

Revolution By Night (3.1.1.)

Frans Jacobi: Frans Jacobi.
Henrik Have: Søren Thilo Funder - in love.
Soundtrack and music: Lonely Boy Choir

A car, a confetti-canon, 1 chair, a box with cobblestones.

We are in the new Youth House at Dortheavej 61 in Copenhagen¹. In the concert hall. A car stands in the center of the space, spotlights framing it. In front of it a simple chair. A canon-like object is fastened to the roof of the car with duct tape. Behind the car there is a stage, on the edge of that stage a green box is placed, filled to the brim with cobblestones.

Scene 1:

Frans Jacobi stands on the stage in the spotlight with his foot on the cobblestones. He starts talking.²

Frans Jacobi as Frans Jacobi:

My dear audience, welcome! My name is Frans Jacobi – I have initiated this performance and the discussion afterwards. I would like to start by telling you about a small, inferior experience – a very personal, but in fact also a political experience. The performance tonight is my attempt to present this experience in an artistic format.

Back in 2006 I received a phone call from a colleague, the visual artist Hanne Lise Thomsen. She had taken part in a rally in support of the now former Youth House, Jagtvej 69. Here a line-up of famous Danish musicians had been performing in support of the Youth House that was under threat of closure. Great names showing their solidarity with a scene some of them had been kindled by. Hanne Lise found it sad that no visual artists had come forward at any point to express their support, and she wanted to try organizing something similar, some kind of supporting event, including a bunch of visual artists.³

I was myself rather agitated by the absurd fight taking place around the Youth House. The surreal conflict between the triangle of the Youth House, The City of Copenhagen and the religious sect, The Fatherhouse, escalating to ever more absurd levels. The atmosphere surrounding the Youth House was at an all time low, and the situation became increasingly desperate; The users of the Youth House had lost all legal cases and were now awaiting eviction and the demolition of the house. Everyone was waiting; waiting for the final demolition of all hopes.

So I was all eager and said yes instantly. We discussed the possibilities of various actions. How to manifest our solidarity? Sadly, only one other artist had agreed to participate. Emil Alsbo. Kind of miserable actually. But Hanne Lise was in no mood to stop; she managed to get us involved in an already planned demonstration between Christmas and New Year, back then in the winter of 2006.

The only thing that came to my mind was black confetti. I wanted to spray huge amounts of black confetti over the demonstration as it were moving through the streets. Black rain. A dark, symbolic gesture, staging the demonstration as a damned, dystopian carnival.⁴

I tried to figure out the point on the route from which I could throw all this confetti onto the marching protesters, a roof-top, an apartment or somewhere else, but somehow I failed.

Then Hanne Lise saw to it that I could get inside the Youth House, up on the upper floor and throw out my confetti as a kind of finale, when the demonstration reached its final destination: Jagtvej 69. That sounded perfect, actually. While darkness fell on Nørrebro, all the angry activists would be dancing in a haze of black confetti, falling from the sky on an already condemned address.

The demo started out from Skt. Hans Torv, and even though I had taken part in several similar demonstrations in the months leading up to this, I felt quite awkward, outside of events, sneaking around on the outskirts of the crowd, trying to gain focus, preparing for my little intervention. In fact, I felt a bit too old and a bit too well off in the midst of all this rebellious – well, yes – youth. And this was maybe exactly what I was: Detached and observant.

There was anger, furious speeches and raw, rebellious music. Hanne Lise and Emil made some quite nice video-projections of the number 69 on the walls and houses surrounding the square.⁵ It worked really well, a kind of loose visual design to follow the protests. So far so good.

When the demonstration finally started moving through the neighbourhood, out through Nørrebro, heading for the Youth House, the 3 of us jumped into my car and went out there in advance. Loaded with video-equipment and my 3 plastic bags of black confetti, we were led into the heavily barricaded Youth House through a small window at the back of the house. It was now completely dark, and the atmosphere there in the back of the house was really desolate; sleety hard wind.

Once inside the house we had to crawl up through an ingeniously constructed staircase barricade, blocking all entrance to the upper floors from the more open downstairs spaces. A guard opened up a passage and let us up and in.

Up here the scenery was pretty hard-core. Everything was painted black, and there was white grafitti all over the place. The mood was completely quiet, but in a wild intense sense. We passed a kitchen with a bunch of completely stoned Germans, just sitting there, drinking

in silence. Bleak and tense. I felt like a tourist on a guided tour in a really exotic, dystopian landscape.

