

# COMMUNION THROUGH EXCLUSION

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## HOW CAN EXCLUSION LEAD TO COMMUNION?

I have looked closely at Sweden and my own areas where I grew up, the very stigmatized northern suburbs of Stockholm. I have also researched the historical roots of the subculture hip-hop in order to then make further links to the story I want to tell you. But I have also researched artists who work on a global level where the performance and the mindset is the same.

My own background as growing up in Stockholm's northern suburbs has made me identify with the subculture hip-hop. But it has also made me an outsider in my entire life. This has made me wonder about where this alienation comes from. I photograph my surroundings a lot. I have my camera at all times. Most often, the images of my surroundings and the people there also reflect myself. The way they move, the way they live in a destructiveness resulting in exclusion of not being a part of society, in my own life and my own destructiveness. I work from myself in my art to get answers to questions about myself. In this way, I process the experiences I have and the conditions of which I live. By doing that, I have been able to form my identity based on the conditions I have lived under, with them as an integrated part of my personality.

*Longing on a larger scale is what writes history.* - Don DeLillo

We all carry an estrangement, and we have all at some point felt like outsiders in relation to what where we want to belong. Perhaps the loneliness and the search for one's identity are universal in us. We are all shades of gray, but we seem doomed to see the world in black or white. Experiences crowd up within us that could help us to empathize with others who feel they are outside of a context. If we only managed to see beyond the outer attributes. But this does not mean that the responsibility should only lie with the individual. We have a

collective responsibility, meaning that it is important not to ignore the structural problems that create differences between people.

Hip-hop is a lifestyle that manifests itself through political awareness. It takes the form of four different elements. The four elements are: Rap, Graffiti, Break-dance and DJ-ing. These four elements were born in different places, but all as youth sub-cultures. The legendary film “Wild Style” showed them together for first time. Hip-hop then emerged as a reaction against the widespread street violence in the mid 70s slum in The Bronx in New York. It started as a black culture, but is now global.

A classic quote in interviews with rappers, perhaps especially American, is that hip-hop saved their lives. The rap took them from alienation and powerlessness and enabled them to use their frustration and turn it into something creative. Maybe it was just in this mile-long circle that all these youth cultures were collected. In any case, they shared similar revolutionary aesthetics. It was about unleashing a youth style as an expression of the soul, untouched by market forces, protected and encased by almost monastery-like rituals, codes and orders. And the rulers did definitely not authorize it. It had its origins amongst kids who were born in the shadow of the baby-boom generation. The ones that grew up and did not expect to be seen. Which TV camera could ever capture their struggles and dreams? They were invisible. But invisibility was its own kind of reward - it meant that they did not have to answer to anyone, except the others who shared their plight. It meant that they became obsessed with showing and proving, with distinguishing themselves and their originality to the audience. It created a relentless search to prove to the others that they themselves were bigger, wilder and bolder than the conditions they were facing ever had in mind. It made people create something out of nothing, something no one else had done, until all around you had to admit that they had something they probably never would have, something that even made other people - big, powerful people – see them and offer them money, give them power or crush their souls. All that was the key to style.

## **SUBCULTURE AND HIP HOP**

The research on youth cultures has several schools and representatives. Common to most theories is that they view youth culture as anything beyond commercialism and youthful search for identity. Young people are not passive victims of a cynical commercialism, but instead they actively reshape the music and styles to fit their life situations. The youth cultural resistance is a way of using style, identity and culture to create an alternative identity that resists the normative. Youth culture is also viewed as a collective response to the social conditions of life, although recent research focuses more on the post-modern elements, meaning that it is about identity building. Every individual is born into the world to a specific social position. Modern society's technological advances and changing norms has created a situation where young people cannot simply take over the parent living standards in order to navigate their way in society. This gives an accentuated need to find your own sense of the world around you.

One of the most vulnerable groups in society is young people from the working class. If one adds a deviant ethnicity in relation to the majority society as well as territorial stigmatization, the situation can be said to be even more precarious. The structural conditions that surround them hinder their ability to get around in society. This situation, where parts of the youth view themselves as outsiders from birth, makes them search for a solution, which they can sometimes find in subcultures. Subcultural styles and music can make the person find a symbolic universe where experiences and emotions can be channeled and expressed. Subculture is the specific form of culture where individuals can negotiate their subordinate position and resist it on a symbolic level. The subculture does not solve the real material conflicts, but it helps the individual on a symbolic and psychological level to solve the conflict. Roughly speaking, youth cultures can be divided into sub- and resistant-cultures. Resistant-cultures have often been rooted in the middle class with an

ideological sword facing the majority culture's way of life. Examples of resistant-cultures are e.g. hippies and contemporary squatters. Subcultures on the other hand, have traditionally arisen among working class youths. Their styles and interests have often resisted the class subordination on a symbolic level. It may include e.g. greasers, mods and ravers, who through music, style and way of life made it clear that they do not fully intend to adapt to the majority culture.

According to Sernhede and Söderman (2011), hip-hop is youth culture with elements from both sub- and resistant cultures. Its starting point is the working class, but there is a long tradition of thematization of living conditions, ethnicity, and an emphasis on social injustice, making it more explicitly political than other subcultures. The political awareness enables hip-hop to serve as an alternative way of schooling outside the regular school and family, whose descriptions of reality are not always based on young people's everyday lives. Hip-hop can offer suburban youths an alternative narrative of their social situation. An important ingredient in hip-hop is often its "authenticity," meaning that it should be untainted by commercial interests. Sernhede & Söderman (2011) argues that society should not be shocked by the elements of violence that may exist in some branches of hip hop, but rather horrified about the social conditions that constitute the breeding ground for this identification.

## **GRAFFITI-STREETART**

Graffiti has its own long history within hip-hop. In the early 70s people wrote their names on the walls of houses to mark their territory and its neighborhood affiliation with gangs. When hip-hop grew they moved on to write their names to be known. The painters began experimenting with spray paint and the small signatures evolved into giant paintings. From there, experimenting grew even more and eventually also street-art gained a foothold as a foundation in graffiti. Street-art is essentially an ephemeral art form - the artwork itself has a limited lifetime. It is not made to last forever. Even the best works must fade with time and eventually disappear completely.

The joy lies in the shared creation, the social meaning of putting up work outdoors, in public, with no time to worry about perfection. Street artists work outdoors and in public. The conditions mean that you have to be inventive and work fast. The artists' goal is not to achieve technical perfection, but rather that in his art emphasize what makes them human and to share that humanity with others.

It starts with the Name. You get a name and you become someone, because without a name, you are nobody. Name gives us the opportunity to become immortal. The ultimate punishment is to be deprived of ones name. To write your name is to leave a piece of yourself, visible to all. Typing your name confirms your identity. A president signing a document. A graffiti artist signing their surroundings.

