

Searching for my Inner Elvis in a post Elvis Society

Maja Fredin - MFA 2 CRAFT! Textile

Word Count: 6604

17th of March 2022

Toturs:

Andrea Peach, Bella Rune, Anders Ljungberg, Agnieszka Knap, Birgitta Burling, Ulrika Mårtensson



Image 1, Searching for my Inner Elvis in a Post Elvis Society, 18th of march 2022, Photo: Niklas Palmklint

It's easy to search for something when you know what you are looking for.

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Abstract

An imitation of an Elvis impersonator, the echo of the long gone American dream that got flushed away, singing karaoke-versions of those so well known songs. An investigation of the human greed and longing for abundance, the capitalistic need of constant rebirth.

"- We can't build our dreams"

An *Eternal Shrimpfest* served as the last supper and as the *Four Flamingoes of the Apocalypse* overindulges themselves in the leftovers, you starting to wonder if you've reach heaven or hell. But as the rhythm from the karaoke machine and the jerking movements of my hips rocks you into seduction, the simple answer is that you are just stuck in Limbo.

*"Make the world go away
And get it off my shoulders
Say the things you used to say
And make the world go away"*

With Shrimps, Las Vegas, Elvis Presley and the Bible,

"Searching for my Inner Elvis in a post Elvis Society" is the overall and collected title of my master project. A work that dissolves but still ties together my thoughts and experiences of being a human in a society built on inhuman growth and reproduction. It is an investigation of the longing for luxury and abundance. Feelings most of us deadly can relate to even though we know it's not healthy nor sustainable. It is a research into the capitalistic need of constant rebirth. That we never will be good enough as creations and therefore have become our own creator. A creator with free hands to create our own truth and a voracious appetite for decadence. And as I say "we" I also include myself, because this is a scanning of all the excuses that I make so that I can continue my mad journey and drag you down with me towards the melting netherworld of the plastic inferno we have upon us.

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Using pop cultural symbolism I am stretching my reality by building up an illusion of familiar concepts. As a priest in form of an imitation of an Elvis impersonator, I am spitting out my sermon for a flamboyance of stuffed flamingos as my audience. Serving an eternal shrimp feast, presented as the last supper I make you wonder if you have reached Heaven or Hell. But as the rhythm from the karaoke machine and the jerking movements of my hips gets you lost in seduction, the simple answer is that you just got stuck in Limbo.

In this text I will further on proclaim my relationship with the Shrimp as my icon for the white middle class gluttony, how I break down the concept of the human as a product with the help of Elvis Presley and the parallel between the Christian Crusade and the Americanization of the contemporary society.

I will announce the Flamingo as the blind consumer who, just like us, has fallen for the big Mammon's temptations. I will try to preach for the comfort that even though we all are doomed, there is still a meaning in the meaningless to be found, and I will make a point of the pointless.

The Eternal Shrimp Feast



Image 2, Youth is Like Diamonds in the Sun - Maja Fredin 2016

Trying to feel enjoyment in eating shrimps again was not as hard as I could imagine. And I, who has with what you could call a "highly addictive personality", started to have bags of thawed frozen shrimps in my refrigerator. Feasting on them like a bag of crisps in front of my television. But as it is with any addiction or longing for pleasure the aftermath will never be a part in the equation, and the guilt and the shame that comes like an ignition from any high rush was unbearable.

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Shrimps have been a part of my artistic practice since 2016. Using the shrimp as a symbol is a wink that I'm certainly not a perfect example of a human being and I am not trying to paint myself as an elitist saint.

For example, there are many reasons I don't eat meat - one of them is the climate issue. But I do sometimes indulge myself in avocado, even though I know the avocado plantations demands an

absurd amount of water (around 9.5 billion liters of water is used every day)¹. I indulge myself in shrimps even though I know that the fishing is not sustainable. I do buy cut flowers, even though I know they will wither within a week. I do use tobacco, I use drugs, I do buy take away coffee in disposable mugs, I drink wine and I love it.

