

the awareness of things

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Mono no aware - An exploration on what triggers our senses



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Literature I

Abstract	7.
Process	8.
Thesis question	9.

I. Literary impulses **10-15****II. Memory rooms** **16-57**

The competition	18.
The itch	20.
The summer house	22.
The bookstore	28.
The earth	32.
The plastic wrapping	36.
The anticipation	38.
The negative	42.
The patchwork	44.
The savage beauty	52.
The song	56.

III. Miscellaneous **58-65**

Dissecting a text	60.
Interpretation	62.
The physical book	64.

IV. Reflections **66-71**

Appendix	72-85
Bibliography	86-88

abstract.

«A story is not like a road to follow ... it's more like a house. You go inside and stay there for a while, wandering back and forth and settling where you like and discovering how the room and corridors relate to each other, how the world outside is altered by being viewed from these windows. And you, the visitor, the reader, are altered as well by being in this enclosed space, whether it is ample and easy or full of crooked turns, or sparsely or opulently furnished. You can go back again and again, and the house, the story, always contains more than you saw the last time. It also has a sturdy sense of itself of being built out of its own necessity, not just to shelter or beguile you»

— *Selected Stories*, Alice Munro, 1996

It starts like this; with a memory.

Sometimes the memory is an image. Like a photograph. So crisp, clear, that you have to resist the urge to walk right into it. Other times, it's more of a feeling. How it felt in that exact moment. A wave of remembrance that hits you so strongly, and goes right through your core.

The memory is a funny thing, because you keep some things, while others are completely discarded. The memories that have left impressions. Imprints. It's not just the memories themselves, it's the context that makes them memorable. They almost become memory rooms.

Why do some experiences affect us more than others?

In the case of Tadao Ando's *Chichu Art Museum*, the experience is tailor-made. The site, the organization of the different spaces, the mysticism around it. Ando is a conductor. Not of what you feel, but that you feel, and that you are as present as possible. The aim is to experience. What, is of less importance.

«[...] there is no point in doing it if it's not going to create some sort of emotion»

— *The Savage Beauty*, Alexander McQueen, 2011

Looking at favorite fictional works more than a decade later, how does that feel? Do the words affect me in the same way? What visual impulses does the texts give me?

Through both writing and reading, this work explores the connection between literature, words and the physical object. Each image, object, sound, is there to trigger something, to enhance the experience.

What triggers our senses? What leaves an impression?

This work is an exploration on how and why we experience, and on what triggers our senses.

process.

This journey has not been linear. Possible routes crossing each other, tangled together. Like the footpaths in Hong Kong.

It started with words, because somehow it always does that.
I am cautious with what I like. Tentative. I want to feel certain that what I say, is actually true. Those things that truly makes an impression on me, becomes more important then.
What triggers our senses? What sticks?
Literature, fiction and words have tendency to do that for me. Capture. Immerse.
What if how I felt when I read, could be conveyed into built form?

I look through the bookshelves in my childhood home.
I read a book once, and then put it back on the shelf.

Each book is a tiny imprint on my skin.
Sometimes I return to the memory, but not to the text itself.
Would I even feel the same way if I read it again?
For the first time I dive into these texts again, at least ten years later.
Do they feel the same? Is the experience any different?
What impulses do they trigger?

The texts are memory rooms. It guides you through a house that doesn't exist, with walls that are only visible if you let them. You're not supposed to understand fully. To say; so this is what it's supposed to be like.
You are part of the story.
The objects, the sounds, the pictures are there to make you feel.
How it looked like? That's up to you.

For someone who always is very goal-oriented, the journey is the destination.
Through my own words, and others, I've explored the connection between literature, words and the physical objects. Each image, object, sound, is there to trigger something, to enhance the experience.
Together they tell a story. One that is open to interpretation.

All images and objects are produced by the author unless otherwise stated.

Through my own words, and others, this thesis explores the connection between literature, words and the physical object.

*What triggers our senses?
What leaves an impression?*

I.

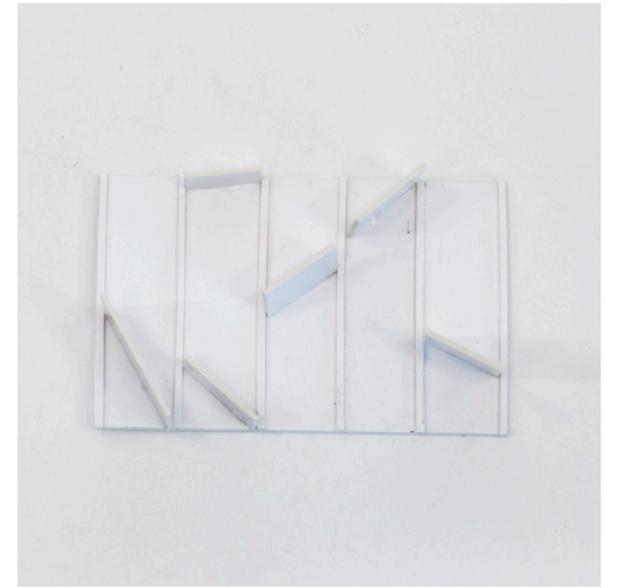
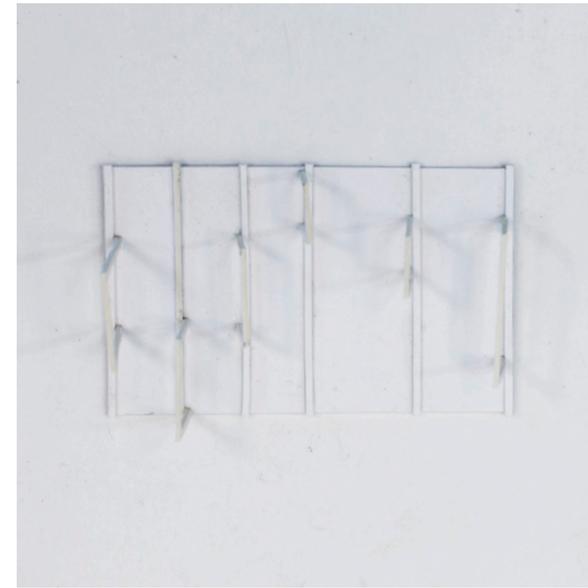
Literary impulses



*«Pulverizing. That's the only word I can think of:
A pulverizing sorrow. As if everything inside me
had turned to dust.»*



*«The world was full of holes, tiny apertures of
meaninglessness, microscopic rifts that the
mind could walk through, and once you were on
the other side of one of those holes, you were
free of yourself, free of your life, free of your
death, free of everything that belonged to you.»*



*«The studio had become a vast construction
zone, crowded with materials, which made it
look smaller than it really was. Doors of varying
sizes lay in piles near the window along with
stacks of sheetrock, sawdust and lumber scraps
covered the floor.»*



*«The water seems to be a sign of...'
I paused. 'The water seems to be a sign of absence.»*



*«The studio had an oppressive, nearly smothering
atmosphere, as if Bill's sadness had leaked into
the chairs, the books, the toys, and the empty wine
bottles that piled up under the sink.»*

What I loved - Siri Hustvedt

III.

Memory rooms

the competition

In elementary school we had classes solely dedicated for reading.
Sometimes we got to pick what we wanted to read, but most of the time we all read books from the same literary canon.
We had to read, in silence, for the entire hour.
The class occurred at the end of the week. For the majority of the students, that hour meant looking at the clock, counting down the minutes.
Towards the weekend.

The chair is squeaky, uncomfortable. Yellow walls. Yellow lights.
A light chatter in the background. The sound of a ticking clock. I glanced at my friend. Or the back of her head at the very least, since my seat was a few rows behind hers. Did she finish already?
I don't remember the literature from those classes either. What did I read?
Did it actually carry any significance?
All I remember is the competition. That silent agreement that whoever finished first, had won. Sometimes we talked about it afterwards.
But mostly we just read - as fast as what felt like humanly possible.
I still read fast. Just without the competition.

しーんと
[Silently]

the itch

I have an itch on my back. Maybe it's a beauty mark. It probably is.
I've had one before, in almost the same place. It's something that sticks out from
the otherwise smooth surface. It's hard not to notice.
I scratch repeatedly. But still carefully. I want to avoid breaking skin.

I accidentally did that once, when I was younger. Scratched so hard that the skin
tore. Surgically replaced with four tiny stitches.

Phantom limb.

After a while it's finally gone. The surface once again feels smooth against my
fingertips.
I don't entirely want to admit it, but I managed to grow quite fond of it.
The uneven surface. The bump against my fingertips. The itch.

What catches your attention? The smooth surfaces. The flawlessness.
How everything is in perfect order. Polished. Impeccable.
After searching, I realized that I didn't look for that. I looked for the oddity,
the out-of-order, the misplaced item.
I'm selective. I never claimed anything else. But when I choose, what intrigues
me? I subconsciously search for it. The bump on the smooth surface.
The one thing that makes me itch.
And most of all, whatever it is that makes it keep on itching.



*Imagine the summer house. With its kinks,
rooms decorated with knick-knacks
The crooked shelf, filled to the brim with books*

It has always been there, for as long as I can remember. The house by the sea. The air is different. A lot less noise, less excessive lights. No television, no wireless internet, no real distractions. There's a certain atmosphere, a calm, to this place. The lack of constant connections to the everyday life. It's not far from the city, but in many ways it feels like being in an alternative time zone. At least mentally.

The house is a creaky, two-story building, with a veranda that faces towards the sea. The painting of the smoking dog, the wooden fish-figurine that hangs from the kitchen ceiling, the wall that shows the heights of everyone who has ever visited.

The house is not ours, but it's lived-in. There are memories on every surface. It has always been there.

The shelf on the veranda must have been horizontal once. I just don't remember it. Through the years it's been filled with book after book, making the shelf heavier and heavier. There's a cabinet on the second floor, dedicated to the books that no longer fit.

