

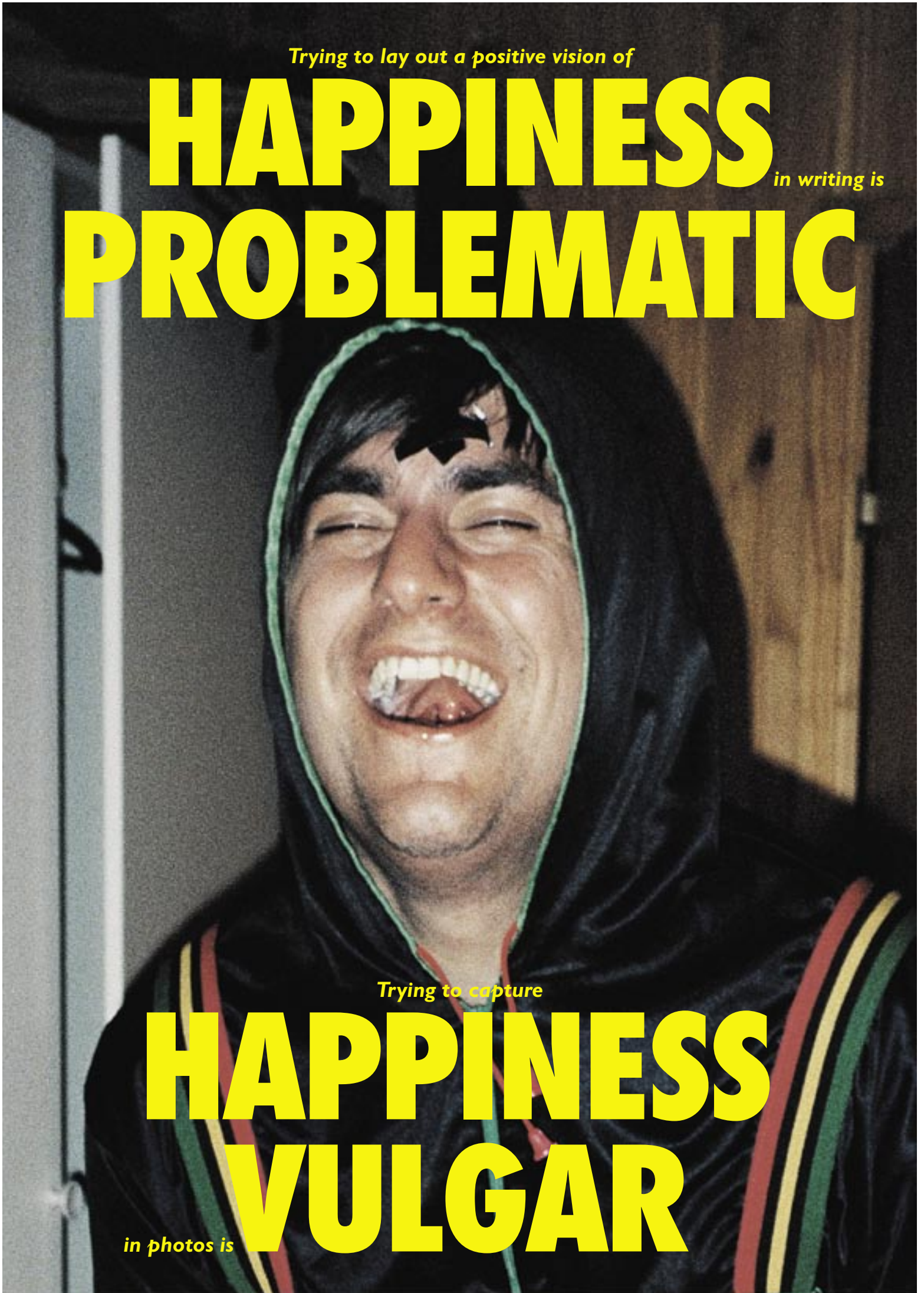
*Trying to lay out a positive vision of*

# **HAPPINESS** in writing is **PROBLEMATIC**

*Trying to capture*

# **HAPPINESS** **VULGAR**

*in photos is*





## **'We're the most miserable bunch of fuckers, we wouldn't know the meaning of happiness'**

How easily does what at first seems to be little but the whining of a few privileged youths become a matter of life and death? The differences between what are often called luxury problems and the authentic problems experienced by the other can be easily reversed. What does it matter if one comparatively has access to the all the luxuries the world has to offer when one hates their life to the point that they want to die? What does it matter if one has relatively little access to these luxuries when one is happy? 'The same bankruptcy is evident in non-industrial civilizations, where people are still dying of starvation, and in automated civilizations, where people are already dying of boredom. Every paradise is artificial. The life of a Trobriand islander, rich in spite of ritual and taboo, is at the mercy of a smallpox epidemic; the life of an ordinary Swede, poor in spite of his comforts, is at the mercy of suicide and survival sickness'. Yet one doesn't want to regurgitate the platitudes of a deluded hippie. It isn't as simple as saying that one cannot buy happiness or that spiritual fulfillment and the accumulation of material possessions are two different things altogether. Everyone already knows that.

Portraying our generation's malaise isn't that difficult. Showing any escape from this malaise feels impossible. Trying to lay out a positive vision of happiness in writing is problematic. Trying to capture happiness in photos is vulgar. How does one write about it without sounding like some kind of self-help guru, simply repeating truisms and hackneyed clichés? How does one attempt to capture an inkling of the feeling in images without doing the same or generating the identical inane garbage that fills so many other sheets of paper in so many other magazines? Still, the bottom line is that whatever happiness is, we all want it. It's central to our expectations and conceptions of existence and everyone has some kind of opinion about what does or should constitute happiness. There is no use avoiding the question.





# Saken #2

Emanuel Almborg - Andreas Bergman - Jeff Kinkle

'We are here and from here of course. We cannot be expected to reflect what is there. We could reflect on it but it wouldn't amount to anything. Everything here comes from here. Yet a dream persists, not of there necessarily but of somewhere else.'