I love it because food has, in one way or another, been problematic for me in more than half of my life. I love it because after years of putting up unhealthy limits for me, I had come to the point I had to let myself go. So for after eight years with a vegan diet I even started to eat fish again. To feel enjoyment in eating something that has been boiled alive, like shrimps, was not as hard as I could imagine. I was now free, I could ~~de~~ eat anything.

But then again comes this feeling of shame. And again as with any addiction the withdrawal is never part of the equation. I became ashamed for not being pure, not being the perfect example, not being the Madonna and more likely the Whore of Babylon. Ashamed of time after time falling for the temptation, not be able to refuse, to just living by my own desire. Motivating my ill-considered choices with mantras like "Because I'm worth it" or "Just do it!", trying to tell myself that its my right as a human to revel myself in abundance.

In short - there is a shame to being human, there is a shame to be intemperate. And how much we do try not to be egocentric, we do everything for our own gain. By this you could argue that human beings are egocentric by nature. So what is the point of shame if there is nothing you can do about it? We already know that we all will burn within a hundred years, that we are doomed and that purgatory is coming for us. Then if we already know this, why don't we feast upon sin and desire as the scum of earth we actually are?

It is especially easy to argue for this when we all grown up in a society that raised us by meaning that the only way to satisfy your needs is by consumption. That you have to satisfy your needs by exchanging money by one way or another. And for that money you have to work hard and thereby you can even more easily motivate your consuming lifestyle, because you *earned it*. By saying all this I'm not describing the human kind as a passive back seat passenger, we all built this society like a well-lubricated machinery and we are all a part of it. But if the the only choice we have is to jump out the window of our super fast vehicle of consumption, to crash-land somewhere in no-mans-land, or to run our marathon called life on treadmill and wait for our final destination in piece and quietness, I think we all know what is most convenient.

¹ World Economics Forum. Avocado: the 'green gold' causing environment havoc. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/02/avocado-environment-cost-food-mexico/> (17/03/22)



Image 3, *I will die, (with or) without you* - Maja Fredin 2019

As discussed in Zygmunt Bauman's book *Consuming Life* (2007) that the consumer society are built on dissatisfaction. Constantly searching for flaws in your everyday routines, "how to make *your* life more easy to live" and that you are waisting your time (time you could be working) by not buying this new product. The best selling products on the market are of course the ones who come up with new needs, needs that we did not have before this product was made, or the one who is an upgraded version, that makes you feel outdated.

But as it comes to food, a basic human need, the market is now built on temptations and lust. Treating yourself for any small wins in your live, the marketing is now focusing on to sell food as small luxury products you *earned*, even though in the end of the day you have to eat, why not indulge yourself in a *Mmmm* piece of chocolate to keep you going. Listening to the podcast P3 Dystopia EP56 "Vi äter ihjäl oss"² (We are eating ourself to death) this American way of marketing food is relativity new for Sweden - the first take away coffee came in the end of the 1990's and was frowned upon. The "To-go concept", to walk and eat, was something you did not do before, but for me, who entered my adulthood in the 2010's, it as a given part of being a productive. And this is where the circle closes. Because if you are constantly productive, and as we are all part of a society that tells you to treat yourself - constantly - it is easy to indulge yourself in quickfixes. At least I do.

² P3 Dystopia. EP56. 8/12/21 <https://sverigesradio.se/avsnitt/vi-ater-ihjal-oss> (17/03/22)

So with these thoughts in the back of my head, the Shrimp came to me as the perfect symbol for the white (Swedish) middle class gluttony. A shrimp feast, some *everyday luxury*. Two words that are in opposition to each other, but has become to be a given part of our vocabulary as an excuse.

This little delicacy of the sea we consume in quantities to underline a festive atmosphere. The living who died for us living dead. Everything get's a little more fabulous with some shrimps served on a silver plate. But that atmosphere will soon thicken, the stench of putrefaction will stick on your fingers and clothes. Piles of empty bodies is all that is left and the odour of death is noticeable. Until you empty your trash, open your windows, air out the death of a party. Until you do it again.

The Shrimp is irresistible, but yet alone the Shrimp is pointless. One shrimp will not satisfy you, because the Shrimp is not the lobster.



