

***I RESIGNED FROM MY OWN
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WAS A POLITICAL MURDER
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BECAUSE I THINK ONE
SHOULD CALL THINGS BY
THEIR RIGHT NAME.***

Text by
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Portrait of the Artist Johanna Gustavsson, 2015, photo by SVILOVA

I'm starting to accept the fact that I'm useless. I never solve any of my problems because my existence seems to be the actual problem and resolving it would be to extinguish myself. Maybe I should? I am alone, ugly, I don't have a job, but wait, I lied before, I do have a place to stay – I am incarcerated, I am socially housed. I'm starting to hate other people. I don't respect them.

I was lying in bed last night thinking: Fuck it! You know, I'm the kind of person who smears everything with personal experiences. This is not meant as an artistic exercise, I hope you understand that. I'm not writing this to be safe, I'm already hurting all over.

I went to my therapist. I tell her that I'm dejected, this whole thing about being open and trusting towards people doesn't work, and I'm thinking about shutting down again. I know why I'm depressed and there are practical political reasons that I feel like I have very little impact on changing. Learning how to express what I want only makes me realize the impossibility of it and I only feel worse.

I tell her: I feel abnormal, like I'm in the wrong place at the wrong time. She says that she understands. That it's good that I'm allowing myself to feel things but I might not be able to handle it right now, that I need protection, and she says that she wants to help protect me and that I might think about taking anti-depressives, but that's something you have to decide for yourself, she says, and I start to cry. I don't want to take medicine. I know, she says, but you need some sort of protection.

She continues: What you feel is political anger because of a real political situation, I understand, the situation is fucked up. I don't want to take away that anger, because it's what drives you, but at the same time I want to protect you enough for you to want to live. You are depressed, but not suicidal, she asks with a lingering question mark.

SVILOVA | KARIN MICHALSKI

If neo-liberalism's contempt for weakness wasn't so imprinted in me I would kill myself, I answer.

(And yes, this is only one of life's paradoxes.)

If I didn't feel like killing myself would be giving up on We and losing, I would do it.

She looks at me with a serious face. Then she brings up the drugs and I start to cry.

It's double, she says while I cry, your anger and despair over things is completely understandable and obvious, how can I suggest taking the edges off your political anger with drugs? At the same time you have to live in the political situation... I know it's impossible. And you know it too.

I have an overwhelming feeling that we're always in the wrong place at the wrong time. I resigned from my own existence yesterday. It was a political murder and I would like you to address it as such because I think one should call things by their right name. She and I, we where the others. Institutions called us special. They looked at us and they didn't like it. But they didn't look at us with that obvious look of condemnation that gives you an identity, no, it was a silent disgust. They look at you out of the corner of their eye, they never look right at you. Everything is, and remains, in silence. At times, we felt like we were in control and we liked ourselves as we were – more desiring then desired. We seemed to lack any ambition to please, we were not enjoyable people. We were forced together through a formulation by them. We were just not sympathetic. We refused to change (we had no choice!) we remained a threat.

Yes, I've had bad times, just like you. But, I don't have to tell you times aren't good, you know that.

Lack of housing, privatization, the sold-out welfare state, institutional racism, class-based humiliation, decades of individualism, competition and egoism supported by the state combined with a systematic repression of unions and the criminalization of difference. We know things aren't good, they're worse then bad! And you react by protecting yourself, leave us alone in our living rooms, let us finish the kitchen renovation, let us at least keep our TVs, let me protect what's mine, leave us alone! But I'm not gonna leave you alone! I won't tell you to write to the government or the media or the municipality because I couldn't tell you what to write to them. I can't explain the financial crisis or inflation but I know enough to tell you to open your eyes and raise your voices. I want you to get angry! I want you to get mad! I want that anger to raise your bodies and raise your voices and say: I'm a human being damn it! My life has value! I'm a complete mess right now but I'm on fire! I'm not afraid of anything today!

Our life's will withers away if we accept the decisions that are made over our heads. The neo-liberals talk about freedom of choice, but what does a choice matter when you only have bad things to choose from? I don't want to be free from you, I want to be with you. We have to learn to put up with each other.

I hereby declare neo-liberalism's common sense and the right-wing consensus to be over. It just didn't work. The struggle continues.

/Johanna Gustavsson

ABOUT THE WRITER

[Johanna Gustavsson](#) is an artist currently based in Gothenburg, Sweden. Her work focuses on feminist, race and class-related issues, through mediums such as text, performance and social interactions. Her work has included numerous collaborations, e.g.: FAGS – Feminist Art Gallery Solidarity, Radikal pedagogik, MFK–Malmö Free University for Women, the YES! association, I want a president... , Nobody Puts Baby In A Corner, The Production Unit.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

[Karin Michalski](#) works as a filmmaker, artist and film and videoart curator and lecturer in Berlin. She studied Film Directing and Production (creative producing) at the German Film and Television Academy Berlin (dffb) as well as Journalism, Political and Educational Science at the universities of Mainz and Berlin.

Since 2001 she has been organising the queer-feminist Film and Video Art Program series clipclub (in collaboration with Renate Lorenz and other curators) and she works as a Film and Video Art Curator, creating programs for art institutions, festivals and conferences.

She received the LBC Award for the Most Promising Newcomer in International Documentary at the Bird's Eye View Women's Film Festival in London in 2005.

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