

# BURNING BRIDGES

Duncan James Higgins

Linda Herfindal Lien

the dark  
d to

the thing

myself

the dark

the dark

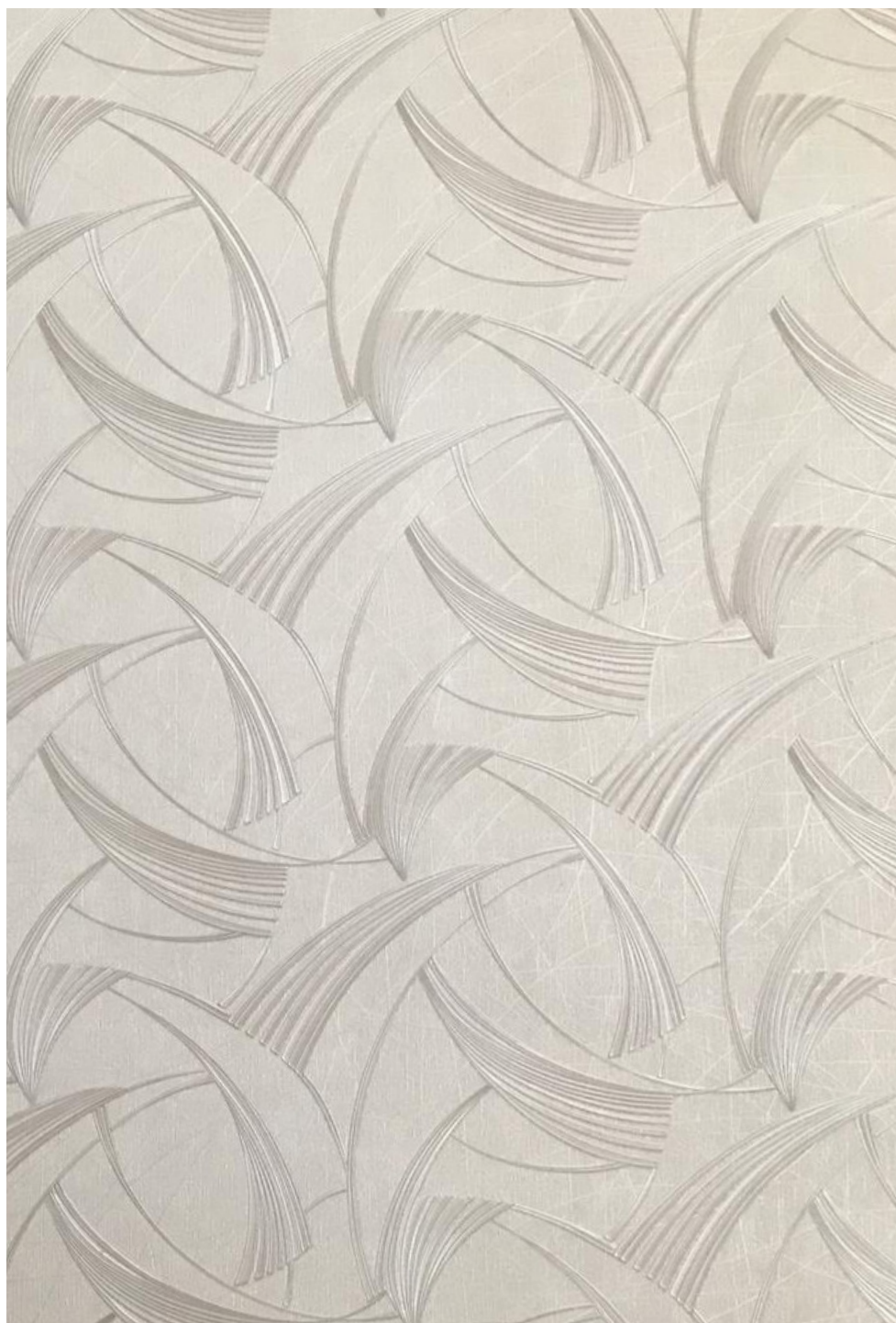
the dark

hard to get  
the dark  
words

"what do you mean  
dogs came to go  
these words are  
the object is no longer  
a subject and the  
is no longer ~~that~~

the dark on  
the dark  
the dark  
the dark

March 9 2020



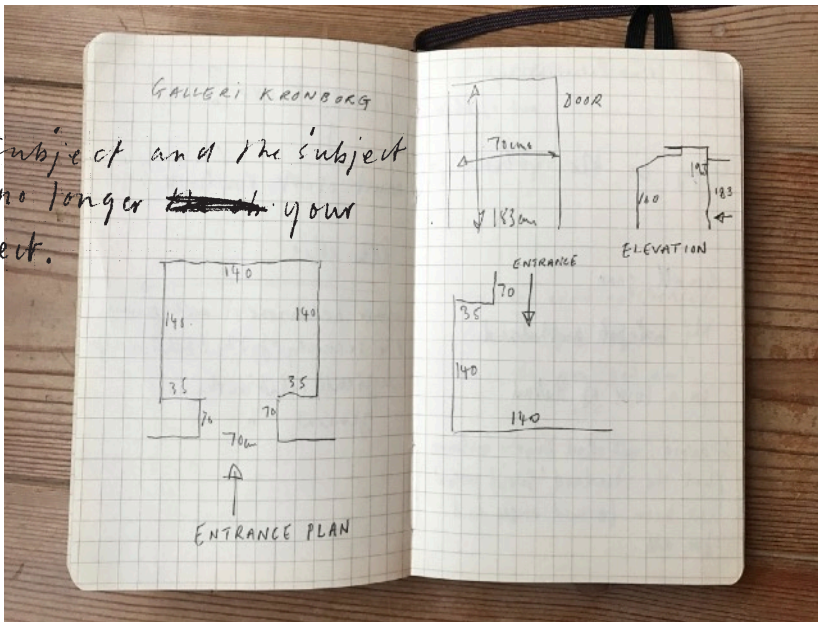
I wanted pain.  
Not to deny it.  
Not to forget it.