Image 4, *Still Life with Landscape*, Abraham van Beijeren, 1650s, Hohenbuchau Collection

Continuing my work I chose a more time consuming way to portray the Shrimp. With a nod to the still life paintings from the Dutch golden Age, mid 16th century to mid 17th century, where artist were often hired by the noble and bourgeois to portrait the remaining leftovers of a feast. Painting they had made just to show that they can afford to throw away or just where able to eat themselves full.

And as described in the book "Still Life: Still Life Painting in the Early Modern Period" (Norbert Schnieder, 1990) these paintings "met the demands of the merchant classes who wanted to express their prestigious positions and their identity". In these portraits spoken of you could find status symbols like fresh fruits, silver goblets, leftovers of fishes, exclusive fabrics and of course - lobsters. It was now I got the feeling that the Shrimp deserves the same attention, but by putting these high quality made shrimps in a pile the attraction of one shrimp will disappear, underline the mad desire of over consumption, that one is never enough. In short, they portray food because they could afford it. I choose to portray food because we can't.

Since 2019 I have constantly been making these shrimp, as a project besides all my other project of my master work. Slowly the pile of shrimps are growing into an *Eternal Shrimpfeast*, an overwhelming buffet of well crafted semi-realistic imitations of the small crustacean, presented together with over dimensioned pioneer, handmade with fabrics made of plastic they will never wither. This feast will, as long as my imagination stretch, always be a part of humanity. Until the sky is opening up and fire starts to rain, you will always be welcome to my last supper.



Image 5, *The Eternal Shrimpfeast, Process* - Maja Fredin 2022

Elvis has entered my Building / Amazing Grease



Image 6, Group of ETA's setting world record for the most Elvis Impersonators in one location, London 17th April, 2005, Paul Smith/Martin Fox.

When he came to me, three years ago during the summer heatwave of 2019 in Berlin, I was sweating like a pig, my body was bloated and my mind was clouded from days of drinking. I was sitting in a studio with a head as empty as the desk in front of me, lacking inspiration when I unconsciously put on Elvis Presleys album "Blue Hawaii" from 1961. Nothing I would normally listen to, but I needed something else. Something I never heard before. And this, to me, comic, ego filled, man-pig character, whom ended his decadent life while shitting, somehow, on this day affected me.

Maybe it was because my body had never been as relatable to the body of Presley as it was at this moment. Maybe it was because I was looking for an excuse for my past actions. Maybe it was because, as in many stories of salvation, I was extra receptive for almost any bullshit.

So, while I was sitting there with my sweaty, bloated and totally empty body, listening to Presley singing his heart out with the voice from an angel, he came to me as a redeemer, a savior, and filled me up.

And I couldn't help but falling in love with him.

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The concept Elvis was made in the aftermath of a victory. He embodied Americas hunger for a liberated revolution, and America (and the world) was not slow to follow. Elvis is with this said a product of his time, and like sent from above he became the American dream on legs. The post war society was starving and with its insatiable hunger Elvis Presley became one of our first fabricated entertainers. I would argue this with the fact that he probably didn't write any of his songs by himself. That he during his 24 year as an active artist put out 57 albums³, acted in 33 movies⁴ and that he during his last seven years alive during his Las Vegas residency performed 664 times.

That he from the age of 18 until his death at 42 was just a puppet for the growing Americanization of our society. The bigger the better. Faster and more furious. He became an embodiment of our greed. With this said, I do not justify any of his obnoxious behavior, I just say that it goes deeper. That in the end of his life Elvis didn't want to be the Elvis we wanted him to be, he had enough but we wanted more.

High on uppers and downers, amphetamines and opiates⁵, in the year 1977 The King flushed the American Dream down the toilet, and left us with nothing. Nothing.

I could put it like this:

The onion is a classic metaphor, and Elvis is an onion. And as soon as I peeled off the hard shiny shell covered with rhinestones and started to peel the next layer, my eyes started, against my will, to tear up.

Underneath the plastic surface of glitz and glamour, the next layer was a little bit sweeter, and the layer underneath the next one even more so. Until I came to the core of the onion, the core of today's Elvis culture - The Impersonator, the most tasteless part of it all. My sinuses were all clogged up and my eyes were red, but my senses were wide open.

