

THE PATH TO CONFLICTUAL HARMONY

What can participatory mural art teach us about social work? How can it open up for new thought models or insights related to the way we see leadership, conflict resolution and collectivity, the practice of democracy and democratic ideals? What are the inherent conflicts and tension points between art and the social sphere, and how can design process play a role in bridging these?

With case studies from two participatory mural art processes, KOKO Labs invites a range of professionals from the spheres of art, design and social work, to reflect upon challenges and strategies in relation to their fields, through the lens of the working concept “conflictual harmony” – a space where the tension of differing social, disciplinary or cultural perspectives can be used, not fixed, and seemingly opposing or conflicting elements can “battle” in a way that allows for fruitful co-creation, learning, and a more just and enlightened way of relating to each other, ourselves and our surrounding world.

The space that “hosts” these conversations is a transdisciplinary* experiment in itself, staged as an interview. The conductor of the interview is KOKO, a cross-eyed chicken with a hole in its stomach. KOKO is an equally enlightened and ignorant spirit who acts as spiritual adviser and overseer of all KOKO Labs activities. Included in the interview are Jo, the artist, Hanna, the designer, and Tysk, the community organizer. These characters illustrate the inner transdisciplinarity* of Johanna Tysk – consisting of separate skills, several modes of thinking and sometimes conflicting agendas. The interview will be presented to a range of contributors, with specific questions attached, and their contributions will then be added to the publication in a conversation format. The first version of the publication will be published digitally through the “KOKO Labs” platform in the spring of 2016, and will develop with new insights, case studies and conversations over time.

KOKO Labs is a transdisciplinary* conjunction point of art, design and the social sphere, centered around the practice of Johanna Tysk. She explores in her work a logic of “conflictual harmony” in the service of social justice and human liberation. Her approach always involves a strong interest in the meeting as the catalyst for fruitful creation – between different viewpoints, a group of participants and her as a leader, various cultural reference points, or conflicting feelings like sadness and joy – and working out a process that allows for a healthy balance between freedom and structure, chaos and order.

*Transdisciplinarity refers to a holistic approach to problem-solving, locating links within a total system. It can be practiced through a group of people of various professional and social

backgrounds coming together to work towards a common aim. It can also refer to a single practitioner using thought systems and methods from several disciplines in order to rise above the inherent restrictions within single disciplines, and open up to new ways of seeing and doing, on an individual, collective or political level.

Welcome :) Who is Johanna Tysk and where are you from?

Jo: I am an unlimited soul inside a material body. I come from the same source that we all come from and to which we will all return. I am an artist, and I strive to understand that which cannot be understood.

Hanna: I am a mediator, a designer. I search for form and patterns in chaos, ways forward. I was raised in Akalla, a suburb of Stockholm, to Swedish parents, both teachers.

Tysk: I am a community organizer. I see structures, power dynamics, dysfunctional social patterns. I was born in the African-american community of Atlanta and raised in the multiethnic and intercultural Stockholm suburbs.

What is your agenda?

Jo: I want to move beyond the alienation we've built into our societies, from ourselves and our surroundings... I have always had a sense that there is more to all of this than what we take for granted in this life. That there is more beauty, more life. That behind the layers we show, or the self-denial we are taught, there is something more true. We're just taught to embrace one side, one identity. I want a society that allows for this mess, this inner diversity, reality as paradox, everything intertwined. I want to see what this looks like.

Tysk: I want social justice. I want to change the dynamics of what perspectives are heard, what is validated by society, what is dismissed, hierarchies of race, class, gender, age, you name it. I have seen, on a very intimate level I would say, how constructed ideas and value systems connected to race, cultural background, concepts of "normality", play out in both internalized ways and very real, structural oppression. And I know this is not natural, this is not how it's supposed to be.

Hanna: For me it's all an investigation I would say, I want to understand how things work. I see many missing communication links in the structures we've built, leading to knowledge incapsulated within specific social or political perspectives, or disciplinary structures. I want to understand how different systems can connect to one another, what is the secret logic that "unlocks"

tension points between different perspectives or disciplines? How can we use this logic to more efficiently transform society in the direction we say we want to go in?

And what would you like to share with us today?

Hanna: We would like to share two processes of mural art that the three of us lead together along with groups of children and youth at community houses in Fisksätra and Tensta, two multi-ethnic suburbs to Stockholm, struggling with similar issues of social marginalization. By sharing our thoughts, our different roles in these processes, as well as the initial drafts around a concept we call “conflictual harmony” we would then like to open up for a broader conversation involving a range of contributors from the spheres of art, design and the social sphere.

Great, so let’s start with Fisksätra, tell us about the context and how the process started?

Tysk: Well, the painting took place as part of a “Creative Studio” for children aged 6-12 years at the local community house. Somewhere along the way we discovered this huge room, a pass-through area, connecting a school and a youth center with the community house and school cafeteria. The room could be described as a no-mans-land, not really belonging to anyone and not being cared for for many years. With support from the community house, we so decided to initiate a sort of “guerilla painting” where we involved the kids in shaping their own surrounding and expressing their ideas and unique perspectives in a very real, physical way.

Hanna: The process started out with pretty open-ended drawing exercises, to get a feel for the site and the thoughts and ideas of the children. We also engaged in ethnography-like investigations of the particular area. Based on this information, we then arrived at a first concept for further exploration.

Jo: This is when I was inspired to create a background of water, strong waves, and a fiery pink sky... Also outline a festive character with a kind of multiethnic feel, representing the ethnic make-up of the area. I left the essence of the character unfixed though, as I wanted to explore it further with the kids!

Before you go further, could you tell us a little more about your process?

Hanna: Sure! You could say that the design process forms the backbone, or the skeleton, in both mural processes we will share with you today, providing a kind of framework for participation. I would describe this process as a symbiosis of the linear process, according to which much of our societal management is structured these days, and the open-ended process of much art practice. The linear approach can be best described as analyze-conclude-implement-evaluate. The design process on the other hand is more like a spiral, where you explore-understand-generate-test in a spiral kind of form. It's really about using both your left and your right brain. Intuitive and analytical. You start with the context, and the desire to understand the situation at hand. This is the explorative, "open" phase, where you engage your counter part in the creative process without the frames set too firmly. You then go back and forth between opening up, to generate as much content as possible, and narrowing down, to move things forward.

Jo: I want to point out that this process can not be clearly defined, learnt passively, or owned... It doesn't happen this way. You can formulate certain approaches or things to consider, but never pin-point things. Whatever you call yourself as a professional, at the end of the day it comes down to your own agency, your own personality when leading such a process. There is also a mystical element to this spiral process I would say... it's a symbol used in much ancient symbolism, representing the movements between the inner (intuitive, intangible) world and the outer (matter, manifested) world, maybe you could call this the objective and subjective spheres, who are in reality intertwined... A process like this then needs to be understood both intuitively and intellectually, through your own being.

Tysk: When discussing a process like this, I would also like to add in the elements of your own built-in prejudice, your own experience of different social settings, or your own social identity/identities connected to different spheres. The more clear you are on where your own "limits" go, the easier it will be I think for you to investigate that which might seem "new" to you from a standpoint of curiosity, openness, and humility.

So what happened next :)?

Hanna: With the initial concept outlined on the wall, we then decided to experiment with how much freedom we could give the children without losing quality in the final work and coherence in communicated meaning. Question explored, what is a fruitful tension between freedom and structure?

Jo: This was bit of a scary process I would say, as I challenged myself to give up much control, and decided to give the children a little more freedom than I´m comfortable with to see what happens... First round of free expression, I had stress hormones all over! I thought: gah, this is UGLY!

