



# **CONTEXTUALIZATION AND PRESENCE IN VISUAL ARTS**

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Degree Thesis for Novia University of Applied Sciences ( Master of Culture and Arts)

Degree Programme in Master of Culture and Arts, Entrepreneurship in the Arts

Jakobstad, Finland 2016

# MASTER'S THESIS

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Title: Contextualization and Presence in Visual Arts

Date: 14.4.2016      Number of Pages: 46      Appendices 0

## Summary:

My thesis is a study divided in three parts. The first part of the thesis elaborated on how text has become a part of contemporary art. I open up the term logos and demonstrate how it has increasingly intervened in creating information that is considered to be crucial in understanding art today.

I start by investigating the ancient Greek meaning of the word and language. I proceed with building the argument by examining the use of text in an artwork. Finally coming to conclusions that implicate that the use of text has made art more rationalized.

In the second chapters I examine what the Greek philosophical term constant present originally meant. In the following chapters I take a closer look at this term including how it can be related in the visual arts today. I also bring up the concept of distorted glory which I believe is a closely related problem against achieving presence.

The third chapter of the thesis concentrates on a more personal artistic analysis, bringing the thoughts raised in the two first chapters under a more subjective consideration. I elaborate how the presence and continuity as well as, abstract and conceptual thinking are, part of my artistic character and examine how the 17th century term Vanitas is related to the essence of my art. The final chapter draws conclusions about the thoughts the themes of this thesis has risen.

Language: English

Keywords: Fine Arts, Philosophy, Conceptual Art, Vanitas

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## INTRODUCTION

The contextualization and the constant present in visual arts are diverse concepts. In my thesis I examine how these concepts are related to the contemporary arts. By using especially the philosophy of Martin Heidegger and through images I open these terms in a complex way. The red thread of the thesis being my own artistic essence and thinking. Focusing on how constant present and spirituality with the use of abstract and the conceptual contexts build an existential entity in my artistic practise.



# 1. INTERPRETATION VS ARTWORK

## 1.1 ABOUT CONTEXTUALIZATION

I begin this thesis by explaining the ancient Greek term *logos*. In my examination of *logos* I have used Heidegger's interpretation. I find Heidegger's knowledge and understanding of art in general suitable for presenting the term *logos* with the aim to understand the use of text in visual arts today. Heidegger approaches the question of the being in a way that is closely related to my thinking. Heidegger's knowledge and viewpoints of how an artwork is, are already well explained in the classical Heidegger book: *Origin of the Artwork*. I see Heidegger's philosophy actual for the art scene today because he uses classical existential questions in a spiritual way that appreciates art. In the book: *Introduction of Metaphysics* he brings up terminology of the ancient Greek that I find essential opening up the question of the contextualization. Terms like *logos* and *constant present* are terms that I use the whole thesis through in order to come closer to problems that the increasing use of text in the visual arts has done. These terms also for me operate as keys to open up the personal analysis of the art I create. But first it is crucial to go back into the beginning, into a time where according to Heidegger the separation between human and nature began in the form of sense and being, Heidegger believed, the human sense, to be superior against the being (nature). This separation eventually made it possible for Christianity to adopt the word (*logos*) and make it the "word" the truth that laid ground to, Western thinking and understanding of being. Hence, it is necessary to start with, what the ancient term *logos* meant and how it still reflects the way we see and use sense when experiencing art. For me this rift between being and *logos* is highly topical, since the use of, the texts has increased in the visual arts through the rise of Avantgarde and conceptual art movements. It is important still to acknowledge that even though I consider the separation between the *logos* (word) and the being, being is considered to be something evident in the understanding of visual arts today. Here I, examine the use of text, in visual arts only, not undermining art-fields like literature and poetry. When examining and referring to this rift between being and word, I am simultaneously referring to the rift between visual arts and being as well as to, how visual arts are increasingly understood through sense and not through authentic experience. I believe that the rationalization of everything has led to the use of texts in visual arts with the expense of the irrational and free interpretation of the artwork.

### 1.1.1 LOGOS AND ART

Crucial change evolved with the emergence of, the Late Greek (300 B.C) philosophical concept of logos. Aristotle developed logos into a language and separated it from the physis (being), therefore beginning a series of events that still prevail in the visual arts scene. Heidegger wrote:

*Now we must trace what becomes of logos, in accordance with the reinterpretation of physis. The opening up of beings happens in logos as gathering. Gathering is originally accomplished in language. Thus logos becomes the definitive and essential determination of discourse. Language, as what is spoken out and said, and as what can be said again, preserves in each case the being that has been opened up.*

(Heidegger, 2000, p.240).

This development meant that the being was submersed under the language (logos), and measured through categories which lead to the birth of ontology. As logos became truth the sentence became the place for the categories and validity. From this point on being and unconcealment were, judged by, how valid the sentence, could proved to be. It changed the way of experiencing and comprehending as validity also meant an ability, to be judged and measured. The tangible forms and prevailing objects stepped forward as they could be judged more easily. The sense built values and the most noble became the highest possible state and the logos (sentence) a place for to prove the claim right or wrong. Thinking and sense became superior against the being. Thus when Descartes in the 17th century said: *I think therefore I am* (Descartes, 1956, p.34). he made it very clear how subjective existence was later considered to be. Progress of sense took its peak in the 19th century when in philosopher Hegel's dialectic logos was raised to its highest meaning: logic.

*At the end of the Greek philosophy this progress of logos lead to the birth of, Christianity and the logos became the word of God. God was valid and almighty in the sentence. With the actual appearance of truth in the form of the Godman, the Greek thinkers' philosophical knowledge of the rule of logos over all beings was validated* (Heidegger, 2000, p. 171-172). However we interpret this development, it surely changed the history of the Western world in a devastating way. Existence was for thousands of years to serve and be controlled by the Christianity. The morality and the way of seeing and comprehending things changed. The being and things we consider being "constant present" developed into the terminology that consisted of be-

liefs and values. Being was for a long time imprisoned by the judgement and the validity of Christianity. The rise of the individuality and the nature sciences in the 18th century slowly started to break this system. Charles Darwin's evolution theory gained popularity and the human being started to be even more the center of the universe.

### 1.1.2 THE CONTEXTUALIZING OF ART

The title of the work has tremendous value: often we see an artwork that opens up in the form of an explanation through text. This development has raised the value of the logos in the form of existence into new heights. The “constant” present and the experience of the being are revealed in the form of spoken or written words. The need for additional explanation in order to understand has led us to this point where the intangible has been lost even further into the artwork. An artwork as a piece that reveals the existence has been lost in the translation of it. What this development has done to contemporary art has been noticeable. As the sense and within the sentence and values took over in the Late Greek philosophy it changed the way we experience things substantially - even though the use of values and categories has led to the progress of modern day society and welfare. It has also shaped how we exist and what we strive for in the world. The rapid change that began in the 19th century due to the technological revolution has been the cornerstone of the global capitalistic world. The values we have adopted have moulded us to believe in the values that consider us to be the rulers of nature. This alignment has changed the way we see our existence. This long separation from the being has led to the fact that we consider ourselves apart from nature and being. We often find it very difficult to understand our role as a part of the world even though nature stands nearest to us.