³ Discogs. Elvis Presley. Discogs. <https://www.discogs.com/artist/27518-Elvis-Presley> (1/06/21)

⁴ Graceland. ELVIS PRESLEY BIOGRAPHY. Graceland. <https://www.graceland.com/biography>. (1/06/21)

⁵ History. Elvis Presley Dies. History.com Editors. 2020. <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/elvis-presley-dies> (1/06/21)

And it is with this point of view I look at the King. You might already have understood I'm not per se an Elvis fanatic - it's the culture around him and how it is developing after his death that interests me.

It's the men who makes it their lifestyle to replicate Elvis Presley who grab my attention - these Elvis Impersonators, or ETA's (Elvis Tribute Artists), fascinates me. So If I put it like this; if Elvis was the embodiment of the American dream - an Elvis Impersonator becomes one who tries to replicate what's expected of us in this capitalistic society. Some impersonators might even be so close to the original it would have been hard to tell a difference - but here comes the thing- you can always tell the difference, because the original is dead - finito.

And what will then happen when I try to impersonate an impersonator myself? Basically nothing can be found in this watered down concept, it is totally pointless. But at the same time it is in these things the point can be made.

I put myself in the context of a community of nothingness, to embody the work of the capitalistic need of perfection. The Presley brand is as big as Coca Cola or MacDonalds, it is a part of the Americanization and has become a part of our system - both physical and theological. We evaluate currency by the Big Mac Index⁶, even though you never been to Disney World you know it is the "Happiest place on earth" and we know that the ever human dream about flying is solved by Red Bull. The American culture is now the whole world's culture. The United States, a nation not older than 246 years old, defines us. You could say an impersonator working like an alchemist, one who in blindness is trying to find the secret recipe of gold and gratification. And as they perform for an audience willing to accept and believe their illusion, I perform to underline that the illusion has become reality.

⁶ The Economist. Burgernomics. The Big Mac Index. 2nd February 2022. <https://www.economist.com/big-mac-index> (17/03/22)



Image 7, Searching for my Inner Elvis in a Post Elvis Society, 18th of march 2022, Photo: Niklas Palmklint

The sublime, the divine and the One Above All



Image 8 Maj/a, Maja Fredin 2018

I was brought up believing in nothing. Raised as a single child, in an atheist home, by my father and (by that time) my stepmother who were, as I remember it, mostly fighting. My mother has been, as far as my memory goes, chaotically absent in another town. I know all of them tried the best they could to raise me, but I was often left with the feeling of being unwanted. Now in my adulthood this is no longer an issue for me and I do not tell you all this to pity me, because I don't feel pity for myself. I just think it is relevant to clarify my background before I continue this chapter.

So, during my childhood years I came to spend a lot of time in my grandparents home. My grandmother (Maj), the one who taught me how to love and accept one another, did during these years believe in the Christian God. She did believe until she said that she had read enough, both scientifically, Biblical research and other religion and holy scripts, to stop believing. Until two years before she died in her sleep she was a part of the Swedish Church, a death caused by a too big heart they said. She got cremated and had a civil burial.

Maybe it was because of her I during my teen years of revolt I found myself in a Christian confirmation camp, trying to find out what I had been missing out on. I found the reading of the Bible interesting, good fiction. But when it came to the baptism-part, I left. I left because I felt nothing.

Nothing.

It is not that I look down on religious people, it is just that I am having a really hard time to accept this idea of that there is one truth and one truth only. This might sound like agnostic thoughts, but no, I still claim to believe in nothing. Everything you do is pointless until you create your own meaning.

But I do feel fascination for this acceptance. How we still accept the tradition of feeling ashamed and filthy for any deviant behavior. Looking back historically it is easy to say that the capitalizing and Americanization of our contemporary society is just as brutal as the Christian crusades. That during the Middle Ages in Europe Christianity was not a choice of belief it was a fact you just had to accept that the world around you functioned that way. The same way the colonizers went out on missions around the world and in the name of God brutally bloody concurred and captured civilizations, the individualistic American market concurred the whole planet in the name of the right of free choice.

As a living being in this world, humans are the only creatures that have systematically built up a structure around how to value labour. We have come to the point that every basic need to survive and every step on *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*⁷ comes with a price tag. So we do no longer have to believe - we have to accept that with money comes success and freedom.