Hanna: We decided though to trust our ability to bring coherence into diverse expression, which is really a design skill we have practiced for many years. This meant that we would go over the painting along the way to add elements and colors to bring symmetry and harmony. Then juggle between allowing free expression again, and pausing and looking at what we did, what coherence and meaning we can find, what elements can be repeated or what needs to be worked on more, in a sort of dynamic “pulse” responding to what´ s happening on the wall.

What did happen on the wall?

Jo: Mukribu appeared :)! A muslim-christian-buddhist with the universe on her dress, and the water, air and diverse components of Fisksätra at her very finger tips... Sunflowers appeared, fish of various sizes and shapes, a bird thinking in numbers, letters approaching Mukribu as just another element for her to play with, a clock with numbers spread around... A mystical and philosophical world filled with all the contradictions children of this area encounter through their various backgrounds. The meaning thus emerged from seemingly random choices made by different people, and developed along the way, in the process. When you allow for this spontaneous formation of meaning then a character like this gets a life of her own. This really is the bliss of creation.

Hanna: This is a sort of “magic” that can be trained I think, through the lens which you choose to see the world from. If you believe there is unity in diversity then you will find it. It´ s also a process that we have found works for us whether we´ re designing a book cover, with opposing ideas between publisher and author, writing a script, exploring conflictual situations in search for a way forward, or directing a festival with a working team of various cultural, social and disciplinary backgrounds. After a certain intake of material, things get a life of their own, and the form starts emerging out of a diversity an “untrained” eye would maybe at first interpret as a chaotic mess, or containing opposing elements that you can not imagine would function in a harmonious whole. I believe there is a sort of “system” to this, a logic to how the synthesis works. This we don´ t expect to ever fully understand, but we can reveal it in little pieces along the way, adjust, rethink, question, share...

The two of you seemed very synced in this process Jo and Hanna... What are your thoughts around this whole process Tysk?

Tysk: Well, I'm thinking about the fear of chaos that Jo mentioned earlier, that she herself experienced in the process, but with the help of Hanna could challenge and overcome through inventing new ways of seeing and doing along the way. It really illustrates much of what upholds many of the hierarchies and socially dysfunctional situations we see, with certain groups exercising control over others. In relation to this specific situation involving children, you could label this an adult fear of chaos, and a lack of strategies and approaches to deal with "chaos" or that which threatens the "set order" of things, however dysfunctional this order might be, in a way that doesn't imply an unhealthy exercise of power over your "counter part". Also an inability to see the potential inclusion of what is considered "ugly" in a harmonious whole, rather choosing to see it as a threat. This fear was very tellingly expressed by the school janitor, who interfered with the painting by brutally painting over what he thought looked too much like graffiti, without first seeking a dialogue with us, who had informed the school about our idea to paint the wall before we started, but not received any response. We were told that the principle and staff supported this mission somehow, fearing that the wall would encourage the children to scribble on the walls. Interestingly enough, during this whole process, six weeks of an "open sketch" in a room where hundreds of children pass every day, the only person to touch the wall when we were not there was the janitor.

So how did you deal with the situation?

Hanna: We decided to "work with the materials of the situation"...This meant having conversations with the children about how we could transform what the janitor did instead of erasing it. Simply put, we might not like what he did, but we'll see what happens if we see it as part of the art work, and respect his aggressive act as a contribution in its own right. Result being that we ended up with several good ideas that we wouldn't otherwise have come up with.

Jo: My favorite one a talk bubble using some of the paint from the janitor's "contribution" as a background, that pedagogically explains that "this is children's art"!

Tysk: The approach we chose could also be labelled a sort of strategy of "non-violent resistance"... Where you do not allow an act of aggression, or an opponent who expresses values very different from your own, to make you enter

a space of war, but rather uses the “opposition” to more clearly define who you are, what your strategies are, what you believe in.

Hanna: I would like to point out however that the design approach does not offer standard solutions, the way many ideologies or theories connected to the social sphere do. It’s all about operacy, what has been called a “reflexive conversation with the materials of the situation”. Simply put; What works in a given moment based on what you want to achieve? In relation to the school, our approach managed to “relax” a tense situation, and opened up for a reasonable conversation with the principal about challenges they faced in relation to the kids. After this occasion, we were allowed to finish the mural work without further intrusions, and with an increased understanding of the larger social dynamics our work was happening within. We also ended up using this approach with good results when the children would complain about each other’s contributions. Thus we encouraged them to continue working on that which seemed unfinished or unfit, resulting in many elements that 4-5 kids had added their touch to.

So tell us about the second case study, in Tensta, where you worked with a group of teenagers 13-20 years old?

Tysk: Sure, this situation was in a way more socially challenging in its initial state, stepping into a youth center where vandalization of walls and furniture was a common problem, reflecting a general apathy connected to society as a whole. The assignment in this case to involve the youth in the creative process of creating art work for their walls, as a way of increasing their sense of pride and ownership of their own space. Here we were faced with a group of young men telling us “no one cares about this mural, someone’s gonna destroy it soon as we’re done anyway”. The general attitude was a jokingly distance to a self-image of being “animals in a cage”, and a veneration for gangster imagery. Challenge very much related to lack of exposure to visual representations that goes beyond the “dangerous and useless guy from the ghetto”-stereotype. We faced the pretty difficult challenge of how to invite the participation of these boys, and at the same time not cement a self-identity that hits boys from these areas at a very young age, both from the surrounding society and older mates.

Hanna: We felt very conflicted at first, considering a “compromised solution” which could have been for instance writing “Tensta 163” in graffiti letters on the wall.

Jo: I don’t believe in compromise however ;). I believe in creating extraordinary things, things that have not been seen before...

Tysk: We also didn't want to stop at a solution that doesn't really bring anything new to the table for the participants we're working with... That would not be responsible social work, which is much about opening up new possibilities or mind frames, based on an understanding and a respect for where people are, what their comfort zone is, what makes them feel seen and validated, and what their struggles are in relation to a larger societal context.

Hanna: To sum up, what we wanted to search for instead of a compromise, was an unexpected symbiosis of seemingly opposing ideas, something that maybe many of these boys would first oppose. Sometimes serving is about leading, even in opposition.

So what happened :)?

Jo: We took their ideas... And twisted them! Starting with the idea of the can't see, can't hear, can't speak monkeys, which in these circles is connected to a gangster identity... I looked up the true root of these symbols, which is connected to Buddhist philosophies of taking responsibility for your thoughts, actions and words. Pointing to this through Buddhist ornaments on the monkeys. Also letting their tongues out, as a reference to Einstein and a sort of genius all-encompassing spirit... Then I put you KOKO growing from their heads, dressed up in Tensta style-street wear inspired by ideas from the boys. Underneath a prison like wall with barb wire, visualizing the prison many young people experience their situation as. The KOKO-monkeys floating out and beyond, creating a beautiful mind-fuck!

Tysk: The first reaction we received when we presented the idea to create something on the wall that had its foundation in their ideas, but took in to another level, was protests from a select group, and more threats of how the murals were gonna be destroyed unless they got exactly what they wanted in the form of straight-out gangster images... This is the kind of situation where any "logical or standard solution", unless you go for a compromise which we just mentioned we don't quite believe in, is doomed to fail, and where intuition, integrity and an acute sense of what the deeper needs of the situation are has to take front seat for a fruitful situation to appear... After careful thought, and discussions with the youth leaders at the center, we decided to go with our gut feeling of sticking with the "Buddhist monkeys", which in all honesty were also very much in line with the boys' weird sense of humor too, in spite of protests.

Jo: It is my firm belief that people sometimes need to be provoked out of their comfort zone... When possible with grace, humor and a playful attitude, and the setting of art can create this!

Hanna: Through visual expression, it is also possible to acknowledge and confirm what people experience as their reality, but “twist things”, add unexpected elements like what Jo is taking about, that point to a “widened mind space” of opportunities that is not well-defined but felt and experienced...

Jo: Yes, is this not the power of art :)?

