# PENALTY AREA

## The Experience of Punishment

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**Thesis for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts with specialization in Digital Media**

# SUMMARY

*In its function, the power to punish is not essentially*
*different from that of curing or educating.*
**Michel Foucault**

In this thesis work, I tried to explain my recent art practice by discussing my previous and recent projects.

In my exhibition project, I summarized my work process involving space and public. I worked with computer keyboard keycaps in public spaces. I used keycaps as a medium in order to write sentences in public places. In a way, my work tries to associate the public with public space. After all experiences I wanted to keep working with keycaps and express my idea within a wider context.

The exhibition place in Röda Sten was big influence to realize my work. There are big bricked up windows that are painted black and facing outside. They reminded me of blackboards, like those in used old schools in the did days. I chose to work on punishment when I saw the Röda Sten windows. Another important factor was the location of the exhibition place. The place is surrounded by much graffiti. I decided to use both inside and outside of the building. Those windows and my blackboard punishment idea provided a perfect combination for my project. I also wanted to make a connection between the exhibition place's environment and my work.

I got permission to make stencils on the exhibition place even though, it is still forbidden to make stencils or graffiti in public spaces in Sweden. The title of my work *Penalty Area* also fit perfectly with this contradiction.

**Keywords:**

Punishment, education, public space, self-discipline, keycap, blackboard.

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## THE EXPERIENCE OF PUNISHMENT

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**Introduction**

Events I experience in daily life and my past experiences form the basis of my artistic works, determining the subject matter and providing previews. This preview-structure unifies and reflects the unity in life. I tried to express these subjects by using different tools. In previous works I made at C:Art:Media program, I based my works on impressions I gained from daily life.

During my thesis project; I have tried to explain my punishment experiences throughout my primary school life and how these contributed both to my personal and artistic development. I have expressed all related memories in my mind by fitting them in a single sentence and installing the piece in accordance with the structure of the exhibition place and the fabric around it.

# Concept of Punishment

*Children are the future of any society. If you want to know the future of a society look at the eyes of the children. If you want to maim the future of any society, you simply maim the children. Thus the struggle for the survival of our children is the struggle for the survival of our future. The quantity and quality of that survival is the measurement of the development of our society.*

*Ngugi Wa Thiong' O*

The word *punishment* has never had a positive association for me. The purpose of giving a punishment is to dissuade and discourage; it aims to avoid the action from happening again. The science of pedagogy separates punishment in two: one of them is positive punishment; a style that aims to make the individual realize his mistake. The single tool in positive punishment is the use of words; physical involvement is out of subject, thus showing that it can be done in a constructive way. Completely opposite of positive punishment, negative punishment uses physical involvement as a tool; the mistake is ought to the individual with applied violence and physical involvement. Whether positive or negative, punishment is aimed at shaping the individual into a requested form by disciplining. "Punishment controls behavior by using pain or unpleasantness to stop the child who is doing something wrong. Punishment stops bad behavior for the moment. Punishment does not teach the behavior you want. Punishment does not cause good behavior. Punishment stops the unwanted behavior for a short time. Punishment teaches children to avoid being caught. Their behavior is directed toward avoiding punishment."[1]

Even though pedagogically punishment has been considered in two contexts as positive and negative, in this thesis I am going to talk about the detrimental effects of negative punishment on me and how these were reflected in my thesis project.

The detrimental effects of punishment are immense on children, leaving negative traces on children's personal development.

"Punishment does not work for several reasons:

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[1] Elaine Wilson, PhD Parenting Specialist, T-2329 Discipline Without Punishment, http://osufacts.okstate.edu

1. Punishment makes children hate themselves and others. They dislike themselves for getting the punishment. They dislike the one who punishes them. Punishment gives the child feelings of low self-esteem. Children learn not to trust but to fear others. They learn to fear those who are older, larger, or have authority over them. They may plan to get revenge when they are older, larger, or have authority. Bullies are not born that way. They learn how to bully from others.

2. The child may behave only to avoid punishment. The child's motive is self-protection. Children learn how to be sneaky and how to get away or to avoid being caught. They become defensive, dishonest and afraid. Their fear may affect their learning and problem solving. Children need and want to learn how to behave. When they learn why good behavior is best, they can think for themselves. They can do he right thing in a new situation. They know what to do and why, even when an adult is not present. If they make a mistake, they are less inclined to try to hide it. They trust their parent to listen and to act fairly.

3. Punishment makes children think there must be something wrong with them. If they think they are bad, they will act bad. They get punished. Children want attention. They will settle for punishment if they can not get attention for good behavior.

4. Children who see others spanked fear it will happen to them. The fear increases each time another child is spanked. Children feel responsible for other children's physical punishment. They fear that they will be next. Children may feel especially threatened when they do not see the reason for punishment. They do not know what to do to prevent more punishment.

5. Children who get spankings and punishment feel they have paid for their misbehavior and more. They misbehave again to get even. Parents and teachers punish them again. Their anger and resentment build. They plan revenge. Spankings short-circuit feelings of remorse needed to prevent future misbehavior.

6. Parents who use physical punishment are setting an example of using violence and physical power to control others or to solve conflicts. Children imitate their parents' behavior. They behave violently."[2]

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[2] Elaine Wilson, PhD Parenting Specialist, T-2329 Discipline Without Punishment, http://osufacts.okstate.edu

# World Perspective

*The gods had condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of a mountain, whence the stone would fall back of its own weight. They had thought with some reason that there is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labor.*

*Albert Camus*

In my thesis work, I focused on punishment in education. When I started to research topic, I found a wide range of materials such as movies, books, photos and paintings, alongside of which I also had my personal experiences with school punishment. In my work, I wanted to combine my personal experiences with my references. When I started primary school we all had to wear the same uniform. It was just the beginning for standardizing us. I took many lessons but when I look back, one of them becomes especially interesting for me. It was called *Hayat Bilgisi* (*Knowledge of Life)*. This was a mandatory course, standardized all over the country by the Ministry of education which we had to attend from ages seven to ten. Despite its philosophical-sounding name, the course focused on "how-to"s in family, school and society. As it was taught and not experienced, it was actually the educational system's ideas on what the life of the future generation should be. I had no idea what was wrong or right about life. Instead of my personal ideas or wishes, they wanted to integrate one thing to our heads: how to be a good person in society! I was not aware of what was happening to me. It was only after many years that I realized what happened to me during my education: I became like everybody else. I did not have individual expectations. I had really ordinary wishes from life; a good job, money, marriage, a house, a car. I discovered that when I had started my primary school life, I had entered to a military structure without realizing. The uniforms we had worn, the oath we had read every morning before school by lining in the schoolyard like soldiers were daily examples of a  struggle to raise a standardized, disciplined next generation. It was mandatory to participate in taking the oath every morning. The oath was simple set of principles all school children were expected to know and respect but it was also a national pronunciation dictated at us. Practically, all children were taking an oath to become invidiuals suitable for the community and obedient to the state. Throughout my primary and secondary education, I must have read the following oath by heart a thousand six hundred times, never being aware of what it meant.