And with this acceptance, that we live to consume, that we also accept that the meaning of life is to reproduce. I claim this because in a capitalistic society, we as long as we live have to consume and because the dead body will not consume, we have to reproduce.

To quote the artist Jenny Holzer, quoting Karl Marx;

"THE DESIRE TO REPRODUCE IS A DEATH WISH"

Jenny Holzer (Truism 1978-87)

I would say that just because reproduction could be the meaning of life, it is not the solution - reproduction is just an obligation to pass on the legacy of consumption.

⁷ Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs from the bottom of the hierarchy upwards: physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem, self actualization, <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html> (17/03/22)

So as when I in my artistry found myself using biblical references to criticize our consumption culture and draw parallels between shame, sin and desire, I was not surprised. I felt the urge to open up the Bible, not to find redemption nor salvation, but to find answers.

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”

Matthew 7:7-8

*There are four horsemen in the horizon, the rattling sounds of hooves.
I turn around to see a conquered world, filled with war, famine and death.
And I tell you,
dear reader,
The Apocalypse is here.*

Las Vegas -The facade of a Sign as a Sign

In the middle of a desert nowhere lays a town, not much older than 100 years, that never sleeps. I would claim "never sleep" since this city roughly generates 70 000 US dollar every second⁸. With the blink of an eye, more money than I could imagine gets lost in a carousel of amusement and devastation.

Like a giant bug zapper attracts flies, this city attracts around 42 million people per year⁹, luring with neon signs and bright lights.

Able to be seen from outer space, this swarming steaming hot dung hole of a city is one of the most light polluted cities on earth¹⁰. And as the concept of time is relative ($E=mc^2$), here, in this town, time stands still. Designed to make you lose your control over space and time. Nighttime is daytime, and with no instruments or guidelines to keep track of your surroundings you become your imaginary overlord in your own imaginary space - as long as you can pay for it. With your most real money.

Just like a modern Gomorrah, the biblical city built upon pleasure and greed, Las Vegas is built around it's notorious main street called "The Strip" - a place where the money talks and the one without King Midas touch will soon be found in the gutter. With no almighty God ready to judge and purify, one can argue that the hell once spoken of is on Earth.

A secret keeper, they say, 'cause "what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas"

Me? I never been there. So it is easy for me to sit here, letting myself dream away to the land of the unforgiven. I do know I sound harsh and judgmental in my words about Las Vegas, but there is no place on earth I feel the need to be more.

The nectar of capitalism, boiled down to a thick tar-like syrup has become the fuel for my engine in this creative process. And as I feed upon sin and desire in my research, I would claim that I found the purest source of inspiration. Smacking my lips as my mouth waters, I voraciously let myself get lost in the neon void of consumption.

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⁸ MarketWatch. Nevada casinos report \$2 billion gain in the 2019 fiscal year. Associated Press. 10/02/20. <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/nevada-casinos-report-2-billion-gain-in-the-2019-fiscal-year-2020-02-10> (1/06/21)

⁹ Statista. Number of visitors to Las Vegas in the United States from 2000 to 2020. Statista. 2021. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/221042/visitors-to-las-vegas/> (1/06/21)

¹⁰ Nasa. Las Vegas at Night. Nasa Earth Observatory. 30/11/2010. <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/47687/las-vegas-at-night> (1/06/21)