Hanna: It is also important I believe to leave some “room” idea and process wise that creates a situation for continuous contributions of the invited participants to shape a “growing art work”. This allows you to respond to the needs of the moment, and also creates a situation of moves and counter moves, where you as the artistic leader can keep the relationship to your participants alive, active and playful, and you can learn from each other along the way.

Tysk: I would say it’s in a way about staying in the relationship, patiently, not “giving up” or start exercising your power in an oppressive way to avoid that which challenges you or is trying to “dominate you” into adopting a very locked position. I see it as your responsibility as the leader to make sure that the relationship is not “cut”, and that the focus of the leadership is serving, and the needs of the relationship, which involves both you and your counterpart, are continuously considered in the process.

What other needs did you sense and how did they direct the process?

Hanna: Well, we also perceived a need for an outlet for the destructive urges of many of the boys, an urge that can become constructive and creative even if dealt with in a good way.

Jo: Even add some raw beauty to the piece :).

Hanna: Yes :). This urge was first expressed by one boy grabbing the dark grey color and randomly splashing it onto the wall, outside the frames we had set for the painting. Since the paint was already on the wall, we encouraged him to keep going. He then went on to fill an entire area with grey paint, with several others joining in.

Jo: I then allowed them to write whatever they wanted, however they wanted on this wall, also add paint with their hands! This was an equally exciting and scary process, just like the painting in Fisksätra, but again I decided to trust Hanna's and our shared ability to find meaning and coherence in what was going on....

Hanna: After they were done we erased some words, and added a few elements representing the buildings in Tensta. We also added references to Himla af Klint's abstract visual imagery, which in this context looked a bit like street art in the form of vinyl records.

Tysk: The boys ended up very happy with the outcome, interestingly enough. No one's left a single mark on the wall since it was finished six months ago. We were even given a spontaneous round of applause from some of the boys who had protested the most in the beginning. Sometimes participation can be about being seen, for where you are but also where you could go. It's not always about being absolutely involved in every decision, in a consensus-kind of way.

Jo: The magic happens I think when you as the artistic leader create space to challenge this way. But also allow this meeting to challenge and touch you also...

Hanna: Yes, it's about relationship, a meeting, where you hold different roles, yet meet on some sort of equal playing field.

What does it take for an equal situation to appear between a leader and a group of participants?

Tysk: Well, this meeting will of course never be totally equal in absolute terms... Someone sets the direction for the work, makes the final decisions, and is also held accountable for the outcome. To create a fruitful situation, I think it's very important to acknowledge this fact, and enter the situation with a type of honesty about your point of perspective as an active subject. Who are you? What is your agenda? Why are you there?

Jo: I also think that entering the situation as an active subject is necessary for you to produce both good social work and interesting art...

Tysk: Yes, because for a true meeting to appear you need a strong sense of I. Who else is there to see the other?

Hanna: This is an interesting point... It also connects to something I have noticed in much contemporary art discourse, which can best be summarized as a

perceived tension between the “I” and “the collective”. Within contemporary art discourse, there is much emphasis on the autonomous artistic subject, free from any kind of collective responsibilities. Then people within the art world revolt against this, by putting all emphasis on the collective or the community, withdrawing from responsibility in a way, calling it “socially engaged” or “participatory arts”. This is seen as some sort of heroic act of giving up agency, but oftentimes results in, like Claire Bishop points out in “Artificial Hells”, irrelevant art and bad social practice.

Jo: The involvement of the “I” as “evil and authoritarian”, like much community art discourse is based on, only becomes oppressive I think when this “I” does not serve anything other than your own ego... Why couldn’t the “I” meet the collective in a healthy way?

What could a “thought model” for this type of meeting be?

Tysk: One useful model could be that of the breakdancer, or the freestyling MC, who expresses oneself in response to the moves of “his counterpart”, in an intense meeting that requires you to pay close attention to the people you’re “battling”...

Jo: It’s a space where “the conflict” of the meeting with the Other triggers both parts to grow better, stronger, more imaginative, where the I/collective duality of much contemporary art discourse doesn’t exist.

Hanna: Also the DJ metaphor is interesting... Which is really about finding the “flow” and the rhythm which connects a variety of creative expressions into a unique mix, while paying close attention to the mood and vibe of an audience, in this case the participants.

Sometimes I am having trouble distinguishing who is the designer, the community organizer and the artist :).

Hanna: Yes! That is when you have entered a truly transdisciplinary state. We go in and out of these transcendent states and those where our roles and thoughts are more distinct and easily distinguished. Maybe you are starting to understand how this all works?

I think you are starting to understand. I only ask questions ;). Do you have anything that could help us think of leadership in response to this meeting in a different way?

Jo: One useful metaphor that has come to mind is my sense of motherhood in my most rewarding creative processes. The material I´m working with becomes the father. If i´m working with a collective it provides me with continuous material in an on-going creative act, while I receive and start forming and serving the baby and its needs, which is really a leadership position, a certain responsibility. It´s almost like aligning yourself with a kind of creative force that is beyond your control in certain ways. The baby, the work of art, then becomes something that does not belong to either of you but reflects you both, carries your DNA.

Tysk: I find this way of describing the creative process very interesting from a structural perspective. The bodily experience of a creative act has been much associated with women, as well as Africans. Looked down upon in the dysfunctional “war between opposites” that we have given some examples of in this interview... In this case the mind is the winner and body the loser. Choosing to explore and also on a theoretical level stand up for this kind of description of a creative process – which is really about body in symbiotic exchange with the mind, where you can´t really distinguish what is what – is really about changing these dynamics on a very fundamental level.

Jo: Yes... It´s again about entering that state of paradox. A serving artistry where you reach a point of deep self-identity and loss of self simultaneously. It´s like the image of the vase and the two faces. What comes the easiest is to see one or the other, but if you really focus you can see both at the same time. It´s essentially about moving away from a dualistic way of looking at the world I would say... And discover that there is a space where these dualities can play out according to a yin and yang logic, where you can watch this conflicting dynamic without identifying with the opposing elements. A point from where you can serve the unity of it all, and enjoy, like artist Himla af Klint puts it, “the pain of duality dissolving in rejoice”.

Do you think this is the truth?

Hanna: No one knows the truth. What we´re trying to establish is a sort of “model” to work from, not another truth to argue about. I prefer to see it as an overarching theory that practice can be tested against. We call this working concept “conflictual harmony”. It´s a point of departure, and something that will be adjusted along the way. Simply put, this model is based on the simple idea that under the right circumstances, seemingly opposing or conflicting elements or perspectives, can battle, or play, in a way that creates new visions of collectivity that allows for more diversity, more space, unexpected solutions or

expressions. The leader is the one who sets the limits for how much diversity this space can allow, who kind of “holds” the space where this conflicting dynamic can play out, and leads the process forward. It’s really about using the tension, not fixing it!

Kind of like we’re doing in this interview?

Hanna: Yes, exactly! In this instance you KOKO are the one who provides us with the space to work together in constructive ways. Without your firm but humble leadership of this conversation, and the space of conflictual harmony that this creates, Johanna Tysk would be in a very confused state ;). To overcome boundaries connected to disciplines, agendas, perspectives etc, there needs to be someone who is not identified with any position, who keeps their eyes on the larger purpose or the “good” of the entire system, beyond the value systems, ideologies or agendas of single elements.

Tysk: I believe this is a “leadership model” that can be explored and developed in response to many of the social and political issues we’re facing today, where the question of how to live together in a democratic society, how to understand and respect each other across our different perspectives, how to find sustainable and holistic strategies to deal with hierarchies and oppression of all sorts, are growing more and more urgent...

Jo: Yes, and it’s a model that requires, or encourages, activation of all senses in both leader and participants. Like everyone is important in this, no one is “just another person” that gets squeezed into a normative system and is not allowed to leave their mark, or their unique contribution to whatever you create together.

