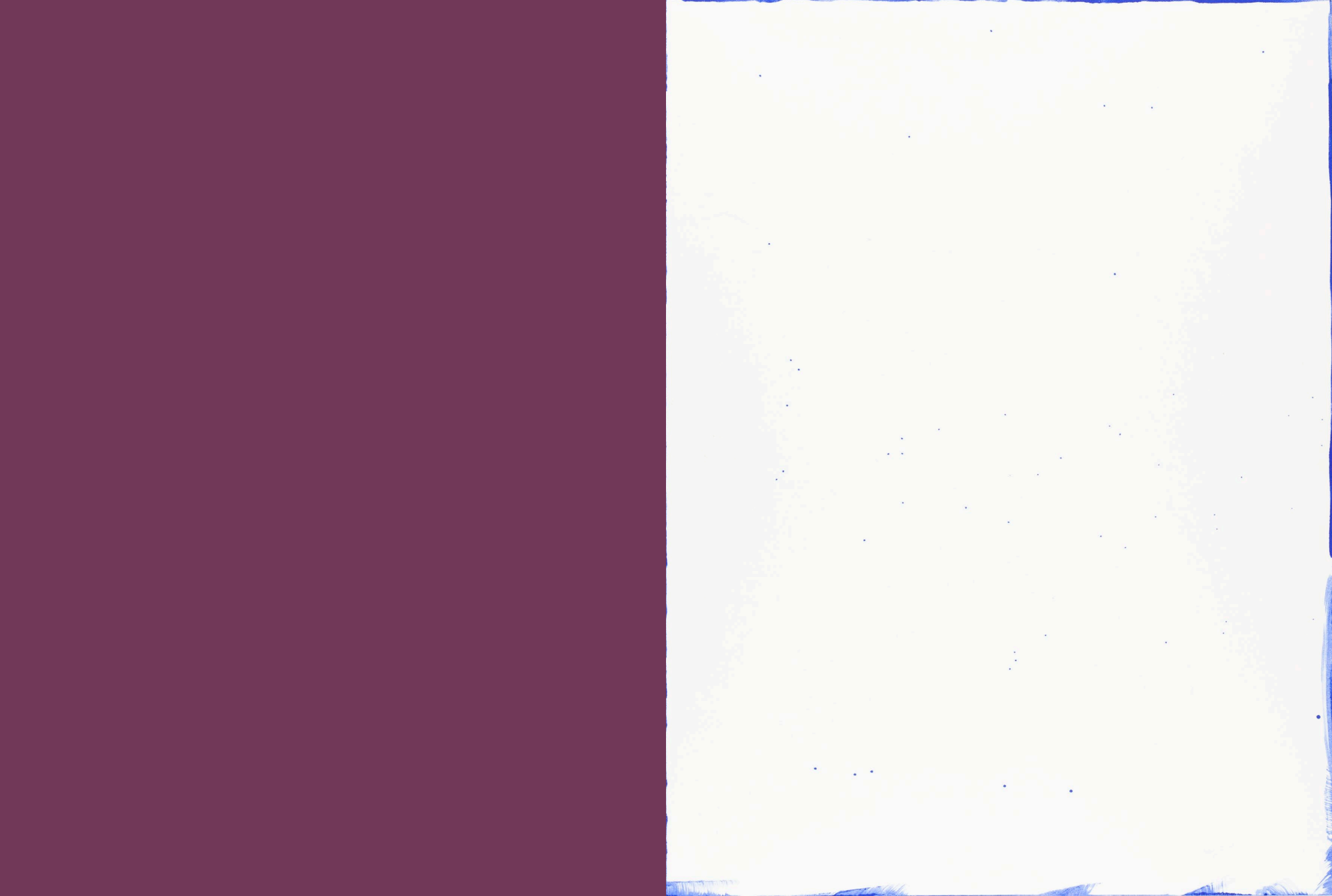




From Artist to Artist
A Personal Manual



From Artist to Artist a Personal Manual

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Introduction and Summary

The Artist's Notes

In 1973 Jeremy Moon a painter and a prominent figure in the London art scene died in a motorcycle accident on his way home from London. Moon painted large scale abstract paintings and had become visible in the London art scene in the early sixties. His hard-lined geometric abstractions extended to shaped canvases playing with the line between painting and sculpture. Moon started to fully dedicate himself to his artistic practice relatively late after studying Law at Cambridge and working in advertising for a few years. He enrolled in art school and later taught sculpture at St. Martins School of Art and painting in Chelsea School of Art. Moon moved out of London into suburbia where he lived close to other artists and friends. To accommodate his large scale work he built a studio in his garden. This suburban garden studio was a stark contrast to the Manhattan Lofts of his American counterparts. In his unfortunately short artistic career he fully committed himself to his art; after all, he was done with his previous career. This commitment is apparent in the large body of work that he left but also in his writing. Amongst paintings and sculptures, he left texts relating to his practice. These texts were notes, thoughts, artist statements and letters. They were never meant to be published, they were just notes, something that happened in the studio. The notes are part of the artistic process and reflect his thoughts on making and particularly on his painting. That is why I find them so interesting because it is not about making an image but about finding out what he is doing and why he is doing it. They are questions about what makes an image work and what makes it not work. How does a painting develop while painting it and what

is the artist's experience? The notes reveal the painter's struggle and the relationship with the material and action. In many ways, these notes are about the artist's agency. Because they are just notes they are ideas and realizations that are often unfinished and sometimes end abruptly. The notes are part of the artistic process as much as sketches on paper are. The notes are interesting because they function as a diary or a logbook of his studio practice. A part of this collection of texts are letters to artist friends. Looking at the texts I started to get a feeling of the person behind these minimal abstract paintings. This is someone who thinks deeply about what he is doing in his shed, someone who questions the decisions he makes, someone with relationships, someone who has an ongoing discussion with people who do the same. What does the painting reveal? And what are the consequences of a new painting? Where does a work lead to?

These questions are something most artists raise and writing notes and letters are part of any artistic practice. Jeremy Moon's texts are a good example of how artistic practice can look like. I can identify with his way of working and his thinking. Maybe because of his sudden death we can read these texts. They are unedited and often not finished ideas but they are questions and evidence of his working. It is as if we sneaked into his studio and had a look around and read his diary. We can do this because he did not come back to the studio to tidy up.