In contemporary art the category of art is a complex field. What the category has done to contemporary art is that it has both widened and diminished the art field. Through categorisation, art has become increasingly institutionalised and academic. What is positive, is that with the rapid technological progress and individual freedom art has found totally new and unseen mediums and evolved into multiple categories. Through education and institutions art is more and more diverse and complex, contributing to the increased understanding of life. As art is one of the reforming categories of life it has contributed by being the leading force of breaking down and creating new ground in the established and shrunken human paradigms. On the other hand the institutionalisation of art has diluted the art field and contributed in creating a language for art that is mainly comprehensible for the educated people of the art field. This development has enhanced building persuasions and in one sense been partly responsible for the difficulties that contemporary art faces today when trying to reach a larger public. Simultaneously, with the increase of capitalistic values in the world, the materialism and objectivisation have put pressure on how to designate art. In a more and more commercial

world, the visuality has become a standard that serves the need of commerce. Artworks are regarded as objects to sell, aesthetic values have become increasingly assimilated with the enjoyment and entertainment aspect. Popular culture and art have vacillatingly merged into a totality where in some instances it has become hard to separate them from the true aim of their essence. The categorisation has meant that the interpretation of an artwork has become incrementally based on the information that an artwork can provide. In visual arts the title of the work has through ages been an important resource in order to understand the artwork. With the rise of conceptual art from the 1950's, the dependency on information on an artwork has increased. This development of the conceptual in arts has led to the point in contemporary art today where an artwork is often experienced first through textual description. When the title used to be the key to open up some of the artworks, now it is in some of the cases a keyring that is needed to open up an artwork. The text (logos) has verified and augmented its position in understanding visual arts today. Visual arts today carry the fact that in order to understand most of the artwork we need to have more information than the usual title of the artwork. In fact, some of the artworks of today cannot be understood or experienced without the information or explanation that is often written as a part of the artwork. This tendency of the need to explain art through speech or text is problematic. It can widen the gap of experiencing an artwork comprehensible only for those who can the language of art, it can also do the opposite: it can conduct us to predetermined answers in front of an artwork. In either cases, the simplicity of an artwork, and its function can be endangered. An artwork carries an artistic utterance and the an intangible core. The way to that core can be lost in the translation when the journey there becomes too filtered. It is important that an artwork can stand on its own and project its existence and its intent. The need for explanations only compromises the strength that every good artwork illuminates. When we understand an artwork through text (logos) and make judgements that are based on the textual guidance, we narrow the experience into the basic claims that the text guides us to feel and experience, and therefore evaluate the artwork by the claims that the text offers and how well the artwork responds to those claims. Out of that, simple judgements are often made, such as whether the artwork is either good (functioning) or bad (non-functioning). Contextualisation in visual arts has partly made artworks into these claims and has alienated arts from its original function: that is to be free to create and offer new thinking and unknown experiences. The biggest problem of this trend is that it turns arts closer to science and to the

way we use research in science. Today, we are more and more trying to adopt into arts the mediums used in science. It is not possible since art is something that contain feelings and experiences that are not be measured or even to be fully understood. Art is not a matter of sense it is a matter of sensibility in order to experience. Because of institutions and historical norms artworks are always partly evaluated by standards and contexts that are set before. These contexts are (nevertheless) difficult to shake off since they help us to understand the artwork more easily. Still narrowing down the artwork into claims if an artwork is true (good) or false (bad) is too narrow. It leaves out speciousness and decreases the possibility to interpret an artwork more subjectively. Surely it is not possible to be totally objective when experiencing an artwork because we carry personal history and (often) unconsciously place the artwork in a frame that has been created into our minds through personal experiences, memories, values, public opinions and prejudices.

Painter Ad Reinhardt took the concept of art being something else than subjective life even further by saying that: *Art is art-as-art. Everything else is everything else* (Reinhardt, 1995, p.61). Formulating art as being something that is totally indifferent from other categories and aspects of life, he laid ground for postmodern thinking. Art would be seen as something totally else than the other areas of life. To understand this theory better he also wrote in 1953 in the book *Art as Art*:

*The essence of art defines the outline that divides art from all the other essences and things. The essence of art is not related to the essence of the comprehension, to the essence of light, to the essence of space, to the essence of time, to the essence of mankind, to the essence of universe, to the essence of creation or to the essence of life.* (Reinhardt, 1995, p.66)

By this Reinhardt makes a statement that can be seen as an effort to detach art from everything else. At the same time he encloses art into a category that is not liable for anything or anyone other than the ones that are in the field of art. The progress of art being inaccessible is a rising problem among art today. Saying this, Reinhardt also endangers art to be turned into academism and elitism. In the 20th century Dada, Conceptual art and Pop-art were partly born as a counterforce to fight against the increasing capitalistic values of the world. Simultaneously these diverse genres made art more complex and individualistic. They increased the

artistic freedom to a point where almost whatever can be done in the name of the art. This development has led to a remarkable improvement in the artist's role in the world. The problem has been that this freedom has also reckoned the quality of art since the artist himself was lifted to new heights. Individualistic values have since the 1960's progressed the march building societies that admire and worship the freedom and personal expression. In a way it has also led to a point now in contemporary art where artists tangle between the commercial and non-commercial purposes. Since self-expression has also become even more complex, artists are today in a way making icons that are not targeted to anyone.

Paul Verhaeghe raises an interesting point about the modern day Western societies by saying: *In all the other structures - religious and ideological - there was a shortage. The media's big other denies this shortage and tells us to enjoy by turning this enjoyment into our moral duty* (Verhaeghe, 2010, p.47).

According to Verhaeghe many of us today lack the signifier, the leader, a God. As for substitute we search and find some response from capitalism, we turn to money and media, they are a modern man's God. The difference is that this "God" promises us the fulfilment like Verhaeghe says that religion or ideology could not provide us. The problem is that in capitalism there are mute leaders and empty truths, because it is run by the capitalistic truth that mainly aims to make profit in the form of money. For the ordinary people this capitalistic ideology is well hidden in the layers of the market and media. The leaders of companies are unreachable and numb, as the capitalistic machinery goes on. Instead we are taught to live in a state of need. The leaders offering us the truths to follow make us turn to the media to provide them. Capitalism is a tempting illusion that provides us something immediate on the contrary to the ideologies or the religions Verhaeghe writes: *Nowadays the capitalistic discourse mediates a totally different kind of message: shortage is pure coincidence, a full answer is possible. To fulfil the shortage the subject is this way guided to objects, not to other subjects.* (Verhaeghe, 2010, p.50). The problem with capitalistic truth is that it distorts the human existence and the need. In capitalism we seek approval and fulfilment through objects, the basic connections between humans are being valued by benefits. The capitalistic ideology of trade turns people into trade and by that also into objects. Because of this we have to form ourselves into these ideal personas in order to compete and have some market value. One of the most brutal examples of how human beings have been turned into commodities is trafficking; this can be well seen with the refugee crisis that Europe is fac-