## ***Towards some sort of introduction***

a subject and the subject  
is no longer ~~that~~ your  
object.



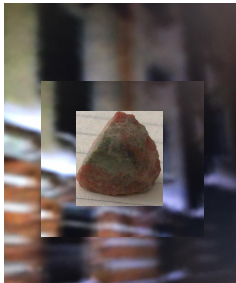
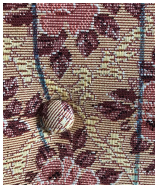
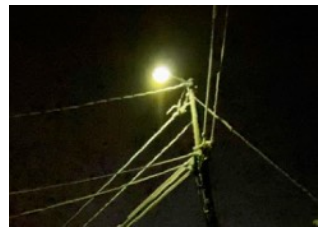
A creative, critical and ethical spatial practice that explores what happens when discussions concerning situatedness, belonging and site-specificity enters into a dialogue with another to offer forms of reflections on their own subject position.

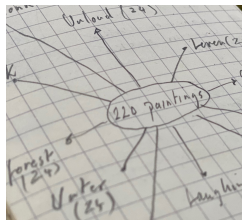
– Or:

Sometimes dialogue is urgent.  
JetStar; an ongoing conversation.

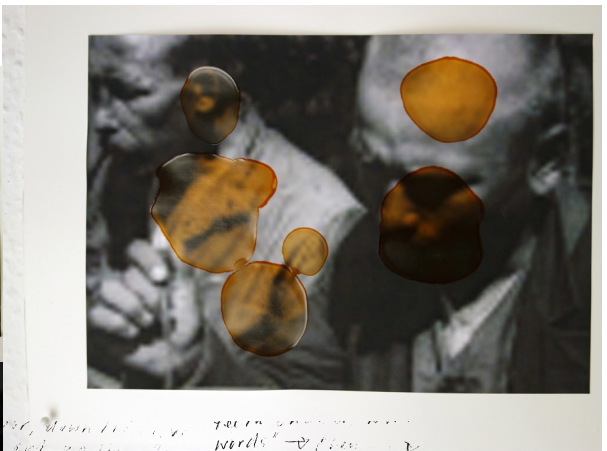
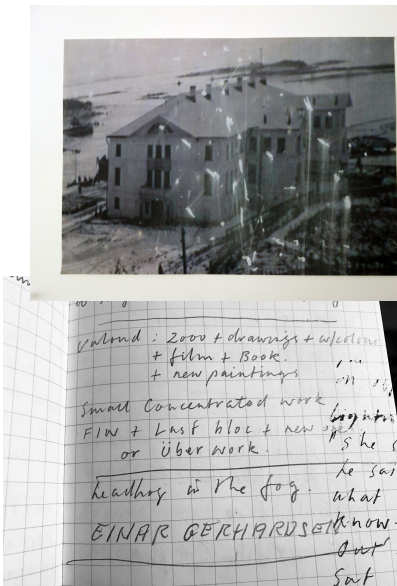


~~to~~ your  
the world is a very small place





Don't punish me with pretty promises and judgments you're just a limey buying a drink, now saying too much.



## Love struggles with death

### **Certified copy of an entry**

I first believe it is a visa to Russia when I receive the certified copy of an entry. I am stuck with the words. Certified copy of an entry.

I have got to know him through emotions. I defend him, and I recognize his shortcomings. I could have felt his feelings; done some of his actions. I am aware I create a human that did never exist. Still, I know he was the man of the match.

The grown up insists on dying slowly. A truck runs over the child. My working period ends, and people are too busy to take their time looking into my application for another period. One day my key card doesn't work any more, and that's it. I belong nowhere.

*The bed, window, wall,  
smell – tell me  
how much do I know.  
I'm sure I said no way.*

All this talk about mercy, cry mercy?  
Not mine but mine to use, to hell with all that nonsense.  
No ask or no refuse.  
Just criticism.

The bastards tale: Sunday, failure and a low slung walk.  
Grovel and beg.  
The bell has rung.  
Right here right now.

Animals tale:  
chickens,  
dogs,  
cats,  
goats,  
cows,  
horses  
and the odd pig or two.



### **Everybody joined**

He had been sitting under a desk, crying. Sounds really great;  
traveling in the landscape, not above.  
More illegal, if you understand what I mean.  
There is currently no consensus regarding the definition of life.  
I'll look into what's what over the next days.

In another, small room: Hello, just arrived. What about you?  
A mountain covered in snow: No, I am not.  
I get very upset and can't sleep. I am no longer a human,  
but a cup of tea. Of course, as you should and must,  
first and always.  
I am home in an hour.

### **Good lunch**

Better now they are split up from each other.  
But I feel peace.

### **8.40**

Was it delivered in English? Pretty brutal.  
I would like to have more books in the living room.  
The one for the dead ones was meaningful to me.  
It's you.  
I think we have not still found our way.  
I met an actor. The female voice can be heard. Not women.

