

Sheltering Routine

Vincent Duraud

17 August – 11 September 2022

Gouwstraat 21, Rotterdam

I met Vincent Duraud in the summer of 2020 in a pocket of the world that was ignoring the global pandemic: Stockholm, Sweden. I had a tenuous relationship with the place – having unsuccessfully attempted to relocate there earlier that year – and my hesitant return was in response to a successful application that I had written still with the optimism about relocating. I arrived to perform a position of research and teaching assistant in a course co-taught by a contemporary art centre and a university to a group of art students¹, of which Vincent was one. I arrived uncertain.

That summer, Vincent introduced themselves and their practice as centred around queer art and sound events. Their work was fed and generated by conversations with groups of people, myself included, they would record and in the end remix, creating a soundscape that was moving towards the question: *is noise necessary for revolution?*

A couple days ago in the backyard of Available & The Rat, where Vincent has been living for the past week preparing the works for *Sheltering Routine*, we also spoke about revolution. The backyard is very still – much cooler and quieter than the front of the space – and I was aware of our voices travelling upwards and across to the neighbours surrounding us. We spoke about the precarity of private spaces, specifically a housing crisis that manifested violently in their lives for the past two years in Stockholm, and a similar housing crisis in Rotterdam that makes the conditions of Available & The Rat so impermanent.

Vincent also works in artist-initiated projects. I learned this working with them on an exhibition they organised with a collaborator in an empty apartment on the 15th floor of a building that they lived in temporarily while between spaces². They described the impulse behind this project in these words:

We are very interested in the ways that power & the reproduction of capital work through individuation, through assigning us to be a single person, and how precarious housing conditions (as with precarious employment, and precarious communities) contribute to this individuation/subjectivation.

Earlier this year, they recall a moment at the end of a move, where only the couch remains in an empty apartment, and the exhausted movers steal a moment together on it. Spending time together, sheltered, in an empty room. Is this a stage for a revolution?

Sheltering Routine is an exhibition of sound and assemblage sculptural works made from everyday domestic objects. Towels trace the perimeter of the space, softening the edges. Curtains slice the corners off, rounding the outside, or creating a sheltered inside. The window that faces the street is obscured, and a cover of pink faces the street and projects through the glass into the space.

There is a room common to apartment buildings in Sweden, especially those built as a part of Miljonprogramme³, that emits its own warmth. Located in the sub-level below the ground floor, with windows only near the top edge of the lowered ceiling, residents share wires strung across the ceiling to hang their wet washing. The room's heated ventilation system is activated by a switch to dry them. There are inevitable moments where the clothes and textiles that hang on those lines come from their individuated apartments, and meet in the warm room – temporarily removed from their service, commingling smells and fibres with the others they share space, separated, with.

Duraud sets out to make the space a holding character: the edges of the room are studied so the centre can be safely occupied. Sunflowers grow down the road: a symbol introduced in Gatwick Airport in 2016 in order to represent "hidden disabilities". Words that appear with the description of neurodiversity awareness are: strength, positivity, growth, are confidence. Vincent wonders about the necessity of symbols for acceptance of a subject position that cannot be seen – of different symbolic language for gender, or the need thereof. Sitting on a sofa together in an empty room, recognising that shared space as an intimate, accessible, and radical one, and marking it on the door as such. *Sheltering Routine* is a space about making space.

¹ Index Foundation and Konstfack University co-taught the course Art & Distribution in the summer of 2020.

² During this exhibition, called SKRAPAN, Vincent and I collaborated on my contribution for me remotely: they collected the clothes of the former residents of the space, and set them, rolled, around the perimeter of the apartment. This labour exchange is remunerated for Sheltering Routine, where I contributed to the sewn assembly of the textile panels in Duraud's installation.

³ Miljonprogrammet was a public housing program implemented in the country in the 1960s and 70s to make affordable, high quality housing to all Swedish citizens - and to make "good democratic citizens".