



## Opening

I am a particle board screw.

I am a particle board screw. My head is magnetic and dangles from the cross-slot bit of a rechargeable electric screwdriver. In this moment I am placed onto a particle board and turned until I go into it. The turning motion is accompanied by a reverberating noise that is composed of the electric screwdriver's howl, the rubbing between my thread and the particle board into which I spiral, and the creak of the ladder upon which the exhibition assistant with the screwdriver stands. In the background, a small portable radio plays "what goes around comes around" by Justin Timberlake. I notice how the resistance is increasing, how the revolutions are getting slower, and how the screwdriver's cross-slot bit suddenly pops loose, spinning around on top of my head resultlessly for a few seconds. Dirk, the exhibition assistant, once again attempts to get the lurching bit into the slot and sink me into the board. Obviously, this isn't the first time this has happened since Dirk is cursing with pursed lips. Something like, "fucking screw, get in there, dammit..."—the damn was in reference to the rechargeable battery which runs out in this moment and the grating on my head stops. Dirk descends the ladder in order to change the battery. We find ourselves in the former work floor of a factory which is now an art exhibition hall. Big wooden shipping crates are all around, bearing names and branded signs indicating which side is up and which side down. A forklift emits a warning signal while backing up.

A woman in a white doctor's smock inspects a crate which is being opened by two men in work overalls. She has a list in her hand and is holding a pair of glasses with an attached flip-down magnifying glass. A little group is approaching from the other end of the hall. Three women, one of them in her late forties, boyish tossy hairstyle and pants-suit with low-cut neck line, the other two in their mid-twenties. One with multicolored-asymmetrical hairstyle, telephoning, the other with ponytail, taking notes, writing down what the older woman is saying. An unhurried man with a half-bald head and quiet, soft-soled shoes—whose belt is adorned with various pockets, tools, and a walky-talky—also belongs to the group; a young Danish-looking man with a digital camera and a dark-skinned woman in her mid-thirties with a rolling suitcase. "So...this space. isn't it fantastic. we're just opening your boxes. your work will look gorgeous in here!" The dark-skinned woman nods and looks around. She looks tired. "Do you want to go to your hotel and rest a little?"

Dirk ascends the ladder again and starts to put a new screw into the particle board next to me. Either he's forgotten that he wasn't yet finished with me, or he's saving me for later. I can feel how the particle board is being pulled up against the base structure and how the screwdriver is already commencing with the next screw. Now Dirk has twisted his arms upwards, and a tattoo under his arm comes to light, warping slightly with the play of his muscles. A stick-figure salutes next to some lettering. There, in uppercase letters, is written the word "EMPTY".

I'm Dirk.

I'm Dirk. I'm going to high-tail it out of here at four pm, the latest. Then zoom back home and finish the residency application. The next few days here are bound to be pretty much a slave ship. That's why it's tonight or never! LOS ANGELES, awesome! Driving through Santa Monica with the top down, my arm around my sweetheart, shorty in the backseat. Are they allowed to come along? Did it say anything about families? Crap, I have to find out for sure if they're allowed to come too. otherwise I'm not going. even though. "Dirk!" Roger is standing on the bottom of the ladder with the curatorial throng in tow. "This is Dirk. He is building the wall for the Velevita piece". "Hi Dirk! can we have this wall ready by tomorrow morning? the artist will arrive tonight

and...” Her telephone rings “Hello? Yes, Fabio! How are you? excellent” She turns around and wanders toward the center of the space while she telephones. “Why tomorrow?!?! I thought he’s not coming until the day after tomorrow.” With raised eyebrows, Roger looks into my flabbergasted face and dryly says with that you’ll-manage-won’t you?-expression in his voice “Well, so now he’s coming tomorrow.” “I don’t have any time! Today I have to pick up shorty from kindergarten and I...” Roger has already turned away towards the curatorial throng. “Roger, we need to make sure that the projectors are installed for the artists from Cuba. Can you...” Then there is a humongous crash and a quake that makes my ladder wiggle.

#### I am an email

I am an email. I was created on Tuesday the 5th of May at 1:53 on a newly purchased Macbook, but I am still unsent, located in the same computer’s draft folder. It is Wednesday the 6th of May, 2009, 10.23. Nuria Gordon-Ray wrote me last night in a fit of enraged disappointment—tears were involved—but she was too clever to go right ahead and click the send button. She sat at her desk in the art exhibition hall office with a glass of Averno in her hand and kicked herself away from the desk with a snuffly sigh so she could yell “Fuck this stupid Fuck” out loud in the middle of the room and while standing up get a “besame en culo” in for posterity. She came back to the desk, shut her laptop and packed her things. “Hello, can I have a taxi to the Kunsthalle. Yes. I don’t care if your computer is down. Send the damn taxi now. I’m tired”. Emails like me are, by the way, written by the thousands every day. The threshold you have to cross in order to stick a letter into an envelope to moisten the adhesive strip with your tongue, possibly cutting yourself on the sharp edge of the paper while you’re at it, to close the envelope finally, buy a postage stamp and to run perhaps in the pouring rain to the mailbox is unthinkably higher than the mere click you have to make on the little grey send button on the upper right-hand edge of the email. Suppose the sender accidentally activates the button or afterwards regrets having done so: he will feel a flash go through his body like a phantom pain. How many flame wars have been started with emails like me, friendships terminated, working relationships finished off, projects failed. You could fill up a space in the bookshelf a meter wide. Experienced e-communicators therefore have a highly respectful relation to the send button. This morning Nuria couldn’t be bothered to deal with me any further; she didn’t have the time. After doing a quick email check without sitting down, she ran off to inspect the space with the exhibition hall’s house technician. Some artworks weren’t delivered until today, after endless email ping-ponging and telephone calls with the shipping company, customs, and the insurance company. The office is almost empty. Nuria’s assistant and the intern have joined the inspection. Esther, the public relations lady, is at a meeting in the art exhibition hall café. Only Mrs. Marquardt, who does the finances, is sitting at her desk, typing numbers into an electric calculator.

