

invitation to *Voice Under*

Dear reader,
dear filmmaker, dear researcher

This is an invitation to the
doctoral thesis in artistic research,
voice under.

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Invitation to *voice under*

My creative practice revolves around finding ways to depict a queer reality. If voice over is the superior voice that dictates the truth, I examine *voice under*, a voice of other truths that exist simultaneously.

In my doctoral thesis *voice under*, I explore through film and text all the parallel voices beyond the dominating all-knowing voice over. The intention is to open up a wider sensory register in both the creation and the experience of film. By looking closely at, challenging and playing with different cinematic conventions (around truth, authenticity, storytelling, the visual and the visible), I explore how we can recreate seemingly dominant expressions and find spaces for resistance, however temporary these may be.

In and through this exploration, I ask: How can the language and imagery of film be used to reach beyond language and imagery? How can a more capacious imagination be activated? The unique potential of film exists in its dizzying ability to create other images and other worlds. Film opens us up to the sensuous. When film activates our memories and feelings, it also creates the possibility of other and different ways of being with them. That is what is filmic about film, and this potential is a queer potential. Because what is queer cannot be reduced to what is visible to the camera.

voice under consists of two different types of material – film and text – in the shape of:

- a performative, contemplative film screening, and
- a book consisting of a collection of texts.

The performative screening consists of audio, moving images, and somatic exercises. The aim is to invite participants to explore a wider sensory register and different ways of seeing. At the screening, I

guide the audience through a number of “chapters”. To emphasize the ephemeral qualities of the screening, and to let its performative elements be as important as the audiovisual ones, I have chosen to merely document this work in the form of a text with a score and still images from each chapter of the screening, as well as references and a list of contributors. No audiovisual material is uploaded or archived.

The book *voice under*, in turn, gather a collection of texts which explores and plays with the concept *voice under* through encounters with examples from my own filmmaking, from other filmmakers, as well as more theoretical renderings of bodies, gender, trans experiences, desire, violence and trauma. None of the examples I write about in this book are an exact illustration of what *voice under* is. At the same time, all these examples are attempts that point toward what *voice under* could be, by gathering a multitude of voices.

A Poetic *voice under* as Storytelling

voice under is about always returning to the body, a beauty and a desire that do not deny pain, a pain that does not deny desire. *voice under* is an exercise in holding complexity. *voice under* should not, and cannot, be reduced to voice over’s opposite. A voice over can be, but is not necessarily, authoritarian. There are queer voice-overs that double as *voice unders*, such as playful, collective voices of queer and trans communities. The concept of *voice under* is an attempt to indicate the relation which creates queer expression, the transgender effects of film.

In my investigation of *voice under*, I explore that which is given space to support or co-create the film. Instead of completely abandoning “the story” as a dominant structure, I wonder if it is possible to see it as a kind of scaffolding. A scaffolding that enables and supports, rather than fixates.

Poetry contains life, resistance and friction in ways that are very concrete. *voice under* has to do with a poetic kind of truth. A poetic trans-truth. Constantly alive, constantly bubbling and vibrating, part of a larger collective fabric of accumulated experience.

The promiscuous storytelling that I experiment with through *voice under* is linked to what I call “traumaturgy”, which is an attempt to find forms of storytelling that do not cut off the connection between the head and the rest of the body but work through fear and trauma toward something else. How can dominant cinematic emotional scripts be opened to make space for a diversity of emotions and experiences? How can fear and trauma be used not to create tension – and by extension harm – but an opportunity to heal, through film?

A Note on Method

voice under is a concept that has grown out of my artistic research project by moving between writing and filming, through workshops with actors and other co-creators.

In *A sweetness from nowhere* (which forms the basis of the performative film screenings of this doctoral thesis), I have worked together with the actors Nina Jeppsson and Louise Löwenberg, the choreographer and dancer Halla Ólafsdóttir, the sound technician Carolina Jindhe, the film producer Anna-Maria Kantarius, and the scenographer Clara Isaksson, amongst others.

