

[ Bridges ]

by Kim Engelen

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[Bridges]

PART I

Kim Engelen



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## London | UK, week 4, 2012

### [ Bridges ] Part I

Question to myself: should I put the round mirror sticker on my face in the picture? I have to experiment with it to see how it will look and what should be the exact size and shape. I am thinking of using in this case black and white for the picture. So than when then the mirror is stuck on the picture, the little mirror will 'blend in' to the image. This way at first you probably don't see it when you look at the pictures, but when you take a closer look, you will stare at yourself.

Yes; I want 'you' to be there. I want you to be part of the design, so that you are not only spectator but also author and subject at the same time. The sticker will be stuck on my head, it is my head but it becomes hidden.

This way you can perhaps identify easier and see your eyes and/or your face in the face of the protagonist. Because you look with your eyes (in your face) and thus see your face when you look into the small mirror. Also it could add an element of mystery to the picture. Who is that under the sticker you might wonder. If you look at more than one photo from the series you probably recognize the same figure in all of the pictures. The mirror could become the bridge between you and me; we become one. We migrate into each other. We are both present at the bridge. Photos last on even after the death of the portrayed person, but you are alive when you are looking into the little mirror. ■

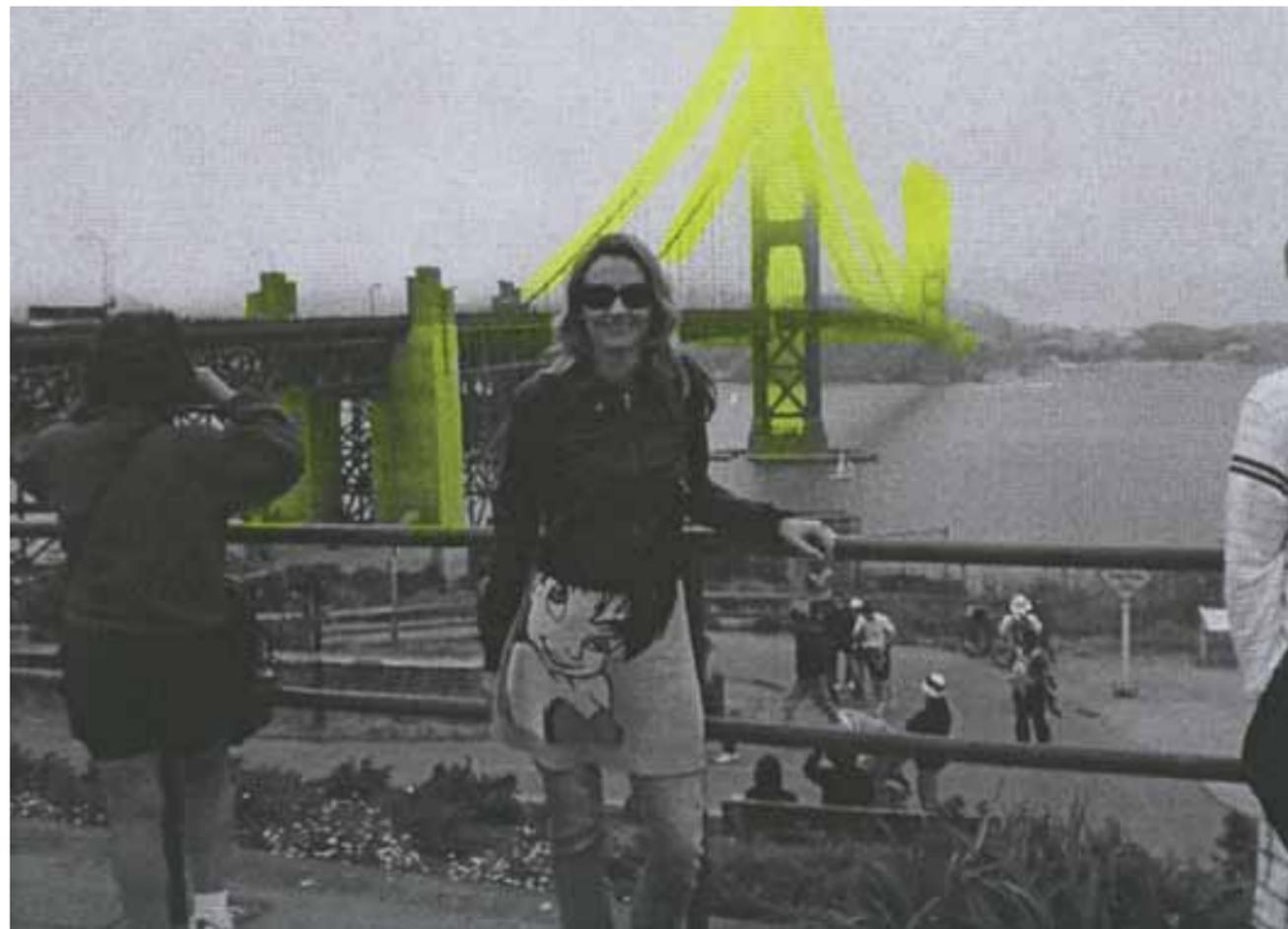
## Malmö | Sweden, Week 5, 2012

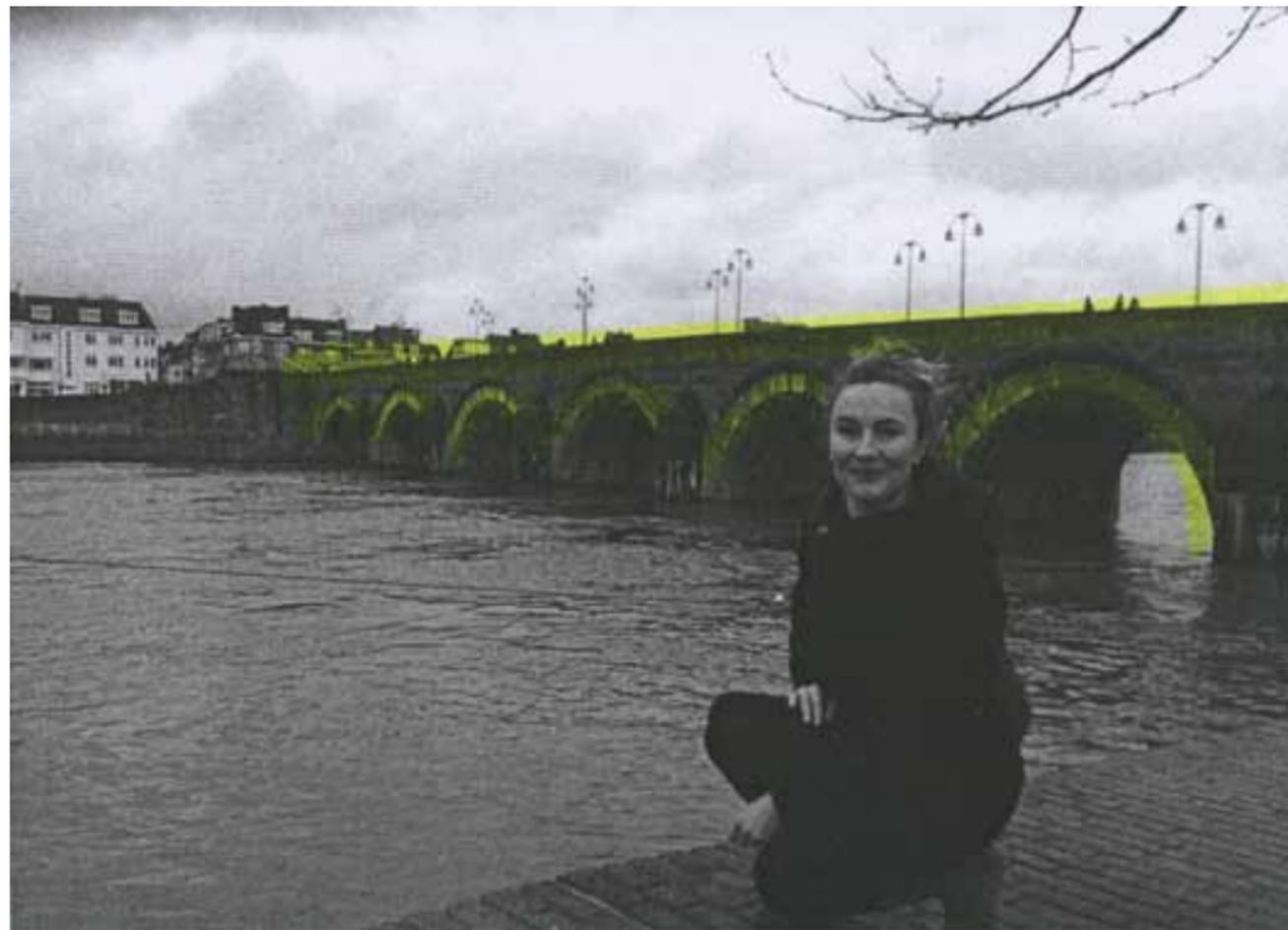
[ Bridges ] Part II

Question to myself: should I put the round mirror sticker on my face in the picture?

No; After a few tests with it, I feel that the mystery part does not work for me. I don't want to put a mirror on my head, because the art piece should be anything but revealing. The more close-up and open, the more intimate and personal and thus stronger and better it becomes in my opinion. This; affecting, individual, private, connection->communication difficulties-> language, emotion is the strength of my work; I cannot and will not put this aside. So I tried to put the mirror on my head, in different shapes, in different pictures, in different places but it does not work.