#### I am Nuria

I am Nuria. I have been doing this job now for almost twenty years and—oh my god—I have fought so hard for this exhibition. It was so important for me to make this statement and the place, the moment is perfect. How was I supposed to know that the Biennale would get in the way and who would let that just slip through their fingers. And now on top of everything this accident. Oh come on, don’t go limp on me. “can someone get me a coffee? Jennifer?” “Yeah, sure. Can do. Latté?” “Yes, and listen Jenny-honey why don’t you bring me an aspirin too.” I follow the see-sawing ponytail, staring at it, and fall suddenly into a kind of trance. It feels as if I cannot move my body any further, except in one direction. I hear my monotone voice saying: “I am going to have a smoke” and my legs begin walking towards the exit. First hesitantly, then more decisively, they carry me into a tunnel where the sounds of the Hall at first become muffled, then fall completely silent, the light starts to get dim and flickers like the sun breaking through the leaves in a forest. A twittering zing accompanies the sound of my movement. I can sense every detail of the friction between clothes and body, every eddying little wind that my arm produces as it swings back and forth. I breathe in and out, and I follow the stream of air that swishes past the inner wall

of my nostril on its way outside. Then I am in a park. It is night, and the tepid air lies on the skin softly. I lie in the grass and look up into the sky, which appears in different cutout shapes between the treetops. It is like I am lying on a dance floor and seeing the ones who are dancing around me from below. Pleasant. I stretch my arms toward the sky and dance too. "Brauchen Sie Hilfe?" A face suddenly appears in my field of vision. "Did you get mugged? Do you need help?" I sit up. "Oh no no, thank you, I'm ok. Thank you."

#### I am the opening

I am the opening. I will not explain at this point in time what that is, an opening. There's been quite a lot of brouhaha around here for my sake, which I couldn't really care less about but at the moment it's not so clear whether I am going to take place or not. There has been an accident. A sculpture fell over, actually down. Down all the way to the basement. In any event, there's a huge hole in the middle of the Hall now. The curator and the architect are both standing around the hole, making phone calls. The technical director scratches his head and corrects the safety barrier's position by a few centimeters. The Danish-looking young man is taking pictures of the hole. "What statics? I don't understand what you're saying. We need this problem solved. now!" The curator is speaking louder now while she walks along the hole with one hand on the safety barrier.

#### I am Dirk

I am Dirk. I'm sitting with Jennifer on the steps next to the loading ramp at the Art Exhibition Hall. Her arms are wrapped around her legs and she's teetering to and fro. "Why is she taking her bad mood out on me? I'm sick and tired of being treated this way! Jenny this, Jenny that...I'm not just something to mop the floor with" She wipes away her tears and blows her nose with a tissue.

"Something to mop the floor with?" I take her ponytail and try to flutter it in her face, grinning placably. She looks quite sweet with her puffy eyes and tear-streaked face. But she won't be cheered up. She won't have it. "excuse my saying so, but seriously, have you ever told her that she shouldn't take her bad moods out on you." She flicks her cigarette away and stares straight ahead. "What?"

She sighs and keeps staring. "I forgot to fax back the contract with the insurance company."

She looks at me with this half spiteful, half crying-for-help face and then tells me with a niggling voice for what seems like an eternity the whole story about strict Nuria who is only concerned about herself and about the pressure she feels to do everything right and ultimately the internship and blah and why now everything is her fault and the Exhibition Hall is surely going to go broke because of the hole. I drift away in thought. I think about my application and where I'm supposed to get the letter of recommendation from. It's going to be a pretty tight squeeze, once again. Will I make it out of here today? Either they will postpone everything anyway, which would on the one hand be good because I would definitely win a lot of time, on the other hand it would be bad because I've been counting on the money.

"Jenny, I have to go back inside. But that's total bullshit that you're responsible. You're an intern. Hello?! You don't get paid. Hello?! For real. No person here can make you responsible. If the insurance fax had been soooo important, then one of the employees should have done it. End of story. They can't do that to you. If it turns out that the Exhibition Hall in fact isn't insured now and that they have a problem because of a hole and a trashed work by Mr. Superimportantartistguy, then it's nice of you to cry too, but it's really not your problem. They should pay you first."

I stand up and go back into the Hall which suddenly seems completely deserted. Apparently, everyone has left. I hear my footsteps on the floor pavement as I walk slowly to the middle of the space. The hole lies dark and silent, like a small lake. The sculpture protrudes out from the lake like a sunken ship. Actually, I'm extremely fond of the whole thing; I can't understand why they're all so upset. I sit down at the brink and look into the dark spot.