### **16.15**

# A strange collection of notebooks in a small village in Norway.

## **Einar Gerhardsen**

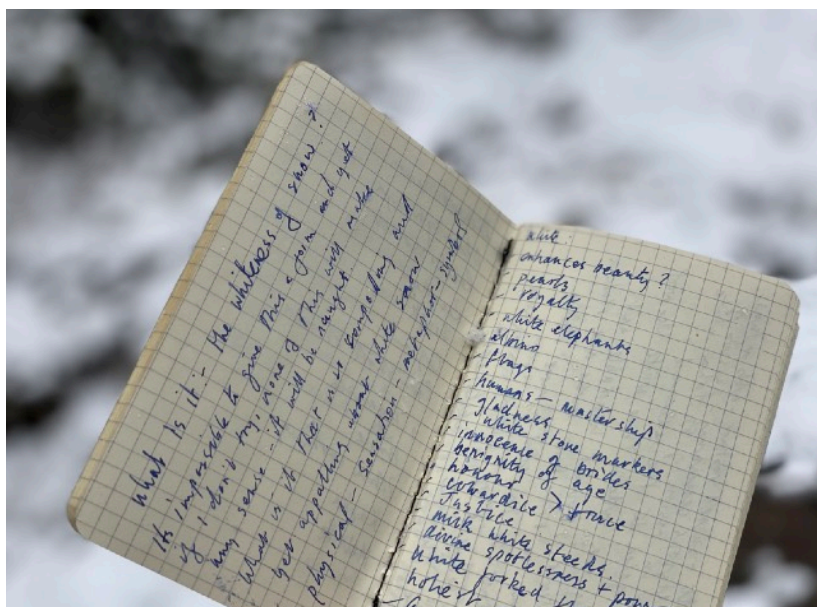
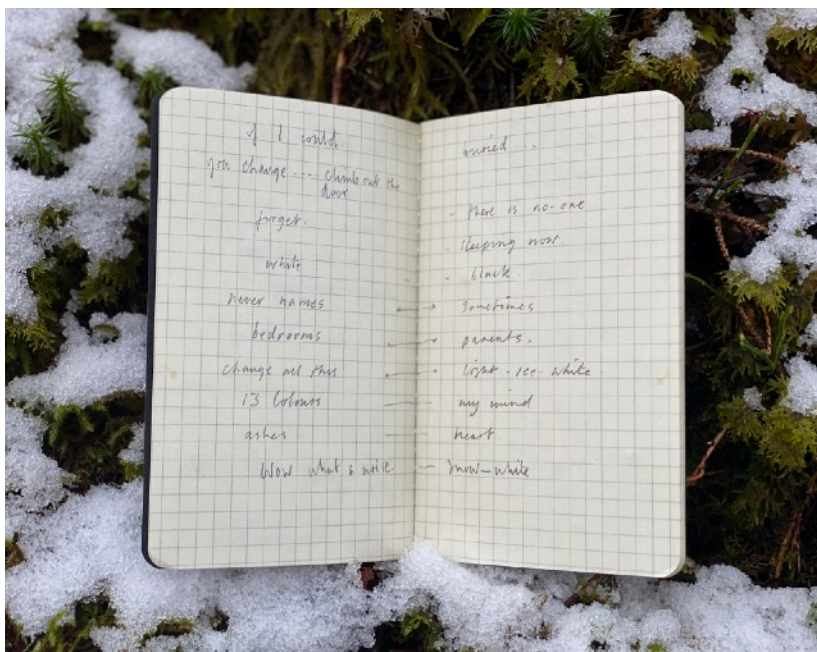
I read the first sentence in his notebooks on a Greenland Air flight that recently had left Kangerlussuaq.

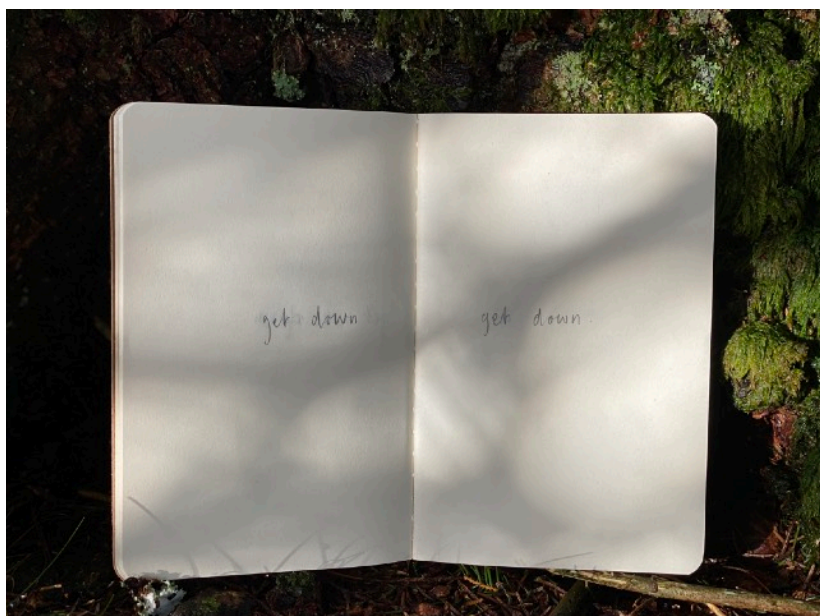
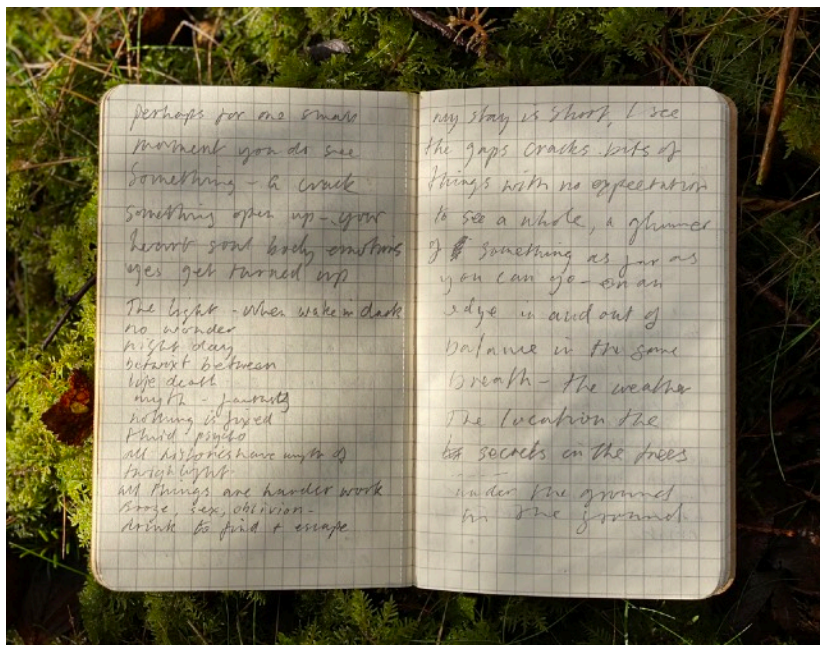
A fragmented conversation followed. Most we did write about death; about six year old boys being run over by trucks, about grown up men shooting themselves while their teenagers were present in the house, and about doctors suggesting that 2 pm might be a good time for your father to die.