Graffiti emerged in the 70s. In the early 80's some graffiti artists in New York began experimenting with new expressions, styles, techniques and materials. Their ideas quickly spread during the 80s and 90s to Paris, Barcelona and Berlin and on to the rest of the world. Not everyone makes a distinction between graffiti and street art, there are certainly similarities. They are both

illegal since they are exercised in the public room. Many street artists have started as graffiti artists, most of them are night workers and driven by a desire to be seen. However, the elements of street-art, such as logos and characters are usually more pictorial and iconographic than graffiti. Its expression also feels more outward looking, it reflects and comments on their time.

All street-art is in some sense a political act because it questions who has the right to cities and public spaces. Far from all street artists are activists but the roots extend to the propaganda that was painted on the walls prior to elections and during crises and wartime. The British street-art icon Banksy says that "graffiti is used to start revolutions, and to stop the war, and you can say that it gives a voice to those who no one listens to. Graffiti is one of the few tools those who have nothing have. "

Street artists do not ask for permission, but do it themselves, when it suits them. Those who do not have access to established channels may create their own. The development enhances the built-in tension between being alternative or established. Some think that the link to the art world is logical and obvious. Others point out that street-art loses its strength and sting when it moves into the galleries.

The graffiti that comes from a resistance culture is seen by many as a destructive way for people to act out by destroying. That is because the platform for graffiti occurs in public spaces, which creates the discussions.

Art in public places is usually a more sensitive issue compared to art in the room of a gallery, and it creates discussions because the viewer does not choose to take part of. They are directly confronted by it regardless of their own will. But graffiti and street art can also be seen as a need for the practitioners to express themselves, and that need in itself makes them destroy because it's illegal. This makes it a political act even though the street-artist or the graffiti painter is not always aware of it. Graffiti is sometimes seen as uninteresting inside the white cube, and as if it is placed

outside of its proper context. Out in the city's public spaces it lacks the connections to art institutions that seem to be necessary for something to be interesting and relevant as art. But regardless of your personal opinion, you become affected by it.

## **ARTISTS**

### ***JEAN MICHEL BASQUIAT***

Graffiti is a non-institutional art direction in a way, while at the same time artists like Jean Michel Basquiat has made it a part of the institutions. From an institutional viewpoint of art, it becomes difficult to argue that graffiti would be art because it is obvious that it is not regarded as art in the dominant contemporary art institutions.

Graffiti lies outside of the art world's discursive and social parameters, beyond the advancing Meta narrative clichés about innovation. But at the same time it seems to be present as what Pollock calls the suppressed but structured other. Jean Michel Basquiat is one of the world's most famous artists, and seen by many as a predecessor of graffiti. It is said that he represented something new. That it was not doodle that New Yorkers could see pass the platforms but coloristic graffiti.

Basquiat, who at one time had the alias Samo, wrote his wayward cryptograms and poetic lyrics on the big SoHo galleries' doors, and worked from the very beginning focused on a career as an artist. He was not a tag-writer or bomber among others, he never made any paintings on subway cars. In his wild naivism, nothing was naive at all - his paintings are rooted in the modern history of art. Basquiat's value as an artist stands in brutal contrast to the graffiti artists - he is what they are not. He is not naive but headstrong and rooted in the modernist tradition. He ignored the subway and went in to get the attention of the art establishment in southern Manhattan.

However, Jean-Michel Basquiats art is often mentioned as an example of graffiti within a broader discussion of hybridization and groups who have denounced the art institutions. But Basquiats role as a graffiti artist is problematic. He can without a doubt be linked to graffiti, but in a graffiti context, he is regarded as a rather peripheral figure. When other contemporary graffiti artists mention him, it is usually as the one who made a serious name for him in the institutional art world. The value of that effort is looked upon with anything from jealousy and contempt to admiration. He is not found in the books and videos that describe graffiti during the 70s and early 80s. Nothing says that these books and videos are completely comprehensive, and many have argued that important names are missing, but Basquiats name is usually not mentioned in that discussion either.

The graffiti masters of today are often discussed in relation to the two artists Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat. Depending on interpretation, that comparison can mean that graffiti is significant art or non-art relevant to art. But regardless of that, it is clear that the repression against graffiti artists have made them even more welded together as a group.



### ***KEITH HARING***

Haring was fascinated by the first graffiti he encountered on the New York streetscape. He admired the virtuoso talent of these artists in their handling of the spray-can and sympathized with their illegal actions, in which they were acting beyond all art and commerce, in public, and visible to all and sundry. Haring reacted to the existing tags with an iconic language typical of him.

Although Haring never really belonged to the New York graffiti scene, the myth is still associated with him even today. Instead of working with spray paint himself, what he did, rather, was to draw inspiration from the communicative power of graffiti. He exploited for his own ends, namely, to broaden the traditional access routes to art and culture, as time went by. Haring began to discover the enormous potential of his inimitable originality and to exploit it more intensively. Rapidly succumbed to his icons, and they in turn encouraged imitators. Haring demonstrated his sense of humor by correcting obvious plagiarisms himself.



### **BANKSY**

Banksy is one of the world's most famous street artists and has a background in graffiti. But turned to street art and is primarily known for his use of stencils. He questions society and the current art scene and the art institution and says that; "Despite what they say graffiti is not the lowest form of art. Although you might have to creep about at night and lie to your mum it's actually one of the more honest art forms available. There is no elitism or hype, it exhibits on the best walls a town has to offer and nobody is put off by the price of admission. A wall has always been the best place to publish your work. The people who run our cities don't understand graffiti because they think nothing has the right to exist unless it makes a profit; which makes their opinion worthless. They say graffiti frightens people and is symbolic of the decline in society, but graffiti is only dangerous in the mind of three types of people; politicians, advertising executives and graffiti writers. The people who truly deface our neighborhoods are the companies that scrawl giant slogans across buildings and buses trying to make us feel inadequate unless we buy their stuff. They expect to be able

to shout their message in your face from every available surface but you're never allowed to answer back. Well, they started the fight and the wall is the weapon of choice to hit them back. Some people become cops because they want to make the world a better place. Some people become vandals because they want to make the world a better-looking place. It takes a lot of guts to stand up anonymously in a western democracy and call for things no one else believes in- like peace and justice and freedom."

Banksy combines graffiti with a particular stencil technique. He is known for his satirical and political expression that he paints in toilets, streets, walls, street signs and bridges around the world. The emphasis is on politics, culture and ethics. Today he works across many areas including film and installations of various kinds. In one of his works called "Vandalized Paintings", Banksy bought oil paintings from street markets and painted his own political messages with his stencil technique over them and said that; "If you want to survive as a graffiti writer when you go indoors I figured your only option is to carry on painting over things that don't belong to you there either".



