

Gap To Fakie

From D3 to Documenta13

by

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I was sitting in my brothers Copenhagen apartment at the end of 2014. I am drinking a cup of coffee (aeropress) and trying to keep my mind off my obligations. One of which you are holding in your hand right now.

For several months I had been struggling in Amsterdam with finding some sort of focus within my endless piles of books and photocopied texts I had obtained for the sole purpose of having something valid to say over the course of the next four-thousand-something-words. During the research- and writing process I seemed to have lost myself a bit somewhere along the way.

I flip through a pile of magazines lying on his coffee table, one of which is the spring 2014 issue of Dank Magazine¹. On the cover was a list of the featured skateboarders and articles in the magazine and suddenly two names that are definitively not familiar in the skateboard world: Matias Faldbakken and Geide Einarsson.

They are both visual artists based in Oslo. Both of which I have a tremendous amount of respect for and both have been very influential on my work over the last couple of years. Faldbakken in particular².

So seeing his name and Geide Einarssons on a magazine cover bearing a full bleed black and white photograph of a skateboarder flying down a set of stairs struck me with curiosity.

The article with Faldbakken and Einarsson was actually a review of a recently released skateboard film. The review is consisting of a transcript of a conversation between the two artists via Skype.

Faldbakken and Einarsson are both watching '*cherry*'³, a skateboard film made by American skateboard and lifestyle brand Supreme. It is arguably the most influential and genre defining video to come out this year in the world of skateboarding. I have seen the film too, I downloaded it the second it got released. From some russian file sharing site (my laptop doesn't have a dvd player built in. But even so I doubt I ever would have purchased a physical copy. Who buys dvd's anymore?).

The global skateboard world was bursting from excitement for it to be released as it had been subject to a lot of hype and speculation due to the company moving more and more into the world of fashion in recent years rather than the skateboard market of which it came from. Mostly people were doubting whether or not Supreme could produce a skateboard film that would match the level of quality of the rivaling companies videos. Skepticism especially arose among the integrity obsessed skateboard underground when Supremes products were seen endorsed by pop icons such as Lady Gaga, Tyler the Creator and Jay-Z. To most peoples surprise (including mine): it did live up to its hype. The film was a perfectly executed 38 minute skateboard film. High end technical skating, very interesting spots⁴ and with editing that marked a new standard of films to come. All in all, a powerful and raw no-bullshit skateboard film.

The film was being true to the original and fundamental value of the origin of the company's

1 Norwegian bi-annual Skateboarding Magazine

2 As I am most familiar with the work of Matias Faldbakken, I will focus on his work and leave out Geide Einarsson.

3 Supreme, '*cherry*', Directed by William Strobeck, April 2014

4 A spot is what, in the skateboarding world, is referred to as a place ideal for skating. Anything is a spot if it offers the possibility to creatively put together a number of tricks and is in a condition that doesn't enable you of the basic necessities such as moving freely around on the ground i.e a smooth flat surface.

ideology: to represent New York City skateboarding in its truest and most honest form. The very same thing that the company got born out of in 1994 when it first opened as a small skateboard shop on Lafayette street in Manhattan. Skateboarding on the east coast is very different from skateboarding on the west coast, its initial birthplace. In a city like New York you see a much more urban and aggressive approach to skateboarding as the cities on the east coast have a tendency to be much more compressed than, say major cities in California. When skateboarding in a city like New York there is a constant presence of traffic and pedestrians that has to be taken into account. This interaction with not just the urban architecture but the city as living collective organism is famously portrayed by professional skateboarder and artists Mark Gonzales in the legendary Blind 'Video Days'⁵. Gonzales is seen skating in and out of traffic while doing tricks constantly. Skitching⁶ taxis and cars in the packed streets of Manhattan in sometimes nerve wreckingly high speed. Doing so with such enjoyment making it seem so easy and playful it almost seems as if he is dancing in traffic. This style of almost circus-esque street skating is very much developed from the mind of Mark Gonzales. His playful approach to spots and tricks broke boundaries within the skateboard world and have set a standard for street skating which is still being developed to this day. Mark Gonzales is to street skating what Marcel Duchamp is to conceptual art. 23 years later this particular style of skating in the streets from 'Video Days' is carried on even further in 'cherry'. So Supremes products might be in high demand of fashionistas and white upper middle class teenagers around the world today but they still remain true to their heritage and remain a progressive and undeniably important factor in todays skateboard world.



