

BAD
MOOD

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PROLOGUE

I would like to start by telling a story of a cartoon that I saw on television about 25 years ago. It goes like this:

There is old fairy tale in the East, Estonia or Russia. It is about one creature that is not part of the situation, neither bird nor animal. It is a bat. The story is that at first all the animals in the world decide together to clean up the mess that is the earth. They gather around their leader, the lion, and make a full day of collective action. Then one of the animals meets the main character of the story because the bat is clearly not working together with the others, not contributing to the action. The animal asks, "Why are you not joining all the other animals for this collective action, to make the world a beautiful surface?" And the bat says, "Oh, but I am not really an animal, you know, look, I can fly, I'm a bird". And the bat flies around to demonstrate that it is a bird. The next day, all the birds of the world gather together and decide to make the sky blue. Each one has to bring a blue flower from the earth and put it high in the sky and this way the whole sky should become blue. In the middle of the action, one of the birds meets the bat, and asks, "Why are you not joining in the work? Look how all of the birds are working!" And the bat answers, "Oh, hmm, well, but I'm not really a bird. I'm actually more like an animal." And makes some moves to demonstrate that it is an animal and not a bird.

The second part of the story is that after all the work, the earth and the sky turn out great, exactly as the birds and animals had planned. And they will celebrate it with a party. The birds fly in the air in circles and lines and triangles but then the bat flies in and disturbs the pattern. One bird asks quite angrily, "What are you doing here? You are an animal, not a bird!" Then the bat immediately leaves and goes to the animal party and there all the different animals are dancing in circles. When the bat flies in, they immediately ask him, "Hey, but we thought you are a bird, as you said before, you better go to the bird party".

Then the bat goes to its own cave. The place where it sleeps, and hangs there upside down, quite frustrated. She looks into the camera and says, "Yes, you birds and animals, you are powerful, and you are many, but I, on the other hand, am one, and special". Then the voiceover takes over and says: "And for thousands and thousands of years the bat hung there upside down in the dark cave..."

PART ONE

About ten months ago, in my first year at the Institute, a project came up – an invitation to participate in an exhibition about humor called “Three Artists Walk into a Bar”. It sounded quite interesting, and for the first meeting with the curators, who were in fact students in the final year of De Appel curatorial study program, me and two of my classmates decided to drink a bottle of cava for lunch. But when we finally arrived, the meeting had already started and what is worse, we quickly realized that it was totally inappropriate and not at all funny to be under the influence of cava in that situation.

After that incident I was no longer so keen on participating in the show. The conditions were also not exactly ideal. Each of more than fifty art students should propose a project by filling in a form online, and on top of that find a venue to exhibit it in. I decided to ignore the whole thing.

But after the second or third reminder in my mailbox, I filled in the proposal form anyway, just for the sake of participation, so to say. I sent in two different forms and told them to choose whichever they preferred. One was a performance that I was working on at that moment called “Presentation” which would be a fast-forward mixture of all my other performances (see extra 1), and the other one simply stated that I would remain in a bad or irritable mood for the duration of the exhibition. I called the work “Moth” – referring to disoriented moths that have started to fly towards artificial light sources since the invention of electricity in the 19th century and have gained fame as a somewhat new type of mythical suicidal animal. (See extra 2). I was quite surprised that they chose the second proposal.

I got to work immediately. Being in a bad mood was not exactly work. At least in terms of effort. In fact it even lessened my usual effort of trying to stay in a positive or productive state of mind. During that month I did literally less than nothing. Moreover it gave me a perfect excuse to postpone many other obligations and projects. I could simply say I was busy with the work for “Three Artists Walk into a Bar”.

No hassle with finding space either, when someone would ask me about my role in the exhibition and I would tell them about it immediately and let them see it at the same time. Since bad mood is not easy to detect, I could even get away with looking cheerful and happy at occasions, justifying it with the explanation of being in a “passive aggressive” state. It was, after all, not about representing a bad mood, but being in it.

Performing the worst cliché of art students I was especially amateurish not only about the execution of the work but also the documentation of it. It was clear from the beginning that a mood can not, and should not be documented. Performances are not ephemeral but a mood is not a performance. A mood is really a mood, and it will stop being a mood as soon as it is performed for documentation. Or so I thought.

