

CONCERNING THE SPARROW AND THE CROW

An essay to Ingeborg Kvame's art installation, in Østmarka, the autumn of 2016.

Titled: *Entering Nature*.

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Above my desk, hangs a pencil drawn illustration of a bird.
The drawing is a present from Ingeborg Kvame that is titled "Såerle".
Its a black bird on a white surface. Its showing its profile.
With a black shiny eye and an open beak, as if it is singing.
It is a bird with the legs drawn and interconnected with branches.
It appears as if the bird's feet resemble roots. As if its claws right in front of the bird had landed and had been transformed into branches when it attempted to latch on to the twigs.
The circular-shaped feet, looking like roots of the bird, are intertwined with the branches which resemble thin threads one might find under ground, on plants or thin twigs at the foot of a dead tree that is upside down. Like a thinner nerve-pattern, that is fragile.
As if the fragility of the bird lies in its feet?
Or as if the bird is no longer a winged-animal, which is no longer capable of flying but rather weighed down by carrying a heavy load; the cargo of the earth.
The bird's head with its open beak (pointing upwards/vertically) as if it is stretching upwards towards the sky and the light; as most plants branch upwards towards the direction of the sun/light.
All the while, its feet are stretching downwards.
The bird's root-like-feet point downwards.... but towards what?
Towards earth's inner darkness perhaps?

The illustration of the bird and its magnificent *bush-like feet* may be interpreted as an (*symbol, allegory*) image of the invisible link between what exist above and below the ground, between what we can see and what is hidden for the naked eye (external and internal)

The Light and the Dark. Above and Below. Air and Earth.

As if to suggest our own feet, that can be a part of the body that can often go unnoticed, and might suggest an entry to our roots, our past, to what is stored deep inside ourselves. To what is hidden. The Dark. Anxiety? The subconscious? The Fantasy (*the imagination*).
As if to suggest the path through our feet might be the gateway that holds the key to unlock our mind and an earthly connection to our inner life, a stable two step walk that allows entry to magical spaces.

"I found a magical space", Ingeborg said, when I met her in front of one of the entries to Østmarka, (*a forested area to the east of Oslo*), at the parking lot that separates the noisy highway from the suburban part of the city named *Oppsal* and the dense forest.
Its raining and the forest feels gloomy and damp.
Its the second time we meet, but the first time in this so-called magical place.

We're wearing our rain gear while walking towards the forest. We get off the dirt road and find smaller trails (pathways) leading to tracks alongside the hills crossing wet marshes, stepping on slippery rocks and slimy roots, passing fully ripe blueberries, shiny soaked *Porcini* mushrooms (British 'Penny Bun'), passing the *Skøyenputten*, and winding up by the *Solbergvannet* (Solberg water/Solberg lake).

It's our feet, yes; that lead us to our destination, with an even rate that is steady, until the lake suddenly reveals its whereabouts, in the midst of thick pines and broad-leaved hardwood trees.

However, now in this light drizzle with steam above the water and low-lying ground fog covering the pine trees, it feels like a slightly different lake than the first time I saw it, which was during the daytime.

What is it about lakes in the rain *that is so alluring?*

As I watch the lake my mind wanders, into folktales about the Huldre (*a Nordic mythological dangerous, seductive and often female forest creature, whom lives around lakes*) and the nymphs with their seductiveness, often described bathing nude in lakes, singing and alluring. I think of Nøkken (*a mythological, dangerous sea creature from Norwegian folklore. Often described as male which lives in rivers/lakes/ponds which have water lilies growing in them that entice people to their doom when they try to pick the beautiful flowers.*) and his water lilies.

I hear raindrops hit the water as I ponder over mystique and melancholy, the moon and the crows, raven's cry, the underworld (aka the realm of the dead) hell, the land of the dead. Death itself.

I observe the water lilies and *their* thin waving reeds.

Somehow alarming (*a warning maybe?*)

My mind wanders in to the slimy and eel-like water lilies, with roots that might grab human bodies, the bodies of the people who commit suicide, Virginia Woolf's body? The roots of the plants, curve and dive under the surface of the water deep into the muddy and pitch black lake.

And then *Ingeborg* tells me that a man was found dead in a tent; here in Østmarka, right before the summer.

Is this the lake of the dead? I ask myself.

We reached a clearing in the forest, it *looked like* an obvious resting place for hikers. No, it must be the lake of the living. A magical place. A place with special powers.

