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SELF-FULFILLING POST-CONSTRUCTS
- THE PROCESS BEHIND MAKING fanmo jimte
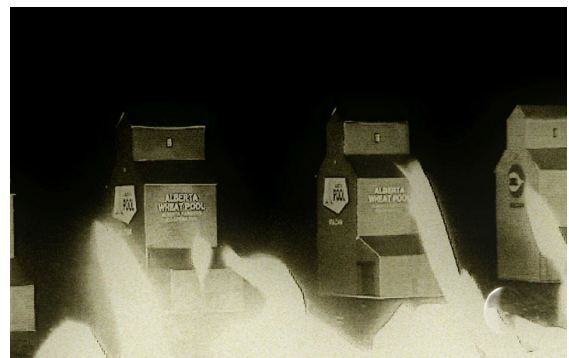
VULCAN, ALBERTA

In the year of 1910 the railway was expanding in all directions and along it, dots of beginning towns, in a distant territory a fertile area was surveyed. The staff at the railway choose to name the place Vulcan, after the roman god of fire, volcanoes and the manufacturer of art, arms, iron and armour. After a year the greatest grain elevator of the prairie was built in Vulcan, and fourteen prosperous agricultural businesses had already established. By 1921 Vulcan was considered a town. It became famous for its great utilitarian monuments; The nine in line. But in the late 60´s things started to change, the harvest wasn't as rich as before, a steady temperature rise and sudden heat waves made farming difficult. In 1971 an inexplicable fire burnt all nine elevators to the ground.

This is the story of the Canadian town Vulcan, Alberta and the introductory voiceover of my film & degree project *fanmo jimte*. I became interested in this town a couple years ago, and since then I've been following its development. This farming community, that seemed to be in the middle of a transformation, both economically and culturally inspired me to get involved in its project and eventually create my own story about it.

Vulcan's hallmark used to be nine high grain elevators in a row, used by the farmers to store their crops and referred to as *The nine in line*. They could be seen from far distances on the otherwise flat prairies of Canada. It is obvious that they also had a symbolical value for the farming identity and the rural prairie life when you look at the many organizations working with documenting, preserving and writing the history of the grain elevators. Today they are gone and a model of the space ship Enterprise from the TV-series Star Trek (ST) stands in their place. This new monument refers to its location on semiotic basis. In the fictive Star Trek (ST) universe exists a planet and a species with the same name; Vulcan(ians). When the ST series became popular in the late 60´s the town was associated with the planet Vulcan. ST fans that were excited about this semiotic connection travelled to Vulcan as a way to practice their fanship. The ST fan movement is one of the strongest and most active in expressing their favourite fiction, and today Vulcan is actively working to be associated with ST in order to boost its tourist industry.

CONSPIRING MIND, WEAWING NARRATIVES

At the start Vulcan, Ab was a sidetrack in my interest sphere. But eventually it started to dominate my activity and also my other interests seemed to be about Vulcan, even if on metaphorical levels.

I work with, on daily basis elaborating a mass of ideas that I accumulate continuously. I collect and gather things that I find, and that catches my interest. It can be something from a radio program, something in the news, something on the path to work. I record it or pick it up and put it in my pocket. Sometimes when it only appears as an idea it has to be written down in formulations or made, like for example building an aquarium with 9:16 proportions. It becomes a manifestation and collection of the residue from daily experience. As this material grows I continuously work with interpreting, processing and organizing this collected material. I make mind maps and try to find the common denominators between them. I keep a "video sketch book" to reveal narrative connections. By inserting the fragments into a video editing project, I force the material into linear order, stories take shape. Every day brings more material, new connections and narratives emerge. I see the material in the light of what happened during the day, and I see what happens during the day through the material I constantly revisit. I keep my eyes open for what seems t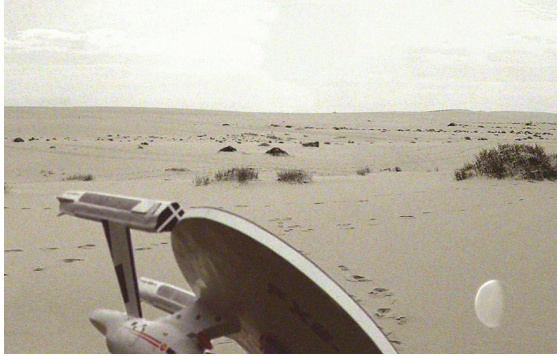o be missing parts in the emerging narratives. In Hungary I found agricultural environments from the Canadian 70'ies, in Denmark I found sci-fi desert landscapes and in turkey desirable railway shots. Sometimes I need to push it a bit further by reconstructing a farmer's home in my living room or ask an actress to stage a reaction.

