

THE BLOD METHOD: CASE STUDY OF AN ARTISTIC RESEARCH PROJECT IN FILM

ANNIKA BOHOLM

STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS (SWEDEN)

KERSTI GRUNDITZ BRENNAN

STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS (SWEDEN)

Kersti Grunditz Brennan, film editor and documentary filmmaker, currently assistant professor of film editing and PhD-candidate in film & media at Stockholm University of the Arts. MFA in choreography from Mills College, CA on a Fulbright scholarship. Research interests focus on cinematic processes based on embodied experiences. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2422-5119>

Annika Boholm, author/playwright, instigator of stage co-creation, researcher, and senior lecturer in performing arts. Former dancer/director/choreographer with MA in New Performative Practices from Stockholm University of the Arts. Research interests focus on relation-building in collaborative creative processes. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4373-9070>

Corresponding author

Annika Boholm

annika@boholm.info

Kersti Grunditz Brennan

kersti.grunditzbrennan@uniarts.se

Stockholm University of the Arts

P.O. Box 24045, 104 50 Stockholm

Sweden

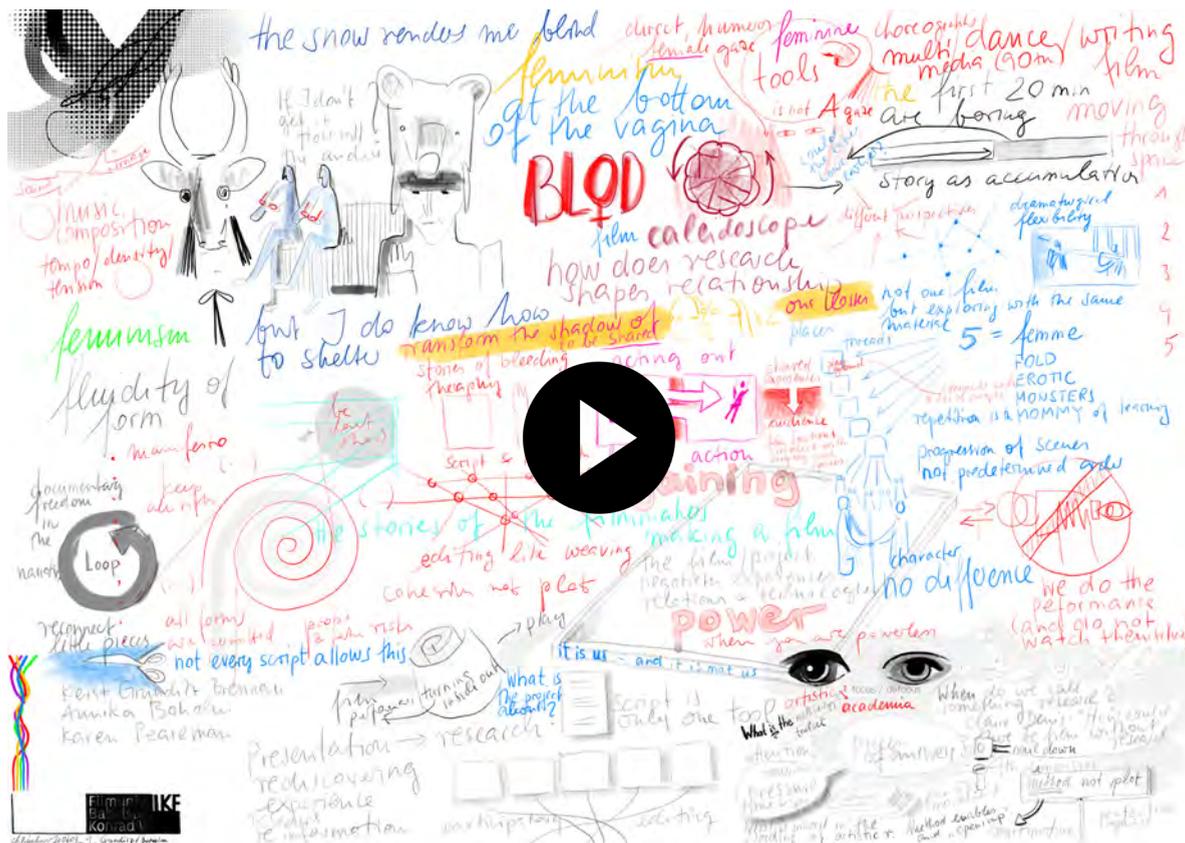
Acknowledgements

In recognition of academia as a provider of exploratory filmmaking opportunities beyond art markets and film industry, we want to acknowledge the support the BLOD project has received from the artistic research community; its resources in time, technology, and collegial discourse. We also want to thank professor of choreography Juliette Mapp for her keen eye on copy-editing.