I remember looking at a book about Raul De Keyser's work called *The Last Wall*.¹ The book shows De Keyser's studio and the paintings he was working on at the time of his death. I thought I would be furious if someone walked into my studio and photographed what was there and showed it to everyone. I would feel exposed. I would want to move things around,

show some works and hide others before I would let anyone in. This is why *The Last Wall* is an interesting book and why Jeremy Moon's writings spoke to me. They are unfiltered. We get to see the raw material, everything that is there. Jeremy Moon's family has been looking after his works, managing exhibitions and an online archive of his work. It was on that website² where I first came across his writings and had a glimpse into his studio the way he left it.

When I started thinking about the master thesis his writing came to my mind. Could the thesis be a collection of thoughts, ideas, anecdotes, poems, and notes all orbiting around a central idea? Could I give the reader this collection of texts and let the reader decide what to do with it as I do with my painting? I would like to let the reader walk around my studio read my diary, look at my unfinished paintings and see everything that is there. The texts in this thesis should be like my paintings in my exhibition. Each stands on its own but is connected to the other ones. Each reveals something and leads to the next one. When combined the complete image becomes visible.

During my time at the academy, I had two exhibitions that counted as the artistic component of my master thesis project. The first exhibition was called *I Was Told There Would Be Cake* at the academy's Project Room in November 2017 and the second exhibition was my master degree show *Kuvan Kevät* in May 2018. This text is the written component in which I want to talk about these two exhibitions. I want to walk through each exhibition and discuss my ideas, processes, motivations, and thoughts behind the works. Between the two core texts, I would like to weave in texts that explore ideas and realizations on what it means to make. Some of these

texts are ways of processing my personal journey as an artist. Like Moon's notes, they also are notes to myself where I try to think about what I am making in the studio. They are inspired by the same ideas and questions that came up when making the two exhibitions. I would like this written component of my thesis to reflect on the work I have made and shed light on my ongoing artistic practice and motivation.

Texts on Making

Looking for an Image

Painting has the power to absolutely overwhelm, to move and to leave us baffled with what we see in front of us on the canvas. I would look at a painting and think "I wish I could paint like that" or "if only I would have thought of something like that." The painters I admire seem to have this infinite effortless in their painting. They seem to be virtuoso in their practice and this perfection is visible in every single painting, drawing and sketch lying around in their studio. I am sure that it only looks effortless from an outsider's perspective and is, in fact, quite the opposite. It seems effortless because we only see the successful work and we just see the tip of the iceberg. What lies underneath is years and years of consistent art practice, trial and error, and hard work. When it comes to my painting it is tempting to look at paintings of artists that I like and wanting to do the same. Even if I give in to that temptation and try to make my painting look a certain way or I try to make it look effortless it never works. I believe it requires to forget about all other artists for the moment to ignore whether the idea for the painting is good or bad and just do it. I learned that my favourite paintings I made all happen when I don't think too much about how they should look like. Painting is a lot about finding an image. It starts with an idea, an image in the head that never is the same as what emerges on the canvas. As I start to translate that image in my head to the canvas the image in my head changes. There might be an interesting mark on the canvas that requires the image in my head to adjust and as the painting evolves the image in my head evolves. It is like telling myself a story that I haven't heard yet. It is a dialogue between something imagined and

something concrete that exists. At some point, the painting is finished. It is finished when I look at a painting that feels like looking at someone else's painting. It is finished when I suddenly look at something I did not expect and I feel I found something new; something I have never seen before. It is a great feeling when it happens.

First Thesis Project Exhibition

I Was Told There Would Be Cake

When I started my masters at the academy I shared a studio with three of my classmates. We had a large room that we divided each getting one corner. There were no partition walls or any other means to hide behind. I did not mind the lack of privacy so much. It was a very similar studio to the ones I had worked during my bachelor studies and as each of us had very different work patterns I often had the room to myself. We became close friends and my studio mates became an important part of a social network. We did our own work in the studio, we talked, we exchanged ideas, drank tea and we went to exhibitions together. The working relationship and the interaction that came with it inspired the idea do our group exhibition *I Was Told There Would Be Cake*.

We wanted to have a group exhibition where each of us would exhibit their work separately in one part of the space. For us taking the work out of the studio was a continuation of a conversation and in a sense, we had the desire to do something with the daily interaction between us and make something concrete with it. The title *I Was Told There Would Be Cake* was a reference to a feeling of a common interaction or of hanging out, to work for a little bit, to first make a cup of tea after lunch and then concentrate on something for a few hours to then repeat a similar cycle. *I Was Told There Would Be Cake* was an exhibition of four different artists that had different practices who spent time together and were interested in similar things. Like our studios, the gallery was divided into separate spaces. Although each of us showed the work we wanted and how we

wanted, I felt that an important part of installing the work was that we did it in conversation with each other. We considered together how each area worked on its own, how it had a continuation and how it stood in a dialogue with the next artist's work. The exhibition opened in November 2017.

When I start working on paintings for an exhibition I have a vague image or idea on how I would the exhibition to look like. This image is in constant adjustment and as my work in the studio progresses this image might get clearer but it stays quite unclear until I can bring the work into the exhibition space. During the making, I end up with a few usually one or two works that fit my idea of the exhibition perfectly. These works become anchor points that are fixed elements in the exhibition plan and lead to the making of the next work. They heavily influence how the next work will look. I am interested in this continuous flow of one idea leading to the next or that a painting reveals a way to the next one. Of course, there are other influences and ideas that come with the next painting but it always relies on the previous painting. Although the paintings are shown together and are meant to have a carefully considered balance they also exist on their own. They exist as part of something and as individuals. Richard Aldrich reflects on some of his paintings naming them "Slide Paintings" He writes:

" These paintings are able to be one thing and then another; to be presented as one thing but then slide away from that purported perfunctory function." he adds " Initially they have their own series of motivations or desires, personal histories and vulnerabilities, but then are directed in an exhibition, given a series of tasks, placed upon them are a few sets of expectations. They may or may not fulfil these

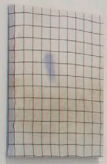
*tasks, or live up to these expectations. Something of their true nature will show through and they will go back to being unnamed individuals when they leave”.*³