As an extension of this series of paintings Banksy did one of his perhaps most known works. During the years 2003-2006 he managed to enter the number of the world's most famous art museums such as the Tate Gallery in London, the Louvre in Paris, the Brooklyn Museum, the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, New York among others to hang his own work on the walls along together with all historical precious artwork. Dressed in

camouflage, he managed to get in and out without anyone noticing what he had in mind. Given the security around these spots and that he succeeded without getting caught this got a worldwide spread and so was Banksy famous. On some of the sites his artwork got to stay just for a few days before they were discovered but at other places they were not noticed for a very long period of time.



Banksy 's own comment to this was; “Art is not like other culture because its success is not made by its audience. The public fill concert halls and cinemas every day, we read novels by the millions and buy records by the billions. We the people, affect the making and the quality of most of our culture, but not our art.

The Art we look at is made by only a selected few. A small group creates, promote, purchase, exhibit and decide the success of Art. Only a few hundred people in the world have any real say. When you go to an Art gallery you are simply a tourist looking at the trophy cabinet of a few millionaires.” Banksy works around the world and his identity is still unknown. He is guarded about his anonymity to be able to work freely and to do what he wants without being held accountable for it. On the few images that are available of him, he is always masked, dressed in a hoodie with the hood over his head and in some cases the face is blurred. Banksy is constantly arising questions and taking stand for his political believes, making the viewer question what they are looking at.

Even in his most provocative political paintings, there is always a certain amount of sarcasm in what he does, maybe not always so clear to understand what he means and what he wants to express.

"Segregation wall" is the name of one of his most political works and is painted on the wall in Palestine. *"Palestine has been occupied by the Israeli army since 1967. In 2002 the Israeli government began building a wall separating the occupied territories from Israel, much of it illegal under international law. It is controlled by a series of checkpoints and observation towers, stands three times the height of the Berlin wall and will eventually run over 700km. Palestine is now the world's largest open-air prison and the ultimate activity holiday destination for graffiti artists".*



Banksy is within the subculture of graffiti writers both loved and hated. Some say that he abandoned the roots of graffiti and is not following the rules that exist within the group of graffiti writers. Banksy doesn't want to be apart of a communion in that since that he is not following the rules of the society and also going against the rules of his own background as a graffiti writer.

### **NUG**

Nug or Magnus Gustafsson as his real name is one of Sweden's internationally known graffiti artists. Like Banksy, Nug has his background in graffiti but has not left the spray can, although his expression has reduced from graffiti painting to only the use of the spray can. Along with Akay and a

third person who calls himself Kaos, they form one of the world's most famous graffiti crews and call themselves the Vandals in motion, Vim. Even when Nug started with graffiti, he had an enormous drive and wanted to do a lot and quickly. This resulted in a rebirth of a new style. It was not any more about the technique but more about painting big, all out and quick. His style became dirty and aesthetics no longer stood in the center, it was all about conquering the areas and to show that he existed, he became known as one of Sweden's worst bombers. Within the graffiti world the word spread quickly about this man who's name could be seen everywhere and quickly became known for being one of the most active graffiti artist in his time.

Nug began at an art college, Konstfack in Sweden. And in 2008 when taking his master degree he made as his end project the controversial film "Territorial Pissing". It was when it was shown at the art fair Market in Stockholm in February 2009 that things really took off for him. In the video work he made, you can see a person bombing the inside of a subway car and then throw himself out through a broken window onto the platform of the station. When you see the movie you can see how people sit quietly in the subway car and watch as this masked maniac is going around and spraying throughout the subway car, it seems like it is a staging. Normally, one can imagine that people had been afraid of this crazy guy and trying to escape from the situation. One wonders whether it is genuine or not? One should always remember that when you see contemporary artwork that you can't always rely on your eyes and not your ears for that matter either.



Those who do not like the movie, want it to be real, to get their beliefs in graffiti as vandalism strengthened. And those who like the movie want it to be fake because then it can be defended. But it can be defended as art even if it's for real. In a legal way you cannot defend it, but it's two completely different things.

The gallery owner who exhibited Nugs artwork even offered to pay for the clean up costs for the damaged subway car but the sprayed carriage was never found. Nug escaped punishment and instead he hurled with tremendous force straight into the gallery world. Nugs movie brought to life in the old infected debate about graffiti as vandalism or art. The difference was that this time "the art world" went in and defended graffiti. All took advantage of the debate for their own purposes. Arts haters saw a chance to shut down art college Konstfack, while others wanted to frame the culture minister who made strange statements in which she claimed that Nugs movie was not art in live television. Thus, we have a minister of culture who believes that art should be something beautiful. It was just the high culture people who protested against that the minister defined what art is.

The only established way to define art today is the so-called institutional concept of art: everything we call art is art. More specifically, it means that everything that qualified observers consider to be art is art, and it is galleries, critics and curators. If the industry deals with artwork like that, then it is art.

Nug said in one of the few interviews he made, several years later that; The political opposition that his artwork "territorial pissing " got, might prove that what he did was really worth something. Nugs artistry is rooted in creating beautiful paintings on the walls and trains, with color and form. And has reduced his expression to only spraying. It 's no longer about the graffiti itself, that is about taking your space, visibility and about conquer, it is thus more about the act itself than the actual final result. His expression has gone back to the only thing he really likes to do and that is the act of spraying. The energy released in him and that gets to decide the picture he paints. It is like

he is in a crisis of his own existence where he lost the desire to write his name and the only thing he really thinks is fun to do is to spray and that's where his artistry lies. When he had no other forum to express himself, the street became his platform to speak up, but even today, as he has entered the established art institutions, he still remains true to his original expression of destruction rather than creation.



### ***JOSE PARLA***

Jose Parla is a New York based artist who picks up inspiration for his paintings from the walls on the streets where he moves and is surrounded by. He has his background in graffiti but now mostly works with paint on canvas.



'Historically, walls have exhibited the voice of the people. My earlier paintings were made on walls at night. My thought and impulse behind the gesture was a primitive as that of cavemen marking and drawing in their dwellings to

assert their existence in a place and time. As my works evolved, be it paintings, signatures, or even the documentation of these early ephemeral artworks throughout city walls, the works took on the nature of personal journals based on empirical experiences. The organized black books and photo albums also became my diaries. This style of art became an influential subculture in many of the places I have traveled to and inspired the aesthetic in my cityscape paintings.

During the beginning, this was an art that was not accepted by society because it was seen as destructive, rebellious and anarchic. I felt a challenge to present art that originally existed outdoors- inside, like art displayed in museums, and this was an interesting problem for me that needed a solution. I wanted to create works that retained their roots. My new paintings could not abandon their environment. I then embarked on a journey to search out in detail the dialogue of decaying walls, the marks on them, and what it all meant to me. This would lead the paintings to become memory documents. As a result, these works are time capsules, mixed documents of memory and research; part performance, as I impersonate the characters that leave their marks on walls. Time I a part of these paintings as their creative process simulates the passing of time on city walls and their layers of history with layers of paint, posters, writing, and re-construction. This process, like meditation, affirms my everlasting devotion to art as a form of spirituality, which exists in the present and pays homage to those who leave their traces behind.