We worked in an explorative way through workshops and came to develop a number of methods. We explored the materiality of bodies. We began without dialogue, without character, and without faces. We began from behind, with the backs. What happens if the shoulder plays the main part? My own film practice with close-ups bordering on the abstract coincided

with how Halla as choreographer works scenically, with the way she’s curious about how to dance with a shoulder or breaking up the body into many bodies. What is front and what is back? In this way, we could decentralize the gaze, both cinematically, choreographically, and in relation to our bodies. With Nina, it was about her work with different forms of dramaturgy, how different fields of tension create contrasts and rhythm. With Louise, it was about being curious about disgust and corporeality and how a character is shaped and becomes in theater and film. The starting point of her practice is often the shaping of a character or a portrait and to allow a script to form through experimenting with these personalities in different situations.

We examined characters, place, and sound as the central aspects and allowed them to inform the story in the construction of a “script”. A script that was not already written, but rather was gathered together through explorative shoots and that gave rise to an *audiovisual prototype*. The audiovisual prototype offered us a way of thinking and making scripts where sound and image carried the film rather than the text, a model without a model, in order to catch the tone of the film and its layers of images and sounds.

We developed what I call *storytelling without a spine*, where the story supports a material in becoming instead of being a skeleton that the flesh of the content has to relate to. Over time, I have also developed a form of *editing as writing* with sound, image, and time. When I write through editing combined with a gathering and discovering of materials, a *promiscuous narration* emerges. A poetic, audiovisual, and temporal writing and sculpting, where the head doesn’t take over or silence the body’s knowledge. A desire to bring the curiosity of *voice under* to screenings was also born from this project, which gave rise to the performative film screenings.

There is a force in montage that I want to make use of, but

where the montage doesn’t end at the screen but spills out over and resonates through the bodies, through the room.

Performative Film Screenings, a Back Story

In the summer of 2014, I was invited by Tensta konsthall to Stockholm Music & Arts. I wore my favorite tiger dress and felt beautiful. I sat in the grass outside the theater where my screening was to take place and went through the text I had written. I thought I had found links between the landscape around the Högdalen landfill and trans, periphery, and center. I had gathered fragments of both my own and others’ texts around these themes that I planned to read together with material from my earlier feature films that had not ended up in the films, leftovers that I experienced as valuable.

The material was from the places around Kungens kurva, Skärholmen, Högdalen, and Värberg, places where I have grown up and lived for many years. There was something in returning to these film leftovers that had been in my own archives, stored on hard drives, that gained new life. Layers of leftovers, as on the dump, traces of fireplaces, photo albums, and landfill.

Here, I started to explore ways of being present with the films on stage next to the film screen, reading the text, allowing images to trickle into my body, trying to have a full body relation to the moving images. Allowing my voice and body to be affected by both the images and the room. Allowing my body, my living archive, to affect the image.

This was my first attempt at what I now call performative film screenings, where the room and the bodies become co-creators, become some kind of tentacles to what is taking place, where the noise from what is happening outside the sometimes badly soundproofed

space becomes a soundtrack, becomes music. The screenings are a way of playing with the occasion and the moment and see what happens when the film becomes a part of everything around it and not something fixed and timeless. That film is something that becomes precisely there and then, here and now, to try to catch a bare listening gaze on the film and through love for the film see what it can do to the body, to time.

I have also come to include guided meditations and exercises in connection with film screenings, which has created another openness for the abstract in the films, a trust in the moment beyond the wish to, as audience, to instantly grasp something. Film is always created in interaction with those who see it and I have wanted to find a way to emphasize that relation and how it not only includes an intellectual understanding. It is rather about a kind of active participation, feeling, and processing. By emphasizing the body in the room, the sound of the room, the fact that we are here together and looking and breathing, my hope is to open up for a multisensory, critically playful, sensual film experience.

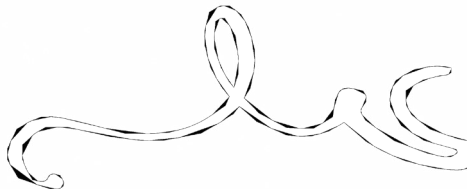
voice under is an invitation for you to listen with your whole body. To listen with your eyes, feel with your hearing, dance with tastes and memories.

Listen to what is drowned out inside you, which habits that sedate your sensitivity and your queer, weird, and inexplicable sides.

To fumble with precision.

I want to invite you to these attempts.

Welcome.





Thank you!
First of all, I'd like to thank my academic supervisor Jenny Sundén for your engaged critique and great care. I'd also like to thank my artistic supervisor Lina Selander for your responsive sensitivity and precise readings, and my artistic supervisor Ellen Røed for your support and encouragement.