Later, I received a great number of the notebooks. For a long time, I had these books stored in a room in the house where I lived with my family at Vaksdal, and I didn't really know what to do with them all.

I tried to develop a strategy to get an overview of the content. But there were too many, too much and sometimes I did struggle to read the handwritten letters.

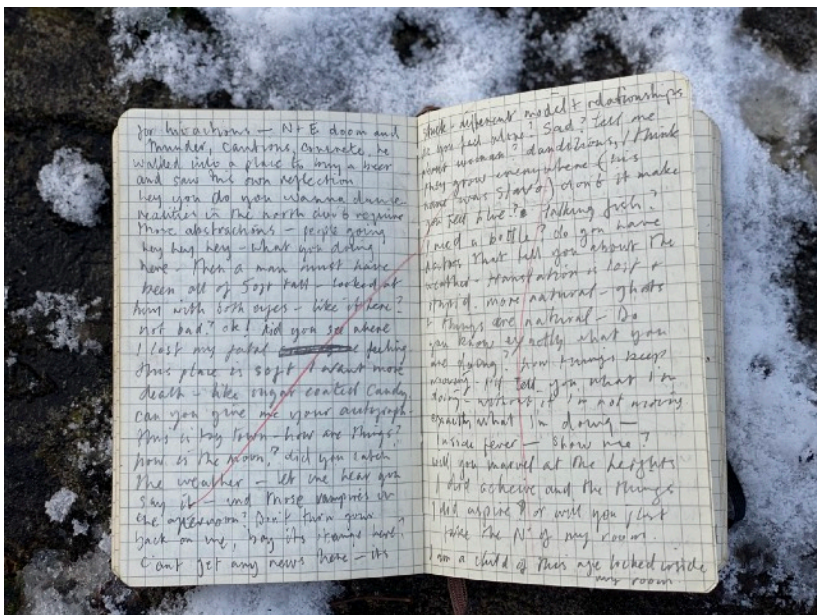
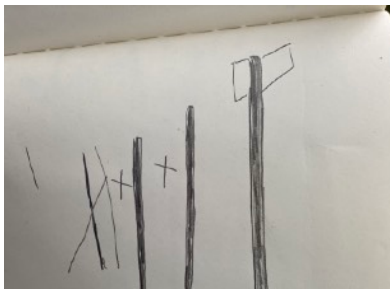
I started a random reading and to move fragments from the notebooks over to a new book. I could read about teeth breaking, about the Norwegian former prime minister Einar Gerhardsen and see sketches for exhibitions. I got insight into dialogues between animals, and between man and woman. Later I took the books for a walk in the mountain I am most familiar with, and I stopped and read when the site invited me to do so. There is still one notebook left to read. It is the smallest one.















"What do you miss most?"  
dogs came together →  
these words are true  
the object is no longer  
a subject and the subject  
is no longer ~~the~~ your  
object.



*'For everything there is a season,  
and a time for every purpose under heaven'.  
Ecclesiastes 3:1*

**Because it is a  
book. No more.  
No less.  
A book.**

### **The quarrel**

I wanted to do it. But I felt no joy. It was, and still is, a duty. I thought I got the book from a friend, but I remembered it wrong. So that the text challenge me a lot\*. I haven't done much to Eve. Collective remembrance. A space for everybody. Outdoor. No limits. Free. Shoes, glasses, things, lined up. Making them self attractive. I am thinking of Eve. You can only be on top for a short while; with a perfect view and understanding of your place in life. On the bus back home we sat beside a man who was talking in his phone: 'I was awake five hours tonight! I was so angry! Couldn't sleep! Just want him to shut up!'. And I did think: If you are able to; walk quiet from the place and leave it all behind.

*\* Rudyard Kipling,  
If, 1895*

*And we did find five dead mice,  
a cabel to a phone, children clothes and a  
tooth brush.*

***And being judged all time.***



## Solovky

November 28,  
2018

*"I had read two books, Gulag Archipelago by Solzhenitsyn<sup>1</sup>, and Diary of a white sea wolf by Mariusz Wilk<sup>2</sup>. Both are set on Solovky, Solzhenitsyn is the classic gulag text that was one of the first that reached the west to tell of the gulag, a personal account of the what, why, how and where of the Soviet systematic extermination of its own people.*

December 2004 I landed on Solovky. Not sure really although it felt right, and I was scared, in a rather nice way.