### ***MAKODE LINDE***

As the Swedish artist Makode Linde who also works from his own background, being a black gay man makes him outside of the norm in society. Makode Linde is an artist who was recognized internationally when presenting the controversial artwork " Painful Cake " created in Stockholm in 2012. The artwork was exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm, Sweden, and consisted of a cake depicting a black woman, the artist was hidden under the table where the cake was on and each time the cake was cut the artist

himself screamed as if it was him the cut was made on. Makode Linde wants through provocation challenge the historical image of racism, abuse and oppression. Although the artwork's symbolism is abominable, it is unfortunate and deeply regrettable that the performance for some people comes to be interpreted as an expression of racism. The artistic intention was just the opposite, says Makode. *"I'm not racist but the world we live in is. It is only when the hidden racism made visible as it can be broken. This is what my art would highlight"*. As he have felt excluded the biggest part of his life, he wants now true his art to rise questions about structural racism and bring it up for discussion in the society. Makode works also allot with symbols from the street culture, such as an installation he made with a basketball fixed to a chain.



### **ROBIN RHODE**

Another artist who is inspired by graffiti and street art and to work in the public space is Robin Rhode who has his roots in South Africa. He is working predominantly with everyday material like charcoal, chalk and paint, Rhode started out creating performances that are based on his own drawings of objects that he interacts with. He expanded and refined this practice into creating photography sequences and digital animations. These works are characterized by an interdisciplinary approach that brings aspects of performance, happening, drawing, film and photography together. Rhode often returns to his native South Africa, creating work in the streets of Johannesburg and continuously registering the traces of poverty and social inequality. An outstanding characteristic of his works is his addressing of

social concerns in a playful and productive manner, incorporating these issues into his practice without simplifying or judging them. Reminiscent of practices of street culture Rhode usually works in public spaces, using walls, public basketball courts or just the street as his “canvas”.



### ***BJARNE MELGAARD***

Bjarne Melgaard is an artist that works with a large range of different techniques. One doesn't easily see or grasp the relationships between his many elements. The viewer are expected to explore the artwork without knowing exactly where it begins or ends, and without a particular perspective regarding the identity of the artist and the dramaturgy of the whole. Meanwhile, the viewers are challenged to examine their own ideas on how they view art, verifying that such complex, narrative. His works, photos, drawings, paintings, sculptures, installations, films, books or catalogues, all tells the same story about exclusion and invoke the same quest for the individual's total freedom. For Melgaard as for Nietzsche, passion always goes beyond reason and is inherently anti-social in nature. And as, Nietzsche he is actually aware that "these paintings must be further developed if life is to be further developed".

He challenges boundaries and conventions in the name of personal, absolute freedom. Bjarne Melgaard says that; "Art should not be about making compromises. Those who chose to exhibit me are the ones to be thankful, not I". Melgaard has the ability to create a strictly personal world, balancing on the thin line between fantasy and reality. His work is could by some be difficult to

understand, but it is at the same extremely direct. He is using traditional techniques, and elements from reality and the society we live in, but with that, he creates his own world that borders on the un-real.



He is able to raise specific and pointed questions about the notion of normality and the reasons for social exclusion. Often seen as provocative using humor as his weapon. His practice consists of an emphasis on expressionistic paintings and drawings. He based his own life in his art. You can see the different periods of his paintings that are directly reflected on his life. He is gay and his works are based on subject matters as exclusion, identity, norms, subculture, etc.

### **SONJA NILSSON**

Sonja Nilsson is a transsexual working from her own exclusion in her art. She is interested in her art practice, the concern about the psychological processes where the viewer is often the one who ends up in the center. Her latest artwork exhibited at Färgfabriken in Stockholm, we are thrown right into a keyed atmosphere, a night where roles are explored, where the desire for love and sex control and where boundaries are violated. Sonja Nilsson has created a drama in which a feeling of intoxication penetrates into every scene. The exhibition is filled with references to another time. A pink shimmering 1970s rock us into a safe expectation, but in the background hovers

constantly something uncontrollably. Towards the end are all suddenly on the way to the bedroom, where a girl's trans identity is revealed. The film Installation is made up of tableaux as the viewer moves between. The relationship between the viewer and the person being looked at is a central element both in and outside the drama.

Sonja Nilsson's method to bring together film scenes in which the characters appear like holograms with real interiors creates a creepy vivid and realistic story. As viewers, we are very close to what is unfolding before our eyes. We move between scenes, we stand in doorways and window openings and stopped by. We are not just visitors to the exhibition; we are witness to a violent crime.



In Sonja Nilsson exhibition underway at several levels a kind of game with expectations; between the characters in the drama, between viewer and character, between the viewer and the viewer. The exhibition raises questions about participation, and how our expectations govern our experience, and sometimes even our reaction to what we encounter. Sonja Nilsson often works with the viewer's expectations and reflects the image back toward the viewer. With the obvious visual references to another time also raises questions about what really changed? The main important story is the one about us, watching. About the difficulty to look the other in the eye when his

differences illustrate your own uncertainty. The viewer observes what is happening and choose to do nothing about it, the sense of passive complicity.

## **RAP**

Rap music is a form of music that has its origins and roots in the black liberation music. The music has since been developed into a more and more multi-ethnic form, which today spreads across both ethnical and national boundaries. Hip-hop and rap was originally mainly a part of the African-American culture, but has today been accepted in particular by media, and by that gained a momentum as an art form. Hip-hop originated during the 70s in the black ghettos of the U.S. East Coast. It was a form of music that could be created with limited resources and in a simple way enabled the black population of those communities express their harsh living conditions. Rap gave an opportunity to convey a reality that was not seen in the media. It was a way for black people to communicate with each other, with their own population and thus not meant for the whites. Rap music was mainly popular among a black audience up until the late 80s.

Hip-hop is now a part of the so-called mainstream culture, and it appeals to a large segment of the population. Its popularity is still expanding more and more. Hip hop is a global music style, but even so, it is still context-bound. The music is characterized by the social situation that the rappers are in. It is not characterized by a uniform style, but a key feature is that it often shows a form of insolence and that it is critical towards society.

The research that has been done on the hip-hop culture in Sweden is mainly focused on an ethnic perspective and the problems residing in the suburbs of the bigger Swedish cities. Ove Sernhede (2002) is discussing this in his book *Alienation is My Nation*. The study was performed in Hammarkullen, which is part of the Gothenburg suburb of Angered. Sernhede followed young people in their own environment and studied their ways of dealing with everyday life.

Sernhede believes that youth cultures provide the opportunity to meet between different cultures. He sees hip-hop culture as a culture that pushes and challenges other cultural and ethnic boundaries that exist in our society. The young people of other ethnicities who Sernhede has encountered in his study all show a tendency to not quite see themselves as part of the Swedish society. This is regardless of gender, social or ethnic background. It has no meaning in what country they originated, where they live or what their parents do for a living. They all feel some kind of alienation.