*ANDIMIZ*

*Türküm, Doğruyum, Çalışkanım*

*İlkem; küçüklerimi korumak, büyüklerimi saymak, yurdumu, milletimi özümden çok sevmektir.*

*Ülküm; yükselmek, ileri gitmektir.*

*Ey büyük Atatürk! Açtığın yolda, gösterdiğin hedefe durmadan yürüyeceğime ant içerim.*

*Varlığım, Türk varlığına armağan olsun.*

*"Ne mutlu Türküm diyene!"*


*OUR OATH*

*I am Turkish, I am honest, I am hardworking*

*My principle is protecting my youngers, respecting my elders, loving my country and my nation more than my existence.*

*Great Atatürk! I swear to follow your path and attain the aim you point.*

*I devote my existence to the Turkish Existence.*

*"How happy who  says I am a Turk"*

I was attending a technical high school when I realized my punishment. I studied electrics. I wanted to be an electrician but it was not my personal ideal. I realized that it was the only option I had because I did not want to be different then others, for fear of alienation. I did not want to be alone or marginal.

Finally, I quit technical school when I was in the second year to start a public high school that was not technical. I had the chance and time to think what I wanted to do rather then focus blindly on technical studies. I felt more relaxed but on the other hand I grew angry at our educational system. In my point of view, we had all been punished during our primary school education though not physically, the  system negatively affected the mentality of each one of us.

"The common thread amongst these is the physical damage/breakdown of the child. The earlier category targeted the psychological damage/breakdown of the child. I wonder which is more valuable: psychological damage, which might scar the child for life (as the doomsday child psychologists like to say), or the physical damage, which might lead to death (as demonstrated in certain incidents). One might say what is left if the child dies and the other might argue that what is left of life if the spirit is broken. Such debates can continue endlessly."[3]

The primary education stage, one of the most crucial stages in the development of an individual is indeed the most appropriate stage to implant notion of nationalism in the individual's. In most of the courses I had taken, notions of nationalism had been imposed indirectly. With those imposed ideas, I had been the student of a militarized education system along with everybody else. It is not so possible to reach free thought in an institution where dogmas and despotism is dominant. As British journalist and political philosopher William Godwin indicated; *Any management style has its constitution by public recognizing and accepting it. Detecting the public opinion by education means constant support. Therefore, in any society where human mind's total development is avoided in school walls, despotism and injustice may continue easily.* Putting education under the state lock means politicizing. In an education system which works this way, free thought hardly blossoms. There is only one path to take on the education system under the state lock, that is what the state wants.

"The power of national education has been explained clearly on Godwin' s review regarding the state, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice.* Godwin had a warning like

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[3] http://inagardencalledlife.blogspot.com/2009/04/punishment-in-education.html, June 17, 2010

this: 'Before giving an enourmous mechanism to an enormous organisation's mananagement, you have to realize what we are doing properly. The government will not stop working it, strengthening its sections and perpetuating its establishments.' Godwin believed that national education's content could be shaped according to the demands of political power. He said that; 'The data that shows their managements reasonable as statesman will be the data based on their educations'. Secondly, Godwin believed that the development of the big and centralized states will cause the sublimation of the values which will have enourmously little benefits like adventures for the sake of national victory, patriotism and economical and cultural competition internationally.

Having larger lands, conquering or sustaining the neighbour countries on fear, the demand of passing them on art or arming is a demand based on prejudgement and wrong basis."[4] As I mentioned before, the oath we had read before entering school every morning was a sign of school-practiced neo-nationalist expression. National education was used in support of the state's benefits and chauvinistic policies. The defined state was composed of a dogma, it was not open to discussion or doubt. "Godwin believed that a fair society could only emerge as a result of the whole individuals' using their minds freely. As individuals changed their power of judgement and nature understanding constantly, their perception of natural management laws changed constantly. Other political instutions towards perpetuating constitutions and laws could only avoid the development of people's understanding of how life should be arranged."[5] The demand of turning students into a civil military in a militarized system by controlling the education and educational content is a very useful constitution for the state. This way, as the next generation grows up there will be thousands of citizens acting as civil soldiers unawares to protect the existence of the nation. In lots of schools on the world, the citizenship education has been institutionalized. "Johann Fichte on Prussia argued that the state should spend money to education at least it spends money to natioan defence, because: the State that uses the national education we had proposed nationally, will not need a private army after a young generation will be included, because it will have an army that no other generation had before."[6]

By the time I got to the age of discreation, the things I had to do in my further education life and on my professional life had been determined long before by the education I had

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[4] Özgür Eğitim (A primer of Libertarian Education), Joel Spring, İstanbul: Ayrıntı, p:12, 1991.

[5] Özgür Eğitim (A primer of Libertarian Education), Joel Spring, İstanbul: Ayrıntı, p:13, 1991.

[6] Özgür Eğitim (A primer of Libertarian Education), Joel Spring, İstanbul: Ayrıntı, p:14, 1991.

received in primary school. Keeping in mind that the educational system and content is formulated by the state, it appears that there can be a single simple explanation to this formula: individuals raised with an unconscious implantation of these national notions and social rules are ready to be managed in the future, ready to serve the needs of the state, not question its notions, and regardful of its rules to point of policing others in their light.

"Education and Power pays considerable attention to how knowledge is actually used a commodity in our economy. It has become increasingly obvious that the integration of university life into the industrial project has had profound effects. What counts as important knowledge is increasingly being defined as that and only that knowledge which is technically and economically productive."[7]

No state will ever allow an education system that will put its existence in danger. The created education system is a long way off a structure which will change the denominational conditions. During the education term, the punishments given by teachers against student's disobedience serve the condition requested by the state. At the same time, this condition presents the existence of a direct bond between the school and the state which has the authorization to apply punishment by legalizing it. The educational period is one of the best times to create an intimidated society. "The child, from the moment he starts the public school, is educated towards conforming the authority, naturally fulfilling the demand of others and as a result of this, in his adult life, owns the thought customs that will serve the manager class."[8] A person's value judgments are determined according to the education he receives during this period. In the presence of the education system, the individual is more of a robot ready to be programmed rather than an organism with a developing and thinking life.