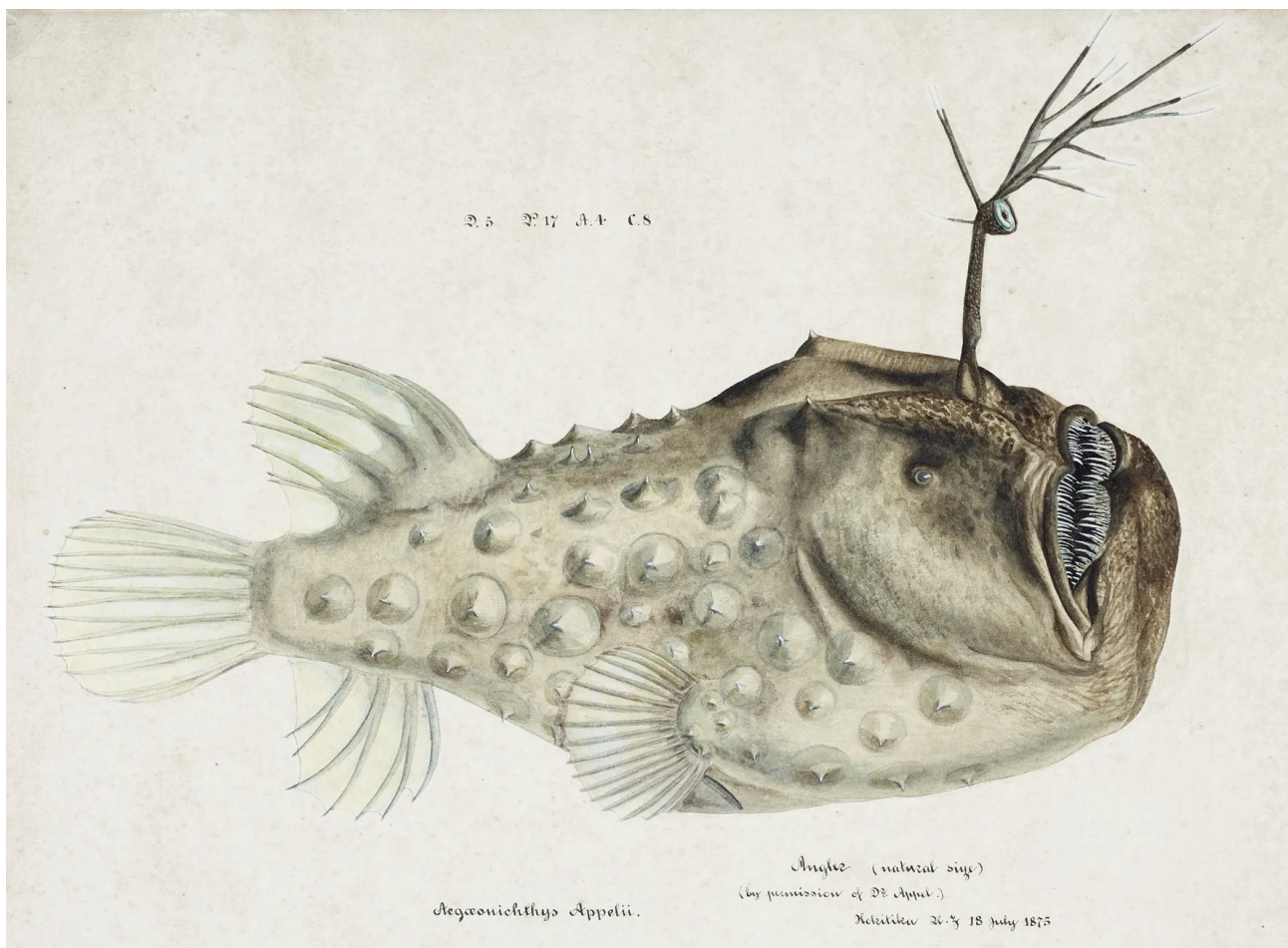


Image 9, Angler Fish

Reading the book "Learning from Las Vegas" by Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, a book about the architecture in Las Vegas, I found a fascination over signs.

Signs as in the use of marketing, a teaser you can call it, has here become more important than the building the sign actually representing. Much like how an angler fish would be helpless without its luminescent sprout, a building on the Las Vegas Strip could basically not exist without its sign.

And as the word sign is synonym with omen, a foretoken of what is yet to come, signs will become the kingpin in this chapter of my work. A sign is designed to speak directly to your feelings, working as a barrier between the spoken and the written word. A good sign, fulfilling it's purpose with bravura will give more information to its viewer/receiver in a flash of a second than reading this paper. A picture says more than a thousand words, a sign will pitch, sell and make you buy a concept before you even know what just happened. Therefore have signs become a power tool in the industry of the market. Just by walking down a street you been unconsciously buying and selling hundreds of concepts.

