

Holes in the Cheese of my Life

Nicolina Eklund





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*“Have you ever had that feeling - that you’d
like to go to a whole different place and
become a whole different self?”*

- Haruki Murakami
The Wind Up Bird Chronicle



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**My Mother's Hole
- an Introduction**



Ever since my mother was a child she was always fascinated with what she couldn't see. She stuck her finger in a snake's pit and got hospitalised for a week. She put her finger inside a mink's den and got badly bitten. She found a hole in the ground just big enough for the same finger and found a nest of ground dwelling wasps. This endless and fearless curiosity for what we cannot see or guess she passed on to me. But my finger wasn't enough, I wanted my whole body to fit in the hole, I needed to submerge into the unknown. I started having cravings of digging holes to sit inside.

Some things just suddenly take shape and touch you, you know. They reach into your soul, your body. Penetrating your eyes like the first sun you've seen in two months and it stays in your mind as a concept, a perspective, an interdisciplinary science. The thing I'm talking about is a hole. It's just a hole. Or maybe it is THE hole. Do you know which one I'm talking about?

My first hole was the well in Haruki Murakami's *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*. My second hole was my brother's grave. My third hole was a construction site for a public art-project. Something is made by taking away, not adding, cutting roots, ripping the face of the earth to put something (someone) in there. It felt so unexplainably significant to be near or inside the hole I started questioning myself why these holes mean so much to me, why they attract me and found out that many other artists also are busy with it. The hole offers not only physical space but also new territory for our minds to wander in metaphysically and philosophically, even spiritually. To regard a hole as an object is to deny the order of spaces in the logic of the material world - it's nothing, but it's definitely something, a kind of paradox of values, and what this exactly is I hope to find out during our walk on a warped time line of art history, peeping in and out through different holes.

The Manifesto of the Hole



A hole. As simple as that. Or is it? What is actually a hole? I know a lot of us know a lot of different holes, so to conform our minds and ideas about the subject for this thesis I define what kind of holes I'm going to talk about. A hole can be:

-a space dug in the surface of the ground or: a space in the surface of something that goes partly or completely through it

-can be irregular around the edge and of various depth but it should be somewhat circular and at least twice as deep as its diameter

-a place to hide, take shelter or store something inside of, but remember that being IN the hole can mean being in a wretched and dreary place, to be depressed or to be at disadvantage

-a trace, a piece of evidence, a leftover from a situation

-a space that you can't see, appearing by measuring the visual effects on what is known

-a negative presence, that exist through its non-existence

-something missing, something taken, something made through subtraction

-a damage, a wound, a fault

-a demanding to be filled, a need of something, a lack of something or someone

-an exit, an entry, an opening, a possible portal to another dimension or consciousness



The Pit from which Conceptual
Art crawled out of



I was sitting at the kitchen table and watched my stepdad frying sausages in a pan on the stove. We don't talk so much, even if we're getting along better now - but still. I told him my new field of interest was the hole, and asked if it would be possible for me to dig a hole in the garden, big enough for me to sit inside. He said that first of all that's not a hole I'm talking about, it's a pit, and second, he preferred me going up on the attic and dig through my old stuff there so that they finally could finish the renovation that's been going on for as long as I can remember. I did and found my old diaries. Turns out that I've been a genius and a prophet since I was thirteen - but that's another story. He knew a lot about digging holes, or as he would say - pits. He dug the hole for the flagpole in a crevice in the rock beneath the lawn. It was one and a half meters deep and he used a shovel. He could talk for hours about the best ways of digging holes and we googled different methods to expertise the usage of the shovel.

Many artist have through times mastred the shovel as the means of making groundbreaking holes. One of them was Claes Oldenburg*. In 1967 he termed his excavation in the grounds of Central Park as an invisible monument. It was a grave, dug out by a professional gravedigger and filled up by the end of the day. The work called Placid Civic Monument was his first contemporary sculpture made directly into the ground. It was interpreted and referenced to as a "grave for dead art" and even "a wounded virgin". Oldenburg himself had another explanation for the work and he stated:

"By not burying a thing the dirt enters into the concept, and little enough separates the dirt inside the excavation from that outside... so that the whole park and its connections, in turn enter into it. Which meant that my event is merely the focus for me of what is sense, or in the corner of a larger field..."

It was guys like him and Lawrence Weiner** that changed the status of the sculpture from a transportable object - into being a (w)hole situation, not movable, not to mention the mess they created in the art market for these unsellable and ephemeral new sculptures.