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[7] Education and Power, Michael W. Apple, New York: Routledge, p:21, 1995.

[8] Özgür Eğitim (A primer of Libertarian Education), Joel Spring, İstanbul: Ayrıntı, p:20, 1991.

"Like Francisco Feller, Illich sees the school as a prostitute of the power, too. He believes that the biggest power is the effect of the school, on person's own identity concept; that is education teaches to person their own abilities and characteristic features, and persons learn to think themselves as stupid, clever, precious or ineffective. When it is assumed that an appropriate identity concept based on being accepted, ability to function in the society, psychological power of the school emerges."[9]

The education I had during my primary school life was an obligatory education. In case of not disobedience to this rule, in other words when not going to or being sent to school, the state had the authority to apply a punishment to my family. It was a citizenship crime to resist to the system created by the state, thus my family was responsible for sending me to school. One could ask whether family could not effect the child's mandatory education in a different way. In my case, I ignored the books and other materials my family advised for my development, in plain words I did not feel the need or wish to do anything.

During my research process, I also examined the alternative education institutions, among which were *Köy Enstitüleri* (*Village Institutes)* which existed in Turkey for only a limited duration. Even though these institutions were tied to the state, they aimed to provide an alternative education to people in rural settings. In their education syllabus, artistic activities geared towards developing creativity existed alongside a more classical education. Classes were experience-based and suitable for advancing rural life. Student, were provided with classes in animal breeding and agriculture activities for both contributing to the productivity in villages and learning the crucial production steps. This curriculum provided an independent individual to grow up without being torn from real and experienced life and be able to stand on their own feet. However, unfortunately after fourteen years of practice, these schools were shut down in 1954 by the period's government with claims of raising communist students. Despite the shutting down of these schools in Turkey, works on alternative education continued around in the world. " The Modern School started by Ferrer and A.S. Neill's Summer-hill represent a part of this liberal approach; a very popular movement in 1950s and 1960s towards creating *free schools* and alternative education styles had presented this clearly. The free school movement was an intervention towards creating an environment for orthogenesis in a exceedingly structured and rationalized world. It was the improvement of the *free play*

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[9] Özgür Eğitim (A primer of Libertarian Education), Joel Spring, İstanbul: Ayrıntı, p:23, 1991.

*area* movement in 1940s. This movement was an expression of liberal interest on people's reshaping the world to detect and use it for their own purpose. The first free play area started in Copenhagen in 1943. Right after the II. World War, it spread to Sweden, Switzerland and USA. The play area was konown in Stockholm as 'Free Town', in Minneapolis as 'The Yard' and in Switzerland as 'Robinson Crusoe Playgrounds'. The basic principle of adventure play area was that it was only equipped with raw materials and tools, wood, nails, scrap metals, scoops and construction tools. There were no installed toys like swing or teeterboard, basicly tools for building, demolishing and rebuilding their play ground were given to children."[10] School education and alternative education are two entirely different practices. The existence of education systems alternative to the state's systematized and oppressive education system provide development of a resistance mechanism by decreasing the pressure on the individual. "The thing to be searched in the future is an education system that makes the individualistic conscious level to understand the powers that create the existing society and communal and historical powers that determines the place of the individual in the society. This should arise with the combination of theory and practice; in this process while people work for a liberated society, both theory and practice changes. There should not be a plan for the change in future, but a constant dialogue regarding the tools and aims. Education should be placed in the center of this kind of revolutionary struggle."[11]

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[10] Özgür Eğitim (A primer of Libertarian Education), Joel Spring, İstanbul: Ayrıntı, p:43, 1991.

[11] Özgür Eğitim (A primer of Libertarian Education), Joel Spring, İstanbul: Ayrıntı, p:110, 1991.

**Other People's Experiences of Punishment**

When I searched punishment on the internet I found very interesting discussion where people from around the world shared their experience with school. I would like to share some of examples from discussion. Since their posts exhibit a slice of educational reality from around the world, I chose to share some of these examples in this thesis. These individuals' need to share punishments they endured with strangers who had experienced similar situation, show a glimpse of how heavily standardized school systems' oppression may be felt.

"Samidha

3-Mar-2003: I had not worn my proper dress to the school so I was sent back home to wear my proper dress.

Ashamathur

29-Apr-2003: In our school, murga punishment is very common. We have to become murga for atleast 10-15 minutes even though I am in 10th class. It is very painful.

Pawan

2-May-2003: I was made to kneel down outside the class for not having done my haircut. Unfortunately, the principal was on his routine rounds as usual with his special cane.....ouch! I still feel the vicious cane on my knuckles!

Minako

27-May-2003: I am a high school student in Japan. I had to stand out in the hall for talking in class. The teacher would not let me back in when the bell rang, and I had to remain standing in the hallway during the entire break period, having been seen by almost everyone in the school. It was so humiliating.

Jenn

2-Jun-2003: I'm in 8th grade. As a punishment earlier this year I had to write 500 times, "I must learn to do my homework." It took forever to write those lines and my hand hurt for days after wards. It was awful.

lau

21-Jun-2003: I'm from Malaysia. I was given 6 strokes of the cane on the bottom before

for repetitively not doing my homework. It was extremely painful and embarrassing. I can't believe I still get the cane even when I am already 15.

Jamie

16-Jul-2003: I go to a boarding school in England. We have like 300 rules to follow, needless to say we get punished a lot. Once me and my friend skipped church and we got 14 strokes of the cane each and a 7 hours detention.

Pooja

16-Jul-2003: In my school, it's in US, the most common punishment is garbage bag duty (you have to fill up an entire garbage bag with trash that's around school campus) But if you are late to class five times then you get Saturday school.

X

9-Jun-2004: Hi, I'm from South Korea. It's interesting to learn the kinds of punishments that people are receiving throughout the world. Murga sounds really painful, and I'm glad I don't go to school in India. But last week, my teacher asked me a question during class. I could not answer. She got upset, and sent me outside the classroom to stand in the hall. It was the first time I had been in trouble, and I felt so ashamed. I had to stand in front of an open window with my back to the class, so that I could listen to the lesson. While I was out in the hall, my classmates could see me standing through the open window. Many students and teachers also walked by, staring at me, some of them laughing and teasing me. I could not believe the teacher asked me another question. Since I was out of the room, I did not think that she would ask me, so I was not paying attention. I was scolded again, and had to remain standing in the hall for over an hour. Do you think it is fair for anyone to be punished just because she could not answer a question?