The spines of the books are all in dark shades, to correlate with its content. Detective novels, crime stories, the usual holiday literature. The kind of fiction that the nurse seem to excel in. The kind of literature I'd rather not read. Not because I'm easily irked, but because I rarely like the stories that they tell, the way they're written.

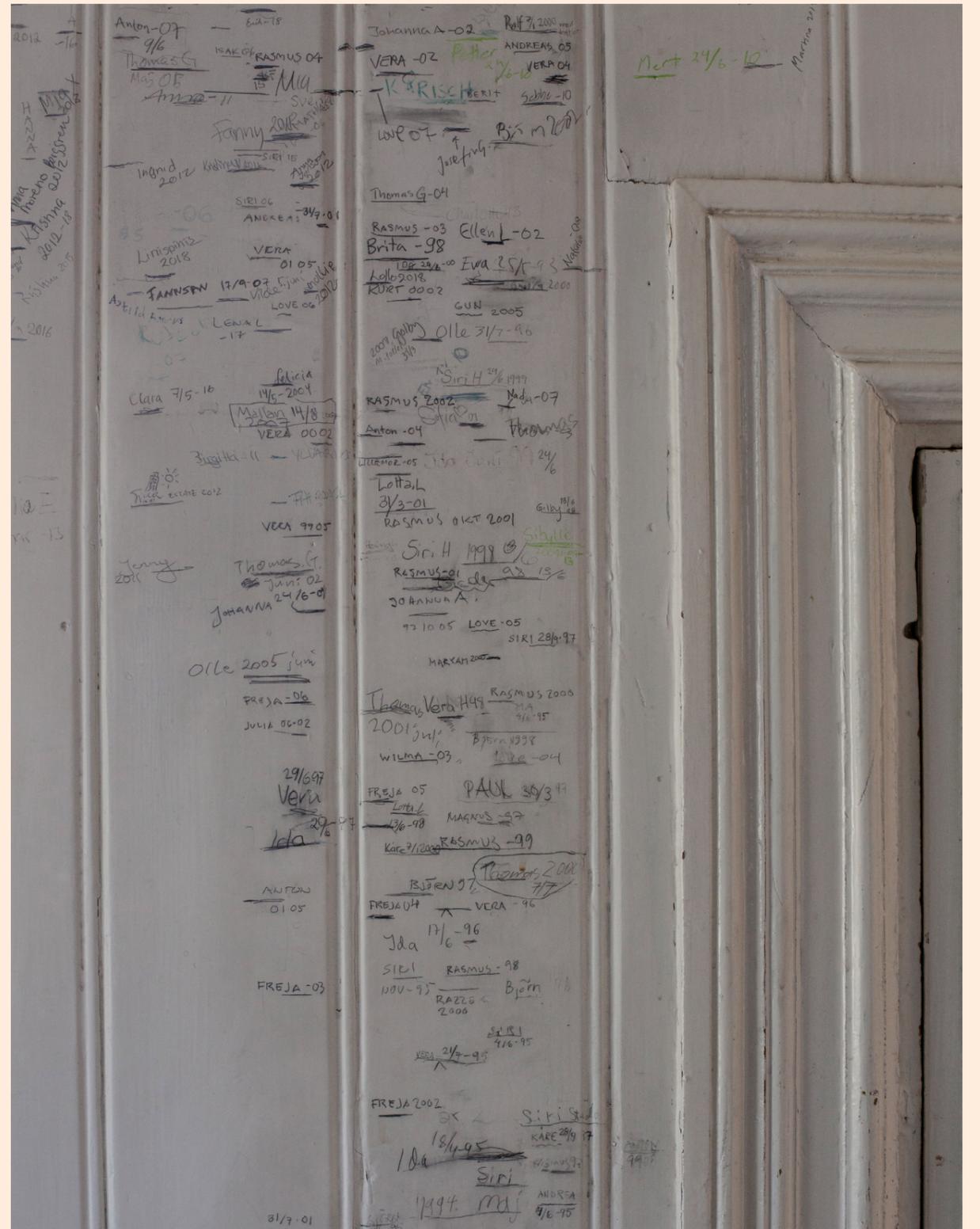
I bring my own books, the ones with stories that you can be enhanced in for hours. Lying on the couch on the living room, the sun hitting your body through the windows. There's a slight rustling in the kitchen. The radio might be on, but you're not really listening. The ones that are enticing enough, well-written enough to make you forget where you are. Sometimes time doesn't exist here, in the house by the sea.

A few books stick out from the general color-scheme, maybe a John Le Carré novel and something similar, but my eyes end up on another title.

"*What I loved*" by Siri Hustvedt. On a book shelf in a summer house in the Stockholm archipelago, was where I accidentally stumbled on Siri Hustvedts' most significant novel. Siri, who also happens to be married to one Paul Auster, but that's beside the point.

I found my first Margaret Atwood book in the same way, in a room on the second floor. "*Alias Grace*" was hidden behind a few other books, on a shelf filled to the brim.





Imagine the bookstore, books climbing across every empty surface. The jazz in the background, the friendly banter between owner and customer

Cannonball Adderley
Autumn Leaves



I could say that the store is ancient. That's not really true. There has however been different versions of the bookstore in the same site, for nearly a century now.

The room is long and narrow, the ceiling high. A faint sound of jazz is playing in the background. Three out of the four walls are covered in bookshelves, from floor to ceiling. The ceiling is painted in white, it has a worn essence to it, like the most recent layer of color coating is about to chafe of, fall down. A table filled with literature in the middle, that makes the room feel even more narrow. By the far end of the room is a sap green velvet couch, for those who wish to read before buying.

I come by whenever I'm in town, sometimes just to chat, or to see what books they have in store. But my relationship with this bookstore started years ago. Half a life, or more.

Sometimes the past is blurry, so I'm not entirely sure when it started, when my first visit was. I do however remember what unintentionally became sort of a turning point in many ways. In reality there's nothing special about the memory itself, but it has stuck by me.

My first internship, at the age of thirteen or fourteen. Mostly I wanted to work with something I sincerely liked. Somehow I ended up here. I spent a week in the bookstore learning how to price-mark books, navigating the old cashier and organizing in the shelves. Sometimes I was sent out to buy pastries for the coffee break.

One of the most significant assignments I had that week, was reading. At the beginning of the week I was given a book, and every day I spent a few hours on that velvet couch - reading. Customers would walk in and out, the jazz music was playing in the background.

I don't remember what I read that week. How it felt. What I do remember is the book I got to choose as a parting-gift, when I left at the end of the week.

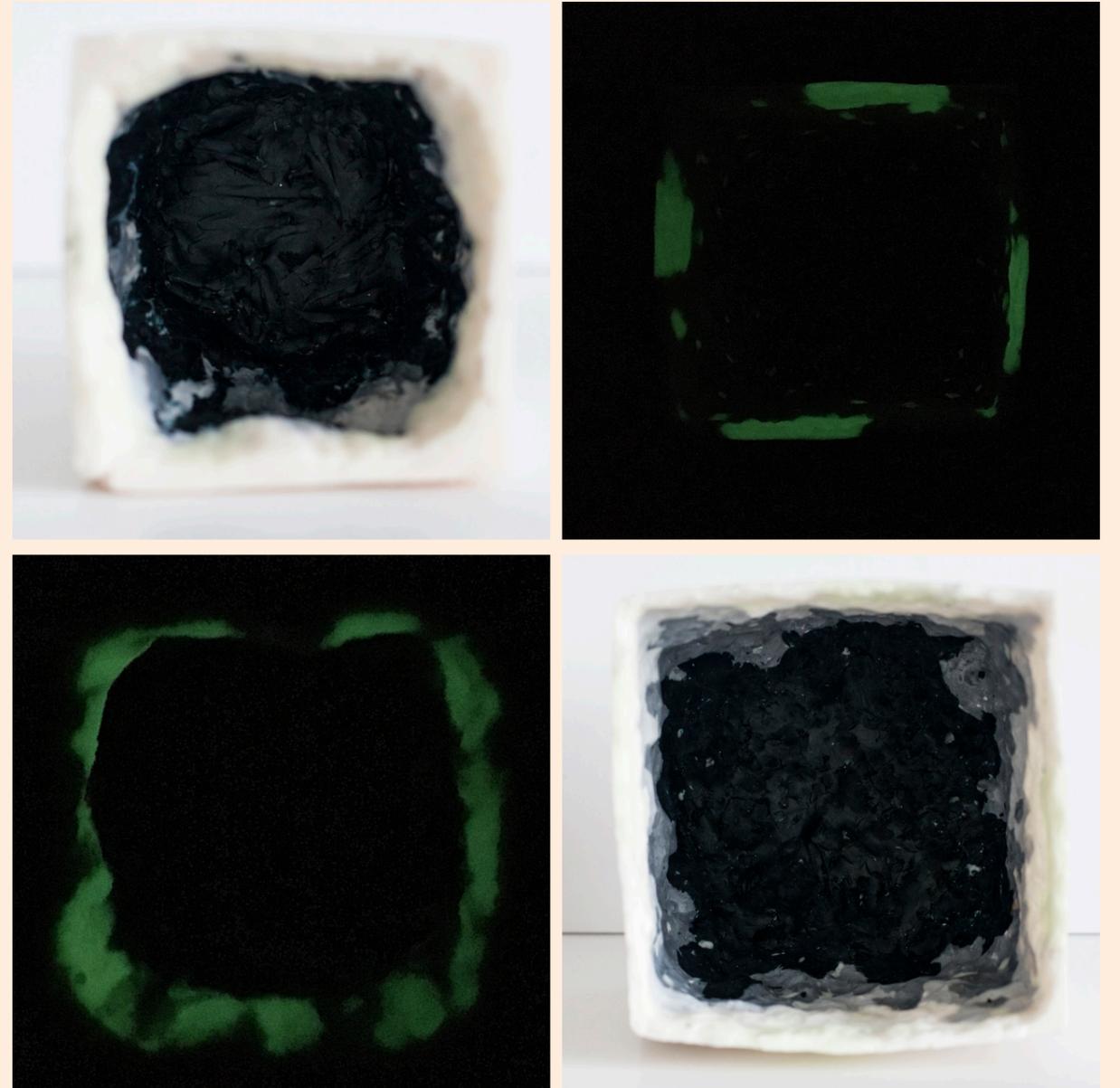
Why it ended up being that particular book, I'm not sure. Maybe I was drawn to the graphically elaborate cover, in different hues of Klein blue. Maybe it was what I read on the backside of the book:

«Several months into his recovery from a near-fatal illness, novelist Sidney Orr enters a stationery shop in Brooklyn and buys a blue notebook. It is September 18, 1982, and for the next nine days Orr will live under the spell of this blank book, trapped inside a world of eerie premonitions and bewildering events that threaten to destroy his marriage and undermine his faith in reality.»