Solovky was the first, and largest 'model' that was tested to see if the Gulag or SLON (white elephant in Russian) could work. On the basis of the 'success' of Solovky the whole Soviet gulag system was created across the whole Soviet territories. Since I've read so many books, listened to people, seen films, heard conversations, walked and walked, swam, got blind, drunk, done so much... etc. etc. on and about Solovky.

Solovky was chosen as the place for this 'model' to be tested as it was previously the founding centre of Russian Orthodox religion in 1400's, has one of Russia's largest medieval monasteries, highly sacred and is symbolic to Russian representation of its national identity.



Stalin chose Solovky in order to turn the whole symbolic system upside-down, inverting its meaning to be a symbol of the new 'faith' and order. If you were sent to Solovky gulag you never -returned... and its meaning become synonymous with state control... to this day it is still a place to be feared and today the monastery is printed as an image on the 500 rouble (money) note. Wilk, is a Polish journalist and activist, exiled from Poland during the struggles for Polish independence, he lived on Solovky in the 90's and wrote weekly articles for *Kultura*, the underground Polish newspaper, the book is a personal account of his life and times there. In the late 80's following Glasnost a group of humanitarian workers went to Solovky to try and restore and salvage its humanitarian memory. Wilk arrived when the islands, buildings and monastery were going through the first major restorations, a museum was created and life beginning to move again. It was an impossible idea for me that such a place could exist... almost... the books created a place like hell and heaven... a frontier and meeting point, an impossible crossing between beauty, fantasy and human disgrace. In the 1st few days on Solovky I had the good fortune to meet several museum staff who opened the museum doors to me... the photo was in a book I was given. I then found the photo in the museum photo archive 2-3 years later.





More recently I was given a documentary film by the museum... on a memory stick... that was made in 1927 on Solovky, it was made by the Red Cross, who had requested access to the islands as they had heard it was a prison and extermination camp. They arrived and made the film; it was perhaps one of the 1st pieces of 'documentary' film used as evidence in an International court of human rights. Everything was just perfect, good health, smiling faces, clean accommodation, sport, leisure, good food etc. Towards the end of the film, at the brick factory, worked by woman, this incredible series of images appear of woman making bricks. This is where the woman in the photo appears. So it is a film still. It was a prison and extermination camp.

After the film was made, there were many executions and reprisals. I went with Olga – great museum worker – to locate the remains of some of these executions... it was kind of secret work for the museum, Olga announced one day that she and her dog 'Tusa' would like me to join her on a walk. Little did I know she had worked out a location where she thought she might find the site.



Small mounds in the ground, that's what we found, she said thanks for joining her and wanted to open up a proper investigation and exhume the bodies later in the year.

Who she is in the photo I have no idea, tho I've now found her in numerous other books, often with nothing to do with Solovky... why? I'm not sure, she's beautiful, dignified, something about the angle of her head, and going about her business. She was somebody's daughter, lover? Friend? Enemy? Who knows? I have spoken to Oleg – and he also sees something in this photo; out of all the thousand's of others.

I have made so many attempts to paint something on this idea, using the photo as a starting point. I have 2 that are ok, though not good enough yet... and I've used reproductions and variations of the photo in the latest book – you saw in *Agios Sozomenos*. Like you, I also very quickly in 2004 felt the absolute necessity to write... you have it now in the notebooks to calm me down, also filter these crushing, powerful, contradictory impressions, like you I write to give ideas a form...even before images. Drawing starts, next then I use video....then gather all this in the studio to paint from.

Following my return in 2004 I wanted to create a gap between me and it – object subject – as I was not interested in my own reportage in the 1st person... why would anybody be interested in that, or why create a vanity project about me and Solovky... a bit like Solzhenitsyn and Wilk – in my view – or the work I made about my own life... it was always a strong emotion to un-fix the fixed narratives and keep open the dialogue. My response was too brutal and incoherent as well, and slowly realised I needed to use both male and female voices – you could say ma and pa, brother and sister, lovers etc. though not any specific relationship to me or my family, though of course that is present in how I am... and I wanted to write for... I think I mentioned... things, objects, people, sounds, buildings, emotions et al... to give a voice to how I felt... or see if that was possible... and try to give a voice to things people couldn't say, hear or be allowed to say.

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1) *The Gulag Archipelago: An Experiment in Literary Investigation* (Russian: *Архипелаг ГУЛАГ*, *Arkhipelag GULAG*) is a three-volume, non-fiction text written between 1958 and 1968 by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. 2) *The Journals Of A White Sea Wolf* by Mariusz Wilk, published in 2003, written after the Polish journalist in 1991 decided to take up residence in the Solovki islands, Russia.