My correspondence with the curator became a long ping-pong of emails in which I tried to postpone the delivery of documentation by finding evermore weird excuses for not being able to send it. Eventually when I was threatened with refusal of artist fee as the last resort, I sent in the same pdf document that I had handed in as the initial proposal. To my luck it turned out to be sufficient for the occasion. (See extra 1)

Meanwhile some questions were asked and several slightly weird conversations took place. For example the simple question: “How is it going with your project?” I could

equally say, “good”, “bad” or nothing at all. And when someone would annoy me by trying to detect signs of bad mood I would hide it completely.

During the public program of the exhibitions which hosted lectures by theorists and artists addressing humor, the curator at the ticket office, upon seeing me leave the venue before the end of the lecture:

Curator: Hi, Krōōt, How are you?

Me: Hi, I’m fine. (Pause) I did not find this lecture interesting at all and I’m leaving now. I hope next time will be better.

Curator: Oh, sorry to hear that. Hopefully next one will be more interesting.

Later she told me that she was kind of scared of me during that month.

Even though the work as I mentioned earlier was quite easy I was relieved when the exhibition closed. I had started to miss the normal discipline of having to be nice with people, especially with my friends and classmates. They could of course understand the context of my mood and take it with a grain of salt, but often times with a bad mood, whether it is real, or part of an exhibition, it can still be irritating for real.

PART TWO

Several months later, at the beginning of my final school year, I was told that as part of obtaining a Masters degree in Fine Arts, a Master thesis has to be written by all students.

It was not that that I didn't want to write something, but rather, I didn't want to write something that everyone else was also writing. Or maybe it was about me not wanting to write something. Or maybe it was about work or bad mood once again.

First meeting with thesis advisors

As I was listening to other students' thesis interests and project outlines, it suddenly struck me that I did not have a topic of interest, nor did I want one. I stated this to the advisors and said that I have come to school to have a good time. I have paid money for it and that means that I want to be doing what I like most. Having interests and research topics just isn't the thing for me. I added that they needn't worry, because I would surely do the work, but that at that moment the only thing I felt excited about was not knowing what to do about the situation.

Second meeting with advisors

A few weeks later I went to the next thesis update meeting, and since I had not spent any time on my thesis during the last weeks, I decided to present a topic. Nothing else came to my mind at that moment so I quickly said it would be about bad mood.

Advisor A: That's interesting. How do you define "bad"?

Me: Unproductive, destructive, abandoned, cancelled...(pause)

Advisor A: Why are all those things bad? Or rather why do we need to be productive all the time?

Me: I'm also wondering about that because personally I don't find it necessarily a bad thing.

Advisor A: True, it could be good. I mean in a world where we produce far too many things, being unproductive can actually be a plus. You were talking earlier about defining your terms and being really critical about your own definition. One of my friends when she was bored as an academic decided that her next project was on boredom. She then wrote a really nice work. She was quite overwhelmed by the huge interest and how much people wanted to talk about boredom.

Advisor B: There are quite a few books on boredom, too.

Advisor A: And now yes, it's a big area of publishing. You can actually, this kind of I don't know "unwillingness" a desire not to cooperate with the existing structure of the world, it is what's needed at some point. I quite like this "bad mood". I feel bad mood too, so...

Me: And the other part is about the moods, somebody said that the so-called contemporary capitalism is being run by moods rather than rules. And we all know that and perhaps it is not so easy to understand how it works.

Advisor B: The moods are becoming very powerful, that's true. A mood is something and it is completely unclear what it is. I'm in a bad mood, why is that. Of course there is this old theory that it used to be based on certain fluids in your body like black stuff running through your body. If you had too much of black fluid you had to get rid of it. To drink a lot of red fluid and so on. There are many weird theories about it.

Student: But it is also interesting how to represent a mood and in what mood it is done. The books about boredom, should they be interesting to read or boring?

Me: Or should they be written while being bored or while being interested?

Advisor B: Can you write while you are bored?

Me: But if it makes it interesting to be bored, I think then the idea gets used up quite quickly. I'm not sure I'm interested in that.

Advisor A: So, if you don't want to research it by the normal ways how would you go about researching it? What other possibilities can you find to think about this without doing conventional research?

Me: Well. One is to just wait and see. Wait with the starting. I would be complying with deadlines but just as much as I will have to. I will show up in the meetings of course. That is also my normal way of operating and I am not interested in changing it.

Advisor A: But I was thinking about some of the conceptual practices. Sometimes it's interesting to think about what other artists have thought and done. Does practice belong to the Academy? Questions about internal forms of resistance in the Academy that have been present since the Academy has had its hands on art. So that's interesting and you are not the only artist that has thought about that. Maybe it would be good for you think about some of those artists who share your own disquiet, thoughts of resistance, refusal and what that means.