And then in that moment, I saw; discovered the artwork of *Ingeborg's* art piece.

A white tent placed on a small peninsula, by the water and two small white sails. installed on two trees opposite. It is like this shiny trio of astringed objects, in the denseness of this nature have been there for some time.

The objects (appear integrated) seemingly intertwined, with its surroundings. This is not an invasion but an insert (*insertion*) this is not invading but inserting on to nature, an involvement if one like.

The installation is an introduction to the lake and the forest, perhaps meant for the inner-city and concrete-jungle-minded like people, an entry to nature.

Entering nature. Not as to walk on nature, but rather inserting oneself and entering it, (*diving*) into nature.

Downwards, both behind and under it.

The tent is placed on a small grass-covered peninsula with a swamp-like bubbly peat padded floor. Its not a modern (camouflage-green) water-proof tent made from tarp and plastic materials, but an off-white, more homemade-looking simple DIY tent. A tent made from cotton with two simple triangle-shaped roofs pointing downwards, a triangle shaped front with a zipper and a backside that faced the lake.

Four poles made out of wood lift the roof of the tent; two at opposite ends with their tip tilted, shaping a cross. And the sail is stabilized by six twig-bolts, three on each side that are firmly bolted and pressed in to the wet organic peat-laid ground.

What kind of tent is this? I *ask myself*. An overnight camping area? Resting place for hikers? Immediately, the urge to move in closer rises.

What is it the tent is hiding or covering? Or perhaps even protecting?

I unzip the tent zipper.

A square shaped hole, approximately the same size as the tent has been dug out of the loose soil. This hole will barely fit two bodies.

Perhaps it may fit two bodies in a fetal position? Embracing each other.

What does the peat material reveal?

It reveals the dead lumber, the dead branches, the darkened brown, soaked and moist wood. The larger piles and pieces of tree trunks and smaller branches are laying neatly next to each other, diagonally on top of the hole as if someone had placed them like that intentionally.

There are water pits in between the lumber. *The tunnels made by the water are printed in the grounds sawdust* with a decaying rotten swamp smell.

Decaying vegetation. A cycle; *the ecosystem?*

The digging shows a hidden past.

Old trees, which at one point in time had been toppled by floods, and with the help of the stream's current, possibly been recollectd and placed as a result next to each other over time.

Whilst all the while collecting other dead materials such as branches, leaves thus taking the form of the peat.

I pull down the zipper on the tent. As I study it from the outside I wonder.

Is this a grave? Is this a cemetery or a tomb? No it can't be. It is a mine, dug and carved.

A carving of something that was not previously visible.

Engraved, into the history of the peninsula, like a portal leading into the heart of the peninsula (the abyss/*the void*) of the peninsula.

It's a mine (construction field), revealing the peat-made peninsula's simple and factual tale of origin.

The second object is a square shaped piece of cloth that's hung above the water on an arched branch, an almost snake-like branch rooted at the end of a large tree trunk. It's another fallen tree parallel to the lumber placed inside the tent.

However, this one is placed at the lake's surface that is a narrow pathway. A bridge leading in to the water.

The piece of cloth touches the water, barley (*moving in the breeze*) waving like a road sign, but in water. A water-passage?

The cloth consists of two colours.

Its white at the top with an uneven line in the middle marking the gradient transformation that turns into a grainy and mud-like colour.

Its stretching all the way downwards and reveals an almost unnoticeable transition into the dark water. *A line in the middle shows that it gradually fades to blend into a dark shade of grey. One can barley notice the transformation of the cloth's colouring into the dark waters. It is* as if part of the mud and the grain from the lake has been sucked into the fabric, as if the very depth of the water and its darkness has begun to grow and rise, spreading into the bright man-made material.

In the reflection of the water the fabric can be seen and the arm-like branch is created. It resembles an enlarged fish head, or a gigantic eye in perfect symmetry, an eye of a pre-historic reptile which has a square shaped pupil.

It's the eye to ancient history. Is it nature's fish-like and mute eye that stares at man? that stares at me?

Is it *the center of the earth with all its darkness?* planet earth's *geology that represents earths inner darkness which* now wants to step into the light. *The wretched of the earth* that now appears at *daytime* in the light and creates a similar mirroring of my own darkness, a darkness that often grows in close encounters *when frightened*.