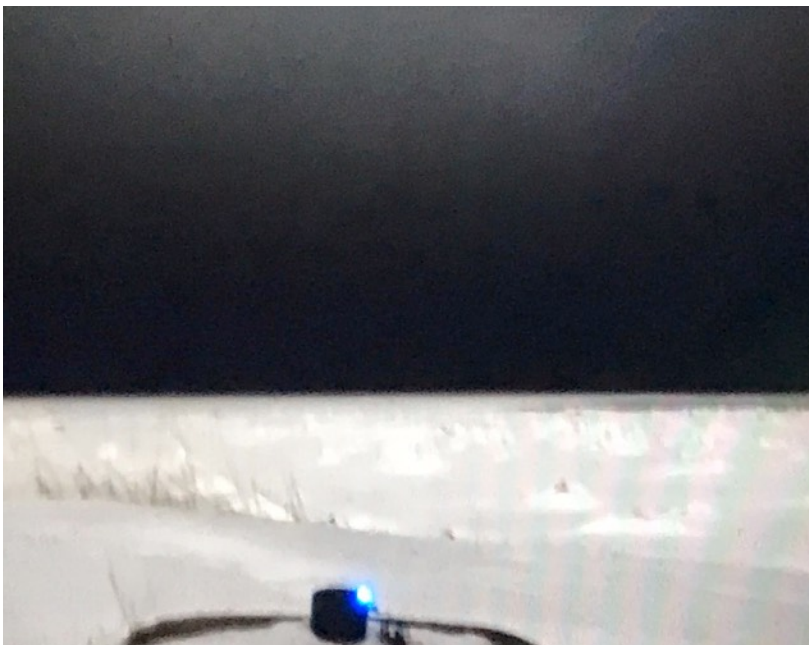
So Misha and Masha took on these personas, embodied all this stuff and voices for me (Misha and Masha in Russian are sort of pet names, also without gender if you want). That was important, and they are both in the unloud book, my Khib sensuous knowledge publication is a fictional interview with Misha, and the new book you saw in Agios Sozomenos, numerous lectures, other published texts etc. So for me the photo is and always has been of Masha. Misha I have an image of, in fact two or three, that's a long story.

Today as we speak; Solovki now receives 20% of the whole Russian cultural budget.....well the church and the monastery does as Putin has aligned himself with the state control of Russia that utilises the Orthodox church. The Museum (humanitarian) has been moved out, the museum staff removed from positions and the islands are now strictly controlled through the church. In a strange way I could be a guide for parts of the islands – I've gathered quite a lot of knowledge both religious and secular – tho now would find it quite difficult to visit them without permission... from the church.

Misha and Masha know this... my conflict is to perhaps let this go, and let them be at peace or whatever they want to do.



I should be really angry with the careless mess we walked into, away from the tears, anger, a thousands questions and problems to solve, ordinary news and information was taken off the screens, and replaced with photos and drawings, to stop and walk out of process as a statement. I will have to think hard if I do this again, so many mountains to walk in, s many sunsets and sunrises, such refreshing water in the sea, I normally feel strong and go to funerals, I just needed to hold on, then another small crisis, tears, seems the weather has turned, I am in control, I am not in control, I feel privileged, I feel unprivileged, I believe in it, I doubt it.



*– Who she is on the photo  
I have no idea.*

**How human is it to be human?**

**Invitation on FaceBook,  
February 1st 2019 (no)**

**Nothing was up**

«Nothing was up» er ei hending, som inkluderer fleire delhendingar rundt om på Vaksdal, i dialog med bygda, over eit tidsrom på 48 timer:

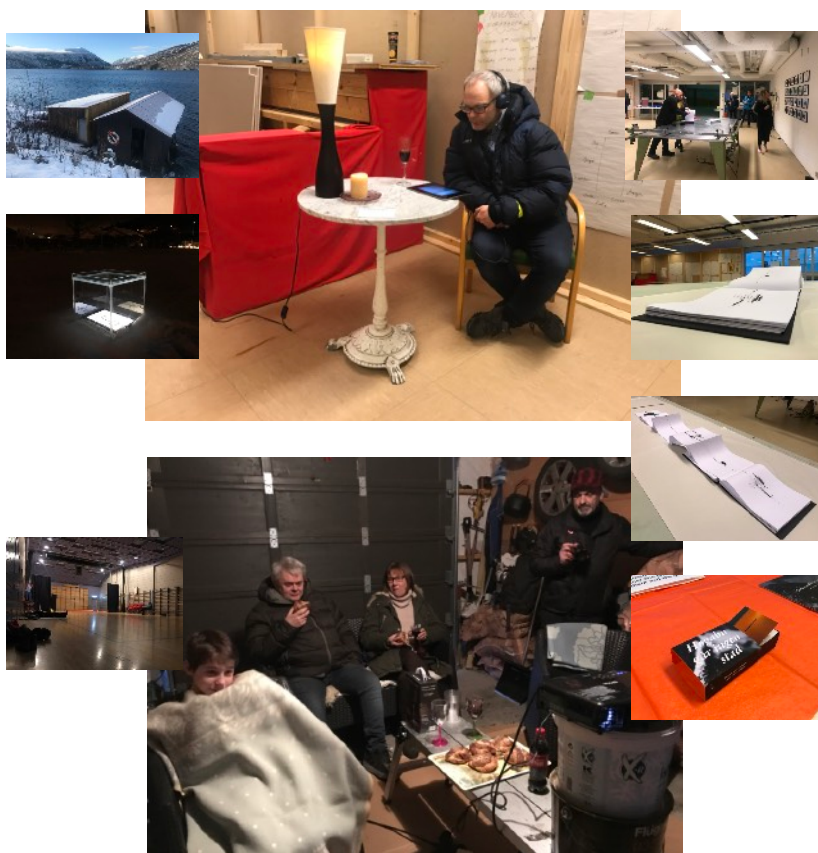
«Nothing was up» tek utgangspunkt i ei bok under konstruksjon, med fleire kapittel, ulike materialar og stemmer, der historier utfaldar seg gjennom bilete i rørsle og lydforteljingar. Historiene vert vidareutvikla i løpet av dei 48 timane arrangementet varer.

«Nothing was up» starta fleire år tilbake, då Duncan James Higgins og Linda Herfindal Lien møttes i samband med ei reise til ein konferanse i Hong Kong. Begge arbeidde då ved det som no er Fakultet for kunst, musikk og design ved Universitetet i Bergen, og samarbeidet utvikla seg vidare gjennom eit prosjekt knytt til Telavåg i Hordaland. Utgangspunktet var korleis kunst og design kan nyttas til å utforska Telavåg sin komplekse og emosjonelle historie. Noko av materialet vart produsert i den mellombels silketrykkverkstaden som er etablert på Vaksdal Senter.