I have been very interested in the function of my paintings. In one sense my paintings are what they are or look the way they look because an accumulation of artistic influences, interests, aesthetics, experiments and anything I surround myself with at the time. But I am also interested in what they are able to achieve and how meaning is created. Now that I have painted a painting what are the consequences of it? I believe by showing paintings together I am able to expand the borders the paintings into the space giving each work a way of communicating to another while remaining a thing with an individual aura or presence. This means that for an exhibition I would not pick works in my studio at random but choose the works carefully. The work in the studio is made to one part with the previous works in mind and the other part allows new elements in existing works to emerge because of the new paintings. The exhibition should be felt as a whole, a work in itself or an installation rather than a series of objects. I would like the viewer to move within the work and sense that there are relationships at play within. Making and installing my work relies heavily on a feeling; on “it” to feel right. I am aware that feelings about something are a highly subjective thing and I am sure that every person would read my feeling differently. But I hope that through continuity in the work I can create a visual language and even if references seem to be vague that it can be read as such. I am more interested in communicating a feeling of the whole than in explaining why I have chosen to paint it that way or why I used a specific image. I would like the work to stay a little ambiguous. I don’t want to tell the viewer too much. I believe a viewer gets more by making their own connection to the work based on the experiences and knowledge they bring with them.

As artists, we are influenced by what we experience in and outside of the studio. A book, a conversation, a fascination for a certain thing, all feeds into the artistic practice. I see my work also as a material manifestation of time spent reflecting. The work is evidence or a witness to what is happening in and outside the studio. The individual works function as ideas. Put together in a space they visualize a dialogue and the network they belong to. I want the works to talk about themselves. One idea inspires another idea. My work in the studio is a process of thinking through doing.

I don’t think there was a particular starting point for the work that I showed in this exhibition. I wanted to work with certain materials and try out a few things. I had been thinking about why I make and why anyone makes art. Why have a studio? Why accumulate more materials? I had admired artists or let’s say makers who just make and seem to have an endless drive to continue making. Someone like Kati Sinenmaa who build Pasilan Kivilinna a stone castle in a small forest near Helsinki’s Pasila station. She carried enormous stones on her bicycle stone after stone, dug out foundations and build the stone walls by piling up the rocks by hand and worked on it until authorities deemed her construction a safety risk and shut her operation down. I admire her conviction. Nothing other than continuing the project seems to matter. I wonder what would have happened if she finished it. I imagine finishing the castle was not the end goal. Getting up in the morning and continue what needs to be done was all there was. Maybe it is like going to a studio and paint.

I thought about Xilitla and Edward James an eccentric English aristocrat who build a system of concrete structures and pillars deep in the Mexican jungle. Concrete pillars mimicking surrounding vegetation, four-storey



high platforms and stairs leading nowhere now overgrown and taken over by the lush rainforest. When I visited family in Mexico in the summer I decided to go to Xilitla and see these structures. I felt the visit was a form of pilgrimage to the artist's conviction or dedication. To me, it felt like an important thing to do. I felt that if I wanted to use an image of Edward James's structures for a painting I needed to have been there. Otherwise it might have seemed like a random reference. If I was to paint a figurative image I wanted to have a personal connection to it. It had to stand for an idea. In one way the painting is a symbol or reference to agency. It points towards making as much as a brushstroke does however it also acts as an access to a narrative. That I went there is perhaps not so relevant to a viewer but it is something I wanted, to give myself permission for the painting. It might open up other works such as the yellow, the green and the white-blue abstract paintings. These are also pointers to ideas of the artist's agency and material while belonging to a language that emerges from existing next to each other. I like to think of them ping-ponging ideas between them. I feel that aesthetics is an unpopular word with artists and of course, the work is also dictated by personal taste and aesthetics. I chose one colour over the other because I like it more and the works are exhibited based on my interpretation of what is "good" or works.

Pared with the painterly oil on canvas and oil on board paintings are the towel paintings. The towel paintings functioned as a way of interrupting the other paintings and acted as a frame within a frame. They created a space between paintings. They also added another visual element to the whole. These towel paintings were used kitchen towels on canvas stretchers of which one of them had been painted on. I liked the idea of the dirty kitchen towel. The dirty towel is not so different from the paintings in the



studio. Every mark on the towel is a record of something that happened in the kitchen. With a different agency as on the canvas, agency nonetheless, each mark has been added, erased, reapplied and manipulated. There was something painterly about those towels. I also liked that the towels came with an image on them. The grid or the stripes already had an abstract language. What were the stripes intended for? Ornament?

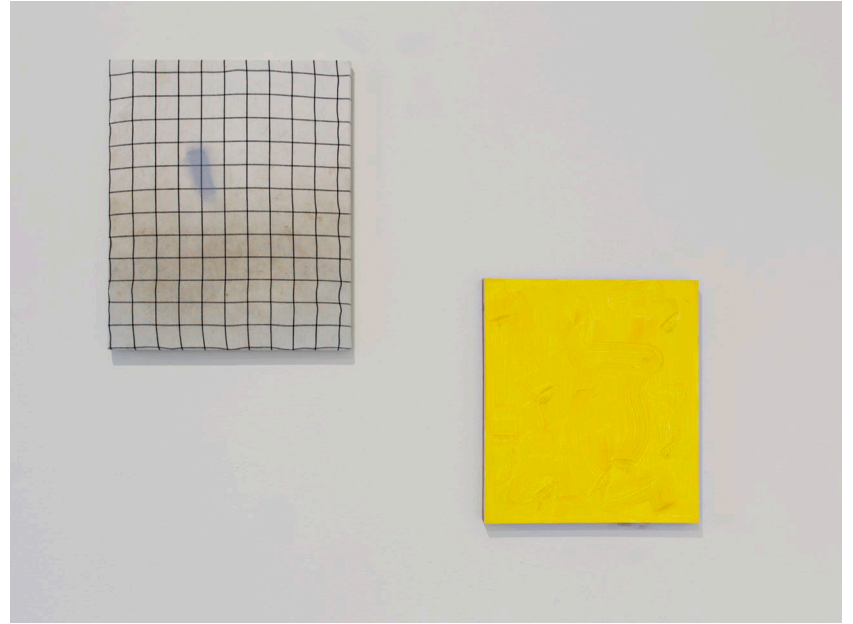
David Salle writes about Christopher Wool's paintings:

*"The dot pattern, so graphically seductive, like a magic ingredient, it is to painting what anchovy reduction is to cooking: it deepens the relationship of all the other flavours"*⁴

Perhaps I have been seduced by the stripes and the grid pattern. In painting as in installing the work in an exhibition, it is about placing the right ingredients in the right spot. It is about having different elements working together to make the whole work. Whether it is brush marks on a canvas or works within a space.