A Still from Blind's Video Days from 1994. Mark Gonzales is lying flat on his back on his skateboard in the middle of the New York Traffic

⁵ Blind Skateboards, 'Video Days', Directed by Spike Jonze, 1991

⁶ Skitching is when skating in traffic one grabs on to a vehicle and gets carried through the city. The image of the skateboarder skitching the yellow taxi cabs in traffic have become synonymous with the essence of the New York City style of skateboarding.

The skateboard video have been used for promotional videos for skateboard companies since 1984. The legendary company Bones Brigade put out the very first skateboard film in that year entitled 'The Bones Brigade Video Show'⁷. The model used for the film back then is the same one being used today. Each skater has their part in the video with a song as the audio soundtrack for the part. The combination of style, tricks, clothing, choices spots and music is what the public were given as information to identify with each skateboarder. And the whole teams parts put together as one whole film is what the company is to the public. Skateboarding is obviously not a team sport, so the term *team* can be a bit misleading. One can compare the team of a skateboard company to an artist roster represented by an art gallery. So not only are the videos a promotional tool in order to sell products but also to create a certain identity around their companies. Skateboard films have since been made in thousands and they all share one thing. They are all contributing to the long history of documenting the evolution and progression of skateboarding. And so today with 'cherry' Supreme not only produced a memorable high quality skateboard film, they also stressed the ever relevant importance of the skateboarding video.

Maybe the fact that the skate film as phenomenon is such an implemented part of any skaters heritage as of how you consume skateboard culture it ('cherry' for instance), needn't be reviewed in a skateboard magazine in the first place, I wonder. At least not reviewed by skaters for skaters. This could possibly be one of the reasons why the two artists were recruited by Dank Magazine instead of some names that are familiar in the skateboarding world.

Faldbakken and Einarssons conversation in the magazine was very relaxed. Full of nonchalant wit and frankly not very much about the actual skateboarding in the film rather than commenting on the different locations and personas caught on tape. Lots of inside jokes and references to Norwegian musicians and b-list celebrities that I didn't feel the need to google my way through. It sounded more like two teenagers on the Facebook chat than two people reviewing a film as it was full of online giggles and a frequent use of the word LOL. I was a bit thrown off to say least, but entertained nonetheless.

The outcome of the conversation in Dank Magazine was nothing I would've expected from two highly respected artists one of which have participated in Documenta⁸ and both having solo exhibitions in respected institutions around the world. There were very few moments (close to none) where I had the impression that I was reading two artist perceptions of the film.

However the magazine cover and the article itself was also affirming me with a preconceived suspicion which I have had since seeing a picture of *Untitled (Slayer Upon Slayer Upon Slayer)*, 2007 for the first time a few years back: That Faldbakken had been skating in his earlier days. Or at least been connected to the Norwegian skateboarding scene in one way or the other. This is a strange assumption to some, I realize that. It is pure fiction and I had not really given it much thought or speculation. Until now.

⁷ Bones Brigade, 'The Bones Brigade Video Show', directed by Stacy Peralta and Craig Stecyk, 1984

⁸ Matias Faldbakken participated in dOCUMENTA13

Much of Faldbakkens work carries out an aesthetic that echoes of a suburban skateboarding teenagers state of mind. It appears direct, hostile and akin to cause trouble. Arisen from slumber during a long scandinavian sunless winter of boredom armed with a slingshot, a can of spray paint - and a skateboard.

Faldbakken Frequently uses general undertones of destructive behaviour in his work and is often referred to as the *enfant terrible* of the art world. In an interview for Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen he states:

“I’ve been very much into the idea of extremist thought, ideas around vandalism. Kind of like where the vandalistic and productive act meets... The creative gesture and the destructive gesture is one of the same”⁹

Here “extremist thought” is crucial for our digestion of his work. He himself is not a vandal. He profits of the visual language of vandalism. The very thought of vandalism is portrayed marvelously by Faldbakken although the gestures used to construct them may be of provocative intension but there is nothing rebellious or destructive about the images he presents. Not within the gallery space nor outside of it. In both his artistic practice and his practice as a writer¹⁰ he has a particular sense of humorous and melodramatic themes served as minimally as possible (intentional). And with a severe amount of tragicomedy (non-intentional).