Sally

25-Jul-2004: At our school in Australia, Miss whips the boys on their bare thighs with a strap, but the girls only get slapped on the legs. You can see the boys stripes for days after wards, and we girls giggle about it. Sometimes we secretly tease boys in the class so they squirm, then the teacher whips them.

Korcan Demir

29-Oct-2004: My teachers beat me by caning on the soles of my feet. It is the most painful punishment I have ever seen. I cannot walk for a week after this punishment. In Turkey bastinado is commonly used for beating students.

Jordan Riak

18-Jul-2004: A teacher who believes that punishments are the key to good student behavior, is very misguided. Obedience in a student is rarely a sign of respect for the teacher, but more commonly a sign of fear -- what the slave feels for the master. Frightened children cannot learn anything except contempt for the person who frightens them and for the institution that allows it to happen. Some students accommodate abuse by imitating their abusers. They become schoolyard bullies and the next generation of authoritarian, abusive, violent adults. Some become teachers, and the cycle repeats."[12]

The common aim of punishments applied differently in every country is disciplining the students. As this can be understood from the examples I had expressed, the punishments had no positive effect in any student. It is inevitable the punishment to turn into a hate towards the past, teachers, education system and thus the state.

**Definition of Some Punishments**

"Bastinado: Foot whipping, variously known as bastinado, falanga (phalanga), and falaka (falaqa), is a form of corporal punishment whereby the soles of the feet are beaten with an object such as a cane or rod, a club, a piece of wood, or a whip. It is also sometimes favored as a form of torture because, although extremely painful, it leaves few physical marks, though evidence can be detected via ultrasound technology."[13]

"Murga: Murgha (also spelled murga) (Urdu: مرا); is a form of corporal punishment used in South Asia, (India, Pakistan) primarily in educational institutions, and by the police who use it as a punishment for petty crimes and eve teasing (sexual harassment), usually administered in public-view. Murgha means Rooster (literally "male adult chicken") in Urdu and Hindi. This is a punishment in which the punished person takes the position of a *murgha*. This is done by squatting, and then bringing the arms between the legs and firmly holding the ears. It can become very painful after a few minutes, and can also be used as a position for spanking, though it is rarely used."[14]

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[12] http://dimdima.com/forumnw/message.asp?Tid=61&q_title=My+School+Punishment, June 15, 2010

[13] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foot_whipping, June 23, 2010

[14] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murga_punishment, June 23, 2010

**Previous Projects at C:Art:Media**

Before explaining my thesis project, I would like to give some information about my previous projects at C:Art:Media.

**Who's There?**

My first project at C:Art:Media was *Who's There?* It was an interactive video-projection installation. I built a small locked room with a door with many peepholes in it. I installed a projection inside which could be viewed through the peepholes while standing outside. A projector, connected to a spy camera, located on the ceiling, reflected the viewer's image inside the room. Standing outside the door and looking through the peephole, the viewer experienced the illusion of being inside and peeping at himself.

My installation deals with the notion of privacy. Due to spy cameras placed all over cities, people are obliged to live under the control of the state in public areas. Even though it has been said that they exist for security, the use of cameras is an interference to social rights. It is not ethical to observe or record someone without his consent. In most places, the state uses its power interfere in people's social lives and tries to control communal life with cameras placed around cities. The film *The Truman Show 1998,* exhibits a far-stretched and yet plausible example of the state's voyeurism . In the film, the character Truman is obliged to live in the artificial world created for him and each stage from his birth to the adulthood is being watched by cameras. Truman who has no idea of being watched, becomes the subject of a high rating show. His entire life is a planned show,subject to audience ratings, but the most crucial thing is that Truman lives his life unaware that he is continuously watched as his life is being staged. In the film, when Truman realizes that he is being watched by the cameras, he tries to save himself from this situation by escaping. However, in real life our awareness of the situation does not guarantee an escape and even increases life's restrictions.  Even in our houses where we feel the safest, we are being watched by someone. The internet, telephone, newspapers or magazines subscriptions all publicize some of our private information and these are subject to investigation by the state. This situation causes us to doubt our basic security in increasing paranoia. In this project, I also questioned the inside and outside notions. In moments we feel ourselves inside and safe, we are actually outside and when we feel ourselves outside, we are in an inner place which has wider boundaries.

**Figure 1: Özgür Demirci, Who's there?, Interactive Installation, Göteborg, 2008**

**Second: They are not famous anymore**

My second project was *They are not famous anymore,* an overhead projector installation.

The photographs I used in this project have an important place in history. They are the remaining images of experienced truths. The German sociologist Georg Simmel names such photographs as 'fortuitous fragments of reality'.

"Simmel's concern with the 'fortuitous fragments of reality', with 'what is apparently most superficial and insubstantial, is not confined to vignettes of fleeting interactions (such as rendezvous). The whole of his analysis in The Philosophy of Money, investigating the site of modernity, is guided by 'the possibility of finding in each of life's details the totality of its meaning'.

This suggests a further important implication for Simmel's approach to the study of modernity: that the fractured and dissolved totality of modernity can only be apprehended from the individual element, from the fragment. Such a standpoint presupposes that there is a perspective capable of creating a unity out of the fragmented world of modernity.

The essence of aesthetic observation and interpretation lies in the fact that typical is to be found in what is unique, the law-like in what is fortuitous, the essence and significance of things in the superficial and transitory… Every point conceals the possibility of being released into absolute aesthetic significance. To the adequately trained eye, the total beauty, the total meaning of the world as a whole radiates from every single point"[15].

These photographs, which capture unforgettable moments in history, are *fortuitous fragments of reality*. They have become icons on their own because they have perpetuated memories of that moment. On the other hand, it could be said that we have turned them into icons by meaning them as fragments as Baudelaire does in order to understand modernity. According to Baudelaire: *Modernity is the transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immovable.*

In my project, I cut out some parts of world journalistic famous photographs from history and arrange them into a new composition. If we remove or cut out parts of these photographs and put them in an otherwise empty-space, they become part of daily life. My composition was ordinary and it disallowed any photographic reading. There was no characteristic. I presented my composition by using an overhead projector.