Advisor B: I recently heard about the project by Yael Davids who was invited to a residency and she fell back to this famous quote by Melville "I prefer not to" – which has been used lately a lot...

Me: I would rather not use that one.

Student 2: There are also these: "Artists without Artwork"- an ontology of artists who didn't do anything and "Bartelby & Co" by Enrique Vila-Matas. He started the book saying that he will not do anything.

Advisor B: It is also somehow strange that so many people fall to this point.

Student 2: It's the process of creation, to start with a negation.

Advisor B: But not only a process of creation. I meet a lot of artists that have the feeling of being over asked or of being pushed by the system and they feel that they are not able

to decide for themselves any more but that something else is deciding and the only solution they have is to step back.

Student 2: “Decroissance”

Advisor A: I would say to you – thinking through art would be a really interesting way to go for you.

Me: Yes of course I do that but I don’t call that work. It’s my hobby. To see and hear and read about artists and artworks – but I spend my free time with it.

Advisor A: You are a passionately engaged artist and your engagement is in practice. You want to make art and the other thing I would suggest to you is using your own discipline of performance – what is it to perform “bad mood”? Bad mood isn’t a statement, it’s a performance. What does it mean? It came out of the idea of performing against the grain. A great writer on this is Walter Benjamin who wrote about writing against the grain, thinking against the grain. Why do you want that? What is it that sparks your own creativity in being against the grain. I think there is a lot of interesting potential there.

Me: And then there is the question of how to capture or represent a performance as a format. I recently thought that it not true, that it’s difficult. At least it’s not more difficult than creating in any other formats. It has simply become an excuse to complain and a way to make performance seem more special.

Advisor A: But for sure you’re not the only one thinking about that. The whole program in Moma is busy with it. How to archive it, how to sell it. Archiving the ephemeral – as they call it.

Advisor B: And there is another side to it. Being in a bad mood is a decision and a performance, a way of influencing one’s surroundings or being present within it. In some sense it is connected to the certain inbetweenness of youth and adulthood. A refusal to be grown up. I found certain books by Gombrowich interesting. He wrote about being not defined and not definable. I find it very interesting literature. G-o-m-b-r-o-w-i-c-h.

Advisor A: It’s also about performing illusiveness. The youth having the refusal to be understood. Slipping out of comprehension. Refusing to be pigeon-holed. Hmm, very good, very interesting.

Advisor B: Ok. Thanks. I will be giving you a lot of deadlines.

So this was quite reassuring and I felt I could really do what was suggested. Some other meetings, however were less inspiring.

Third meeting with advisors

Advisor: And how about you, Krõõt.

Me: My next stage of the work is that ... I've been sick actually.

Advisor: Ha-ha. Now that's very productive.

Me: It turned out that the bad mood. Well first the week before I was in Paris and then I was staying a lot at home or in the hotel room and doing really nothing. I thought I was preparing for the week after when I would start writing or working on the thesis. But then I kind of fell into the sickness thing and of course it's not really like a real sickness but half real I think. So I don't have like development. And when somebody says: "just start writing" I don't see it really happening like this.

Advisor: Yes, not when you don't know where to start or what to write about, then it of course doesn't happen. So what do you think is the best way for you to handle it?

Me: Well, I'm feeling better now. So that's good. But I don't know still. I am imagining different formats and am now kind of writing in my head.

Advisor: Could you say something about those formats?

Me: Well I had a meeting with the artist Trevor Paglen and he suggested that I could just write a page about each thing that I had had to do in order to do this project. Like canceling other projects, delivering bad work, not answering emails, quitting relationships, tensions with friends and so on, so that would surely make ten pages. He also said that the thesis itself is not really worth the trouble of suffering. But I said that I wanted to suffer for it. Even if the suffering would not be expressed in the final result.

But I have also considered asking other people to write it for me.

(I asked a few people later but they took it for a joke.)

I think that's it.

Advisor: How about writing about the position of non-commitment. We are so bombarded in art with commitment and all these artists are so committed and engaged. So there must be another side to that. There is a tradition of non-commitment "It's not my problem; it's not my project"

Me: But how could that be testified?

Advisor: It's not so much about testifying or proving it but reflecting upon it. What does it give me, what is the value of it?

Me: Yes, I can see that you can say these things but I can't see that I could myself see the value in it. Obviously I see a lot of value in it but I cannot justify it.

