

If something doesn't get going in January, nothing will come, a sentiment of poet Katarina F. in *Skallarna*¹. November is my January.

November in Stockholm means morning tipping over the edge at 8, darkness arriving at 15. Some peers around me suffer – even though one claims she doesn't miss the sun – some long for snow, some seem to have gone with the bears.

The temperature should normally be below zero. But no, sleet and spatter on the windshield. Swisch swoosch, the sound of the wiper blades, swisch swoosch, one rubber barely hanging on. I notice that I'm thinking of the worldly and the temporal. I'm driving to Färgfabriken, to create an exhibition about the process with the collaborative film- and research project BLOD. Why do I feel so melancholic? I turn up the speed of the wiper blades. The wind is tearing the crowns of the trees. A pale shadow on the moon looks like an ear.

What the fuck is it with November!

Before the romans added two months into the calendar, the year had ten months. The name derives from the Latin root novem, meaning nine. In old Swedish this time of the year was called winter-month, in Old English, *Blotmonað* – month of sacrifice, literally blood-month –

BLOD(y) will be an exposition of the work processes of BLOD – a research and film project trying to go beyond norms when it comes to content, aesthetics and modes of collaboration in cinematic storytelling. The Open Studio exhibit will feature the film, its source materials in different forms, works in various degrees of progress and scheduled talks on related topics.

The vampire bats listen for their victim; it's no bigger than a thumb and it has learned to distinguish each prey by memorizing the sound of the victim's breath. My memory is in flames. This text will address matters from eleven days of artistic practice.

November xv –

I need some kind of blocks. Big and stable enough to climb on. On-line I find some for physiotherapy, but they are too expensive. Calling a wholesale agent for the possibility to borrow demonstration samples, the man helpfully advises me to contact GIH. Nada. Nic. Nichts. Niente. It starts to feel a bit shaky, what if I won't find the material I need.

Nothing. In the essay *Lovtal till intet*² [Eulogy to Nowt], Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback speaks of how the Western thinking has not developed thought categories to describe nowt beyond a negative meaning; maybe out of fear for the empty, horror vacui.

Kindergarten! that might be the place. I drive down to my kids' old spot, haven't been there for over a decade. "Yes, we do have a kind of play cushions and it would be a delight to send them out on an art-mission." It's drop dead fantastic, but the pillows are colorful and too small.

On the way back I happen to glance down at an outdoor public pool where one of my twins worked as a lifeguard during the summer. There they are. Big. Stable. And white. They have white plastic lawn chairs to lend me too.

We are temporal and finite beings. We have got this life. My practice delves into basic existential questions.

November XVI –

To be able to transport the six styrofoam blocks, I steal-borrow a pallet from a construction site in our neighborhood and tie it to the roof of the car. There is a tension in the grey-light and in the air, almost literally, like in a rubber band. The blocks are dirty and stink from years of serving as swimming pool cover holders. Since it is Saturday night, I assume no one will use the car wash area in the garage, so I put them there, soak them, lather them, rinse them off. Five blocks fit on the roof, and if I fold down the back seat the sixth plus the garden chairs fit in the trunk. I wonder what kind of fantasy the image invokes.

What does it mean that we live? What does it mean that we die? That things end?

November XVII –

To rehearse the prologue to Kersti's 50%-seminar, I need to screw the wooden frame together. All of a sudden it feels too much. Is it typically me not being able to settle for less? The desire to widen the perspectives and bring things further? Since it is my idea, I am responsible for rehearsals. Costumes and fika are fixed, I have refreshed the alphabet and how to say *hi*, *welcome*, *my name is*, *coffee*, *tea*, *milk* and *crackers* in sign language. The performers have been asked to bring 4-5 one-liners starting with *Woman is...* plus a *Lived experience from your womanhood – a situation you found yourself in and how you reacted to it*.

Shadows of a trappy role turns up inside me during rehearsal. Deeply irritating, monstrous.

Everytime I wake up during the night, the unease of the situation gnaws my bones. At dawn the respons to the fundamental but urgent query *what is in there for me* remains in the dark.

Suddenly, I realize that this is what I do. That I in my artistic practice create homes. That BLOD has been a home. And that it soon will be over.

November XVIII –

Checking in on my students at Valhallavägen. When I get to Färgfabriken, the equipment has already arrived. It takes the whole morning to get the five monitors mounted. In the afternoon we roll out the dance mats and tape them. Reminiscence of cold floors and waterish coffee.

Soon, or at least at any time, anything can break apart, whiter and be over. I am aware that it is personal. That it is trauma. But at the same time it is a condition.

November XIX –

The gallery is closed. Working alone in the Open Studios. Focusing on getting the brown carpet lining up on the wall. Indecisive – space between gores or not?

The question of what is important in life, the question of what is valuable, has always been with me, I have lived with it for as long as I can remember, always trying to answer it.