Paper submitted: 29th November 2021

Accepted for publication: 31st March 2022

Published online: 3rd October 2022



Drawing made by Christiane Büchner during the presentations session by Annika Boholm and Kersti Grunditz Brennan.

Abstract

The BLOD project aims to create multivocal cinematic experiences through embodied practices. The research explores relation-building through a feminist methodology of creating gaps and friction – between audience, story, time, matter, and co-creators. The project asks, how to tell multifaceted, non-exploitive stories of womb-related states of life and death, rarely depicted in cinema? And how to disturb film industry hierarchies through a collaborative practice that maintains individual artistic integrity and promotes collective authorship?

The BLOD method is articulated as a *Manifesto*, written to accommodate a multitude of contents, forms, and modes of collaboration, while demanding cross-disciplinarity, honesty and risk-taking. The method is non-linear, looping, and embedded in the manifestations of the research: films, performances, presentations, etc. Through this paper, different aspects of the BLOD method are tossed around in relation to BLOD research activities; making cinematic building blocks that allow and induce multiplicity, improvisation, and fluidity of form; sharing personal experiences through fictionalized documentary processes; dealing with ethics in interpersonal and ecological relations.

The paper proposes that critical reflection and vulnerability are integral to film production and offers this case study as an example for method development in other research projects or films – especially ones that sprawl, tangle, and defy categorization by field or discipline.

Keywords: Collaboration, Embodied practice, Film editing, Filmmaking, Methodology, Relation-building, Scriptwriting

Introduction

This paper seeks to share the methods and insights gained through the artistic research project BLOD which formally started in March 2017 and is ongoing. The project aims to investigate how to create cinematic experiences with kaleidoscopic dramaturgy using embodied principles as the main compositional tool in making multivocal work that invites active audience co-creation. Method development is at the core, and the creative processes have been shaped in and through the project. To support the project's ambitions in research methodology and artwork incarnations, the research method is articulated as a manifesto:

The manifesto points (Fig. 1) guide both content, form, and modes of collaboration to give equal weight to ideas and craft. The numbering of the manifesto points does not reflect their order of importance. The BLOD method is non-linear, looping, and transdisciplinary, allowing for various formats for its dissemination. This paper is divided into four sections: *Immaterial conceptualization*, *Material creation*, *Material composition* and *Immaterial causata*. The section headings give the paper a structure that resembles stages of traditional film production (preproduction, production, postproduction,

and distribution) for the research to speak directly to a film industry beyond academia. Explications of relevant manifesto points frame each section.

The research is undertaken from feminist perspectives; through pluralistic, personal, and embodied practices drawing from a complex mix of cultural exposure, film, and literature, lived experiences, personal dispositions, sensory impressions, and accumulated learning. These practices intersect in paths that could never be fully accounted for but thinkers, artists and writers that provide inspiration are Kathy Acker, Judith Butler, Helene Cixous, Ulrika Dahl, Sergei Eisenstein, Donna Haraway, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Mara Lee, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Karen Pearlman, Yvonne Rainer. Their diverse imprints are entangled in the undergrowth of this research process. When discernable yet not referenceable, paths of influence are explained through footnotes.

The BLOD project explores modes of collaboration that allow integrity of individual artistic practices. Guided by a feminist methodology of gaps and friction, the BLOD method takes an



CLIP – Trailer for research project

1. LEAVE THE IMPLICIT AS IS!
2. BE, DON'T SHOW!
3. NO COMPROMISES!
4. KEEP ALL RIGHTS!
5. REVEAL YOURSELF!
6. PROBE AND TAKE RISKS!
7. EXPAND NATURALISM!
8. PROTECT YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS!
9. KEEP RESTRUCTURING TO THE LAST CUT!
10. ALL FORMS ARE PERMITTED!

Fig. 1 The BLOD Manifesto.

uncompromising and multivocal stance on collective authorship, applied when writing this paper. To reflect the multiplicity of perspectives in the research project, this paper takes on different author positions and literary styles. Some parts are written jointly while others have a single author; voice and tone connected to individual artistic practice, particular interests, and personal reflections.