Years later land art like the excavation in Central Park moved in to the galleries. The sign at the door cautions; THE INSTALLATION IS PHYSICALLY DANGEROUS AND INHERENTLY INVOLVES THE RISK OF SERIOUS INJURY OR DEATH. It's 2007 and You is on display at Gavin Brown in New York. It's a huge hole. It's a huge hole in the floor. It's a huge hole in the floor of the gallery, down in the red New York soil underneath it. As a more present reminder of the holes of the sixties Urs Fischer*** celebrates the idea of the (empty) gallery as an art work and at the same time, in it's clownlike exaggeration, it can be considered to be making fun of the convention. Bordering between madness and total sense this new hole remakes an old hole, in the way we look at galleries and museums today.

extract from interview- magazine.com 26-11-2008:

GB: So what are you going to do in a year's time, when it's all melted down, every bank's gone bust, and there are no more galleries or collectors?

UF: There aren't many spiritual values now in art.

GB: Do you ever worry about your footprint?

UF: Yeah. The whole art world is being filled with all these fairs and flying all that crap in crates all over the world in planes. Jesus.

GB: We've got a big footprint here, too.

*UF: Then I think we've all got to become poets****.*



*Claes Oldenburg (born in 1929, Stockholm, living in New York since 1965), was a pioneer of the Happening; to present an event as a work of art. The body of work he created together with his wife Coosje van Bruggen has made, and still makes, a great impact on the pop art movement.

**Lawrence Weiner (1942) was one of the heavyweights from the 60's, a godfather of conceptual art, who's work often were mere texts, instructions on how to perform the work, like "Two minutes of spray paint directly on the floor". He also spent six years in the Californian desert making craters as individual sculptures using explosives. During the baptism of Conceptual Art, Weiner held a speech containing advices for the new born art form and his "Declaration of Intent" (1968) could as well have meant what the burning bush meant to christians:

The artist may construct the piece.

The piece may be fabricated.

The piece need not be built.

***Maybe if Fischer (born in Switzerland in 1973) would have finished his studies in art school he would have learned about Chris Burden (more about Burden in *Drilling our Way out - Bodily Holes*) and the hole he made in a gallery floor more than 20 years before and maybe he would never have had the courage to do something as senseless and repetitive. Luckily he didn't. Today he lives in New York and exhibits his deconstructions all over the world. There is always a feeling of loss and decay in his installations and he embraces the imperfections with everyday materials sensitive to time such as fruit, bread, wax and clay.

****If I would have written this thesis as a poem:

I'm digging this hole

*I go there to think to think
follow me on this one*

*I dig a hole to think
it's a thinking pit*

*I dug that
and here I find*

*the spiritual value
of the hole*

It's an interesting fact, and you may have noticed it already, that it's mostly men digging holes. Men being busy with holes (more of that and Oldenburg's wounded virgin further on). Men being busy or just men being. It's like that in the current art history or history in general because we accept the fact that that is how it was back in the days. I have another view on that, and that is that history is constantly being re-written because we keep finding more facts we didn't know about before. Take a sidestep and look up the hole in art history named Himla af Klimt.

Sidestep: Klimt was an abstract painter before Picasso, Kandinsky and the rest. Unfortunately she thought that the world wasn't ready for her paintings back then, so she refused to show her abstract paintings as long as she lived, and wrote in her will that the paintings could be shown for the first time 20 years after her death. Discovered in the eighties, these paintings truly seem to be something from the future, and then I mean the future of the time she lived in, the early 1900's, or another dimension, but still we have forgotten to mention her in art history the last 35 years. It seems to me like there is a sort of a black hole in the space of art history where all the female artists get sucked in and forgotten.

Yet we are constantly, inevitably, moving forward. Poking our finger in the hole, not knowing what will bite us. In the exciting present women, including myself, turn to the grounds to find independency. I compare the excavations conquering and breaking the land typical to male artist and the more spiritually significant holes women are busy with. I see a pattern where men are trying to get in while women escape or open up to let out. Yasmina Ghalmi, to mention one of my fellow students at the academy, gave me the following story when she found out about my research:



One night me and my friend had this sudden urge to dig a hole. Once we start digging the hole something happened. We couldn't stop scooping. Like our body wanted to be in the hole. First our feet felt the cool temperature of the hole but this tangling feeling spread through our bodies the deeper we got. Now one person could sit in the hole.