It was important to me that the works shared a visual element. Most of the paintings had a wooden frame behind them and the green painting had a more traditional frame in the same dark walnut wood. Using the same material throughout the works gave it an additional continuation and bound the paintings together. Making the frames also introduced another "making" that I have been fascinated with. Woodworking has been something I had liked and even if I felt that it was something separate to my painting practice I wanted to add it to the vocabulary of the work's visual language.





Boredom and Wasting Time

In Alberto Moravia's novel *Boredom*⁵ the protagonist Dino, a young painter now in his mid-thirties looks back on the last ten year that he had spent painting in his studio. Disillusioned and plagued with boredom he decides to stop painting. In an impulsive act, he jumps up from his armchair cuts the painting he had been painting on for two months into pieces and replaces it with a new canvas. Staring into the blank canvas he realises that destroying the painting was similar to finishing the painting and the new canvas meant a new beginning. A new beginning for the painting but more a new beginning for himself to start all over again in complete freedom. As his initial excitement wears off he is left with a feeling of negativity and complete impotence. He realises that boredom has been a part of his practice and his life and had ultimately brought his painting to a stop. Dino reflects on boredom not as the absence of amusement but as an inadequacy, insufficiency and a lack of reality. He describes that boredom originates from a consciousness that between him and external objects was no relationship. This feeling of disconnectedness paralyses him and throws him into a downwards spiral leading through unhealthy obsessions, desires and powerlessness.

His works are compelling and I find myself sucked into the always self-inflicted tragedies of his protagonists. The reader becomes a helpless witness to the unfolding misery of the character and is confronted with his very own human desires, obsessions and morality.

Perhaps the relationship between Dino and external objects is something he was looking for in his paintings. Wanting to create something of mean-

ing in the studio he felt that there was no relationship between him and his paintings. Or he had no relationship to the canvas and paint. Realising those feelings he sees failure and his inadequacy. He had tried to make something that had meaning but ended up with the opposite. It is a fantastic starting point for the novel.

As an artist, I think about meaning and about how I spend my time in the studio. I feel that meaning is something that comes to the works with time and with or because of things that happen parallel to the making. In a short film about Jake Chapman's home and studio, Chapman says:

“ You have to subject yourself to waisting time in order for something to become purposeful”⁶

It is also that through doing something else in the studio a new thing finds its way into the work. I am interested in turning away from a hierarchy of certain things being more important in the studio than others. Reading a book in the studio is as important as painting although it might feel like I haven't achieved anything because the results are less visible. Any artwork is a tip of an iceberg of an artist's practice. I am interested to see what lies underneath.

New Studio Same Routine

It is Monday early afternoon. I am sitting in an apartment in a new city, the windows are open and a light breeze is entering the living room bringing a welcoming relief from the midday summer sun. Today is a workday like any other day but it being Monday brings a certain sense of new beginning. It is a fresh sheet of paper, a blank canvas, the start of the week. It is full of potential, ideas and ambitions. I have been trying to keep a routine in my day since arriving here. A routine of reading, going to the studio and thinking about the work I have been making in my new studio. Most of my time has gone into organising my life here in getting materials for my studio and trying to find out where to find the things I need to keep a similar studio practice going as I have in Helsinki. There is a constant feeling of not using my time efficiently enough. It is easy to spend a whole day running around and to feel like nothing has been achieved. I have been in the city for almost a month and I have started some painting on paper as a form of practice or routine. The paintings on paper are meant to work as a sketch or a quick recording of the moment. I try not to think when I make those sketches but I often do or I try to make them look a certain way and overthink it. That is when they don't work out and the paint accumulates into a murky puddle on the surface. Now and then everything works out perfectly and a painting comes together. It is then when suddenly everything looks different and all the moments of frustration and worries about not getting anywhere with the paintings turn into an equally intense feeling of euphoria and excitement. This balance of doing and not doing is important. There might be a period of one or two weeks or more where there are no visible results in the studio but a painting might need that build up and at the right moment the painting continuous. A big part of

my work in the studio is to reflect on what my work is about and of course, I have an idea about what it is about. If I get asked I usually say that in a broad sense I am interested in painting about painting or in painting that is about itself. But what does that really mean? And are my paintings doing what I am saying they are doing? So in that sense, the studio is not a workshop or place of production but a laboratory and a place for research and experimentation. It is by thinking and doing and time that a pattern emerges a sensibility for something that becomes visible in a body of work and in everything that is made. That is what my work is. I am looking for my work to have its unique sensibility.

Thoughts on Procrastination

I should start writing.
sit down, write it, hand it in.
But it always takes me such a long time to start writing.
I start doing other things.
I think of other stuff.
If I had the right environment to write it would be easy.
I need to get organized.
All I have to do is to sit down and start.
I don't own a chair.
I have a nice table.
It is a long walnut desk that I made.
It measures almost 2 meters in length with a drawer in the middle.
It would be a perfect place to sit and write
However
I don't have a chair.
I will not go to Ikea.
If I made a chair I'll be able to start writing.
Of course, the chair would have to be made from walnut as well.
To match the table.
First step, buy wood.
I will have to wait a few days until a car will be available for transport.
Then when I have the wood it should rest for a few days in the workshop.

Temperature differences between storage places might cause the wood to twist and letting the wood acclimatize before starting to work on it is of the utmost importance.

I don't want a nice piece of walnut that starts bending later.
Then I should be ready.
To make the chair.
It will be a simple chair.
Functional.
I'll be able to sit down
at my desk
write
and hand it in.

The Dark Green Paint on my Canvas

We broke the clouds. Fading in and out of a white screen of fog a landscape emerged that became clearer the further we descended. The dark green and black silhouettes of sharp and pointed triangles lay on top of the bright but matt white ground and created a strong contrast between the colours. The white and green landscape speckled with little black uneven dots stretched out to the horizon. It was clear that there was not much but dark green, black and matt white around us. As we further descended and the angle of the dark triangular silhouettes shifted they became longer and we suddenly found ourselves in the middle of this landscape. We picked up our bags, rolled them across the tarmac, dropped them, closed the hatch and went off. As we...