The book I brought home that day was Paul Auster's *"The Oracle Night"*.

*«To determine what something "is"
means to return the unknown to a known one»*

— Kullahusets Hemlighet, Sten Eklund, 2016





けい
Keiu
[Welcome rain]



We're sitting in a waiting room. A small, rectangular construction of steel and glass, which we arrived to with a tiny bus. Everyone in here already has a ticket, so what they're really waiting for is their particular time slot. In this culture, it's always better to be early than to be late.

[Chotto matte kudasai]

ちょっとまってください

11 am.

We pick up our entrance passes, and borrow umbrellas on the way out. It's been raining a lot for the past few days, the clouds a light tint of paynes grey. The sound of shoes walking on gravel is the only noise you hear, besides the steady rain. Against the umbrellas, against the ground. A shorter walk, with a small ascension, takes you from waiting area to the entrance. Inside it's darker, a contrast to the natural light outside. A long tunnel of mostly darkness. It feels a lot like walking in the earth, *Chichu*.

I know that the gift shop is on the left side when you enter the main part of the building. Besides that, the museum is sort of like a maze inside my head. Would I be able to draw it from memory? Probably not. Each room is distinct, each passage different. But the lack of windows or proper facade, makes it hard to remember and locate yourself. It's more like a journey. Light and darkness. Ascending and descending.

Claude Monet

I've seen Monet before, in Paris. But seeing Monet here is a different experience. Shelves with neatly stacked leather slippers and a single row of benches, meets us in the anteroom. The *"Water Lily"* exhibition, consists of two adjoined rooms. The first room is stripped clean. The only thing you notice is how the floor feels against your slippers. Small, square stones of marble, stacked neatly together. Round edges. No suture. A floor that makes you want to bend down and touch. Through the doorway you can see one out of the five water lilies. It's warmer in here. The air is different. More humid. In fact, the entire room feels different. The light is subdued, slipping in along the edges of the room. Edges is maybe the wrong wording. All the corners are rounded in here. It makes it feel soft. Safe.

The Monet exhibition is just that. White walls, softly diffused light, the faint sound of leather slippers tapping against the floor. And five majestic paintings of water lilies.

James Turrell

"Open Field", follows a certain narrative. The experience is limited to eight visitors at a time, creating a steady line outside. Inside a foyer, we get slippers. The feel of the slippers against the floor is not significant here, so these are of a simpler kind. Textile, not leather.

In the adjoining room, there's nothing except a black granite stair at the far end of the room. Like a pyramid. At the top of the stair is a bright, blue rectangle. We're instructed to walk up the stairs, through the wall. Suddenly the rectangle changes from just being a projection of light - to an opening in the wall. The entire experience is a bit like that. Like walking into an open field without knowing what lies ahead. There is no time for expecting, just doing, following directions.

"Open Sky" is the polar opposite of *"Open Field"*. A square-room, with a bench of marble, that follows the walls of the room. Marble, and white walls, slanted slightly inwards, and in the ceiling - an opening to the sky. If it rains, it rains here too. The climate is inside, and outside. In fact, that's a recurring theme throughout the entire building. Looking at Chichu from above, the only trace of a building, are the openings towards the sky. Geometric shapes randomly paired together, forming a pattern. The journey through the museum is like that. Passages, stairs, walkways, all open to the sky. If it rains, it rains here too.

I'm not sure where I have been, but it's somewhere else. A vacuum. Imagine being so absorbed, that time becomes something else. Walking in the rooms, under the ground, it's hard to grasp what parts of the experience has to do with place, and what has to do with circumstance.

We come in tiny groups, and what we focus on is experiencing. It's not crowded. No sound of shutter sounds clicking in the background. It rains when we're outside, when we're inside it doesn't. The focus is on being. What happens in the now.

the plastic wrapping

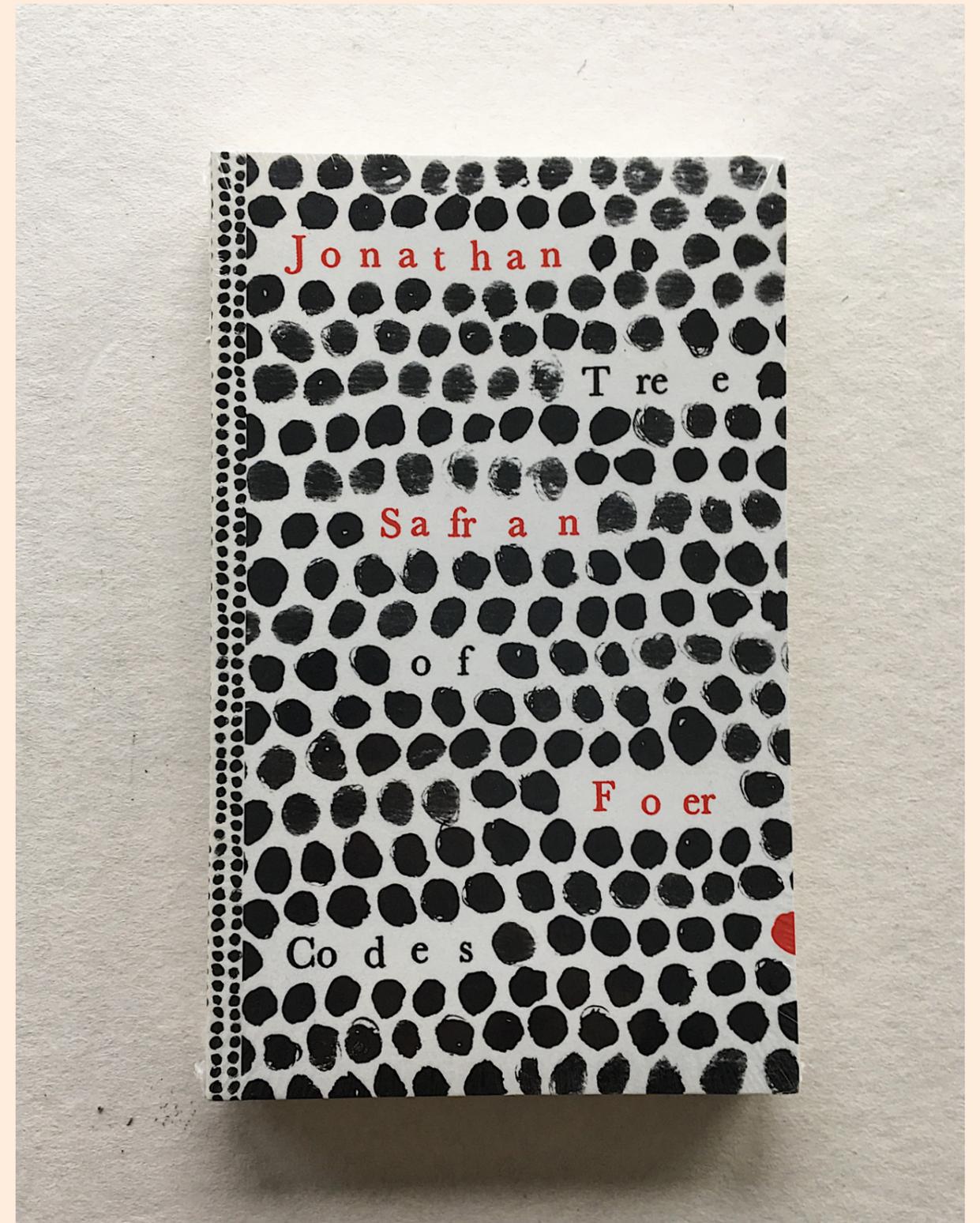
How do you find bookstores in cities you don't know? You read about them. I rarely trust other people's judgements. But sometimes it's hard to be your own guide when you don't know. Especially when the city is a maze. By everyone. To everyone. For everyone.

East Village, Manhattan.

I took someone else's advice, and now I'm standing in this gigantic bookstore. 28 kilometers of books and I have no idea where to start. I can't stay here all day. I don't even know if I want to stay here all day. Too crowded. Too many options. Everything just starts to morph together, like a giant colorful amoeba. I end up going to my usual shelves. To the names I already know.

This book, standing on a shelf in a too-big, too-bright, too-American bookstore is supposed to be rare. Not rare in the sense that it was printed hundreds of years ago and has been kept in a vault ever since. No. Rare in the sense that it's not a traditional book. Printed by an obscure company in the Netherlands. The only ones who could handle the technique. Rare as in there's articles written about it. Anything printed on paper must be true, right? I pay 60\$ to buy a book of someone else's book. The same way I refuse to see the movie adaption if I haven't read the book, I knew I had to read the original. The book on which this book is based. Of course I had to read that one first. It turns out to be a bit of a Catch-22.

Nine years later and I'm standing in the bedroom of my childhood home. There it is. The rare book, standing on the shelf. Still plastic-wrapped. The books on the shelf are color-coordinated now, but I'm pretty sure the book has been in the same place for a while. I just forgot that it was there. Would I still feel like I was cheating if I removed the plastic and read it now, nine years later? I'm the one who created this rule.



the anticipation

Why do we react the way we do? It must be circumstantial, right?