Then we reached our destination, a small space on the upper floor facing the street – from here I was able to throw my confetti out the window, and Hanne and Emil could project their video-69s onto the neighbouring houses.

It was a wild place that room. All four windows covered by lattices. On the floor 30-40 crates with cobblestones and bottles, lined up ready for fight. Everything in this space is ready! A clear message. The Youth House has to be defended, by whatever means necessary. And it is gonna be a hard fight; a battle with whatever available weapons: No surrender!⁶

The strange thing is that the moment I step into that room, my attitude changes instantly. All my cynical skepticism disappears, all my emotional distance collapses. It is a radiant, exuberant moment; all of a sudden I am at one with the situation. I know exactly why I am here; instantly I feel like a natural part of a collective body. This is in no sense a rational deduction, or any kind of intellectual proces – it is a completely unexpected shift of consciousness.

From being an unacquainted, distanced spectator to a fascinating, but strange protest movement, sub-culture or whatever the Youth House Movement is called, at that moment in time, all of a sudden and with no delay, I feel completely at one with a desperate, furious battle against the unjust systemic power. At this moment, a pure, lucid feeling of collectivity sweeps through my body.

If it becomes necessary, I will not hesitate to grab those cobblestones and throw them directly in the face of whatever threat arises. That kind of militant resistance, indicated by the storage of cobblestones, is now completely justified. Here, at this site, in this situation.

We're in the space for about half-an-hour. Waiting for the demonstration to arrive in the street in front of the Youth House. The other two are working on their video-projections. I'm just pacing the space, trying to act normal. In fact I am ecstatic, a strange, unfiltered joy, high on rebellion. But I am confused at how to share this feeling with my accomplices, not knowing how to verbalize it. I am just lurking around, preparing to throw my confetti out the windows.

In her ph.d thesis, the anthropologist Stine Krøijer discusses the perception of time in radical leftwing activism. She describes what she calls Active Time. Active Time is the opposite of Dead Time.⁷

Dead Time is the time of our societies. Dead Time is capitalism; the all-encompassing grind of entertainment, uniformity and control. Dead Time permeates us all; it permeates our bodies, our emotions, our identities. Our individualized sense of self is created by Dead Time in Dead Time. Dead Time runs through everything, all of the time. Dead Time appears permanent.

But Dead Time can be broken. In the cracks of society, collective pockets of Active Time can be realized. In short intense moments, or in long calm stretches of time. The fight against Dead Time creates Active Time. Active Time is autonomous. Active Time is quite simply a completely different time than the normal time of society. Outside of the capitalist regime, an alternative exists. Active Time is collective time. In Active Time we are individuals in a completely different mix than in Dead Time.

Active Time is no utopia. Active Time is exactly this, time activated, realized. Made real. Actualized.

When I enter that room, high up inside the fortress of the Youth House, I enter Active Time. Unaware and unprepared, by coincidence, I open the door, and at once I am connected. Tuned in, turned on. In explanation, it sounds pretty weird. But at that moment, it makes perfect sense. It is obviously not an argument, a rationale, but an emotion, an almost physical feeling of presence, responsibility and intense involvement.

Much later, at a large demonstration, celebrating - or rather mourning - the one-year anniversary of the demolition of the Youth House on Jagtvej 69, I heard a tune being played from the soundtrack of the demonstration. "In Love". A kind of rap. Revolution is like being in love. In upfront language the insurrection and the destruction are described like an infatuation. The tune hit me straight up - this is exactly the way I felt up there, in that room, inside the Youth House. At that moment, when I was for once ready to do anything.

As by a strange coincidence, the song was written by a good colleague, Søren Thilo.⁸

Back in the space on Jagtvej 69. After awhile the

demonstration arrived. I got the windows and the lattices opened. With the help of my two friends I emptied my three bags with black confetti out into the darkness. Outside it was snowing, a dark wet snow and a pitch black darkness. We couldn't see the confetti at all. I don't know if anyone down in the street discovered it at all. In a sense, it wasn't important any more. In a sense, it was already passé.

The idea that I as an artist could contribute with anything at all in such a situation was passé, hopelessly gone. Somehow, in the half hour passing up in that room, I had already given it up. Later on, when we arrived downstairs, in the street, the party had already gained momentum. I detected a bit of my black confetti mashed into the snow; a mash of grey pulp. The vibe of the partying crowd was in a different, completely colorful mood.

I myself felt pretty shattered by my own emotional reactions. Completely confused by my exalted ecstasy, I walked around the street-party for awhile, now feeling alien again. Then I lurked off, heading home. Home as in suburbia. As in family. As in sofa.⁹

It has taken me a long time, a really long time, and a large, pathetic and very complex art project to attempt to understand my experience that evening in the Youth House.

