

Intersections between artistic approach and text genre

Katji Lindberg

Why bother about genres, as long as somebody has something to say?

Related to the artistic text, written by an artist or an art student, my assuring answer is built on the suspicion that a genre is more than just a category, and that every text produces its own *schibboleth*¹, that is to say mark for inclusion or exclusion (only traceable for the ones already initiated).

Literacy² as a capacity offers freedom, but there is not just one literacy. Accompanying all forms of texts (and spoken language) is a question about value. Literacies appear in the same hierarchical web as all cultural and scientific production. In that sense all kinds of texts can be evaluated. So, either we speak of an artistic text that seeks its way close to poetry or one using non-fictional prose. It is in one way or the other traceable as a statement about knowledge fashions. If the choice of type of text is not as innocent as it can seem to be, there are questions to be raised about how reflection relates to artistic practice and how it is best mirrored through text. Which affinities can be spotted between the artistic approach and different kinds of text types?

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Before the eruption of the creating spirit (poet or artist), there is a blank sheet in front of a hand, a shining white surface, either promising or demanding. In any case: the natural outset for a new book or artwork. Or, does this setting really cover the process of bringing forth new meaning? According to the Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh, the answer would be no. The notion of a (creative) process, that starts at A and ends at B, is not compatible with Zen. “Without the cloud, there would not be any rain; without rain, no trees can grow and without any trees we could not make any paper.” (Loy 1992:237).

The process of establishing an artistic enunciation – no matter in what media – can be traced to a position *before* the encounter with the demanding sheet. What, in a later state, turns out to be a solid artistic work, once upon a time only existed as some kind

1. The term *schibboleth* refers to inherent (sound) qualities in language, which may function as marks for division among social categories. See also Jaques Derridas’ famous essay *Schibboleth* (1990).
2. The concept is used in sociolinguistics and covers a range of language abilities and their situated social context.

ESSAY

Raise ^e Question.

Can Textile be more (active positive) in the Architecture?

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WORK

← Answer

of idea, and *before that* as a hardly traceable influence of some sort. These tiny fragments, described by philosopher Marica Sá Cavalcante Schuback as ‘indications’ (2006:161) are at a certain moment only a *potential* line or figure at the sheet. The material transformation of a prefigured notion, is an act of catching *something*, from the never stopping flow of life itself. As we can see, the fragment or figure-to-be, is as the concept indicates, very fragile – not yet completely existing.

Something is – at several moments – on the verge of taking form and for some time its existence is quite unsecure. If the creative mind does not sweep it over the threshold of the studio door, it will soon evaporate and disappear.

What I would like to bring forth is what we can call the process of *prefiguration* (Ricoeur,1984:54). For natural reasons ‘art’ is generally considered to correspond to an actual piece of work. But as nothing can come out of nothing, a few steps in the forming process are worthy of being put into a thematic framework.

Once it transforms itself from idea into media of any kind, the fragile work-to-be leaves its unsecure state and enters the world on the same premise as everything else.

Elsewhere I have touched upon this formation of understanding by saying:

The act of catching is in itself pleasing. [Marcia] Schuback refers to Blanchot’s (1988) phrase; “the joyful presence of the immediate” (2006:165). Nothing at this stage is completed, instead osmotic and indeed changeable. But through the mediation of the hand and the pencil, the fragment is tied to materiality of the paper. When I am drawing an impression, the prefigured and light material gets materialized and turns into a figure; like an episode snatched from life (Dahl 2005). “Sketch” is the word that covers the episode-like character of this kind of drawing. In the light of [Swedish philosopher Hans] Larsson’s thoughts, we can understand the sketch – the materialized fragment – as ‘a sedimentation of space and time’ (1925:24). But at the same moment as the passing material has been caught, something is changed; “a fall, a degrade, a death” (1925:24) – the sketch is always losing a certain amount of the pulsating character of ‘the flow of life’. It is not until the viewer’s or the reader’s active confrontation with the outline, that the two worlds can meet and the sketch stops been something ‘alien’ and once again transforms to be meaningful and perceived (Ricoeur (1992:55).

The prefiguration, as perception of an event, is relevant for all kinds of creative practices. For instance, in the book *Le théâtre de l’expérience*, Finnish dramatist and theorist Esa Kirkkopelto discusses this model of Ricoeur’s as playing its part for an understanding of performance and stage [*comprehension scénique*] (2008:432).