Mathias Faldbakken, Untitled (Slayer Upon Slayer Upon Slayer), 2007

Untitled (Slayer Upon Slayer Upon Slayer) is part of a series of several works Faldbakken has done using duct- or aluminum tape applied directly on exhibition walls or canvasses. The works spring from the idea of temporarily fixing a glass surface after, say, a brick has shattered a storefront

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IcLdRJAELVw>

¹⁰ Matias Faldbakken have published several books under the pseudonym Abo Rasul

window. Coming from the #1 most violent city of my home country¹¹ a window taped together until the replacement glass would arrive was a frequent sight in the city centre on saturday mornings. This sight was probably in most cases obviously the result of meaningless drunken small town idiocy. A mentality which, by the way, also breeds social environments in and around skateboarding.

In this particular work Faldbakken uses the visuals of this pointless vandalistic gesture and uses it to, quite succesfully mimic the famous trash metal band Slayer's¹² iconic logo. Three times on top of each other. Faldbakkens appropriation of the Slayer logo is akin to Thrasher Magazines¹³ 'Skate and Destroy' logo. Inspired by the famous essay with the same title by Craig Stecyk in the very first edition of the magazine in 1982¹⁴.

The appropriation and mimicking of logos, like the one of Faldbakken, is also recurring in the world of skateboarding. Where skateboard companies would use recognisable mainstream imagery, altered slightly and use it as a graphics on the decks¹⁵. Which would represent the lifestyle or public identity of the skateboarder. Say a band the professional skateboarder likes or his favourite beer etc.



Slayer Logo and Thrasher Magazine 'Skate And Destroy' Logo



A series of Bryan Herman pro model skateboard graphics based on iconic imagery from Baker Skateboards

11 As were the statistics growing up. And skateboarding.

12 Slayer had a large cult following of skateboarders in California throughout the 80's.

13 Thrasher Magazine was founded 1982 and was the first Skateboarding magazine that was made entirely by skaters for skaters. Thrasher have always been associated to the more punk, diy and outlaw skate cultures. This only growing stronger over time when more and more magazines were created as alternatives to that image of skateboarding.

14 The less punk rock oriented and more "mature" skateboard magazine Transworld would later that same year go on to publish an article in reaction to Stecyk's in their first issue titled 'Skate and Create'.

15 A deck is the wooden plank of the skateboard. When not attached to trucks and wheels it is referred to as a deck.

Vandalism, as the one Faldbakken is dealing with is coming out of frustration and boredom. See the works *Remainder III* from 2009 and *Untitled (Book Sculpture)* from 2008. In both examples Faldbakken addresses us both as the vandalist and as the victim of the vandalism too.

In his piece *Untitled (Book sculpture)* Faldbakken tears down books from the library shelves leaving them in a chaotic mess on the library floor. Or at least it seems they were violently torn down in a moment of frustration. Under agreement with the library staff the books get to stay on the floor for a substantial amount of time hereby establishing the sculpture. Here is one of Faldbakkens strongest examples of his tragicomic (and/or genius) presentations.

In most of scandinavia the public library is free of charge for anyone. It is, as many other public benefits, covered by the tax payers approximately 50% income tax. I find the ambience and the general feeling at Danish libraries very welcoming and cozy to a certain extend. After all, I do theoretically own a part of the library. *Untitled (Book sculpture)*, again, is a great example of the symbiotic relationship between the public, the vandalist and the institution. A work like this would not be realized anywhere else besides Scandinavia. Where the artists, whose past education and present funding etc is financed by the tax payers makes a immature vandalistic intervention in the institution which is the public library, fueled by the exact same means. The works contradicting tragicomedy can just as well be its geniality. The banality of tearing the books off the shelves onto the floor inside the sacred space of the library, a place where whispering is barely tolerated, it seems almost like the perfect crime and comes close to the perfect image of the ultimate anarchic act. The fact that the sculptural is only active by being under surveillance by the library staff is bitter irony.

“I am a spokesperson for totally anarchistic mayhem on a bed of traditional family values”

Mathias Faldbakken



Untitled (Book Sculpture), 2008



In *Remainder III*, 2009 a wall of tiles is installed in the gallery space. Then gets spray painted and marked by graffiti markers only then to be half heartedly washed off afterwards. Leaving only the remains of the vandalism between the cracks of the tiles.

