

FROM BEING JEALOUS OF A BLIND DOG'S DREAMS

Text by Nora Arrhenius Hagdahl

GEORG NORDMARK
2022

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"As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect." I awoke one morning from uneasy dreams and found myself transformed into a dog? CBT - LSD! Change my way and change my perception. Pet me; feed me, I can sit - I'm a good dog!

In many ways, Georg's work plays a brazen game with minimalist tradition, at times embracing its aesthetics and ideas, then bluntly rejecting its premises, even mocking it. Looking at the three neurotically symmetric gray monochromes or at the carpet on the floor, the black and white paintings of Frank Stella immediately come to mind - lines creating optical illusions. The minimalist idea that "what you see is what you see" is however not the case in Georg's works; his pieces are not without referents. In *Untitled (Thicket)* the gridded pattern is woven out of firehose, *Untitled (Pasture/Training Pad)* is a piece of plastic lawn and in *Blind Dog Browser* tennis balls with small bells inside, objects usually used for playing fetch with blind dogs, are put in neat rows.

Use your garden hose to clean me. Spray me! Spray me again! I'm running in circles and I can't catch my tail. Get me out of my loop, see me, feed me, love me. I'm helpless. If I roll around will you pet my belly? Please? Throw that ball and I will get it. Do it again. Do it again. Do it again. All I want to do with my life is to play fetch with you my master. I love you, I love you, I love you, I love food.

Nordmark has continuously worked with objects appropriating environmental enrichment: items normally used for providing stimuli to captivated animals in understimulated environments. In zoos you see stones and cliffs made out of plastic to resemble an ape's natural, rocky environment or fake cardboard 1:1 cutouts looking just like (and serving as company for) the leopards inside the enclosure - the toilet paper tubes in hamster cages also come to mind. These environmental enrichers are used to soothe the animals, otherwise anxious because of the restraints captivity entails. The gray *Untitled (Pasture / Training Pad)* looks nothing like real grass to me. I wonder if it does to a blind dog? In hyperreality, everything is a copy without origin. According to Baudrillard, that's the modern condition. Would I notice if I kissed a copy of my boyfriend? Would I stroke my hand against rubber and not flesh? Would I realize if they exchanged the sun for an enormous light bulb?

Robert Morris claimed that minimalist sculpture was meant to create awareness of the body of the viewer; the artwork becomes an object of comparison. With *Untitled (Feed Chair)* I become embarrassingly reminded of my corporeality. Not only do I have a body, I am a body and my body has needs. Again and again, Georg points to the viewer being a primal, biological being. He demands us to be.



GEORG NORDMARK
Untitled (Feed Chair)
Emeco navy chair, aluminium dog bowl, vertebrae bone
86 x 39 x 50 cm
2022

Sniff, sniff. Lick, lick. Peeing in the corner.

The modernist art critic Michel Fried wrote that the lack of framing in minimalist art resulted in blurring the line between the beholder and work. Hence, the work of art becomes the situation it creates. In George Nordmark's *Blind Dog Browser* one of the balls has literally jumped off the frame and landed on the floor in front of it, creating a condition where the beholder and work are not at arm's length, the work invites interaction. The exhibition becomes a playroom.