Section 1. Immaterial conceptualization

Immaterial conceptualization revolves around BLOD manifesto points 3, 4 & 5, dealing with ideas, ethics for co-creation, and impetuses for form and thematic content. This first section starts with Annika's library-listing of themes as fodder for story events. Manifesto points 3 & 4 are further explicated by Kersti in an essay style text about authorship and collaboration. Concluding the section are thoughts from Annika on the purpose of these choices.

A key question the BLOD project keeps circling back to: How to tell multifaceted, non-exploitive stories of womb-related states rarely depicted in cinema? This question is explored through a meta-fiction where two women make a film about female bleeding from cradle to grave. The story events are based on experiences of being human with brains, heart, and uterus – challenging naturalism and narrative logic of traditional cinema.

Manifesto points 3, 4 & 5 as applied to Immaterial conceptualization in BLOD

3. NO COMPROMISES!

The collaboration is based on both researchers fully supporting every choice, method, and artistic vision.

4. KEEP ALL RIGHTS!

The entire creative team owns all creative rights; carries out all artistic practices that entitles to immaterial copyright. Annika writes the scripts and Kersti edits. Acting, directing,

cinematography, production design (incl. costumes), music, and all research documentation and presentations are carried out jointly and with joint responsibility and ownership.

5. REVEAL YOURSELF!

At 50+ it's time to stop searching for subjects of sufficient weight to build a film around and start digging in our own backyard. Tell stories about physical experiences shared by half the world's population – abortions, miscarriages, pregnancies, and menopause – states of life and death in intensely intimate disgusting detail. BLOD is not only about liquids. It's about blowing open the patriarchal power structures that have caged our inner creative beasts. The story about the filmmakers is documentary storytelling in a fictionalized form. All story events are based on our own and others' experiences – revisited, reconstructed, re-enacted, rehearsed.

ANNIKA: *BLOD(y) bearings; inventory of references (→ re ≈ back + fero ≈ carry)*

Archeology (attentiveness) (anatomies) (atlases) (animals) (alliteration) (and ABC!)

Babies (and books of course) (birth) (not to forget blood) (+ bleeding) (boxing) (breathing)

Children (carrying) (caring) (cores)

Dancing (+ dressing us + all the roles) (discussing) (debating) (death) (dolls) (decentering)

Erasing (entangling)

Filming (fictionalizing!) (figuring – in & out) (framing – some letters are better)

Gravity (gazes) (ginger)

Healing (hopping)

Improvising (or is impersonating of more importance as an i-word?) (iterating)

Juggling (A was supposed to – with oranges! – for a special reason – but didn't make it)

Knocking together (a huge wooden framework)

Listening (labor) (laugh)

Musicmaking (metamorphose) **MANIFESTING** (mooning) (method) (more-than-human)

Nursing (nourishing) (naming) (~~non-human~~) (non-succeeding)
Operating (not only the cinematography)
Parenting (PLAY PLAY PLAY) (patterns) (poiesis) (problems)
Quoting (e.g. Bhabha q-ing Morrison)
Researching (and rhyming) (red + thread) (RELATING) (read) (recognition) (rest) (rhythm)
Singing (surgery) (silence) (salad) (scars)
Trying (and there is tailoring – even though Kersti did most of it) TRANSFORMING
Understanding (+ undergrounding) (uterus) (unbelieving) (unintelligibility)
Ventilating (vocal) (vulnerability) (voicing) (victim)
Weeping (womb) (whispering) (wolfing)
X-chromosome (xxx) (XL) (x as in...) (x) (x) (x)
Y (y)
Zooming (zebra) (ze)

KERSTI: *Shots of BLOD – tastes of collaboration*

We meet in the tiny sushi place by the subway station, and our conversation continues in the nearby cemetery. It is a pivotal meeting, starting a collaborative project that will span years. My memory of this get-together is very clear but not all mine. I've read about it in a text by Annika and can no longer distinguish what is my memory of the event and what is her description of it. A sense of November in her writing rubs off on my memory. I know we met in June, but when I envision the occasion, I see yellow leaves and feel a slight crispness in the air. Like a scene in a movie. I even feel a cool draft through the door of the sushi restaurant. The warm June day replaced like a set change.

I arrive to meet my long-time friend and sometime collaborator in a very particular state of mind – angry, tired, ready to leave the film industry for good. It's been a while, so we



Fig. 2 Still from BLOD.

have a lot of catching up to do. Both in and out of womb-related surgery, with scars from past professional collaborations, hopelessly dealing with our mothers, faced with communication breakdowns in our love relationships. And menopause on top of everything. As we talk, it all seems interconnected, and Annika tells me about an idea she has for a play or a film. She sees a hospital bed in the middle of a soccer field at night. The flood lights turn on with a bang and there is a woman in the bed and empty blood bags on the ground. I get enthusiastic. This is a film I want to make with her – about our own experiences, in the first person, and no negotiating rights with third parties.