Student: What if it is a transcription of all the dialogues you have had or will have?

Me: Transcription from memory?

Student: Or from recordings.

Me: But I am not recording. And my memory is really bad.

Student: Fictional then.

Me: You are right that this thing appears in conversation. That's where it lives.

Student: The surrounding landscape is decisive.

Advisor: Then you would become the research object. Not the subject but object. I could also imagine that could be a text not so much on the topic of non-commitment but a completely non-committed text. In the sense of: "I have to write a thesis and I don't believe in it, so what kind of thesis will I write?" And go to the extreme in that. That's not too hard; I read a lot of non-committed theses all the time. Things that look like theses and there's nothing more to them.

Me: Maybe I could learn something from reading those.

Advisor: But you know the text should include a certain amount of research. It doesn't have to be an artwork in itself. It can just be about stumbling upon things. Thinking about what somebody had been trying to do. It doesn't have to be you doing it all.

Me: Ok. I can try to think of that thing as not an artwork. Interesting idea. Good. When is our next meeting?

I was already becoming slightly weary of performing the same attitude of non-motivation or total helplessness which would make everyone try to cheer me up with motivation and help with advice. The bad mood had somehow started to sink in and I felt I needed to get out. But it was only getting worse.

Me: Sorry I'm late. I hope Diego told you I would be late.

Advisor: No, no. Diego is himself ill; he came here completely white in the face so I told him to go home.

Me: Ok.

Advisor: How are you?

Me: I'm good, not sick anymore.

Advisor: Have you been sick?

Me: Well, fake sick.

Advisor: School sick.

Me: Well, but I don't really have good news today either.

Advisor: You didn't do anything.

Me: I don't really know what I'm doing and I was thinking that I'm not looking for the subject of the thesis but the subject that would be writing. I don't know what to write and who is writing. So I'm missing both of the subjects.

I went on to talk at length about what I've written before and how difficult it has always been.

Advisor: Ok, and now you find it quite hard to start writing.

Me: Mhmh.

Advisor: But it is hard! It never comes easy. Not even for me after forty years of writing. It's always work.

Me: But you at least have a subject that is writing after forty years I guess. At least you know who is writing.

Advisor: Yes. In your case I guess it would be a student writing a thesis. That's the

person. But maybe you should start reading.

Me: Yes, now I'm reading this: "The situation is hopeless but not serious. The pursuit of unhappiness." by the Austrian psychoanalyst. Quite a funny book of reversed self-help.

Advisor: You know the topics from before - boredom, unhappiness - they were all quite fascinating - there is also a lot written about it already. There are all these experiments like the Situationists that refused to work all their life.

Me: Yes, yes. I don't feel I need to contribute to this topic cause there is obviously already more than enough.

Advisor: Well, that's not true. Even if there is enough theory about it but it doesn't mean there is nothing to contribute. Research is not only about finding out what's there and contribution but it's also about appropriation, finding something there that you can call your own and formulating that. It's a method of acquisition. Taking a part of the world and calling it your domain, not property but domain or field of play, game board or whatever. Writing is not necessarily part of it but turning it into something is part of the process of appropriation. By doing something with it, it becomes yours.

Me: Ok, like making a work is making it one's own. Can I "own" bad mood?

Advisor: Of course if you make a work about boredom it is still a contribution to the theory. It shows something that is not there yet. The funny thing is that with scientific research there is always the fear that someone else is doing that too, but this fear has never any purpose because the other one would always be doing something else. Even in the scientific world it's a personal fixation. You are writing in the end about yourself. You can dive into literature and forget about yourself, in the end you will still be in it. Don't worry. You don't have to put yourself upfront - you will be there. It might help if you see this whole thing not as an obligation but really as an opportunity to find things. Just stumble over them and collect them and write down the collection.

Me: And do you know when the deadline is?

Advisor: 14th of January. So two months to do. Doable!

Me: Ok. But I'm... hmm. It's going to happen. I will not be late but it will probably be in the very end that I deliver it.

Advisor: I'm quite sure that most of the others will also be doing it in the end. No worries about that. Please make some remarks about the things you are reading. Set up a kind of trail of what you are following.

Me: Ok. Thank you.

Advisor: You are welcome.

Me: I like that you have such a positive approach to things.

Advisor: Well it's not really such a heavy thing.