Likewise, changing the size and form of the mirrors and image does not change the fact that still the face with a mirror stuck to it becomes a mask. Also the added element of the mirror to the image I find distracting. The spectator does become a participant and that is good. But because of this, someone gets lost and nobody should get lost, nor myself, the artist. So what then? I think I should go back to the original form of the picture, thus that is does give the feeling of a holiday snapshot. I like that, it's personal. Most people can relate to that, I think. It is pure and simple. That should stay and therefore color should be put back into the image. >





It gives more juice, more atmosphere to these photos, it makes a difference even if it's a grayish bridge picture taken in London or a sun-flooded picture taken of an Indian bridge in Agra. What I should do is have more, many more bridges, places, pictures.

But still what should I do with the spectator? I want to have this triangle in order. Maybe I should not worry about the spectator, as one of my peers said, and just focus on the image. The fact that I ask someone else to make a picture of me is already a big step for me as an artist. I have no control over the making of the image; I cannot look at the framing, moving elements if any, how the portrayed person looks or acts, facial expressions and other unique time related details from being there at that particular time and at that particular place. When I write facial expressions I wonder what in the world was I thinking to put a mirror on the head? The most interesting visual part of a person to me is the face. Here everything happens, this is where the mind is located, the eyes leading inwards towards the soul, the mouth

that enables us to speak with each other. The mirror idea is definitely discarded. Maybe I could hold a mirror in my hand and then later put a real mirror on this part, so that the viewer can still look into this and see themselves? But then the idea of having the viewer becoming partly the creator is lost. And also it sounds like a trick, I don't like tricks, I want reality. Maybe it is enough to have a passerby, a stranger, a momentary and volunteer participant have an extremely short performance with me, when s/he takes the picture of me. Maybe that is enough for now. So that I can move on with thinking about the bridge and what it symbolizes and why it matters.