Been here too long

#### Thanks:

Seya/Indigo, Tryckeriet Lagersberg, Rappidax, EPS, Toby

#### Footnotes:

1. Celine, *Journey to the End of the Night*
2. Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf*, MIT Press, 2003, p. 42.
3. Theodore Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, Verso, 2002, p. 112.
4. Julia Kristeva, *Revolt, She Said*, Semiotext(e), 2002, p. 100-1.
5. Maurice Blanchot, *Bataille: A Critical Reader*, ed. Fred Botting, Blackwell, 1998.
6. Klara Morawski
7. See Todd McGowan, *The End of Dissatisfaction?*, SUNY Press, 2004
8. Žižek, 'You May!' *London Review of Books*, 18 March, 1999.
9. McGowan, p. 194
10. Adorno, par. 217.
11. Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, trans. Eldred. U of Minn Press, 2001, p. 5.
12. Mike Davis, 'Planet of the Slums', *New Left Review*, 26, 2004, p. 15.
13. Žižek, *Repeating Lenin*, Arkzin, 2001, p. 102.
14. Alain Badiou, 'The Caesura of Nihilism', *Poesis* Vol. 6, 2004, p. 185.
15. Adorno, 'Resignation', *Critical Models*, Columbia, 1999, p. 292-3.

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When talking about happiness it seems as though there are clear two options: we could either say the question is purely subjective and then say whatever it is that makes us happy - this sounds rather uninteresting - or try to come up with some kind of more universal definition - this sounds incredibly difficult, maybe impossible. When discussing boredom, for example, it is easy to speak of a We. With happiness it isn't. We all experience similar feelings of boredom and the causes of these feelings may be the same but that doesn't mean we have a common vision of happiness. Even each of us working on this project has different visions of happiness. There is no way to speak about it in terms of a We that 'have been born in the privileged sections of empire at the beginning of the end of history'. How can this be resolved without resorting to relativism or positing a universal subject whose experience of happiness we all share?

Even if I were to merely write about my own experiences, I wouldn't know where to begin. I don't even know if I am happy. I feel somewhat happy but it's so difficult to reflect upon. Adorno claimed that saying your happy is a sin against happiness and that it can only be known retrospectively. He's right in the sense that in everyday life one is always comparing one's happiness with some ideal or with some past state of happiness but wrong in the sense that I do feel as though there have been moments in my life in which happiness flowed through me so to speak, moments in which I could feel a certain exhilaration in my body without having to qualify it or compare it with something else. This happiness always seems to be slightly unexpected and mysterious in that you don't really understand what is causing the sensation. It is a feeling of being simultaneously thrown in and out of one's self and is hard to capture in words or images.

It's also difficult to write of happiness without making the concept synonymous with enjoyment or fun. Freud's famous notion of the pleasure principle that drives the subject to avoid pain and maximize pleasure seems obvious enough but latter in his work he described a psychic realm beyond the pleasure principle in which the dichotomy between pleasure and pain or happiness and unhappiness isn't so clearly defined, in which subjects seek their own destruction. A definition of happiness that is broad enough to cover sadomasochism, happiness in slavery motifs, may appear paradoxical by definition but without such considerations honestly approaching the concept of happiness is impossible.

*'It's a repetition of what I did the day before or what I did earlier. So that... You're more tired of the whole pattern than just that day maybe? Those that sit and actually do nothing, maybe lie in bed or watch TV all day, they do actually nothing. I do lots of things everyday but in the end of the day it feels like I've done nothing even though I've done a lot. That's the worst feeling, to feel that nothing happens, that nothing changes.'*

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Perhaps Gottfried Benn was on to something when he wrote, 'To be dumb and have a job, that's happiness'. Maybe that's all it is. Find something to do with your life that you don't hate, settle for it, get on with things. 'After all these centuries of watching our domestic animals coming into the world, laboring and dying before our eyes without anything more unusual ever happening to them either than taking up the same insipid fiasco where so many other animals had left off, we should have caught on'.<sup>1</sup> What else should we expect? Endless adventures? Isn't it inevitable that all of our aspirations will lead us to tragedy? One wants to be a philosopher, a filmmaker, a revolutionary, an artist, or a rock star. Why? Part romanticization of a chosen field, part the desire to express oneself creatively, who knows what else. But how can it possibly end well for all or any of us? Eventually our dreams will gradually fade away and reality will slowly creep up and perhaps then we will long for the idiocy that could push the ennui into remission.





# How can we measure happiness?

Can we move beyond this MTV-spontaneity? This desperate attempt to enjoy feels like a carapace masking a certain lack. Dancing is great and all but what's beyond it? Can we make the (re)turn to antiquated and decidedly unhip notions of community, economy, and solidarity to look for happiness? Maybe photos of peasants reclaiming land or labour marches would be more appropriate than photos of after-parties.

**'I remember being 17 and having just moved to New York. I had left my relatively small suburban New Jersey town, only about 20 km from the city but in most respects the Hudson felt as wide as the Atlantic, and knew very few people in the city.** It was a time of transition in which I was cutting ties with the people I grew up with and I remember feeling very lonely but never unhappy. I remember, for example, eating vegetable dumplings in a cheap Chinese take-away or walking home, drenched with rain, the New York wind blowing in my face, experiencing what some would describe as the peaks of urban anomie and yet feeling completely content. I was genuinely happy in this aesthetic of utter alienation.

I think at this age what I despised, and from what I was trying desperately to separate myself, was the utterly bland vision of happiness projected by American culture and suburbia in particular. It's a positive vision of happiness. Accomplish the following and you'll find happiness: find a steady, well-paid job, a partner whose company you enjoy, two or three kids, and a nice car. What this vision neglects is that happiness can be found in negation. Unemployment, poverty (maybe not real poverty), and loneliness, waiting on an abandoned PATH platform in Harrison: all of these things can bring about a kind of fulfillment.'