...I snap out of my daydream. I try to get back to it but the moment is gone.

I let it sink in for a moment. I think of that dark green on the matt white, the landscape and the black speckles from my daydream. No one will know that the dark green in the painting are the dark silhouettes that I saw when the fog cleared. I don't mind. I know it.

Second Thesis Project Exhibition

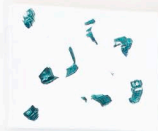
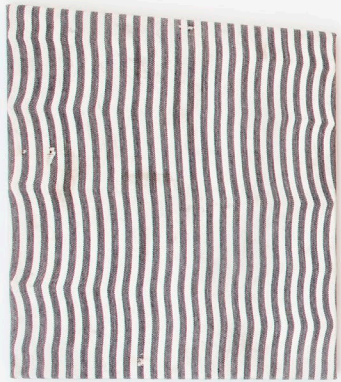
Kuvan Kevät

When the time for *Kuvan Kevät* came I approached it as I had done it with the exhibition in Project Room. As I worked in the studio I thought of the exhibition as a whole. I thought about the relationships between works and what I wanted them to do. In general, I feel that the work in the studio is an ongoing research. It is a process of trying out things. *Kuvan Kevät* was a natural continuation of *I Was Told There Would Be Cake* and I wanted to further explore things that I had just started in Project Room. I had learned a lot from making the work for *I Was Told There Would Be Cake*. I was very interested in playing with the ideas of framing the exhibition as a whole and allowing the viewer to move within the work. I wanted this work to have a certain feeling or an aura that is so hard to put into words. I was looking for something that made sense when it is seen but could not quite translate into words. Like at Project Room it was about a language the works created. The exhibition should consist of different elements with individual characters and personalities that stand in a dialogue with each other.

Painting can be very hard and frustrating. There are ideas and expectations. The possibilities for how the painting will turn out are infinite. It also seems to be very clear whether a certain thing works on the canvas or not. When painting I am invested in my idea and it is easy to start feeling too precious about the painting. Not wanting to destroy the things in the painting that I like can then feel limiting and freedom or a certain degree of risk is required. Once a mark is made it cannot be taken away that

easily. After the Project Room exhibition, I thought about something that I had found frustrating for a long time. I thought that ideally, I would have an endless supply of canvas ready to paint on and enough space to store everything. Unfortunately, I don't have that. I often would not start a painting because I was concerned if I wanted to use the material for that idea or if should wait and use it for something else later. That is why I started to paint on paper. I was able to work on paper without overthinking. I could start painting with an idea and quickly go on to the next idea. The works on paper required no preparation. They worked as sketches or almost as ideas written on post-it notes. They are paintings in their own right. They function also as a form of diary. I could paint them every day. The paintings also have enormous freedom about them. Because they are on paper they are less of an object and they are detached to some extent from a traditional format of canvas and stretcher, which comes with the weight of painting tradition. Starting a studio routine of painting on paper has been one of the most important changes in my practice. The paper paintings are something that happen while reading in the studio, drinking tea, working with wood or working on other paintings. The paper paintings inform each other and they inform other works. Some are more successful than others. The only rule I have with them is to keep all of the paintings. Unsuccessful paintings don't get thrown away. For me, it is important to build up an archive of the work that I can revisit later.

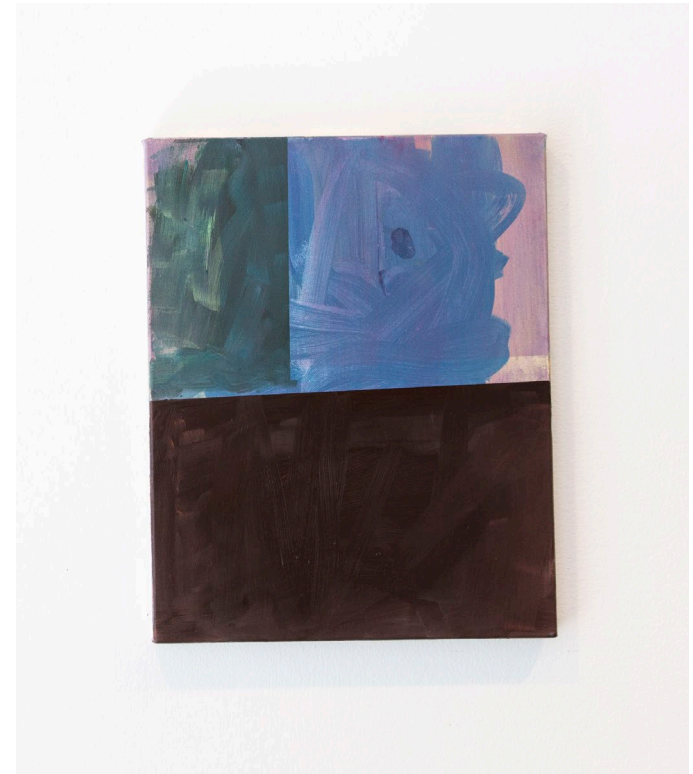
In preparing for *Kuvan Kevät* these paper paintings played an important role. I was able to develop ideas through them that fed directly into the other pieces. As in *I Was Told There Would be Cake* I had some anchor points in the thinking around the exhibition. These were artworks that I liked and that I knew I wanted to have in the exhibition. Sometimes some works



that I consider anchor points might not make it to the exhibition in the end. Moving works around in the exhibition space is an important second part in my making. Comparing and testing works next to other works also happens in my studio but it is only through leaving the studio that they go to a second stage. The individual pieces are like building blocks that I can use to set up the exhibition. This can be a playful process and I am looking for something similar to what I look for while painting in the moving and placing of these individual elements. A painting next to another painting might suddenly reveal a completely new feeling about it.

The paintings on paper reflect on a painting routine and stand for a continuity. Initially, they started as patterns reminding of Portuguese tiles, then became more abstract and lately have become partially figurative. Perhaps I give myself more permission with those paintings and they are part of trying to find myself as a painter. I wanted to show the paintings on paper in *Kuvan Kevät* because they are a part of my studio routine and I felt those paintings reflected quite directly the influences that contributed to them existing. They belong to what happens in and outside the studio.