In my bachelor essay[1] I wrote about my need to realise and develop my works through the experimentation of the tools and media I've approached and gotten to like. My reasons for that, was my dissatisfaction with the state of affairs and my belief that established media, languages and conventions was reproducing this state. I was imagining it to be possible to find new forms, other then the dominating ones, by letting subconscious visions and alternatives take shape on its own conditions. My work processes and working methods still looks quite similar, but my attitude towards it has shifted.

VULCAN THE PLANET

Now, Vulcan has a considerably higher gravity and thinner atmosphere. Its climate is generally harsh, with most of the surface consisting of large deserts or mountain ranges, along with scattered small seas. Desert areas are prone to large amounts of heat, light and electrical sand fire storms[2].

This text is a description of the planet Vulcan based on the ST script. These words also accompany the final scenes in *fanmo jimte* as a voice over.

Through my interest for Vulcan, Ab I developed a liking for ST. I started to watch it, trying to figure out what it was about. I also joined the local fan club and together we started a fan film group.

ST has had a huge impact all over the world. The first episode was aired in the US in 1966. Though set in an outer space environment it dealt with issues from everyday life, human relations and often commented on the state of the world in metaphorical language. The series was no success from the start but has gradually gained huge popularity. The series has now been produced for more then forty years and in May 2009 a new feature film will be premiered.

ST presents a version of the future, where humans have developed technologies that supply unlimited energy. The ecological balance of earth is restored without restricting the comfort of humans[3]. In 2012, just when earth is about to collapse from the green house effect caused by the burning of fossil fuel there is a breakthrough in energy research. Thanks to the increased population the combined brain capacity reached the required level to come up with the ultimate solution. The adventures of colonizing intergalactic domains in order to host a growing population, is the dramaturgical engine of ST. The encounter with the vulcanians was the human's first experience of

extraterrestrial species on this quest. The vulcanians are characterized by their logical personality. By methods of meditation they exercise self-control, in order to reduce emotional influence in their behaviour and prevent the disasters vulcanians emotions can cause. Before they learned to control their emotion and navigate according to logic they were still technologically advanced but also violent; a society similar to modern times on earth.

FUTURE VISIONS, CLOUDED EXPECTATIONS & UNDEREXPOSED IMAGES

Cloud seeding, the method of spraying clouds with silver iodine in order to make it rain has been used occasionally in Vulcan Alberta since the middle of the 60´s[4]. For desperate farmers facing bankruptcy, it has been a last desperate attempt to save their crops. Also in other parts of the world this method has been used and it has caused conflicts when different regions fight for the ownership of the rain.

At the US governments National Centre for Atmospheric Research a project on cloud producing machines floating on the sea surface is being developed. The hope is to reduce global warming through making fluffy white clouds that would reflect the sunrays back into space.

I borrowed a smoke machine and sprayed smoke from my window. The smoke dissolved into fog as it drifted with the wind between the houses. During a sunny day I sat on the balcony with my air moisturizer uvox 2000, observing if moist or clouds to take shape above me.

Uvox 2000, 2007

When they did, I made sketches of their evolution. When did a cloud become an image of a cloud, or when did a image of a cloud become a cloud? During a residency at Grafikens hus 2007 I built a pinhole camera. I placed the camera outdoors on the ground directed towards the sky. The sky and its clouds determined the exposures; they became both motif and medium. I affected the exposures by breathing, eating honey from New Zealand and taking long showers in the morning. I printed the light sensitive sun-engraved metal plates in small editions.