With inspiration from Aristotle, Ricoeur has developed a model consisting of three parts of narrative activity: the first part is exemplified in the quotation above about prefiguration. After the collecting of prefigured ‘dust’, a putting together takes over -configuration. This putting together (in Aristotle’s case; the construction of a plot) has many names: designing, writing, *creating*, configuring. Finally the sorted material is then put in a suitable order to be re-read. In the same way as it is easy to forget the importance of ini-

Textile ——— Architecture

West ——— East

Past ——— ~~Now~~ Today

Textile is the ^{key} to the ^{modern} architecture

(Textile)

Textile - Design - Textile

tial preparation in creative practice, one often omit that the art piece has to be 'awakened' – refigured – in order to transpose meaning. This is what happens in the introduction to an outer world, described by Ricoeur like this:

What Aristotle calls plot is not a static structure but an operation, an integrating process, which, as I shall try to show later, is completed only in the reader or the spectator, that is to say, in the *living* receiver of the narrated story (1991:21).

The 'putting together', or organising parts of narrative production, could also be described as establishing a certain perspective. By the act of choosing, a perspective can slowly be articulated, and here we have another way of describing the balancing act of bringing the perceived into a form. The sorting and composing takes place in the name of *intelligibility* (Ricoeur, 1991:22). Enunciation is produced to be understood.

In a pedagogical setting concerned with artistic practice, this description (of establishing something which is vague, but also more complex than an easily *detected* material piece) can be very fruitful. The thought of a perspective as something to be established, with each different step playing its part, seems to be convincing. In this sense, the British author Richard Wolheim's idea of perspective building is a useful model to adopt while discussing reflection on artistic knowledge. Wolheim states that the art piece can be seen not as just one perspective, but as a *negotiation of perspectives*; the artist's and the viewer's. This mean of description, coincides with Ricoeur's model.

In the passage above I refer to the encounter with influences, as something ongoing. The fleeting kind of event, closely attached to creation, pleasant but also full of threat and unreliable as it constantly shifts. If we turn back to Ricoeur, the procedure of a mimesis, consisting of three parts, can also be spoken of by means of distancing. If an event can be traced to one pole of an ellipse, the (language) system holds the other. By following the circular movement of the base of the elliptic form, we get a clear picture of the whole process by perceiving an event, the gradual distance of the lived world towards the use of language. As the completing movement, back to reality, we can follow the higher elliptic line back towards the re-figuration, and the awakening encounter with the original material.

Anyhow, if we rest in the configuring stage, the gradual enforcement by the shape, helps to get away from the "epistemological weakness" (Ricoeur 1976:9) of the event, in my words:

...the configured story cannot exist as a fragment, without connection to language context. [...] all fragments containing meaning, texts and symbols, belong to a texture of meaning. Before the text is transformed as text, it is a part of "the texture of symbolic meaning" (Ricoeur, 1984:58).³

3. My translation, Lindberg (2006:13).

経緯は？

Why textile?

background

将来的には

空間を考えた時、テキスタイルのような
素材をコンサルタントみたいな人

↓

そして、それをつくれる人

~~経緯~~

経緯は 113113
~~経緯~~ 113113

In this quote, text is to be understood in a broad meaning.

In creative practice the step from total openness to a formalized statement is, if we turn to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's famous text *Cézanne's Doubt* (1986:8), something that just happens, as shown in the following description of difficulties of the endeavour:

[H]e does not want to part the solid objects surrounding us, traceable by sight, from their fleeting mode of appearance; he wants to give an account for materiality as it takes form, the order born out of spontaneous organization.⁴

The hesitation in question seems to be connected to the same phenomenon as mentioned before, as "a death, a decade". Once transformed into an enunciation, the impression is subsumed under new structural demands, which seems to be a price to be paid in order to fulfil the task of communication. The step, from fleeting heterogeneity towards a synthesis by a gradual stiffness, corresponds to a "fixation of discourse in some exterior bearer" (Ricoeur 1991:26). As we can see, discourse (understood as meaning or content rather than as discourse in a foucaultian sense) is not the same as the final text or artwork. Meaning is seeking its forms, and meaning makes use of "the stability of the system" (1991:9). A (language) system that only exists as virtuality, actualised by the event of uttering meaning.

The leap into mediation cannot be done mechanically, even though the transformation is sometimes quick. The doubt of Cézanne goes back to the instance, engaged in the process; the productive imagination. In order to form the much-needed synthesis, imagination 'suggests' solutions to questions about how, this is to be done. The designing (or configuring) of a narrative structure is dependent on the ability to choose and combine. In relation to this stage, we can also spot a link to specific genres. The more freely the productive imagination works, the closer we move towards fiction, and the less configuring (imaginative) tools are used, the more formal the textual outcome will be.