However, it's not only being just startled by darkness (Nyctophobia), or fear of coming death, nor is it the general meaninglessness/*insignificance* of it all, but also being startled by crisis. The climate and environmental crisis. The refugee crisis, being aware of the Anthropocene, (*a proposed epoch, when human activities started to have a significant global impact on Earth's geology and ecosystems*). The Trump tragedy. The possibility of world war three. Yes, the doomsday-alarming, crummy but yet very human anxiety.

It's the twin to planet earth's volcanic million-year-old existential crisis, a massive pressure-point that here by the *Solberg lake* has been given a portal. An air hole. Now it wants to reach for the light, tumbling its way ahead and is ready to manifest itself this rainy Thursday afternoon in August.

However, not like a scream, but with a soundless banner (the cloth) and a wordless man-made road sign that is in water with a soft like-cotton, the artful burp, manifest itself to the world above.

But what is its message?

I sit down at a tree trunk near *Ingeborg*, with my hair wet and my clothes damp. I watch the cloth hang quite still almost leisurely placed around the beautifully arched branch. The cloth moves with the wind carefully and slowly.

Its almost tickling the waters surface. The raindrops create ripples in the water covering the surface. I listen to the sound of raindrops, a soft drumming sound that is soothing.

The circular shaped forest that surrounds the lake and the fog, the denseness and the stillness of the forest makes me feel nature's...

peace?

The last object is a white small rectangular shaped cloth with an embroidered symbol on. It's nailed with double black bolts to a tree in the middle of the camping area.

It is nailed by one nail at the top which makes the cloth wave with small movements gripped by the wind; waving away from the trunk of the tree.

Mellomgang is the title of the piece. (*Pathway, Hallway, Passage*).

Perhaps once it was a passage between two larger spaces?

The cloth is made of linen and with its stiffen and loosely spun fiber, the thread creates a rugged and uneven background due to the few crochet stiches in black.

There's two triangles, one bright and one dark. The top one is only marked with a circle crossing its stiches along its side and with two thin pedal-stitched lines at the back.

The bottom one is slightly larger with cross-stiches alongside the edges, but filling the whole triangle with the pedal-stitches.

It's a mirror reflection of a triangle.

The bright one pointing upwards is without content, signifying emptiness(*hollowness*)?

Whilst the dark one pointing downwards, carries the content.

As if darkness and being drawn to sadness, the hopelessness and death equals meaningfulness?

As if lightness and joy are lacking some particular content which then falls short (*then bares less significance*) not meaningful enough.

We are pulled between these posts (dualities) to tumble downwards and flapping upwards. Pondering vs. laughter.

Because we need the heaviness, the melancholy to ponder on what comes after death in order to take in and accept life's un-magical and ordinary daily living.

I observe *Ingeborg* pack down the equipment: a yoga mat to sit on, a needle and thread, a thimble, one thermos and a lunchbox made out of tin, a hammer and shovel. Everything is wet. We're wet. And the lake is still. The tent is still.

The two cloths hang still. The rain has stilled, and our conversation has stilled.

We start to walk, stepping out of the forest towards civilization.

We hear a bird sing in a tree, high toned as if it wanted to say something simple, I think about some pencil drawn illustrations made by *Ingeborg*.

Two self portraits like birds.

The first one is a sparrow sitting showing her profile, crouched with the main weight balanced on the toes with an arched back and the hands carefully hidden in her lap, nude, startled? With an open and innocent face, her back is turned away from the viewer.

In the second image there's a crow that sits crouched, but this time with her legs apart. The nude body is facing the viewer and the arms are resting on the parted legs. Making a face with a twisted smile, an almost pouting face with an attitude, un flattering facing ahead, confronting the viewer, confronting me.

Two characters. Two sides?

The Sparrow and the Crow. The light and the heavy one.

The simple one, vs the difficult one?

And in both images the body is balancing resting its whole weight on the toes.

It's the feet that carries the body.

It's the feet that creates the balance in the rest of the body.

As if the feet by shifting its weight, from one foot to another,
perhaps helps us balance this duality, these contradictive sides within ourselves.

Like our confusing ability to both see the magical and to think about tragedy, so that the
darkness may be out weighed by brightness.

The cheerfulness, the brightness? Brightness within ourselves

Then a clearing appears, and as we exit the forest, it suddenly feels light (*as if the air is
bright*).

We see a crack in the sky in the middle of thick darkened clouds.

It's the sun with it's rays attempting to break through.

Its sunrays hit us and lights up the grey dusty parking lot.