A certain feeling of tranquility came with it

*Completely overwhelmed by the isolation.
Everything muted.
They should have holes like this everywhere, is what I thought. In offices, schools, shoppingmalls...
A recognised place to reload yourself in nothingness.*

Leanne Winjsmaa (1987, Amsterdam) graduated from HKU in graphic design but knew she would never be a traditional graphic designer. She continued at Sandberg Institute where she found her true calling - tunnel making*. She states that it's an antidote for over heating and collapse caused by the endless need for constant availability. And she looks for therapeutical seclusion when she's making her holes in the most traditional way there is to make a hole. She uses a shovel and her hands to create her ongoing work, a series of tunnels in cities all over the world, Escape. On the homepage for the project she's now gaining followers in her Escape and they meet to dig themselves underground** just for one day.

I took a group of first year students from the Rietveld's VAV department to Zandvoort an Zee one early autumn day in September 1015. The idea was to have them walking for a couple of hours along the shore of the North Sea and then ask them in the middle of it to make a giant hole in the sand. I thought it would be a great way to show the students that art is not only sitting in the studio thinking about something, but it's also hard labour, and many times you do it without knowing why. The students dug the hole we sat in the hole, we shared that moment, and we comfortably didn't speak for almost an hour. The hole opened up for an unexpected silent meeting and proved my point in a way I couldn't have foreseen. We used the hole to jump out from a conversation. We became the hole in a social situation.

As a last example of this we look into the deepest hole human made, where we find the voice of Earth herself, thanks to Lotte Geeven. "I've always been curious about what kind of sound the Earth would make" she said, and stuck her finger into the deepest of holes. Born 1980, Geevens is a multimedia artist from the Netherlands. For her installation The Sound of the Earth she teamed up with geologists and engineers to record the sound of a 30,000-foot hole located in



the sloping hills of Windischeschenbach, Germany and won the Illy Prize 2010, a price for most innovative artist.

**The digging is a basic act to escape
and to disconnect. The
act itself is an important experience,
digging the soil to find fundament
and autonomy. Escape is an urge
to do something really banal yet es-
sential. The tunnel doesn't lead to
freedom. It ends just a few meters
from where it starts. The choice to
dig however...*

-Leanne Wijnsmaa

**According to the State Forest Service it is not intended that people just go digging in the woods. "That means a disruption of soil patterns, animals and plants" said a spokesman,

"People who dig tunnels, we have not yet experienced. However, we sometimes find people who dig bunkers in the dunes".





**A Constructional Starting Point
-The Nothingness**



Look around you. Count how many holes you see. The hole is a key element of our everyday constructions. It provides air, water, visibility, light, passages and in some cases, sexual pleasure. The glory hole makes a building into a sex toy that forces us to let go of control. Because of this I definitely see the potential of it and it might very well be that in the end the glory hole sums up the whole. Look at Keith Haring's The glory hole. It's literally a Glory Hole, whatever comes through the hole is rewarded for it's bravery, glorified, shining. It's stuck into the unknown and the unknown seems to be amazing in this drawing, do I even dare to say - it looks like heaven. It is in that direction we're heading if you just keep following. Let's leave old spank theatres and anonymous ball tickling and turn our gaze back to the nothingness as a starting point to some of the most significant conceptual works we've seen the last fifty years.

As we already know, the 60's were vigorous time in the art world, also in Japan. Nobuo Sekine (1942) is one of today's most important artists and he started his career in 1968 with digging a hole and press the excavated soil into a cylinder of the exact same proportions as the hole it came out of. He named the piece Phase-Mother Earth and the hole and cylinder are so immaculate they are hard to believe, and other works he made in the same manners often play with big dimensional facts that seem to be illusional.

Unbelievable reality that makes me question what reality actually is. His work Phase of Nothingness-Water (1969) struck me particularly hard. Two black lacquered tanks of water, one flat and square, one higher cylinder. It's the exact same volume of water in both tanks, but it looks impossible. I first thought they were each others opposites, one round like a black hole, and one square, one high one low, but Sekine wanted to show different phases of space and material to connect the human mind and the material world*.