November XX –

Climbing up and down ladders rigging the three projectors. Kersti is busy with getting the film material into the monitors, I start tracing out the timeline of the project. Distributing its events across the three years it has been going on, I feel how tangible content and form, the trying and the doing – the labor of it all – is embodied in me.

I need to be faithful to the impulse to stay close to life. And particularly life's finiteness.

November XXI –

The Open Studio exhibit opens and BLOD first screening at Bio Rio.

I am solely responsible for writing the scripts and Kersti for the editing. We share responsibility for idea-development, directing, production design, costumes, props, acting, cinematography and music performance. We have our own separate research performed on this site. Only now I have enough distance to begin to critically review our work, and actually dare to more closely look into the editing – which I have taken part of in the role of director and collaborator, but also held back to keep Kersti's creative process and practice protected. Agnès Varda: "You don't shoot and then edit what you shot, you think about what you are going to edit and then you shoot." Strangely enough, Varda's quote is valid for how I guided myself writing the scripts; writing scenes meant to be broken up; providing us with material to explore fragmentation and movement; to create flow with a kaleidoscopic quality. Surrounded by fifty or so other people, I am trying to grasp how our intentions are manifested in the film.

It is artistic matter that every human being's precious existence is not endless. The insight that our wee lives are finite is artistic matter. This life is my material.

November XXII –

Over again mounting the wooden frame and draping it in white fiber cloth. While flapping around with a screwdriver in one hand, a staple gun in the other and screws in my moth, a Kafka-quote³ (Nov 1917) pops up: "A cage went out to catch a bird." I suggest a better beginning of the performance to Csilla, Sunniva, Iris, Rebecka and Kersti. Totally unexpected, ease and lightness appears. One of my one-liners read out **Woman is attentiveness – the most honest form of generosity, according to Simone Weil.**

Generous is also what I hope the prologue to be. Giving the audience a moment to tune in to Kersti's research presentation. *Woman is...* and *Lived experience* are told in the performer's mother tongue – half of it I don't understand – it's awesome.

Critically connecting three paragraphs from The BLOD Manifesto:

1. **Leave the implicit as is!**
6. **Probe and take risks!**
7. **Expand naturalism.**

Time aspects and finance not taken into consideration; what if the editing would be more ambitious to operate for those who cannot see and for those who cannot hear? what if cinematic tension in the relation between eye, ear and body were stretched further? what if our bodies were left in silence? what if the cuts were even steeper – creating montages within the montages? what if cognitive comprehension was even more challenged? what if risk taking was performed as vulnerability? what if the figures/roles/us acknowledge being watched?

For me to be finite implies to be in relation, to be depending on others. Otherwise nothing would be put at stake.

November XXIII –

Fire fighter Anders Narling talks about struggling with gender norms in his profession. If I approach the abstruse, how do I do it? Development of methods is always at the core when I work with a project. The actual method comes later. The film BLOD and its creative process have to a great extent been shaped and developed in and through the project. I start my talk about my writing practice with a question: How do I make something without making it? Recreating situations that have gripped me; episodes that remain? And recreating the events even better than in reality; by placing situations in alien contexts; complicating the matter until reaching simplicity – like peeling an onion – at the end, only tears.

I create shelters. I practice dying. Again and again and again (the world's most erotic word?).

November XXIV –

Ergo November, the most hearable of the months. One hears since everything is defoliated. Sunday's dialogues begin with LBGTQ gynecologist Lena Moegelin. We have two questions to fire off the conversations: 1. WHEN IS IT HARD AT WORK? 2. WHEN IS IT FUN AT WORK?

Sexologist Kalle Norwald answers the second one: I SHOWED A MODEL OF A CLITORIS TO A MIDDLE AGED WOMAN WHO HAD NEVER HAD AN ORGASM, SHE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IS WAS. THE NEXT SESSION, SHE TOLD ME SHE HAD HAD THREE IN A ROW.

During the day in the Open Studio, two little girls imitate the movements of Kersti and me dancing, projected on the wall. One says: you'll be the purple coat, I'll be the black.

Vulnerability, anxiety, fragility and limitations make my life come alive.

November xxv –

Over and out. I have a felt sense of sad joy. It feels like rewinding the experience when BLOD(y) is taken down. Move through changes out and in⁴, Rilke tells us (funny how Kafka and he were born in the same city). Furthermore, Rainer Maria asks, what is the deepest loss that you have suffered?

At the end of life, the question of what is valuable is explicitly connected to the premise that we do not have all the time in the world, that we need to take care of what is important and that the question of what is meaningful is alive because death is there as a threat

1. Frostenson, Katarina. *Skallarna*, Bonnier Essä, 2001.
2. Schuback, Marcia Sá Cavalcante. *Lovtal till intet*, Glänta produktion, 2006.
3. Kafka, Franz. *Die Züräuer Aphorismen*, Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1931. My translation.
4. Rilke, Rainer Maria. *Die Sonette an Orpheus II: XXIX*. Insel-Verlag, 1923. My translation.