

# Slapping Scenes

## Susanne Clausen

One of those nightly Google and YouTube sessions. Search terms “Interview with” and “performance.”

A sonorous commentator’s voice announces an interview sequence with a famous young woman. White title on a green background. The first thing you see are slender hands noting something with a thin pencil and then rolling together a small piece of paper. The piano playing in the background slowly grows louder. A child is sitting at the piano. She has short blonde hair and is wearing a pretty dress. The child is playing, then turns around and smiles proudly into the camera. Cut to the hand nervously rolling the small piece of paper open and closed. Next to the ashtray is a half-full pack of Roth-Händle cigarettes. The piano can still be heard in the background. The woman is speaking into a microphone, and her head is slightly lowered. The camera keeps the woman in one corner of the visual field, revealing a table with a floral tablecloth in the background.

*I would like to shoot cold from the hip and Love is colder than capital, or perhaps rather a scenario full of warm concepts: sofa, love, life, loss.*

The hands snip off the cigarette into an ashtray. She has a determined voice: *Private matters are imminently political; raising children is terribly political; seen from the perspective of the children, the place of the family, the stable, human place of the family is absolutely necessary ... and essential.* Cut. She lights a match. *Difficult, terribly difficult ... it is difficult, terribly difficult. ...* the voice breaks off, the match flickers. So this woman has problems. She lowers her head, but nevertheless directs a brief rebellious gaze upward. She says: *Naturally it’s a lot simpler if you have a wife who does all that, who takes care of the kids and everything works out. ... and children really do need stable relationships, and everything, and someone who has a lot of time for them. And if you are a woman, and don’t have anyone who can take that over for you, you have to do everything yourself. And that is terribly difficult ...*

So a bad mother. The woman’s face is now lowered:

*So that’s the problem of all politically active women, my own too, that on the one hand they are doing socially necessary work ... but on the other hand sit there just as helplessly with their children as all other women do ...*

The handheld camera floats over the woman. Her face is framed by dark bangs. The camera tracks nervously up to and away from the woman, and her answers become dialectical.

*The central oppression of women, if her life is made to contradict her private life ... if you can call it a contradiction when political work has nothing to do with your private life, then something is wrong, then it’s a perspective that cannot be endured. You can’t pursue antiauthoritarian politics and then beat your children at home. But in the long run, you can’t not beat your children at home without pursuing politics, without fighting for the elimination of competition outside the family ... which is where everyone ends up who starts to ... leave her family. ...*

Now the message of the film clip is insistent: the woman really is a bad mother. *Keywords: psychology, critique of kitsch, comedy of despair.*

*Voice: The conflict between private life and political ambition remained, even grew worse as a result of her new role as the mother of two children. She felt overwhelmed, tortured, to the point of despair. ... A few months later she left her own children.*

New search: "Competence for one's own problems."

*Why do I want to maintain my ambition to realize myself in my profession despite the precarious circumstances of the work? And does it still work?*

*Should I hit her? Should I? Do you want me to hit her in the face?*

Search: "Slapping scene." Open a new window.

An actress is standing on the front of the rehearsal stage and has to explain why she does not want to allow herself to be slapped by her colleague as the work requires. She reacts hysterically. The author of the play they are rehearsing is sitting in the parquet, annoyed. *You find that funny?* This famous scene is apparently being staged by students here. In this scene, the actress can no longer calm down at all. She rolls on the floor, wails hysterically; her male colleague: *You don't get to me, you really don't get to me.* René Pollesch reads the logic of creating art out of this slapping scene. So the actors rehearse on an evidently moving Broadway play. *Keyword: Successful product and everyone falls out of character; keyword: Rebellion in miniature.*

*I have lost touch with reality; reality simply no longer seems real to me anymore.*

Making a move becomes a problem here because it stands for everything you doubt: explainability, resolution, crisis, success. *How do norms emerge in the defect and how does understanding process these defects?* The scene is no longer a brief aperçu but appears rather as a model that causes the regulation and its outputs to be considered more selectively.

**Susanne Clausen** and **Pavlo Kerestey** initially formed Szuper Gallery as a tool to explore the concept of gallery as institutional critique. Operating as an artists' collective, they have since moved on to larger sites for art production and continue to renegotiate their East-West experiences through a number of projects looking at precarious working conditions, disaster narratives and social choreography. They recently exhibited at GRAD London, Western Front Vancouver (2014), National Museum of Art Ukraine (2013), Perm Museum of Contemporary Art (2012), Kunstmuseum Thun (2012), MacKenzie Art Gallery (2011), Kunsthalle Helsinki (2005) and Para/Site Art Space, Hong Kong (2005). Susanne Clausen is a Professor in Art the University of Reading