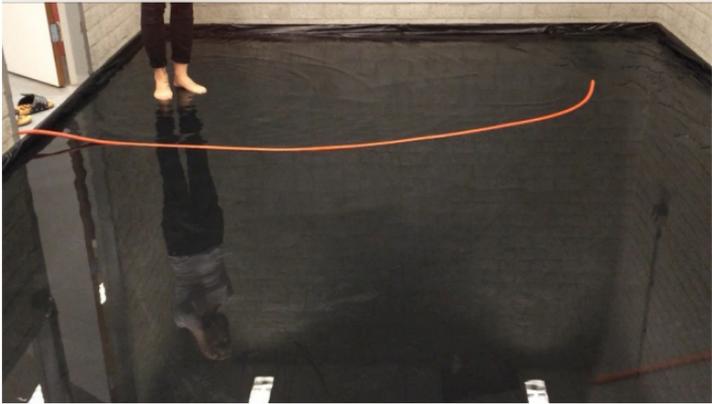
*The mass of the universe
neither increases nor decreases. This
is the universe of eternal sameness.
When one becomes aware of this,
then the futility of modern concepts
of creation can be realised.*

-Nobuo Sekine

It is the universe of eternal sameness, but different. If a hole can stand for a negative presence of something of matter than two holes can show us where the footprints of two buildings once were. After September 11th a young man named Michael Arad started drawing and got picked to design the September 11th Memorial. Arad had no experience and little knowledge about architecture but won the committee with the plan he called Reflecting Absence, for one of the most expensive works of art in history (20 billion US dollars). The two enormous pools, with names of all the victims engraved in a bronze plate that surrounds the 30 feet waterfalls down to a platform and then further down, in a well like hole, another 30 feet. It certainly reminds us of the different phases of space. So many sculptures and monuments strive upwards, for height and visibility, but not one does high as well as these two holes.

Why don't we look down a little more often? Andreas Eriksson** (1975) is one of the most prominent Swedish contemporary artists today, and he found himself in a reality where the natural world became, to a certain extent, both a place of safety and of imprisonment when he developed an allergy for electricity. My favourite work of his are the mole holes he brought to the Nordic Pavillion at Venice Biennale 2011. Bronze casts of mole holes in the garden outside the artists residency in the middle of nowhere. He made a huge something out of nothing, that's why I like them so much. He makes an agreement with the viewer - and that's one basic condition in art, that you accept the terms the artist lays out for you - that this lump on the floor, is a hole.





The Hole in Space
- the Hole as Space

In 1955 a small mousey professor invented a portable hole in the cartoon *The Hole Idea*. Professor Calvin Q. Calculus mixed together a black liquid that when poured out on a flat surface it made a perfect circular hole, which one also could pick up, fold, and reuse. The portable hole quickly becomes a handy tool for a thief and the city is under a crimewave where banks, jewellery shops and strip clubs (not even in a cartoon from 1955 am I relieved from the mandatory visit to a strip club, typical and normalised in most American film) are swiped clean until the thief uses one of the holes to get away from the police and by accident jumps through the wall of the prison. It ends with a small sexist joke when the professor slips a hole under the feet of his wife, sending her to hell because she was complaining about him never contributing to the home or relationship, and the devil pops up returning the wife saying: isn't it bad enough down here without her?

The portable hole becomes an object of nothingness that breaks laws that goes beyond the legal system. More interesting than what one could do with such a hole is how that hole exists and the possibility of the impossible that director Robert MacKimson suggests in this metaphysical rampage.

Some holes are animated fantasies that tell stories about laws and orders we don't understand, while others are recognised as attempts to animate reality and to understand those fantasies. The first time I saw the works of Anish Kapoor* I was struck by the space his sculptures creates for the viewer. They seem to be limitless. What they do is not only existing as physical objects, but they also have a counterpart of negative presence, or non-physicality, about them that I only can recognise as something spiritual. To quote the artist himself the holes let you use:

“art as a way to go where you don't know”



the
whole
Anish
Kapoor-
thing

I saw him at De Pont

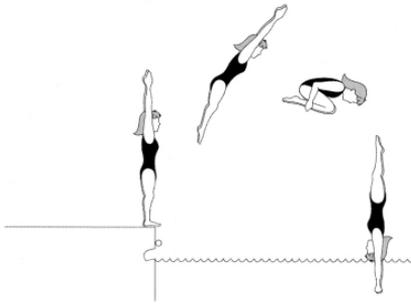
*big red glossy shapes
like lips mouths*

*I thought it looked like
vagina-envy*

or worship

*is the glass half full
- or half empty?*





Suggestion for repurposing of *Descension*,
2015, by Anish Kapoor:

Once a day a professional diver,
dressed in adequate swimwear, preferably
monochrome, walks into the exhibition space.
By the entrance the performer stops, letting the
audience notice him or her, just breathing and
gathering the focus necessary for the act that
is about to be performed. When the performer
is ready he or she runs through the exhibition
space and dives with great precision into the
vortex. Via a hidden canal the performer then
escapes into the room next door, perhaps there
could be another pool to surprise the viewers
on that side.