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[15] Simmel, Georg. David Frisby. London: Routledge,  p.65, 2002

The views obtained as a result of the installation technique were just silhouettes. They had no connection regarding the past. With the composition created, they had become the view of another time and moment. My aim was to convert it to a composition that confronted the viewer in everyday, ordinary life by using photographs from important moments experienced in the past.



**Figure 2: Özgür Demirci, They Are not Famous Anymore, Overhead Projector Installation, Göteborg, 2009**

**Keycap Project**

**Inspiration**

My work is very much involved with public art. During the preparation of my project I was inspired by Slinkachu's presentation of his works. I enjoy and admire his effective use of public spaces. Slinkachu is an artist who makes tiny toy installations in public spaces. He defines his art both as street art installation and a photography project. His projects involve the remodeling and painting of miniature model train set characters, which he then places and leaves on the street. The street-based side of his work plays with the notion of surprise and his aim is to encourage city-dwellers to be more aware of their surroundings. He wants people to be able to empathize with the tiny people in his works.



**Figure 3: Slinkachu, Rubbish, Toy Installation, 2006**



**Figure 4: Silinkachu, Commuting, Toy Installation, 2006**

In my keycap installation project I used the same method as Silinkachu when I installed my keycaps in public spaces. For example, I used hidden spots or places that people do not notice at first glance. I like the idea of hiding details in a public space.  I used computer keyboard keycaps to write different sentences on different spots around Göteborg. After the installation of my works, I documented them with photos. Like Sillinkachu, I also define my work both as street art installation and photography project.

**First Phase: Researching**

**Public Installations**

*What public ? Which is this public that participates? What is this public that is there as viewer? And which are actually the tools that the artist can use to bring them together?*

*Sotirious Bahtsetzis*

In my second year of study at Valand School of Fine Arts, I decided to work in public spaces in order to communicate directly with the public.

I have tried to place works within experienced life by making small interferences in public spaces experienced by the viewer. After an extended observation process where I got to analyze and understand the dynamics of chosen spaces, I installed my works after the installation stage, I had the chance to re-handle my works by questioning the meanings and functions people addressed to them in these community areas.

 "Classically, according to Richard Sennett, the public sphere is the space where one is exposed to everyone's inquisitive gaze, the space in which there are actors and onlookers, where one is simultaneously observer and observed (Sennett 1986). The relationship between the individual and society is reflected in urban space. Here, according to Georg Simmel, is where the urban mentality is revealed, which is characterized by distance and reservation, but also by a complexity of relationships and situations. (Simmel 1984). Public space offers the possibility of disappearing anonymously in the masses, but also that of identifying with a group. In the meeting of strangers or like-minded people, a central principle of public space is evident: there is something communal about it and it is borne or used by a collective (Fraser 1999)."[16]

My purpose was to create little interventions by using keycaps and communicate with the public in public spaces by using words. I spent time in variety of public spaces, especially around bar and nightclub locations. The city became absolutely different at nighttime. Even though they were in the same space, people exhibited behaviors that were totally different in nighttime than daytime. I became really interested in how people used public spaces at night. I got many influences during my observations and started to write sentences about my observations. I wanted to write something brief and effective,

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[16] http://www.republicart.net/disc/realpublicspaces/wildner01_en.htm, June 21, 2010

like advertisement phrases, in order to communicate easily with people and also associate with the public space. I preferred to write in Swedish in order to be comprehensible for the majority of the public and to feel as part of the city through my artwork. Depending on the meaning inherent within these brief texts I had placed, the viewer could react either positively or negatively as they were effected directly by these words. The first of these reactions was the viewer's expectancy of a reaction, displayed by pressing the buttons after trying to read the text written with computer keycaps. Through the use of keycaps, I was making the viewer incorporate with the work actively and experience rewriting the text I had written again. Even though no writing action happened as a result of the nonfunctional buttons, I was communicating with the viewer through the action of pushing keycaps one by one by.

**First: Text Installations**

I decided to employ computer keyboard keycaps to write my sentences in public spaces. I took out entire sets of keycaps and created different sentences. My purpose was to encourage people to read my sentences and also force them to react physically to what they were reading. By their very nature computer keyboard keycaps force people to press them in order to purposefully write something or to check their functionality. This allows the spectator to participate in my work. My first installation was place at the entrance of Valand School of Fine Arts. Using keycaps, I wrote "Du kan pissa här" (You can piss here) at a spot that is used as a toilet almost every night. The reason for using that spot and for writing that sentence was to point out a different aspect of the space. My work was not an attempt to stop people from what they were doing; it was there only to make them aware of their behavior with an ironic sentence.

This place, which was used as the entrance door of the school on daytime, turned into a practical toilet by night due to its proximity people to bars whose toilet lines bar-goers wanted to avoid.

As keycaps are used regularly by the majority of the city population in order to type text on the computer, their use invited the public to attempt to write. Their placement already invited audiences to read. The act of reading automatically constitutes the act of writing placing one letter after another in deliberate manner- in the mind, by its very nature. This awareness was part of what tempted the viewer to react by trying to use the keycaps.

**Figure 5: Özgür Demirci, Du kan pissa  här, Keycap Installation, 2009, Göteborg**

I was curious about people's reactions to my work. Some people tried to push to keycaps and some people tried to remove them. My observations showed me that this type of communication made them angry. Even though people using this area regularly changed the function of the place, they had no patience to encountering a text to that by its choice of words encouraged this use. Some keycaps were removed by people to render the text meaningless. After that, my sentence did not make any sense but on the other hand, it was integrated in the public because of people's reactions.

Whatever its result is, the work I had made consisted of a process and as a result of the reactions the viewer gave, the work had completed its process. It may be that viewer did not want the place they felt belonged to them to be under an artistic interference by someone else, and thus, converted the place to its older state by removing parts of the work.

The interference of the public into the artwork interfering in public space and experience, especially in urban settings, is not uncommon. Well-known public conflicts regarding art in public spaces range from Richard Serra's experience with 'Tilted Arc' to street artist Banksy's unintentional involvement in realty values in Hackney.

 "On the day Richard Serra's 'Tilted Arc' was removed from the Federal Plaza in Lower Manhattan, the administrator of the federal government's Art-in-Architecture Program declared that, "This is a day for the city to rejoice because now the plaza returns rightfully to the people." Advocates of public art often seek to resolve confrontations between artists and other users of space through procedures that are routinely described as "democratic." Examples of such procedures are "community involvement" in the

selection of works of art or the so-called "integration" of artworks with the spaces they occupy. Leaving aside the question of the necessity for, and desirability of, these procedures, note that to take for granted that they are democratic is to presume that the task of democracy is to settle, rather than sustain, conflict."[17]



**Figure 6: Özgür Demirci, Du kan pissa här Destroyed Version, Keycap Installation, 2009, Göteborg**

I would like to share a viewer's opinion about Banksy's work. The following letter is a good example showing how public art effects the public. In this letter we have a chance to understand one of the many reasons why sometimes people want to remove or destroy artworks.