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## Malmö | Sweden, Week 6, 2012

### [ Bridges ] Part III

Question to myself, what does the bridge stand for and why does the bridge matter? The dictionary tells me: a structure carrying a road, path, railroad, or canal across a river, ravine, road, railroad, or other obstacle. Thus the bridge is a structure that you can cross over to the other side, which helps you over the obstacle what ever that might be. Of course you can also choose not to cross the bridge but to jump from it. I have to think of a movie scene where the young boys jump off their little town bridge into the water on a sparkling sunny summer day. Because of gravity you will most probably fall downwards. As opposed to an elevator that takes you either up or down, the bridge itself does not move you. You have to move yourself or your means of transport over the bridge in

order to cross the bridge. Could we say that the bridge is a passive object? It can bring you closer to your destination, your goal, your desire, your end station, or towards a person you love living on the other side. But that still does not answer the question. What does it symbolize and why does the bridge matter? The bridge could be part of an element of joy, people can jump off the bridge for joy or go bungee jumping off of the bridge, which can go wrong or wrong and then turn out right such as in the case of Erin Langworthy, who bungee jumped 111 meters into Zambezi River at Victoria Falls only to have her cord snap. She survived the fun-jump. But there are also suicide jumps, with the intention to end one's own life of suffering. Could we say the bridge has this

dual element already built into itself? In times of peace it is mostly an overlooked 'object'. On the contrary in times of war, it can become a strategic element in warfare. The bridge leads to somewhere, from here to there. From left to right and back. From this life into another altered life. From live to death? But in normal day living? It could be just that particular structure that happens to be there in the city where you live and that you have to cross over. I think of the Erasmus Bridge in Rotterdam. If you live in the south part and you work or study in the center then you might 'take' the bridge designed by Ben van Berkel on a daily basis. The bridge is nicknamed "The Swan". Is it because of its shape or because the fact that you cross the river the Nieuwe Maas (English: New Meuse) on a cable stayed bridge which under strong wind conditions moves? By the way, don't you just love these words; move, maas, meuse.

In any case the bridge is a 'helper' structure. Sometimes it is also a sightseeing structure. So in any sense it is a 'helper' structure, for better or worst. But still what does it stand for? *The Old Man at the Bridge* is one of

Hemingway's shortest tales. It is based upon an Easter Sunday stopover at the Ebro River during his coverage of the Spanish Civil War in April of 1938. For me, the bridge symbolizes transition, and in this short story the old man is too tired to cross the bridge. That he does not continue along with the refugees means that he stays and that when the enemy comes most probably his life ends. But one could also live under the bridge.

A song that reminds me of addiction and death in relation to a LA bridge, is *Under The Bridge* from the Red Hot Chili Peppers;

Under the bridge downtown  
Is where I drew some blood  
Under the bridge "  
I could not get enough  
Under the bridge "  
Forgot about my love  
Under the bridge "

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In this sense the bridge to me symbolizes not only a transition but also a process. The process of going through a hard time. Or using hard drugs to get through difficulties. Or in other words, going from one state into another state. I think this duality has to get into my work somehow. I have to accent this. How? Should I maybe continue to use black and white photographs instead of color? With black and white the only two 'affects' that make by this choice perhaps a contrast? Or is there a different way to show process, transition, duality, the bridge as a passive but helpful structure? I marked the bridge yellow intuitively with a marker. Maybe this makes sense. It does make me think of the Øresund or Öresund Bridge (depending which side you are on).

This bridge connects Denmark and Sweden, and it is the longest road and rail bridge in Europe. And this takes me back to communication and language. Two countries connected by a bridge. Two languages, related but different. A refugee fleeing to a different country which is sometimes the same country that in fact somehow created the war in their home country, but also exchange students who have the choice to learn the language of their temporary host country.



## Malmö | Sweden, Week 7, 2012

### [ Bridges ] Part IV

What does the bridge symbolize and why does the bridge matter?

Wikipedia tells us there are six main types of bridges; beam bridges, cantilever bridges, arch bridges, suspension bridges, cable-stayed bridges and truss bridges. Structurae, the International Database and Gallery of Structures, tells us that there are thirteen undefined bridge types:

1. Arch bridge
2. Cable-net bridge
3. Cable-stayed bridge
4. Covered bridge
5. Girder bridge

6. Hyperbolic paraboloid bridge
7. Movable bridge (sometimes referred to as bascule or drawbridge)
8. Pontoon bridge
9. Rigid frame bridge
10. Stressed ribbon bridge
11. Suspension bridge
12. Trestle bridge
13. Truss bridge (or traffic bridge)

I don't know if this categorization is important to me, I am not a civil engineer or architect nor builder, I am an artist unfortunately with a bad memory. But

for now I want to go with the flow of research, so to speak, and see what these groupings might reveal or lead me to. In my current and still growing collection I have the following bridges from these 13 bridge types;

No. 3 The Erasmus Bridge in Rotterdam, which is a cable-stayed bridge.

I lived there for almost eight years and although I am living in Sweden now,

I am a registered citizen in Rotterdam. No. 7 The London Tower Bridge is a combined bascule and suspension bridge. We went to London in February for the seminar: *Cultural Translation in the Age of the global Assembly Line* with Sarat Maharaj. No. 11 The Älvsborg Bridge in Gothenburg and The Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco are suspension bridges. I lived in San Francisco for 5 months when I studied one semester for a Master of Fine Arts at the California College of the Arts (unfortunately I had to quit because of money issues). No. 13 The John F. Kennedy Bridge in Maastricht is a truss bridge (or traffic bridge). I went to school for 1 year in Maastricht. In the soundtrack: Memory evoked by the John F. Kennedy Bridge in Maastricht, 3'06" I speak about this.

Let's have a look at the other bridges.

No. 1 Arch Bridge. I go to Wikipedia and the very first picture that strikes me is the Aqueduct of Segovia (or more precisely, the so called "Aqueduct Bridge"). This is a surprise; I lived in Segovia for almost one year and am also registered as a resident there. So I went through my pictures only to find that I have no picture of me in front of this multiple arch bridge which carries water.

