

dare not stop

Things we might have seen before don't look the same anymore. Some things or something. A situation, an everyday constellation, daily walks to the work place, passing by the same shops and buildings, car parks or malls. The same people taking the same bus in the morning, waiting at a bus stop, getting stuck in the same traffic jams. Things as routines, routines as things. While our minds and senses often trick us. We don't actually see (notice) the buildings, shop windows, construction sites, trees, people we are passing by every day. We might be drifting off, encapsulated, bothered with things not yet done, should have been done, to be done. With whatever stuff and worries. We hardly focus on what's around us. And instead of looking for the excitement in changing the flows of everyday routines, we tend to project ourselves into the extra-ordinary by all means necessary.

That's where Lisa Størseth Pettersen's making is taking shape. We might call it a site-specific performative intervention, or a choreography that gently disrupts the order of things in a way that the ordinary begins to shine. To be seen, to be heard. This minimal invasive surgery takes enormous effort to be realised successfully. A generative gesture as an act of creation that doesn't direct the attention to the artist, but towards things, places, people, moments that are usually not seen. Or dismissed. As if the artistic labour needs to become invisible to make invisible labour visible. A complex, entangled process of decision making is behind turning the everyday into a scenography, a set, a stage.

I began seeing things happen in Risvollan a few years ago. Risvollan Borettslag is a housing area in the outskirts of Trondheim, built in the 1970s with the ambition to provide affordable homes for a growing population. Lines of terraced houses designed for small families. Cars banned to adjacent parking spaces. A socio-spatial arrangement where child-friendliness, guarding, care taking, community building, surveillance and teen-gang activities can easily blend into each other. Just like in countless other similar housing projects. An outstanding marker in the area is the so-called Risvollan tower, with shopping facilities on the ground floor and apartments stacked on top of each other. The only concrete building in the neighbourhood, usually perceived as ugly. It's an area the artist knows well. She can tell what's happening by listening to the pipes. She turned the surroundings into material to work with. For one hour, on May 22 in 2019, she enchanted the rather bleak ground floor of the Risvollan tower, surfacing what might be called the poetics of concrete. *A Song for Risvollan Senter.*

"Cosmic Love" was the fairly well-known song chosen. Written by Florence Welch and Isabella Summers, released in the album, *Lungs* in 2009. Here, in Risvollan Senter, the three-minute charming pop song was sung acapella, without further electronic amplification and repeated for an hour with a three-minute break after each song. Sung by two women living in the same housing block, who had responded to an open call that the artist had distributed. While singing, they took turns stoically walking the same course, down the stairs, up the escalator, both wearing the same ordinary clothes. Only their voices radiated across the entire floor. There was

no assigned place for an audience to stand and watch. The soundscape became a score for any random action, for all sights the passers-by could capture. Like turning the whole space into something cinematic, playing with the affective potential of an uplifting melody, estranged through the on and off, repeated to the extent that the feel-good had long turned into a slightly enervating loop. Sound creates the image and sets the tone.

Things we might have seen before don't look the same anymore. Their order is out of place. What we have heard before, but never listened to. Used to filtering out Muzak in any shopping mall, our ears were hit by the clear, pure voices of a hairdresser and a social administrator, airing and repeating a popular song without further instrumental support. Becoming popular, not by imitating or appropriating a pop star attitude in a karaoke or cover-band-like stage setting, but by taking space through their voices and minimal movements in their everyday environment. Exposing and blurring assigned boundaries. Becoming actors in an art student's performance project. Everyone involved in that process had to leave comfort zones. To become comfortable in being uncomfortable. Or rather: dare to not stop once one step has been taken and the ground begins to get shaky. Taking ownership of the everyday and turning it into a platform to move things out of order. Chantal Akerman's shopping-mall musical *Golden Eighties* might come to mind.

I saw things being transposed again a few years later. *Is it the sea?* A record player at the entrance of a small fiskemottaket on the Fjord in Ila, Trondheim – the first access point for fishermen to weigh and store their catch before the fish gets further distributed. A ballad played over and over again: "Is it the sea?" Familiar and

strange, estranged. Bonnie Prince Billy's live album of the same name and the record player were borrowed from the public library. As if in search of an answer, the nostalgic-sounding indie-pop song had been carried to the sea, offering a soundtrack to the shift-rhythms of those whose labour interacts with the sea. Like an experiment for sensing the frictions between two-three distinct worlds overlaying each other. Could we hear it? And setting up a frame for chance to happen. But what would an audience be coming to see? The artist had invited an amateur choir to take over, to use the place for their weekly gathering, and suggested the song— quite unusual for their repertoire— to learn and rehearse. Over the course of an hour, in the twilight of September 29, 2021, one could listen to a process of gaining confidence. Uneasy, insecure voices at first, getting stronger, into the flow, self-assured through repetition. And indeed, a great catch of langoustines was delivered.

There were other things I couldn't attend— various choreographies of displacing and rearranging zones of comfort, nerve-racking, audacious and against all odds— anything but a routine or business as usual. Precise, small, generous, shape shifting interventions that resist documentation and I am aware that I don't know what happened although I have seen pictures. Curious to find out what will happen now with fundamentally changed parameters, I know it will always be different from what I imagine.

annett busch