Hanna: True, and it’s a model where you cannot “hide” behind an ideology that has provided all the answers beforehand, or that justifies a type of behavior that maybe goes against what you say you stand for because your ideology or theory is regarded more true or interesting than reality. I believe this is important to point out, that it’s a thought model or a working model, when combined with the kind of process that we have described in this interview, that requires constant attention to what your actions actually produce. That opens up for sustainable strategies, on-going dynamic conversations and action, rather than “final solutions”.

Jo: Yes. We are gonna have to learn to accept a certain degree of uncertainty in this... Also find the courage to share knowledge which is not “done”, “final”, “set”... There is some relief in not knowing everything. To enter a true meeting,

there needs to be this space available, that which you do not yet know. Then you are free to play, and create things anew.

What are your hopes for the future, in connection to your fields?

Jo: I wish for the unique qualities of the artistic process to be valued by society to a much larger extent... And given the space and resources to flourish in a way that helps us shift our thinking toward a more sensible, thoughtful approach to life and our material existence. I also wish for the cultural sphere to drop its own internal hierarchies, divisions and silos-mentality. I wish for more courage, more purpose, less prestige and attachment to things that don't matter... I wish for the inclusion of hip-hop and other cultural expressions offering a rawness, a directness and a vivid energy, to "battle" with what is now considered fine arts, in a way that evolves both sides, and eventually transmutes beyond these clear distinctions... I wish for art's active engagement with every-day life, with every-day people, with every-day issues, with the topics that unite us.

Tysk: I wish for non-judgmental public rooms where we can evolve together, on a community scale but also a political and democratic scale... Where we can learn from each other on equal and just grounds, where there is room for conflicts to be dealt with in sensible ways, where opposing ideas or perspectives are not treated as a threat, and defense mechanisms can be dropped... Rooms where the "burden" of heavy hierarchies and forced norms are dissolved, where we can see each other and feel ourselves, where there is room to play, to be, to question or to learn.

Hanna: My hope is for more conversation between art, design and its wider social, ecological and political contexts... I'm talking specifically about the knowledge inherent in the design process, and its focus on gathering different actors, exploring common ground and prototyping, or "testing", your way towards sustainable "systems" or strategies of transformation... Designer Frank Spencer said "the new global citizen will be one that not only sees the perspectives held by other cultures, but is able to process and create "new worlds" from the convergence of those views." This very much relates to disciplinary perspectives as well. It is my hope that a new breed of designers - in the service of giving form to change - will play an important role in bridging the gap between art and the social challenges we are facing today.

Thank you Jo, Hanna and Tysk for sharing your process and thoughts... We will now "zoom out" of your brain and invite a range of professionals from the spheres of art, design and social work to discuss the concept of "conflictual

harmony” in relation to their specific disciplines and areas of interest. Are you ready Jo, Hanna and Tysk to merge into one :)?

Jo, Hanna & Tysk: Yes, shoot :).

So we warmly welcome Ihsan Kellecioglu, 35, as our first guest! Could you tell us who you are what your agenda is?

Ihsan: I work as national strategist for socio-economically marginalized areas, at nonprofit organization Rädga Barnen (“Save the Children”). My agenda is to reduce child poverty and social marginalization in primarily areas with a majority of citizens with foreign background, also raise the general level of awareness about these issues.

Johanna Tysk: Hi Ihsan :). I know you asked me at first how you could contribute to a publication about art and design... The text I’ve written has artistic processes as examples but is really about the need for new strategies, processes and “thought models” within all three spheres/disciplines that I’m concerned with. As I bring up in the text, there is a pattern in the art world where artists working within the social sphere often either impose their agenda on the people they work with, or let go of leadership or agency altogether. I see this happening in the social sphere as well, when the “ruling middle class” meet the “marginalized areas”, and display similar patterns of a leadership that is often either too authoritarian or too “lenient”, sometimes in a weird mix where you “give up your agency” as a leader yet keep those with “opposing loyalties” out from any kind of strategic influence... What are your experiences and thoughts around this, and what do you believe are the key factors that can bring about a “true meeting” between these kind of “opposing forces/perspectives”, in a way that challenges current power structures?

Ihsan: Well, my experiences are much connected to representing “the system” through my affiliation with Rädga Barnen, meeting groups of young people in the suburban areas who do not accept the “victimization” that much charity or help organizations such as ours is based upon, at least in the eyes of the members and the leadership structures. Embracing a meeting like this can be very challenging for any organization of this kind, as it will surely put the self image to the test. I see this a lot for example, based on the different reactions from “middle class people” and “those we are trying to serve” when I say I work for Rädga Barnen. Where “middle class people” all express deep admiration for my “noble role”, people in marginalized communities tend to be much more suspicious of our agendas and claimed expertise on topics that they are affected by. The problem

in terms of embracing this kind of criticism or suspicion, I see is much connected to an organizational sort of arrogance, an idea that “what we do is right” that is affirmed by the collective you identify with and hard to get past. The higher up in the hierarchies the stronger this “protectionism” or unwillingness for self-reflection usually gets. As a representative for an organization like this, it’s very important to be aware of and honest about your own power position, also trust in the people, share the power you possess through this role, and break down your own position in current power structures.

Johanna Tysk: What is it that needs to be broken down exactly? I also see many people from the middle class, regardless of ethnicity or background, who are aware of their privilege or power position in relation to what we call “marginalized areas”, and almost make excuses for their existence when approaching these areas... In a way just affirming a messed up system, where you try to raise others by “lowering yourself”, creating an uncomfortable situation for everyone involved, instead of just approaching people as equals, which to me is really what constitutes a true meeting.

Ihsan: Well, it’s not the person that should be broken down. You have to maintain your integrity in this. But you can break down your identification with a certain role, or with an organization and the collective that comes with this. Then you can use your role in a certain organization as a tool for serving the people, instead of the self-image of the organization you’re working for. This is when, I believe, you can create a sort of symbiosis with your “counter part”, that helps both of you grow, and in the end affects current power structures in a positive direction.

Johanna Tysk: Could you give an example of a symbiosis of this kind?

Ihsan: Yes. I think this appeared in relation to Megafonen for instance, a social movement led by young people in Husby, that we arranged a lecture series with. Megafonen challenged our organization in many ways through their sharp political analysis of current power structures for instance. Through their connection with the people, I could then “go back” to the organization, express their concerns in a language people on this side could understand, and grow our collective understanding of the complexities of our work. We’ve ended up hiring a number of people from these movements, and could also share our resources and lend more credibility to their pursuits through using our name to back them up when appropriate.

Johanna Tysk: This I would call a situation of “conflictual harmony”, where the conflict that necessarily comes with a meeting like this is embraced, used, and not seen as a threat... What would you say are your “leadership strategies” to enable this kind of situation?

Ihsan: I think it’s important to maintain a balance in the loyalties you uphold, where you should not allow yourself to be “absorbed” by identification with either the larger organization you work for, or the people you involve, in this case Megafonen. At the same time as I relate to people on a “brother or sister”-level, I’ve seen it as my job to also uphold bit of a distance, and not try to force a “unity” with the organization that I represent. The risk if this happens is that the larger organization could no longer allow for any mistakes within the smaller organization, they would have their eyes on them so to speak, and the larger organization would necessarily “eat” the smaller one, which would break the “conflictual harmony” we’ve been talking about. In terms of leadership strategies, I also see it as very important to be very clear about what you can actually achieve, what the limitations of the organization that you work for are, and not promise more than you can deliver within your role. At the same time it’s important that you have a “flexibility range”, where you can stretch the limits of your role as a representative of this organization. This can both mean personal choices, like how I’ve chosen to give people my personal number and say they can call me in the evening if needed, to show them I’m “with them” and not belonging to some other world where problems are only dealt with during office hours. But this “flexibility” also needs to be worked out internally, as a form of “flexible mechanisms” embraced by the larger organization, like a negotiation range that we can bring into our meeting with our “counter part”, that also allows us to give up some control and share some of our power.