Her vision of that scene (Fig. 2) has such distinct details that I am pulled into its potential to hold the span of topics we covered that day in all their contradiction and complexity and from both our perspectives. I no longer want to stop making movies; I want to make them on new terms. We leave each other in shared excitement but without a plan for the next step. The new year starts with me suddenly in full-time employment at a university as a part-time assistant professor and part-time PhD-candidate. And Annika and I haven't talked since June.

Four years later, we stand in front of tv-cameras delivering a conference presentation of our film and research project BLOD. We have prepared two video clips, one of which is the bed on the soccer field and a list of talking points, the list printed out. We are quite different in many ways. I easily talk freeform in front of an audience, and Annika likes to stick to a script. This presentation was partly improvised, and I did most of the talking. When we finished, I apologized for taking over the show, but she had felt taken care of. When I later watch the video recording, I can see how our improvisation and attention to each other become a performance of our collaboration and its underlying agreements.

We are co-researchers and refer to the BLOD project as "A shared site for research". It is clear enough to us, but we often

get the question "whose idea is it?" understood as "whose research is it?" This question gets further muddled by the asymmetry of our formal research positions. My PhD-position affords me unique opportunities to represent this research stemming from her idea of the bed on the soccer field. Still, when I don't take credit for the idea, my integrity as a researcher gets questioned. This equating of idea and (research) authorship mirrors authorship hierarchies in the film industry.

In the BLOD project, we develop ideas together and figure out what situations could become scenes, what locations they could take place in, and what characters might be part of them. From there, Annika writes scripts as an individual practice that is part of her research interests and without my interference. Similarly, Annika is not very present in the edit room. I send her half-finished sequences to share my excitement or ask questions. We talk it over on the phone, and she may remind me of strands from our project development worth revisiting. She also provides ethical feedback as a documentary subject since we are both in front of the camera. I research through editing with film material that has been created through processes of joint idea development, Annika's writing and joint filming. I write music parallel to the editing, but that is all I add to the sources I am editing from. I have autonomous agency within the boundaries of the project, work independently, and yet the collaboration is always present in this stretch of the relay of creation.

Our first big collaborative clash came early in the project. In retrospect I recognize it came out of my lack of experience with directing and acting dramatic text. We had just started filming, and Annika was writing our first scripted scene: Hannah & Aziza going to couples' therapy. I will play Aziza and one of the therapists. Annika sends me the script. I read it and can make sense of neither the lines nor the characters' motivations. And when we talk about it, it turns into a heated argument. Annika is persistent and tries to explain the potential subtext and the options for directorial interpretation.

I project my (subconscious) fear of exposing my poor acting skills to her in the guise of questioning the script and its potential to serve as an initiator of the staging and filming. Later that night, I managed to emotionally acknowledge what before had been a purely intellectual understanding, that all her years of working with theater, actors, and dramatic text and all her years of writing bring to our project something I don't. The strength of our collaboration lies in respecting what the other knows deeply. It is not about people sharing the same task but people doing different things that create something unknown to all.



CLIP – Sequence featuring Hannah & Aziza

Collaboration is complex, and through the years, this project has provoked skepticism and resistance from both institutions and between us. We have formal agreements on copyright where Annika owns the immaterial rights to the actual scripts, I own the immaterial rights to some of the music compositions, and together we own the immaterial rights to the filmed material and the edited manifestations. But many issues lie outside the scope of what can be legally regulated. I am recognized as the editor, but there is no independent artwork that is only mine since I cannot edit without material. Annika and I talk a lot about how to maintain the integrity of our practices and persons through the project. This is especially relevant given the asymmetry of our power relationship where I am paid to study and will get a PhD and she has temporary research contracts.

After the big script clash – that eventually became a scripted scene for the project – and before we went on with the filming, we knew we had to create a guide for our collaboration. We spent several days writing a manifesto. For the joint endeavors, we arrived at NO COMPROMISES. Not the middle ground but an alternate route, a third option that might be different

from what either of us initially proposed. Or that which comes from one of us retelling the other's idea, changing its setting from spring to fall.