ing at the moment. The quick fix and fulfilment that capitalism offers is an illusion. There is no fulfilment in getting more and more objects. It is just like heroin is for the junkie, the need to fulfil a shortage with objects is only a momentary high. The moment passes and we get the same urge back. There is not either any morality in capitalism the only morality we can find in existence is through a connection to nature and most of the human morality comes and is developed from contacts with other people. The real morality comes from how we treat others and how respect and caring are shown in our words and in our actions towards others. In arts it is the same, if we consider everything as objects we turn art into enjoyment and commodity and lose the individuality of an artwork. Unfortunately, for many, art is just decoration and mere illustration and this progress can well be seen in how, for example, many people have stopped to appreciate authenticity in arts. For many art is convenient and suitable when the painting fits with the colour of the sofa. Everything is for sale and everything is possible to fulfil with money. But this worldview just alienates us because art is not something that ever fully fulfils anything, it just exist without any practical purpose (not making art unworthy). The value of the art as in spiritual life lies in the unfulfilment. The seed of the truth is in the authentic and gratuitous everyday communication between us and the world. The understanding of the world exists in the small and in the (often considered meaningless) everyday actions.

### 1.1.3 INTERLUDE AS AN EXAMPLE



Picture 1. Guemberena, Juan-Pedro Fabra (2012) *Interlude* (Seven bronze sculptures).

### 1.1.3 INTERLUDE AS AN EXAMPLE

Juan-Pedro Fabra Guemberena's artwork *Interlude* (see picture 1) is a good example of how the visual arts, through text and language, communicate and entwine in a visual artwork. At the first glimpse the artwork opens up seven different highly formalistic abstract sculptures - sculptures that refer to a rather traditional and modernist context. Similarities with the groundbreaking Italian sculptor Alberto Giacometti (1901-1961) are apparent. Like Giacometti's sculptures, this artwork also contains thin and fragile forms with a sense of roughness in the way the hard material is worked. At closer look you get a feeling of explosion or almost like fluids have been paused and frozen. The title of the work *Interlude* does not open the artwork more meaningfully. The catch of this artwork lies in the information text:

*The series of sculptures (Interlude) cast in bronze, are the results of shootings with different ammunitions against ballistic soap blocks. Ballistic soap is a testing medium scientifically correlated to muscle tissue, in which the effects of bullet wounds can be simulated. The sculptures are hence the effect of seven different types of rounds and the cavity that is produced immediately when the bullets penetrates the block. The method of production can be likened with that of photography as the sculptures are carried out instantaneously by their respective shot, whereupon the process of "developing" the cavities (images) into bronzes commence (Guemberena, Juan-Pedro Fabra 2012).*

This information is the key to the artwork, it changes everything. The whole essence of the artwork opens up with this information. Suddenly the forms have meaning and the essence is bound together in an alliance with the meaning of this work. Without the text this work is only shallow outlines and an empty shell of a sculpture. This way of presenting is becoming more and more common in contemporary art today. The being and existence of this artwork relies on the textual (logos). This artwork is a symbiosis between the visual and the textual. The visual is often met first but in this case it would be more logical that the text is read first. The text is descriptive and non-artistic so its function is to operate only as a guidance of the work. The reason why this tendency of using text as part of the visual art is problematic is that it emphasizes the understanding of language. Within using a certain kind of language we are progressing and deepening the rift between the being and the sense. As we use language in this sense to make an artwork accessible we elevate the meaning of the language and undermine the visual experience. The language and words take over and the way

to experience becomes more given in advance. What the language also does to the artwork is that it draws from certain values and contexts and therefore hinders the objective experience of an artwork. Language is a way to comprehend and communicate but in art it can also be a distraction. The language of the *Interlude* provides us a moment of understanding. This moment of understanding however steer the experience to a more practical state. Problematic is that the practicality brings to an artwork the need to function. So what the textual does to *Interlude* is that steers the experience to the world of functions. To understand in art often mean the need to please the spectator and provide them the answers. By giving too much knowledge the artist instead define the visual artwork in a category, instead of creating an own language that works on an authentic and unrestricted manner. Every artwork should speak to us with its own and unseen language, with a pure and symbiotic way where the creator and perceiver meet in a neutral platform. Because the more we need to explain an artwork the more we build filters between the perceiver and the perception, and weaken the experience.

## 2. THE CONSTANT PRESENT AND THE GLORY

### 2.1 THE CONSTANT PRESENT

To understand and reflect on art today and on what an artwork meant and how it functioned in the beginning of the Greek high-culture, we must go to a time where the being and logos had a different meaning. Heraikletos and Parmenides were Greek philosophers (400-500 b.c) that represented a different kind of attitude towards the being. Unlike Late Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle they comprehended the world as an entity, as a place where the being consisted of a totality: *For the capricious, life is just life. For them, death is death and only that. But the Being of life is also death. Everything that comes to life thereby already begins to die as well, to go toward its death, and death is also life.* (Heidegger, 2000, p.139-140)

Heraikletos and Parmenides did not separate being beneath the thinking (sense) and therefore risk the objective observation of things and the presence of being. They lived in a world where time was not defined, where the past, the present and the future were one. Natural order (Cosmos) and mystical beliefs in Gods guided and gave them ease on their everyday-life. Their life consisted of a different kind of belief on present and on eternity. They did not separate nature from their existence, they understand the superiority of the being around and over them. For these Greek philosophers life and death were in a symbiosis with their being. This is easily understood when looking at their art, especially the theatre plays, the tragedies and the comedies that dealt with issues of life and death in the most serious manner and could not be differentiated from real life.

The ancient Greek's art was a demonstration between seeming, being and non-existing: *Being essentially unfolds as phusis. The emerging sway is an appearing. As such, it makes manifest. This already implies that Being, appearing, is a letting-step-forth from concealment.* (Heidegger, 2000, p. 142). For them Being always consisted of these three segments. An artwork opened the being in the unconcealment (aletheia) by moving the veil of the seeming aside. In the unconcealment the being was shown through an argument between the concealment and the unconcealment. It is also important to understand that when the unconcealment (truth) revealed itself in an artwork the "opening" was not a stable place where the being stayed still and was able to be experienced for long term. It was instead the argument that made the artwork "alive", the

constant battle between what is, what it seems to be, and what it is not. These elements of existence built the composition and the movement/flow between being and the becoming in the play that an artwork contained.

*The aim in ancient Greek art was to uphold this argument in an artwork and through that reveal the beauty (truth) of the being. Beauty however had a different meaning in the early Greek philosophy. Aesthetics is of a different opinion; it is as old as logic. For aesthetics, art is the display of the beautiful in the sense of the pleasant, the agreeable. And yet art is the opening up of the Being of beings. (Heidegger, 2000, p. 140)*

Aesthetics for Greek's was the bringing of the unconcealed into the light, it was an effort to capture that on-going moment of constant present that this argument upheld. The beauty was in this argument. It indifferently intrinsically the way Western art tradition is considered to be. Traditional Western art relies on and appreciates the aesthetic values when looking at art. Traditional Western art also appreciated the surface and the stories of the artworks provided, often having an authority and norms overseeing and forcing forth the imagery. It took until the late 19th century when the Aesthetic judgement and valuation started to break down, when the avant-garde movement introduced the aesthetics of ugliness in arts and started the reformation of the concept of beauty.