Johanna Tysk: As a last and final question, I will bring this back into the field of art and design. What role do you think these fields can play in the social engagement you have been a part of?

Ihsan: To speak for myself, art via hiphop has always been where I land, where I feel “seen” and confirmed, where I’m allowed to dream, and imagine things... In the “starting phases” of any type of social engagements, I think it’s important for this “mind-opening” space to be present and play a role. Then bring it back to an analytical phase, where you draw out your understanding of societal issues and your strategies. In the “end” you can again employ creative expressions to communicate what you see, or where you want to go, and use it as a tool to engage others.

Johanna Tysk: Thank you Ihsan for sharing your thoughts!

It's time to invite in our next guest, Gunilla Lundahl, 80, art/design journalist and author! Where are you from and what is your agenda?

Gunilla: I'm a cultural worker, mostly freelance. I write. Been the editor of Arkitekttidningen, Form, contributed to numerous publications and catalogues, written about ten books of my own. Worked with exhibitions at Moderna museet, Arkitekturmuseet, Stadsmuseet, Riksställningar, Konsthall C etc., taught classes and lectured at art and design schools across Sweden. I have a daughter and two grand children. I live in Stockholm but I'm from Västerbotten, a province in Northern Sweden. The mountain village of Fjällheden confirms my existence.

Johanna Tysk: Welcome Gunilla :). Since I know you've had a special engagement in topics concerning children and their place in society, I figured I would start this conversation by bringing up the "opposing poles" of children and adults... Where I find that we usually don't explore a "healthy balance" between that which differentiates a children's perspective from an adult perspective, and how we can learn from each other in a constructive way... Similar to the topic I bring up in my text, about art in the social sphere, where you often get stuck in a dualistic thought model where you either violate your "counter part" or give up agency altogether, it is my impression in relation to children, that grown-ups often display similar patterns of behavior, which results in missed opportunities to actually learn from each other, or create things together. What are your thoughts on this, and how can art and design play a role in exploring processes, knowledge, strategies and approaches that can help us grow as a society along with the children?

Gunilla: To start off, I would like to mention that I see your beautiful description of "conflictual harmony" as a description of the dialectics in a community and its possibilities to build new experiences. The first things I think of when it comes to the meeting with children is that the starting point needs to be acknowledging that we have different positions, or different entry points to our meeting place, that there is an "I" and a "you". In a space for creation and play, and for being together, this recognition of the "you" forms the very foundation for mutual trust, as well as the recognition that we are both curious. That's when we can leave our positioned world and wander into the world of imagination, and the unknown, go on a journey of discovery together. It is very rare that children are allowed to be "subjects" in a happening - whether it's planning, building, learning or creating - so that an exchange occurs and inequality and opposition can come to the surface, and new patterns of behavior appear.

Johanna Tysk: I find it very interesting that which you mention about the importance of acknowledging the “you” for any type of equal meeting to appear... And how this ties in with creation. Does not all creation happen in the meeting between an “I” and a “you”, whether this “you” is the world, the dialectics within yourself, e group, or another human being? A sociologist I know recently referred to someone a few days ago, who had said that relation appears in the “in-between-space” between you and I... He was emphasizing the importance of this space to be present, or else there is no relation, and it is my thought that also creation does not happen without this space... It also makes me think of the fear of the “in-between-space”, to not alone have the power to control what appears here, how wide spread this fear is especially among those at the top of the societal power hierarchies. Perhaps this fear, if we think specifically about children and adults from bit of a larger societal perspective, is also connected to the difficulties of “finding your role” in relation to children if we move away from those relations which we are used to. If children are acknowledged as subjects in the meeting with the adult sphere, then what would happen to the adult “structures”? What “weirdnesses” would the adult world have to see, and face? What would be left, what would be worth “keeping”, what would have to go, and what new “patterns of behavior” would appear?

Gunilla: Yes, children are expected to grow into society, and adults claim themselves to be experts on how this should happen. We often fail to trust in the childrens´ own power. Make ourselves superior. Don´t listen. For grown-ups it is often unimaginable to leave their power position and dare the unknown. Our grown-up responsibility is to at least try to create opportunities for equal meetings where we can learn something for the future. Seek new models. Dare to also fail. Create a space for this exchange to occur. It´s so hard! Can we? The apparent emptiness of this space gives us anxiety. When it can be freely activated, it lightens up.

Johanna Tysk: I know you were involved in the exhibition “The Model: a Model for a Qualitative Society” at Moderna Museet in Stockholm in 1968, where the Danish artist Palle Nielsen turned the museum space into an adventure playground for children. As far as I understand it, this was part pedagogical research project, based on a dissatisfaction with an educational system disregarding a child´s artistic creative potential. Part an activist critique of everyday-life, perceived as alienated and boring, and part a way of presenting an inclusive, process-oriented concept of art. I guess it could also be seen as one step in the direction of “staging” this space that we´ve talked about, where children are allowed to take

full ownership of their positions as subjects. Could you tell us a bit more about this project?

Gunilla: “The Model” was a reaction against the materially and mentally limiting structures of our capitalist society. The playing children were to be models for the human being in the future qualitative society where we offered space and tools for play without our governing or steering participation. The Model as a positive form of societal criticism. Valid then. Followed by discussions. Left their marks. Faded out.

Johanna Tysk: If I were to look at this example from the perspective of “conflictual harmony”, then I would say perhaps it falls more towards the category of “giving up agency” than exploring what a fruitful dynamic between children *and* adults as subjects could possibly look like or, or be, in the co-creation of a “healthier” society than what we live in today, where that which has been marginalized is integrated into the very fabrics of our societies, and ourselves. I can see how “The Model” makes sense in relation to the very authoritarian and rigid structures that I’m sure many of the 70’s movements were a reaction against. But I also believe, as times are changing and we have the opportunity to learn from previous trials, that it’s important that we develop new models or strategies for social change, with the concept of “conflictual harmony” as one example of such a model. In developing this concept, I’m sure there’s plenty of knowledge that we can draw from a project like “The Model” also today. What knowledge would you like to highlight, in the creation of this space of “dynamic harmony”?

Gunilla: Fifty years later it is perhaps the play which becomes a model to explore further. The play as a practice in liberating ourselves from the straightjacket that modern capitalism has put us in. The play as a state of consciousness. An exercise for all ages, a meeting that appears when everyone is granted equal value. The play is the childrens’ method of exploring, and attaching. In the play there are no results, no set direction, the movement is not determined by calculation. The play has no set start, no determined ending point. The play is created, like life itself, for its own sake. It’s a flow. “Without interest” in a Kantian sense. The play is a creative act. A place of growth. A resistance against the neoliberalism that turns the world into surface, deprives people of their intrinsic value and makes our doing lose its meaning. Wears down our humanity. Perhaps it is in the play that we liberate ourselves. Set formulas don’t exist. Only practice.

Johanna: Thank you Gunilla for sharing your thoughts and insights! The way you describe the play reminds me of the “thought models” I present in the text for a

fruitful meeting between the “I” and “the collective”, drawing from a hiphop tradition of breakdancing, freestyling, or DJing, who just like the way you describe the play, has the potential of connecting the being to the doing through the meeting with a counter part of some sort... I also enjoy how you help us envision where this “conflictual harmony” could take us, beyond current power hierarchies and structures, whether it’s related to children or other oppressive structures. It’s easy sometimes to “forget” this dimension of what kind of society it is we’re trying to create for the benefit of everyone. It makes me think of a question I asked Gudrun Schyman (Swedish feminist politician) once during a lecture. I said “What do you think men would benefit from gender equality?”. She thought about it for a moment, and then said, “love”...