**'When, exactly, can people be said to be happy? In a country like Czechoslovakia in the late 1970's and 1980's, people were, in a way, actually happy: three fundamental conditions of happiness were fulfilled.<sup>1</sup> Their material needs were basically satisfied – not too satisfied, since the excess of consumption can in itself generate unhappiness. It is good to experience a brief shortage of some goods on the market from time to time (no coffee for a couple of days, then no beef, then no TV sets): these brief periods of shortage functioned as exceptions that reminded people that they should be glad that these goods were generally available – if everything is available all the time, people take this availability as an evident fact of life, and no longer appreciate their luck. So life went on in a regular and predictable way, without any great efforts or shocks; one was allowed to withdraw into one's private niche.<sup>2</sup> A second extremely important feature: there was the Other (the Party) to blame for everything that went wrong, so that one did not feel really responsible – if there was a temporary shortage of some goods, even if stormy weather caused great damage, it was "their" fault.<sup>3</sup> And, last but not least, there was an Other Place (the consumerist West) about which one was allowed to dream, and one could even visit it sometimes – this place was at just at the right distance: not too far away, not too close. This fragile balance was disturbed – by what? By desire, precisely. Desire was the force that compelled the people to move on – and end up in a system in which the great majority are definitely less happy.'**

*Slavoj Žižek<sup>2</sup>*

**'To happiness the same applies to truth: one does not have it, but is in it. Indeed, happiness is nothing other than being encompassed, an after-image of the original shelter within the mother. But for this reason no one who is happy can know that he is so. To see happiness, he would have to pass out of it: to be as if already born: He who says he is happy lies, and in invoking happiness, sins against it. He alone keeps faith who says: I was happy. The only relation of consciousness to happiness is gratitude: in which lies its incomparable dignity.'**

*Theodore Adorno<sup>3</sup>*

**'There was a time when my girlfriend and I broke up when I was 19. We were supposed to spend seven hours together on a cruise between Åland and Sweden but after only a half-hour the trip became insufferable when my girlfriend decide to break up with me.**

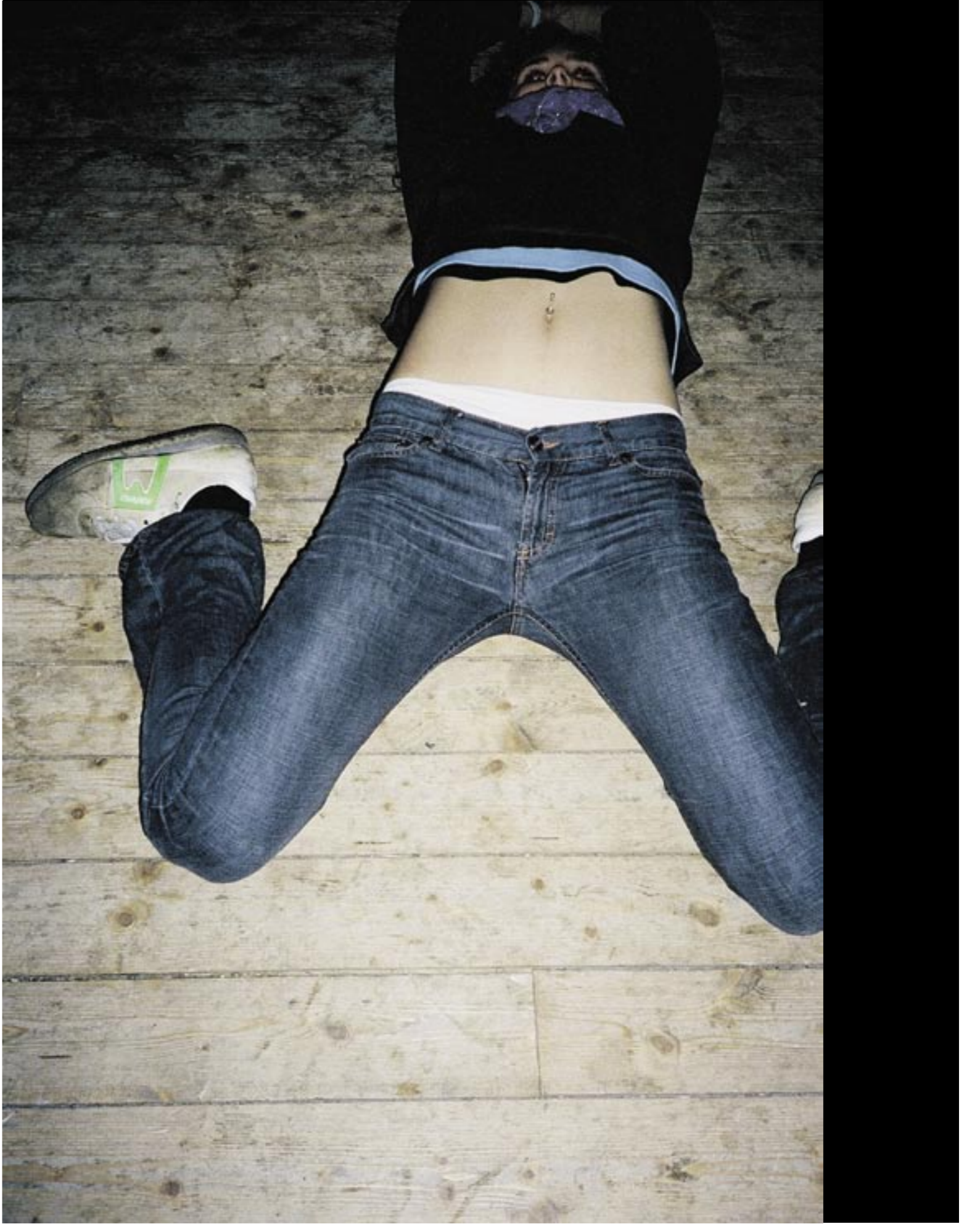
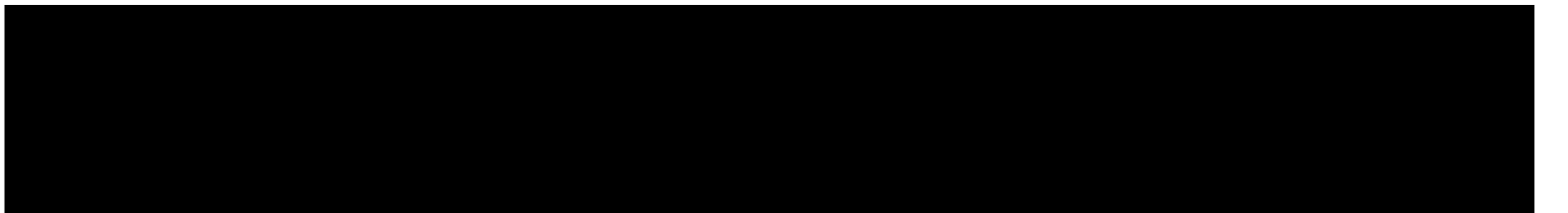
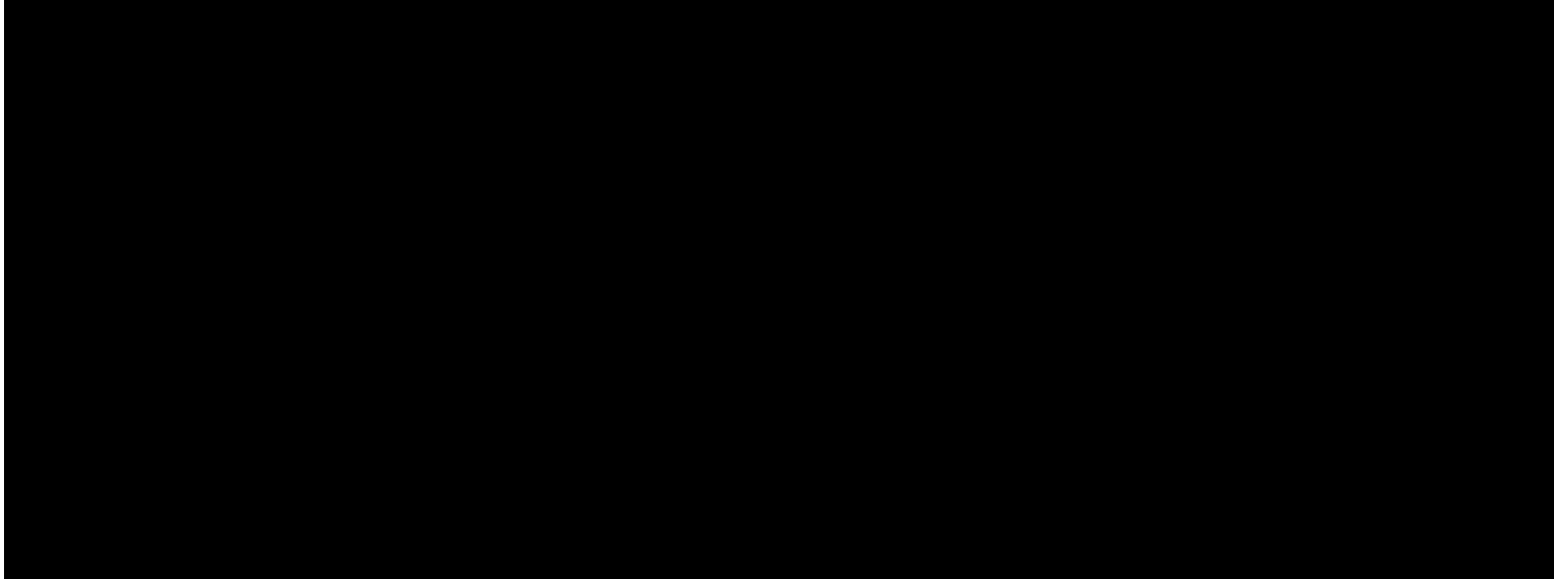
I was seized by panic and just wanted to run away but there was nowhere on the boat full of families with kids and drunk middle-aged singles to be alone. I wandered around the tax-free area for a while trying to hold back the tears until I couldn't hold it in any longer and ran to the toilets, the only place I could have some privacy.