In many of his interviews he saw an interest from the respondent to monitor what goes on in other youth cultures across the world. This is done through watching and reading media and through friends and relatives residing in other countries. Through the latter, the teenagers have a possibility to directly be in contact with members of other youth cultures, which often inspires the creation of local cultures and styles of expression. It can for example be through linguistic expressions, clothing or music. The hip-hop groups Sernhede met during his study mainly consisted of young people with other ethnic backgrounds than Swedish, which characterizes their music and expression. They rap in several languages from different parts of the world. The rappers view themselves as representatives of the young people living in the suburbs. They see themselves as part of a movement with groups from similar places in Sweden. They also feel that they belong to a part of "The Hip-Hop Nation", that hip-hop is everywhere.

Sernhede talks about the relationship *"between the intimate and close bonds that develops in the neighborhood on one hand and on the other hand the form of abstract or imagined affiliation that the global context provides"*. He states that there is a dynamic tension within that relationship that helps to form the identities of these young people.

Sernhede describes the relationships within the hip-hop group as so strong that they can sometimes resemble the relationships within the family. The strong ties within the group are partially explained with their common

experience of being immigrants. *"The external pressure that exclusion, refugee experience and the experience of being a second class citizen in Sweden, has led to a concern and a care between individuals"*, Sernhede states. Within the hip-hop group, it also lays a responsibility of each member to contribute to the common good of the group, both musically and socially. The music is based on each individual's contribution and each member has his own role in the group, both in terms of music and in everyday life. In order to meet its obligations, the new and younger members are schooled into the group through a mentor-like system.

British researcher Paul Gilroy consider hip-hop to be the latest expression of what he calls the transatlantic Diaspora culture that emerged with the European slave trade. Diaspora is when a religious group is living outside of their area of origin in societies dominated by another religion. The term originally referred to Jewish "Diasporas" i.e. outside of Palestine, but has also been used in the case of for example protestant groups in Catholic countries, as well as the Assyrian and Syrian Christian groups in Sweden. With an emphasis on the ethnic aspect, the word can also be used on the large groups of people from different African countries that were forced to live outside of Africa as a result of the slave trade. Gilroy emphasizes the shared sense of identity through common experiences, pain and alienation. Something, which he says, "is the black man's relationship to modernity". The above identification of the black man's experiences, pain and alienation contributes and provides the basis for the formation of what Gilroy describes as a "new form of global, multicultural imagined tribal community" which he calls "The hip-hop nation ". Other genres that Gilroy chooses to categorize under the term Diaspora culture and as an expression of the above emotions are for example blues, soul and reggae music. Gilroy further states that the concepts above allows for a sort of contrast between the places where they live in relation to the place you feel most at home.

Being a part of hip-hop culture is not determined by race, color or ethnicity. We live in a multicultural society where people from around the world meet

and where a constant crossing of the present, history and local and global means that there are no limits. These are also reflected in the culture and perhaps especially in the hip hop music, which "samples" elements from all corners of the world to create something new and innovative.

Ove Sernhede argues that identity always says something about the social, cultural and existential conditions that people live under. His study showed that young people carry feelings of being second-class citizens in relation to the rest of society. The persons own suburb becomes a kind of "existential breathing-hole", a safe place in an otherwise oppressive, uncertain environment. The importance of the place becomes a symbolic marker of national / cultural affiliation. Whiteness and Swedishness is associated with Stockholm, while the suburb, which is on a social distance therefore, is associated with non-whiteness and non-Swedishness. By never becoming a part of a national sense of community, a shared identity is created which is based on a feeling of living in exile. The exclusion leads to a sense of community within the own group, where the common experience is to be "non-Swedish". The young residents of these suburbs often feel a need to raise the value of their own suburb, a romanticized picture of the place that has been given to them as a home. There they have their friends, their family and their security, and there they won't have to meet the society that looks down on them. Sernhede states that young people have to relate to the negative discourse that surrounds the suburbs, a discourse that threatens and encroaches on their self-image. This exclusion will call up feelings of inferiority and indignation, even more so since they feel excluded in a wealthy country.

Anthropologist Philippe Bourgeois paid special attention to young people who, in the vacuum created by exclusion, discrimination and unemployment, tend to organize themselves into a society's opposition groups. Violence can be a natural part of these groups as a form of resistance and survival strategy. The violence may in turn be demobilizing as it shatters and breaks the social bonds, partially because it may lead to self-accusation and self-loathing. According to Bourgeois, the everyday violence often contributes to the

alienation since it adds to the symbolic violence. The deep poverty and social misery that Bourgeois witnessed in Harlem is nowhere near comparable to Swedish conditions, but it accounts for factors that can form a breeding ground for oppositional youth cultures.

Young men who feel like they are alienated from the rest of Swedish society can through the membership in a bigger collective become empowered and be able to mask hidden insecurities under pre-determined attitudes within the group. Moreover, due to Swedish youth living under marginalized and stigmatized conditions they develop the need to symbolically charge their own community by using opposite meanings and myths to assert status and create a sense of self-respect. It created a form of romanticized nationalism in the community for the Million programme, which led to most multi-ethnic suburban families living in concrete housing. This form of suburban-nationalism is based on the necessity of having a haven where the youth do not have to feel as if they are second class-citizens in Sweden (Sernehede, 2011). "Förortsrap" became the representative subgenre for Swedish hip-hop that gave voice to those people living in the suburbs who were experiencing the affects of social and political decisions made by the state.

In order to process their vulnerable situation, they often developed a form of counter-identities. These identities found their symbols and their style from youth cultures around the world. Many of the young people interviewed by Sernehede felt a deep affinity with hip-hop's description of reality. Through the music and the lyrics, they can draw strength and power and on a symbolic level show discontent and resolve the difficulties they face in their everyday lives. Through the culture, the youth can form a resistance against oppression and a refusal to allow them to be subsumed.

## **SUBURBAN SLANG**

It's called suburban slang by the youth themselves. For them the word suburb is synonymous with immigrant-rich areas, often located on the outskirts of major cities. Sometimes it is also called Swedish concrete after the concrete suburbs where it occurred.

In the 1980s, the newspapers wrote about the Swedish language that youth in the new immigrant areas used. The young people there spoke differently than those who grew up in more monolingual Swedish areas. They noticed that they used words from a foreign language when they spoke Swedish. At that time a lot of economic migrants and political refugees arrived to Sweden, mainly from Greece and Turkey, and the children who grew up heard Swedish, Greek and Turkish around. When they spoke to each other, they used Swedish, but they borrowed words from both languages and used them as common slang.

The next big group that came were the Hispanics. Since then it has come many working immigrants and refugees from many different countries of the world and thus also new slang words in the immigrant-rich areas' youth language. The slang is common regardless of the home language of the user. Like all dialects highlight these new youth language where you come from, that is, the identity they have. The slangs main function is probably to highlight a common identity. To belong to the group. The common slang with words from many languages mixed with slang words from the local language, and very own, newly slang shows that you still belong together. No group is more important than any other. They all have different home languages but together they talk the same language anyway.

