

Herd Instinct 360°

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Welcome to *Herd Instinct 360°*. I will continue with this text, which I developed during three Sundays in New York. It has the format of a sermon, which used to be fitting for those afternoon gatherings.

Communes of labour, brain-washed consumer combatants, cult action, group therapy, exclusive clubs and corporate get-togethers, guerrilla marketers virally gathering virtual communities of no contact or sharing, hip-hop mainstream culture, fists for some cause to the left, the right and together, masked faces on the catwalk, romantic remakes of coming together with no forward vision, displaying a scorn for reality. Ironic hyperboles of no specific importance with no apparent risk at stake. What was meant to stir action now makes stale. Now, how could one possibly get oneself killed for organised activity, when it all is taking place in a symbolic universe, of style and value, I am dead therefore I am!

Dear Lover, or rather Dear fellow art believer,

How can a community of resistance take place, if that's what we want? Where is the space where a gathering of people means more than a crowd of super saturated kick-seeking consumers looking to pose as politically conscious beings? Where a group from the family to the national level, is something other than a 'productive get-together'? Where fashion statements don't supersede the real, where the energy of discussing, of exchange and sharing, of appearing in front of each other bare and naked is not only a theatrical agreement? Where is this place possible, if it is possible at all?

Not exactly did I have this dream. I thought today was going to be a mockery of romantic community-making, the nostalgia for the primal gathering, which never really took place, a remedy for all evils in society. Today was going to be a grotesque, a situation of a super-fake community, a most artificial one, scorning unspecific affirming notions like the belief in inherent goodness and empowerment. Together in our fictive universe, to look at some stuff, the products, the dogma. More like malfunctioning group therapy, somewhat like a cult, the art cult. In a regular cult, at least there are prescribed rituals and structured belief systems. We have nowhere.

For the first *Herd Instinct*, there was a bake sale called *Share Our Strength*. Together we made \$8.75 cents. Remember, to be part of a community one has to participate in that community.

After the loss of faith in equality, when the word freedom doesn't make sense anymore, the silencing of the voices of you and me, where can we go then? After the last state of communism – that is the emancipation of man through work, yielding identity from productivity at all cost, communal goals ridiculed and the birth of the bulimic individual. Our

community, a community of US. Making publicity for the adversary via this binary opposition. It is funny, capitalised US reads as the US; let's not go there. What is left for US then, non-producers, un-goalifying our activity. It must just happen to us. There is no other way.

January 10th, 2004, in Knutby, a small idyllic town 2 hours north of Stockholm. Alexandra Fossmo, married to the minister Helge Fossmo, was shot in her sleep. Their neighbour, Daniel Linde, was seriously injured. Sara Svensson, babysitter of the Fossmo family, former mistress of the minister, was arrested. Earlier that year, she beat the murdered wife with a hammer. Both victims and perpetrators were members of the local Baptist congregation. The spouses of the victims were involved in an extramarital affair. They were also arrested. The death of the prior wife of the minister becomes a target of a new investigation; the minister is a suspect in this case as well.

The local congregation is run with an iron fist by 38 year old Asa Waldau, also called the 'Bride of Christ', a concept not intended for a person, but a metaphor for the Christian church, comparing Jesus and the Christians to the love between a married couple. She interfered with the private life of the members, arranging marriages, encouraging child beating and preaching that women should find their inferior position to men sexually. She was the sister of the murdered wife. She was also involved in a sexual relationship with the minister.

The members of the congregation initially protected their community, turning offers of help down from other congregations, choosing to remain insular, trusting their own ministers. As more information surfaced, it distanced itself from the minister, emphasising his Norwegian origin, opening up for help from an external minister. There is nothing more common to a group than a myth. Communion is not Communication. One of the strongest links to the suspect was the cell-phone of the baby-sitter, to which the minister had sent text messages urging the murder, signed God.

Had Andy Warhol a cell phone, only God knows what would have come of it. 1968, Valerie Solanas walks in to the Factory and fires a gun several times against Andy Warhol. She had wanted him to read her manuscript for the *Society for Cutting Up Men*. Warhol had only returned her requests with his silence. A passive authoritarian leader style, always mute, always omnipotently manipulating, branding his signature onto every product exiting the doors of the Factory, where productivity took on new meaning.