Is the work the hole or the things around it? Maybe I should quote Carl Andre who once said “a thing is a hole in a thing it is not”. Andre (1935) played a central role in defining the nature of Minimalist Art and challenging the fundamental notions of the definition of art, through sculpture, installation and poetry, in the early 1960’s. His most significant contribution was to distance sculpture from processes of carving, modeling, or constructing, and to make works just by sorting and placing. He claimed that he with his often low crawling artworks, dangerously close to being nothing at all, sculptures making places instead of inhabiting space, wanted the experience to reach not only the viewers eyes and mind, but also the body.

While we try to wrap our heads around philosophical questions like the one above another artist is looking to nature to find the answer. Andy Goldsworthy** arranges material he finds in nature to make the photos he is famous for and a subject that often appears in his work is the hole, or perhaps I should say - the space he creates around it.

“When I touch a rock, I am touching and working the space around it. It is not independent of its surroundings. When I work with a leaf, rock, stick, it is not just that material in itself, it is an opening into the processes of life within and around it. The underlying tension of a lot of my art is to try and look through the surface appearance of things. Inevitably, one way of getting beneath the surface is to introduce a hole, a window into what lies below.”

- Andy Goldsworthy

The further down we climb into the aspects of the hole the more we realise that a hole is not at all what we thought it would be. It’s a lot more than that. It manifests the thoughts of me, my mom, Anish Kapoor, Andy Goldsworthy, even Plato***, in one non physical object and states this one

simple question: what is reality? It seems to me like we have a perspective of being outside of something. I'm suggesting that we are circulating around something, just like the rest of the universe is gravitating towards a Super Massive Black Hole in the middle of our Milky Way...

Another brilliant example on how to use a hole to show what's around it is Kim Hyesoon's**** poem *Manhole Humanity*, 2010. In her pioneering through Korean gender culture she uses the grotesque to break free from "pretty writing", a style of decorative poetry that female Korean poets are supposed to write according to the patriarchal power system Korea upholds. American publishers agreed on the provocative nature of her poem and refused to release it before she ● changed the word "hole" into something else, that had less negative connotations. Her award winning translator Don Mee Choi answered: To change "hole" to something else would be to change to world the poem came from. During the Korean War about 250,000 pounds of napalm per day were dropped by the United States forces. Countless mountains, hills, rice fields and houses were turned into holes. Four million perished, leaving more holes. It's a place that is "positively holey" (Deborah Schwartz, a feminist ontology of *Ooziness: On Kim Hyesoon*, January 19th, 2014, *The Critical Flame*). The hole she described in her poem was the grief of a nation, but why did the Americans fear the word "hole"? Was it guilt of causing it or was it another type of negative connotation in culture that they resisted? We leave this chapter with another one of her poems appropriately called *A Hole****** and move through it into the next chapter with it's

“o”

lingering in our brain tissue, still tasting our tongues and tickling our feminist nerve.

*Anish Kapoor was born in Bombay, India in 1954 and educated at the Doon School in Dehra Dun. He moved in 1977 to Britain where he still lives and works today. His work balances between sources of inspiration from both Western and Eastern cultures and are famous world wide for their vast curves and spacious colours.

**Andy Goldsworthy (1965) is a British artist who regards his creations as short lived. He photographs each piece once right after he makes it. His goal is to understand nature by directly participating in it as intimately as he can. He generally works with whatever comes to hand: twigs, leaves, stones, snow and ice, reeds and thorns and his works have been installed all over, from the North Pole to Australia.

***Plato's allegory of the cave (book 7 of the Republic, 400 BC) suggests that maybe our lives in this world are like the lives of prisoners in a cave. These prisoners have lived their entire lives chained up so they can only see a wall with shadows on it. One day a prisoner some-

how escapes and leaves the cave. He's amazed by the real world and runs back into the cave to tell the other prisoners, but they only laugh at him. The shadows are all they know, and they cannot imagine anything else. They think he became crazy. The story suggests that what we really see are only shadows of reality. How could we tell which is the right description? How do we tell which is the truth? What if there's more than one valid description of our world?

****Hyesoon (1955, South Korea) Poet and professor at Seoul Institute of the Arts. Her poetry seeps from the page, protruding with images of violence, vomit, trash, bodily decay, and death. Kim's poems consistently resist the pressure to beautify; they take instead the subjects deemed appropriate to Korean women - family, motherhood, romantic love - and defile them with the violent expressions of an oppressed identity.