I like taking time, before I decide what to think. Sometimes I do it while I experience it, too. I think that's the biggest problem with films, for me. I analyze, while I experience. Do I like this?

Sometimes, it's based on expectation. Sometimes how I perceive the film, end up becoming more important than the film itself.

Quentin Tarantino is one of few directors that captures my interest throughout the entire film. Which is why his latest film, *"Once Upon a Time In Hollywood"*, left me a bit perturbed. A year or so prior to the premiere, I stumbled on a few articles on the film. Since it wasn't finished, there was very little information about it. Only that the general theme of it, was the Manson-murders. Since I don't really care for trailers, I walked in to the theatre with that information as the only prior knowledge.

Maybe it was that the pace was different, but during the film, I felt myself waiting. I knew what was going to happen. I just didn't know when.

Would I have appreciated the film more, if I didn't know? Or was it the film itself?

I didn't know anything about Bong Joon-ho before the end of last year. But when *"Parasite"* went up on theaters, it was hard to miss. An image of a poster, a video clip. All I knew was that it was good.

Watching *"Parasite"* is a bit like a rollercoaster. The experience was nothing like I expected it to be. Funny, engaging, multilayered, and aesthetically pleasing to the eye. And very unexpected. I didn't walk into the theatre with any expectations. Mostly, because I didn't really know what to expect.

You've seen the cover, read the text on the back. Maybe you're even familiar with the author. But when reading, it's only you and the story. You are part of the story, in an entirely different way. It's different, walking into something without knowing. Walking into something blindly.

It can be a bit like that, walking into a book.



the negative

I have been in this city more times than I can remember. The streets, the buildings, the narrow alleys and the cobblestone. Windy. It's always windy here. Walking around here is natural, second nature. I must have been there too, in that building. Several times. At least. It's infamous, so of course I have. It would be strange otherwise. It's beautiful there. In theory I know that. From pictures as well. But it is like there's only one memory left, that has erased all the others.

The image in my head is blurry. White marble statues. Deep green leaves. Running water somewhere. Maybe from a fountain. In some strange way nothing in that memory becomes entirely clear. Sharp. Instead there's several images, developed on top of each other. Like when you didn't know how to use your camera properly. All that was left was a messed up negative.

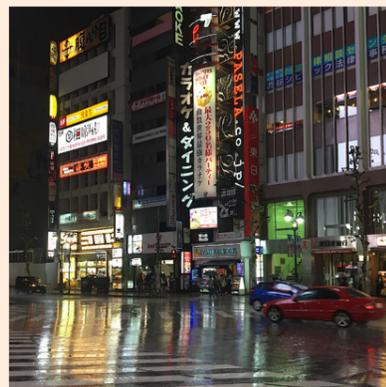
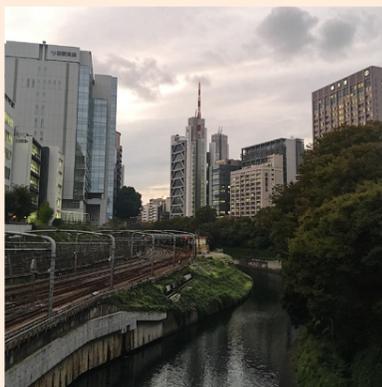
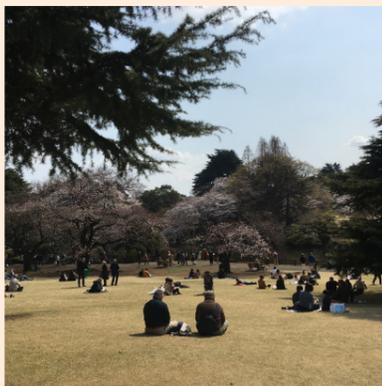
It's weird, the memory that stuck. I didn't expect it to be that moment, that I kept. Maybe because what happened was unexpected. Or because of my reaction to it. Somehow that image stuck. We didn't do anything else that day. After that phone call. A time warp that shifted the reality.

Sometimes I see it on the street, the sticker. On a wall. In the subway. In the most unexpected places. It always makes me think of that double exposed image. The memory that never becomes fully sharp.



*«Every painting is always two paintings;
the one you see and the one you remember»*

— Siri Hustvedt, 2013



Sometimes I take a detour leaving campus. Instead of taking four different trains, moving in-and-out of subway cars, blending with the crowd, I follow the river. In the beginning I didn't fully understand the city. It felt so different. The energies, the environments, the people. The walking helps me understand.

It doesn't matter how many times I take the same route, it's equally fascinating. The campus with the ginkgo trees, and the heavy masonry buildings. The scenery that at first almost made me think of fantasy novels. The archways and loggias, too heavy for their own good.

I go through the old, red, wooden gate. Past the Korean lunch restaurant. It's well-hidden, this establishment, but one of the best things around campus. The bibimbap so hot it's sizzling in its iron pot. L-shaped, a little strange in its layout. A row of columns that go right through the room. A precaution in case of an earthquake. Last time only a few of the stores on this street survived.

Onwards, to one of many alleys that make up this neighborhood. We had our celebration dinner somewhere around here. After the competition. A lot happened that day; the transportation of the models, the anticipation in the room before, the judge falling asleep on stage. Afterwards; the group pictures, the congratulatory toast. I doubt I'd be able to find my way back to that restaurant again.

The alleys grow wider, the buildings are higher. More traffic. The first time I saw the Dome I was perturbed. It felt like it didn't belong there. A wide, low shell in the middle of the city. A 17th century botanical garden right next to it. The path becomes greener around here. Less narrow alleys. The heavy plantations gives the feeling of an oasis in the middle of the city. Even when the highways start overlapping each other, there's greenery. Despite the width of it all, when the river starts appearing in the periphery, it doesn't seem that big. On the other side, a train is passing. Walking, with the river on one side. A wide, four-lane road on the other. There's a strange serenity to it. The sun is starting to set now. It's going to be dark when I get home. (You've barely started your day. For others, it's still yesterday.)

It's an odd feeling, the transition from the open, to the more closed off. On the side where the river ran, there's now a high wall. Over three kilometers of masonry, guarding the palace from the outside world. The only thing visible - the tree tops.

The surroundings open up again, and it's almost like walking into a new country. The city starts to feel present again. Higher, wider. There's activity in every store front. I enjoy this part of the route, because it's like a city suddenly coming to life. The farmers market, the fashion university. The club with a tree growing in the middle of the room. We're approaching the core of the city, the heart. A turn and the street becomes an avenue. Every building is something here. The best part though, is the people. The mixture, and the eclectic styles. Sometimes I stop here, under one of the zelkova trees, and just watch. The short and heavy trunk of the tree, the wide crown, makes you feel enclosed. Embraced.

The epitome of city life is right around the corner, but despite that, the scale feels very humane. The contradiction of this city. A dog in a wig walks by. I don't know what I'm more surprised by, its attire, or the fact that it's not in a stroller. The scramble crossing. The blinding lights. There's noise everywhere. From advertisements. From the cars that drive around, promoting new music. It intimidated me in the beginning. I didn't know how to juggle all the different impressions. All that was happening around me. Today I just follow the stream. I'll end up in the right direction any way.

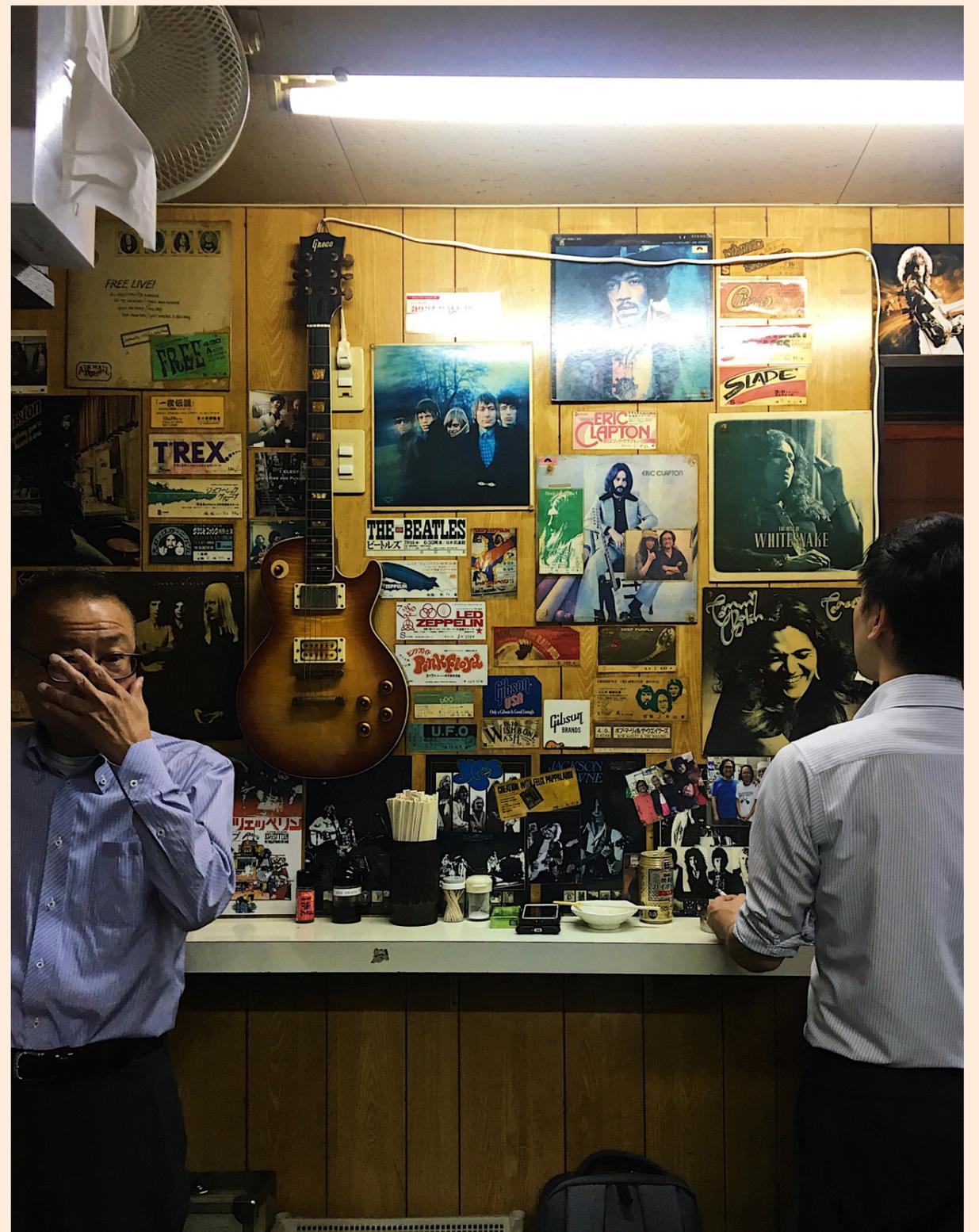
The parking house on the left side. The structure is very timid, almost mundane from the outside. It's not an eye-catcher, not at all. But the way it was introduced, almost turned it into a secret. The strangest person I know, was the one who showed it to us. He loves the word maybe.