Going back to the the magazine, it reveals in the end of the article that in fact Einarsson and Faldbakken in fact were skating together in the 90's growing up in Øvre Vang, which is the area in and around the city Hamar¹⁶. I was right! In an interview with Norwegian Newspaper 'Dagen Næringsliv', Faldbakken elaborates on his days as a skateboarder and how it relates to him to this day:

“Skateboarding is an activity with a very strong sense of freedom. And it was even illegal! An activity where one occupies public space. This vandalistic approach is something I've worked with since. Skateboarding has given me the impetus to the improper use of the given subjects, be it in the city or culture. On a skateboard a railing is not a just a railing and a sidewalk curb is not just a sidewalk curb”¹⁷

I, like Faldbakken, spend most of my teenage years skateboarding. And dedicating myself and the majority of my time to the lifestyle which comes with being a skateboarder. A lifestyle which, like many other subcultures, includes certain social codes of interaction, use of language and a way of dressing. But I never, like Faldbakken, had a vandalistic approach to skateboarding. The vandalism is a byproduct of the creative act, not the intention nor motivation.

I realize that skateboarding has made a greater impact on me than anything else I have been involved with. To this day wherever I go in the city I scan the urban architecture with the eyes of a skateboarder, even though I can't claim to have been an active skateboarder for many years. Public

¹⁶ A town in Rural Norway of close to 30.000 inhabitants.

¹⁷ Kemp, A., “Matias Faldbakken”, <http://www.dn.no/d2/2008/08/21/matias-faldbakken>, August 21, 2008. (Translated from Norwegian to English by the author)

spaces instantly appear to me as obstacles for me to explore with both of my feet firmly planted on a plank of wood and four wheels. The skateboard becomes a tool not only for athletic performance but a window to a new way of seeing. The board and wheels become an extension of the body. Enabling you to react and interact with the architecture in ways that are almost limitless within the restrictions of the physicality and dynamics of yourself and your board. The new possibilities of movement that the skateboard enables you to rethink and reevaluate your surroundings and what they mean and how the objects speak. Suddenly you can engage and interact with them and open up a dialogue with your surroundings.

Such a way of physically responding to architecture (objects) is very natural to me and yet extremely fascinating and it is something that undeniably have brought me my way into visual art. I find this “way of seeing” that the skateboarding mentality has opened me to very similar to the process and mindset that art making requires from from you. And the process of producing an artwork equally similar to the one of making a trick happen on a board. I see a very clear resemblance and similarity between the studio practice of the artists and the session of the skateboarder.

I have to establish the notion of *studio practice* before going further. The idea of studio practice is something I first encountered starting my studies at Rietveld. Having had several creative outlets previously in my life before being accepted to an art academy I never seemed to have had a necessity for a fixed space for working. Whether it be physical or mentally. The lack of creative outlet was never really an issue. Until recently.

For the last couple of years in the Fine Arts Department I have been force fed an idea of the artists studio practice. The idea of the studio as being ones physical space where ones work is primarily being made. It consists of: a small cubicle with pictures from google image search and cut outs from magazines hanging on the wall (occasionally also post it notes bearing the words *space* in various forms and contexts) next to a shelf with your material (clay, paint, glue, plaster, etc). This is a stereotypic image of the artist and the idea of structuring working. I have my sincere doubts towards whether an idea like this should ever be informed by any art academy. However, as an art school you cannot offer students much more than a place to work (and guidelines to work by) so I presume there is a certain sense insistency from the faculty on the studio spaces¹⁸. But to forcefully undermine the idea of the artist's studio practice into a caricature drawing of itself is perhaps a model not precisely suited for a school actually teaching art. (I would rather see school uniform implemented at the Rietveld than imposing a preconceived illusion of *the artist* on the students.)

If considering skateboarding my first encounter with a sort of artistic practice, which is bred on the streets with no hours, no fixed setting and no end product in mind imposed from anyone, then adjusting to the idea of working, made on someone else's behalf was quite tricky.

When the artist is working in the studio¹⁹ there is a lot of dependency on the immediate reaction on

¹⁸ I suppose, to a certain extend, studio spaces also functions as a visual manifestation of what the school is doing. Just to keep oneself reminded that art is being made here.

¹⁹ Using art schools model for studio practice as example.

the visual experimentation that is going on within the process of making the artwork. An investigation in material experimentation and how this material corresponds to/with the physical space in which it has been created or have been created for/to²⁰. It is a matter of trying out possible combinations throughout often several attempts. Which often means many failed attempts until you get to somewhere tangible. A trial and error process that hopefully will lead you somewhere interesting²¹.