*****A hole walked in just as I
was wiping of my makeup

I looked at the hole as I sat on the
sofa and took of my stockings

The hole was about one meter and
sixty centimeters wide

I hear that the hole makes good
steamed rice and on some days
babies pop out from it

However the hole isn't certain
whether someone is spitting into
it or not and even when a black
cloud sits leaning against its thighs
for decades

It doesn't care

A fool, like a hell that keeps on
walking

I poured left-over seaweed soup
into the hole

Really the hole is nothing an idiot
but it's deep

When I took out my wisdom
tooth there was a one-me-
ter-and-sixty-centimeters-wide hole
opening up

However the problem is that a
hole falls into the hole endlessly
whenever it can

Where's the hole's end?

The hole remains a hole ever if
the water from all the ponds of
the world is poured into it

Do people know that the hole puts
on makeup? That it cries when it
is hit by lightning?

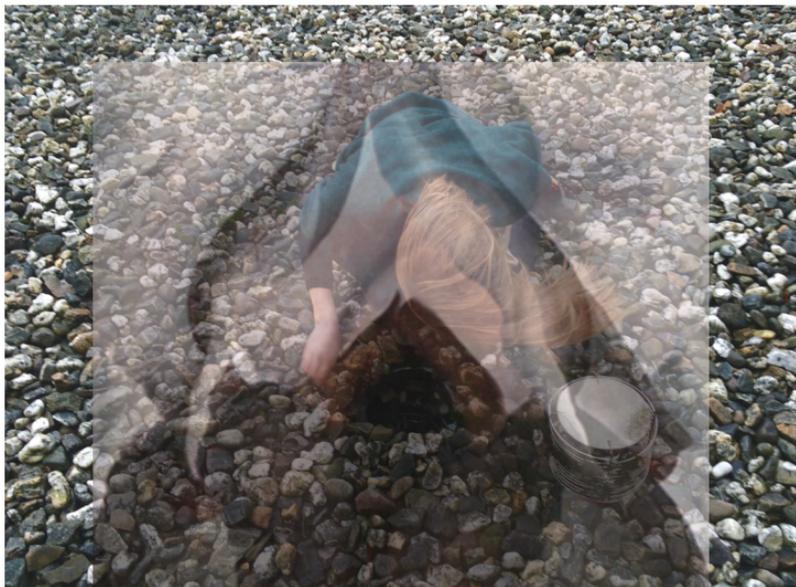
That a red tongue that detests the
hole hides inside the hole's mouth
and kneads an obobob sound?

The hole intensifies when it stays
in bed too long

In other words the hole becomes
deeper and deeper

When I get up in the morning I
see a mark on my pillow

From the tears of the hole



Down the Rabbit Hole
- according to Freud



“We don’t understand. For nearly a hundred years physics have been able to explain the universe around us. General relativity perfectly describes the motions of stars and galaxies, and the world of atoms is beautifully explained by quantum mechanics, yet the discovery of [REDACTED] holes means we don’t fully understand anything. But far from being a problem [REDACTED] holes represents the greatest opportunities in physics. [REDACTED] holes are the key to taking the next step - our doorway to our next step of understanding the universe around us. Unlocking the mysteries of [REDACTED] holes could provide the answer to the biggest question ever posed by human mind”.

-Super Massive [REDACTED] Holes, BBC, 2015

Image on previous spread: Black Iris, Georgia O’Keefe, 1926 and a photo of me by: Robert Riphagen

The fall down the rabbit hole in Alice in Wonderland symbolises Lewis Carroll's desire to penetration and coitus, Dr. Sigmund Freud thought. The whole story, actually everything, not only in the story but in the world, is filled with sexual innuendos if you want to trust him. Ever since Freud started publishing his theories about the ego and the subconscious critics have been applying them to everything, everywhere, anytime. My own analysis of Freud himself tells me he was a cocaine addict and a misogynist (Kunskapens frukt, Liv Strömquist, 2014) Some of his theories about sexuality, ego and dreams were based on the idea that women were imperfect men and the vagina only a hole made by the absence of a penis and therefore she was jealous of the penis and he was scared that she would steal it. The hole became a metaphor for a woman, the Americans thought it had too many negative connotations and Oldenburg put his shovel in a virgin in Central Park. Why? According to Freud; to tackle his psychological traumas he experienced breaking free from his mother, or because he was subconsciously afraid of the mysterious, jealous hole, that possibly could castrate him.

The Vagina Dentata, that's an interesting hole, my friend Harry Hyena at the academy said. "It's both attractive and dangerous". I said I was more interested in attractive and dangerous holes like abysses, but promised to look into it since he wasn't the first one sniffing around this particular hole. I was also advised to research only this sublime hole and it's many circumstances, and leave out all the other holes. I found out that the myth of the toothed vagina is considerably older than Freud.