I rushed there impatiently and as though I was going to use the toilet for its intended purpose I pulled down my pants and let the tears come. It was as if I had been holding back for an eternity because the need to cry was enormous. As I sat there, as dumb as it sounds, I thought it would be important to preserve such an important moment. I took out my video camera from my bag and started to film myself.

The stall I sat in was one of those that has a big gap on the bottom and top and was in a long row, so it was possible to hear and smell what was happening in your neighbor's stall. I happened to have a neighbor in a parallel state of release. As I sat and filmed myself all one could hear was my neighbor to the left that had most likely eaten a bad buffet and decided to provide my tragic film with a comic soundtrack.

The decision to film myself can easily be explained by saying that I wanted to distance myself from or romanticize the situation and that I didn't take the situation seriously but I want to believe that it was to preserve, remember, and even embrace the situation in love and hate but also as something both significant and somehow satisfying.'





We have seen a qualitative change in the experience of happiness and enjoyment over the past decades. While in the past we lived in what Todd McGowan calls 'a society of prohibition' in which individuals were expected to sacrifice their private enjoyment for the benefit of the society as a whole, we have moved into 'a society of enjoyment' in which private enjoyment is not only increasingly important but it becomes obligatory.<sup>7</sup> This private enjoyment has by and large been commodified by late capitalism and has become something to be consumed by separated individuals rather than something communal. Also, it's been long since people were encouraged to be sensible and save their money. Instead people are now encouraged to consume on credit and a remarkably high percentage live in debt.

There is definitely a certain pressure today to be happy. Unhappiness is commonly treated like a disease, as a lack or excess of certain chemicals in the brain and often requires a pharmaceutical cure. This intermingles with the demand to constantly indulge oneself. Perhaps the days in which one could speak of the Protestant work ethic that coincided with the development of capitalism have vanished completely. Today's dominant discourse from Hollywood films and advertising to self-help manuals implies that wasted time is the time one spends in the office (unless you're lucky enough to find a job that contributes to your personal development). I am much more likely now to feel guilty for not going out and having a good time than for not prioritizing my work. 'There is the obverse paradox of pleasure becoming duty in a "permissive" society. Subjects experience the need to 'have a good time', to enjoy themselves, as a kind of duty, and, consequently, feel guilty for failing to be happy'.<sup>8</sup>



This duty to enjoy ultimately backfires in that the compulsion to enjoy in the end overshoots its final objective according to McGowan. Real enjoyment is only possible with a certain distance to the object of enjoyment. His archetypal example is that of kids on Christmas morning. Their enjoyment of the holiday does not only lie in the fact that they receive toys per se but that these toys are wrapped up and sitting under the tree for weeks, unable to be opened until Christmas morning. This society promises to deliver the thing in itself – ultimate enjoyment – and as such keeps individuals in something like a state of permanent and concurrent disappointment and expectation. Paradoxically, by being provided with more enjoyment, we actually experience less. McGowan's recommendation is that we attempt to embrace what he calls partial enjoyment. The problem with both the society of prohibition and the society of enjoyment is that they both define themselves in reference to the prospect of complete enjoyment. The society of prohibition uses the image of complete enjoyment as a symbol of what the subject must renounce to join the social body while the society of the enjoyment uses the image as what the subject must ultimately pursue. McGowan argues that it is only by rejecting the ideal of complete enjoyment that we can open ourselves to enjoy at all. This partial enjoyment is 'uncertain and insecure. One never knows whether one has it or not, and at the moment one seems to secure it, this form of enjoyment slips away'.<sup>9</sup> The subject should be aware of its unstable relationship to enjoyment and it is only by accepting this that real enjoyment can follow.