## 2.2 DISTORTED GLORY AND PRESENT

*In Hellenistic philosophy and in the New Testament, doxa theou, gloria Dei, is the majesty of God. To glorify, to bestow and demonstrate regard, is, in Greek, to place into the light and thereby to provide constancy, Being. Glory, for the Greeks, is not something additional that someone may or may not receive; it is the highest manner of Being. For us today, glory has long been nothing but celebrity, and as such it is a highly dubious matter, an acquisition thrown around and distributed by the newspaper and the radio—nearly the opposite of Being (Heidegger, 2000, p.108).*

The ancient Greeks believed that an artwork was the best method to demonstrate the constant present in its purest form. Through art they could exist in a higher manner and be glorified. Yet this glory was understood differently as Heidegger wrote. In contemporary art the essence of glory is becoming increasingly harder to designate. Technology and capitalistic values are constantly reforming the concept of glory. Through Internet (social media) and various applications the possibility for anyone to gain “glory” and become a “celebrity” has exploded. The individual human being is considered to be in the centre of the being and through computer applications like Instagram or Facebook “nobodies” can be a hit overnight. The power of the visual has strengthened its position in our societies as the chance to step into the light through visual imaginary has been made possible for individuals. In today’s society the impulses are thrown against us from everywhere. This information overflow has built and shattered everything into an increasing amount of categories. Today when a person experiences an artwork he/she can mostly certainly find a category that matches the profile. Putting everything into categories however has simultaneously diminished the free association of things and the objective observation of existence. The search for this kind of glory has become distorted since visibility today lives mostly on the values that worship the superficiality by appreciating the outer (form over essence). Primitive emotions and needs are highlighted in the social media. Human body (appearance) and the human achievements are shown off and being underlined. Looking from this angle the world seems to be living in a state of regress. We individuals live in world of diasporas where the truth is hidden under the many layers of the appearance. By building an ideal persona of ourselves, we are contributing in building a world that is based on the (short-time) appearance of things. This trend has led to scepticism and admiration over things and values that are not real. The being has been cast aside and it has been replaced with objects and values that humans perceive and try to imitate and live up to. The overflow



of information is also making it almost impossible to be “famous” for a long time and sadly the overflow of information also devours the authentic ones out there. The reason we are presenting an ideal picture of us is because we are searching for approval and validation from others. An increasing amount of humans are building an ideal image that is flawless and superior in order to stand in the limelight. People are constantly in the search of new ways to stand in the light (gain a constant present) and to build a connection with the world. Nevertheless through this orientation we are instead contributing in creating a persona that is untouchable, unbreakable, and (sadly) insensible. An artwork has also partly fallen into this system where we seek the approval from the authorities and the viewpoints of others. Some artists are trying to find connections that are based on the subjective appreciation of the form and on values that cannot be adjusted into arts. Anselm Kiefer said: *Art is about the connection between a person and the world. Things are being separated and the only way of bringing them together again and create context is art.* (Art is Spiritual 2010) Many people today are living in a world of constant update instead of constant present. We are building the connection to the world through contexts (social media e.t.c) that are constantly in need to be updated. Through this progress we are sinking deeper into the information over-flow. Kiefer also said that today we are not waiting anymore. That is true, technology has made waiting to a value that is juxtaposed with being bored and ineffective. But as light is for darkness so is wait as important to action. In a balanced state of making art the wait is an equal force with the making of something. For creativeness the pauses create the wait where actions have space and time to be bound together. Constant present has these both it has the wait and the action. Creating art and aiming for a constant present can be a glorified play that brings and breathes an artwork alive. So how could we capture present in arts today? Surely by starting to value the inner aims as we evaluate the outer object. Baseline for this direction could be what it meant for an ancient Greek to be an artist and to be glorified. It meant humbly, objectively and with all sense openly existing in the Cosmos as a Greek citizen as Heidegger describes Greek poet Pinderos being a part of the existence:

*If for Pindar glorifying constitutes the essence of poetry and is poetizing, and to poetize is to place into the light, then this by no means indicates that for him the concept of light plays a special role but simply that he thinks and poetizes as a Greek—that is, he stands in the allotted essence of Being.*

(Heidegger, 2000, p. 107-108).

## 2.3 THE SEARCH FOR THE CONSTANT PRESENT



Picture 2. Tanahashi, Kazuaki (2016) *Miracles of Each Moment, Black on White* (Acrylic on canvas 76 x 91 cm).

## 2.3 THE SEARCH FOR THE CONSTANT PRESENT

I want to bring up two examples of how two different techniques and ways of thinking in the visual arts reflect on the ideology of the constant present. First I am going to demonstrate how the traditional Japanese calligraphy drawings from the 18th century (up to now) have influenced thoughts about the present. In the second example I will use the English painter Francis Bacon's philosophy to open up the concept of immediacy. The concept of the Japanese calligraphies especially of the so called enso drawings (see picture 2) is to manifest the momentary of life. Enso symbolizes completeness, the Universe, absolute enlightenment as well as the void. Usually the circle is drawn with one human breath, with ink on a thin Japanese paper. The Circle is either closed or open depending on what the artist wants to express. If the circle is closed it demonstrates the perfection of life and when it is left open it demonstrates the imperfection of life. Enso drawings are a spiritual practise that can be done everyday. It reflects the character of the artist being in a symbiosis with its creation in a short, contiguous period of time. Once the Enso drawing is made the artist is not allowed to change it. The interesting thing in Enso drawings is the philosophy of how they are made. The moment is highlighted in the technique that is based on one moment of time, which is measured by the artist's breathing. With a couple of brushstrokes and with only one breath the artist creates enso this symbol of existentialism, which the artist then can repeat on a daily basis. Repetition offers continuity for the artist to practise and research the presence of the day being a part of eternity. I think the enso drawings are an excellent way of showing how we can, through art, connect the concept of constant present into practice. The way enso drawings are made demonstrate one of the mediums to actually make an artwork contain constancy in present. The short moment of a breath and the continuity of the practice. The enso for me is an act that forces the artist to look at the existence everyday through a minimal amount of time. The breath is a moment like the blink of an eye or the heartbeat is, the breath creates a natural rhythm to the creative process. The drawing is a practice to celebrate and glorify the moment of pure existence and demonstrate how differently comprehended and sensed the present is on a daily basis. What makes this act even more interesting is the uniqueness of the enso artworks. By taking away the possibility to correct the drawings they become authentic. There is not anything that is added or taken away, it is a moment of pure being, a naked truth.



Picture 3. Bacon, Francis (1969). *Lying Figure* (Oil on canvas 198 x 147,5 cm).