As to compare this with skateboarding the material, so to say, could be considered as being the possibility of the trick (or combination of tricks) that the physical dynamics of the skateboard enables you to put together. That in combination with the given surroundings where you are skating and which you will interact with via the trick you intend to put together a series of tricks which suggest the same. This process also implies a certain level of trial and error procedure in order to get the intended trick done. And in some cases the physical surroundings will dictate the trick that can be done at the spot.²² The main focus is the environment in which you are present at that given moment. It is a matter of an instant physical reaction to the architecture around you.

The directness of the immediate responsive gestures performed on the board together with the physical restrictions that the skateboard enables you to do is a powerful combination. Something that will elevate active participation with urban architecture to a level of such performative quality it makes most other urban extreme sports seem bland.

What I truly miss about skateboarding is the directness and carefree naivety which is the creative driving force of skateboarding. As mentioned before skateboarding does not aim to have a predetermined contextualized goal or end product in mind. The before mentioned skate videos are merely a side effect by the capitalist forces of the cultural phenomenon. And if not from a company but independently produced (essentially home made) films it is usually with the intention of giving something back to the community. Skateboarding is a non productive act, the act itself is the making. This is not only because skateboarding is essentially playing, rather than it can be considered a sport, it is the fact that skateboarding is a form of expression.

In Raphaël Zarka's mind numbingly boring essay 'The Forbidden Conjunction' from 2011 he argues skateboarding through the eyes of Roger Caillois. Namely in reference to his work *Man, Play and Games*²³ from 1958. Zarka argues:

20 This, of course, is partly based on my own individual experiences when working on physical artworks. And that of many I know

21 "There's a process to brilliancy: you do all the corny things, and you might have to go through 500 ideas. Any corny thought that comes into your head, do a sketch of it. You're constantly emptying the brain of the ignorant and the dumb and the silly things and there's nothing left but the brilliant. The brilliant ideas are hatched through this process. Pretty soon you get ideas that no one else could have thought of because you didn't think of them."

Kellie Jones, "Morgan, S. & Lawson, T., "An Interview With David Hammons", *Real Life Magazine - Selected Writings and Projects 1979-1994*, Primary Information, 2007

22 "So you hit this wall, and when I hit it, the first thing you do is you fall forward, and I'm like, all right, all right. As you adjust, you punch it up, and then when I would do that, it was throwing my shoulder this way, which as I was doing it, I was like, "Oh wow, that's begging for a 360 flip," because that's how you load up for a 360 flip. And so this is what I want to emphasize that, as you can imagine, all of these tricks are made of sub- movements, executive motor functions, more granular to the degree to which I can't quite tell you, but one thing I do know is, every trick is made of combining two or three or four or five movements."

Mullen, R., "Transcript: Pop An Ollie And Innovate!",

http://www.ted.com/talks/rodney_mullen_pop_an_ollie_and_innovate/transcript?language=en, May 2012.

23 The game is defined by Roger Caillois as an activity that is once free, separate, uncertain, and unproductive: strictly governed by rules or make believe (the two last terms being almost all exclusive of one another). Before anything,

“Although there are numerous spaces created expressly for the activity of skateboarding (skateparks), it is above all an urban activity. More precisely, it is a practice “of the urban”, in the sense that its terrain is really the city, or at least a montage of the diversity of the city's materials and forms. Contrary to this, hip-hop dancing (an example among many other forms of urban recreation) merely breaks down the walls between the space reserved for training and its representation. It limits itself to a tiny parcel of the overall urban space. Of public space, it adepts seek out the smoothest possible surfaces (marble, granite), with or without foot traffic, covered and heated depending on the season. Yet while the skater may ignore numerous aspects of the city, he rarely limits himself to a single surface. He uses a variety of urban accoutrements (benches, garbage cans, fire hydrants, etc) as much as architecture (flat or inclined surfaces, stairs, curbs, etc). He inhabits and uses the city differently than a pedestrian or even a *flâneur* would. Skateboarding is always engaged in pushing the limits of the possible, at once dynamizing and destabilizing certain forms and objects conceived for the rest and comfort (benches, stairs, handrails, etc). It is not a game that has expanded beyond its original terrain was inserted in the city (a basketball court, for example, under an overground metro stop).”