After this meeting, I decided not to mention either bad mood or thesis to anyone anymore. When somebody asked me how my thesis was developing, I would simply try to ignore the question, or if that didn't work, say "good" and change the topic. I also decided to become more cheerful and pro-active in general. I was considering quitting the bad mood project for good and to write the thesis about something else, perhaps about something that would also be useful for a future project.

But then a studio visit by a New York artist took me by surprise. After I had presented myself and talked about some of my ideas and works, the visiting artist said that I am a typical art student, that I perform exactly what is expected and fit into every format of contemporary performative discourse. He concluded by saying “It’s boring, and you know what, you are bored with it yourself”.

His words would be ringing in my ears for weeks. It seemed that everything I had initially played around with, had become true. If it hadn’t already been the case to start with. As the scene in Leos Carax’s “Holy Motors” where a father tells his teenage daughter: “Your punishment is to be yourself for the rest of your life”. It wasn’t funny any more, nor interesting.

In a conversation with a fellow student I decided to not write the thesis at all. I wouldn't even mind getting in trouble with the administrative side of the Institute, for example not being allowed to graduate, or having to explain that to my parents. The relief of not having to write it was undoubtedly worth more than any such complications. Besides, I thought, I could start to concentrate on the defense part of the thesis, which would surely be interesting, given that I would have nothing to defend.

Several weeks passed, and just before the Christmas break, another visiting curator came by. I decided to go for a coffee with her, since I did not want to present anything, rather have a chat about whatever. We ended up talking about bad mood anyway. I don’t remember what she said and by that time I had given up recording meetings, but something in that conversation mysteriously made my mood and consequently my mind change. Maybe it was her unreasonable enthusiasm, or the fact that she didn’t seem the least bit concerned about my work.

It is, of course, quite obvious that a mood is a mode of thinking, and as long as one is in a situation, one cannot really see it. There is a saying: the fish can’t see the water they are in. I would not be able to write about bad mood, as long I would be in it. Or so it seemed.

After that meeting for the first time since months I felt a willingness to write. I told my classmates that I had to do something, went to a nearby café and started the thesis. I am not sure if I was more excited about the work or about the fact of me working. For the upcoming period, my situation reversed. I was very content with work, and got irritable hanging out with friends. I decided to cancel Christmas celebrations with my family and spent the time all alone in school working.

PART FOUR

On January 14th 2013 I submitted the thesis. I felt a huge relief obviously and spent the night in the local karaoke bar, happy that everything was finally over.

PART NINE

But it wasn't. Next day the director called me to his office. I don't know if I was more concerned if it had something to do with the karaoke bar or with the thesis, but it was the thesis. One of the three advisors had already rejected the text.

Advisor: As I said before the thesis should be a report on research. Now the research part is more or less missing. It's a description of the meetings you had and the experiences you had but the material you collected and the stuff you have been reading is completely missing. The first part with your starting point and your reflections are okay but the conclusion part should be about "what now", how to go on and this. And this is where the material should come in as a certain external impulse, more or less. So if you could start to write that in the final chapter that would be really good.

The ongoing reminder about the necessity of theoretical research was becoming annoying for me. That was after all that was the whole point, to avoid all that. But at second thought I had come to betray my initial premise in numerous other ways too. Sleepless nights, stress, concern and suffering had never been part of my investment plan.

So, I wrote a few pages of text where I added quotations from books I had been recommended by friends and tutors. Later I deleted it again. And put it back. And deleted again. It didn't make sense. Nothing made sense any more. The closer I was arriving to the completion, the further away it moved, like trying to catch your own shadow, time units were stretching like under a microscope, every next word taking exponentially longer to be typed.

DEFENCE

In the afternoon of February 4th I entered the auditorium where the director, the advisor and the tutor were sitting behind a big table. I took a seat.

Director: Alright, we will talk about your thesis for about thirty minutes. First of all we'd like to know why this subject and why this structure.

Me: Why this subject? Is that what you're asking? Well, if you read it, it is kind of already written in the thesis. It's basically because of the project that I was doing and how that blended into the thesis. So that came quite naturally.

Director: But could you explain to us why this subject of Bad Mood?

Me: Why is that the subject?

Director: Well, I know what I've read about it, I just want you to talk about it.

Tutor: Read yourself.

Me: Hmm. So. Well, I guess I wanted it to have something to do with the project. So that it would also be useful and not just a thesis for the thesis sake. And that seemed to be...

pause

Director: Bad mood is the subject, right?

Me: Yes.

Director: And can you talk about it? What's your interest in bad mood?