What I do have, are several video recordings of my walking route to the local immigration help center to enjoy free Spanish classes. So I have recordings of myself walking under the Aqueduct Bridge. These could become recordings that I am going to use, but not for the photo series, because the recordings are my point of view (pointing outwards of myself) instead of the pictures in the photo series where the point of view is from the person behind the camera (pointing towards me). They are both the point of view of the person holding the camera. So there is something else going on here as well. I'll come back to this later; it seems that as a tourist you take pictures of your travel companion or >

yourself in front of tourist attractions. But if you are a resident you don't.

Even before I was writing about bridges as possible symbols of transition or process, the bridge as a communication 'helper' is already in one of my video works. In *Bonding on the Backseat* (from the Series: *Words don't come easy*), 4'40, 2011 we see two women on the backseat of a car driving over the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. Pop music is playing and they start reacting to the music and mimicking each other. Without verbal language they pick up each other's ideas to move similarly. One woman is from Brazil and the other woman is from the Netherlands. In this series the theme is language as a form of problematic cultural barrier as well as an empowering instrument. Language as a possibility to express ourselves: our character, thoughts, feelings, and presence.

Curator Cydney M. Payton wrote a fantastic text on *Bonding on the Backseat*

touching on the relationship between the *tourist* and the *resident* as one of the binary messages in the video, which include cultural differences and assimilation; this she understands as the video's main topic of human communication and understanding. In her text she includes *Dean MacCannell's The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, in which the global tourist is always arriving and departing prefigured scenarios. And with the Golden Gate Bridge luring in the back window of the car as a focus of this communication, suggesting joy and vulnerability. According to Payton in relation to this video, MacCannell specifically relates to the way that we build expectations around experience into the "touristic".

In MacCannell's epilogue of 1998, he explains that the word "touristic" didn't appear in the Oxford English Dictionary as a word and that he resisted to find a substitute for it. Then in 1977 the word entered the English language as an adjective with a negative connotation.

In its original use, "touristic" only wanted to alert us that something new had entered the world. MacCannell's terms "touristic" as the meeting place of the exchange of human notice and commercial exchange. It is difficult to disconnect the spectacle of international sightseeing from capitalism. The sightseeing aspect of the different bridges in the different countries is free of cost, but the travelling and accommodation is not. The more pictures in the [Bridges] series I take the more visible the aspect of "movement" will become. The more "tourist" pictures I have to show, the more visible it becomes that it is not "home." And one could wonder what or where is "home"?

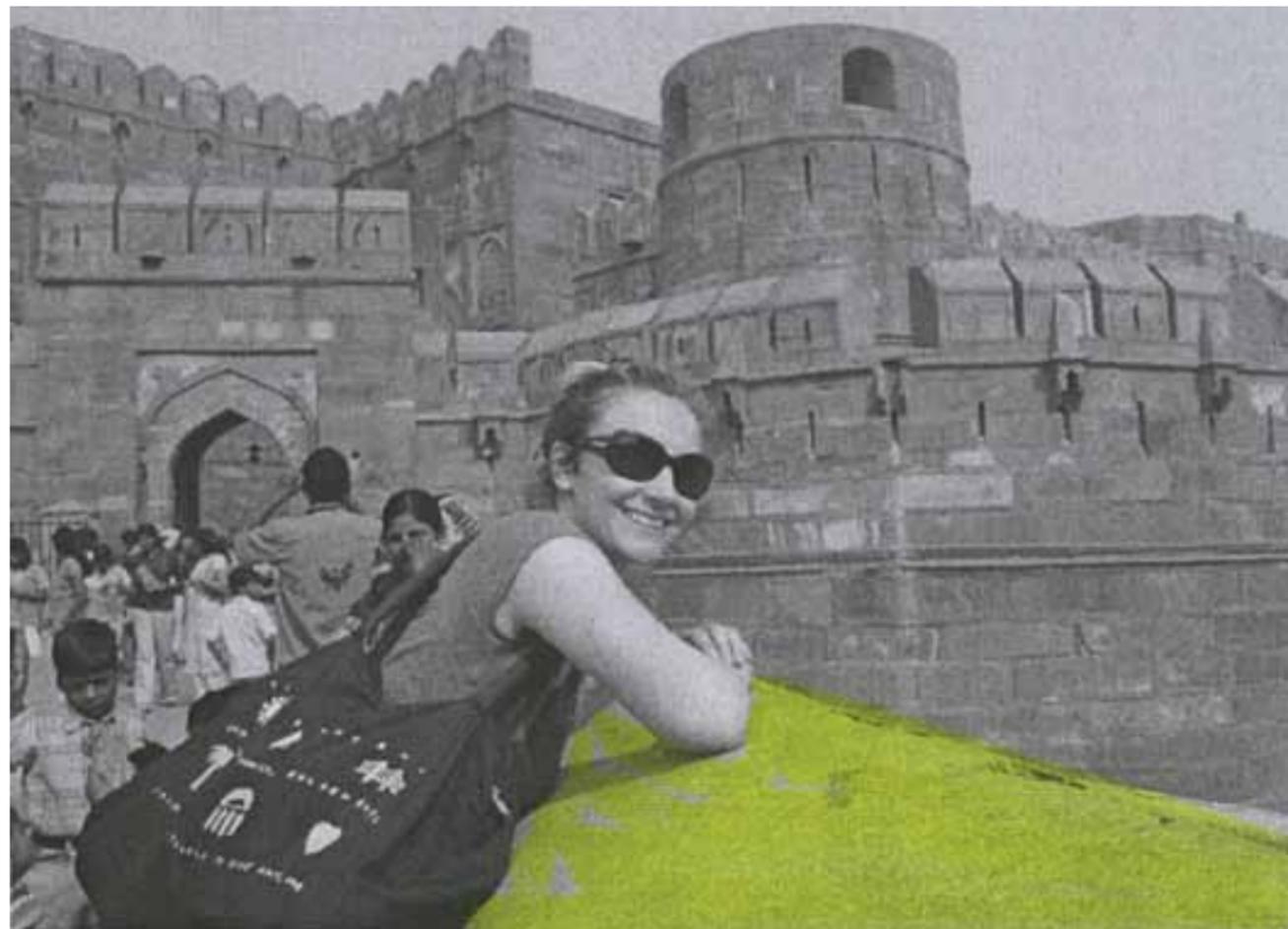
Why do tourists have this urge to bring home a picture of their visit?