On the wall were four works. A striped fabric, a small painting, a slightly bigger painting on canvas followed by a large painting of horizontal stripes. The small painting and the slightly bigger painting in the middle were anchor points for this exhibition. I knew quite early on that I wanted them in the exhibition. These two paintings came to be in quite different efforts. Sometimes the first brushstrokes fall perfectly on the canvas. When painting I find myself looking for something. As I begin with an initial idea or image I start seeing new things and ideas come as I paint.



Standing in front of the canvas with the brush I am engaged in an activity, adding, removing and pushing around material. I do that until I feel that I can leave it as it is. Sometimes I find the moment to leave it quickly and sometimes it takes a lot of adding and moving around material until I find it. The painting in the middle took a lot of time and pushing around material on its surface. I believe there is an interesting dialogue in that process. The painting reveals something and the painter reacts to it. It is as if the painting takes on a quasi personality and an exchange happens. The painting becomes an individual with a character, opinions and a personality.

With every move of the brush, the face of the canvas changes and every adjustment, correction and change build up a new image. I had painted and wiped paint off that canvas over and over. The traces of a mark I tried to erase would form an interesting new mark and over time all the traces of adding and removing combined would accumulate and make the painting. The painting bears the marks that are evidence of that action. Similar to the kitchen towels the marks are a record of a history. If we were to analyse each mark meticulously we could find the information on each movement the painter has made. I previously referred to that painting as a "painting paintings" or as "real paintings" because it seems closer to an idea of painting as a long interaction with the material on the canvas and artist. The expectation is that the painting is able to visualize that interaction.

On one side of the two paintings in the middle was a work with vertical stripes and on the other side was a large painting with horizontal stripes. Both works functioned in a way as a framing device and introduced the visual element of the stripes into the space. The stripes bound the other

works together without being too loud or having an overpowering presence. They almost worked as backdrop or a kind of matrix for the other works and the viewer to move around. The vertical striped work was a used kitchen towel on a canvas stretcher. I wanted to bring the kitchen towel into this exhibition. I felt that it connected to the idea that it was a trace and evidence of an action as much as the paintings are.

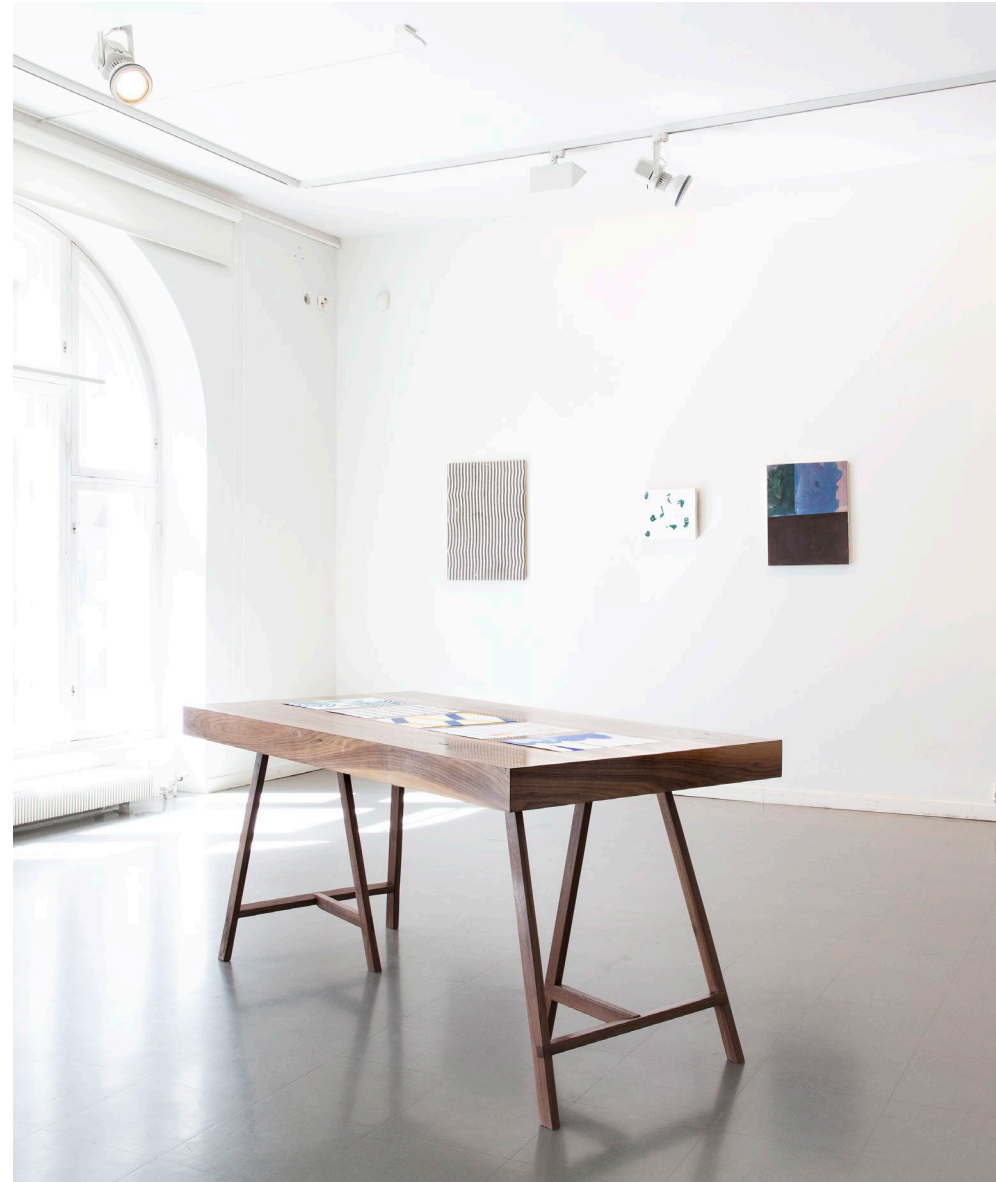
A lot of my painting is about itself and how it can be something individual and also create a connection to the next work. It is a pointer to ideas and thoughts around painting and making. It is shaped by an underlying aesthetic. It tries to create its own language and wants to be a symbol where meaning can be attributed.