NEW RAW MATERIALS

Weather is the great equalizer, there is nothing anyone can do about it, and it affects us all the same way - rich and poor, black and white, healthy and sick. The weather makes no distinctions, when it rains on me it rains on you. Unlike most of the problems we face it is not a condition created by man. It comes from nature, god or whatever else you call the forces in the universe we cannot control.

Paul Auster
Double Game & Gotham Handbook
Chiang Hai Tat, 2000

The term global warming with its implications of imbalance and human interference has been abandoned for the more neutral and passive phrase climate change. This is a result of a political strategy developed by the Bush administration[5]. In spite of this successful lobbying, few can today oppose to the fact that the limited natural resourses has been exploited by a few on behalf of the most, causing disturbance in ecology. With declining feedstock, shifts in economy and growing global markets, new economies emerge in more parts of the world, such as for example South-East Asia. Many Western industrial countries face difficulties in the competition with these economies.[6] Many towns like Vulcan, Ab are abandoned by its citizens, along with the lost markets. The cities shrink and in the long run their existence is threatened. These communities are forced to find new ways to create a base for their existence and livelihood.

TOWNBRANDING - IDENTITY AS VALUE

City-branding is a common strategy for a depopulating place to strengthen their position in the competition with other places over jobs and citizens. This basically means creating a trade-mark out of a city, making it into a coherent product that can be recognized and marketed. In order to be distinguished, these brands often draw on sensation and spectacle. One very common feature in city branding is the spectacular landmarks as for example in the Guggenheim museum Bilbao or the Malmö skyscraper Turning torso. Another strategy can be developing a special theme like in Visby where I come from. Visbys economy is depending on its image as a medieval space. In yearly festivals and masquerades this theme is manifested. I and most locals I know find the medieval identity quite silly and disparate from what our life is all about, but somehow we all play along in this masquerade anyway. Branding and

marketing are terms from the field of economy and are less concerned with the culture of the place its and citizens with its history and diversity. Traditions and multitude doesn't seem to be the most used marketing strategy[7]. The Star Trek concept seems to have what it takes to build a new potent identity for Vulcan, Ab. ST has one of the largest fan movements, and the many seasons that are constantly being showed on TV all over the world, has given it a place in the collective consciousness. For Vulcan, Ab an ally with the universe of S.T. could bring it a lot of attention.

      Vulcan Ab's capitalization on ST is a narrative project, a sort of fan fiction. The myth construction tying Vulcan Ab, and ST together was in the beginning a project for the ST fans that projected their fantasies and desires onto this Canadian town. But when realising the possibilities also the citizens started taking part in it. As the community organizer Greg Dietz expresses it; *A lot of people asked us where our pointed ears are or if everybody in Vulcan has green blood and so on, and finally we decided maybe it wasn't such a joke, we could do something with it*[8].

FANFICTION - IDENTITY AS NARRATION
For some reasons some fictions become so popular that they continue to be written and expanded by others than its original authors and producers.

Some fans take an active part in expanding their favourite fiction by writing continuations and alterations that builds upon it. This writing of fan fiction is often a collective effort where exchange of texts and dialogue is the base of a community that shares an interest in a specific fiction. The citizens in Vulcan, Ab creates a fan fiction in a constant performance. They arrange festivals, masquerades, and conventions where the ST premises are acted out. They construct monuments and buildings from it and offers food and drinks from the ST cookbook[9]. On the ST fan history wiki[10] fan fictions from 1967 to present time is shared. I added the story about Vulcan Ab to this archive, and the story about Vulcan, Ab the birthplace of the vulcanian Spock, is now officially a ST fan fiction.

