

The Departments of Anna Sörenson

In December 2012 I opened *The Departments*. It began in Vermont during a time when I travelled to and from the United States as a foreigner and consequently experiencing numerous border control interviews. Passing the border so often I began to analyse the content and the method of the interviews in order to comprehend and to do better next time. I feel that I came to understand the absurd logic of the interview, the strict format and the method of indexing and classifying the interviewee's answers.

When these mechanisms of bureaucracy appeared to me, I transformed myself into the bureaucrat, to better understand the psychological implementations of the role. The paintings *General Government Issues* (2012) became my framework with departments that the one could enter, like a country, but the contents of the Departments are not nations but rather states of mind. *Your Application is Pending* was the first performance, where I entered the role, playing out the applications interviews between the audience and myself – as the head of all departments. Within a year the performance was carried out in three cities, Stockholm, Brussels and Miami (2013). The result became 70 files of both granted and denied applications, gathered in the archival piece, *The Analogue Database* (2013–) that is still growing as I continue performing *Your Application is Pending*.

When entering the persona of the bureaucrat I was faced with the struggle to master the psychological implication of complex situations where the bureaucrat cannot escape a set of contradictory rules. In order to analyse the enigma, how we relate to rules in society I used my bureaucrat-character as an example, and staged *The Therapy Sessions* (2014). The focal point of the piece was the improvised dialogue between, the bureaucrat, and the certified therapist, Magnus Ivarsson.

The sessions were improvised and with the therapist Ivarsson was playing the part of a therapist, I acted out my experiences from the collected work of *Your Application is Pending* and *The Analogue Database*. In an existential and critical debate, the bureaucrat is required to answer to the societal constrains of my personas' work moral. The sessions provide an insight to the bureaucrat's emotional disturbance, servicing humanity in a sometimes commanding, controlling and dominating manner. The final piece in *The Therapy Session* is the introduction of *The Analyst* and raises the question of what analysis is and can be in the bureaucratic setting. After the data from the sessions, the documentary film, the transcripts and the audio file has been gathered, I let my bureaucrat become the surveillance monitor. As the analyst, I drew diagrams, concluded and illustrated the emotional patterns of the bureaucratic persona, from interviewee to interviewer back to interviewee, formulating the essence of my own work in a collection of pencil drawings. The analysed material became the installation *The Surveillance Room*, where the viewer themselves can assume the role as the analyser in the surveillance setting.