In the end though does this mean what we should be aiming for is something like a perpetual Christmas Eve? McGowan writes that, 'To recognize one's failure to enjoy is already to begin to enjoy.' Is the problem however not more with the enjoyment or happiness that this society promises? Enjoyment and happiness have indeed been thoroughly commodified alongside nearly everything else over the past century. As such, the problem conceivably isn't that this society gives us too much access to enjoyment but that it only promises us pseudo-enjoyment. This society does promise happiness but only as far as it can be bought. What is bought or what can be commodified shouldn't be thought of only as 'products' in the traditional sense but should be expanding to include experiences, jobs, houses, lifestyles, both illegal and prescription drugs, etc. In the 1960's Adorno wrote that happiness had become obsolete: uneconomic.<sup>10</sup> Today the pursuit of pseudo-happiness drives economies. While people a few decades ago had to rely on commodities to survive, now they have to rely on them to enjoy as the commodity-form moves towards its absolute realization.

In this sense, perhaps what is most threatening for the society of pseudo-enjoyment would be for people to take its promises seriously. Advertisements are constantly offering a world of utter bliss that would open to us only if we buy their product but everyone already knows that this is manipulative and that this world of complete enjoyment is a myth. An actual experience of complete enjoyment would be an economic disaster because we would stop consuming. In a society in which enjoyment has been commodified, there is something to be said for enjoyment that exists outside of the normal channels or for anything that breaks the stupefying rhythm of the work-cycle - spontaneous enjoyment undermines commodified enjoyment.

At the same time, there is the question of whether or not such experiences actually provide an alternative to the work-cycle or exist as its supplement. It isn't hard to spot images of them in the most disgusting advertisements. There might also be something obscene about collaborating to such a high degree with this world. Seeing what this world reduces people to, seeing how little most of us actually know our friends, our families, and ourselves is sickening. I don't know if it's possible or desirable to ignore these things in order to be happy. In such a disgusting world maybe a sense of enmity or hatred is more constructive than any kind of vulgar enjoyment or fun that is to a degree always conciliatory.



**'People say that I'm bitter but I'm not. I just realize that the world is worse than most people suspect. And I am so tired of the happy-trend in the indie-world, like all the flyers for new clubs that always say "craziest dance floor", "wild party!", "crazy indie-frenzy!" etc etc etc etc okay, we are tired of crazy dancing forced happy idiots, play a little bit of nice pop music and give me cheap beer, I'm not interested in any "wacky gags".'**<sup>6</sup>

I've often had the thought, as ridiculous as it sounds, that I'm a bit too young to be happy. I don't want to feel satisfied or content at this point in my life. Of course I want to enjoy myself and be pleased with what I do and all that but I don't think I've ever associated these things with happiness. It only feels like I could be happy when I'm older and have really accomplished something and am ready to settle down and all that. I've of course had moments of happiness but nothing sustainable. Or maybe happiness isn't sustainable by definition. I vacillate between thinking of it as being synonymous with contentment and the opposite: that happiness can be only found through change and development.

The connection between anxiety, revolt, and happiness has been a theme in the work of the psychoanalyst and theorist Julia Kristeva. She contends that stability is always provisional while conflicts are eternal. One's life is inevitably in a constant state of flux and all attempts to find permanent sanctuary from the anxiety that accompanies this flux are illusory and rather than suppressing this anxiety, we should recognize it as being an inseparable aspect of human freedom. 'The individual, in this return to him or herself, experiences division, conflict, pleasure and jouissance [extreme enjoyment] in this fragmentation. This is the modern vision of psychic truth. I think that in the automated modern world the depth of psychic life, the liberation of psychic life, the search for truth in the interrogation and the questioning are all aspects that are overlooked. We are expected to be performing entities. At best, we are asked to work well and to buy as much as possible. This whole problematic of interrogation, of the return to the self, the questioning of the conflicts that are sources of human freedom have become obliterated, rejected or even destroyed parameters. The culture that arises from this situation is a culture of entertainment rather than one of interrogation and revolt'.<sup>4</sup>