According to Henry Jenkins, fan fiction is about stretching its [the original texts] boundaries to incorporate their concerns, remoulding its characters to better suit their desires[11] (p. 156). Thanks to Vulcan, Ab's identity construct, they can claim the right to host the premiere of the next ST feature film, which would definitely improve their economical situation. Dayna Turner-Dickens, the director of the Facebook lobby group Star Trek XI – help bring Spock home to Vulcan, Alberta writes me a message that *In the meantime, because we now know that Paramount is watching, AND because the premiere's coming to Vulcan is not yet a "done deal", I encourage you to invite all to your friends to join our Facebook group to show your support for Vulcan's goal to host the premiere of Star Trek XI in December 2008.*

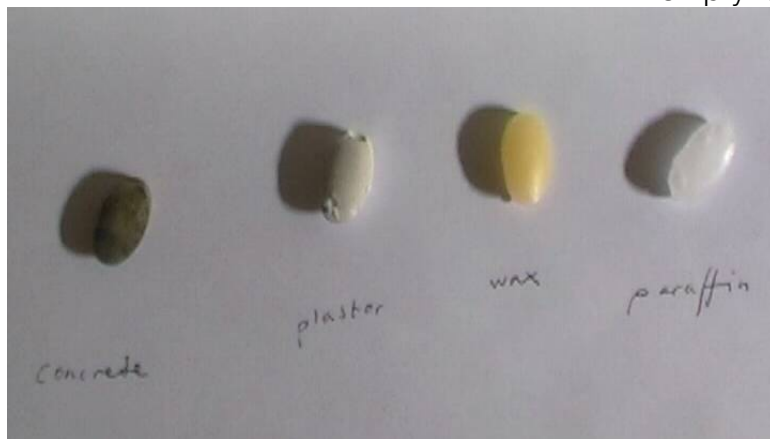Making fanfilm with west coast trekkers, 2008

TRANSFORMATION & COLLISION

I also see my work around these phenomena as a fan fiction practice, where I build upon, rework and modify the story developing in Vulcan, Ab. I found a lot of material about Vulcan in radio and TV archives and in local newspapers. There were reports on the droughts and its consequences for farmers, articles about the bank systems for real-estate loans forced them into bankruptcy and programmes about cloud seeding, foam isolation and other technological projects to control climate. On a travel to Germany I filmed lush wheat and canola fields, just like I imagined them in Vulcan, Ab before the drought. By composing them with different found footage I tried to construct sequences depicting the same fields dried out. I watched ST and studied the scripts about Vulcan which was a dry and hot planet covered by deserts. As I continued to work with this material, I found more and deeper connection between Vulcan, Ab and Vulcan the planet then the name. In Vulcan, Ab an imitation of the planet was being performed, but also the actual geology seemed to take part in

...tion. The droughts made the ...k like deserts. In my cloud ...nts I used weather and climate ...ols, I reflected over the ...gical engulfment of nature. ...e cloud-seeding project and ...Ab's approach to the earth, ...ST's prophecy on "nature ...technology"?

...AMOK – MAGIC AND BELIEF

...e story about Vulcan started to ...e the narrative in my video ...ook I decided do extract it into ...te project in order to make it into a work, an entity, on its own. The remaining material I developed into other works and some of it are still fragments that I keep adding things to. Much of this other material dealt with different physical manifestations of mental processes and performativity of signs related to magic, psychology and religion but also to the speech act theories by for example J. L. Austin. in Artnodes, Inke Arns[12] examined the voodoo concept where a thing is affected through a manipulation of a representation of that thing, the kind of creatures brought to life by words or through recipes like the Golem or the Homunculus. My big collection of self help material and instructions from movements like mind-cure or New thought that promoted positive thinking and meant that thoughts are something physical, they can lead to bodily reactions such as illnesses or pain. Along with it I had documentation of different experiments where I try to control my physical environment with the power of thought.

Out of these experiments I made the sculptural and performative work Sculptures of disputed effectiveness. I made a cast out of a common painkiller pill and moulded new ones out of different sculpting materials like wax,

plaster, concrete and paraffin. I swallow these pills and made notes of the effects they have on me. Is all the potency in placebo pills originating in the audience/patient herself? Is the aesthetic form of a pill that strong and convincing that it gives raise to physical reactions? Is there such great belief in the symbolic effect on physical conditions? It was also way of testing, visualizing my context and society in general as a convincing form, an empty shell. As if all the connections and meaning I saw in it was originating in my perspective.