ANNIKA: *The why of it*

Talking about abundant experiences from hospital stays – close to death, the uterus at heart. A felt sense of oddness in the hospital environment; how the brain vs body duality arose and created a sense of self-alienation. Where were the artistic expressions portraying such experiences? What could a feminist approach to such a task be?

The BLOD project's care for the integrity of different artistic practices extends to exploring how they interact with performing arts and cinematic traditions. Through our uncompromisingly shared artistic processes, we question hierarchical power structures and artist myths. This is in line with our interpretation of a feminist methodology – creating gaps and friction which, when they are bridged, can generate depth and complexity while leaving room for improvisation, unpredictability, and fluidity of form.

In November 2019 BLOD the feature premiered. The night before I couldn't sleep.

What does it mean that we live? that we die? that things end? Tossing and turning I fathom This is what I do; I create shelters, I practice dying.

The research project BLOD is a home.

By home I mean: a relation-building well-tempered hangout, or: I'm looking for metamorphose.

I am in there, and I am not in there. Also, I am not not in there. When I write I, I also write you. 'I' write 'you' and 'I' mean all my lovers, all my cats, all my children. When 'I' write lovers, cats, children 'I' probably mean relations, society, transformation.

Home in Old English is ham, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch heem and German Heim. When what is known and familiar returns as strange and foreign it arrives unheimlich

– one feels at home believing one is safe, and suddenly: strangeness in the ordinary.

During the years of work with BLOD there have been questions: *Whose research is it? Who has done what? Why chorus?* Even if I have felt BLOD being a home – for acumen, for breeding, for community – if there are heads thinking I do not belong, there will be tension. Creating unhomey moments. Homi Bhabha (1992, p. 141) recognizes this uncanny experience in Toni Morrison's poem¹:

Whose house is this? Whose night keeps out the light
in here? Say who owns this house? It is not mine. I
had another sweeter... The House is strange. Its shadows
lie. Say, tell me, why does its lock fit my key?

The artistic practice in BLOD is a process of deep playfulness, serious humor, hopeful mourning. While seriously transforming the shadows of losses into artistic expression. At no time a matter of representing a tragedy; it is all about transformation. The BLOD process delves into existential questions but shall not be understood as translating the medical mythology of healing into research or artmaking. Something profound happens, existence crackles, and I am challenged to become another.

BLOD's continuously dialoguing process seeks modes of transformation also beyond the artistic practice and its academic context, a call from themes, situations, and relations the project is entangled with. Guiding principles articulated as: How to make accessible art while exploring complex issues? How to search for broad appeals without ending up with simple answers to difficult questions?

BLOD as a site for research is still delineated by mortality as a grounding condition. To be finite implies to be in relation,

to depend on others. Otherwise, nothing would be at stake. Artistic risks involve exposing oneself, but can flip, so that I instead expose others. To be *werk*² worth its name, it needs to challenge me to also face what is monstrous in myself. To take responsibility is to take risks is to take responsibility. The point where responsibility and risk-taking intersect is an open wound.

To be or become – moving on to something less. Succumbing to the temptation of risk-taking. (Nothing near what the action means in a life-death situation, just the unpleasantness in perhaps not making oneself understood.) But still, an attempt to compose phrases on moving in a movie. About moves in a movie-world of life and death moments (when one becomes aware that one's body belongs to mother nature, who does whatever the fuck she wants; about the animal experience of having a body with an inward-bound movement). Reflecting upon the movie movements by post-trained bodies performing pedestrian baroque (Fig. 3).

The entire research project – process, artistic outputs, dissemination (including this paper) – rests on embodied experiences. Taking shape through post-Rainer-pedestrian movements performed by two ex-dance-persons who have moved on, dancing by making movies... Constantly distracted by their children, partners, mothers, lovers, cats...

Section 1. Summary

Immaterial conceptualization revolves around creating a framework for ethics (including creative ownership and interpersonal and ecological relations), aesthetics, and thematic content, including descriptions of a collaborative practice that maintains individual artistic integrity.

¹ This poem is part of the song cycle "Honey and Rue" by Toni Morrison and André Previn. It was later published in Toni Morrison's novel "Home".

² Old form of "work of art".



Fig. 3 Stills from BLOD.

Section 2. Material creation

Material Creation highlights BLOD manifesto points 2, 6 & 7, addressing several cinematic practices involved in the generation of film material, with special focus on scriptwriting. In this second section Annika reflects on her BLOD writing process, followed by Annika and Kersti taking turns briefly describing material creation in BLOD through other cinematic practices.