He never promised salvation to his dysfunctional congregation, the only thing assured was a high and their 15 minutes share of fame, in this upside-down travesty of a collective. The tin foil of the factory with its theatrical economy confuses the roles of the actors and the spectators. The stars alternate as stand-ins for the king. This is not to be mistaken for an inclusive de-

hierarchised commune. This renewed gesamtkunstwerk – a symbolic language of mass action and individual gestures – the actor as leader bringing the herd together for ‘business art’.

The bride of Christ, the love between a married couple as the bond keeping us together. Isn't it rather the image of the flesh and blood of Christ violently feeding us? That second Sunday, we united over a commune. If we can accept Jesus in the shape of a cracker to come together, let us unite over some local national condiments, to commemorate this union. Eating together – today I won't offer any ethnic food. Nor will I adopt the, so common in this context, soft corporate way of leadership. The apple one, a seemingly open business model, built on the ideals of the 60s West coast hippie collective. Here, more a mimicry of a marketing spoof, promoting brands such as Hugo Boss.

Hugo Boss was the one who made the Nazis look good. The designer of the SS uniform, tailoring to the vain needs of a great propaganda machinery for a national community.

Coming together in the name of brotherhood, entertain us! Make us ecstatic, communal orgiastic activity of deferred satisfaction. The instinct of gathering, our basic herdal needs, the riddance of our inhibitions. No personal responsibility. Not even the common sacrifice with a real taste for blood can save us, give us the bond to stick together. The human sacrifice, to which Bataille was no stranger for his sacred society Acephale, only to realise it would be a dead-end proposition of immanence, a concentration of the will to meaning. From then on he withdrew from all communitarian enterprises.

In the dualistic tension between the nullification and the celebration of the individual, is there a third place? Community is pressure, but the individual must go. This non-divisible entity cannot share, it is complete inside and out, asserting an idea of transcendence. Not as a vehicle for immanence, a community must be in and of itself, being ecstatic of being itself.

During World War II, this poster was to be seen throughout Sweden: it shows a Swedish tiger, with a double sense: a Swede is mute, ie not squealing on the system. A silent community – an accomplice. European terrorists of the 70s were not mute. Words and actions aiming, in Ulrike Meinhofs words, “at destroying the imperialist system of powers – politically, economically, and in militaristic terms, and the cultural ‘fascistoid’ institutions, providing hegemony of the ruling elites, the communications systems for its ideological domination.” Complimentary to this quote, Chairman Mao once said “never stop a revolutionary force” about the Chinese student revolt in the 60s, which he then used towards the, shall we say, fascistoid cultural revolution.

“Tactically speaking imperialism is a man eating monster”, Meinhoff continues, “strategically it is a paper tiger...” This exotic animal in an inverted Imperialist colonialism. Both sides waging wars

outside of their own centres of power. It is as if they, the RAF and Brigade Rosso in Italy, with their many communiqués, needed justification, or explanations for what they were doing, like an overcompensating artist putting words in the eyes of the beholder. Elsie de Wolfe, American interior-decorating genius, introduced leopard chintz into the homes of America, following her utmost utilitarian motto: "never complain, never explain". Her clients; mainly wealthy East cost celebrities.