A special thank you for everything during these six years, Nina Jeppsson, Halla Ólafsdóttir, and Louise Löwenberg. It cannot be overstated how important you have been to this project.

Thank you, Anna-Maria Kantarius, for making all these films possible, thank you for your courage in trusting me when I didn't know what I was doing. Sara Kaaman, thanks for all the years of inspiration, joy, and curiosity. Forever always sharp eyes, heart, and mind. From the bottom of my heart, thank you Tomie Lee, for your curious compassionate questions, patience, sweets, wise words, and for always being there.

The ideas, concepts, and desire that have shaped my work have grown out of several long relationships with other artists and collaborators. Thank you Eli Levén, Anna-Maria Kantarius, Minka Jakerson, Imogen Heath, and Siri Hjorton Wagner. Thank you Carolina Jinde for how you center the sound and challenge the image in filmmaking, it has been so valuable to research in parallel with you.

Thank you also to all the collaborations, reading circles, and exchanges in recent years. Nadja Hjorton, Lisen Rosell, Zhala Rifat, Tiny, Roby Redgrave, Brandy Litmanen, Roxy Farhat, Erik Annerborn, Enna Gerin, Majsa Allelin, Channa Bianca, Marit Östberg, Kaly Halkawt, Dimen Abdulla, Marta Dauliute, Sophie Vuković Elisabeth Marjanović Cronvall, Neil Wigardt, Clara Isaksson, Carolina Jinde, Marcus Lindeen, Mia Engberg, who have infused this project with their brilliance.

I want to thank Juliette Mapp for playful precision and Rebecca Hilton for certain uncertainty. Thanks to Cecilia Roos as well as my colleagues at the Research Centre for creating a generative research climate at Stockholm University of the Arts (SKH). I want to thank all my fellow doctoral students for your research and your generosity and playfulness, Marc Johnson, Savaş Boyraz, Ellen Nyman, Kersti Grunditz Brennan, Eleanor Bauer, Linn Hilda Lamberg, and Lina Persson. I also want to thank my colleagues at the Department for Film and Media, Maria Hedman Hvitfeldt, Tinna Jonne, Ylva Gustavsson, Erik Gandini, and everyone in FoM “forskningsrådet”. Thank you to the administrators for our

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CHARACTER WORKSHOP LEADER Louise Löwenberg
DRAMATURGY Nina Jeppsson
CHOREOGRAPHY Halla Ólafsdóttir
PRODUCER Anna-Maria Kantarius
ACTORS Nina Jeppsson, Halla Ólafsdóttir, Louise Löwenberg
ACTORS WORKSHOP AND SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT Roxy Farhat, Lisen Rosell, Brandy Litmanen
CINEMATOGRAPHER Minka Jakerson, Ester M. Bergsmark
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Rydingen, Ismaila Jallow, Kaly Halkawt, Hanna Rosén
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COSTUME Ester M. Bergsmark, Franciska Svenson, Erik Annerborn
ASSISTANT COSTUME April Linn, Anna Eriksson
FIRST ASSISTANT CAMERA, FOCUS PULLER Linus Enlund, Dinis Rodrigues, Jonatan Bjerke
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RUNNER Zahraa Aldoujaili, Hanna Rosén, Saga Ekesryd
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER Mimmi Spång
COLOR GRADE Daniel Pherson

This project is filmed and developed in the following locations:

SKH Linnégatan, Stockholm, the film studio at Vallhallavägen, Stockholm
Sweden
PERFORMING ARTS FORUM Saint-Erme-Outre-et-Ramecourt, France
HÄRINGE CASTLE Västerhaninge, Sweden
MILVUS ARTISTIC RESEARCH CENTER Knisslinge, Sweden
THE

BIOLOGICAL MUSEUM, Stockholm, Sweden
BOGESUND CASTLE, Vaxholm, Sweden
BERGIANSKA TRÄDGÅRDEN, Stockholm, Sweden.

Parts of the work “All that you can't leave behind” by Halla Ólafsdóttir and Franz Edward Cedrins are included in the film's choreography.

The film material is produced together with Garagefilm International AB with development support from the Swedish Film Institute [film commissioners, Baker Karim, Juan Pablo Libossart and Jannik Splidsboel, controller Jenny Örnborn], Film Stockholm, and Creative Europe.

Acknowledgments

lunch conversations, Rut Jarl and Helena Falck.