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[17] http://www.thephotographyinstitute.org/journals/1998/rosalyn_deutsche.html, June 20, 2010

Letter To Banksy

"I don't know who you are or how many of you there are but I am writing to ask you to stop painting your things where we live. In particular xxxxx road in Hackney. My brother and me were born here and lived here all our lives but these days so many yuppies and students are moving here neither of us can afford to buy a house where we grew up anymore. Your graffiti are undoubtedly part of what makes these wankers think our area is cool. You're obviously not from round here after you've driven up the house prices you'll probably just move on. Do us all favour and go do your stuff somewhere else, like Brixton."[18]

**Second: Function Keycap Installations**

After all text installations I decided to use other function keycaps that did not correspond to a single letter or punctuation mark, but to entire actions, i.e. *Home, ESC, Print Screen, Delete.* I tried to create nonfunctional keycaps in public spaces. First, I started to install *Print Screen* keycap on to the trams' GPS screens.

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[18] The Politics of Magma, Art Monitor University of Gothenburg, P: 61

**Figure 7: Özgür Demirci, Print Screen, Keycap Installation, 2009, Göteborg**

By placing nonfunctional computer function keycaps (Ctrl, Delete, ESC) on functional facilities, I have allowed the public using these facilities with small opportunities of interference through my work. I observed that each viewer who came in contact with my installations expected an action to take place even for the briefest moment.

I kept working in different spots and locations. After my installations, I watched people's reaction to my works. Many people tried to press the keycaps in order to print out the timetable. Contrary to my expectations, my installations gave no functionality but I had attained a chance to criticize functionalism in public spaces.

The facilities used in public service all have a function with a public interest. For instance; the information panels used at bus stations inform people about when public transportation vehicles will arrive or car park machines allow people to pay after they park their cars. This expectancy arose from their unquestioned trust to the facilities they used in daily life without encountering any problems. With the addition of a small detail, I had provided the viewer with an opportunity to questioning the functionality of daily life's facilities, even for a short time.

By using the function keycaps on the other placements, I have tried to identify the buttons' own meanings with the place. For example, by placing the keycap 'Print Screen' to the backbone of a bridge where a beautiful view could be seen, I have directed viewer to perceive the view together with a small detail, creating the illusion of a screen. Thus, I had created a connection between the viewer and the small detail I used in this public place to create my work. Forming this connection largely depended on the fact that people who came into contact with the work already used computers on a frequent basis. Nowadays, almost everybody is in contact with a computer somehow; thus, the keycaps I use become a tool that directs the viewer to different perception of the location instead of

standing out as foreign objects unrelated to the place.

My small installations are like pedestrians: people can meet them when they are walking on the street. I like the adhoc query when they see my works.
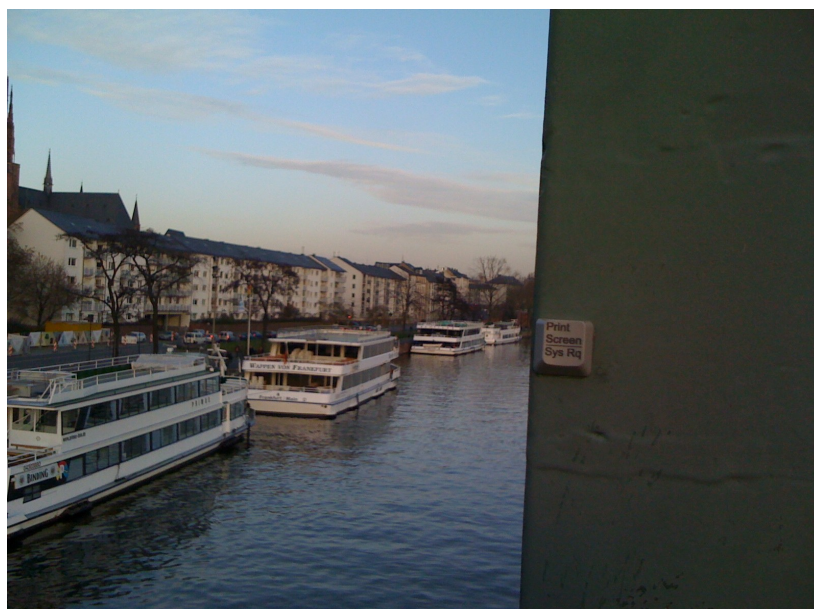


**Figure 8: Özgür Demirci, Print Screen, Keycap Installation, 2009, Frankfurt**



**Figure 9: Özgür Demirci, Delete, Keycap Installation, 2009, Frankfurt**

## Inspirations And Other Reasons for Choosing Punishment

### First: The Wall

It was upon watching Alan Parker's 1982 film The Wall that I realized I was not the only one who had issues with educational institutions and the system.

 The screenplay was written by Pink Floyd's vocalist and bassist Roger Waters. It was especially impressive to me that it was the true story of Roger Waters. I empathized with the movie especially since my experiences in educational system match the oppression he left. It was the art education I received during and after collage that allowed me to notice things and feel free to express criticism. It is quite ironic about my standardized education to be thanks to my art education.

After the Industrial Revolution, both society and the people's expectations changed. We have to receive a certain amount of education in order to be a good citizen and beneficial for society. In one of his TED website speeches, Author/educator Ken Robinson points out the overriding hierarchy of subjects throughout education systems around the world. He observes that  "At the top are mathematics and languages, then the humanities, and the bottom are the arts." He goes onto point out a further hierarchy within the arts as well, stating that art and music come on top.  … There isn't an education system on the planet that teaches dance every day to children the way we teach them mathematics. ...Truthfully, what happen is, as children grow up, we start to educate them progressively from the waist up. And then we focus on their heads. and slightly to one side." [17]

My experiences in the Turkish educational system, where we wore uniforms and read the same speeches out-loud together and had a single hour of music, a single hour of art and two hours of physical education in an entire week of thirty hours are proof enough that mandatory education was not designed to raise a well-rounded individual, at least on this side of the world.