With this insight I would say that society would not work without signs. You would be lost in translation because there is nothing there to tell you what you are suppose to feel/see. A world without signs would within a minute collapse, end up in chaos and deaths.

Made by humans for humans the language of signs has become the Esperanto we once dreamed of. Working in silence, constantly whispering, demanding our attention they are there to tell us the things we already thought we knew.

And by this they make us live in the delusion that the choices we make are our own. That we live in a free world, life is like a flower and all you need is love.

But love is never free.

The Neon Dawn of the Four Flamingoes of the Apocalypse

Let me recap and I paint you the picture:

We stand here, in a Las Vegas-inspired setting, invited to an Eternal Shrimp Feast served by an imitation of an Elvis impersonator. There is cheap synthesized covers of well know ballads once sung by the King playing in the background. LED-lights are slowly shifting the colors of the soft floor carpet under your feet. But we are not alone here at this buffet of plastic seafood.

Because for the same reason we are here to eat shrimps, flamingoes has landed uninvited around the table to take part of the feast.

I eat shrimps because they gives me color; they makes my life interesting and worth living. A flamingo eats shrimps because it haves no choice. It is the only food they consume, and it is from their shrimp consuming habit the flamingoes gets it color. For a flamingo, eating shrimp has become their only truth and in the same way we have to consume to survive, the flamingo has to eat shrimps to survive. And just like us the flamingo are social creatures, the flamingo moves in flocks. Moving from place to place in a cramped pack it is easy to think as this bird as a *swarm*. A mass of consciousness, thinking and acting together but all separate living their own life codependent of each other.

To refer to Bauman *Consuming Life* (2007) again, in where he brings up a discussion about *swarms* as a group of individuals without any exchange or cooperation. To consume is an act of loneliness, if not the most lonely act even though if yo do it together with other individuals. But even though there is no exchange between the individuals in the swarm, they do feel a connection as a group. As one big body of individuals the swarm collects and consumes in masses.

So if the shrimp is, as I proclaimed earlier, my symbol of gluttony the flamingo has become the one who falls for the temptation. And with that said - We all are flamingos.

To make it even more clear - the connection is childishly easy. While the Flamingo gets its bright pink color by consuming large quantities algae (from where shrimps gets it pink colour) and brine shrimp¹¹, there is also The Flamingo Hotel in Las Vegas (where they do keep wild flamingos¹², and what I heard the stench from their feces can be overwhelming due to the desert climate). The

¹¹Smithsonian's National Zoo & Conservation Biology Institute. Why are Flamingos Pink? And Other Flamingo Facts. 29th Jun 2021. <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/news/why-are-flamingos-pink-and-other-flamingo-facts> (17/03/22)

¹² Ceasars Rewards. Flamingo Las Vegas Attractions. 2021. Ceasars Entertainments <https://www.caesars.com/flamingo-las-vegas/things-to-do/wildlife-habitat> (1/06/21)

picture is laughingly fitting.

I need to emphasize that besides my own symbolism of this pink bird, the flamingo is a worldwide known symbol for the swingers community. So in this aspect, the flamingo serves its purpose very well as someone who indulge themselves in their lust and desire.

Here I once again need to point out that I am not judgmental, I have been there myself and I will always see myself, as what I might call myself after writing this text and to put it in Biblical terms, a sinner.

Putting all these puzzle pieces together I also put on my tin foil hat. At this stage in my research, everything seems connected and I need to take a step back before I fall into a puzzling state of mind. Starting to feel like Shelby in the movie Memento, (Christopher Nolan, 2000), everything falls in place as I investigate myself.

It's easy to search for something, when yo know what you are looking for.



Image 10, Flamingo in process - Maja Fredin 2022

Then thinking about the flamingo as a creature that consumes in blindness, it's thereby a creature who is a follower. It is a social bird that lives in flocks so if the Shrimp speaks the truth and the Flamingo is the follower, I naturally will have to make four flamingo sculptures to make my point heard and to illustrate the Apocalypse.

My flamboyance of flamingoes serves as apostles of a doomed world. Willing to eat from my Eternal Shrimpfeast, they will stand in collected silence to consume my sermon.



