



## How I Became An Artist

by Saskia Holmkvist

Faith, hope and love are all strong feelings preceded by a series of events, which leads to conviction and trust in the feeling that has been experienced. What happens is a conviction of events over time, which means that one stops questioning and starts accepting. My becoming an artist is due to a number of events that I do not question today, but for a long period of time there were no indications that I'd be an artist.

One thing leads to another – so can the world be related. Causal connections above and beyond the easily predictable make me curious and therefore the chain of effects motif occupies an important place in my work, especially as a narrative means. The form is illusory and good for getting the viewer to understand or feel part of an event. Participation is important for me, which is why in my work I most often try to direct myself straight at the viewer. The logical structure of chains of effects (a to b to c) is simple and pedagogical. Perfect for learning, conveying messages and presenting results.

On one hand side one could say that a chain of effects is in fact an historical flashback. It can stretch over a long or short period of time, but will always remain a record of a course of events and as such is retrospective. Fiction on the other hand uses the one-thing-that-follows-another, as in a chain of effects, as a point of departure for building up an exciting story. Fiction, in contrast to real chains of effects, always drives a story towards a goal and therefore these structures go in opposite directions time wise.

A chain of effects is linear, which means that everything points forward when one relates a course of events. There are no subplots. The structure is harmonious, and consequently one can always be certain of a solution at the end of the story, as in fairy tales or legends. One can therefore say that choosing to relate an event through a chain of effects narrative usually involves simplification. The narrative structure effectively eliminates all relative values, which makes these sorts of narratives more like anecdotes. Perhaps they won't become the world's most reliable historical sources but all the better stories, which makes them more compelling.

I use this aspect to attract the viewer and to get what is depicted to be more clear or understandable. I have worked with documentary and reportage forms and styles in several films and used historical facts and fictive material, which I have stacked on top of each other like a chain of effects in order to bring out what I want to say.

What is interesting about chains of effects is that their structure is rather misleading. When an event is related as a chain of effects it is often in terms of a result of some form. For the result of the story to achieve full impact, one uses elasticity to go back and relate the story chronologically. The chain of effects is always retrospective but the narrative structure makes the moment when the story is being told so exciting that it almost feels as if it is happening now. The reason why one experiences it like this is that it is related as a development (a to b to c), which increases the tension. The more unanticipated the consequences, the more fantastic or shocking the story. We find this in detective stories, for example, where it is very important to arouse the reader's engagement and participation since he/she is supposed to become the other criminal inspector. The intrigues that are presented must seem to be potential clues, even though they are most often wrong.

Another aspect of the chain of effects is the unexpected or improbable result. When this occurs, like when a person becomes an artist who has not shown any interest in it before, one can go back and try to find out how it all came about. An exciting research investigation similar to detective work to find the factor that triggered an unanticipated result.

Hence, one looks in the rear-view mirror in order to find out what happened first when something truly unexpected occurs. That turning point interests me. When it has been cleared up, it appears as a self-evident chain of effects, even though in fact it was entirely unpredictable. Like the discovery of penicillin. Not until



Fleming began to study the fungus which was first considered as the problem of the bacteria cultivations in the laboratory, he discovered that the cultivations were free from bacteria around the fungus, “*Penicilium notatum*”.

No one can believe that I am an artist today because of the fact that I lived in Cuba when I was little. There is no self-evident connection. But that it led to an interest in languages which made me choose the humanist programme in gymnasium and gradually read art history in university and then drop out and begin to practice art, can afterwards seem to be a normal course of events and a logical conclusion. But it has to do with the narrative structure of chains of effects – it always comes in retrospect.

Translated to English by Jan Teeland