Ken Robinson points out that (our) *education system is predicated on the idea of academic ability.* He states that the *whole system was invented* in the 19th century to meet the needs of industrialism. In his observation, most useful subjects in which one should work were placed on top, rendering other areas of interest that were given less attention

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[17] http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity.html, June 21, 2010

and time at school useless.

Furthermore, he observes that our perception of intelligence is faulty, that it focuses on academic ability *because the universities designed the system in their image.*

Even though I have chosen to focus mainly on primary and secondary school experiences, especially those implementing a standardized student through a variety of methods including punishment, Ken Robinson's observations and remarks on higher education underline similar issues that are carried on to university education.

The picture Ken Robinson points for the future is not very optimistic. He quotes UNESCO's research results to announce that more people than ever in history will be graduating through education around the world in the next 30 years. He calls this situation as an *academic inflation* and says that *it indicates the whole structure of education is shifting beneath our feet.*

Surely, if there is action to be taken in this regard, it should start with the primary school systems around the world and more beyond. The emphasis on education seems to have been misplaced somehow along the way.

**Figure 10: The Wall, Alan Parker, 1982**

**Reference Artist**

**Ayşe Erkmen**

During my Bachelor's degree education in Istanbul, I met many artists who worked in public space and used texts in their work. I owe much inspiration in the realization of my thesis project to these artists.

Amongst these inspiring art figures was Ayşe Erkmen, and amongst her works, it was *On The House* that triggered many ideas in for my own public art works.

An article published in the Dbartmag of 2008 on *On The House* defines the work as " using relatively simple means" and remarks that "it illustrates highly complex relationships of belonging and alienation, migration and change."[19]

Installed on the façade of a residental building in Kreuzberg, an area of Berlin where a lot of Turkish immigrants live, *On The House* consists of 40 strings of letters in Turkish in black plexiglass. These  word fragments have no meaning by themselves but they are easily recognized by the Turkish speaker as suffixes used in verb conjugations.

On the artist's official website, the work is described as follows: "The artist signalized that they are to be added to by placing a hyphen at the beginning and a full stop at the end of each fragment. Local Turkish residents could well understand this as a challenge to complete the 'game.' But it is just as likely that they also find it disconcerting to suddenly see something familiar and original to their language, namely the variants of a specific past tense, in an 'alien' context. In contrast, a viewer without any knowledge of Turkish can only discern that the strings of the letters are differentiated grammatical forms. In this way, the so-called outsider in German society becomes the insider, while conversely the insider is now the outsider."[20]

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[19] http://dbkunst.medianet.de/dbartmag/archiv/2008/e/5/1/628.html, June 14, 2010

[20] http://www.ayseerkmen.com/, June 20, 2010

**Figure 11: Ayşe Erkmen, On the House, Installation, Berlin, 1994**

I am an advocate for using public space as a way to communicate with people. Each public space has qualities and dynamics that remain silent. It is important for me to put these dynamics into words and draw attention to them by the use of text. Erkmen's *On The House* does this by the use of Turkish suffixes in an area occupied by immigrants. I attempt it by using function keys as commentaries or fully verbalizing aspects of the space that remain unspoken.

Turkish curator Adnan Yıldız observes that while Erkmen surfaces aspects of space, she does not push towards an *inevitable reading*: "Since the title of the installation is *On the House,* it can be seen as a way of getting into a relationship with a context through a specific site that could bring up some unspeakable aspects of the space but does not have to provide an inevitable reading. The piece is openly waiting for anyone who will see it or ignore it.

…Erkmen reflects that the audience is free to think about the piece and to get out of it whatever they want. Likewise, how the work is going to survive also should not be only decided by the artist but also by the people who have it in their everyday life"[21]

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[21] http://www.cagdassanat.com, (May 20, 2010), Space between space, Adnan Yıldız

This work by Erkmen had a big effect on the development of my work. People living inside the selected building and the area had produced a direct connection with the work made. I used this type of connection for my own placement in *Penalty Area* as well. With the stencil writing technique and the font I chose, I emphasized producing work suitable to the area's fabric as the area used to be heaving graffitied and stenciled until about a decade ago . The texts placed on the outer façade of the building provided direct communication with passers-by in this area.

Even though the text I chose *I WILL NEVER DO THAT AGAIN* was very personal since it focused on the self and my history, by making it part of public life, I allowed the audience to not focus solely on the writer of the words, but also reflect on themselves.

In this aspect, the work lets the audience to go free and get out what they want. Whether the work becomes a permanent part of the public landscape or not is also up to the public in this sense.

**Exhibition Place: Röda Sten**

Our graduation exhibition took place at Röda Sten. Before I started to realize my project, the exhibition place and its environment gave me an idea as to how I could present my work. Röda Sten used to be a heating factory during the 80's. Afterwords, the building was totally abandoned and people occupied it fro party-gatherings. Soon enough, the building was covered with graffiti on the walls. Even when the building was transformed into an exhibition space in the 90's, Röda Sten kept its tradition of graffiti writing on its walls.

During my research  and work process, I spent most of my time at Röda Sten. Every morning, I witnessed the funny rituals of Röda Sten. Almost every night some graffiti artists were making graffiti on the front wall of the building, which is normally used for advertising of ongoing exhibitions. In the mornings following a night of graffiti, Röda Sten's staff was erasing the graffiti by painting over them in black again. This ritual was repeated again and again during my research and work on this project. Repeatedly witnessing this ritual gave me the title of my work: *Penalty Area*. I got permission to make stencils on the outer façade of the exhibition place despite the ban on stencils and graffiti in public spaces in Sweden.

I decided to realize my work by using stencil techniques. Thus, my work could become

an organic be part of the building and environment. I also decided to use "**STENCIL STD**" font, which is really old and used for labelling in industrial areas. I chose this font in order to relate to the history of this old industrial-turned-artistic building.



**Figure 12: Röda Sten**

**Final Project: Penalty Area**

My final project at C:Art:Media, an installation called *Penalty Area,* was installed both inside and outside the exhibition place. I wrote the text *I WILL NEVER DO THAT AGAIN* by using stencil techniques on the outer façade of the building, and by using computer keyboard keycaps on the inside of the building.

Even though the text I wrote on the windows *I WILL NEVER DO THAT AGAIN* is a text I had revealed from personal experiences and regrets, the use of first person singular causes the viewer to embrace the sentence they read. Also the typography of the text I wrote avoided the work from belonging just to me: The text that I wrote provides the viewer to communicate with my work one by on by questioning him what he should not do again. The use of the word *that* instead of *it,* in the sentence emphasizes an action towards the past. Thus, I could provide the viewer with the opportunity to question his own past while I questioned my own past.