Videostill, Sculptures of disputed effectiveness, 2007

MIRRORS, CONTAINERS
Some analyzes of fan movements show that the reasons for the worship can differ dramatically within the same fan community; To the geography student Brendon, who rejects dominant discourses of Englishness, or the teacher Ally, who is of Mediterranean descent, the club reflects their own cosmopolitanism; whereas to White-collarworker Benny, it remains a symbol of his, in his eyes, racially superior White English heritage[13]

Sandvoss, Cornel, 2005

In the research by Sandvoss it shows that many popular media phenomena

are characterized by a semiotic emptiness, they are neutrosemic[14]. They have the capacity to give raise to a near unlimited number of interpretations; very diverse readings can all find support within the same text. These texts have no clear message or ideology in its content therefore anyone can project any personal need or identification onto it. Since ST has been produced through many decades and the seasons are divided into generations it become impossible to determine its textual boundaries. Could ST have the same function as my placebo sculptures; an empty form capable of reflecting any ...elf-projection? Is this mode of ... effect of post-modern ...ing of objective truths and ...riting? Society appears as a ...emic narrative, allowing and ...g any possible ...ation/definition.

...LIZED AGENCY
...leo-sketchbook I had inserted a ... text code as subtitles. It was the raw data from a jpg file of one of the controversial Mohammed comics. I found the conflict around these drawings interesting since it connected to idolatry and belief in agetial power of images. I wanted to see them but felt ashamed over it, felt like I would contribute to some accumulation of evil if I did. I downloaded one of the files and opened it with a text program and started working with the raw data of the image. In Islamic culture figurative art has been considered idolatrous and instead there is a highly developed tradition of calligraphy, an art of writing. But also these letters sometimes take the form of recognisable shapes of birds, boats or horses, they are called calligrams. I borrowed some books on Arabic language and started to translate the letters into Arabic letters. Inspired by

calligram masterpieces I arbitrary put the letters together in decorative compositions, which I collected in a book[15]. For me this brought together different aspects of performative signs, the idolatrous, the executing power of computer code, and consequence ethical journalism. In the conflict, freedom of speech was called for as if there existed a completely true and impartial journalism. Consequence ethical journalism is criticised for avoiding difficult truths. But most journalism is consequence aware. The question is then what consequences one doesn't find difficult? The editors that choose to publish the images new that it would provoke Muslims as a consequence, but what they didn't know was that, that provocation would cause just Denmark 7.5 billion crowns in boycotts[16].

The flows of global capitalism are often referred to as a nature force, something beyond human control and ideology. The many layers of suppliers make it impossible for H&M to control and prevent that the cotton in the clothes they manufacture is picked by enslaved children[17]. The complex weave of financial products obscures the status of the economical situation allowing bubbles to grow. According to this discourse these structures has agency of their own. These abstract structures conveniently prevent us from taking responsibility.

Klama is a video work I made 2005. It was an attempt to think about myself from different perspectives simultaneously, a try to blur my position as either object or subject. Klama is also the Lojban word for coming and going, it doesn't specify from which perspective the movement is defined. It is possible to talk about the movement without thinking in terms of object and subject. A year later I saw the film Muhheakantuck by Matthew Buckingham[18] at a seminar[19]. In the film he discusses the word *the* and its implications on the power to capitalize things like land and air. The word *the* makes it possible to talk about things in themselves, whether in the native Americans Lenape language, the word *the* doesn't exist. When speaking Lenape one always reveals ones relation to what one talk about.

MEASURABILITY & VALUE
After as a child, seeing a detective on TV, attaching a piece of hair to a door as an indication of intruders, I remember inspecting the kitchen's cupboards carefully before stealing sweets or cookies. Today monitoring techniques are more advanced and so are my paranoid fantasies.