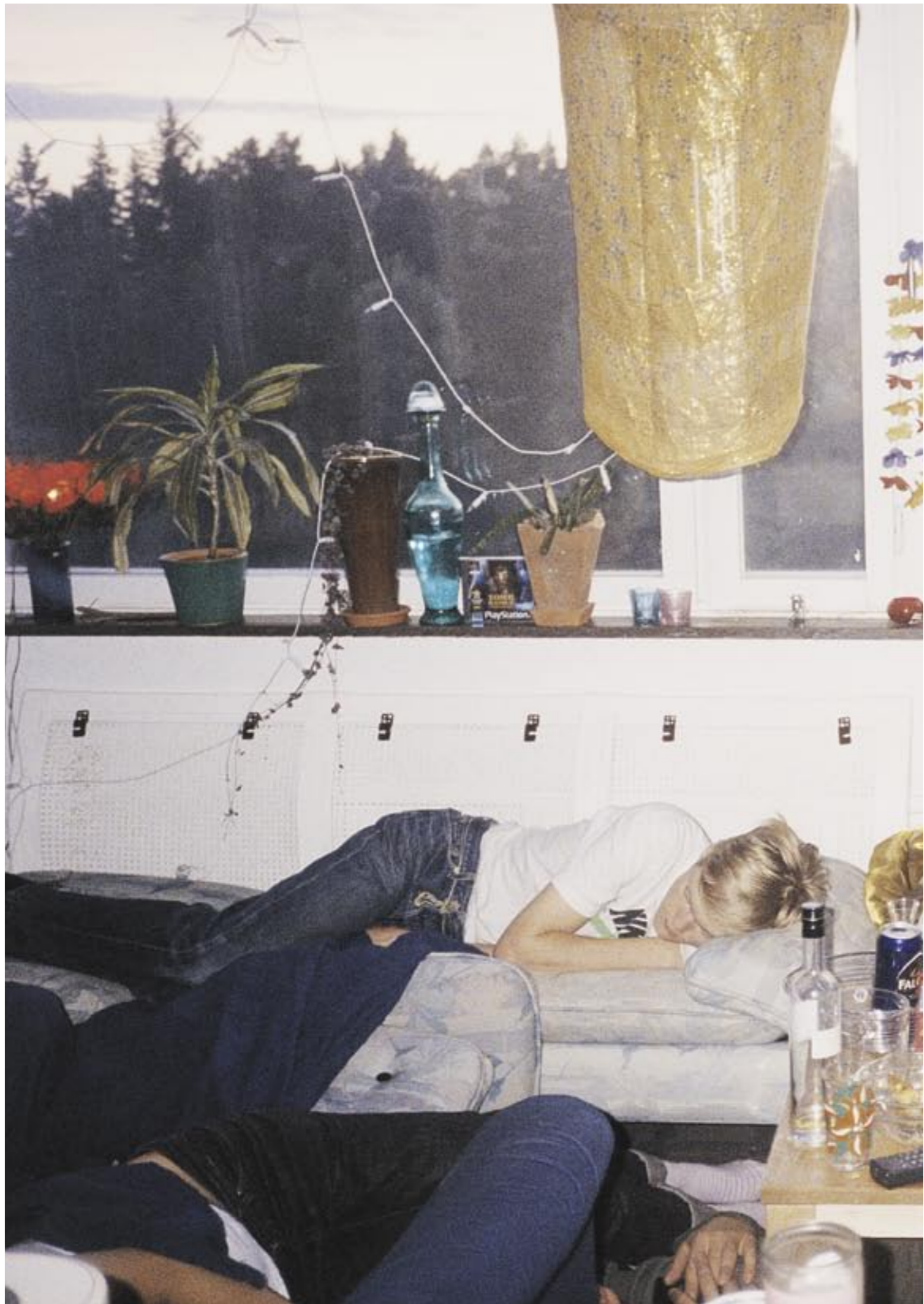
Instead of actively engaging with themselves and others, many people seek perpetual distraction to avoid this often painful process of self-interrogation. Thought of in this way, the popular conception of happiness as an absence of pain is shattered. Happiness does not exist apart from pain but can only be experienced through, alongside of, or after moments of pain. For Kristeva, 'Happiness exists only at the price of revolt' and is diametrically opposed to static notions of satisfaction and contentment.

This does not imply an objective definition of happiness. Of course everyone defines happiness differently and it is not reducible to any specific form. Maybe then we should look at happiness as a possibility. Or better, maybe it should be viewed as a certain subjective opening up to the possibilities of life itself – whether it be love or hate, creation or destruction. This opening naturally is accompanied by a certain amount of anxiety. As such it has nothing to do with conventional notions of stability or contentment. Stability and contentment are then the domains of less-intelligent mammals, automatons, and corpses. When people speak of happiness and stability as synonyms, one can almost smell the musty odor of a preserved carcass, coated by a thin layer of dust, wafting through the air, contaminating everything around it with the stale scent of inertia. 'Man achieves contentment by deciding to be unceasingly discontent; he accomplishes himself because he carries through completely all his negations'.<sup>5</sup> This unceasing discontentment is a better synonym for happiness than unceasing fulfillment.











It is so easy to despise this world. A cursory look at the present and the past century cannot lead to anything but pessimism. What do we see when we look to the recent past? Holocausts, mass-slaughters, revolutions with egalitarian intentions turning into totalitarian nightmares, carpet bombings, atomic bombs and the fully enlightened earth is still radiating disaster triumphant with a billion plus still living in abject poverty, an utterly corrupt simpleton leading the world's most militarily advanced nation, all as the ice caps are melting and nuclear and biological weapons are easier than ever to procure.

Still, despite the possible oblivion awaiting this world, our middleclass lives feel as boring as ever. Whether it be the serene suburban existence in the suburbs of Stockholm or New Jersey, beneath the tranquil surface pullulates a wide array of dissatisfactions, neuroses and resentments. It almost seems as though everything our parents and their parents worked so hard for – to be able to keep us safe and secure, to give us every opportunity to be happy and successful – has overshot its ultimate goal. It should be embarrassing to say considering the state of the world but it is almost common wisdom to claim that we are too comfortable to be happy or we have had it too easy to possibly feel content. But the problem is not an excessive standard of living or the consumption of goods; it is rather the way in which our material wealth has been (dis)organized.

It is necessary to look at our lives without illusions or excuses. Everything effectively depends on the level at which this problem is posed: How is our life? How are we satisfied with it? Dissatisfied? Without for a moment letting ourselves be intimidated by the various advertisements designed to persuade us that we can be happy because of the existence of (something hip at the moment that won't sound dated by the time Andra Saken comes out) or a benevolent welfare state or because it's much worse in Grozny.

Recently, we asked a friend of ours with superior grammatical talents to look over this draft. His first response after reading it was, 'I think that happiness may largely come from willfully pulling the wool over your eyes and then ultimately forgetting that you did so'. It is quite easy to block out all of the above mentioned travesties, assume that the world has always been and will always be a miserable place and live for the moment, trying to enjoy as much as possible, concentrating on one's immediate surroundings. It is impossible to change the world but it is possible to enjoy it. This is arguably today's dominant discourse – a thoroughly cynical vision verging on the not just hedonistic but nihilistic. In a meaningless world, 'it is the universally widespread way in which enlightened people see to it that they are not taken for suckers. It is the stance of people who realize that the times of naïveté are gone'.<sup>11</sup>

We indubitably all live damaged lives and having the right conscious in the wrong world is impossible. Exclusive of resigning oneself completely, it is almost impossible to go a single day without making certain compromises, without being hypocritical, without adopting at least a modicum of cynicism. The times of naïveté are gone indefinitely and there is likely no going back. Instead of mourning this as a tragedy, it is perhaps better to celebrate it. Yet this celebration is not enough. As argued above, this option of celebration is increasingly becoming an imperative. While this cynicism may have had a subversive sting at some point it's been thoroughly recuperated – it simply exists too comfortably in and with this world.

But then what do we do? If the concept of happiness has been co-opted, must happiness go into exile? The question is how to move beyond this cynical enjoyment without resorting to asceticism and without replacing affected happiness with equally affected dour faces and pouts or militant posturing. They are all carapaces masking a certain lack and all are insufficient. We cannot only repress cynicism or return to some authentic state that existed prior to cynicism's emergence as a dominant discourse. The only option is to go beyond this cynicism.