Though the text came from personal experience, it was not handwritten but stenciled, a more anonymous technique. With the use of stenciling, it appears that the text could have

been written by anyone instead of a deliberately acting artist. This allows the reader to embrace the text.

With the computer keycaps I placed at the exhibition place and around, I drew a connection between two works with the use of the same sentence. By using the building's windows as screens, I tried to give the impression that texts had been written to the windows by typing with the buttons inside. I tried to draw a connection with the viewer visiting the gallery by guiding to interpret the indoors space with the buttons as the lower-self. With their placement, the texts written on the windows also existed as this self's expression. Drawing from previous experiences with public areas, I wanted to use the buttons inside the exhibition place. As I has assumed, viewers tried to type by punching the buttons while reading the text on them. Even though the text was clearly present on the keycaps, the caps lacked their traditional functionality, causing the audience to question function. After this experience, the viewer who saw the text written outside had the opportunity to question himself by making the connection with the buttons inside. Many of the viewers that I talked to on opening day expressed experiencing my work this way. On the other hand, viewers who first saw the texts on the windows and then the buttons inside made the connection between the text on the windows and the buttons immediately upon seeing the buttons.

In both cases, I had allowed both groups of viewers to ask themselves a private question. What would I never do again? What would they never do again? Each viewer kept the question and answer to themselves. The text had allowed a private communication.

**The Creation Process**

In this part, I would like to discuss in more detail how I created *Penalty Area.*

As I mentioned earlier, my starting point and main inspiration was punishment in education. When I researched school punishment, I found different definitions of school punishment, according to the denotation of school discipline; "school discipline is the system of rules, punishments and behavioral strategies appropriate to the regulation of children and the maintenance of order in schools. The aim of school discipline is, ostensibly, to create a safe and conducive learning environment in the classroom. In a classroom where a teacher is unable to maintain order and discipline, the climate for

learning is diminished."[22] This definition shows that punishment is a part of school discipline and school discipline is a part of education; thus punishment is a part of education.

In my point of view, punishment is a physical action used for sanctioning; hence, making people feel guilty and depressed. In time, persons who have been punished in one way or another feel more and more the detrimental effects of punishment. These detrimental effects may play a big role in a person's future life. It is impossible to ignore the detrimental effects of the past in a person's character. There are two ways to live with these detrimental effects: the  person can accept everything without criticizing and continue life, as decided by someone, or he can become aware of nature of the experiences and injustice, build his life despite to this. I switched from the first to the second only after technical school and my work was composed by my decision. After the elementary education I started to criticize my experiences from the school life. I was inspired by my educational and punitive experiences when I created *Penalty Area*.

### Connection Between Experiences And Art Practice

After analyzing the concept of punishment, I wanted to explain how I made a connection with my experiences and my art practice.

Since I decided to use text for my project, I tried varieties of text in order to explain punishment with a single phrase. It was probably the hardest part of my creation process since  my previous works, all included expression of my ideas by using visuals. I had to express my idea by using text, without relying on visuals and coming up with a brief and yet expressive enough phrase was a challenge.

### The Text

I chose  the punishment method widely known as *Writing Lines*  as a reference for my work.

*Writing lines* is a form of punishment handed out to misbehaving students by teachers at schools in many countries of the world. This punishment involves copying a sentence on

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[22] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/School_discipline, May 17, 2010

a blackboard as many times as the teacher requires. The sentence to be copied may be related to the reason the lines are being given, for instance "I must do my homework". The number of lines to be written may be 100 or more. Teachers issue more lines in order to hurt the offending students' fingers and hands. Another punishment makes an exemplary show for other students.

**Penalty Area**

The text, *I WILL NEVER DO THAT AGAIN* arose from the *Writing Lines* punishment.

It was very important for me that this sentence express a more general situation with its meaning. When creating this work the starting point was my personal experience but I wanted everyone to empathize with my work through their own background.

As I mentioned before, the font *Stencil STD* I used addresses the history of the exhibition space as well as the graffiti tradition in that area.

The realization of my work became a punishment for myself. With this paradox, I became the one who gave the punishment and got punished as well. After this process, the work which I created, became a part of and also a critique to punishment. The result was rather ironic.

Other issues which I wanted to point out, were dissatisfaction and self-criticism. Dissatisfaction and self-criticism are two feelings which I often face after I finish an artwork. The completion of a work always gives me feeling of dissatisfaction and I always find myself saying, *I will never do that again.* This feeling helps me discover new materials and different subject matters each time.

**Figure 13: Özgür Demirci, I will never do that again, Installation, Göteborg, 2010**

**Conclusion**

My purpose of performing this project was to aestheticize my anger against the past by combining my past experiences with my current art practice. After the observations and installations I had made in public areas during the term I lived in Sweden, I had determined the set-up for my project.

I did not have a net result that I was after with this project, it was more of a discovery through interactions of the piece with audience. The most important thing for me was to approach the process again with a critical eye, by looking over it. By exhibiting the work I made, shared the process I experienced with the viewer and provided the viewer to go through a similar process by questioning his own past.

I will continue to direct my art life with my impression and experiences gained from life. I believe that the experiences I had while I was performing this work will be a good background for the works I will make in the future.

**Appendix 1: Catalogue Text**

**By Laura Mott**

The tenuous boundaries of the individual's role in social and public space are often under investigation in Özgür Demirci's work, which he explores through a wide range of mediums—including painting, installation, printed material, and performance.  Much of this work is influenced by the aesthetic decisions and class distinctions that make up the contemporary city of Istanbul, where he has primarily lived and worked as an artist.  He also examines the public character of "the artist" in this social system and the persona can take literal or fictive forms.

At <u>Röda</u> Sten, Özgür has covered the windows on the exterior of the building with pieces of board inscribed with the repeated text "I Will Never Do That Again". This is reminiscent of the punishment sometimes used for school children; they are reprimanded by having to write their mistake over and over again in front of their peers. The viewer questions what kind of public punishment is being administered here—does it come from the artist or the institution itself? —however, it is purposefully open-ended, so the viewer can formulate an answer that is applicable to themselves.

Also, throughout exhibition spaces inside, Özgür has installed several small interventions: he has formed phrases using keyboard keys glued directly on the wall. He has done these keyboard sentences in the public sphere before, finding that people often touch or remove them, thereby creating a tactile connection between the viewer and the text.

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