This performance, you are now witnessing, is that attempt. My attempt at responding to that experience.

As Frans Jacobi is finished speaking, he picks up a large knife and fastens it to the microphone with duct tape.

SCENE 2:

The soundtrack starts, a large symphonic sound, interspersed with the sound of huge crowds shouting and cheering. An older man, the poet and conceptual artist Henrik Have,¹⁰ enters the scene, sits down on the chair in front of the car. He starts reading a text aloud. As he is reading, Frans Jacobi starts scratching long lines in the lacquer of the car. The action of the knife makes long violent sounds. He crawls around on top of the car leaving it scarred and demolished.

Henrik Have as Søren Thilo:

I think of revolution as an infatuation.

Even if this is the most banal and worn-out example, but believe me, there is nothing more beautiful, clean and musical than just the banal and worn-out.

I'm in love.

A woman has stolen my heart, and I can't think rationally, even though my whole sensory apparatus is desperately trying to pump me up with reason, rationality and perspective. This person who dances in my cortex, who tags my heart, who gets drunk on my vocal cords, is this person in fact the right one? I do not know and I fucking don't care.

I'm in love.

Fuck the consequences. I don't want to see, I wanna be blind and dumb, I wanna mock ambition, career and future prospects. Nobody is right. I'm so goddamn wrong myself, that we match perfectly at this moment.

I'm in love.¹¹

In this sense revolution is an emotional expression, and when the revolution is truly evident in our hearts, the systems will reveal their inner meaning and everything will crumble and bloom in an ecstatic breakdown of time and space.

Revolution is love.

While one institution after another crashes into fire and destruction, I don't consider where my children are supposed to go to school, how to get medicine, who will now maintain the law. I fucking don't care.

I'm in love.

In my senseless love-intoxication, I can only see schools as buildings where young people are being systematically demoralized, I can only see a constant medication of entire societies, everything is disease, everything needs a pill and a price, I can only see those chosen to maintain the law, as those constantly breaking precisely that law.

I'm in love.

I stand in front of the ATM machine, not considering for one moment my balance, my overdraft, my rescheduling of loans, my profit margins, my value (value), I have my pockets full of stones and I'm in love.

One bank after another is sinking; at no time do I think about globalization, welfare, wages or pensions. In my love-craze I see nothing but oppression, exploitation and inequality. My personal financial adviser flies through the shattered window, his expensive suit is on fire and I can't help a certain glee at the fact that I still can't remember his name.¹²

I'm in love.

And while one apartment after another loses value and I hear people screaming and crying into cell phones to their parents in Jutland, I drink champagne from a burning supermarket, toasting the flames of a huge bonfire of all the surveillance cameras on Nørrebro.

I'm in love and can never sympathize with their loss.

From my love-bubble I see only their greed, their exclusion of anything that does not fit into their Euro-Woman-slash-Euro-Man world. I only see their desperate hunt for more, more, more, more.

When they run with their baby carriages, and their eco-crisp bread, and their soya lattes, I see only their lousy, stinking double standards.

I'm in love.

And as TV2 News fix their ties and exert their compassion, grimacing and twisting their brains, inventing whatever disintegrated, rapidly urgent news to fill their 24-hour bullshit, we keep totals of the burnt-out police vehicles with spray paint on the wall of the Assistens Cemetery, and from my love-delirium I can in no

way see the beauty of the traditional yellow brick wall and its amazing history, the only thing I see is life communicating.

I see a generation who were told to shut up, now screaming back in the face of society. It is with pride that I read this wall of creativity; portraying a society, where government is not for or of the people, where the government doesn't have the faintest idea who the people are.

I'm in love.

As one American chain-store after another is plundered, demolished and mocked, I can in no way tolerate the Western world's dependence on production and consumption. From my love-fever I see only rich white men washing the blood off their hands, and when our knives tear their billboards, I see it only as retribution for promoting women as objects, spreading scary clichés of the unattainable nuclear family and steadily backing up the general homophobia.

I'm in love.

And while Christiansborg crumbles and falls under its own weight and all constitutions, restrictions, laws, penalties and regulations are covering Copenhagen in an immense cloud of confetti, we are thousands dancing on the roof of the Opera House until the architectural mausoleum gives in and collapses into ruins. From my love-mania, I can only see it as the end of a culture and a society not ashamed of using the words "Danish values". With my hand on my heart, I say goodbye to phobic nationalism and normalization. I can certainly no longer behave normally, I'm in love and must behave accordingly.

