. At times a very interesting temporal construction, conjoining the very different temporalities of people, architecture and nature. Of course these various potentials are always defined by the type of ruin we are discussing, but on a very abstract level, The Ruin is both spatial, temporal, and social implosion – the collapse of understood planning and order and the violent shock of vanishing materiality. But one could also choose to see this as a space embodying vagaries of utopian vision. I think that the margins of things, are a space with a radical potential for openness. One where the anchorage for our understanding of object, architecture and history is potentially shattered, and new explorations in perspective and meanings become possible. Pasts that could have been, and futures that never came to be, but not as an inspiration for restorative nostalgia, rather as a point of departure, in seeing the ruin as crevice in history, through which it is possible to break into other presents and futures. In terms of work approach, I wanted to make a film, which was both a very linear documentation of a sort of interventive research of several different actual ruin sites, but which fictionalized this documentation, in such a way, that its cause of action is both trying to “expose” the nature of these sites – through concrete investigations of their material characteristics - “unearthing the site” so to speak. At the same time, the film, and the investigation itself, is constantly obscuring the actual identity, and geographical qualities of the places investigated. Thereby turning them into allegories, or signs.

The collage was made out of a lot of different images, all taken from digitally generated plans for architecture, that was to be built. Both the actual built environment, but also people placed there to show scale, and the vegetation surrounding the houses, to place them in a geography. I processed the images in a way so that they correspond aesthetically with the film, or the other way around, so that both things have the same “collaged feeling”. They are in fact also both, film and image, built on strategies of collage, and both in a quite classical way. The image by juxtaposing fragments belonging to other contexts, the film by staging several spaces and causes of action, as if they are one place, or a linear cause of events.

The film is very concrete in its form, and the material depicted, it is all debris of the everyday objects of neglect, the remnants of built environment that tends to loose their meanings when not connected to a greater whole. It is plastic sheets, metal rods, broken drywall and concrete elements, styrofoam, insulation and cinderblocks, wood, earth and alloys – and vegetation “reclaiming” or absorbing the whole thing. There are buildings in there too, relatively recognisable structures that we usually see in the peripheries of cities, post-industrial remnants and new concrete suburbia. The person, or persons, moving through this landscape, are conducting some kind of research of it, but in a slightly panicky kind of lacklustre way, as if not quite knowing what to do with the whole thing. The protagonist sometimes seem to be searching for a way around, or perhaps out of the place, but at the same time, he is wanting to engage with it, touch it and take it apart, even disappear into its architecture (in the case of one ending of the film). And the place, or zone, seemingly has no limit, it is a continuous parade of seemingly unusable fragments and superfluous infrastructure. At a point it even seems to evaporate, like a smoke-screen. Filmed in a horribly poor quality, both utterly aestheticised, and visually unpleasant to a point where it is almost unbearable to watch.

The image collage is not necessarily thought as an opposite, or a reflection of what happens in the film, but there is a connection, beyond that of the grainy black and white aesthetic. What it depicts is to me the only kind of utopia that can exist as such, paper-architecture. It is inherently romantic, and slightly disturbing in an uncanny way. The architectural structures in the image could both be nice little boat, bath or forest houses, but with their cubic and windowless forms, they also slightly resemble bunker architecture. Somewhere to recede to. A memory of past plans and dreams, or ruins from the future.