Image 11, Flamingo in process - Maja Fredin 2022

Conclusion: The meaning of life is to ~~re~~Produce

*"How I wish that there were more
Than the twenty-four hours in the day
Even if there were forty more
I wouldn't sleep a minute away"¹³*

So begins the second verse of the song "Viva Las Vegas" performed by Elvis Presley and I couldn't agree more. These four lines of lyrics have become my mantra the past semesters and even though Elvis sings about spending money in Las Vegas, I think almost everybody who lives in this consumer society can relate to it. Since I decided to make almost everything in my work by hand. My Elvis jumpsuit, from the dyeing of the fabrics to hand stitch over two thousand rhinestones on just the cape. My pile of shrimps that never stops to grow. My flamingoes, sculpted in metal, covered in hand dyed lycra and the hundreds of hand- sewn silk feathers I painted stitched on one by one. I lost track of time. I could argue and make you believe that I do this as an act of making art as a revolt against the capitalist and the mass consuming society.

Just saying that I am making art that is so expensive I could never afford it myself, is somehow philosophical pleasing thought, but that would be a lie to myself and a way of glueing my theses together with a cheap glitter glue stick.

In many way working like this is a distraction from other things, a replacement too, what I might call it, distasteful behavior. But I would not call it therapeutic work either, since I do have an unhealthy relationship towards my method. Removing the "sex, drugs - rock 'n' roll" in "sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll" all I have left is the "and?". A small word, working like an urging question, promptly asking me to put more and more and more, time, in to my piece.

I do get tunnel vision, I lose myself, time and space do not longer exist. I forget how to eat, sleep and nothing else really matters. It is at this moment, when I feel the closest to myself, the surrounding that I created is taking form.

¹³ Written by Doc Pomus and Mort Shuman, 1964 for Elvis Presley and the movie Viva Las Vegas. <https://www.allmusic.com/song/viva-las-vegas-mt0001628410> (17/03/22)

I am High.

I am Holy.

A religious experience.

The Creator.

The creation.

But as since the meaning of life worth living in a capitalistic society is to consume and reproduce. I tell you now, from a perspective of an art crafter, that the meaning of my life is to produce. The thing we leave behind us is what story that is going to be told.



Image 12

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Image References:

Image 1: Searching for my Inner Elvis in a Post Elvis Society, 18th of march 2022, Photo: Niklas Palmklint

Image 2: Youth is Like Diamonds in the Sun - Maja Fredin 2016

Image 3: I will die, (with or) without you - Maja Fredin 2019

Image 4: Still Life with Landscape, Abraham van Beijeren, 1650s, Hohenbuchau Collection, https://snl.no/Abraham_van_Beyeren (17/03/22)

Image 5: Majla, - Maja Fredin 2018

Image 6: Group of ETA's setting world record for the most Elvis Impersonators in one location, London 17th April, 2005, Paul Smith/Martin Fox. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Elvis_impersonators_record.jpg (17/03/22)

Image 7: Searching for my Inner Elvis in a Post Elvis Society, 18th of march 2022, Photo: Niklas Palmklint

Image 8: Majla, Maja Fredin 2018, photo Pär Fredin

Image 9: Antique Prickly anglerfish drawn by Fe. Clarke (1849-1899). Original from Museum of New Zealand. <https://www.rawpixel.com/image/8877/free-illustration-image-fish-sea-watercolor-background> (17/03/22)

Image 10: Flamingo in process - Maja Fredin 2022

Image 11: Feet - Maja Fredin, 2022

Image 12: Me working - Maja Fredin - 2022

Image 13: Searching for my Inner Elvis in a Post Elvis Society, 18th of march 2022, Photo: Niklas Palmklint

*"I once was lost,
But now I'm found"*

-Amazing Grace - John Newton, 1772



Image 13, Searching for my Inner Elvis in a Post Elvis Society, 18th of march 2022, Photo: Niklas Palmklint

Thank you, Thank you very much;

Martin Seipel for the fantastic work with the karaoke-covers,

Niklas Palmklint for the amazing portraits,

Pär Fredin for excellent documentation of my works,

Johan Hedbäck and Joakim Mattsson Ödmand for the much needed extra proofreading

And a special thank you to all my friends and family who is always there to support me.