

Susanne Kriemann: Duskdust

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### **Introduction by Lívía Páldi**

The Furilden peninsula lies on the Northeastern coast of Sweden's biggest island, Gotland. Similar to the small island of Fårö where Ingmar Bergman resided for 40 years or the Bungenäs peninsula and the harbour area of Fårösund, it was closed to the public until the late 1900s, as it was a restricted military area. Its limestone industry operations, including mining, crushing and shipment, closed down in the 1970s. Over the past 15 years, the hotel and tourism industry has taken over many of Gotland's former industrial areas. Dotted with neglected quarries, now transformed into lakes, parts of Furilden were declared a nature reserve in 2005. What remains from its mining past and industry are two gravel piles, the port of shipment with a rusty crane standing at the end of the ruinous pier, and the crushing plant. Inspired by the overlap of nature and post-industrial decay, photographer and entrepreneur Johan Hellström purchased the site in order to establish Fabriken Furillen, a highbrow boutique hotel housed in the old factory building.

Susanne Kriemann was invited to Gotland to be the second participant of The Site Residency (1), an experimental program that invites artists for a 2-week stay during which time they are asked to refrain from production. Inspired by the strategies of Land and Conceptual Art practices of the 1960-70s, TSR revisited the notions of "site" and "cultural confinement" addressed by Robert Smithson in his seminal essays. (2) The program suggests a hybrid format that inverts the artist-curator-writer relationship and, in a poetic-conceptual way, continues BAC's engagement with exploring the complex relationships between artistic processes / research, production, location, and identity.

Reactivating the discussions about contemporary forms of artistic labour, Susanne pointedly addresses a range of topical issues: what am I doing when I don't work? Is this an interval within my working life; is it a privilege? Where is work to be made? (3)

She and her family resided on the Northeastern part of Gotland, Valleviken and made several trips around Gotland in February 2014. The "non-working" period – during which she also refrained from being online – compelled her to collect and register observations that led to the articulation of how her emergent research processes intersect with the particular sites visited. The 151 m long tunnel at Furillen – formerly used by the trains carrying the limestone – became her temporary "studio" because of its specific spatial-light conditions that cause one to feel as though one has entered a camera obscura. (4) During her subsequent visits (5) one of the gravel piles at Furillen was to become a central motive, industrial waste turned into a "mountain", both an aesthetic formation and an interface. Her several exposures revealed that under certain sun/light conditions, in some areas, the resolution and color of the mountain's image appeared as digital noise. These misrenderings born out of accurate adjustments of high res technology flattened fragments of the mountain into pixelated planes making the tension between material, surface and image, and opaqueness and concreteness even more apparent. The work evolved through a dialogical process where the photographing of the re-naturalized landscape also provides a visual framework for remembering labour history, a process that resonates with the objectives of Zoe Leonard's "You see I am here after all" (2008) to work with representation and abstraction, while at the same time using an image as both an image and a mark. (6)

Duskdust has developed its conceptual and visual structure from the physical remnants and the underlying narratives of various sites of the Northeastern landscape connected to limestone mining and cement production. (7) The limestone museum in Bläse that was established in 1983 in the disused limestone quarry and surrounding buildings hosts a library of archives and a collection of wooden carvings by the former miner and self-educated sculptor Georg Moberg, (8) as well as an extensive archive of syndicalist history.

Visits to the Slite-based plant Cements usually end in the control room where the kilns are surveyed in shifts for 24/7. On the multiple monitors we stared at the burning cement, a blasting hell that flickers like a simulated sunlight. Opposite the factory, in the small privately run Industry Museum we browsed through objects and albums documenting the production and shipping of cement from Slite harbour.

This volume includes text contributions by invited writers that expand on specific aspects of the multi-layered conceptual and visual system Duskdust presents. Media theorist Jussi Parikka situates Susanne's artistic essay within the relation of contemporary media technological culture and the ecology of waste. He ties her imaging process of the transformed landscape of Furillen's expired industry to the acute awareness of how geological components and material realities enable our thriving digital existence.

Writer Kirsty Bell traveled to Gotland to follow the research trails of Susanne and, with a prescribed itinerary in hand, visited the three pivotal sites at Slite, Bläse, and Furillen.

She reframes the artist's experience, her field observations, and the interaction of subjective and objective aspects of her "revisitation" in an analogy-based narrative that unfolds as pages from a notebook.

Duskdust as an object and document was born out of an elaborated conceptual and material process that interweaves layers of geological, industrial and social histories and references, the material memory of the archives with questions of how history is formatted, how labour can be described and represented, how automation and economic reality alters both the concept and operation of labour, and how this shift towards precarity in the name of heightened efficiency can be formulated through image mining. (9)

Livia Paldi

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## Notes

1 The Site Residency was conceptualized by curator and writer Sebastian Cichocki (deputy director, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw) and is co-curated by Livia Paldi (director, BAC–Baltic Art Center, Visby). It was launched in collaboration with the Polska Institutet and Goethe-Institut, Sweden. Subtly interwoven into the program are a set of curatorial instructions and invited “ghost-writers” who translate the residency experience into literary fiction.

2 Robert Smithson: A Provisional Theory of Non-Sites (1968) and Cultural Confinement (1972). In Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings, 2nd Edition, edited by Jack Flam, The University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California; University of California Press, LTD. London, England; 1996.

3 Taken from previous conversations with the artist.

4 The poem, And So She Walked by her Site Residency ghostwriter, poet and artist Maria Barnas, serves as a literary document to that experience.

5 Susanne was invited back in the framework of a 2-day seminar initiated and hosted by BAC’s 2013-14 PIR resident, Canadian artist Judy Radul, who during her residency in August 2014 proposed to look at “field work”, how an artist can deal with expectations of the host and how methodologies can be born out of site-specific experience. The organized site visits addressed the triangle of landscape-industry-military, including the Cementa plant in Slite, the military museum at Tingstäde fortress and the former military base turned nature reserve on the Asunden peninsula.

6 The original quote: “I had this idea about working with representation and abstraction at the same time: could I use an image as both an image and a mark?”

<http://www.arthistory.northwestern.edu/faculty/documents/Copeland-LeonardInterview-FINAL.pdf>

Last accessed on February 15, 2016.

7 The limestone on Gotland is roughly 430 million years old and unique due to its very high chemical purity. It has been quarried since the 17th century and remains one of the island's key basic industries.

8 Georg Moberg (1889-1974) for further information please see Harald Ahlman: Hellvimästaren Georg Moberg (photos Thomas Brandt), Calrssons förl 1989, Sweden.

9 Taken from previous conversations with the artist.