The touristic behavior of "taking" pictures seems to show "the human" who is not at "home" and the picture is proof of this. Marking "other" places shows leaving home and meeting the "other". Or could it be that it is not about the movement, the meeting or the experience, but just about the picture as

memory, which serves as evidence of "being" there or as evidence of a type of status symbol or trophy? Or that a picture can serve as a way to connect with the world in our own safe way by a shared experience? Or, that we want to know and show human heritage?

Driven by the desire to experience the unknown or out of pure curiosity, it is a "human" experience, maybe we want to have something new to say, to offer a gift by telling a good story. The Golden Gate Bridge draws 9 million visitors per year, hardly an exclusive one. But we want to experience it ourselves. Maybe it is not about getting the picture, but the moment of being there, having arrived at the un/known destination and to stand, for example in front of a famous bridge, make a picture and leave again. But what kind of experience is that? Been there, done that? These questions don't make me wiser, in fact I am a bit lost. Somehow my feeling says that the [Bridges] series therefore should contain also not so famous bridges.

Read Payton's text online: [www.kimengelen.com/text/cydney\\_payton.html](http://www.kimengelen.com/text/cydney_payton.html) ■



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## Malmö | Sweden, Week 8, 2012

### [ Bridges ] Part V

This week I keep thinking of the photograph *Untitled, 1972* by Larry Clark, in which he is injecting heroine into his girlfriends arm. And at the same time I have an 80's song from Human League in my head, and during transcendental meditation I keep pondering about this songs lyrics 'I was working as a waitress in a cocktail bar, that much is true ...'

*Untitled, 1972* touches me so deeply. Why? There is an incredible intimacy in the picture to me. But it is not so, because you know someone else took that picture, so they were not alone. Similar to the 'people' photographs which Nan Goldin shoots. They have this intense vulnerability in them, I find them immensely moving. And the way they have been shot, it feels as if you as a

viewer are there. Which can not be, but it is. The picture is there, as if the photographer was not there. Isn't it Larry Clark himself portrayed in *Untitled, 1972*? I think it is him 'in' the picture. Back to the song, the different voices, the different viewpoints merging into one are interesting. In my [Bridges] photographs I want to think about the person who photographs me standing on or in front of a bridge. S/he is not visible, but s/he shoots the picture. S/he is immensely important, s/he is not in the picture. S/he is not the only witness, because there is the picture, the evidence of the action, or performance, or happening. I think I read that that was the first and only time he went to jail, because he injected the heroin into someone else's body and the photograph was the evidence of this action. It is still tangled, I take my first decisions intuitively and now I need more time to think about this presence vs. absence or all together, and integration, assimilation. And also the evidence of the tourist as producer vs. the passerby as the author, participant, and viewer. ■

## Netherlands, Week 9, 2012

[ Bridges ] Part VI

My [Bridges] pictures are cooperations with the factual authors who remain anonymous, they are the participants and authors, and I become the participant and the spectator.

What should I call this: a performance, situation, action, event, a game, or better a happening? Maybe I should deconstruct or personalize the meaning of these words for myself to see which one fits best: Performance; I don't consider it a performance, since the action is not presented to an art audience. Although the other passers by are witnesses, but then they are completely oblivious of the fact that they are witnessing something related to art instead of a tourist-action. Situation; Yes, but what does this say?

No, when I think of a situation, I think of something negative, which it is not. At the moment of making it, it is a beautiful voluntary art-supporting action. Action; Yes, also, but what does that say? Action...it does come close, there is something going on, and also the movie-director says 'Action'. Event; no, that is too big. It is something small almost invisible, something personal, yes maybe even intimate, but in the public sphere, people just pass by, maybe here and there someone watches, which makes the picture possibly even more interesting. Is it then more a game? That also comes close, but a game usually has a loser and a winner. And I am not aiming for that. But the game is happening indeed with the person who takes the pictures. >





S/he is in control, but still I, the artist control a lot. I can more or less control the framing, because I choose the moment when I ask the 'photographer' to take a picture of me, and I choose where I am going to stand. I can control what I am wearing and more or less how I look. But the way s/he takes the picture, angle, height and the timing is out of my control and the framing is not the way I would choose it when I hold the camera myself. And a game you play with each other, which is what we are doing at that particular moment. But in this case the 'photographer' thinks s/he shoots a picture for a tourist and therefore I, the artist, am cheating. Because I am not on a holiday I am working. So I cheat because in fact s/he is playing a different game than what s/he thinks s/he is playing. But happening comes close too; because the cooperation with the photographer is a key element. Wiki: "A happening is a performance, event or situation meant to be considered art, usually as performance art. Happenings take place anywhere (from basements to studio lofts and even street alley ways),

are often multidisciplinary, with a nonlinear narrative and the active participation of the audience. Key elements of happenings are planned, but artists sometimes retain room for improvisation. This new media art aspect known as happenings eliminates the boundary between the artwork and its viewer. Henceforth, the interactions between the audience and the artwork makes the audience, in a sense, part of the art." But maybe the naming in itself of this element of the 'work' is not so important and I can choose or even misuse by choosing which ever name I give it in relation to the henceforth meaning.