"In essence Vagina Dentata is embodying a deeply rooted fear of the feminine in a both psychological and physical sense."

-The Moral Panics of Sexuality, Fahs, Dudy, Stage, 2013.



In various myths and legends men have to violently break the vaginal teeth in order to incapacitate and control a powerful, demonic and insatiable woman and thus sustain and protect the virile power of the man. Freud meant that when a man sees a vagina he sees both the possibility of birth and of castration and he therefore fears the hole - if now the hole is the vagina of a woman. In this case he fears and needs to control what he doesn't know about, what he's excluded and different from - the hole of motherhood. It wasn't always like this though. Through times and cultures there has been a worshipping of the vagina instead of fear and a need to control it. There was some kind of spiritual symbolism hidden between the lips from stone age up until as late as the 1800's, from vagina cave drawings to preVictorian paintings of women, showing their vulvas to the devil and therefore defeating him. Sheela na gigs - figurines of women exposing their vulvas - from all over the world are worn smooth by the touch of hands and generations and today they remind us of a time were the vagina was a symbol for birth, life and creation. These vulvas protected the house or temple and were often found above or close to the entrance, to be touched for good luck. At some point in our history, we worshiped what we today don't understand, what we objectify, subordinate and have nightmares about - the monstrous feminine. We have Freud and Hyesoon's American publicist among many others to thank for patriarchy, but the story about the Vagina Dentata has a happy ending, I believe.

"If you hang around long enough, things will come back"

- Iris Apfel

I see a change and a chain of acceptance towards, and appropriation of, the feminine spreading and even if the female feminist hero of today (look up the works of Camille Henrot* inspired by Nicki Minaj for example) is swinging a confusingly sexy double-edged sword, she's swinging it against norms and social codes that binds behaviour and gender together. Soon there will be no more fear of the vagina, Vagina Dentate will be re-recognised as a Sheela na gig and we will happily fall into the realms of the unknown, and step into an equal future.

*Henrot (1978) was In 2013 the recipient of the Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship in Washington, DC, where she produced the video *Grosse Fatigue* awarded by the Silver Lion at the 55th Venice Biennale. In her Matisse like paintings of

naked bodies there is a hint at the hope for a “world that can embrace female sexuality without objectification or judgment” (Aindrea Emelie, “Nicki Minaj becomes a feminist art muse”, *The Guardian*, September 1st, 2015).



Wormhole, Eugenia Loli, 2015

**Drilling our Way out
- Bodily Holes**



A hole is a spatial situation which is created by an outer force, over time or in an instant. And there are as many ways to make a hole as there are different holes. One of the many ways is to let a friend shoot you in the arm with a .22 rifle from a distance of 15 feet - as an art-project. In this particular case the spatial situation took place in a human body, the outer force was a bullet being propelled in and through it and further into the history of art. A smoking (bullet)hole with an ambition to change the world. The artist Chris Burden (1946- 2015) aimed to re-sensitize the western televised audience to the notion of pain and to question the nature of political power and following orders in the turbulence of the war in Vietnam. He explored the nature of suffering by setting up extreme situations that he, himself, had to endure*.

To change the world though, you have to start with yourself. This is what I believe was in the head of Amanda Fielding when she took a drill to it**. She ran for the British Parliament twice on the platform “Trepanation for National Health” after seeing her boyfriend Bart Hughes*** perform a trepanation on himself a couple of years before. In her short cult art film Heartbeats in the Brain you can see her trepanning herself, wrap a golden turban around her head, and jump off to a high class social event in a beautiful dress. Fielding (born in Britain in 1943) had an interest in modulating consciousness for the benefit of the individual and society and in 1970 she wrote Blood and Consciousness, a theory about how blood and cerebrospinal fluids can underlie changes in the conscious state. Today she is the director of the Beckley Foundation, an organisation that has been busy carrying out research about consciousness, involving everything from cannabis to Buddhist meditation.

*Theoretically, a viewer could interrupt the work at any point, but usually they did not; thus, his work challenged viewers themselves to act - both within the sphere of his art and within the larger context of humanity in general. He questioned the role of art itself and in 1986 he dug a hole in the floor of the MOCA's Temporary Contemporary and named the hole Exposing the Foundations of the Museum. The institutional critique that the work gave birth to reappeared in many other artists works later on. One in particular is *You, 2007*, by Urs Fischer, but we already got to know him in the earlier chapter "The Pit".