What we are dealing with then are new dialects that are both similar to and different from the dialect used in the place where they are used. Suburb

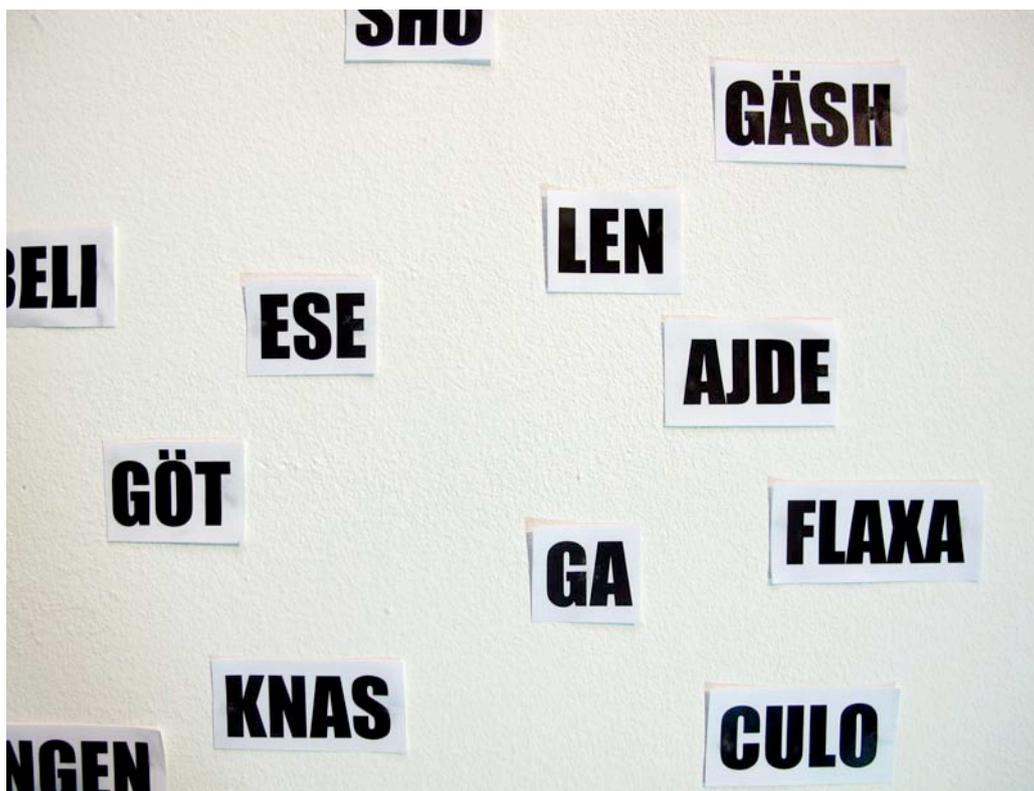
Swedish in Gothenburg, Gothenburg features in Malmö has the malmö it traits and in Stockholm stockholmska moves.

Recalling words from other languages is thus nothing new or special for immigrant's rich areas. Throughout the ages, youths picked up more or less unfamiliar words and used them as slang. If you look at older slang in Sweden so you can see a lot of words that originally has its roots from Romani. Some of them live on the slang while others have risen through the ranks that no longer even perceive them as slang, as example, the word tjej (girl).

Slang is used not because you cannot the "real" words. In most cases, the slang users can also use more neutral language. This is also true in immigrant areas, at least for those who have grown up in the country. The immigrant population makes use of slang for exactly the same reasons as in monolingual Swedish areas. But with the slang they can play and joke with the language. They twist and turn words and meanings, and show their language ability by finding new, fun and aptly slang. By using more or less arcane slang, one can also speak of those activities that you want to keep more or less secret, such as sex, drug use, and other illegal activities. But the slangs main function is probably to highlight a common identity. To belong to the group, be it a youth group, a group of colleagues or a group engaged in shady activities, one must also be able to interpret the slang word, which is the group's own. This is particularly important perhaps in immigrant-rich areas, where humans originated in widely different parts of the world, different religions, different eating habits, customs, different political views, etc. Rap was and still is listened mostly by the people who lives in concretebuildnings in the suburbs in a place that doesnt count, of the fact that many of them feel as it is them self-talking. Today it is not so great indignation about slang. It's just another part of the language, a language spoken on the streets.

## INSTALLATION "ORTEN"

"Orten" is an installation about identity, origins, exclusion, communication, and space. A big white room where the walls are covered with slang-words from the concrete suburbs of Sweden. The word "Orten" is suburban slang for the concrete projects where I grew up. The work is a direct translation of the feelings I, and most of my friends from the concrete suburbs grew up with. Outsidership, and a feeling of being out of context in relation to "normal" society. The room is filled with visual aggressiveness, and it deliberately excludes the viewer from understanding it. Hence, it forces the viewer to be an outsider – excluded from the context.



## RAP FROM THE SWEDISH SUBURBS

*How do people who live in the suburbs of Sweden's describe their everyday life through rap based on text and image?*



Image from music video "Am43" Kartellen

### ***Lilla namo – "Tuggare<sup>1</sup> utan gränser" (intro Meron Mang Asha)***

*Did you know that Swedish has been called the honor and heroes language and yet it's lending slang words of the suburbs in their vocabulary, and I wonder ... who takes the credit for that then?*

*Tuggaren\* is charming and trendy until he wants a change.*

*Shut up and watch as we create your self-image.*

*Only hope left, it does not matter where I jump off, you are more than your area.*

*When you represent all postal codes.*

*Representing all postal codes, repp, repp, all postal codes Representing all postal codes, repp, repp, all postal codes*

*Tuggare\* without borders, tuggar\* in the stairways and alleys*

*People pull down their jealousies because there is something that scares*

*Shines, streaks of sunset silhouettes similar to fires*

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<sup>1</sup> *Tuggaren or Tuggare is a slang word for a person who are hanging out without doing anything. Its a way of moving in your surrounding. Not all can do this. And certainly not the people from the inner-city. This is very much based on people in the suburbs. \* Tuggar or tugga is to hang out without doing anything. Like sitting on a bench. But it is very much connected to not having a choice of something happening. Because there is nothing happening.*