The building has an air of purposelessness to it. The many doors and stairs that doesn't actually lead anywhere. The club secret club that's hidden somewhere here. The many abandoned rooms. The fact that we're not entirely sure if we're allowed to be here. Maybe. The balcony provides the perfect view over the scramble crossing. The myriad of people, the constant flow. When we don't know where to go, we go here.

The rest of the walk home is quiet. The turn of a corner, a small ascension, and once again it feels like a different city. The houses that follows along the railway are low, almost suburban.

I pass the laundromat with the sleeping lady. I've never once seen her awake. Someone passes on a bike. There's no proper sidewalk here. Instead I follow the green line, directly painted on the asphalt. Two convenience stores. At least four hairdressers. I reach the train station. On the 500 meter distance between the station and my apartment, you pass eleven vending machines. I've counted. From the window at the far end of the corridor, the city is still present. If I look through my own window, all I see is green. The progression of season. That's what I enjoy the most. The mixture. The different layers. The miscellaneous.







New York was an accident. It really was. I've never really had the desire, unlike many other that age. You'd think that with the amount of American literature I'd read, I might have had some interest in it.

The plan was different. I was going to go east, not west. But then the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami occurred. The plans were a bit derailed. New York was an accident. It just turned out to be a better one.

Upper East Side, Manhattan.

The grand white building. Heavy on the ground. Monumental in its weight.

The infamous stairs, filled with people. There's a long line below, too.

Everyone is here to see him. Alexander. Or his legacy. Like a *lit de parade*.

Are they here because they want to, or because they feel an obligation to?

There's a crowd inside as well, and the pace is slow. Everyone is here.

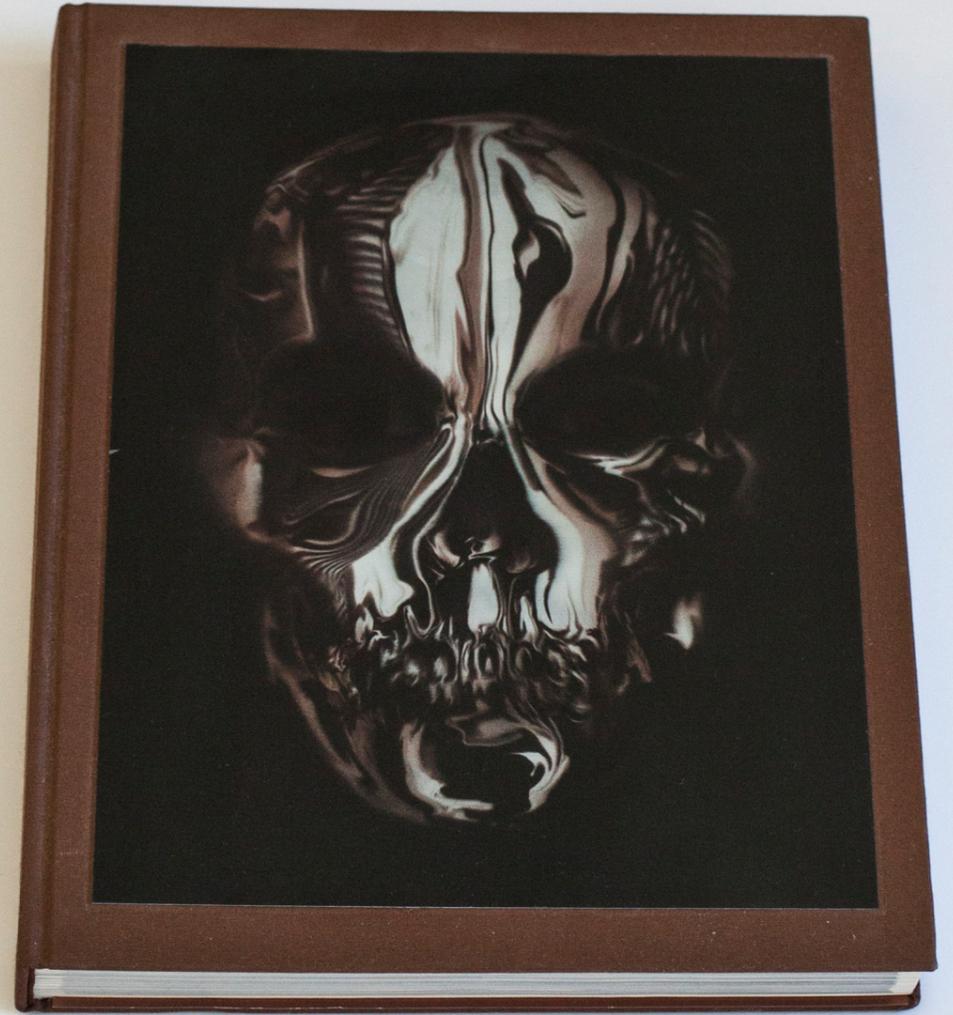
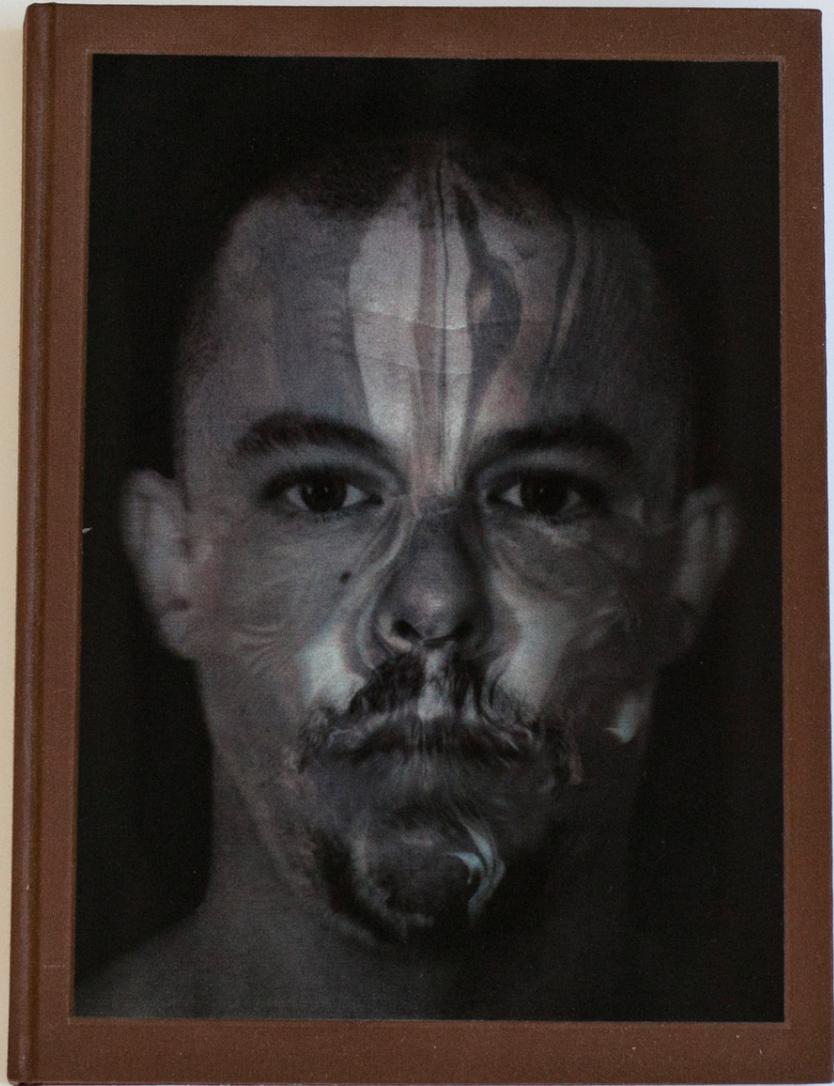
Even those who didn't know of him before. It should feel claustrophobic, the amount of people, but it doesn't. Somehow the slow pace forces you to look, to fully see. There's a detailing there that requires the observer to be entirely present. Almost demands it.

Walking out of the exhibition, how are you supposed to feel? The mixture of emotions turn into a disarray, and I'm not sure what to make of it. Is it the exhibition, the art, or the circumstances?

Even for those who walks this experience as blank slates, it's obvious that Alexander was never just doing. Costumes in heavy fabric. Black. Dark, deep red. Feather like creations. A hologram of Kate Moss. Eclectic animal patterns. The mood in the exhibition shifts, depending on the theme. There are entire stories behind the works. They just happen to be told through fabric, instead of words. There's a talent, behind, and it's not solely about fashion. It is beauty.