The temporal 'photographer' or 'author' or 'participant' has an important role in the work. In fact a crucial role, without this 'action' or 'play', the work could not exist and would possibly remain just a 'souvenir' in the form of a tourist holiday 'kiekje' (English: photograph).

## Malmö | Sweden, Week 10, 2012

### [ Bridges ] Part VII

This week I went back again to Malmö from the Netherlands. Since I was staying in the south of the Netherlands I needed to take the train for two hours to Schiphol, the Dutch Airport. Just past Eindhoven we got a message that there was a fire alert in the tunnel and the train took us back to Eindhoven.

There was no way to get to Schiphol by train without passing through this tunnel. NS, the Dutch Railways, provided a taxi for two other passengers and myself from Eindhoven to Schiphol airport. This was fantastic, firstly that the NS arranged a taxi for people who had to catch their plane and secondly because I got to see many, many, many bridges.

AND surprisingly, many of the viaducts that we went under had a fluorescent yellow transparent safety-band on the border of the bridge instead of the gray metal bridge railings that are so common to me for Dutch viaducts. I felt an aha-moment and instantly understood my black and white prints with the yellow marked bridges. Before, I thought that I only used the yellow marker to emphasize the bridge, and because of the simple fact that I nowadays use the yellow marker a lot. But it seems there is more to this; my subconscious had picked up the yellow outline of the bridges from real life bridges in the Netherlands where I am originally from. This gives me a boost that I should stick for now to my black and white printouts and marking the bridge with a yellow marker. That this came to me while traveling back to my (temporarily) new home country makes complete sense to me now. It is not intuitive anymore, and the meaning is correct. Because I am a petit immigrant myself and taking not just tulips but also yellow bridge railings with me to my host country and process these elements into my work [Bridges]. ■





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## Malmö | Sweden, Week 11, 2012

[ Bridges ] Part VIII

Bridges are often overlooked because they seem so obvious in our landscape. So are the tourists taking pictures in our (urban) landscapes. We see them, but we don't really see them. Bridges, as well people who use the bridges, link areas and countries. The earliest history of bridges goes back to the India of the 3rd and 4th centuries. In epic literature it is told how Rama's army built mythical bridges that stretched from India to Sri Lanka. But the oldest still existing bridges were built by the Romans. Their aqueducts and arch bridges still exist today! The materials used to build bridges have changed over the centuries and in the 19th century, during the industrial revolution, the amount of bridges increased drastically.

The diversity of materials used for building Bridges; stone, brick, wood, metal, concrete, are as diverse as the people themselves who cross these Bridges. Bridges were usually functional, but in modern times bridges became a way to influence the landscape by way of their aesthetics and they became icons of cities and therefore tourist attractions for tourists.

## Malmö | Sweden, Week 12, 2012

### [ Bridges ] Part IX

Last week I went to the Malmö Konstmuseum and I saw Carl Fredrik Hill's *Trädet och flodkröken III* (Bois-le-Roi). And I thought to myself how nice this is if you are a painter. You choose (in this case) a viewpoint of a landscape that you like and start to paint it. Your gaze lasts on and on, on the vista you have chosen yourself. Later, I heard that Hill's also had periods of mental illness. And then, while I was pondering and looking at the painting, I was having this particular thought, and my gaze was drawn to the bridge in the painting. Back 'home', when I entered bridge Bois-le-Roi in Google, the first hit I got was a Youtube video where two people jump off of a Bois-le-Roi bridge. It seems people like to jump off of constructions for

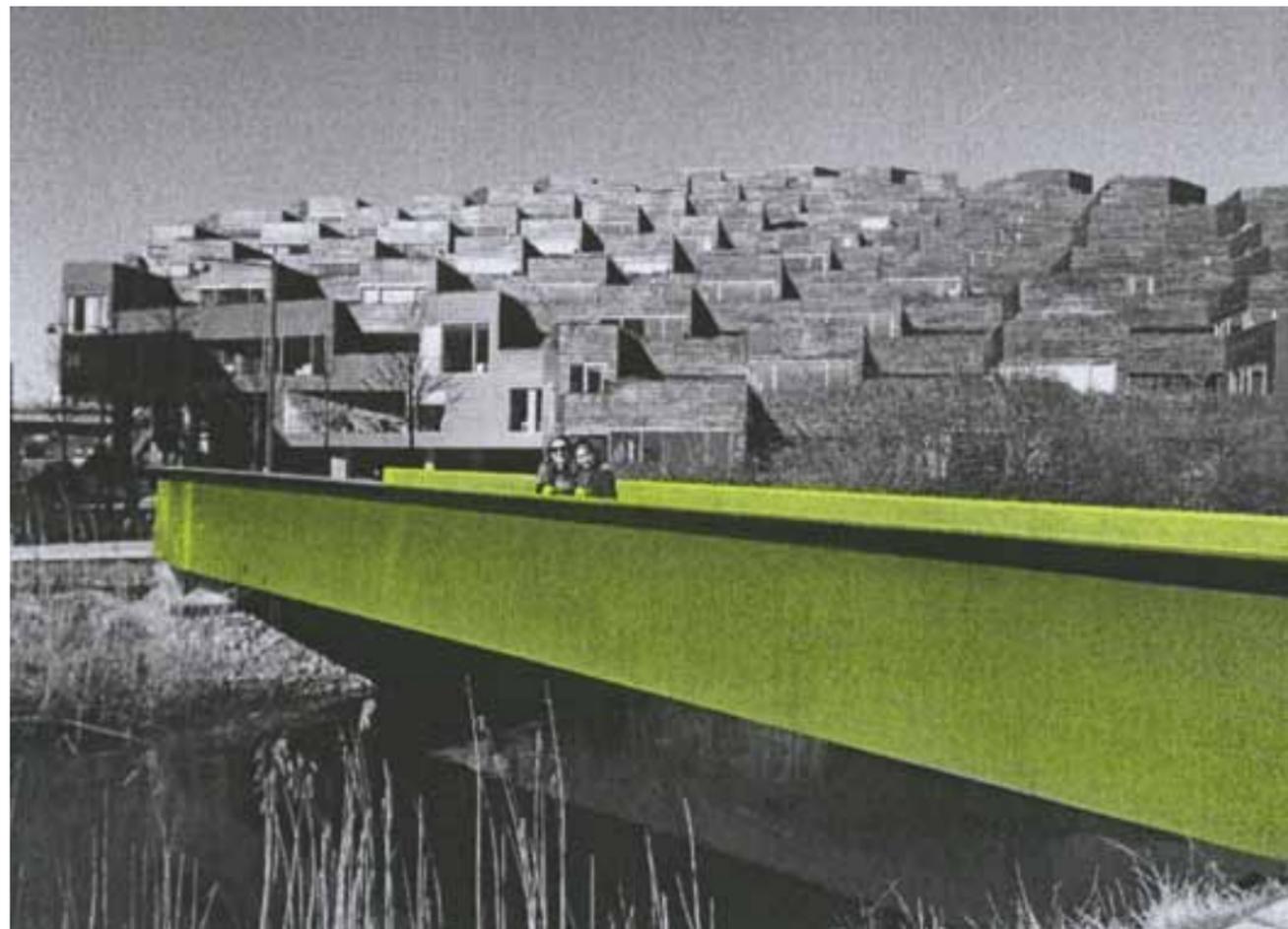
one reason or another. Thinking about jumping, I think of the series *Falls* from Dutch artist Bas Jan Ader who jumped off of a house, who jumped off of a chair, who jumped from a tree into a pond. (I wouldn't call it falling, because he knew that he could not win over gravity). So we have fun jumps, art jumps and suicide jumps.