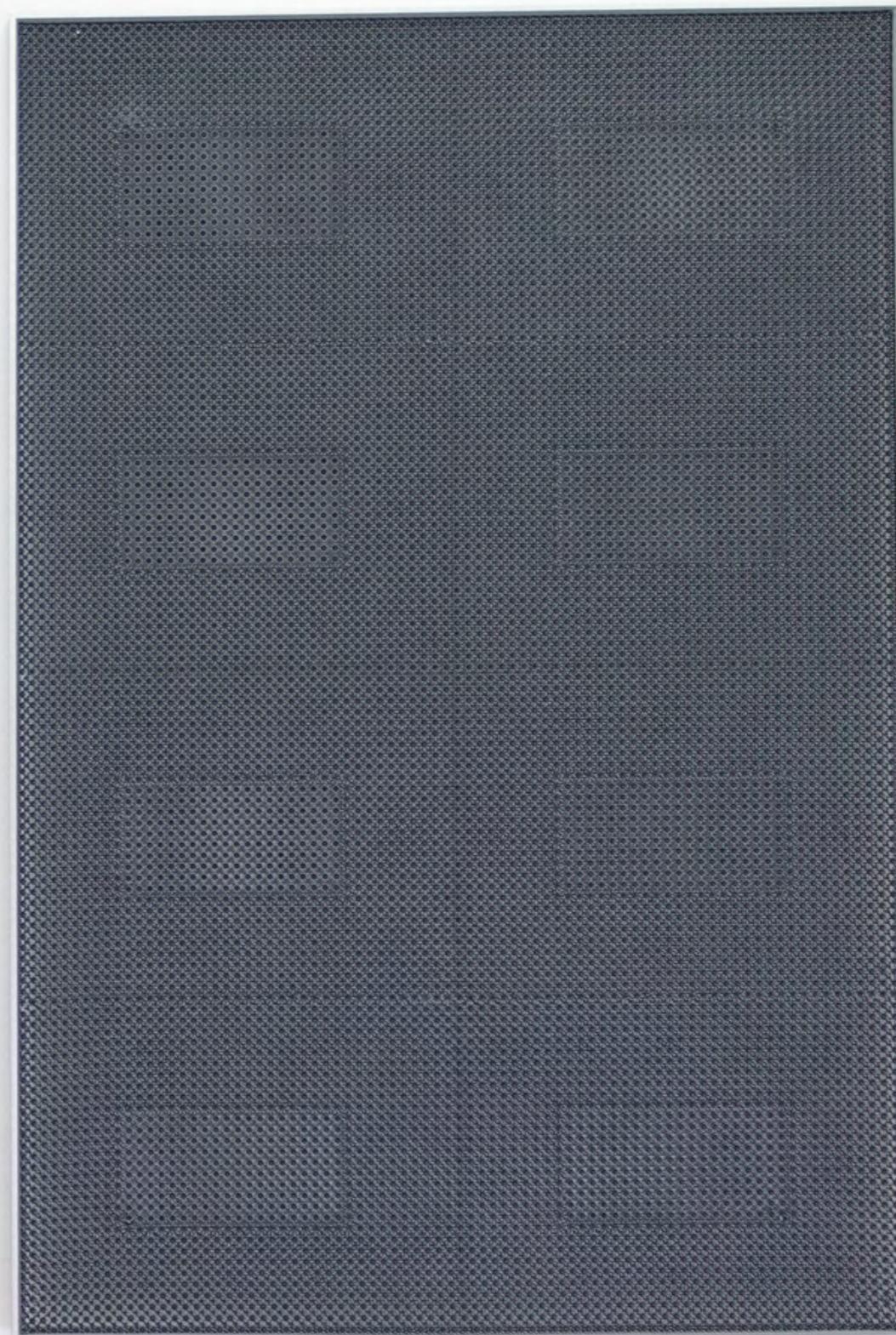
The relationship between work and viewer isn't passive, as with two bodies orbiting each other. When looking at Georg Nordmark's art I feel as if he dominates me. First, he takes my vision. The artificial grass ain't greener on the other side, it's gray, and I'm color blind just like a dog. B.F Skinner said that changes in behavior are the results of an individual's response to stimuli in its environment. Existence precedes essence and in contrast to what Sartre thought that meant, in this Pavlovian manner, unwillingly I enter the role of the animal. Like a mouse released in a new cage, I'm sniffing, feeling, gazing, and trying to find ways of interacting with the objects around me. Georg Nordmark is the zookeeper, engineering my actions and catching my attention.

Am I supposed to put that ball back into its hole? What happens if I do? Will I get a treat? I'm a good dog.

I feel as if I'm watched. Like a guinea pig, I'm hypnotized by the optical illusion created with *Snake Charmed - Achromatic*. I understand the circles aren't supposed to be moving, but they do it anyway. Rational truth is defeated by my biological functioning.



GEORG NORDMARK
Untitled (Thicket)
Firehose, aluminium stretcher bars
170 x 114 x 10 cm
2022



GEORG NORDMARK
Untitled (Pasture / Training Pad)
Astroturf, aluminium picture frame
180 x 120 x 3 cm
2022

Woff, woff

Is art itself not just stimuli, distracting us from our own imprisonment? As Debord said in his book *The Society of the Spectacle*: "...in modern society life has been replaced with its representation". Culture is our drug, our distraction. We are so occupied with the spectacular images that we can't see our own cage.

Zzzzzzz...

Nora Arrhenius Hagdahl

Nora Arrhenius Hagdahl is an art writer, critic, and curator based in Berlin and Stockholm. She writes regularly in *Dagens Nyheter*, *Office Magazine*, *Numero*, *King Kong Magazine*, to name a few. She is editor-in-chief of *Nuda Paper* and the library curator of *Voo Store* in Berlin.



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