English painter Francis Bacon (see picture 3) had a similar theory about the presence than the classical Japanese enso drawings painters had. Bacon said that with a painting he aimed to demonstrate the present so that every brushstroke of the painting would have the immediacy and the vitality as the first brushstroke had. Bacon described his paintings simultaneously being a demonstration of a shock not in the terms of horror but as a visual shock. A shock that woke the spectator to the true aspects of life, which were our animalistic features and the brutality of nature. I believe that with the shock Bacon tried to achieve to bring a continuous presence to an artwork, similar that the constant present of the being possesses. To paint like every brushstroke is the first - what could be more in the moment? This thought about the moment of course draws our thoughts back to enso drawings which were exactly that. But unlike the enso artists, Bacon's aim was to embody a whole painting with the same enthusiasm. Bacon painted on the un-prime side of the canvas because it soaked the colour in a way that made it impossible for him to brush it away. He always "attacked" the canvas without any sketches to avoid making mere illustrations. Bacon believed in the process when painting and that the process would lead him towards the functioning final-result. His philosophy was not tell a story, he let partly the unconscious take over as he painted, simultaneously having an idea of the overall image that he wanted to create. He was optimistic and believed that the chance would always work in his favour. Of course Bacon failed occasionally and then he just destroyed the canvas, because the moment for him to go back and start over was gone. Bacon saw himself as figurative painter who wanted to paint reality, he said that his aim and paintings were: *Not illustrations of the reality, but to create images which are concentrations of the reality and a shorthand of sensation*, (The South Bank Show 1985). It is important to add that in his painting process, he said he does not feel anything. This thinking of numbness and emptiness refers closely to the creation of the enso drawings. In both the enso drawings as well as in Bacon's methods, there is this aspect that the artist is more like a mediator throughout which the creativeness flows through. It raises the question about the role of an artist when creating constant present in an artwork. Is the only way to create presence on an artwork to constantly concentrate on the moment. Or is it the opposite as it seems most likely to be when drawing for example the enso drawings you instead lose yourself. Get caught up with the moment and work more as an empty shell, a mediator as the existence takes over. In both of these examples I see resemblance in both the enso drawings and with Bacon, where the unconscious works as a favour when creating something that is present. Even though enso drawings base on Buddhism and Bacon's ideology to

atheism there is the spirituality and depth that builds the presence from the intangible. I do not believe that in order to reach these levels of the presence you have to be able to meditate or train yourself in a certain way into sensing. Bacon is an excellent example how you can from totally un-religious grounds create something that is more than just a formal surface. In enso drawings and in Bacon's art the core is in the freedom of the creation. If you draw a circle or an image of shock it is there in both creations, the uniqueness of the moment. So in order to create the most important issue is to leave space for chance so that the artwork will hopefully lead to an end where in the process you do not have a full control over the artwork. In this sense the artwork can build the momentary aspect and through the artwork we can continuously go back to experience the diversity that the moment offered /offers. You understand the uniqueness and change of the moment easily when you for example look at the sky on an everyday basis. The motion, the clouds and the colours, existence is always changing, like the subjects within.

### 3. THE SPIRITUALITY IN MY ART



Picture 4. Juntura, Mikko (2014). *Oracle* (Installation: floating pikehead, chair, table and sound).



### 3.1 THE INTAGIBLE GROUND

Everything we perceive limits itself first on the outlines. Whether it is a painting with colours or a video displayed on the screen, even the sound is experienced on the outlines of the hearing. Still all these methods used in arts always move something in ourselves that is beyond perception. As we look into the eyes of another human or animal we see that there is something more. The same happens when experiencing art. An artwork is a subjective gesture, demonstrated in a material/immaterial object. It functions through creating communication. This communication nevertheless is not only between the spectator (subject) and the object (the artwork). The intent is there and therefore it is evident that an artwork must have the inner essence bound in with the outer form. This is the base of an artwork, a symbiosis where taking out the another, the artwork ceases to exist. Decay and recreation are the forces driven from the inside, it is a melancholic play that we humans have to witness, as the outlines are melted into each other's and broken down, reforming the inline of the human existence and followed by the endless discourse between the will to preserve and the decomposition of the decay. So the only chance that is left (for me) is to create art that survives for ages and leaves an inner, in the form of memory when the material has disappeared. Looking at it from a time perspective, an artwork is a memory from the minute it is created.

### 3.1.1 THE INTEREST IN THE ABSTRACT EXPRESSION

*When a bird flies and passes us by, we do not consider it to think that here I just fly by. We imagine, that the bird understands - if understands - being a part of the nature. Only for the humans has been given the horrid faith to experience being apart of everything else, being lonely (Varto, 1993, p.156).*

Ever since I was child I have wondered how things are formed and what senses they transmit. I could go on for hours wandering and wondering alone in the forest and get emotional of the observations of the nature. Scents, sounds and touch, the forest was a treasure chest with endless variations of emotions in different forms. Experiencing it alone was essential, in order to lose track of time and make the distraction of humans disappear. These childhood memories reformed my perception, view on life and especially how I consider art to be. The dominant feeling that was left was the insurmountable sense of nature's power and the melancholy of the continuous decay of life. The ruthless play which I had to witness as the seasons kept on changing. The sadness came along as things that I wanted to stay just reformed and disappeared. The lazy summer days, the leaves falling from the trees or the snow melting away in the spring. As soon I had got used to something being permanent, it was taken away. So as I got older I started to create realistic paintings of the nature in order to keep it still. But inside I always felt that this accent lacked something. These realistic pictures could not go beyond the surface and into the core of what was that something that orchestrated this nature's on-going movement.

Loneliness is a human burden yet still it can be a strength for an artist: *The horrid faith to experience being apart of everything else, being lonely* like the quote said in the beginning. Loneliness for me is a source of creativeness and a state of mind that makes me act. Feeling apart from nature and existence strives me to find a connection to everything else, a similar connection with nature as animals possess, without even acknowledging it. It is a state where time and space lose their significance, I see it as a state of being one with everything. The closest way to it, for me is through art. German artist Anselm Kiefer said: *That as an artist you create your own sense of the world.* (Art is Spiritual 2010). I think it is exactly like this, as an artist I create sense to my subjective existence in the world. There are no rules, just the subjective me being and trying to observe the world and build my own sense from those observations in order to exist in the most expanded





Picture 5. Juntura, Mikko (2012) *Dispute* (Pigment and soil on canvas. 225 x 165 cm).



panded and diverse way. I find the abstract expression to be the purest way to demonstrate my own spiritual sense of the world since it does not stop on the outlines of the appearances. In 2012 I painted a large-scale painting called *Dispute* (see picture 5). The painting consists of pigment, soil, and egg-emulsion. It is painted in action-painting style with the canvas lying on the floor. At the first glance the painting seems uncontrolled, decorative and almost as a mere illustration. There seems not to be any clearly recognizable forms, things have seemed to be melted together. Everything happens in the surface, the depth seems to be missing. Yet after a while the movement begins as the spectator concentrates. The contrasts between the un-painted bright canvas and the colourful pigments and dark soil build a tension, reminding us of an grid or stain. With earthly colours *Dispute* almost feels like been taken straight out of nature, representing a piece of soil. So as we are drawn to experience soil, this powerful element of nature, we are simultaneously looking at ourselves and our part in the existence. Soil is an abstract entity, a symbol of the constant that is unfolded everywhere on this planet. Even though soil is something obvious it still is something that escapes us because of its diversity and mass. So what *Dispute* symbolizes is the base that we all are a part of, often without even acknowledging it. We come from the soil and decay back into it, soil is always present, we stand on it and are in contact with it on a everyday basis. *Dispute* is an artwork that demonstrates this abstract and silent discourse between us and the existence. Varto says that: *True contact between beings is established only by mute presence, by apparent non-communication, by that mysterious and wordless exchange which resembles inner prayer.* (Varto, 1993, p.155) Abstract for me breathes images that avoid being mixed up with narrative forms. The way I see it the realistic interpretation alone cannot go into that level of depth where things fall apart and create unseen contexts and meanings. With abstract expression I want to touch the core of existence. That core that is present in everything that the universe contains. The immaterial shown through material forms, like Varto said *inner prayer* that is initiated by the artist in the artwork but later being available for all of us through it.