I'm in love and my love spreads worldwide like a wildfire.

As all trade-committees, security-organs and climate-councils are wiped out, sinking into eternal dissolution, I don't give the free market a single thought. I don't consider the danger of terrorism, or the preservation of the environment. From my love-exaltation, I only see a world where people work themselves to death for a salary that is less an actual payment, than an insult. I only see a production of fear that gives rise to surveillance and imprisonment. I see only water-boarding, blind-folding and various other authorized torture methods, I see only big companies assessing how much of nature you can smash without the complete extinction of humanity.

Don't forget that this same humanity are the consumers.
As the EU collapses, it is a fortress subsiding.

I'm in love.

As the buildings of NATO fall into ruins, I see only the
end of yet another lie and the liberation of all the
people who have been subject to their human rights
abuses.

I'm in love.

And when everything ceases to function and we've lost
everything that was so hard to build up, I can only think
of how small a part of mankind on this planet is actually
living above the poverty line.

So what comes after the revolution? Perhaps the price of
our ignorance. What must we abandon? Perhaps all that, to
which we have denied everyone else access.

I'm in love and from my love-rapture I can only see the
destruction of everything we have robbed others of.

Everything dissolves. There is no knowledge. There is no
education, no security, no law and order. The civilized
world is dead and you know what? I fucking don't care - I
am in love.¹³

Revolution is a thought; mercy on us if one day there
will be thoughts we can't think or don't dare to think.

*In the last part of the reading Frans Jacobi turns on the
confetti-canon and black confetti is shot up into space.
Three times. A slow black rain of confetti covers
everything as the music rises in a last crescendo.*

THE END

Note:

¹ This is the new Youth House, created in the summer/autumn of 2008 as a substitute for the former Youth House on Jagtvej 69, which was evicted and torn down in March 2007 (see commentary 3.1.4.1.). The new house was granted the activists in the Youth House Movement after a year of constant struggles, weekly demonstrations and an array of wild and creative protests.

² This is the only performance in this project where I am not presenting myself as 'the artist/researcher'. The text in the first scene is spoken in first person, without filtration. This is myself speaking.

³ Punk Culture: The fact that a lot of musicians supported the Youth House stems from the way music, especially punk, but also other genres, was an inherent part of the Youth House culture. A range of bands that later became famous started out there. Visual arts was never a part of that culture in any significant sense. This might explain the lack of engagement from the Copenhagen Art Scene.

⁴ Black Confetti: see Glossary 0.3.

⁵ 69: see Glossary 0.3.

⁶ No Surrender! Is one of the central slogans of The Youth House Movement. See also commentary Violent versus Militant.

⁷ See commentary Active Time versus Dead Time

⁸ The song 'In Love' ('Forelsket') is written by the video-artist Søren Thilo Funder and the pop-musician Pato, 'after a pirate-party and a bottle of Red Label.' The track was played for the first time at the demo commemorating the 1-year anniversary of the Youth House Demolition. It is in Danish – translated by me. The track can be heard at: <http://www.myspace.com/srenthilofunderpato>

⁹ See commentary: The very personal note: I'm Not There

¹⁰ Henrik Have (born 1946) is a visual artist and poet. Have's multimedial art stretches from objects and collages through painting and sculpture to poetry and publishing (he has been running Edition After Hand since 1973). His work has roots in Absurdism and in the form experiments in the new French novel, in the radical art movements of the 1960s and 1970s, such as fluxus, minimal, conceptual and processual art. Both as a poet and as a visual artist Have was early on attracted to the anti-psychological art that downgrades the role of the Author, but involves the reader and the viewer in an open reflection, guided by language itself, material process and the creation of meaning is central.

Henrik Have is one of the lesser known heroes of Danish conceptual art. To me, Henrik Have as a person and as an artist is a permanent rebel. In all he does there is a rebellious attack. My idea with including him in the performance had to do with displacement. By using an older man – Henrik is 66 – as the voice of a young rebel, I wanted to add a slight displacement, to give the text an existential weight; to suggest that the state of exaltation described in the song, could be seen as a general aspect of the human condition, that the rioting is not something left over to the young to engage in.

And then he has a great voice, a cool, sturdy detachment in his recitation that creates a perfect distance to the text.

¹¹ See commentary In Love part one (3.1.4.4.)

¹² See Glossary: Barricades

¹³ See commentary: In Love part two (3.1.4.6.)