Our next guest, Maria Bergström, comes from the field of psychology. Who are you, where are you from and what is your agenda?

Maria: I am a recently graduated psychologist who grew up in a small town outside of Stockholm. I am now working with occupational psychology in Malmö, southern Sweden. In regards to this essay, I enjoy exploring in what ways psychological theories might apply to the kind of artistic process that has been discussed, as well as their possible connection points to the broader concept of “conflictual harmony”.

Johanna Tysk: Welcome Maria! So, considering that you’re a psychologist it would be interesting to explore your thoughts on the psychological dimensions of achieving the kind of “conflictual harmony” that the whole interview is a sort of “staging of” through the characters Jo, Hanna and Tysk. What are your initial thoughts around this concept?

Maria: Well, to start with I would interpret the concept of “conflictual harmony”, and how it can be reached from an individual psychological standpoint, as the ability to integrate conflictual and contradictory elements, and see a “unity” in these in spite of the apparent conflicts. It also makes me associate to the concept of “cognitive dissonance”, which could be described as the mental stress or discomfort that appears when having for example several contradictory beliefs or ideas at the same time, which entails that we always strive for internal consistency. We respond to this cognitive dissonance in ways that decrease the dissonance, such as simplifying or overseeing things so that the experienced contradiction goes away, which then “releases us” from the discomfort. To overcome this built in tendency to simplify things and endure staying in this discomfort, it usually requires a conscious effort, energy and psychological maturity, as well as conditions that don’t contain too much threat or pressure.

This is obviously an ability that might be difficult to exert, for some even impossible.

Johanna Tysk: That's interesting and highlights one of the "foundations" of the working concept of "conflictual harmony" I think. That there needs to be some sort of non-judgmental space available for this to appear, a place that is free from the threats that always seem to pop up as soon as you identify too strongly with a certain position or standpoint... I'm curious also how you would interpret the characters Jo, Hanna and Tysk, and how their relationships could be described from a psychological standpoint?

Maria: When I read your description of the artistic process and the collaboration between the three characters, it makes me think of theories related to parenting and attachment theories, for example of how a child uses the parent as a "safe base" to explore from and return to when in need of reassurance and security. In the examples that you give, it seems like you have started developing these relationships within yourself in a way that allows for you to explore the world quite freely, and then return to your inner "parent" when things get scary or feel threatening. Without this inner parent however providing "too much structure" in a way that hinders the "freedom" or the creativity of the exploring child. The tension you mention between "freedom" and "structure" in the working process I believe is central also for this inner dynamic to stay balanced and healthy. I see "Hanna" as the safe "grown up" that "Jo" turns to when she becomes distressed or needs to see the "bigger picture", and whom she needs to return to repeatedly to maintain her sense of direction and security. "Jo" could in this sense be described as the "Id" according to Freudian theory, which constitutes the subconscious urges or instincts within a human being. She is the creative force but also the fear and the performance anxiety that is ready to "throw in the towel" when things go wrong. "Hanna" then is the "Ego", the organizing and realistic player in this who manages the Id in relation to the outer world. "Tysk" I see as the "Super-ego," who has the moralizing and critical role in terms of reminding Hanna of "ideals" she finds important in relation to a larger societal perspective. It's a challenge for Hanna to adjust and mediate between the urges of the "Id" and the demands of the "Super-ego", but that is her role really, to play this part. If I were to be a bit self-reflective in this, I would also think about what you pointed out in terms of how creative "chaos" is feared in our culture, and seen as the opposite of "security". Perhaps this affects the way I interpret Hanna as the "safe base", maybe if I had other "glasses" to see with then creative chaos could be considered just as "safe", and I would see Jo as the safe space that for example Hanna turns to? And in that case, of course, this analogy of Freud's structural model of the psyche wouldn't apply as directly.

Johanna Tysk: My thought is that perhaps the security lies in KOKO, not in Hanna :). Hanna represents structure indeed, and a type of mediation that prevents the conflicting dynamic of Jo and Tysk from resulting in “inner conflict” and drama. Perhaps the presence of a space, in this case created by the KOKO character, that “holds” all these roles and their differing functions, makes sure everyone feels seen and valuable, and is responsible for moving the process forward, is what provides the overall sense of security, which would make security a dynamic space of both “freedom” and “structure”? I would somehow connect this “space” to a sort of “spiritual awareness”, an unidentified “watching” that also is the goal of mediation, mindfulness or similar practices. I´m wondering how this “space” is seen or worked with in psychological contexts? Or, generally speaking, what kind of strategies are used in psychology to help clients deal with their inner contradictions and the “battles” that take place in between these (how much destructive power tripping does not take place within every single human being on a daily basis?)?

Maria: In relation to this “space” that is created, and also in relation to KOKO’s role that you mention, I associate strongly to the concept of a clear frame and clear boundaries of the therapeutic setting, which is supposed to enable a space for the client to feel safe and supported. This also applies to group activities, such as supervision or conflict management in groups, where the external leader provides and upholds a strict frame and structure for the activity, but allows for the freedom of the group members within that frame. When this space is successfully created it allows for a sort of play in which the client or the group members can explore aspects of themselves and experience confirmation, contradiction and continuity. Maybe this analogy can be applied to the artistic process you describe, where you provide the structure but allows for freedom and creativity within that structure. As far as strategies used to help clients with their inner contradictions, I think the important thing is to foster the ability to cope with the distress and discomfort that these conflicts bring about. One way of coping with these sensations is to learn to relate to them in an different way. Here I think there is a lot to learn from the third wave of cognitive behavior therapy with its Eastern influences, such as non-judgmental mindfulness and acceptance. For the therapist, strategies that help clients deal with inner conflicts include creating a comforting environment where that distress is allowed and normalized, and contradictions can be explored without trying to minimize the conflict. Also encourage the client to dare to embrace the nuances instead of escaping to a black or white view of the matter. All in all, these strategies could be said to increase tolerance of the distress and anxiety that contradictions

evoke, and therefore be used in the “tool box” of achieving a space of “conflictual harmony” within an individual psyche.

Thank you Maria :)! We now welcome our next guest, Pomme van Hoof, 30, designer, curator and educator! Where are you from and what is your agenda?

Pomme: I was born in Geldrop, a suburb of Eindhoven, the Netherlands, and raised by my father, a specialist in building construction technology, and my mother, a textile designer. I design experiences and interactions that make people look with different eyes at their daily reality. You could say my agenda is to reframe the way we think, about our world, our future and ourselves. I like to question the “normal” and the “norm”, reconsider whether it could be different, better, and articulate different possibilities of moving forward.

Johanna Tysk: Welcome Pomme! I know you teach a class at Konstfack in “Trendspotting and Future Thinking”, where you provide tools and facilitate a setting for master students from the fields of economics, social studies, technology, art and science, to work together on the creation of future scenarios. When practitioners from different fields meet to discuss “reality”, there must be ample opportunity for misunderstandings, ideological opposition, generally a situation that requires specific tools or circumstances for a fruitful conversation to take place. Just like “Jo” and “Tysk” in the case studies included in this text need “Hanna” with her designer perspective to overcome the barriers that separate their viewpoints and agencies, I’m sure you have a number of “tricks up your sleeve” that helps facilitate the kind of “magic” Hanna speaks of, that allows for co-creation across disciplinary or social boundaries. I’m very curious what these tricks or strategies are :).