Back to the bridge on Hill's painting, I think it must be the Pont de Chartrettes. So now I Google Pont de Chartrettes, and what do I find? The first hit again is a video of people jumping off of a bridge. Alas we know fun-jumps do go wrong, and also suicide jumps go wrong. And wrong in this final sense is perhaps right. Direction, more or less horizontal as long

as you are on the bridge, and you can go back and forth, there is the possibility of return. There is some form of stability in it. The movement comes from the person. The vertical jump is also movement, however once in the air there is nothing much to do, the fall is then inevitably governed by gravity.

The second 'hit' on Google, is a Dailymotion vid also showing a fun-jump from a bridge, but using a viewpoint from the person holding the camera standing on the bridge itself. Again I think of Erin Langworthy, who bungee jumped 111 meters into Zambezi River at Victoria Falls after her cord snapped. She survived this fun-jump. Then I think of what I read on Wikipedia; more people die by suicide at the Golden Gate Bridge than at any other site in the world. At this moment it is the No.1 most-popular place in the world to commit suicide. Sara Rutledge Birnbaum, jumped off of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco and also survived. She went back on the bridge

and jumped again. The bridge is lifeless, the route where it is designed for we know, it is a recognizable pad that you can take. You cross it to go from A to B, not to jump off of. But whatever route you take the bridge is, for better or for worse, stable and supporting. People can choose not to 'use' a bridge for what it was designed for, but to 'use' it differently. The bridge is an inanimate thing in itself, and in either case it still remains a helping construction but we decide how to use it, crossing it horizontally or jumping off of it vertically.



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## Malmö | Sweden, Week 13, 2012

[ Bridges ] Part X

Ywe Jalander's film on Alvar Aalto enlightens us to the fact that Aalto always approached things from the human point of view outwards, not from the intellectual point of view inwards. I admire that, although for me it contradicts with the fact that he did not let his daughter choose her own profession. She wanted to become a nurse, or something 'good', but it was not academic enough for him. I don't think that any person is better than any other person because of having a more developed brain (or should I say trained), bigger mouth, power, amount of money or what not. But ethics do form a problem for me in order to be able to contribute to this thought myself and not to become the judging person. Perhaps all my work is not

about communication between people and the happiness and problems that it can bring. But rather it is about ethics and moral issues, and how to deal with this, and how we human beings all differ in this immensely. Does law, democracy, religion or consensus help us with this? Why is it that being an intellectual is 'better' than being a nurse or a teacher? This confuses me. A lot of the times in my art I just take risks and try things intuitively. I would say my project [Bridges] like many of my projects is social, but I imagine does not produce real social consequences. Because how could a person standing in front of a bridge, directly affect our look upon immigration problems and/or ethics, power structures, communication, authorship or personal development? And what would I want to change anyway? In fact my own view on immigration and power structures changes with every news article I read about it, in addition to my current three years personal experience as an artist immigrant and now two times as an art-student immigrant.