Den første delen av arbeidet kretsar omkring tap, at noko som i eine augneblinken er nært og synleg, i neste er borte og heller ikkje vil koma attende. Perspektivet er det personlege, med utgangspunkt i at tap er ei individuell, og til tider einsam, erfaring.

«Nothing was up» handlar strengt tatt om alle ekstraordinære hendingar, som samtidig er vanlege. Arbeidet er ein hyllest til samtalen; ei påminning om kor verdifull dialog kan vera for å forstå og handtera livet på konstruktivt vis.

*And I did say: What?!? We must be able to have a normal conversation. And he said: No. Not when someone is sleeping. Then you need to go somewhere else to sit. And the sleeping man said: I am not sleeping anymore.*





# The Fond Library

## First attempt of an index

Those we like.

Those we argue about.

Those we are not sure if they fit in.

Those we can't explain.

Those we made in very emotional circumstances.

Those who are coloured by death.

Those who are ethically problematic.

Those we want to share with others.

Those we are not sure if we want to share with others.

Those we almost had forgotten.

Those we have forgotten.

Those we didn't think were interesting before a long time after they were made.

Those who are not completed but ready to go public.

Those who never will be completed.

Those who started as something and ended as something else.

Those who cause problems.

Those we felt a desperate need to make but could not find time to do,

Those who are just wobbling imaginations.

Those that became a burden.

Those that fokin' move us.

# The impossibility of it all, for all time without end: Nobody lives forever.

## **33 seconds on top of it**

*Him.*

*He.*

Carry everything,  
in the end he had more.

Is it really more words  
we need?

Maybe less words and more  
listening and thinking?

Maybe no opinion?

**I hate  
mountains  
so much**

I want you to know about the death of a man,  
this male,

a figure that haunts me.

Beyond death if they could send a word  
to say something.

Don't leave me, the last 33 seconds, imagine?

And the genes from the Black Death plague are quiet,  
or are they just sleeping,

life, so slow, nothing happens,

and in the meantime, the genes might wake up

and start doing, while I am busy doing something else,

and I am surrounded by brains and bodies

falling apart,

piece by piece, and that make me want to say

*Don't leave me,*

but I don't feel I am allowed to say that,

to ask someone to not leave me,

they have to be allowed to leave, if they have to,

there might be so many reasons,

and I get images of images,

and I start to make an imagined book,

I want to add stories to the words,

and I think of the fast death,

and the slow death,

and the wanted death,

and the unwanted,

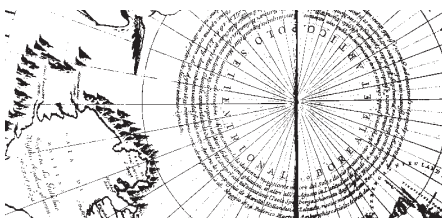
but I can't see any difference,

whilst I grow stronger,

and that make me humble, patient,

not painful, and not brutal.

# WITHOUT MOUNTAINS I AM NOTHING



**The sense of failure is not so important,  
that flows on forever.**

## The isolation

I had the tattoo in 2005 very soon after the 1st visit to Solovky – part of the impossibility of it all – it still feels necessary – in the tattoo shop where I had it done they said “what is this?” and “what is the meaning... normally people want to say what is ‘forever?’”... I think I said more or less, “it’s the impossibility of it all.... I want that on me, so it can’t be removed”. To me it’s a gesture. I’m embodied with it.

...

I remember being isolated at my grandparents family home when I was a boy, around the time of that photo, blond boy, my grandfather had a very bad health issue of TB in his bones... and it was viral... so I was quarantined – kept away from everything... for weeks, in case we spread the TB... during this time my grandfather showed me his tattoos... a large eagle on his chest – the crest of the Royal Scots Greys Brigade - with the words ‘Forever’.

## **I must remember to remember**

*The Living mountain* by Nan Sheperd (1977, 2014, Canongate Books,); she writes about death like she asks you in for a cup of coffee. *Response* by Arne Nordheim, first played at Kunstnerens Hus, Oslo, 1960 something, then I heard it performed at the same place November 6, 2020 (Kjell Tore Innervik, Simen Brenden, Håkon Drevland, Nora Sjøgren, Geir Strande Syrrist); the great noise and the sounds which are unfamiliar and familiar at the same time. *Goodbye Intuition* (Ivar Grydeland, Morten Quenlid, Andrea Neumann), the same day, almost the same place; all that space to get lost in the sounds, yet so connected.

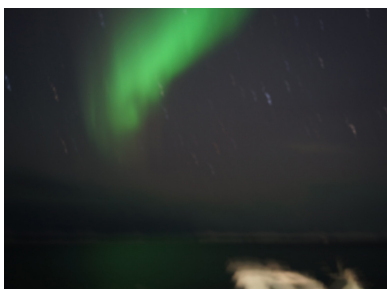
Pia Arke, she makes the history of the colonism part of «my own story in the only way I know, namely by taking it personally» – but also by using film, photos, sounds, a simple language and her own body (*Wonderland*, exhibition at Trondheim kunsthall 2019, May 9 – November 11, showing her work from there period 1990-2005, her book *TUPILAKOSAURUS*: Pia Arke's Issue with Art, Ethnicity, and Colonialism, 1981-2006, and most of all her work *Arctic hysteria* at Nuuk Art museum, 2018, which I first passed without interest).

*Betroffenheit* by Crystal Pite and Jonathan Young; I haven't seen it all, I haven't seen it live; but I have seen enough to understand what can't be said in words. Edvard Munch and his friend Emanuel Goldstein; their intense dialog about human feelings; their different languages and the trust they had in each other (Intense linjer, exhibition, Fuglsang kunstmuseum, 2019, May 17 – september 1).