'The times when you feel the best are when you don't know exactly what's going to happen and can just leave and explore and not know exactly what's you're going to do in a week or a day or an hour or whatever and be in a place you've never been only to experience and see things and maybe meet some people or see how people have it in a different place. It's good because I've found someone with the same restlessness and frustration as me that also needs to get away... and we're going to travel to..., to travel. We'll probably start in Peru and then go on an adventure.

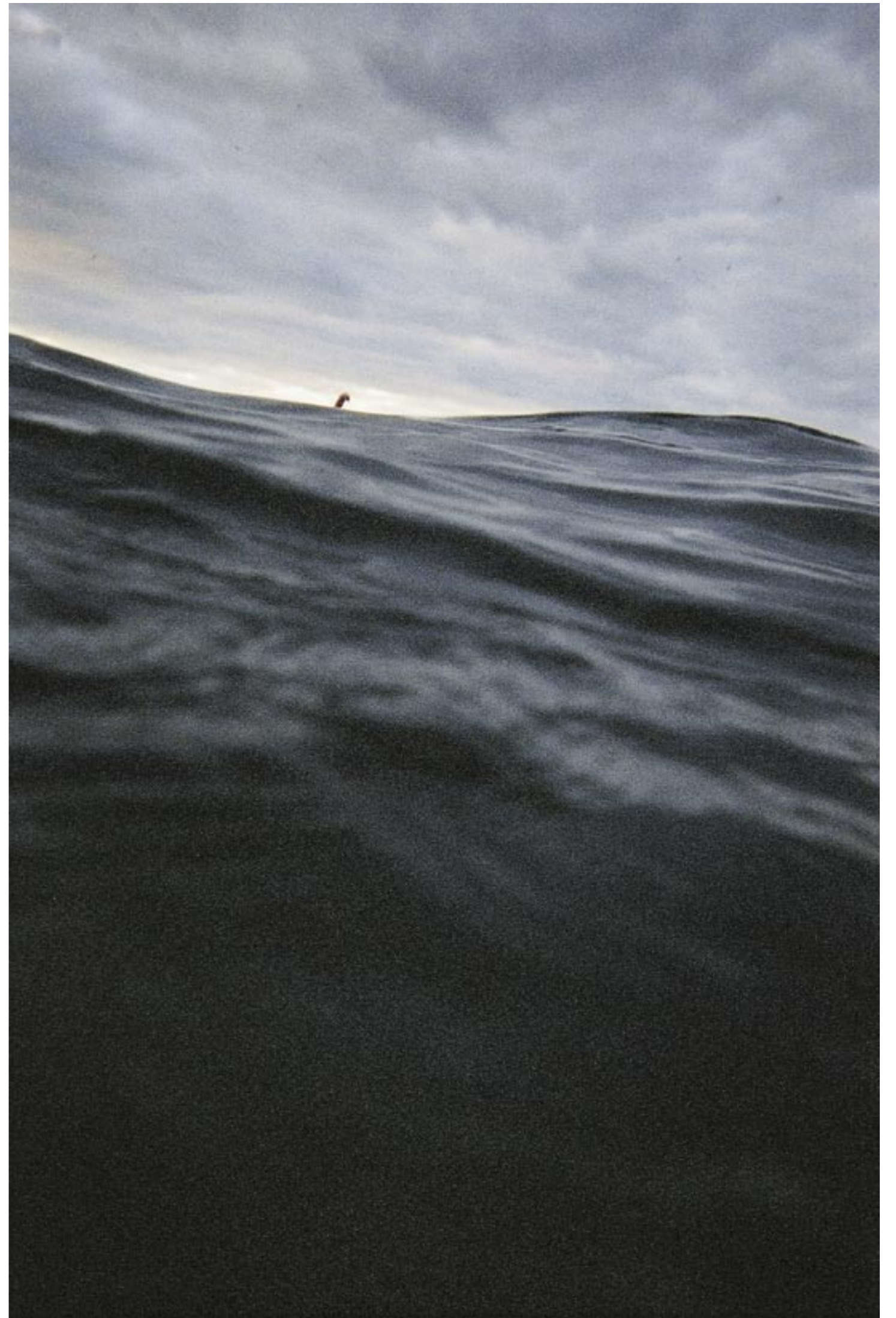
I think and I hope that I'll find something that I would like to do, a school I can apply to or whatever. I just want to have an idea or a notion of what I want to do. I have no plan of coming back and doing the exact same thing. Then you haven't gotten anywhere, it's just a vacation, not an actual change.'