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Aside from all the complications, I am aware that I am in the fortunate position to be able to go 'voluntarily' abroad to study and that the Swedish system pays for my education. And this, with the advantage that students are immigrants, which are according to statistics the most tolerated group of legal immigrants. Having an effect implies some kind of power, which my art doesn't have and maybe needs, because it comes with responsibility. And as an artist I just want to express, flow, maybe expose, maybe define by researching myself, slowly, scattered, intuitively, imagining or working from a sort of premonition, stubbornly (perhaps) going in the wrong direction. But then deep down I do feel that art can create a shift by exposing these fragments of reality. I think people could become more aware of immigration as not an abstract word, but that it is about people. In my project [Bridges] that could work as a gear shifting into another level of approaching the subject and thus dealing with it in real life when encountering 'others'. American Indian artist Jimmie Durham, video taped lecture called: *Cowboys and*

*the São Paulo Biennial* for example changed my vision for good on cowboys. The process of knowledge on how 'Americans' also took the land away from the Mexicans is shaping. Interestingly now North America makes it difficult for Mexicans to cross the border into what is in fact land that was once stolen from them. Because they were Americans living near the border, and wanted to look for fields for their cows to graze. They could do that in Mexico, but then they also wanted to bring their slaves along and Mexico did not want that and one thing led to another. So how do we call these 'Americans' to be historically correct (not politically correct)? But in truth it is really nobodies land. It is our common globe; earth. Or is it not? In my other blog *Immigration-Open up borders*, I collect news-items, and almost everyday there is something in the news concerning immigration. Somehow I think it is crazy and fascinating at the same time that people have claimed the right, to determine where people can or can't go. And thus that a living being hasn't got the freedom to go anyplace s/he chooses. My boyfriend tells me I am

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'lucky' that I can move with my European passport relatively freely, whilst he with his passport is not that free, mostly only as a tourist. For a while he was illegal and I went with him through the entire bureaucratic and emotionally straining voyage. The border issue I find most complicated. I say let's *Open up Borders*. But do I really feel that way? If the whole world were without borders, could that work? What are the 'rules' for that, or 'courtesies'? The word courtesies audibly sound nice together with securities. How about tribes, or nomads, where are their borders? Is it still the land, or the people who stick together and call themselves a tribe? My tribe would be the 'westerling' tribe? So that makes me aware of individualism. Westerlings with a garden have often 'border-problems' with their gardens. They say: 'If you don't watch your border, you 'let' the other take advantage of this. And if you're not careful in the end they will sit with their chair in your garden'. Norman McLaren comically shows a lot in his animation *Neighbors*, where live actors as stop-motion objects battle over a flower that blooms between their

houses. Personally I do have a problem with authority, I really don't like it if another person tells me what I 'must' do. Immigration comes with bureaucracy and a lot of 'musts'. Could we approach immigration like that? Do the problem makers screw it up for the others? But aren't we all sometimes a problem maker? Like Alvar Aalto's approach I want this art piece to be basically a joint creation, I don't want to be a dictator. But mostly I do have the control and do control how the piece looks like in the end. When I ask you: '*Could you take a picture of me?*' You can of course always just say no. But if you do take the picture, I'll accept it as how it is; the framing, the lighting, the distance and all. I am not going to Photoshop it, or color correct it. Thank you. So could I pluck bridge-pictures from the Internet? No. Because there has to be a person in front or on it and it should be the same person in all the pictures, passing through time. The picture is nevertheless 'tooled', I have printed the color picture in black in white, in the original size of 10x15 cm (4x6 inch) and then colored the bridge yellow with a marker. >

This I then scanned and blew up to A2 size (leaving the dpi at 300). The picture gets more pixelated and looks cheaper, second hand, something of not so much value and reminds one of the look of a newspaper, because of the black and white print quality and the yellow marker relating to office material. I have to do the yellow marking of the bridge before I finally print it again in the A2 size. Why? Why don't I mark it after the final print? The marking gets done in the original size and is the first 'marking' of the bridge as a signifier. It should become part of the picture. Also I don't want to make it crafty-looking. There is no resemblance to a painting, if there is a correspondence to an (art)medium then it is to photography, video and performance. Something moving, changing, developing or slipping. The news, current news, old news, the blog, the information, the picture, the digital age. My previous experience with video makes me choose for this sequence and thus has this outcome: research, pre-production, production, post-production and distribution. It is relatively the same process to me.

Also the final print is going to be on aluminum or Plexiglas. For now I choose for aluminum, it has the connotation of bridge material and there is a little coldness in the material, which is what I am looking for. A black and white photo on a grey surface, because it is not a cheery tourist photo. Also it has a slightly mirroring effect, I don't know if this will work. But this could make the viewer, become more integrated in the work by the slightly mirroring reflection. The yellow could be the one positive attribute to the black and white, little bit pixelated photograph. It refers to something positive, which is the bridge. The symbol of connection, of going from A to B in reverse, movement, contact, continuity. The work shows the same single person, but is not necessarily about the identity of one single person, or a particular person and I think because of the pixelation the face is not that visually exact, so that it becomes a bit more distance to the particular person in the picture. But it is still recognizably the same person in the picture, which is necessary.

It is important to see the same person in each of the pictures of the different bridges, in the different locations/cities/countries. As the series [Bridges] grows this will be clearer, I think. Also the 'growing' of the art-piece as installation needs time and money, since I need to travel to bridges in order to have new photographs taken and the person in the picture will age. I don't expect that you will see that the person is aging that much because of the pixelation, but time will tell. And also I don't know at this point how long I will continue to work on the series [Bridges].

The A2 plates will be probably placed on the floor, I am going to make a mock up of this with A2 prints this coming week. The placement is low so the viewer can look down on them, or has to squat down on their knees to make an effort to see the pictures more closely; the worthless tourist pictures. Which become worthy because of the transformation. Do these trophies conjure up some form of individual or family post-colonial gene? I don't

want to treat the plates as objects and certainly not as sculptures. They should remain pictures, because I feel it is about social and human issues and in reality not about the bridge, the inanimate object. The bridge is just a symbol, a method, a 'bridge' to the topic, but I think it will be good if the plates are placed on the floor at a slight angle and are not 'stuck' to the wall. Almost as if they were placed there temporarily, to be re-placed later or corrected some other time. Also the aluminum and the bridge create a link, not that all the bridges in the pictures relate to the same material of the aluminum plates, but due to the combination of the material and the placing, the pictures too become three dimensional because they are not hung, but placed on the floor, loose from the wall only standing by supporting themselves. Which is what the bridge in essence is; a helping and supporting structure.

To be continued..





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