### 3.1.2 CONCEPTUAL THINKING

In 2014 I started to use conceptual themes in my art. The philosophical writings and the surrounding world are the basis in my conceptual thinking. Philosophy offers me questions and new ways of comprehending. The aim is not to find answers but only to feed and open up the human mind to different possibilities. The same applies in my artworks, I am always in search for binding the ideas I sense in the form of an artwork. The conceptual has become important to me because it offers prefabricated and legitimated artefacts with a prelude for the truths. The artefacts are for me the material and an inspiration where the conceptual urge of mine steps in. We are surrounded with things from which I out of coincidence and intuition choose and create contexts. My studio is always filled with artefacts waiting to be a part of something else. Some artefacts are thrown away, some come close in being a part of something, some things are moulded into unrecognizable entities and some are presented as originals on different contexts. Conceptual for me is finding context that challenge the human mind. Even though the artefacts in most of the cases carry a realistic meaning, the aim is always to make them into abstract artworks. The essence of the work is not to display a predetermined answer in the form of textual description or guidance. I do not want to explain art, therefore I keep the textual in artworks in a minimal state. I believe that a conceptual artwork can function and be experienced with the primitive human senses. Of course thinking and sense are one part of the human perception. But to interest human thinking, I believe there is no need to explain anything. I want to rely on that a human being, coming from any background, religion, educational or economical knowledge, can equally experience an artwork. The mute force of the experience is a language that applies to all of us. Partly it is a belief on that the evolutionary process of a man has given us enough to feel and experience without relying only on sense and evaluation. Sense can narrow down conceptual freedom in many cases because of sense we often think too practically. Since sense leads us to the world of practicality and to rules that often reinforce the forces of routine and prejudice. To break free from the prevailing ways of thinking we need philosophy and through that art that varies from the norms. Octavio Paz said that for Marcel Duchamp, (a legendary artist of ready-mades and conceptualism) *The only beauty that Duchamp is interested in is the beauty of "indifference"* (Arman, 1986, p.146).

I think the truth of conceptual thinking and of art as a whole lies in this quote. I am also, like Duchamp, interested in things and thoughts that are in many cases considered indifferent. Artists find contexts in and be-

tween things that are indifferent for the most of us. Bringing different un-interesting, underestimated everyday objects into the light, artists contribute to giving new value to life. Conceptual art for me is a celebration of every aspects of life. By being neutral in front of life there are endless possibilities for how to make things “precious”. With precious I do not mean only tangible objects, I mean that through our subjective senses we humans make things matter. After all what is life but an endless decay without any point of return? Therefore I believe that the indifferent is as valuable as anything else. It is through our taste and will that we separate and make distinctions, separating things from being equally consequential.

### 3.1.3 SPIRITUAL READY-MADES



Picture 6. Picasso, Pablo (1942) *Bull's Head* (Bicycle seat and handlebars, 33.5 x 43.5 x 19 cm).



### 3.1.3 SPIRITUAL READY-MADES

When looking at Picasso's *Bull's Head* (1942) you are been overpowered by the simplicity and the indulgence of the sculpture (see picture 6). The work consists only of two parts from a bicycle, the seat and the handlebars. They are welded together building a symbolic view of a bull's head. What is important to acknowledge with the sculpture is that Picasso did not wanted to hide the original function of the bicycle parts. He wanted the artwork to have both the resemblance to a bull's head and to the bicycle. It is an interesting notion because it makes the artwork much more diverse and takes a stand about the function of an artwork. Picasso is with Bull's Head presenting us a symbol of the head, still he wants to keep the material appreciation and its meanings there. The way I see it he does not want to alienate us from the everyday aspects of being, he wants the tangible to be there, without any extra explanations. Still what the everyday elements of a bicycle become when they are bound together in this context are highly symbolic and lean towards the intangible. There is both the mundane and the spiritual, like in all functioning artworks. Without the context of representing a bull's head it is just a saddle and handlebars, or twisting it around without showing us clearly that there are handlebars and a bench it is just a bull's head. So what Picasso is saying with this artwork is that we need to have the material, the genuine shown in order for the artwork to become other than a mere illustration of an idea. And that we need to have the symbolic essence and context in order to raise the original functions of the material becoming art. This question of material and essence is highly related to the contextualization in arts. What the increasing contextualization and descriptiveness have done to art is that they have built filters in-between the spectator and the artwork, as we are in an increasing sense given explanations and guidance for how to open up the experience of an artwork. We are simultaneously losing touch with the being and with the world. In the Bull's Head there is no need for explanations the essence is mutely there, everything is presented to us in an apparent way yet it contains an overwhelming accuracy of the diversity that being consists of. There is the spiritual inner, the part of what is considered to be constant, stable and unmovable. Barnett Newman said in an interview about an artwork having an *immediate impact* (Newman 1943), I think Picasso's Bull's Head has exactly that. It does not have anything that should be added or anything that should be taken apart from it. Newman continued by telling an example, when looking at another human being we do not divide his/hers face in to parts, instead we see an entity. Dividing the face we lose the entity and concentrate merely on the parts that construct the human face. The result

is that we lose the immediate impact of the other person's character and the uniqueness of the entity that we each behold. In my own way of using ready-made material I think similarly as Picasso. I do not want to hide the material or turn it into something totally different. I want to keep the original aspect of it and turn it into the contexts I feel that I in that very moment need to express. For me creating an artwork of ready-made material is always a quest of bringing out the divinity of existence. That is the essence I intend to reveal, I see it is an intrinsic value prevailing in my world as an artist. The difference in my ready-made material is partly due to the use of organic materials such as fruits or insects. These materials vary because of their natural and more rapid decomposition. Still I see them also as ready-mades, because they carry the existing significance of their own. The aim of the art however is not in the duration of the material it is in the context that the material creates in the hands of an artist. The duration is just a period time, something that the stable and the spiritual inner of the being do not contain. Time is a human perception and measurement in order to understand and bring structure, simultaneously showing us the decay of the earthly existence. When measuring in the sense of time the meaninglessness comes alive. Because there is not a single thing in this earthly life that we can preserve and that includes us humans as well. Philosopher A.M.S Boethius made an interesting theory of existence in the book: *The Consolation of Philosophy* Boethius assimilated existence with a circle:

*As in the case of spheres moving round the same axis, that which is nearest the centre approaches most nearly the simple motion of the centre, and is itself, as it were, an axis around which turn those which are set outside it. That sphere which is outside all turns through a greater circuit, and fulfils a longer course in proportion as it is farther from the central axis; and if it be joined or connect itself with that centre, it is drawn into the direct motion there of, and no longer strays or strives to turn away.* (Boethius, A.M.S 2009, p.55-56).