Me: Well, obviously it's not an interest but it's maybe more a method or a way to work. I have become less interested in what bad mood is. Especially throughout writing this. Honestly I don't care, it's not a subject, not a research into bad mood. I'm interested in the medium of the mood as a material. So let's say if we talk about sculpture the material of the sculpture is the material, and so the mood is the material of my work.

Director: Well, there was a certain methodology that you used to express the material and there is a certain structure that you used to compose your paper - why that type of structure?

Me: Well, there are several projects here that are intermingled, the bad mood project is just one of them but it produces other works, like this writing. And at least retroactively you can see that it produces quite specific kind of work because of the mood project.

Advisor: In what way is the bad mood in the structure of the thesis, because the thesis itself is not a bad mood. In fact it's a very friendly text or a description. In what way is the bad mood itself really "in" the thesis?

K: Well, it's in the narration of how I did not want to do it...

Advisor: So it's "about" the bad mood, it's not an operation that guides the thesis regarding the text itself. It's more like at the same time stepping out of the frame and looking at it. Right?

Me: Partly stepping out maybe.

Tutor: If mood is a medium then, one of the characteristics of mood is that it's hardly reflective. In that sense the thesis becomes part of the medium because it reflects what other people think. And you're really trying to avoid, or you avoid conceptualizing, or let's say art historicizing. For me in that sense it's a very adequate thing for the medium. It makes me think, it's quite interesting, because when you talk about sculpture, we can of course talk about sculpture and reflect what it does at the same time we can make that sculpture that reflects sculpture and in a way it's what a lot of artists do. So let's say thesis is a way of reflecting on the medium of the mood is in that sense quite integral. Whether you want it or not, maybe it's even too integral. Too integral to the medium because you avoid conceptualizing and art historicizing. And everybody in the narrative is saying: would you like to do this, would you like to do that and you don't do it.

Me: Well, this I can't do, I feel very successful actually that I managed to avoid doing anything that I did not want to do, and that there is still a text.

Tutor: So, there is a moment of giving up. That's the thing, it's a weakness of giving up and producing a text. If it would be really radical, there wouldn't be a text. You implicate that you are not graduating as a sort of a possibility and that could be seen as a very integral part of the project, the most radical accomplishment.

Me: It's very defensive I think, so that you could not criticize it in any way. But I would not be interested in not doing it. That would be like too easy.

Advisor: But we can criticize it, so maybe it's not defensive enough? We have criticized it and you have added other sections, and we can criticize it more.

Me: Hmm.

Director: Do you consider this a thesis?

Me: Of course. You could also consider it a commission to fulfill the task, if the task is completed and if it is not then it's not. Well, first of all I have never done a thesis before, and secondly I would like to continue my practice, the element of performance, as some advisors suggested that it would be a kind of a "choreography". So that's why the format is like that.

Director: Well, there are a few things, a few remarks about this. For me this was super predictable as something that comes from you. I don't know if that's a positive or a negative thing. Last year, for example, whenever you got an assignment from the Masters (this is a master program by the way) you used the presentation context as the material to present yourself. That could be interesting and as we already spoke earlier, it could also be exhaustive. Because it's something that is logical when you feel uncomfortable with something, you use the discomfort as the material for presenting. For example, when you had to do a presentation for the archive project, you used the format of the PowerPoint to look at what a presentation of a portfolio could be, we interpreted your portfolio in a different way. So it's constantly a responsive thing to what's being asked by the school. Is this something, let's say if I look at earlier works of yours, there is a work where you respond directly to the theatre context by having the audience read the script. But there are also works that have a much more open structure than that. Is this kind of almost hermetic self-exhaustive type of work, is this something that is caused by being in an MA? Is it something that would not be there any more when you leave this? I'm just curious.

pause

Me: Yes, it's because of being in this context. But maybe it's also not so interesting for

you because you are also in this context. So, I know that it's predictable for you. On the other hand it's surprising to a certain extent to myself. I didn't find it boring in the end. So to be myself part of the situation is something that I could not not do. But I also agree that works that are entirely self-reflective are boring and exhausting. But this danger does not mean that I will go looking somewhere outside for "topics". And maybe yes, this does produce a similar work one after another, but then so be it. Maybe I have to change context again, like two years here is maybe enough. So I should go somewhere else and that would also change the work.