Looking from the art worlds perspective usually there seems to be a frequent focus on certain recurring aspects in and around skateboarding. Such as skateboarding in relation to public space. How one actively participates in public space and rearranges the function of it. Also the subculture of skateboarding, vandalism etc. All these subjects are from the art-worlds perspective usually the main suspects for analysis. Before mentioned Raphael Zarka was the only writer, I stumbled upon during my research for this text, who was approaching the subject in a more humanistic manner. Or at least one that I could relate to the easiest without feeling a sensation of betrayal towards my heritage and convictions. And what is obvious throughout his work is that he is a skateboarder himself. Personally I have close to no interest in the various aspects around interaction with public space as when I was skateboarding (although I was enjoying them very much), these things were obviously factors that played a part in the activity. But from the skaters perspective this interaction might be the cracks between pavement tiles, the skate stoppers on the bench or the risk of security guards breaking up the session. They are all natural elements you have to deal with while skating but you won't question the nature of them. You know your place in the structure. Only much later in my life (right here and right now) am I being confronted with these various subject in terms of my *studio practice*. And, as you can imagine, it feels very forced to do so. Instead of looking at skateboarding as phenomenon through the blurry windows from my studio space, I would like to do it the other way around. And use the mentality of the skater as a role model for future studio practice. As I consider skateboarding my first creative practice within a collective.

The paradox between the skateboarders session and the before mentioned notion of studio practice of the artist it that the playing, which is the creative process of making is not often so directly embodied within the final stage of the work. A few works come to mind, in particular Richard

however, it is a form of recreation; whoever plays is free to play or not to play. A compulsory game is not enjoyed as a game, in the sense that to live, or survive, is not to play. The game is a separate activity, which is to say, “circumscribed within limits of space and time, defined and fixed in advance.” Whether the players measure their results against others or themselves, the outcome of the game is always uncertain, as to play is to surrender oneself to chance. The game is unproductive and in this way differs from any professional activity. The remunerated player (athlete, actor or other) no longer plays, he or she works; that nevertheless does not change the nature of the game. Governed by rules, the game is submitted to “convention that suspend ordinary laws legislation, which alone counts”. In indulging in make believe, the game may accompany the awareness of a reality parallel to every day reality, even of a total unreality.

Serra's 'Splash' pieces where the room itself dictates the physicality of the sculpture. And the sculpture itself reveals the very moment of materialization.

Serra throws (hence the title) molten lead against a corner in a exhibition space, lets it dry and then pulls the, then solid lead of the wall. And continues to do so several times until the floor is partly covered with the casts of the corner of which it is connected to.



Richard Serra's *Gutter Corner Splash: Night Watch*, installed in SFMOMA in 1995

But this is a rare quality as in most cases the artwork undergoes several shapeshifting stages before finally being exhibited as the final product. And usually in a space that do not leave very much up to the imagination. I think when working on a piece of art, in the back of ones head will always be acknowledgement of the piece ending up in a white cube.

Skateboarding is documented within the stages of playing whereas becoming an immediate image of the creative act. The gesture is not intended for any specific context, although it most likely will end up in a video, it is not the intention of the skater in the moment of realizing the trick. The gesture is only aimed at that specific moment and that specific terrain. (Imagine an artist producing work with no intention of any gallery-like exhibition in mind. What does that do to the process of the work and the work itself?)

Considering the skateboard video as a product of the creative act it is as honest as it gets in terms of documenting the creative act and the personas behind them. Obviously a number of videos undergo a rather large post production that might include some aestheticizing or even staging of the skaters. Just like the sculptures do in the studio but this is primarily a choice of the company and their priorities regarding their branding. But with a video like 'cherry' which is reduced to its bare minimum in terms of the above mentioned, the portrait of the skaters seems as close to a real portrait as possible.

When filming for a video at a session the videographer or filmer²⁴ is actively documenting everything going on that day. It is his job to film and the skaters to skate. That is why so often that a certain charismatic skaters video part will be full of clips of the person doing anything else than skating. A great example of this no-filter representation of the skateboarders persona is to find in another legendary skate film. Namely 'Sorry'²⁵ by 'Flip Skateboards' from 2002. Here, swedish skateboarder Ali Boulala's part consists of equally as many failed attempts to life threatening stunts as with successfully landed tricks. And a large part consisting of the skater goofing around. (Flip's 'Sorry' was also the first skateboard video ever to be hosted. The ex 'Sex Pistols' singer Johnny Rotten was an exceptionally appropriate choice of host for the Film)



Stills of non skateboarding from Ali Boulala's part in 'Sorry' Flip Skateboards 2002



Ali Boulala Ollies one of the biggest sets or stairs ever in Skateboarding history. He does not succeed.