This theory believes that there is a divine centre, around which everything else circulates. Boethius was a pre-religious philosopher who did not specify the God. For him Providence was the ruler of the world. Providence was the centre of the universe that made and allowed things to happen, Boethius wrote: *As, therefore, reasoning is to understanding; as that which becomes is to that which is; as time is to eternity; as the circumference is to the centre: so is the changing course of Fate to the immovable directness of Providence.*

(Boethius, A.M.S 2009, p.55-56). So he believed that the centre was immovable, a place where things stayed always the same. This belief can be seen closely related to a religious truth where behind everything is the almighty God and within the eternity. Still where Boethius theory differs is that he does not specify and create a one and only truth. For him there is a divinity but it is shown to us humans through Providence. The fate is for him only a consequence of the Providence. Like the earlier quote was saying: *so is the changing course of Fate to the immovable directness of Providence* (Boethius, A.M.S 2009, p.55-56). Boethius theory of circle can also be used in our everyday life. Through this theory I can relate to understanding how for example the contextualization of an artwork can drive the experience of an artwork on the outlines and further away from the centre. From the centre where in arts things are one and build an intrinsic value. I think that this core is a concentration of energy. It is the artist's effort to induce the energy, the intuition and the meaning in as direct, authentic and simplified way as possible into the artwork. In this way, the artwork becomes in the most efficient and direct way the centre of its own universe. A place around which meanings and thoughts can circulate without interfering with the artworks independence. It is not a closed state but a state of pure being, pure existence to which we all can relate to. Through the core of the artwork we can feel like being one, being in a state of fulfilment, appreciation and enlightenment. This is the core in my own art making. Earlier I was talking about time and how all things decay, Boethius theory for me proves that life has some kind of a point. There is possibly this core the core of eternity. A place where everything will stay the same, where we all are an undivided entity. A state of pure light where perception is replaced with a holistic feeling of fulfilment. I believe that the reason why we bother to do things on terra firma is because we have faith, faith that there is an eternity. Faith for me equals having positivity and the will to grow in the world filled with change, disappointment and the brutality of the decay. Having faith enable us to believe in some kind of ultimate truth that will set us free in the end. Like philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche said: *Ultimately happiness is seeing eternity in all things.* (Areena Yle 2006).

### 3.1.4 ABOUT VANITAS



Picture 7. De Champaigne, Philippe (circa 1671) *Still-Life with a Skull* (Oil on panel, 28 x 37 cm).



### 3.1.4 ABOUT VANITAS

*“Meaningless! Meaningless!”*

*says the Teacher.*

*“Utterly meaningless!*

*Everything is meaningless.”*

*What do people gain from all their labors*

*at which they toil under the sun?*

(Bartholomew, 2009, p.9).

The book of Ecclesiastes from the Bible begins by repeating five times the word meaningless (title in counted). In Hebrew in which the book of Ecclesiastes originally was written in, for Vanitas the word is Hevel: meaning something that is transient and volatile, or something that is absurd and senseless. Translated into English meaningless reflects better the word Vanitas since the English word vanity has a more shallow meaning. The book of Ecclesiastes is a part of the Old Testament in the Bible. It is assumedly written by King Salomon in 965-928 B.C. (which has not been able to be verified). The Book of Ecclesiastes was written before the New Testament existed. This is seen in the text through a more sceptical view of the world, as not having the hopefulness of the redemption of the New Testament. In the book King Salomon paints a very gloomy atmosphere of the human life. In a sarcastic and precise language he opens up the meaningless of life. Demonstrating that nothing is worth the effort, that all in life disappears into the dust, the wise and the stupid, the rich and the poor and the glory within. He considers that not being born would be better since death is more of a relief compared to the struggles of life. But after consideration and studying life he makes a twist in his mindset. In the end he comes to a conclusion that is important and meaningful to enjoy the small necessities in life, like drinking, eating and sleeping. Salomon also underlines the importance of one and other and the respect for each other. The essence of the Bible; love comes through in this book. Even though the book is a part of the Bible and therefore possesses a religious basis it has a cross-cultural human message to mediate. The essence of it is to focus more on the spiritual sides of life and that is something that is highly topical today. Questioning this more and more material world where we live in and where we believe we are in control of everything. The text ends as it began, stating everything is meaningless and through that closing the circle of life, with an indifferent aftertaste of our existence.

### 3.1.5 CONTEMPORARY VANITAS

The art that I make is highly related to the themes and essence of the Vanitas (see picture 7). The de-  
composition and the decay of things and being are the supporting features in my artworks. Underneath  
can be sensed the feeling of melancholy and the need to preserve existence as it is. The constant present is  
presented in with the intangible that lies behind the slow destruction of things. My aim is not to make things  
last or to preserve anything. My aim is the opposite to show the decay in front of us, to reveal that there is  
the force and divinity that keeps everything in motion. Lately I have been working with living organisms  
like fruits to show this flow of life better. These artworks with fruits are also highly linked to the old vanitas  
still-life imagery. I have taken existential questioning and the essence of the decay and turned into contem-  
porary vanitas as I call it. Traditional vanitas still-life demonstrated three stages of life the birth, the bloom  
and the death. Common painted objects in these paintings were fruits, flowers, skulls and everything that  
could be linked to the existential thinking. Vanitas paintings often had a black background which demon-  
strated the mystery of not knowing the meaning of life, therefore everything for a traditional vanitas painter  
came from the darkness and disappeared back into it. My aim has been to turn vanitas into something even  
more realistic and genuine, concentrating on things that are here in front of us without the obvious depth of  
the darkness. *The Untitled* 100 x 200 cm, 2014 is a painting, where I have taken real fruits and vegetables and  
let them rot on an aluminium plate for five months (see picture 8). Compared to the 17th century still-life  
paintings, my artwork has several layers of how to sense it. Because *the Untitled* contains real fruits it has  
the smell, the mixture of rotten and boat laquer, giving multiple options to sense it. The rotting smell can  
also alienate us, if we are stuck in the natural instinct of repulsive smell reminding and protecting us against  
the mortality and death. If we can see beyond the fact that the artwork is not about shock or abomination, we  
are free to experience it. The artwork also contains movement, leaving new marks as the rotten fluids and  
process of drying evolves. Even though the artwork has a lot of small symbols in the form of different fruits  
and vegetables, it should be seen as a one big symbolic act of decay. The danger of experiencing the *Untitled*  
is that the spectator is stuck in the first layer and looks only at the individual elements. All these small ele-  
ments (fruits and vegetables) are equally important and seeing them separately helps us build a conception.  
But still all the small elements build an entity, an extensive symbol of meaninglessness. The meaningless-  
ness for me is not something negative, instead something melancholic brutality. It is a realistic aspect of