Advisor: But part of the context is the thesis and as I said already the thesis is about researching something that you don't know yet. In the last part of the thesis something happens for me that makes me think: "well, if you take the consequences of this, then it could become really interesting". I'm not so interested in reading my own text because I know what I've said. I'm much more interested in what other people write. And I think that using the mood as the medium as you say is a sort of in-between refusal, sort of doing your thing but not committing. Well, just as mood works - using that to read certain literature, and I do not mean you should place it in art-historical context but take it more into a theoretical context. Theory always wants you to commit. Using theory in this non-committed way, this could be an interesting text, you know. Then you get a confrontation. Because now, as I said, the mood doesn't really come across because it's sort of like "friendly" and "neutral". A mood is not a struggle, but it is a friction. Right? It's something that doesn't go about easy. It's not supposed to be like "happy", "flowers" or whatever. And that doesn't seem to work in your text but it could work, it could work especially if you start working with other texts, because of how you would deal with it while being non-committed, while being absent. Considering your task and at the same time taking distance and working with this material, that would be a thesis.

Me: The mood is an easy thing. Otherways it's not a mood.

Advisor: No, it's not meant to be easy.

Me: It's meant to be easy. So that it would look like I have not done anything at all.

Advisor: Yes, but you can still look like you have done very little in many different ways. As it does now.

Me: Yes, but I don't want this to look like that.

Tutor: Then it becomes a matter of aesthetics here, almost.

Advisor: Yes, and as you said, you want it to meet the requirements. In that sense it failed.

Me: Well, then we have friction, I think it's none of your business what I've read and the effort I have made. I am still going to show this part of the work.

Advisor: Then it doesn't fulfill the requirements.

pause

Me: Hmm. It's quite clear that you're saying that it doesn't have to be the work that I have done and that it has to look like I've done work.

Advisor: No, it's not what I'm saying. I'm only saying that if you choose this position of doing what is required of you and at the same time not doing something against your will, there is another way to go than has been done. That is the only thing I'm saying. You are not fulfilling the requirements. So if you say "i still want to fulfill the requirements" then I say there is work to be done. And if you show it as work or not, doesn't matter, since it's

not there now. So if you say you want to fulfill and at the same time to not show what you've done, then it's failing. It's not a success. It missed out on something that could or should be there.

Me: So maybe you're saying that there should be a "part five"?

Advisor: Yes.

Tutor: Can a thesis, in terms of the framework implicate it's own criteria, invent its own criteria according to the rules of the school?

Advisor: Yes, well most of the others do.

Tutor: To me, I don't want to define your thesis in terms of success, you mentioned success. This is already like going out of the field because success belongs to a different set of criteria.

Me: Well, I think we are talking about "pass/ no pass".

Tutor: To me it's more like a performative thesis, in the sense that it performs on us. We are now sitting here and we are not feeling great. We are like suddenly facing our own system, let's say of being like in a school and it performs. If that could be seen as a way of implicating it's own criteria...

Director: There is always this side of defining one's own criteria. This is just a way of avoiding things by using other material and there is a way that could be done within that. I feel that you are not pushing it further, not to the extent that it would perform the way you describe it. So for example: this thesis is based on a story that you mentioned last year to me about this bat, which is a nice story in itself, and it follows a process of events of doing this thesis because it was assigned to you. That's all fine as well, and then there's ok, I went to PAF and the conversation in the end and that's it? So, the describing the process, you call it text but I call it describing a process (yes, it uses language). And that's basically how far you take it. For me that process is fine but then there is still that element that can be added which would put this whole process on unstable ground. It's too stable for me right now. It's not that we are not willing to deal with this, we are very willing to deal with this, I just think that you yourself as an artist, as an individual, need to deal with it in a way that it becomes also unstable. You know, also for yourself. It's not like putting it on the table and getting an uncomfortable conversation about "I used the fact of doing my thesis as my thesis" that's just not enough.

pause

See what I mean?

Me: So, what's "too stable"? The format is of course, as simple as a children's story, but I don't understand what you mean by making it more unstable.

Director: The logic of how you present the things that you do, is also what needs to be and at the same time, it's what you want, you want it to be almost as logical as it needs to be. But then for example you start up with giving an introduction, "a prologue" as you call it, which is almost metaphorical. And then it goes into very descriptive passage of conversations: A, B, curator, non-curator and that kind of things and then it's yourself and then that's it. If I would analyze this paper then even that story in the beginning was not necessary. You could start with "I don't know what bad mood is". You could almost start directly by saying what it's all about instead of introducing a prologue and then at the end because requested add "works cited", which I thought was quite banal.