²⁴ What skaters refer to the guy in the session responsible for the documentation.

²⁵ Flip skateboards, 'Sorry', directed by Ewan Bowman, 2002

Skaters are used to being constantly documented, the filmer and photographer is an extension of the team. When being constantly documented in a fly-on-the-wall kind of style you do not even acknowledge the camera and therefore the portrait is most likely to become rather honest. A bit of the same honesty I imagine you find in documentary film making.

This honesty is also to be found from more physical parameters. It might take twenty attempts to land the trick down the set of stairs so the product heavily depending on chance, luck and skill.

There is no appropriation here. Naturally, if not satisfied with the trick, the skater can attempt at it again but that does not guarantee a better looking version of the trick. That is: IF he or she succeeds to do it again. So when skaters have a natural grace to their skating it is not a matter of appropriation or aesthetic choice, it is an extension of their bodies. An undeniable sincerity capsuled in a creative gesture documented the best way possible.



Stills from Richard Serra's *Hand Catching Lead*, 1968

Few artworks spring to mind when thinking about capturing the essence of the playing in a studio setting. Bruce Nauman's series of video works from 1968 such as *Stamping in The Studio*, *Bouncing in the Corner*, where he is performing mindless non-constructive tasks in his studio simply as an act of the artists himself working in the studio. And much later *Setting a Good Corner* from 2002, which inhabits equal qualities in terms of honesty from artist to viewer and which operates around the same parameters but here we get a small inside to the personality and life of the artist. Most people reading this probably knows he relocated to New Mexico in 1979 and developed a professional interest in horse breeding- and training. Just as most skateboarders know that Ali Boulala was an alcoholic and drug addict throughout most of his skateboarding career.

So now here I am wondering which of the collectivities that is me. Is it art or skateboarding? In retrospect skateboarding for me was a refuge from the collective of which I was involuntarily a part of (Society). Now I find myself in a collective so extraordinarily similar to the skate world but still I still have a need to escape it and look back. Have I just grown older and wiser and lost my sweet teenage ignorance by blindly subjugating myself to (a sort of) academia and affiliating myself with an academy full of pseudo-intellectual insecure hipster rich kids, like myself, wanting to pursue an identity in art rather than to make use of it? I am not looking back at my oh-so wonderful teenage years. But to where my authenticity arose by finding a place within an artistic collective not dictated by the illusion of predetermined guidelines. And doing so neither being held back nor forcibly shaped by commerciality whether it be the conformities of studio practice or a skateboard video.

So, going back to the article. I started out mentioning my slight disappointment with Einarsson's and Faldbakken's review of the Supreme video. But where did this expectation come from? I was wanting to hear an artist's interpretation of it, but what is that anyway? Does my surroundings breed these false expectations from our art-world colleagues to talk to me only in my borrowed vocabulary in order for me to take them seriously as artists?

But that very article itself became the driving force for me to continue my writing focused. And I happened to stumble upon that article one afternoon in December 2014 in Copenhagen by a happenstance. Of the same nature of which, for me, skateboarding's sole quality too is its strongest strength. And not the ones on the bottom of your Supreme shoes but the artistic freedom which it enables you to have.

I was expecting Mathias Faldbakken and Geide Einarsson to talk about skateboarding in a vocabulary and setting which is not related to each of their personal relationship to the subject in the article in Dank Magazine. But if I were to imagine myself in that very same position, reviewing that very film I would probably have done the exact same. The people you hear talking there are still Faldbakken and Einarsson from Standard²⁶ but they are also Matias and Geide the skaters from Hamar. But the question is where their authenticity lies? Is it like mine own, quite possibly left behind in Scandinavia or did they bring theirs with them to Kassel? The footsteps of the D3's²⁷ are hard to trace.

“I have not just changed style since those times. Jeans, a t-shirt and skateboard shoes. I kind of got stuck there”²⁸

Matias Faldbakken

²⁶ Standard Gallery in Oslo both represents the two artists.

²⁷ The Osiris D3 was a visually vulgar skateboarding shoe that reached such enormous popularity in the mid 90's they became synonymous with that era's aesthetic of skateboarding.

²⁸ Kemp, A., “Matias Faldbakken”, <http://www.dn.no/d2/2008/08/21/matias-faldbakken>, August 21, 2008.
(Translated from Norwegian to English by the author)



The Osiris D3

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