A lenticular cover. It's him, but it isn't. Alexander from one angle, a skeleton from another. Sometimes just fibers of a tree. The material, the canvas against the plastic. If I move my hand in one direction it's without sound. Bumping slightly over his head, as if it was more than just image. If I move my hand in another direction there is a dissonance, a discord, as if something was wrong. Maybe it was.

This isn't just a catalogue. The intimacy, the details, the level of it. It tricks you into feeling like you knew him. Like he was actually Alexander to you.



the song

A friend asked me;
«When it comes to music, what catches your attention first?
Is it the melody, or is it the text?»

I've thought about it. I'm not sure if there is one answer. Despite what people might think, my taste in music can be pretty versatile. Sometimes it's easier to say what I don't listen to, than the opposite. Words are very important to me, so of course that should be the answer. Right? That's what's expected, in a way. A clever rhyme. A phrase that makes you want to sing along. And sure. it's important, but it's not all.

Most of all, I think what I want is to feel it. The music. It's a combination of a lot of different factors. Sometimes it's a phrase that's stuck in your head for several weeks in a row. Sometimes it's the goosebumps on your skin, from the first time you heard that song. Sometimes it's the beat that goes straight into your spine. That makes you want to dance and run, at the same time. Sometimes it's a memory of what you used to feel when you first heard it.

I've been angry to this song. This album. Felt a range of different emotions, sometimes at the same time, blended together. Like going through a therapeutic session without a therapist. There's something very liberating about music, or art, that allows you to be. Angry. Happy. To feel. When I listen to the song nowadays it's connected with something else entirely. It's connected to standing in a dingy karaoke bar, screaming out your hearts content. There are those who scream with you. There are those who think you're insane. Most important, there are those who lets you be. It's a summary of a frozen time.

The song that you once listened to because you were angry or sad.
It's the same, but different.
That song has become another song now.

«*There is this kind of music inside the body,
that is language*»

— Paul Auster, 2014

III.

Miscellaneous

We're approaching the core of the city, the heart.

You are part of the story, in an entirely different way.
 There's noise everywhere. sounds | The sound of a ticking clock.
 The light is subdued, slipping in along the edges
 Geometric shapes randomly
 the only trace of a building, skeleton

The sound of shoes walking on gravel is the memory that never becomes fully sharp.
 Everything just starts to morph forming a pattern.

Passages, stairs, walkways, all open to the sky. opening to the sky.
 Light and darkness.

It rains when we're outside,
 No sound of A vacuum. warp that shifted the reality.

Running water somewhere. the faint sound of leather slippers tapping against the floor.
 White walls, softly diffused light, It's
 clicking in the background.
 The chairs squeaky, uncomfortable.
 Sometimes time doesn't exist here, in the
 unexpected. stuck.
 inside my head. an open field without knowing what lies ahead.

All I remember is leaves.
 Deep green
 lights. Yellow lights.
 the polar opposite the city is a maze.
 Probably

The first room is stripped makes you feel enclosed. Embraced.
 I'm not sure where I have been, but it's somewhere else.
 in many ways it feels like being in an
 alternative time zone.

There are memories on every surface. The only thing you notice is how the floor feels
 the canvas against the plastic.
 it's without sound.
 walking into something without knowing.

Suddenly an opening slowly slow pace forces you to look, to fully see.
 It's hard not to notice.
 In some strange way nothing in that memory becomes entirely clear.

it's only you and the story.

What happens if you dissect a text? Or several?
 Sentences, torn apart and put together again.
 This text is an experiment. It is not the absolute
 truth. It is one of many parallel stories.
 Possibilities.
 Realities that tells something and nothing at all.
 If you were the author, it could have been
 something else entirely.
 A process starts, but that doesn't mean this is
 where it ends. There are multiple answers.



"The patchwork" - interpreted by Emmy Rotsman, B.F.A.

"The patchwork" - interpreted by Emmy Rotsman, B.F.A.



IV.

Reflection

reflection.

I walk through a museum quickly. I look at the pictures, read the descriptions and move on. Unless there's something about the image that at first glance pulls me in, that makes me want to explore further. There's a crowd forming behind those who stay and contemplate.

Images are quick, immediate. Your eyes are drawn to them in the otherwise clean and stripped environment. How do you keep the attention? I read, which is becoming more and more rare these days. Reading is almost an anomaly. It requires a different kind of attention.

"An image is worth more than a thousand words". The words however, can tell something else. The can convey what the image doesn't. As Deborah Cameron and Thomas A. Markus says in *"The Words Between the Spaces"*, it is rare that people communicate solely through images (2002). The text and the image tell different stories, together *and* apart.

There are impressions everywhere. Images. Audio. Video. When I first arrived in Tokyo, I landed in the epicenter of it. I felt like I was going insane. After a while you learn to filter it away. To focus your attention.

Tadao Ando's *Chichu Art Museum* is located on a small island in the Seto Inland sea, called Naoshima. The island is not very accessible, and requires both boat and train transportation. If you go to Naoshima, you go there for the art. There are several notable objects on the island, but I will tell you about Chichu. I've already told you about what it's like inside the museum, but now I will put it into context.

Chichu in Japanese, means in the earth, or under ground. That is literally what Chichu is - an art museum underground.

An aerial photo of the museum makes it look like a puzzle for infants. Geometric shapes scattered in nature. A floor plan of the museum that there are a lot of things happening, simultaneously. It's hard to grasp, even for those who have been there.

Photography is prohibited in Chichu. I can only speculate why. There are numerous of reasons that comes to mind. When you buy a phone in Japan, the camera comes with a built in shutter sound. One that, unlike on other phones, is impossible to turn off. Lectures, exhibitions, visiting national treasures. It is always there. The shutter sound becomes a natural part of the everyday environment. The only place you (hopefully) won't hear it, is in the subway. Or in this case - Chichu.

The aim with creating Chichu was «[...] to make it possible to experience art and architecture at the same level. That is, to reduce a space without any discontinuity between the two» (Akimoto, Y. et al, 2005, pp. 83.)

reflection.

The museum doesn't fail its goal. What however made the experience even more memorable was, at least for me, how in tune with my senses I felt. I was present in the experience in a way that I rarely am.

The way that Tadao Ando has arranged Chichu, almost forces your attention. The experience is as if directed. The route that takes you underground, the walking from light into darkness.

How does it feel, walking a museum under ground? If you haven't felt it, it's hard to grasp. An image won't convey that. A text won't either, if I'm being truly honest. But it will probably give you a wider context.

The philosophy that Soichiro Fukutake, president of Benesse Art Site Naoshima, had regarding the island, could be applied to other arts as well. I am an avid reader. And usually, I'm more affected by words or literature than what I am by for example, an image or a motion picture. Maybe it has to do with what I talked about earlier, distraction, or the lack of one. Maybe it has to do with the fact that I can include myself in the story. The literature that I choose generally fall under the category of realism, or in some cases, speculative fiction. Part of what they're not telling, is also what intrigues me.

«An important part of any discourse is silence—the things that are not said or represented» (Markus, T. A., Cameron, D., 2002, pp. 144)

It is also where I, the reader, come into the story. Not in the sense that I would be an active participant, but rather - that it allows me to use my own imagination.

When I write, the aim is not to project my experience on to the reader. You are not me, and your experience wouldn't be the same as mine. The gaps in the stories, what I'm purposely not telling, are a way to invite the reader, to let them be part of the experience. And if they want, to change it too.

But why did these memories linger and remain, to begin with? And what made me write them down?

«When we remember things, we construct, in our minds, images of the past. We like to tell ourselves that such images are mere reconstructions, but are in fact images with a life of their own, independent of the 'thing that has been 're-membered.'

[...] Ricœur notes, in the tension between these two conceptions of memory, a paradox about truth:

The constant danger of confusing remembering and imagining, resulting from memories becoming images in this way, affects the goal of the faithfulness corresponding to the truth claim of memory. And yet...And yet, we have nothing better than memory to guarantee that something has taken place before we call to mind a memory of it...» (Hollis, E., 2018, pp. 243)

reflection.

Some of my texts, such as *"The song"* and *"The patchwork"* are compilations of several events, piled on top of each other, like a stack of notes. It is memories together with memories, that builds a whole. It is the circumstances, the atmosphere or the spaces that makes it worth remembering. It becomes small capsules of a time, and therefor important.

"The negative" on the other hand, refer to a single event, that has since then been remembered, over and over again. Although the text doesn't explicitly say so, it is a story about an unexpected loss. These circumstances, are also most likely what shapes the outlook of the memory itself. The fact that it is blurry, shapeless around the edges, distorted. On the other hand, had this so-called loss not occurred, would it have been worth remembering at all?

The circumstances are what made them interesting.

What all these texts have in common, are that they all tell stories about spaces.

Are they reliable? Probably not, memories rarely are.

They are part fiction, part truth.

APPENDIX.

STEN EKLUND

Sten Eklund, 1942-2009, was a Swedish painter and graphic artist. Between 1966 and 1971, Eklund studied at the Stockholm School of Art. In his paintings, the machine, the word and the architecture are essential elements, painted with distinct sharpness, but equally important are the surrounding desolate and cold surfaces.

Sten Eklund's **Kullahuset's hemlighet** - consisting of 53 etchings, a number of stained-glass paintings, material collections, models, notes and more - is one of the most unfathomable works of Swedish 20th century art. The reader meets the young botanist J.M.G. Paléen, who in 1849 embarks on a hike through Sweden. Coming to a desolate forest area, the Paléen discovers a strange and seemingly recently abandoned area filled, with incomprehensible buildings, technological constructions and cultivations, surrounded by a magnetic field; an area where human pre-existing laws of nature doesn't seem to prevail.

Paléen seeks to find out the secret of the place through measurements, records, sketches. However, when he returns to civilization and presents his discoveries, no-one believes him or his experiences.

