

“Take your protein pills and put your helmet on....”

An introduction on Failure.

Failure makes uncomfortable. Failure among our contemporaries has no space. No room for development. No room for address. Failure –in other words– should not exist, according to the present society. Do we in Critical Studies feel the same? We shouldn't, of course. Theoretically each of us (at large, not only in CS or in Academy) allows a margin of failure in life. *But maybe not this time...*

If we fail here (and now), we will jeopardize the future credibility. From where we stand it's impossible to talk about failure in a positive sense, nor develop a notion of failure, without suspicion. We set our expectations on a high level, and we don't even consider the possibility of not achieving them. Hence, what is important in programs like Critical Studies is to attempt to dispense with the error-phobia that envelope us in a perennial mist. Not only we are scared of failing, in physical and mental terms, sometimes we set up mechanisms of self-censorship. We don't even allow ourselves to think we can fail, and things can go wrong. What does exactly mean things can go wrong?

When we expect something from someone else or some situation, we want to enjoy the most of it. We get ideas; we plan them, put to work and enjoy the results. Still, the possibility to fail is not harming anything. Failure is a precious space where we can stretch our boundaries and experiment with another dimension of living. At this point, most of you will feel the urge to ask why should we fail? It's not that we should fail in order to live better. We should simply allow ourselves the space, the mental dimension, of failure. We live in a win-win society, where one cannot afford to step into something wrong. For instance, we cannot bear the thought to lose our time following someone or something, which in the end disappears and leave us alone. This can happen in love as well as business. In our deeds we invest feelings, time, money, and so –because it's an investment– we expect something back. A return, some results. We cannot conceive an action freed from expected effects, freed from the obligation to avoid errors. It hurts us to see and to think about our failure. We can bear only someone else's failure. And we don't want to be that someone else.

There's a school of thought arguing that *there's no right to fail, but a duty to experiment*. Fine. Does it mean that an experiment cannot fail? Why do we take away the word 'fail'? We fail in studies, jobs, loves. We fail permanently, as well as not. In writing these lines, we're probably failing to communicate exactly our thoughts to you, completely or to some extent. The list of failure of the 2005/06 CS group can be read in this light. We failed, a lot, as well as not. And we failed sometimes because we were overly generating, and couldn't fit everything in place. Other times because we weren't able to carry out a commitment, or none of us felt like, and the project collapsed on itself for obvious lack of time and resources. Other times again, we failed because we initiated something already doubtful, and it went worse and worse. And in some occasions we managed to successfully complete something totally different from what we started. Is that a failure?

Chronological Order of Failed Projects Galore

Critical Studies Track Suit -- I don't remember who came up with this idea of making the Critical Studies track suits with a big logo on. The idea was for all of us to wear it at the opening of Common Ground project (and for everyday use for some brave ones, but not me) to mark our humble debut to the Malmö scene. ...Critically absurd, but that's the idea. I wasn't keen, but there is no democracy in Critical Studies. Soon the Critical Studies logo was made and each one of us was allocated a size (female size 10 for Alfredo, etc). Though the suit didn't get materialized as we found it'd be a expensive laugh. Thank god. **KFC**

Galleri Henri / Rose Room -- We dreamed about re-naming extremely unsexy 'Test Site', which sounds like a virus incubation room. Can't we just call it something more normal, something a little more friendly to approach... Like Henry. Galleri Henry! But someone else came up with another name with full elegance: Rose Room. We thought Rooseum might not like it, so we decided to be incubated. **KFC**

Inviting People – What happens when brains are fried by too much biennial and Mediterranean sunlight? People start to dream about inviting other people to come and join the merrymaking in the slightly less sunny, but still hearty environments of Malmö. The Critical Studies had fabulous plans of taking over the guest list, and the potential list of dinner guests included such glittery names like: Yael Bartana, Claire Bishop, and Greg Brodowicz. But alas, the party was poorly managed, as the mistress of the house was often incognito, and as for the servants, all were busy thumbing through the employment section to find positions in other Estates, whose reputations held greater promises of achieving dreams in the land of opportunity. **J**

CS Language institute – Welcome to the other Critical Studies business venture, selling one of our many marketable products at the stalls here in Malmö. Speak German with a native German speaker! Upgrade your business English with a real American! Traveling to the Far East? Learn your elementary Japanese and Korean with two native Asians! Practice your Turkish before hitting the next Istanbul Biennial. Have you always wanted to sing the romantic Italian songs in its original language? Our Italian teacher can bend your tongue to pronounce the perfect r's. How about learning other languages in the Nordic area? We have two very qualified teachers who can enlighten you on the mysteries of Finnish and Kierkegaardian depths of Danish. Our institute was to be housed in the chambers of Gasverksgatan 22, whose acoustics are modeled after the great church of Notre Dame in Paris, allowing one to sound heavenly no matter how experimental the grammar structures may be. **J**

Critical Studies website, blog (1) and blog (2) -- Creepy stuff. Years ago the first CS group obtained the domain name www.criticalstudies.net, kindly paid by the Lund University. It worked for a few months to present the CS participants' individual projects, and since then lies in a sort of cyber limbo never clicked. Common destiny, you would argue, but that's more. In Summer 2005 a brave (blond, male, and Danish) participant gathered the energy and opened a blog, <http://criticalstudies.blogspot.com>, where we could have exchanged ideas and feedback, post texts and pictures. With the same results of the previous one. A third virtual space, this time from our proactive CS secretary Jakob, came along with the improbable address <http://cs.beyondimage.dk/> for seminar schedules, holidays, commitments, text titles. Same same.