Objects with a clear function are read as what they are. A table is going to be seen as a table in whatever shape it comes. It has to have the basic qualities of a table to qualify as a table but when it does it is not scrutinised on how it looks. It is different from painting in that sense. As soon as we see a painting we try to put it into a concept and context. What is it? Who made it? When was it made? A painting's function is not as clear. A painting doesn't need a function per se it is more a vehicle of communication. It stands for ideas or it represents something. Or a painting just is and is what it is.

I have always had an interest in woodworking. During my time at the academy, I was able to make full use of the woodworking facilities. I was able to make canvas stretchers, frames and I started making furniture. With any new project I start with an idea and an image of something I want to make and then think around the problems of making that object. I find

the problem solving and thinking of solutions a very rewarding process. Also having a finished object that started as an idea and develops into a three-dimensional object is a beautiful thing. I pursue perfection in my woodworking. I want the work to be as good as I can make it. With each project I learn something new and I become more skillful.

I always saw my woodworking as something separate to my studio practice although there are many crossovers. When I started thinking about how to exhibit my work for *Kuvan Kevät* I was thinking of ways to break out of a traditional way of looking at works on the wall. I wanted to show my paintings on paper without putting them in a frame. I wanted them to keep a sense of spontaneity and lightness. A few weeks before installing at *Kuvan Kevät* we were shown our exhibition space and I was able to get a better picture of my exhibition. I had thought of different modes of displaying my work and in how I could show the works on paper. If I showed them on a table they would remain these loose ideas on post-it notes. I also liked the idea of the table because it was such a familiar object. I wanted it to feel like a table one would remember from their grandparent's house. Certain objects can embody strong personal connections and feelings of nostalgia. With the table in the space, the viewer would walk around the table between the works on the wall and the paintings on paper and thus move within the work. It makes the artworks extend into the space and forces the viewer to walk around the work. The table and the wood also added to the vocabulary of the overall image of the exhibition. The table as a mode of display should like my paintings reflect on who I am and in what I am interested. The paintings, the table and everything that creates the language of the overall work are an extension of my ideas, thoughts, interests, dreams, and passions.





At an Opening

We arrive at the museum an hour late. Or if you can be late for an opening, an hour after the doors open. The party is in full swing. I push through a crowd of people with my friend I arrived with, scanning the room for a place to leave our coats and bags first and then the bar. The air is thick and I regret wearing my wool cardigan over my over a woollen sweater. We see some familiar faces I say a quick Moi! and push on before having to engage in small talk. Everyone seems to be searching for something or someone, rushing past from all sides. The room is filled with the sounds of a thousand conversations blurring into a uniform noise. The locker room is full and not wanting to leave my things unattended I turn around and say: "let's get a drink!".

Funnelled into the steps leading up from the foyer to the exhibition I notice a marble plaque engraved with the names of important donors and patrons of the museum, Amos Anderson etc.... Between my feet on the stone separating each flight of stairs are the names of the participants written in vinyl lettering. I know most of the artists, some of them are close friends. I feel a sudden sense of pride that my friends are in this which I come to realize seems to be quite a big deal and with that, in some way, I am also part of that bubble. Not having seen any artwork yet we walk past a video on a screen. The priority seems to find one or two people first congratulate them and find the bar. As I start to make my way around the space a few artworks begin to attract my attention but there are too many people that obstruct a proper view of the artwork. Also, my attention span is far too short at that moment at least to give each artwork the time it deserves. I say to my self I'll be back to see the exhibition some other time to get a good view and continue to navigate through the crowd. Every

couple of meters I get stuck in a short conversation and exit with
"I'll just have a quick look around

but I'll see you later

Anyway, it's nice to see you!

Oh, are you going to later for drinks?"

Finally, at the bar, I buy a beer for me and my friend. Seven euros for a beer seems a bit much but I figure I would feel less awkward standing around with something in my hand. Now having said hello and satisfied our most pressing needs I start to look at the exhibition more closely. There are three large paintings I immediately like. They remind me of an American painter I was recently looking at. Heavy oil paint on raw canvas. Primary colours, red, yellow, cyan blue. I start to wonder if I really like the paintings or if I am coerced into liking them by their boldness and confidence. "It feels a bit Macho," I think "actually I might not like them at all". I leave the paintings without coming to a conclusion and say hello to a familiar face I bump into. Everyone seems to know one another and there are the usual originals you see at every exhibition opening. There are a lot of people from art school at this opening so it is easy for me to fit in but if I wasn't from here I would probably feel like an outsider. I start thinking it is funny how people seem to be more interested in each other than in the artwork as if the exhibition was a pretence to get together. But then again behind each artwork is an artist, ideas, research, a story, a person. And what we see in the exhibition is there to make us think, to talk and to challenge us on what and how we see something. It connects us and creates a discussion, even if it is just small talk at an opening. After a while, the space had become less crowded and the exhibition as a whole, as a curated selection of artworks and the way the works are displayed alongside each other becomes more visible. The main hall has a very high ceiling with windows

on the top of the wall. Running my eyes down the length of the wall, for a while, I only see the white wall until the object to be displayed comes into my view. The very object this tall and long white wall was designed for. The rectangularity of the hall which feels like a hangar or a shipyard is cut in one corner by a diagonally stretched projection screen. A friend of mine complains: "Why would you hang up a screen like that if you could project the video on the white wall?" I don't say anything in return but I quite like it. It changes the space and makes the work a three-dimensional object. The space will always stay the same and is meant to be a structure reduced to its bare minimum to be a vessel for what is being displayed. That said it doesn't mean that this vessel is only for objects. Activities performances non object artworks have a place in it as well however that is only one facet in a kaleidoscopic wealth of exhibiting and experiencing art. There is definitely a life outside the box. Now it was also time for me to leave the box as everyone was asked to leave the exhibition space. We made our way down the steps and gathered outside. As the heavy carved wooden door shut behind us the crowd lingered in front of the building for a while continuing their conversations and figuring out where to go next.

Bar?

I'm kind of tired.

Home?

Is there an after-party?

There will be an opening next week or the week after. I'll be in my studio, I might think of a work I saw at the exhibition or remember a conversation and that might find its way into something I am working on. Maybe I'll think about the space about how my work fits within or outside of it. Or I go to another exhibition in the future and say: "Oh I remember your work from that exhibition." And the dialogue continues.