Picture 8. Juntura, Mikko (2014) *Untitled (Process)* (Fruits and vegetables on aluminum, 200 x 100 cm).

nature that I want to demonstrate with the artwork *Untitled's "finished"* version (see picture 9). In fact the meaninglessness is only at the surface of the work. The essence of the work is what happens underneath it all. What makes this movement occur, what are intangible forces that tend to decompose everything just to let them be reborn. This essence is the same as it was in the traditional 17th century vanitas paintings. It is an existential dilemma and it all comes down to the most fundamental questions of human beings. Why are we here? What makes the world go round? Where do we go from here? Or do we just rot and that is it? These were and are the same questions we humans still struggle with, even though technology has given us keys to open and examine things from a very close range or from a great distance. We still have not found any significant scientific reasons for existence other than referring to the basic biological structures of ourselves and through science, have only been able to widen the knowledge of the environment and its functions. The inner, the soul is still a territory that is vastly a mystery, an unknown territory. Still we keep searching for the reasons and building connections to the existence even though we have this horrid history that more or less proves that there will never be a reason or a truth that can be found. For theologian Martin Luther everything in the world was done with hope. I truly believe that hope is the most powerful human force that leaves the ultimate-question open and sustains the faith in us that maybe one day we will find full meaningfulness in this all.





Picture 9. Juntura. Mikko (2014) *Untitled (Process)* (Fruits and vegetables on aluminum.200 x 100 cm).

## CONCLUSIONS

Through my thesis I have found a lot of insight in contemporary art. I began by researching the relation between the textual in the visual arts. I found a lot of confluences on this subject from how the sense took over the being in the Late Greek philosophy. The rationalization of existence has affected and still affects broadly the visual arts today. The rise of conceptual thinking in the 20th century has expanded the use of concepts in arts. This has led to a trend in visual arts where the explanation can make an artwork. I see that the visual arts have become increasingly a multi-dimensional field where the visual value of the visual arts has diminished. Surely one of the reasons for this has also been the stagnation of the progress in visual arts. There is too much visual art that lacks quality and especially ambition. Too many artists follow the old routines and established traditions of the past and paths that indicate how the visual arts are supposed to be. This is particularly striking in the field of photography where seeing an exhibition means seeing standard-size pictures framed or laminated bourgeoisly on the walls. You see the same also formally in paintings where we still use the same forms like rectangle which has established its position as being the base for an artwork. One of the main reasons for upholding the strong position of traditions is surely the increasing foothold of capitalism. Capitalism wants us to understand, be practical and use scientific methods in measuring and evaluating, highlighting the tangible and with this bringing us enjoyment through objects that have led to the objectification of the arts.

In the second chapter I opened the concept of the constant present which I believe is an important aspect of the arts. The present and the constant are significant fields of the existence. Through the concept of constant present I found that there are ways in which an artwork can contain both the present and the constant. In fact through the research I am even more assured that every functioning artwork has to have them both. As the artwork is a momentary act of the sensibility of the actuality, the importance of the unconscious and the letting go of the moment were the two sides of the road towards being present. Boethius' theory about providence and the sphere of existence summarizes this thesis in an accurate way: the idea that in the centre of the sphere is the core in which things are unmovable and eternal. Core being the place, a concentration around which everything circulates, core is in one sense the divinity from which the Boethius's "providence" acts. Moving away from the centre and the core is where things start to lose their immediacy and strength. Not being included in the centre and the further away you are from the centre the more inaccurate and undefined

things become, the more you step into the world of change and mortality. I think Boethius theory is the basis in all the three chapters of the thesis, when analyzing and examining the contextualization of the visual arts, the constant present and spirituality of my art. In contextualization of the visual arts I thought the centre of the core being the artwork around which everything else circulated. I came to a conclusion that the contextualization in many cases meant being apart from the concentration of the energy that an artwork has. This meant that when explaining too much, the artwork worked from the outlines of the sphere weakening the immediacy and the strength of an artwork by building filters between the artwork and the subjective experience of it. In constant present the sphere theory works in similar mediums. The constant is the core of the centre and everything else is the present. The more apart from the centre the more things are at risk of chance and corruption. So the more the artwork has the core, the better it works against the hands of time and change. However what I found out was that in order for an artwork to function in the name of the constant present, it also has to have the present aspect. So the sphere in fact is a two-way movement from which the artwork gathers its liveliness and pulse by using both the outlines with the movement and the core with the immobile. It is in this play an artwork becomes alive, demonstrating being as authentically and truthfully as possible. The third chapter was about the spirituality of my art. The sphere theory with its providence is a core that can be easily transmitted to the spirituality of my thinking. The birth and decay of things, divinity and hope. The sphere theory for me builds a ground from which I act and exist. I strongly believe that there is more to life than what we see. Still this does not mean that something means fulfilment instead that something can mean also total emptiness. In either case there is an answer about which we do not know much about. My aim as an artist is to strive towards that ultimate question. Hope being my only armor in the middle of the battlefield of birth and decay, against the brutality of the fact that is called existence.



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## PICTURE LIST

Cover: Juntura, Mikko (2014). *Untitled* (detail) (Apples and spray paint on metal 165 x 125 cm).

Picture 1. Guemberena, Juan-Pedro Fabra (2012.) *Interlude* (Seven bronze sculptures).

<http://www.juan-pedro-fabra-guemberena.com/interlude>

Picture 2. Tanahashi, Kazuaki (2016) *Miracles of Each Moment, Black on White* (Acrylic on canvas 76 x 91 cm). <http://www.brushmind.net/artwork-1/>

Picture 3. Bacon, Francis (1969). *Lying Figure* (Oil on canvas 198 x 147,5 cm). <http://www.fondationbeyeler.ch/en/collection/francis-bacon>

Picture 4. Juntura, Mikko (2014). *Oracle* (Installation: floating pikehead, chair, table and sound).

<https://vimeo.com/119051536>

Picture 5. Juntura, Mikko (2012) *Dispute* (Pigment and soil on canvas. 225 x 165 cm).

<https://mjuntura.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/kiista21.jpg>

Picture 6. Picasso, Pablo (1942) *Bull's Head* (Bicycle seat and handlebars, 33.5 x 43.5 x 19 cm).

<http://sfcitizen.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Picasso-Head-of-a-Bull.jpg>

Picture 7. De Champaigne, Philippe (circa 1671) *Still-Life with a Skull* (Oil on panel, 28 x 37 cm).

<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/ae/StillLifeWithASkull.jpg>

Picture 8. Juntura, Mikko (2014) *Untitled* (Process) (Fruits and vegetables on aluminum, 200 x 100 cm).

Picture 9. Juntura, Mikko (2014) *Untitled* (Finished) (Fruits and vegetables on aluminum, 200 x 100 cm).

[https://mjuntura.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/nimetc3b6n-5\\_mikko\\_juntura.jpg](https://mjuntura.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/nimetc3b6n-5_mikko_juntura.jpg)