I could understand that the branding campaign of Vulcan, Ab was successful. But where did the value come from? What makes a performance or an identity construction profitable? Making maps to own land, writing history to claim truth or making code to patent bodies. The commodification process has always been in relation to the outlining, the formulating, and the summoning on a piece of paper. But In Vulcan, Ab there seemed to be going on a production of value out of immaterial dreams and fantasies acted out in everyday life. In *Essays on the blurring on art and life*[20], Allan Kaprow describes an art taking form in the consciousness, how to alter culture and reality with ones perception through working with how to pay attention to every day things and life in general. Fluxus artists like Yoko Ono worked with spreading phrases and acts that would multiply in social exchange and eventually this attention on micro levels amount to a critical mass. Ono's "Imagine peace[21]" is a

campaign for thinking consciously about peace, if everyone could just imagine peace, it would be possible, and it would be reality. In my work Writing history I wanted to explore how it would affect the here and now, if we could imagine the past differently? I created flyers that announced different hypothetical events in the past. The Seemingly outdated flyers were distributed in the city, mainly through the handles for ads and marketing on public buses in Istanbul 2007.

When Kaprow wrote *What if I were to think art was just paying attention?* (p.202) he was referring to the new subjective, and hypothetically collective, realities that shifts in consciousness can create. But as more and more aspects of everyday life are digitalized, it also becomes easier to measure consciousness and attention. The power in the Fluxus approach has a more economic dimension today.

I have a friend who works with formulating the kind of short texts that comes up in the result list when using a search engine online. The sources of her texts are words and sentences that that people searched for but didn't get any results for. Sometimes she writes texts about words wrongly spelled and then she uses the misspelled word all through her text in order to not offend the illiterate person. By using Mladen Zagorac´s search wall[22] I have reached more awareness on that using search engines is not a private act. The search wall is a firefox plug-in and a website. When installing the plug-in, my writing is displayed on the website every time I type make a web search in a browser. Most of my everyday doings I carry out through my computer, weather social interactions or economical transactions. This means that my actions can be monitored, transcribed and analyzed[23].

In a experimentI call *attention value of attention value* I continuously make web searches of the term attention value and make notes on how the number of hits change during time, it allowed me to understand more about my own contribution to a meaning when trying to understand.

I like Tino Sehgal's works. I saw his piece Kiss[24] in an old ballroom in Berlin where professional dancers performed a never-ending intimate act. Sehgal doesn't document or describe his works. I found this absence of transcriptions fascinating. But after seeing my second Sehgal exhibition at Magasin 3[25] in Stockholm, I realized that the transcribing is going on, inside of me instantaneous as I experience the work. The possibility to measure and transcribe attention and awareness in of social media & digital society also brings an economic value to it. But still, how and when is this attention actually transformed into money? And if the amount of attention increases will there exist more coins and bills? In an article about the American home loan economic crisis, Göran Rosenberg describes a new capitalism of finance.[26] Instead of a stock market based on the value of companies it has a stock market based on expected value changes and on changes in expectations on value changes. This shift has been enabled through a combination of the measurability of expectations and bank's formulations of more and more intricate financial products, aiming at minimizing risk in speculation, disguising loans without safety and obscuring actual values on behalf of imagined or expected values. But this is a magic that only works till the bubble bursts.

SYMBOLIC ORDERS & SYNTHETIC LANGUAGES

Should time travel become practicable, the 4-dimensional facilities of the space motion grammar may become useful.

Donald Harlow, An Esperantist Comments [on Lojban], 1988 [27]

The structures that makes it possible for us to handle reality and interact with others often appears static and by nature given, especially in situations when new orders emerge. It is often I forget that every language has an ideological foundation and a political consequence. When everything is very clear and fits perfectly, all parts seems to be connected, creating a perfect wholeness, it is because I have forgotten that the I, that am feeling, have been constructed in dialogue with this system?

What I like in Fluxus is the playful attempts to step out of ones regular orbit. The artwork as formulations and instruction that anyone can use, and where the meaning is in what the instructions gives raise to in the performer. In my activist and collective work in questioning structures of gender, migration and production, we often formulated and agreeing on set of rules for how we were to operate and organize ourselves. By that we hoped to challenge ourselves not to reproduce the current structures we were criticizing. The rules could be about how to talk and be silent in groupdiscussions, and to help each other sticking to the structure, we would take turns in supervising it. During 2004 I experimented with "reversed jogging". In the jogging tracks we move predictable from start to goal in the same direction. In the area where I went jogging there had been a rape and assaults on woman. I felt that the jogging track's structure was exposing me and made me feel insecure, made me feel like a victim. By jogging in the reversed direction I could detect people in advance, instead of being surprised when suddenly being passed by from behind by faster runners. It made me feel more in control and safe.