He tries to get back to what he calls the Kullahus area, but fails to find the rare place, his investigations and discoveries only seem to raise more and more questions. The attempts to clarify the mystery, to explain the seemingly inexplicable, only makes its mystery more impenetrable. In the end, Paléen's laborious work casts doubt on the reality of his own experience, whether it actually happened.

Kullahuset's hemlighet embodies a man's attempt to understand and in some sense subjugate his world. Through Paléen's experience, Sten Eklund sheds light on questions about whether an absolute understanding is possible at all. The work has been praised for its distinctive character and the suite of etchings in the book are published in its entirety, together with an extensive picture material and texts by Sten Eklund, as well as by Torsten Ekbohm, Ulf Linde and Lotta Lotass.

(Albert Bonniers förlag, 2016)

PAUL RICŒUR

Paul Ricœur, 1913 – 2005, was a French philosopher best known for combining phenomenological descriptions with hermeneutics, i. e. the theory and methodology of interpretation.

Ricœur's ambition was to convey on a broad front between the dominant linguistic domains of modern philosophy, but also to actively relate philosophy to other disciplines, such as theology, literature and history. His philosophical project as a whole constitutes a kind of "conflict of interpretations", where each interpretation perspective is justified by limiting its claims, so that no one can be said to possess a total, absolute knowledge.

For Ricœur, hermeneutics is understanding the link between the self and the symbol—neither things in themselves, but rather the dialectical engagement between the two (Nationalencyklopedin, 2020).

WORDS BETWEEN THE SPACES

Using language - speaking and understanding it - is a defining ability of human beings, woven into all human activity. It is therefore inevitable that it should be deeply implicated in the design, production and use of buildings.

When contractors, media, etcetera describe what is already built they are formative of our judgement and responses.

In *Words Between the Spaces*, Deborah Cameron, linguist, and Thomas A. Markus, architect and historian, examine how such texts relate to issues of national identity, power structures, the creation of heritage, and the evaluation of projects by professional and lay critics.

The role of images in these texts are crucial and are discussed in detail. The authors use texts about such projects as Berlin's new Reichstag, Scotland's new Parliament, and the Auschwitz concentration camp museum to clarify the interaction between texts, design, critical debate and response.

Through a close reading of these and other texts the authors examine how the underlying ideological forces worked through language. Finally they discuss how questions about language and texts might influence both the teaching and the practice of architecture (Markus, T. A., Cameron, D., 2002).

HANSSON & BRUCE

Söderbokhandeln Hansson & Bruce is a small bookstore, located in central Södermalm, Stockholm. There's been a bookstore in the same site for nearly a century now, 1927.

The current owners, Anna Gillinger and Bo Greider, took ownership over the store around twenty years ago. (Dagens Nyheter, 2009)

Independent bookstores, is a rare phenomenon today. With a large base of loyal customers, author talks and running their own printing company, Hansson & Bruce have managed to stay afloat. Part of their success, lies in the fact that they truly enjoy what they do.

It's not the only bookstore that works after this philosophy, but it's the only one that I have a strong personal connection to.

TREE OF CODES

Tree of Codes was created by Jonathan Safran Foer in 2010.

In order to create the book, Foer took Bruno Schulz's book *The Street of Crocodiles* and cut out the majority of the words.

The publisher, Visual Editions, describes *Tree of Codes* as a sculptural object (Visual Editions, 2020).

Foer himself explains the writing process as follows:

"I took my favorite book, Bruno Schulz's *Street of Crocodiles*, and by removing words carved out a new story".

The idea for the book came about because Foer wanted to explore writing in a new way, specifically through the technique die cutting.

There was only one company who was willing to print it using this technique, *die Keure*, from Belgium. Due to the way the book had to be bound, it could not be produced as a hardcover edition (Louisiana Channel, 2012)

The book has since then been adapted into a ballet by choreographer Wayne McGregor, composer Jamie xx, and visual artist Olafur Eliasson. It was first shown in the UK as part of the Manchester International Festival in July 2015, for which it was commissioned, and subsequently received its US premiere at the Park Avenue Armory in September 2015.

Australian composer Liza Lim adapted the book into an opera. The joint production by Cologne Opera and Hellerau will feature ensemble musikFabrik.

This opera's US debut took place at the 2018 Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston, South Carolina under the direction of Ong Keng Sen. (Wikipedia, 2020)

ALEXANDER MCQUEEN

Alexander McQueen, CBE, 1969 – 2010, was a British fashion designer and couturier. Between 1996 and 2001, McQueen worked as chief designer at Givenchy. In 1992 he started his own label in his own name.

McQueen died by suicide in 2010, at the age of 40, at his home in London (Nationalencyklopedin, 2020).

The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City hosted a posthumous exhibition of Alexander McQueen's work, titled *Savage Beauty*. The exhibition included unique architectural finishes and tailor-made soundtracks for each room.

The show opened on May 4, 2011, a little more than one year after McQueen's death, and closed on August 7 the same year. By the time the exhibit closed, over 650,000 people had seen it. Thus making *Savage Beauty* one of the most popular exhibits in the museum's history, and its most popular fashion exhibit ever. (Wikipedia, 2020)

The show was composed of six separate galleries, arranged by specific themes: "The Romantic Mind", featuring some of Alexander McQueen's oldest works, from the early 1990s; "Romantic Gothic and the Cabinet of Curiosities", featuring his exploration of Victorian Gothic themes; "Romantic Nationalism", examining the Scottish and British identity; "Romantic Exoticism", examining non-western influences in his designs; "Romantic Primitivism", featuring natural materials and organic designs; and "Romantic Naturalism", featuring McQueen's attempts to combine themes of the natural world with technology.

Savage Beauty included pieces from Alexander McQueen's first major collection named *Jack the Ripper Stalks His Victims*, which he created during his graduate studies at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design. Other notable collections in the exhibit include *Dante*, *#13*, *VOSS*, *Irere*, *Plato's Atlantis*, as well as *Banshee*, *Highland Rape*, *The Widows of Culloden* (including the original life-size hologram of Kate Moss), and *Horn of Plenty* (Wikipedia, 2020).

Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty, celebrates the creativity and originality of a designer who relentlessly questioned and confronted the requisites of fashion.

Published to coincide with an exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art organized by The Costume Institute, the book includes a preface by Andrew Bolton; introduction by Susannah Frankel; interview by Tim Blanks with Sarah Burton, creative director of the house of Alexander McQueen; quotes from the designer himself; photography by renowned photographer Sølve Sundsbø; and a lenticular cover by Gary James McQueen (Met Publications, 2011).

PAUL AUSTER

Paul Auster, born 1947, is an American author. His most notable works include *The New York Trilogy*, *Moon Palace*, *The Music of Chance*, *The Book of Illusions*, *The Brooklyn Follies*, *Invisible*, *Sunset Park*, *Winter Journal*, and *4 3 2 1* (Nationalencyklopedin, 2020).

The Book of Illusions is a novel by Paul Auster, published in 2002. It was nominated for the International Dublin Literary Award in 2004.

«Six months after losing his wife and two young sons, Vermont Professor David Zimmer spends his waking hours mired in a blur of alcoholic grief and self-pity. One night, he stumbles upon a clip from a lost film by silent comedian Hector Mann. His interest is piqued, and he soon finds himself embarking on a journey around the world to research a book on this mysterious figure, who vanished from sight in 1929.

When the book is published the following year, a letter turns up in Zimmer's mailbox bearing a return address from a small town in New Mexico inviting him to meet Hector. Zimmer hesitates, until one night a strange woman appears on his doorstep and makes the decision for him, changing his life forever.» (Macmillan Publishers, 2020).

SIRI HUSTVEDT

Siri Hustvedt, born 1955, is an American novelist and essayist. Hustvedt is the author of a book of poetry, seven novels, two books of essays, and several works of non-fiction. *What I Loved* and *The Summer Without Men* were both international bestsellers. (Nationalencyklopedin, 2020)

«Siri Hustvedt's *What I Loved* begins in New York in 1975, when art historian Leo Hertzberg discovers an extraordinary painting by an unknown artist in a SoHo gallery. He buys the work; tracks down the artist, Bill Wechsler; and the two men embark on a life-long friendship. Leo's story, which spans twenty-five years, follows the growing involvement between his family and Bill's--an intricate constellation of attachments that includes the two men, their wives, Erica and Violet, and their sons, Matthew and Mark.

The families live in the same New York apartment building, rent a house together in the summers and keep up a lively exchange of ideas about life and art, but the bonds between them are tested, first by sudden tragedy, and then by a monstrous duplicity that slowly comes to the surface. A beautifully written novel that combines the intimacy of a family saga with the suspense of a thriller, *What I Loved* is a deeply moving story about art, love, loss, and betrayal.» (Author's website, 2020)

MONO NO AWARE

Mono no aware (物の哀れ), literally means "the pathos of things". It can also be translated as "an empathy toward things", or "a sensitivity to ephemera". It is a Japanese term for the awareness of impermanence (無常, mujō), or the transience of things, and both a transient gentle sadness (or wistfulness) at their passing, as well as a longer, deeper gentle sadness about this state.

«*Mono-no aware: the ephemeral nature of beauty – the quietly elated, bittersweet feeling of having been witness to the dazzling circus of life – knowing that none of it can last. It's basically about being both saddened and appreciative of transience – and also about the relationship between life and death. In Japan, there are four very distinct seasons, and you really become aware of life and mortality and transience. You become aware of how significant those moments are.*»

The phrase is derived from the Japanese word mono (物), which means "thing", and aware (哀れ), which was a Heian period expression of measured surprise (similar to "ah" or "oh"). Roughly, it can be translated as "pathos", "poignancy", "deep feeling", "sensitivity", or "awareness".

Therefore, *mono no aware* has frequently been translated as "the 'ahh-ness' of things". Awareness of the transience of all things heightens appreciation of their beauty, and evokes a gentle sadness at their passing. (Wikipedia, 2020)

Todaimae Station (東大前駅, Tōdaimae-eki) is the closest station to the University of Tokyo.