My question in the introduction, related to artistic approach and from the discussion above, configuration or synthesising, plays an important role. The configuring activity stands in-between the two other parts in Ricoeurs' model (something to bear in mind in further discussions about various kinds of texts).

The undertaking of narrative procedures, as described here⁵, can also be mirrored by the dialectic between event and language, relating to discourse (Ricoeur, 1976:8). As prefiguration and event coincide, just as configuration and appropriation of language, do, we have a link between the ends, just described, and the textual outcomes. Until now I have considered an open question: what was the prefiguring act directed towards? (The choice can be very broad and include both text and other media, but for now, the focus will be on language and text.).

4. My translation.

5. Mats Alvesson has commented on distance, relating to research methods (Alvesson & Sköldböck 1994: 297). This understanding of the concept of distance, could be further discussed in relation to artistic practice and artistic research.

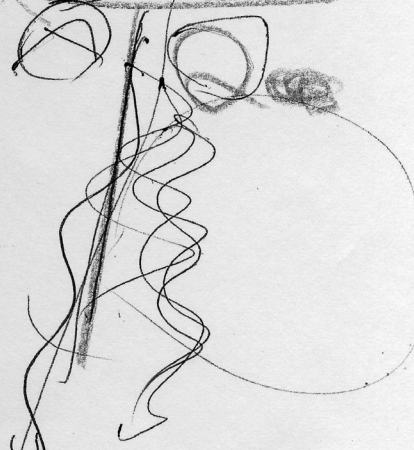
フラットを
外にだしては"かっこ"
内にあるかっこ"
素材のおもしろさを
満足させる。

インテリア
既存のあり方

PAST

建築
既存のあり方

疑問



疑問

? 本当は? ?

布はあんなに好き
二次的。

どうして
そういう方向を
考へるのか?



~~Surface~~

さわるころ。
構造。

Private/public
movable.

和洋の見方を
提示したい。

Textile
Can't material

be more active
in space?

ANSWER 作品 WORKS

most important.

If we pay attention to what I just referred to as a gradual fixation (1976:26), we will detect distance as an interesting element, "Now material 'marks' convey the message." (ibid.) An inscription is born with the shadow of distance (1976:43). "Distanciation is not a quantitative phenomenon; it is the dynamic counterpart of our need, our interest." (ibid.). Distance sets estrangement in motion, as an outset for productive evaluation.

This dialectic can also give an echo when it comes to a choice between formalised text forms. Close to the unbound flux of life ongoing around us, we might intuitively identify poetry. This can be supported by a description as "an unbound or liberated language that is freed from certain lexical, syntactical, and stylistic constraints" (Ricoeur 1976:59). Besides, this type of format is: "freed, above all, from the intended references of both ordinary and scientific language, which, we may say, by way of contrast, are bound by the facts, empirical objects and logical constraints of our established ways of thinking" (1976:59). The non-fictional prose, as a scholarly essay for instance, does not act in a hypothetical space, but within an empirical order.

It seems obvious that a connection between an affinity to lexical and systematically constraints generates texts that are highly valued in a rational domain. But as I have tried to show, even meanings produced freely are relevant as sources of knowledge. Therefore a multitude of formats are needed.⁶ Poetry or the literary essay seems to be sharing the same dependence on productive imagination as the artistic enterprise. By following Paul Ricoeurs' problematising the split between fiction and fact, poetry and the literary essay, a broader register opens for writing.

Understanding that the establishment of a new (artistic) perspective is being given birth to, can be distinguished from a 'theoretical understanding'. As this, in accordance to what I have earlier outlined, relies more on facts and empirical objects. Instead, phonetic understanding, emanates from some sort of complexity; for instance lived life. If this understanding, lends itself to be embedded in the most suitable form, the outcome will appear as something that give justice to its content.

Earlier I mentioned synthesising, as a crucial part that will tell us something about the artistic approach. Distancing seems to follow closely in all meaning production, but perhaps more so with writing (a topic to be further developed). Before concluding, I can also add, phronetic understanding as a trait: the establishment of an artistic perspective always takes its outset in some sort of highly complex order. The third statement brought the text itself, into question and outlined several options. As configuration appears both in artistic practice and in textual production (if we can separate these two for a moment for pedagogical reasons), it is interesting to note what ways different kinds of texts synthesize or configure. Following both intuition and my previous statements, the

6. For reasons briefly mentioned here, without being sufficiently elaborated, one of this forms, suitable for pedagogical purposes, might be the essay, as introduced by Jo Bech- Karlsen (2003).

literary essay is the least configuring text type but still it bears mark by artistic approach. Poetry configures freely, while non-fictional prose, as the term indicates, leaves configuration behind in favour of structural and empirical demands. The choice is free.

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