Synthetic languages are another way to construct and subject oneself to other systems. Linguists constructed Lojban, a cute sounding, logical language, during the 90íes. It was constructed to be syntactically unambiguous similar to computer programming languages but also to be speakable by humans. One of the aims with Lojban is to improve human's communication with computers, but it is also an attempt to enable new ways of thinking by removing limits in the language. In *fanmo jimte*, my film about Vulcan, I use the Lojban language for my voiceover. The Language has been associated with the Vulcanians in ST because of its logical structure. A constructed language can remind us about the authors of the language, the context in which it has been created and what ends it is expected to promote.

As an art student I experience an increasing demand to formulate and summon my process and practice. This reflexive process of reading one's own writing goes way back in history. In 1789 for example, the concept of the family-archive was introduced in Germany[28]. Every child would at birth be given a book which was to be filled by stains, drawings, and eventually words, and everything was to be dated and archived by loving parents. When growing up you could, thanks to this read your own history. According to Friedrich Kittler this technology of self-reflection, contributed to the cultivating and production of the individual, the identity, and the modern

self that is a cornerstone and control instance in today's society.

The increasing demand on us (as graduating art student) to formulate, summon and put on paper, my learning process, method and ideas, is a sort of commodification process of education, but perhaps my study of my process also contribute to some kind of knowledge and understanding?

THERE IS A STORY FOR EVERY REVELATION

A circular animated element in the corner of my film reveals the time span of the film.
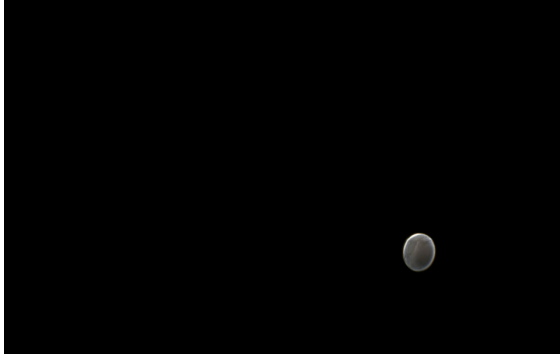

Its presence is separated from the narratives, like the logo of the TV channel when watching a program. When the symbol indicates that the ending of the film is near, it slowly merges with the background and becomes part of the story.

Finally my fascination for Vulcan, Ab's spectacular similarities with the planet Vulcan came to a discovery. Vulcan, Ab *is* the planet Vulcan. ST is a fiction spun out of the North American consciousness continuously for more then fifty years, and it has constantly been revisited and reworked by fan communities, it supply a vast source of reference in everyday conversation. It is a process similar to the family archive tradition. Memory alfa[29], Ex Astris Scientia[30] and Trekmania[31] are just three of many online ST reference encyclopaedias. You could have long conversations with only ST quotes. Seemingly separate things can be part of the same root, just like there is a story that includes both the logo of a TV channel and its program. The discovery of the common origin revealed a new story, recognising oneself in the other.

The new territories of value lie in our actual being, in our social life and in subjective patterns of everyday life. Then is also the main value in art the process and the patterns of actions leading to an artwork? I don't really believe as I did before, that the experimental method in itself creates new structures or alternative orders. I could say that the intuitive and experimental approach will reveal something about the structures conditioning my practice and me. Perhaps can my intuitive and experimental approach repeat and reflect the dominating structures. An art that is a mere reflection doesn't sound too interesting, but if one thinks of Judith Butlers theory on performativity this reflection or repetition can be seen as a revisiting, but with eyes open for other exits[32]. Or maybe this structure within the structure can be understood in relation to how Rosalyn Krauss describes Sophie Calles work, *a narrative structure of a story within the story, The modernist reflexivity of Calle's art is a matter of what Jacques Derrida calls invagination, by which he means the folding of one story within another through the invention of a character who exactly repeats the opening of the first story, thereby setting it off on its narrative course once more*[33]. The dominant structure repeated, but with an aesthetic distance.

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