

THEMES, AGAIN. (Part two of “All Talk, No Action”)

Fredric Gunve

I like SQUID!

- Why do I like SQUID?
- Because SQUID stands for institutional decentralization.

What is the difference between practicing and preaching, and what does it have to do with themes?

– My name is Fredric Gunve and I work as an artist. I’ve had several exhibitions, performances, situation based happenings, installations, teaching projects, written texts, and I have often been asked:

– What themes do you work with?
And I have often answered:

– I don’t care about you!

I hate the city center!
I hate Stockholm, London, New York, Berlin..
I go: Burn! Burn! Burn!
I fucking hate the city center!
Fucking IASPIS!
Fucking Mejan!
Fucking government!
Fucking art board!
Fucking gallery owner!
Fucking art fairs!
Fucking arty farty party!
Fucking art booze!
Fucking blah blah blah!
Fucking networking!
Fucking always putting the prefix “post” before all that’s been done to prove that nothing new is ever to happen
Fucking post shit

To handle and act within art today is to choose between “with us”, or “against us”!! And we all know that “against us” is not really an option. There is no such thing as “against us”, we are all onboard from the get go and possibly all the way to the end.

– But themes and it’s significance, how should we handle all that?

Firstly, I don’t know what “*that*” is supposed to be referring to? Secondly, I am simply just against you, after all. (Not at all a sellout!!) So tired of hearing about all that’s been bought. A self-fulfilling prophecy. I don’t give a shit about Marx, Das Kapital, I don’t care about the world market and all that it does, because there are other ways to get ahead. We are not all sitting in the same boat going round, round, round, although I *did* record the song (Runt Allting) and put together the trilogy with the same name. All doesn’t end up where it started, trust me, we start here and NOW!

The year 2006

– So what is the problem with Themes in art?

There is no problem with themes, there is no problem working from different points of reference and to have specific areas of interest within your artistic practice. There is no problem unless the theme is there

as a power strategy reason, hidden from others on the art scene. There is no problem working with issues of integration from an artistic perspective, not for the artist nor for the curators or institutions. However, it does turn into a problem when the government attempts to pass its failures on to someone else. It becomes a problem when the failures of integration of the social democratic government expect to be solved by putting the blame on the art scene. Themes are becoming an artistic problem when it is being forced upon, and separated from its original train of thought. Therefore, art cannot ever solve the problem of infrastructure or world famine all by itself. Factual themes that lies outside of artistic themes such as aesthetics, color and design, must be handled interdisciplinary if they are ever to matter. That is where themes has its power and its ability, in common with other disciplines and other discourses.

Hey! Dandy Dory!

Themes must be handled with care, and with great responsibility, but often themes are completely misapplied. A person with something to say picks a theme, and then this person sets out to find people to illustrate this issue, whatever it might be. Often it is being illustrated by a small number of artists who can easily fit into the spirit of the times and who for some inscrutable reason also possesses the ability to launch different varieties of analysis. Sometimes, the artist is perfectly clear about what is what, even before the opening of the exhibition and the critic and the analytic are being forced into to seeing things from a different perspective. Many times, the art piece itself don't matter much. As I said, we've pretty much seen it all already, or haven't we?

- **How many questions can be asked?**
- **How many answers can be given?**

I believe that this culture has an almost perverted interest in *The End*, *The Apocalypse*, *The Big Disaster*, while we shut ourselves into bunkers. How does theme apply here, how do I apply, how does this actually work? I wish I knew?

- Is there an overall theme that summarizes our times?**
- Is there a theme of our century?**

Fredric Gunve tries his best,

During the discussions at Liljevalchs February 7th 2006, we sort of agreed that the concept of themes constitutes no threat in itself, however we do have to be careful in *the handling* of them. The disappointing fact is: themes are often a result of a contemporary hype instead of a genuine interest or curiosity.

“The artist is who questions it all”

The artist has the task of putting together a variety of statements and phenomena, but outside and beyond the demand for truth or reality. The artist profession is the profession that invents possibilities and visions of what “*could be*”. The artist becomes the gatherer. The artist becomes the theme-worker.

And here is the answer to the theme:

The choice of the theme has to come from a genuine interest. This sincerity is a responsibility towards yourself as an artist, a promise to find out what is relevant and important. It is far too easy to end up in a routine. Passion is the only cure, and the only thing that can save us and save the principle of the theme.

Be daring and choose a theme based on what you love!

Dare to be honest towards yourself in these times of art with a functional aim of view. It will never help you. Dare to ignore career-based choices. Your career might take off, or it might not but this is not important in the long run and definitely not important in comparison to be true to yourself. This honesty is also what is going to make the difference. All that is left when all else is gone is our passion for what we create.

Translated to English by Ylva Mazetti