*Buying alcohol without licenses  
Drink despite age limits, ah trouble tendencies  
Do you tuggar without limits?  
Some are local legends, sells without intermediaries  
How quickly they become local thugs, they were friends before but now in disputes  
Sms-loans in long lists, she has robberies in her register  
Your walk will be a move to someone else who romanticize us from them  
It doesn't matter what you represent,  
Because for them it's always the same, do not care what you represent.  
It does not matter what you represent  
Because they are always the same do not care what you represent they can remove  
you from the street  
But the street will always be with you  
Post Trauma, but not because of your postcode  
You are traumatized by media reports  
Self Met prophecies egocentric individuals  
They do not acknowledge you, pretending to stand beside you.  
Hold on because you are standing outside the system. Healthcare centers closing  
down, post offices shut down  
Your postcode is immaterial, everything is moved to the big city center Megalomania  
is driving you to your fall  
Because they want to centralize the economy  
Create large malls you away in the periphery  
Comedy or tragedy, not your choice  
For they built up Stockholm as a new U.S.  
But that 's okay my friend for everything goes in cycles.  
Bad economy, bad integration policy  
My philosophy is fuck that, we will conquer  
The eye to eye battle made us bleed*



Image from music video "Tuggare utan gränser" Lilla Namon



Image from music video "I vår betong" Jacco



Image from music video "Han ba" Abidaz

### **Jacco, I vår betong**

*Here we have loaded guns, watch out for stoned people banging their guns  
welcome to our concrete jungle, they have weapons and sell heroin and ganja  
among houses that look similar, welcome to our concrete jungle*

*It is here where we live, though we spend time in jail sometimes and we try to stick  
together, though some guys always arguing with each other, so stop messing around  
brother, ey yo we need to chill brother, too many have spilled their blood. Then mark  
my words, for here about guys are gathered together as a war tribe. You mess with  
one and you get problems with at least 10 guys and brothers and uncles and cousins  
to them, when it's beef, then the guns and knives come out in our concrete jungle  
where some pumps heroin into his arm, where kids throwing stones at police and set  
cars on fire.*

*You become robbed on your phone bre o they stomp on your head and the station is  
being shot, welcome to our concrete jungle*

*Because it is here where we live, in the middle of Sweden's concrete million program  
and we try to stay together, one for all and all for each other.*

*So concrete people rise up, and fight back against all misery, so Sweden can see  
exactly how many ghetto youths we are. Do not let problems knock you down, as  
long as you are alive let love lead your way, but if they cannot behave or give. Take  
weapons with you and use violence if necessary. Because, mother is addicted and  
selling her body, big brother is with the guys and planning crimes, little brother took  
an overdose and nothing feels nice. The street walk in our concrete has done that  
friends passed away*

*If you turn the other cheek, you will be carved by a knife straight to the intensive  
care. Welcome to our concrete jungle, unemployment is widespread, youth is  
misguided but come and salute don't be afraid welcome to our concrete  
For it is here where we live and have seen the most since we were kids. I will stick to  
my suburb, don't like at all to hang out in the inner city.*

*So sing a song for your concrete jungle*



Image from music video "Hoppas" Aleks

### ***Mack Beats Tre legender***

*"Blackhead" becomes harder than the night, when night falls falls also the image of a beautiful world.*

*Looked at those who fiddle with money, with the heaviest clothes,*

*Never ever lick asses, fuck the bitter world.*

*Formed by slang, no twitter language,*

*No instagram pictures with some filters on for life is a bitch, but not a beautiful one.*

*max volume on the attitude of fight mode*

*immortal, immortal*

*from a place where all we have is our rumors, never sober.*

*ghetto kids feed their belly despite their lack of resources*

*live for the day, miserable, looks gloomy. the soul in two, it dies right away, seeing*

*how brothers bleed, brother, I hear your fear.*



Image from music video "stationen" Ison och fille

**Max Peezay FAS**

*Got rid off with my identity, no more doing this, doing that, working class, immigrant son, dandelion child, you are what you are*

*With true spirit, I paint a dystrophic picture. Whether we look forward or back, if you ask me, we stand still. You can call me conspiratorial I counter with calling you for a person with no knowledge of history .*

*Powerful forces in power or want to get your hands on it, go over corpse, prepared to do everything to reach it. While the some kicks down and chases the gutter children who trample on the yard, people are starting to stand up for their neighborhoods. Let our voices be heard, dandelion cut through asphalt, politicians think they are smart but we are from the concrete jungle, believe me, we know when they are hustling*

*Who was it? Who was it that voted? say who it fucking was!*

*Say it to me now whoever did it is going to get beat up one beautiful day . What they did in my community they call for reform, I call it attacks.*

*But how they managed to turn people against each other, the hat off.*

*What shall I say obvious case of fraud, stealing from us and sold it further. Thought people would get it, after four years, they have not learned a damn thing, you vote for liars, thieves, racists, fascists try not to swear you free.*

*It is called class betrayal, sorry for only those who do not know better, I am the revenger for them who got out secured, that hit the wall. Took their last 50 bucks and put it in our wallets o said we got better . Landlord who threaten eviction and the social care who do not care if you fall behind with bills. This is Sweden today, just gets worse every day. Soon, we'll see what kind o adults we will get from these scarred children.*

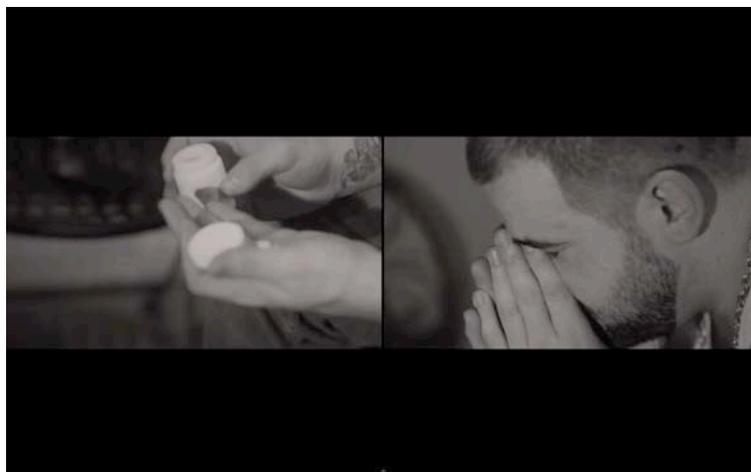


Image from music video "Andra porten" aleks

### **Max Peexay – Om sanningen ska fram**

*Skeletons in the closets, fear, pain, anxiety and demons. Repressed most emotionally anyway as I remember it. Poker Face, alcohol and blaze, frightened boy behind the scenes and ideals. The tears were falling inside the cheek, a survivor had no choice.*

*Social care notification, investigation, custody battle and coercive measure, you know the classical reheated suburb misery, rivers of alcohol, stickers that said flush the booze, blood that floated, I witness my first suicide attempt.*

*Heavy abuse, a staring eye, pale, or worse, hepatitis c, domestic violence, child abuse, I got to taste the belt. Do not remember the works, but shit leave marks. I know that most of you have your opinion clear about people who beat their children, I know, bad father, but it is not that easy, never met a man so loving and so loyal, do not know which side of him I want to remember when I stand at his grave, he knows that all is forgiven considering how I feel today.*

*2008 brought death to one of my crew members, three months later a close family member, shit how fragile it is, what a miracle that some of us survived.*