There is a part of you that kind of wants to make it, that wants to do the thesis and then there is a part of you that uses that as material, but that part of using that a material is not radical enough.

Me: Using the bat story and...?

Director: No, using this story, which you are addressing, mood as material, which I find very interesting also in regards of trying to write a thesis. All of this is interesting. I'm just saying that you are not pushing this to a point where it actually becomes interesting. It just stays what it is.

Tutor: I disagree in the sense that I don't think that it wants to be interesting.

Director: But that's for me exactly that point "ok, it doesn't want to be interesting". I'm not looking for a like a special story here but I'm trying to look for something that also pushes you as a individual further into what you want to do. It's not about trying to make things less interesting and trying to have another conversation about what should be the criteria, if this is what is going to be the discussion, you know?

I also think that it's a form of hiding. I know that you can say that that's what it is. But I think it's just a way of avoiding it. I'm not saying that you are not putting effort into this, I'm not saying that at all. It's just that I think that more needs to be done, in a way that makes this more than what it is.

uncomfortable pause

Me: Are you talking about explaining what I mean with this?

Advisor: No, being more radical!

Director: If you print the thesis out and lay the pages next to each other, you will see that you are not being precise. If I analyze the structure of your thesis, which I asked you in the beginning then you are not being consequent.

There are different kind of processes that you follow through and describe but that's not enough. Maybe we need, as from a conservative point of view, we need another voice, a more distant voice, maybe it can be academic, but now there are several voices but the distant one is definitely missing.

Tutor: What if the next step would be radicalizing through reduction. Now we are talking that there is a need to add something...

Advisor: Not necessarily. The point of departure is interesting. You say the mood is the material but you don't conclude it from the work.

Me: So, you're saying it's inconsequent as a whole?

Advisor: Yes, if you say the mood is the material...

Me: Well that's the idea, I don't want the thing to have an end. It's a poorly thesis, so I want to leave it so that in the end you would come to me and say "this what you should have done with it..."

Tutor: For me there is a notion of antithesis in a certain way. There is a mood about writing a thesis, and you avoid all of the criteria or what it means to write a thesis. I don't know what it is. There is a piece of writing of course and it's entertaining and irritating at the same time...

Director: It's not irritating. I wish it was irritating.

Advisor: But this is part of your thesis. The fact that you write a thesis about that you don't want write a thesis and now we are at the defense part of it.

Me: But I find the idea super boring, it's not the nice idea that made me do this, it's a true story.

Tutor: What would be an antithesis to this thesis?

Advisor: A normal thesis would be the opposite.

Director: Could you write it again?

Me: I don't think so, there are certain passages that I think are stupid that I could work on a little more. The last part I am not sure about, the dialogue with references is maybe totally unnecessary.

Tutor: For me the most interesting solution would be that it's up to you to decide how to continue. You could decide to write more or reduce or present the same thing...so, all that would be totally relevant.

Me: Ehh, that's interesting. That's not how education works.

Director: How does education work?

Me: It works with guidelines and criteria. The thesis is about passing or not passing.

Director: So, you do need those guidelines and if we start removing those you would start to get lost. So maybe we should de-educate you?

Me: Yes, without criteria I would get totally lost.

Director: Well let's say you should re-edit it or edit it and read it over and over again.

Advisor: Yes, that would put pressure on it, even though it is easy.

Tutor: Well, for me it would be interesting to say that we don't know.

Advisor: We could also say that we are not interested. That was my first reaction to it: "whatever"...

laughter

Director: That would be clearly much more irritating for you: here, thesis, "nice, whatever", graduation "whatever"...

Me: But then you would have at least changed your mode of operating.

Advisor: But we don't have a stable mode of operating.

Me: Well maybe not, but let's say 80% of it still comes in a form of advice, trying to push students further, in situations where they would rather not.

Director: Did this enrich you, maybe that's a good question, did it add anything to you as a person?

Me: I'm not sure if "enriching" is the thing I'm looking for but for sure I'm very happy about it.

Director: What makes you happy about it?

Me: Well, producing something out of almost nothing...for doing anything at all. And of course I'm also fascinated by the accomplishment that this text actually performs itself as a text and that is why I have come to this education, to expand the performance out of

theatre. Because I think that performance should not be limited to certain live acts where some people watch something happening on stage, or people having a wild imagination. Performance is a lot more than that.

Director: Well, I think we can all agree on that.

Advisor: Maybe the last part of your text could be the transcript of this meeting.

Me: well.. hmm...