Todai-mae translates to "in front of The University of Tokyo"

The University of Tokyo (東京大学, Tōkyō daigaku), or Todai (東大, Tōdai) is a public university located in Bunkyo, Tokyo. Established in 1877, it is one of Japan's oldest universities.

The university consists of five different campuses, whereas Hongo, is the main one. One of Hongo campus most well-known landmarks, Akamon (the Red Gate), is a relic of the Edo era (1603-1868).

Tokyo Dome (東京ドーム, Tōkyō Dōmu, is a stadium in the Bunkyo ward, near Korakuen Station.

Tokyo Dome's original nickname was "The Big Egg". It has a dome-shaped roof, which is an air-supported structure, a flexible membrane supported by slightly pressurizing the inside of the stadium.

The Tokyo Dome was developed by one of Japan's largest architectural firms, Nikken Sekkei.

Koishikawa-Kōrakuen is a 17th century garden. It incorporates elements of both Chinese and Japanese taste style. The garden is located next to the Tokyo Dome.

The Kanda River (神田川, Kandagawa) stretches 24.6 km from Inokashira Park in Mitaka to the Sumida River under the Ryōgoku Bridge at the boundary of Taitō, Chūō, and Sumida. The entire length of Kanda River, lies within Tokyo.

Akasaka Palace (赤坂離宮, Akasaka rikyū), is one of the two state guest houses of the Government of Japan. The other one is located in Kyoto.

The palace was originally built as the Imperial Palace for the Crown Prince in 1909. Today the palace is designated by the Government of Japan as an official accommodation for visiting state dignitaries.

In 2009 the palace became a National Treasure of Japan.

Omotesandō (表参道) is a zelkova tree-lined avenue located in Shibuya and Minato. The avenue stretches from the Meiji Shrine entrance to Aoyama-dōri (Aoyama Street).

Omotesandō was originally created in the Taishō era as the frontal approach to the Meiji Shrine, which is dedicated to the deified spirits of Emperor Meiji and his wife, Empress Shōken.

Shibuya Crossing is one of the most well-known scramble crossings in, Tokyo, Japan. The statue of Hachikō, between Shibuya station and the intersection, is a common meeting place and almost always crowded.

Scramble crossings, or (スクランブル交差点, sukuranburu-kōsaten), are very common in Japan.

Japan's largest, and most famous diagonal crossing is found outside Shibuya station. Over 3,000 pedestrians can walk past Shibuya Crossing at the same time, which makes it the world's busiest pedestrian crossing.

Komaba-tōdaimae Station (駒場東大前駅, Komaba-tōdaimae eki) is a railway station in Komaba, Meguro, Tokyo.

The name of the station, is a combination of Komaba, the suburb in which it is located, and Todai-mae - which means "in front of University of Tokyo". Komaba is one of The University of Tokyo's five campuses.

(Wikipedia, 2020)

If you want to go between the Komaba campus and the Hongo campus using public transport, there are several alternative routes. From Komaba-tōdaimae, you take the Inokashira line to Shibuya Station. At Shibuya station you can transfer to the Ginza line. At Tameike-sanno you transfer to the Namboku Line, which stops at Todaimae.

An alternative route is to walk from Komaba campus to Yoyogi-uehara (1,6 km). From here you can take the Chiyoda line, to Nezu station. Nezu station is located approximately 800 meters from campus, depending on which department you are heading to.

Both routes take approximately 55 minutes.

NAOSHIMA, 直島町

Tetsuhiko Fukutake had a dream to create an environment where nature and culture work in symbiosis with one another. That was how he discovered Naoshima (Akimoto, Y., et al. 2005. pp. 79). In the middle of the Seto Inland Sea of Japan, lies the island Naoshima. When Mr Fukutake first contacted Tadao Ando regarding the project, he was hesitant. The island was hard to access, and some of the nature had been heavily affected by the metal refining industry, that had previously supported its economy. Ando was however, touched by the passion the Fukutake family had towards the project, and decided to continue working with him. That was more than thirty years ago. Since then, Ando has created numerous of buildings on Naoshima. It has become the island for art. One of these projects is the Chichu Art Museum.

«Architecture exists here solely as a device that sets the human imagination free and initiates dialogues with art and nature»

— Tadao Ando, 2014

CHICHU ART MUSEUM, 地中美術館

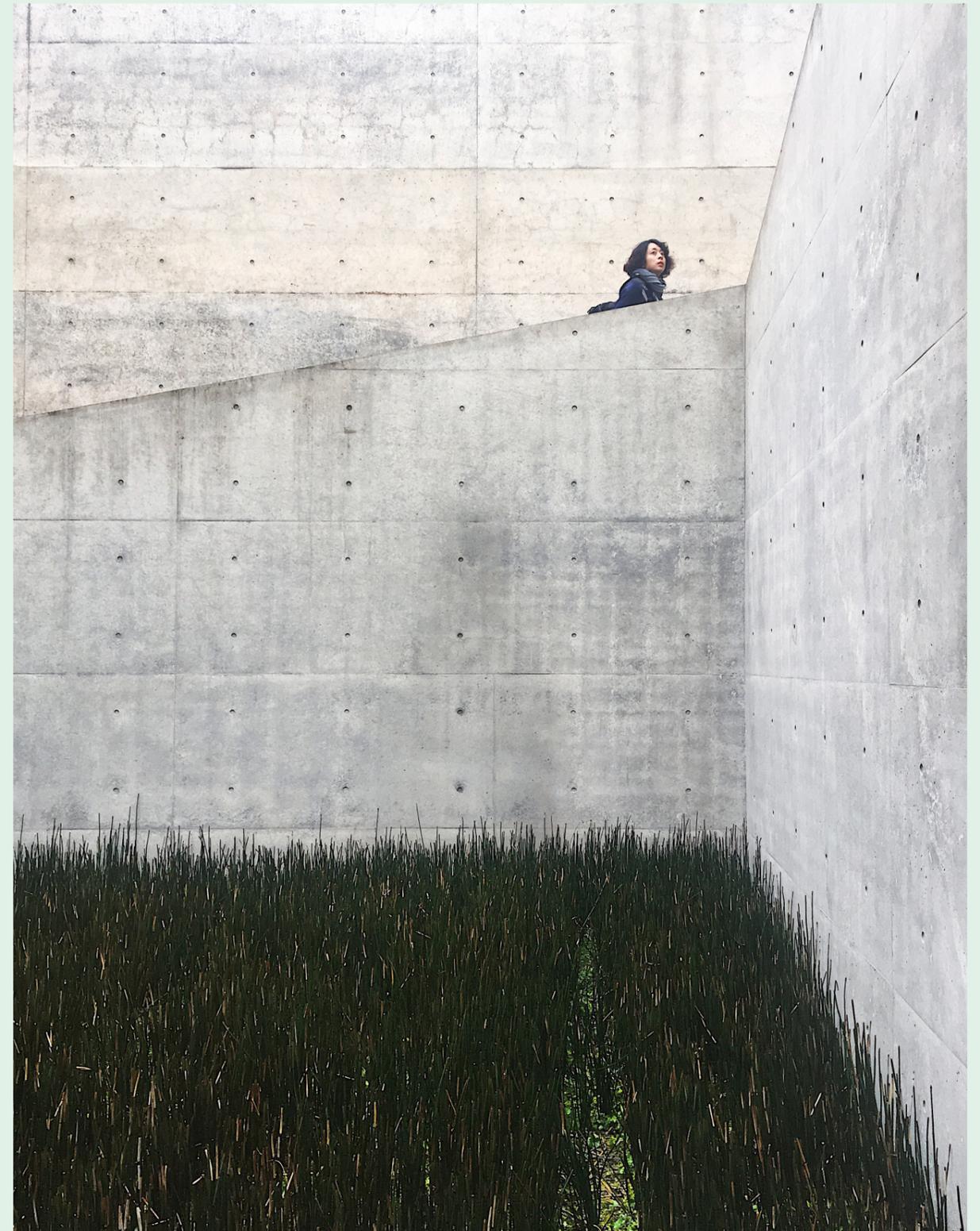
Roughly translated, it means "art museum in the earth".

The Chichu Museum is set underground, which means that the only way to fully see it, is to experience it. In Chichu Art Museum photography is prohibited, which means that usual shutter sounds that's so often associated with Japan, are non-existent. The time assigned on your ticket decides when you're allowed to enter the museum, i. e. it's never over crowded.

The experience itself is very much tailor-made, with the aim to create a very specific atmosphere.

Chichu Art Museum, is a museum that host permanent exhibits by three different artist: Claude Monet, Walter de Maria and James Turrell. The focus is on the meeting between the art, the architecture and the nature.

(Akimoto, Y., et al. 2005.)



SMALL JAPANESE GUIDE

しーんと
Shiinto
[Silently]

けいう
Keiu
[Welcome rain]

ちょっとまってください
Chotto matte kudasai
[Please wait a moment]

地中美術館
Chichū Bijutsukan
[Art museum in the earth]
Where as 地中 [Chichū] refers to the earth, or the underground

カラオケ
[Karaoke]
clipped compound of Japanese kara 空 "empty" and
ōkesutora オーケストラ "orchestra"

東大前
Tōdai-mae
[In front of The University of Tokyo]

駅
Eki
[Station]

表
Omote
[Frontal]

参道
Sandō
[Approach]

つんどく
Tsundoku
[Buying books and not reading them]



The bookstore - complementary sound



The earth - complementary sound



The patchwork - complementary sound

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- 14. Model, acrylic glass
- 14. Model, Fimo clay
- 15. Models, cardboard
- 16. Model, gypsum
- 16. Model, Fimo clay

33. Models, Fimo clay

35. Model, Fimo clay

42. Painting, gouache on paper

43. Models, gypsum

45. Collage, newspaper, sketching paper, old school newsletter

62. Collage, printing paper

66. Shelf, pinewood

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