An obscure force keeps at distance every CS participant from any virtual activity that isn't gambling or emailing. Christian H. tried a last shot in Spring 2006, emailing for

some time the rest of the group with news and updates that could have been found on his/ours blog. We love you, Christian. Anyway. **A**

Eli's Drop -- From New York to Malmö is a courageous trip. Malmö is small, shy, closed and dark. People hide in their flats in Malmö. Hiding in flats is unbearable for someone coming from an open city "citta aperta". Eli Ping is a minimalist sweetheart. A self denying theory buff. The macho artist of big sculptures. The hiphop dance floor heater. A mellow heartbreaker. The Emu oil promoter. The former occupant of the big green leather couch in CS. Malmö was a bit too much for him I guess. He departed before Christmas without properly saying goodbye. The last time together was drinking Christmas beers in the oldest bar of Copenhagen with Alfredo. He had left before the party started, we generally think. Love u Eli. **OE**

Missing Parties -- For me, the party animal of CS, missing parties was one of the biggest issues. I like seeing people on the dancefloor. Seeing people on the dancefloor here means all barriers are up. Difficult business. Means people give up their shyness. It can cost quite a number of beers. Then it's an open ground...Common Ground parties made people happy. The master bartender in Tempo, husband of our technician Sophie, still asks about them and says "You made me feel good that night." We intended to continue but couldn't because of different formal and informal reasons (the notorious CS vodka mix, sensitive neighbours, etc...) But you missed a gorgeous working party in CS room all days and nights long behind the closed door. Life is hard. **OE**

Konstfak – Arranged marriages can work if there is a big dowry. If not, well it's more challenging to reach the collaborative stage, unless the other party is extremely affable. In this case the two parties met, got timid then hostile and said, "leave me alone." However it is still a nice attempt, positivist attitude being our mascot. **J**

Road Movie -- In response to our missed collaboration with CuratorLab in Stockholm, we skillfully developed an alternative project with two of the Konstfack students, Alejandra and Mia. A daunting task: a proper underground road movie, Malmö-Stockholm-Malmö. To hell and return (sort of). A noir-psycho-fetish filmic drama in Swedish territory, with a German engine (Christian S. aka 'KITT/Supercar'), an Asian dominatrix (Juno, who else? Though she had reserves), and a real Nordic cannibal museum. References evaluated: darkness, domestic space, Russ Meyer, symphony of multiplicity, Wim Wenders, languages, Chris Marker, getting lost, coherence between content and form (hence, maybe, the difficulties) and –prophetically– failure. A missed collaboration in response to a missed collaboration. Truthfully, a missed opportunity for [quotes] *a discursive collective reflection on multiculturalism, and on what this actually means*. Pity. **A**

International Organization -- Critical Studies becomes global! A cultural NGO, an umbrella organization for cultural projects based in Denmark (primarily to get access to Danish funding programs), with subsidiaries in Finland, Germany, Turkey, Korea, Italy and Japan. Maybe in Sweden too, but that wasn't sure as we would have needed a base (and nobody from us is Swedish). Funding members were the CS 2005/06 participants, who would have develop ideas and project proposals alone or collectively, and then apply to cultural funds in different countries, according to what was available at the time of the funding (in terms of money and agenda), the nationalities of producers and promoters, the peculiarity of the project; with an eye on possible trans-national collaborations.

In short, the Hulliburton of the cultural scene, the Nestlé of the artistic production, the Exxon of the engaged art. **A**

Book KeywordZZzzZZZzz-- "Aren't we supposed to choose among the keywords we collected to interview each other at some time in some part of the world? Hello? Anybody there? Hey, it is the deadline! Is this the dead end?" Nope, no answer. Lost in mobility. Another proof: Creative enthusiasm evaporates when CS people don't touch in time and space, face to face. Still makes me angry (a bit), I know I sound like that. The list is something to see, though. It will evolve, yes, it has been, for some days now. Attendance is obligatory this time. **OE**

CS featuring T.E.N.T aka inTENT -- The intent of inTENT was to make an extremely visible gesture in making CS "visible" in the year exhibition. We heard many times that all people in the school know about CS is its closed door. The project was intending to put up a tent where emptied Critical Studies ingredients were to be reinstalled. inTENT also intended to mock CS' existing outside of the borders of any institute. Well, don't ask what happened if you have managed to come this far reading the list. This is a usual CS mental state of mobility and suspension. **OE**

Missed Malmo Festival -- Our sincere apologies for ArtPort, the artist-curators for not responding to your kind email invitation to contribute to your project 'Unclassifiable' at 2007 Malmo Festival. It would have been a great opportunity for us unclassifiable cultural practitioners to be part of your project, but
Shit the invitation came again!!
Let's pretend we have a holiday to go for.... **KFC**

Refurbishing Simon Sheikh's Office on the Fourth Floor of Malmö Art Academy – We thought it was no longer appropriate for scholars to don the garbs and interiors of monks who have taken the vows of celibacy to kitsch and/or glamour. This is the brilliant interior design business idea, other wise known as CS-Team – the fashion and design police ready to kitsch up any boring office spaces with our leopard print wall paper and custom made lava lamps. Criticality does not have to mean austerity – there is always room for some colors and prints to express yourself in your space. We wanted to nominate Simon to be the first candidate to have his office remodeled by the CS-Team, as thanks to his brilliant navigation throughout the year. What prevented this? Well, nothing really except for our own critically engaged hesitancy. **J**