Thank you to technicians, producers, carpenters and costumers, and everyone else at SKH who made my work possible. Thanks, Max Edkvist, Lena Kempe, Ewa Wallin, Nils Harning, David Smith, Roland Engström, Joan Wandin, Stefan Engman, Carl Amnert, Hanna Husberg, Christoffer Limér.

Thank you Rebecka Bülow for your thoughts, your way of thinking and writing, which has been a great support along the way. Thank you, Kira Josefsson and Alicia Hansen for your comments and editing in the development of my writing.

Thank you Andria Nyberg Forshage for invaluable readings early in the process. Thank you Wibke Straube for our ongoing rich and fruitful dialogue. Thank you Ingela Josefson.

A big thank you to the editors at Lambda Nordica's special issue, “Nordic Queer Cinema,” Ingrid Ryberg, Katariina Kyrölä, and Anu Koivunen.

Thanks to the organizers and the participants of the conferences that gave me new energy in the midst of confusion, such as The First International Queer Death Studies Conference: “Death Matters, Queer(ing) Mourning, Attuning to Transitionings,” November 2019, Karlstad, and The 8th Nordic Trans Studies Conference: “From Transgender Rage to Trans Joy: Trans Studies through Affective Lens,” February 2023, Tampere.

Another great inspiration is the Elsewhere and Otherwise meeting at Performing Arts Forum. Especially the meeting in 2018 with the theme Tools for Visceral Sensibility – trauma, love, work, and polyvagal theory, where several artists shared their practices in a self-organized framework. I want to thank the meeting itself and all the participants in this generous collective atmosphere that has given me so much in how I see myself as an artist. We were co-creators and intra-related within the context in a very beautiful way. I was

touched by the group, in particular Catalina Insignares, Valentina Desideri, Daniela Bershan aka Baba Electrocia, Neha Chries, Siegmär Zacharias, Fijona James, Clara López Menéndez, MPA, Shifa Doğuştan, whose presence stayed within me and changed me. Thank you.

Thank you Annika Larson, Galleri Index, Vika Kirchenbauer, Adina Pintilie for incredibly fruitful days at the festival and the symposium “Non-Knowledge, Laughter & The Moving Image”, 15-16 Nov 2022.

Thank you Camilla Sköld, Stephan Pende, Rob Burbea, Catherine McGee, Leela Sarti, Yahel Avigur for teachings in meditation in, through and beyond mindfulness. Thank you Plum Village, CFMS. Yeshin Norbu, Dharmagiri, Gomde Denmark, Dhamma Sobhana, Gaia House and Barre center for Buddhist studies.

Thank you to my “opponents” at my doctoral seminars, Sara Edenheim, Ann-Sofie Lönngren, Ingrid Ryberg, Lina Selander, Chrysa Parkinson, and Hendrik Folkerts. Thanks to Performing Arts Forum and Milvus Artistic Research Center. Thank you Therese Kellner and Richard Julin at the exhibition space Accelerator. Thank you Jenny Örnborn, Jannik Splidsboel, Baker Karim and Juan Pablo Libossart at the Swedish Film Institute.

Thanks Lisskulla Moltke-Hoff and Tove Torbjörnsson, for chipotle and black beans and your immense wisdom. Thanks to artistic researchers who have inspired me who trod multi-layered paths to follow and get lost in. Mara Lee, Malin Arnell, Axel Karlsson Rixon, Petra Bauer, Anna Linder.

Thank you to all the students I have met over the years, and a special thank you to those who participated in my course “Intimacy, Sexuality and Moving Images.” Your art and thoughts touched me deeply.

A big thank you to Garagefilm, Mimmi Spång, and Ida Lindkvist. Thank you Corinna Helenelund for your wisdom and generosity. Thank you Lukas Hoffman and thank you Miki. Thank you for inviting me to be a guest at Pro Artibus Villa Snäckesund to write.

Thank you, Mika Kastner, for the way you make voice under intimate, playful, and elegant with your graphic design.

Thank you, my loves, Tomie Lee, Mika Mei Ying Lee, Sara Kaaman, Imogen Heath, Shaon Chakraborty, Chris Atapattu Riddselius.

Credits

A Sweetness from Nowhere

Voice Under
is at once a chorus and a million
unique songs.
It is the voices of the banished,
in you and in the world.



If we listen,
a swarm of insights awaits us.
From afar, beneath, inside.

Far away, and right here.