*Some chilling, smoking a fat one, the lives of others broke entirely.*

*They say my eyes rat on out, my brother, but I try to smile, two souls be wondering ahead, I hope the other side gives them more, because life gave them only suffering.*

*Want to keep the memories alive, want to see what they were missing words for.*

*Fuck facebook rebellion that provides as much profit as my daily grace, when I die, do not ask what I was good for, remember me for the things that I stood for.*



Image from music video "Benängen. Kvalitet och Kvantitet" Abidaz

## CLOTHING

Clothing can be used both to enhance and to conceal our personality. Seeing the class differences in the Western world only through clothing is more difficult nowadays, even if some expensive clothing pieces still have a symbolic value of class. Even if it's harder to see to which class you belong to today only by clothing, it is still used to show where you come from. Some pieces are still a class marker though, such as for example the Canada goose jacket. Catrin Lundström (2007) says that the Canada Goose jacket has been a symbol and a metaphor for "the inner city's class", but that it has been captured and conquered by suburban youths. The cultural and symbolic value that Canada Goose jackets are supposed to demonstrate is a way to bypass the economic capital. If you do not have access to privileged areas or groups, then a tacit symbol like the jacket can reinforce your own, and your groups self-image. You must wear a jacket so you do not freeze in the winter. But you must also have the right jacket to be able to belong to a context. Thus, it becomes an invisible demand on you. And if you are too poor to purchase one, then what do you do? The riots in London 2011, also created the same issues, where young people went in and stole shoes their mother could not afford to buy. Poverty among young people creates the feeling of exclusion because they cannot afford a pair of sneakers that you have to wear to be able to belong to a certain context.

Les Back (2011), professor in sociology at Goldsmiths University in London stated that the issue is about consumption patterns that have gotten out of hand. Where people are constantly reminded that you are someone if you can afford to consume. A society where people who cannot consume are deprived of their human value. Christina Patterson (2011) wrote a controversial article on the same subject, and stated that: *"It was not these children who created the culture that told them that what mattered was the fire of their trainers, or the glitter of their bling. It was not these children who created the institution of a country where all the black workers were in the canteens. We have, as a society, created this monster and, as a society, and like those people heading*

*into the trouble spots with dustpans and brushes, we must pick up the pieces".*

Clothes are used to show the rest of the world who you want to be, and to reinforce a sense of communion within various groups. Within subcultures such as hip-hop that has its roots in vulnerable areas - the suburbs, it becomes a way to show a communion by wearing clothes with, for an example, the same prints. It becomes an identity based on an exclusion in a suburban community context. Since economic capital may not always be available, people have to find other ways. A way often seen is creating own brands with small means. These clothes often include the symbols of your neighborhood, even more so when the symbols belong to a neighborhood that the rest of society looks down on. Once again, attributes are used to highlight the communion within the group in the exclusion from society.

A garment that is often linked to hip-hop culture, and that has a strong symbolic value is the hoodie. For many, the hoodie is a safety garment. Being able to take on the hood when you do not want to be seen, it covers the entire head from behind and only shows a glimpse of the face. A hoodie symbolizes anonymity. It symbolizes that you have taken a step away from society, and that you want to remain anonymous, just like Banksy posing in a hoodie where the face is hidden. But aside from that, the hoodie also has a symbolic value of something scary, something frightening.



## INSTALLATION "WHERE TIME STANDS STILL"

In the concrete suburbs, the bench on the square is a gathering point for people who have not got anything else to do or anywhere else to go. People that are pushed out into the corner by society, to a non-doing that is based on social injustice. People without jobs or anything else to do - so they just sit around while time passes by. It is an identity based on not getting to be a part of the society - a society that doesn't want them. Being forced into exclusion, and choosing to create an own society based on that.

*"In Sweden, some suburbs are a 40 minute journey from the inner city center. Without access to public transport you have no possibility to move. Without work, you have nothing to do. You are literally speaking stuck in a place where nothing ever happens. Localized rather than globalized. No one can leave, but everybody can get in to play. If they want to". (Edin, 2010 )*

Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (1998) says that; *"Mobility is a class marker. Could you move freely or are you tied to one place? Do you communicate to the world or just to your physical neighbors? Or even with them? The privileged lives "in time", untouched by the room's physical limitations, while the others live "in the room", where time is empty and nothing ever happens "*



An empty room with a bench, a feeling of silence, a place where nothing happens. It is a story about longing, about prejudice and alienation, but also about communion.

A few hoodies are placed on the bench for the viewer to put on. The hoodies are all the same, with symbols from my own area, the postal code and our slang words. But there are also symbols of my own ethnic background in the clothing. Shapes and patterns and laces from the finish part of Karelia, and colors from Nicaragua. While wearing the hoodies, the viewer will probably feel un-easy and out of context. I want the viewer to not feel as a part of the context, and to question his or hers own position within it. The viewer can always step into the room and put on the clothes and for the moment pretend that they are like them, like the people on the bench in the concrete suburbs. However, they will never understand or can never be as them, or be a part of that context. But they can look and listen. And perhaps in that moment in the room with the clothes on, question their own position within the context and understand that they are a part of the existing gap, of some people having and some not, that they are a contribution factor to it. The viewers can always take off the clothes and go back to their own life, while the people on the bench are stuck at the same spot not being able to leave.



Image from "Where time stands still" by Johanna Robleto

## FINAL WORDS

The concrete suburb is an arena for both marginalization, destructiveness and communion.

*"My streets, my childhood secrets, are still regarded as a peripheral region and a periphery, a zone somewhere "out there" in nothingness. Those who come from the suburbs are nobody. I am still in the suburbs, in love with the new urban environment that has never been recognized, but has become home to most city dwellers. All my adult life I have wondered what the suburbs really are and why it looks like it does and where I come from. The only way to turn nothing into something is to trying to find the answers"* (Wirten, 2012).

When society fails, new subcultures are born as a resistance to the current state of society. In the exclusion from society, a new form of communion is born. People who live in stigmatized areas in harsh conditions where they feel excluded from society can through music, clothing, art, etc. get themselves a voice to be heard and listened to, an expression of their own existence. Creating a communion in his or her own being. Some by silence and others by doing resistance, some through music, some through visual expression such as graffiti and street art and some by throwing brick stones.

This world we live in. Everyone think they will die young, living for the day, for the moment, like tomorrow does not exist. But not in that good way as the saying "seize the day". There is a longing for something beautiful, something better. Everyone knows it exists, but no one knows what it looks like because no one has been there, so instead, destructiveness takes over. Because for the moment they forget about the pain they live in, and for the moment they are there in that beautiful place. What they have learned, what they have lived

in, does not change overnight. As in my art, I think about it often. Our history, if I do not tell it, it feels like it has never existed, as we do not count. I'm interested in those contrasts and have probably never thought about how I use them to access myself. It's like a mirror image. This love-hate relationship to my own suburb and the people there.



Image from "Where time stands still" by Johanna Robleto

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