The Certain "Je ne sais quoi"

I have been talking about a feeling around my work and about the feeling of "it" to be right. Why does it seem clear when something in a painting, a particular brush mark, a composition or a juxtaposition works or doesn't work? There seems to be a collective agreement of what is a good painting and what is not. Or at least it is clear when something is not good, not finished or perhaps just needs something more to work. Surely all these must be opinions and it is a matter of taste and subjectivity. I, however, feel that I am often able to share my excitement about a painting or a particular part in a painting. I find that my peers often pick up on the same nuances in a work. They instantaneously have the same excitement about the same thing. We are shaped by our environment by what we are exposed to and what we surround ourselves with. Our understanding of good or bad might be to a part subjective but our "personal taste" is influenced by our surrounding, education and by what other people say is good.

As artists, we often lean on a feeling when making creative decisions. I mean that the decision making in the creative process relies more on emotional than rational and scientific acting. I am surprised that we don't talk a lot more about that feeling, but it is a very difficult thing to talk about. Perhaps because there seems to be no logic behind taste, taste doesn't need to be explained and can not be questioned- it can be disagreed with. Talking about taste also might simplify and concentrate only on the visual elements of the artwork and not engage with what ideas, context and motivations are behind the artwork. At least that are the fears attached to it. I feel that there is a silent fascination that we share. Painters will fetishise the brush mark on the canvas and printmakers will notice the skilful

layering of the colours on the print as much a carpenter will appreciate a well-made wood joint. These are of course things that we are fascinated by because we are moving within that bubble. But I do believe that there is an understanding and appreciation of these tastes outside the bubble of makers. Although we have different tastes there seems to be a sensibility that we are able to understand. I can look at an artwork that I might not personally like but I still understand it to be a "good" work and I am able to appreciate it because it fits into a common sensibility. This sensibility is borderless. I understand that culturally there are different perceptions of good and bad, beauty and ugliness but I believe that there is a sensibility that lies beyond cultural and geographical factors. Susan Sontag talks about sensibility and taste in her essay Notes On Camp. She writes:

"Most people think of sensibility or taste as the realm of purely subjective preferences, those mysterious attractions, mainly sensual, that have not been brought under the sovereignty of reason. They allow that considerations of taste play a part in their reactions to people and to works of art. But this attitude is naïve. And even worse. To patronize the faculty of taste is to patronize oneself. For taste governs every free-as opposed to rote- human response. Nothing is more decisive. There is in people, visual taste, taste in emotion- and there is taste in acts, taste in morality. Intelligence as well, is really a kind of taste: taste in ideas.(One of the facts to be reckoned with is taste tends to develop very unevenly. It's rare that the same person has good visual taste and good taste in people and taste in ideas) Taste has no system and no proofs. But there is something like a logic of taste: the consistent sensibility which underlies and gives rise to a certain taste. A sensibility is almost, but not quite, ineffable. Any sensibility which can be crammed into the mold of a system, or handled with the rough tools of proof, is no longer a sensibility at all. It has hardened into an idea..."⁷

I find the idea of a logic of taste and that sensibility is something coming from a consistency very interesting. This feeds into my interest in letting my work create a visual language by an ongoing practice. Over time a pattern or a consistency and a connection between the works becomes visible. The individual work stands for ideas but is bound together by a logic. This gives my works freedom. Freedom to me as the maker to pursue what I am interested in and freedom to the works to stand on their own and to be part of a whole. It allows a variety of influences to be part of the work. I want my works to have a certain openness. I always felt that for myself this made more sense than choosing a subject and make my work about that subject. An artist's practice is in a sense a taste of ideas and an exhibition is a mode of showing the artist's taste in ideas. In the end, I would like my work to reflect a sensibility and leave the viewer with my ideas.

Steve

I sometimes think about my ex-partners father. Steve was a man in his mid-fifties who would normally be seen wearing a black leather jacket and chain-smoking roley cigarettes. He rolled his cigarettes without a filter, according to him they tasted better. He jokingly would say he loved that taste more than life. He drank a couple of large coffee cup-sized thermos flasks filled with quadruple espressos throughout the day. He was a vegetarian, liked the Smiths and could go on about medieval European history. Steve grew up in Belfast during the Troubles and the stories he told me from that time left a deep impression on me. Steve was a social worker and part of his job was to work with people that were in crisis. I somehow understood his work as a kind of negotiator or in my mind he easily could have been a hostage negotiator. Sitting on the other side of a barricaded door in his leather jacket and sunglasses exhaling the smoke of his cigarette saying: I get it man! We've all been there!

He told me about his clients and that it was often about working out some compromise. That when they talked they talked until they found a middle ground somewhere they knew they could continue working on the problem. It was not a work that finished in the evening and on Fridays leaving the weekend for resting. It just took as long as it took and for Steve that was more important anyway. He and his client would be in it together.

I think about him when I'm in the studio when I have been painting and I'm trying to get the painting to a point where I can leave it. Either leave it completely or leave at a point where I know we can pick up from where we were. Like Steve's clients my painting, or perhaps it is myself, are highly

unreliable and are not to be trusted when they say they have met a common ground to work from the next time. Anything can change very quickly and we are back to square one. But like Steve, I know that and I have to work with that knowledge in mind. So a relationship starts to build, a back and forth, somewhere where I have to stay until I know that I can leave. We're in it together.

The Inside of my Eyelids

Maybe the paintings are like a memory, an imagination or an image appearing in the moment between sleeping and waking. A form that seems completely clear and real but then evaporates into nothingness before you can touch it. They are longing for a place or a moment lived before. They are the inside of my eyelids when savouring that memory. The German word "*Sehnsucht*" consists of *sehnen* and *Sucht*, longing and addiction. *Sehnsucht* translates to longing for something. It is much more than just longing. It is wanting to see, to be somewhere you are not or to have something you do not have anymore. *Sehnsucht* feels more melancholic than longing and in *Sehnsucht* you are experiencing withdrawal symptoms from the thing you so desperately long for. Maybe the paintings have a *Sehnsucht* in them. The heart lies heavy but like with every heartbreak there is the sweet memory that you can escape to where for a little moment nothing else exists.

Notes

- 1 Van Eynde; De Keyser; Weiss & König 2014.
- 2 Moon 1961-1973.
- 3 Aldrich 2017, 54.
- 4 Salle 2016, 31.
- 5 Moravia 1960.
- 6 Chapman 2017.
- 7 Sontag 2018, 2-3.

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