Pomme: Yes, and it also connects to what “Hanna” mentioned in the text, about the designer as the facilitator of the “creation of new worlds out of the convergence of different views”. For this to happen, it helps to have tools that can broaden our viewpoints and with which we can start to externalize our visions. You also need tools that help create a common ground, in which people coming from very different schools-of-thought can start discussing something together. I find it very useful to work with the concepts of ‘time’ and ‘space’. As Brian Eno has described and conceptualized in his essay titled “The Big Here and Long Now” I strive for making peoples “sense of now” longer and their “sense of here” bigger. If you live in a big here, you have realized that your spot is intertwined with a larger place. You are able to zoom out and see things in a broader context. As Eno describes it beautifully, “the Long Now is the recognition that the precise moment you’re in grows out of the past and is a seed for the

future. The longer your sense of Now, the more past and future it includes.” This awareness, and the mental activity of switching scales and travelling in time, facilitates new ways for us to understand and rethink the here and now.

Johanna Tysk: Very interesting! What is it precisely about this “widening” of the perception of time and space that facilitates fruitful conversation or co-creation?

Pomme: Well, when widening your perception of time and getting into the field of working with ‘futures’, one important thing to keep in mind is the understanding that we are not trying to predict ‘the future’ but that this work is about exploring and testing multiple possible futures. This plural approach is very useful to avoid one-sided views and fixed truths as it embraces failure and doubt as part of the process. You can see how the creation of futures then is not so much interesting as a tool for prediction or articulating ones pre-decided value systems, but rather functions as a critical tool to explore a wide range of possibilities (that might be desirable, undesirable, very probable, or merely possible). This ‘leap in time’ brings us to a mental space which is per definition uncertain, one where no one can know anything for sure. Let’s say you are working on the future of education. Because the topic can be approached from so many different angles (economics, politics, social factors, cultural elements, technological innovations etc.) no one single discipline or person would know what that future would look like. In a space that is uncommon for all, and where there is a high level of uncertainty, we realize that we need each other’s perspective if we want to get anywhere. Having different voices around the table is important in identifying all the elements that could be worth looking into. Future scenarios can be used as a testing ground for thoughts and a dynamic space for experimentation and imagination. My experience is that the open-ended approach I introduce in the Future Thinking course, one where there is no one right answer, is very much appreciated by the students and a real eye opener for the ones more used to a linear approach.

Johanna Tysk: Do you have examples of specific future thinking exercises that could help us create a situation better suited to deal with the present, without falling into disrespectful arguments? I’m thinking about our political systems for instance, who are much defined by the kind of “fixed ideas” and one-sided views that the future thinking that you’re explaining manages to “bypass”. What I see in politics is a general tendency to avoid the discussion of what kind of society certain decisions actually produce, which is a kind of speculation, like you mention, where there needs to be multiple view points and perspectives present for us to get an informed idea about what direction we could potentially go in when adopting certain ideologies, or making certain political decisions. It’s like

the political format, the way it's been designed, creates short-term thinking, and like political scientist Chantal Mouffe points out, is so badly fit to deal with "conflict" that the ideological differences are starting to blur out altogether. In Europe, and I'm sure elsewhere, this tendency according to Mouffe has created opportunities for right-wing populist parties to gain influence at the expense of a tolerant society, where people have faith in the political institution there to serve them. Her solution is to create a kind of "agonistic space" within politics, where opposing perspectives can meet based on a common ground of mutual respect. According to Mouffe, allowing passions and battle to have a central integrative function in politics will reduce the need for extremism. The task for democracy then is not to exclude or deny conflict but rather to domesticate it, by establishing an us/them relationship in which opponents are not treated as "enemies" but "adversaries" who share a common symbolic space, somewhat related to the concept of "conflictual harmony". What kind of tools, connected to the future thinking you've talked about, do you think could be worth looking further into, in creating a kind of political space of "conflictual harmony"?

Pomme: One thing I could start with, connected to the political context you bring up, is a tool that allows us to constructively think through consequences. This can be done in a process of co-creation using a tool called the 'future wheel'. In this exercise, a group of people starts by writing down a major change or trend (lets say, mass immigration) in the middle of a large piece of paper. They then expand this by mapping the consequences, and the consequences of the consequences. Besides stretching the "now" into understanding effects over time it also broadens the sense of "here", as one is asked to think in different directions (technology, politics, culture, social consequences for example) when formulating the consequences and coming up with opportunities. Of course there is no clear outcome, but it can enrich our understanding of a topic, and it highlights the interconnectedness of things and the uncertainties involved. This mapping and the 'thinking out loud' of possible consequences, disasters, risks and opportunities, helps us to be better prepared to deal with changing futures, plus it gives us a way to formulate a preferred future. In relation to the concept of "conflictual harmony", an exercise like this also becomes an opportunity for multiple viewpoints to come together to explore a topic, in a way which helps create a space of learning and exploring rather than a space of fighting for ones ideas.

Johanna Tysk: This all sounds like tools that could be successfully applied to the political sphere, by allowing a space for insight also into people's wishes, fears and thoughts around certain topics, which I'm sure are bound to come up when doing the kind of "consequence mapping" you describe. I'm thinking it could be

especially helpful in relation to very sensitive topics like immigration, integration etc., that very easily trigger fears, anger and other emotions, across the political spectrum, that in current formats of “ideological combat”, easily lock people in static positions. These are also the kind of topics that could be hard to grasp through “dry” political discussions, or discussions based on high ideals and beautiful words that don’t quite illustrate what people actually mean, or what the society they’re talking about would actually look like. Do you have more tools that could help facilitate constructive conversations on these type of political topics?

Pomme: Another tool that design can offer is visualization, which not only offers the ability to illustrate something after the fact, but that can be used as part of analyzing a topic. As human beings we relate much easier to stories than to statistics or graphs and therefore this idea of narrative and scenario becomes important when working with futures. A visualization of a possible future scenario (which could take the shape of written text, film, performance, an object, installation, a game environment or virtual reality) is not meant as an end point however, but functions as a tool to re-evaluate the topic and research our attitudes of today in order to figure out how to move forward. To relate it to politics, when someone talks about the importance of better integration, what does that mean, what does that look like? Can we paint a picture of how that would look like for me, in my street, for the city I live in, for Europe or for the planet? When we start coloring in those visions we may find out that even when using the same terminology, we might mean something completely different, and that there are several ways of getting somewhere. A more clearly outlined future scenario can help to avoid misunderstandings within a discussion because it ensures that everyone is talking about the same thing. Generally, it helps to have options on the table, to have something tangible to discuss. It’s also a way of overcoming the “imagination challenge”, where it is hard for most people to imagine alternatives to what is, and rethink the systems many of us take for granted. We have to remember that these were once designed as well, and what we see as normal and unchangeable today, can change if we make conscious effort towards it.

Johanna Tysk: Thank you Pomme for sharing your experiences and thoughts!

Time for our next guest, Danny (Danielle) Deadwyler, 33, artist, actor and performance artist based in Atlanta, Georgia, US! Where are you from and what is your agenda?

Danny: I´m an Atlanta native, with my artistry rooted in theatre, dance, and creative writing. I carry a Master’s of Arts in American Studies from Columbia University, where I deepened my analysis of issues facing women and African Americans. I call myself an artist, innovator and sanctifier of female sexuality. As a published poet, writer, and performance artist, I´m an observer of all things pop culture and gender-centric.

Johanna Tysk: Welcome Danny! We spoke for the first time over Google Hangouts a couple of months back, on the topic of the intersection of art, hiphop and social innovation. I have come to learn that your work marries film/video, performance art, and themes of motherhood, sexuality, and hiphop. With all this interdisciplinarity going on, I´m sure there´s plenty of “opposing elements” that you come across through your own practice. What aspect of your artistry would you say that you would most closely connect to the concept of “conflictual harmony”?