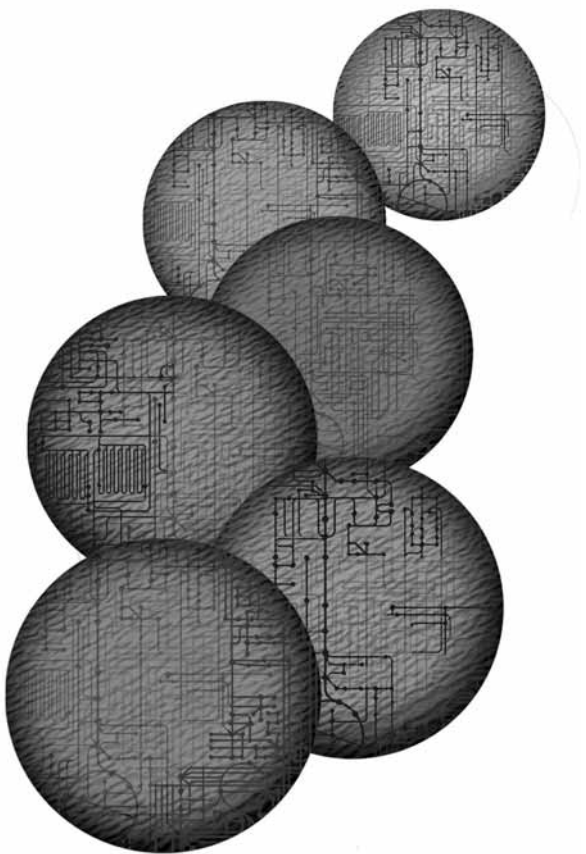
With the use of quite totalitarian leadership styles, many now labelled terrorists also became icons of worship on their own. In an attempt to go unnoticed, Ulrike Meinhoff dyed her hair blonde during the two years she was on the run after the prison break-out of Andres Baader. More innocent, more bimbo, more Aryan looking, in a state which was not about to break with its political past. Black hair, more militant, sharp thought. Giorgio – who was he? The anonymous life of a professional terrorist. Rather than hair colour, we all know 'you are what you eat' – a spaghetti revolution instead of manifest community life. Crawling spider networks, in slimy worm-like moves, anything may slip by.

"Becoming an 'urban guerrilla' presupposes that one is immune to 'der Spiegel' methods, the criminal-subhuman-murderer syndrome they use." writes Meinhoff. "It is important that one is clear about one's motivation. Those who have joined the revolutionary left just to be trendy had better be careful not to involve themselves in something from which there is no going back."

Just like there is no going back from operating system X to 9, our most radical move might be an upgrade from panther to tiger in OS X, small risk of data loss. The other way around, nostalgically going back to Jaguar. Fusing life style and smart assemblage, hedonistically, egotistically realising our full potential, purchasing Chic radicality. Staged vertical chute, giving commercialism an alternative make-over, then un-harnessed resurfacing again and again – to the over-ground. As if having it both ways or not having it at all.

Our cult believes in the possibility of art, art uber alles. Kunst Macht Frei. We may think lovers and artists contain a disruptive possibility. Sharing as in appearing as in co-appearing, communicating. Communication – an un-working of what is social, economic, technical and institutional, un-working instead of accomplishing meaning. Only the communication of lovers, through the mouth, the kiss, eternities expressed in the moment, these platitudes, only meaningful in the solipsistic universe of the couple, until there is death. This is not the direction. No longer an individual, you are dead, you appear in your death to us. Through death, community reveals itself to us. It can be symbolic, but it has to be bare.

The communal farce of rules and regulations, how can it offer proposals of dynamic exchange? I don't believe in tribal hippie get-togethers, I don't believe in corporate uniform, I don't believe



in relational aesthetics, nor in brain washed guerilla soldiers admiring their leader, or AA, KKK, SS, XX, I don't even believe in Yoko and me. I believe I ought to offer something, but I don't know precisely what that is. Yes, who believes in fists anyhow? Maybe it's about the stomach instead, the gut feeling of being in touch, of in-touchedness.

In compliance with the demands of Patti Hearst and the Symbionese Liberation Army in 1975, one of those past Sundays I offered a soup kitchen to undertake the very same vertical journey...like so many known terrorists before us."Everything is in motion...the struggle is moving on". I guess we've got a Tiger in the Tank. What about another kind of animal, not a car; its gut needs too much attention, renovation. Maybe it's a toy, a pink one, or maybe it's about sliding out of this spectrum altogether.

Can it be that we are in a post-community state? But how can we be beyond something, which is everything. There is no experience outside of community. Without you and me together, there is nothing. Before we want super slim, eternally young, smiling, success-oriented, ego-driven individuals; before all that, we are together. We are in touch, we touch each other. Through each other the rest articulates.

We cannot organise, we cannot produce, nor can we define and contain. It has to pass through us. Happening, then dissipating, an inoperative experience. That's why this meeting, like all the others, is a failure instead of a parody, a little less than entertainment. An organised staged theatricality, a gathering, a fictive situation we may call art. I titled it *Herd Instinct 360°*. Stay Connected.

I will leave with this image which I found googling for communities.