**Trepanation is the oldest known surgical procedure. Skulls with drilled or carved and healed over holes have been found and dated as early as 8000 bc. Why this treatment first was introduced is not certain, but it's believed to be for both mystical and medical reasons. The hole was thought to let in the good spirits, open up the third eye (also known as the inner eye, a mystical and esoteric concept referring to a speculative invisible eye which provides percep-

tion beyond ordinary sight.) or to let out evil thoughts and cure mental disorders.

This beautiful picture to the right is made by Madeline Foerster 2005 and is called *Self portrait*.

***Huges (1934-2004) was a 31 years old dropped out medical student when he after one and another trip from LSD decided to trepan himself in the quest for eternal highness and expanded consciousness. He also wrote about it in his autobiography *The Book With The Hole* in 1972.





**One last Story
- in Conclusion**

The hole can be an alluring possible turning point, a confrontation, a tight passage into a realm beyond the death of reality, the very act of curiosity, a point of discovery and imagination. The hole can also be a vagina and, since I have one, I found it hard to not become partial about wounded virgins and vagina dentata and write my whole thesis about patriarchy and rape culture and maybe that's another thesis, but my fascination for the hole was stronger this time. I tried to keep vaginas out of it and treated the hole as a genderless physical/non-physical and abstract object and studied it's appearances through the last 50 or so years with small toe dippings in older history to find something that connects them all. In the 60's they were busy with making the nothingness. Sekine made nothingness in different phases, Oldenburg made an invisible monument and the holes they made became checkpoints on the map of conceptual art. Today we try more or less to experience it. Wijnsmaa is literally digging herself into the soil and we could hear the actual sound of the earth in Geeven's installation. Kapoor's work pulls the viewer in with an unexplainable visual gravity. Looking back through the holes we visited in this thesis I see one thing they all have in common. The artists are tampering with the unknown and penetrating reality.

Perhaps these holes represent our negative presences and parts of us we don't understand, our subconscious. If you let your mind stretch it could be about death and it's oxymoronic power of being the only thing that makes life invaluable - the ultimate negative presence. Let me tell you one last story.

When my brother died a negative presence appeared, a hole in our family. After the first year of total emotional chaos this hole eventually became so dear to me I felt somehow filled with it. I sometimes feel closer to him now than when he lived, because now he's that hole in my heart and I take him with me everywhere I go.

Death and depression are the holes in the cheese that is our lives, they develop during our maturation and adds flavour and texture to it. In my case, it made me very much aware of what it is to be alive. Somehow the death became an awakening, a new beginning.

When the clutter is vanished and the only thing we can hear is our blood gushing around inside of us - what can we focus on if there is nothing? What can we be aware of in nothingness?

We look at the artists that climbs down in holes to recharge and disconnect and it's like they're experiencing a ritualistic imitation of death, a short vacation from this world. The hole as a symbol of a metaphorical death, one that means catharsis, flux, transition, metamorphosis. An empty space for our minds to wander in, disconnect, shut down and ignore. We crawl into the hole to come out as new. We make holes, sit in holes, stare into holes, fantasise about holes, fear holes, make art around holes...

I'm suggesting us being outside of something, where the hole, the actual, depicted and abstract, becomes a psychological tool for transformation and a juxtaposed metaphor for life. The insides of us and the outsides. Are we listening inwards or outwards, penetrating or embracing, discovering or hidining? Do you believe in the universe of eternal sameness? The nothingness being something? And can you die and still be alive? From the perspective of being inside instead of penetrating, looking forward at history, having Future breathing down our necks I went all the way back to Plato's cave and his concern for humankind and our plausible subconscious captivity. I compare the opening of the cave with the front door of my house. The shadows on the wall with my computer screen. I still didn't figure out yet where the escapee comes in, but I must admit it's uncanny the way this allegory works 2400 years later. Humankind didn't change so much. Perhaps

we still resemble those prisoners, chained in the cave, living in what we think is reality when all it is is a reflection of something we're not part of. What got us in here and how do we get out? Where is that opening of the cave, that front door of mine - that hole? Trepanation anyone? I rather dig.

*the hole and history
the hole and future
the hole and the unknown
the hole and spirituality
be holes in our mind
from birth to death
- back into the hole*

*I do everything with my eyes closed
riding the escalator
playing with dolls
watching tv
in my head this is real*

*digging deeper into
it's the death hole
the grave
the last big hug
whatever you want to call it
where the end of you not knowing
is your death
or rebirth*

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