I must also remember that it is good to write in bad English – it creates the distance I need to be able to be close.

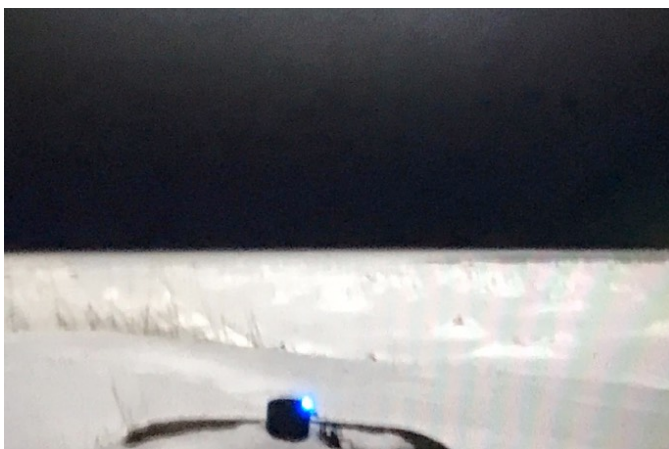


***It will take a lot of  
people to get used  
to all these people.***



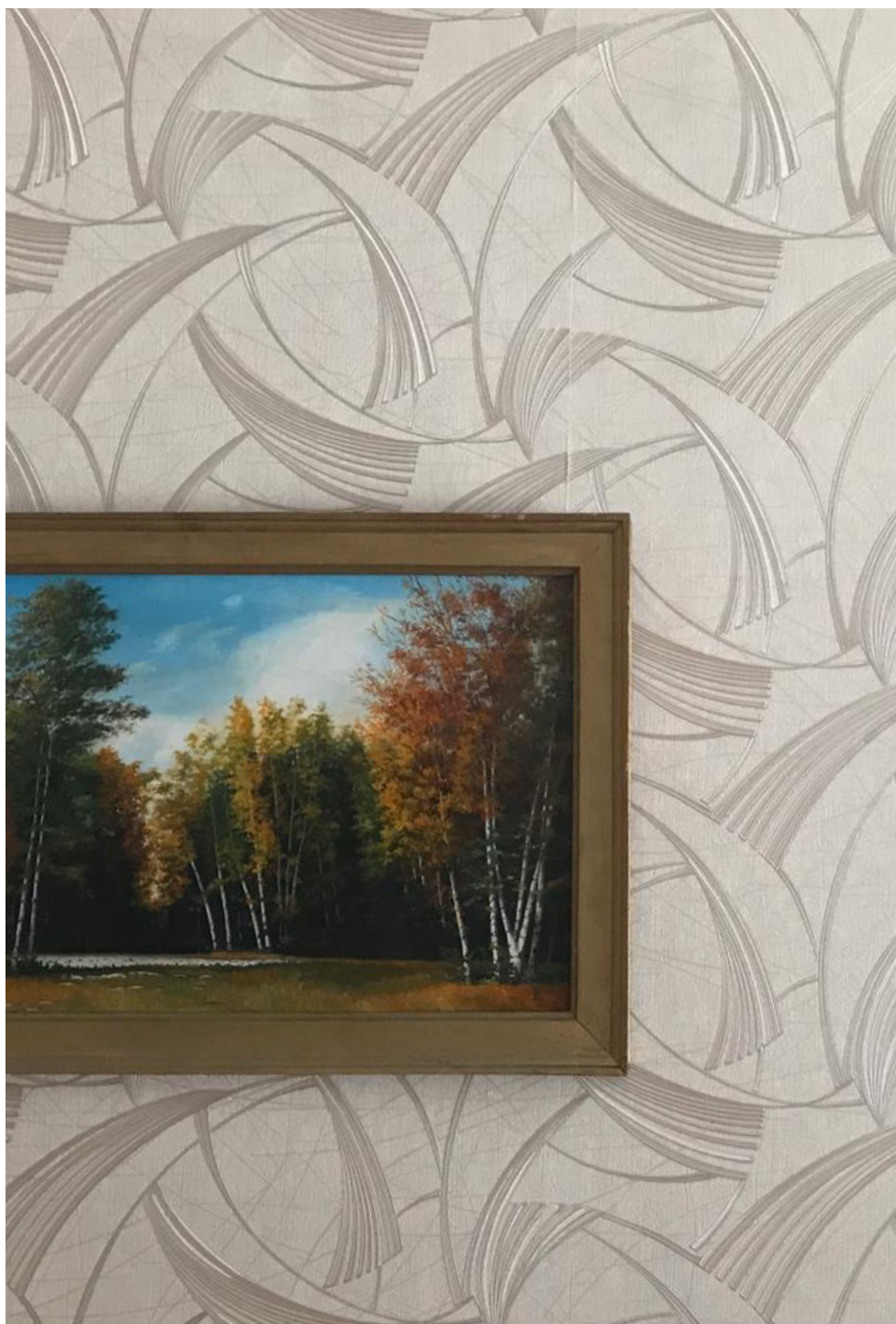
Earlier today I drifted away  
from the social meeting  
the boys were talking too fast  
drinking a lot  
moving – connecting – shaping.





Photos, sentences, video, sounds –  
transferred within seconds,  
and your words;

the only predators are humans.



*The week ahead is busy, the days start early and end late,  
and there is not much time that is not occupied.  
Such weeks that is not so healthy,  
maybe like the week you just completed.  
It is not the tasks,  
but all the different people  
and the shifting situations that takes energy.*



**JETSTAR**