Danny: I would say that I find conflicting harmony occurring in the act of the artistic process for the kind of work I choose to perform in public spaces. My latest project, Muhfuckahnevaluvduhs: Real Live Girl, had its conception in video form, then elevated to a performance intention and location. I danced live, as a sexual performer-dressed in a bathing suit- on three corners of my city, juxtaposed with a video representative of motherhood, to a mixtape, largely hiphop influenced, surprising drivers and pedestrians. There is an awkward, yet wonderful tension that occurs. ‘Should I engage; Am I being pranked; Is this appropriate; I love it; I hate it; Get outta the street’ are all potential and real responses/queries that happen. However, aberrations in anyone’s day to day are direct triggers to the mind, the body, the mundane. And I think that everyone will react in myriad ways along the spectrum. And I welcome them all, without cause for violence. Mostly, I find people just stare...if they stop to entertain it. Those that whisk verbal commentary showing disdain tend to instantly react and fly by in their cars. In this case of disdain, a reaction is had about the image they see, a deeply rooted stereotypical reaction to the literal performance or the idea that art is being performed on the street, and they hurl their ideas immediately. Others, the silent, observant ones, take in all of the work...breathing in it with me, occasionally relinquishing some of the awkward feeling the longer they stay...and I feel welcomed, though maybe not wholly understood. And that is okay by me- the lack of full understanding. The engagement they provided is 100% enough and valued. How does one practice surprise/improvised performances like this for the public? How do you determine what will happen or how it will look (weather, sun’s influence, etc.)? You do not. I did not. Therefore, the conflictual harmony arises in the surprise of the interaction of the performance. A surprise in

the same manner of the students' work being vandalized not by another youth but by a presumptive janitor. Saying yes to whatever may occur, whatever makes itself known the day I choose to perform and where and for whomever comes forth that day...herein is where the harmony lies. The conflict is the unknown. The unknown is to be embraced. Dealing with or going with conflictual harmony in other mediums or social structures is a constant 'yes and'...in order to yield results, positive or leading in that direction. Saying yes to the negative, if that is what comes about, is a potential positive direction too, I presume. I constantly go back to the example of the surprise of the janitor doing the insolent act on the work of the youths, and the collaborative deciding to upend the act to grow towards what they would actually want, an artistic product, from that negative.

Johanna Tysk: I think this beautifully describes how an individual act or approach/mindset can sort of “impose” a space of conflictual harmony in a public setting, by presenting the public with the “conflict” of this sudden, ambiguous, out-of-the-norm situation, and then choosing, like you do, to embrace the reactions in whatever shape or form they may come... Where it’s the choice of the passers-by in a way, whether to “engage” in this conflictually harmonious situation or not, by entering a “meeting” with you and the work you present... How important do you think this context of the public sphere is for this opportunity of a “conflictually harmonious situation” to appear between an art work and its audience?

Danny: Well, first off art in the public realm is accessible. The thing about museums and galleries...all people do not feel welcomed there. Therefore they don't make the choice to attend. The work and themes of projects that I do are not always given public art value...in the same way a sculpture or dance from a traditional organization or visual art piece would receive. And hip-hop lives in such a commercialized space...voices that counter the traditional dominant narrative are often undermined, further marginalized, and discredited. Putting the kind of work that I do in the public realm is a direct counter to the narratives that have most visibility, as well, it creates the opportunity, in the public realm, to have a moment of wonderment, a conflict when least expected...our values and beliefs are capable of being shifted highly when we least expect it. We are not with our guards up. We are not ready to rebut or fight in the same way if it happens upon us outside of where we think things are supposed to belong.

Johanna Tysk: I'm also curious to know more about the “conflicting images” that you're presenting the audience with, of the strip club dancer and images of motherhood, two ideas of womanhood or female sexuality that are usually “kept apart”, with their own separate logic tied to them... What do you think “happens”

when the audience is confronted with this "conflict"? What does this "mind fuck" do, or open up for? It makes me think of the "gangster monkeys" juxtaposed with buddhism and the KOKO bird in the second painting I describe... How something happens when you combine things that normally don't go together, without saying "this is good and this is bad", how it opens up to some sort of "space" of possibility to transform what is to something else, "juggle" with what is served to you, maybe even play with it, embrace it, but on your own terms... What does it do for you, to somehow embrace both these "conflicting ideas" of womanhood and female sexuality? A thought that hits me also, is that both these "ideas" of womanhood and the logic tied to them seem to have been created to cater to male needs, would you agree? Does juxtaposing them and somehow embracing them both through your own performances, somehow change this dynamic of a womanhood defined by male, or simply outside, eyes?

Danny: I will say this mindfuck (HAAA), again, is a supercharge from the mundane. The funny thing is, that it's happening directly under their neighborhood's noses...they just don't see it presented on their street corner, or next to their package store, or at the streetlight they pass through day after day. Sometimes you have to be pushed to think outside of what is normalized. That is the fun in what I do. I'm always elated and completely horrified internally to do work like this...you know, they say do what scares you. The valuation guidelines are screwed as hell. I'm disinterested in continuing to sweep identities under the rug along with the institutions who have been controlling notions of woman's work, the value of the woman's body, the value of her labor, the value of her domestic contributions, the value of black women's bodies...the value of the black woman's body and labor within the hip-hop cultural context. This work is to mindfuck on all those levels. To value and salute black women in these spheres. These spheres of women's work, home and sexual, have surely been largely influenced by patriarchal, misogynist notions on what is womanhood. Rebellion, however, comes in everyday occurrences. Micro-rebellions. This might be a little bit of micro-rebellion...

Johanna Tysk: Going back to the "conflict" of an artist engaging in a public or social/community setting, I'm curious to know what your experience and thoughts are in relation to this. It seems like this "meeting", with an audience outside of those who already feel welcomed in the museums or galleries, is most often influenced by barriers in terms of what is considered "high culture", associations oftentimes connected to ideas of class, race, gender to a certain extent. Artists like yourself, who are influenced by hip-hop in the sense of nourishing a certain "raw ass energy" (I think those are your words from our Google hangouts session ;)) in your work, I believe has the potential of adding

new layers and dimensions to this whole idea of what is high/low culture etc. and the hierarchies and “locked identities” that come with them, in a way opening up for new ways of relating to art, ourselves as social constructs or beings, social hierarchies etc... I would say this type of artistry, playing with influences stemming from different kinds of experiences and expressions (be it cultural, class-related, gender etc.), merging into something that cannot clearly be defined as this, that or the other, also has the potential of “mind-fucking” both those identifying with the “traditional hiphop realm” and those identifying with the traditional notion of “contemporary fine arts”, which is always a first step to engagement, and connection I would say, across social borders of different kinds... And I´m curious, how do you envision a “fruitful meeting” between an artist like yourself and a community, in terms of more long-term relations or impact, beyond the experience of a specific art work like the one that you´ve discussed?

Danny: I´m not sure... I know it looks like openness, as you describe it. It looks like those that are underrepresented coming into the sphere or space and having their say alongside those who´ve had their say predominantly. It also looks like direct connection to the community/communities that are wished to be engaged by a single individual or organization. It also looks like time. I´ve been engaging in an artist pilot program at the non-profit organization C4 Atlanta; it has been integral in my thinking about my work, its social engagement, civic engagement and the like. It has influenced my thinking on community engagement, community connection and the ability to influence change. That work has to be done slowly, authentically, and with the community/groups that one seeks to impact. It isn´t a superhero coming in to save the day. The secret weapon is day to day engagement with the issues and concerns. I´ll also say that the conditions for learning, educating ourselves is eliminating hierarchy and everyone being students learning together. The artist is not valued over the community nor vice versa. There is no gender hierarchy, racial, class, etc. etc. There has to be a collection of the voices and experiences of the community to bring the concerns to light and to be able to shift them, to give value to the history of the issues, to envision the wants of those impacted by the issues, and to come to common ground. I see that for women´s issues, gentrification issues, hiphop cultural issues (gender, class, et.al.). A whole community practice together, whether it be in the literal streets or in the buildings and homes of those impacted. You gotta go where the site of concern is taking place, live there, and grow from there...

Johanna Tysk: Thank you Danny for sharing your experiences and thoughts!