**THIS  
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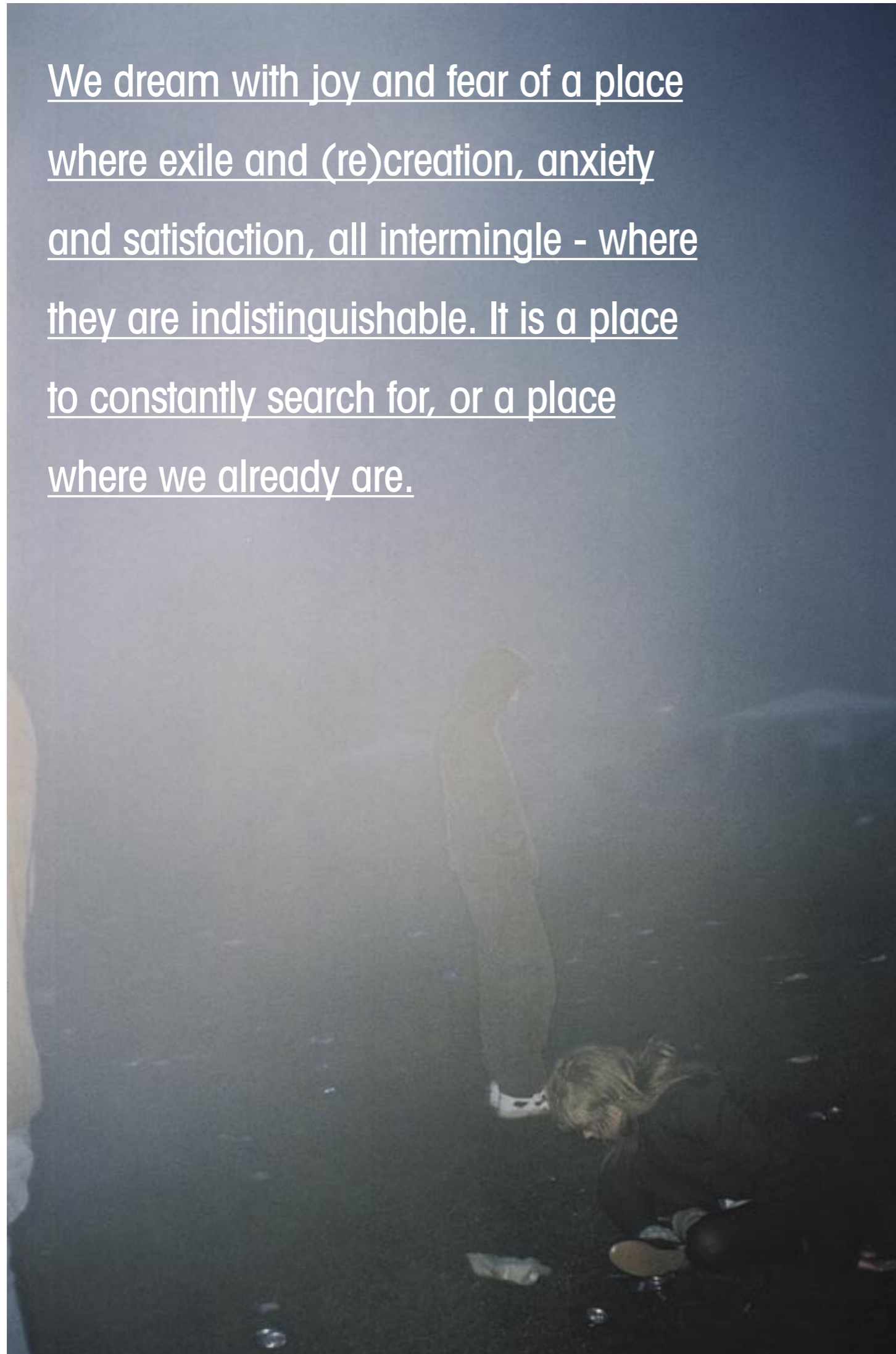


How, if some day or night a demon were to sneak after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you, "This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything immeasurably small or great in your life must return to you—all in the same succession and sequence—even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned over and over, and you with it, a dust grain of dust." Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or did you once experience a tremendous moment when you would have answered him, "You are a god, and never have I heard anything more godly." If this thought were to gain possession of you, it would change you, as you are, or perhaps crush you. The question in each and every thing, "Do you want this once more and innumerable times more?" would weigh upon your actions as the greatest stress. Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to crave nothing more fervently than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?

*Friedrich Nietzsche*



We dream with joy and fear of a place  
where exile and (re)creation, anxiety  
and satisfaction, all intermingle - where  
they are indistinguishable. It is a place  
to constantly search for, or a place  
where we already are.



The point is not to resist happiness but rather to rediscover its potentiality – the potentiality of a happiness not in collusion with this world. But what kind of world is this? Today we live in a world that is not a world according to the French philosopher Alain Badiou. One of the key aspects of a world in his view is its ability to name its inhabitants – to give them a place, a future, and a history. The old world, which perhaps ended in the 1980s, was far from perfect but in the middle of the last century for example, a peasant living in China or a poor Brazilian had both a name and a possible future no matter how illusory. Both could see themselves as part of larger movements that would change the very course of history. Today, claims Badiou, all of that is gone. The closest we get to a world is the global market that exists under the logic of capital and the only name today available for the great majority of humanity within this market is ‘excluded’. What else does one call one of the 70 million that inhabit what is likely the ‘biggest continuous footprint of urban poverty on earth’ - a stretch of slums and

shantytowns on the African coast from Abidjan to Ibadan with Lagos as its point of greatest density?<sup>12</sup> They are considered to be nothing by the world’s logic. A world in which most of its inhabitants are nameless is not a world.

Considering this, it would be easy to claim that happiness is something that we cannot possible achieve today – that without a world, happiness is doomed to exist in the privileged sections of empire where those that have the luxury to avoid the horrendous problems facing a large portion of the world celebrate their freedom, a happiness that always exists ‘in spite of...’. It would be easy to claim that we must defer the experience of happiness until the next world comes about. Instead, maybe the possibility of this future happiness is enough to generate a happiness without apologies in the present. As Slavoj Žižek writes, ‘In a proper revolutionary breakthrough, the utopian future is neither simply fully realized, present, nor simply evoked as a distant promise which justified present violence – it is rather as if, in a unique suspension of temporality, in the short-circuit between the present and the

future, we are – as if by Grace – for a brief time allowed to act as if the utopian future is (not yet here, but) already fully at hand, just there to be grabbed. Revolution is not experienced as a present hardship we have to endure for the happiness and freedom of the future generations, but as the present hardship over which this future happiness and freedom already cast their shadow – in it, we already are free while fighting for freedom, we already are happy while fighting for happiness, no matter how difficult the circumstances’.<sup>13</sup> Still, how you differentiate between real happiness and its imitation I don’t know. The question seems to be similar to the question of love. How does one know when one is in love? The decision always contains an element of risk. There is always the chance that one is wrong. Sometimes you’ll be right though and that is when the world explodes.

Unfortunately no revolutionary breakthroughs seem to be imminent, although arguably they never do. As such maybe all we can do today is to try to lay the groundwork for this unknown world, to keep its possibility alive. In doing so we must oppose the resignation - in all its forms -

that tries to find happiness in an unnecessarily repellent world and recognize that happiness can not only be found in struggle but that happiness in itself is a struggle. In this interval between worlds, the only way to oppose this resignation and assert the struggle of happiness is experimentation. ‘We are the experimenters of the interval. We are between two worlds, one of which is falling little by little into oblivion, while the other is only fragmentary. What we have to do is pass through. We are passers’.<sup>14</sup> There are no formulas to follow or guaranteed results. A first step may perhaps be to identify and think our happiness and our unhappiness. ‘Thought is happiness, even where it defines unhappiness: by enunciating it. By this alone happiness reaches into the universal unhappiness. Whoever does not let it atrophy has not resigned’.<sup>15</sup> The anxiety we feel about the inadequacy of our lives and our society is a step on the path to happiness or it is simply an unavoidable element of happiness. Is any of this enough? No. Definitely not. It can’t be. All we can hope is that it might be a part of a new beginning.