In BLOD, inner experiences are staged through outer manifestations using performance, surrealism and dislocation of place and time. The writing is shaped as scenes with dialogue and scores for improvisation. Staged and shot as written, the scenes have no predetermined order, drawing from documentary processes to create fiction material. Rather than filming towards a set narrative, components of story threads are made to be forged in the editing. Cohesion is sought through method, not plot. The material creation spanned a period of two and a half years, generating 112 hours of raw footage.

Manifesto points 2, 6 & 7 as applied to Material creation in BLOD

2. BE, DON'T SHOW!

Everything is told through settings, actions, and dialogue – no inner monologue or narration.

6. PROBE AND TAKE RISKS!

The film plays out on several planes – meta layers, concrete story events, moments of dream and fantasy – forming a web that reflects our permissive and very personal aesthetic, with its

drastic choices on both form and its relation to content. Emotional logic is more important than chronology and continuity.

7. EXPAND NATURALISM!

Dolls, stylized costumes, and non-naturalistic settings open what's personal to emotional ambiguity. Sports environments allude to feelings of exposure and power relations in the health-care situation and comments on idioms like "she lost her battle with cancer". Therapy sessions set in places created for other interactive purposes – flea market, laboratory, library, playground, tv-studio – hint at potential subtexts in the collision between site and situation. What's going on in the lab with its design to cure disease or the swing with its promise of play...

The acting in BLOD is another way to break the yoke of naturalism in (fiction) film. We don't become our roles; we perform their actions. House them in our bodies and give voice to their lines. We don't know everything about our characters, but we know of the ongoing moment of struggle. Physically working the words and the situation into action.

ANNIKA: *Scripting*

Talking and writing are utterly different practices. The first time I was going to read out loud in public what I had written was in a building on a hill, in a space called the Bishop's Kitchen. I almost crawled backwards into the fireplace. Yes, the fire was lit. Before I would say the first sentence, I was deeply unsure if I could still speak, or if I had become mute. The text? It started Mmm mma mmma maammaammmmm mmmaamma

All my work begins and ends with relations. Human as well as more-than-human. To me, writing is ground research on what it means to be human, to be alive, to be a temporal and finite being. Every creature's existence will come to an end. How do we deal with that?

The BLOD method is a method of reuse and repetition; subtle performative recycling – it does not talk about it, it's doing it. Exploring actions and situations, like bodily processes – breath, heartbeats, bowel movements – that keep us alive while driving us towards death. With this kind of – simultaneously life-giving and destructive – premises I explore the fuel of creativity: the doing and the attempting. Paying attention to bodies' importance in creating meaning; a practice that also involves bodily aspects when working with power structures, risk taking, responsibility, limits. It is a fundamental attitude to what creation is about, just like the words point to, ethics in interaction with artistic exploration.

I want to write scripts that allow for theatricality, engender a kinesthetic reading, and invite scenic displacements and temporal shifts, while simultaneously foregrounding the materiality of the text and the embodiment of concepts.

Aiming to reveal the material's inherent fragilities and instabilities, my work is based on creative documentary strategies in a porous overlap of fiction and reality. Weaving the components into each other while still maintaining a space for the unknown. Weaving hybrids by giving attention to vulnerability and tenderness of bodies. Complicating the role of the protagonist through listening, recognizing, and decentering.

My writing in BLOD is not autobiographic in the way one might think of as autobiographic. Having said that, I recycle

experiences gained from my own life, mixing with others', reusing parts of earlier texts, rotating the so-called reality turning it into fiction. The core of drama is relations, which requires a personal engagement from me to be meaningful. Trying to capture dimensions of life or reality, I often find them in the concentration that reproducing offers. In other words: by using the archive of my own body when writing, I discover new meaning in familiar events.

To write well is to read well. The most difficult is to read one's own writing. Shared readings help me get in touch with what the text often knows better than myself. To openly listen to an attentive reader pointing towards something particular in the text – what is going on there; how does it function; when does it itch. When writing scripts for BLOD, the script meets its reader challengingly early in the process – again and again surprising me, inspiring me to be gutsy, deepening the process. Ever and again hurling the text in unexpected trajectories.

The BLOD scripts are different in that the dialogue is less stable and performs less causality, as it consists of a combination of at the same time insinuating and straight responses, and hardly hidden references and kinesthetic triggers. Perhaps more of a dance because of how I work with rhythmical and poetical concepts. A kind of translations. The BLOD-work seems to resist quantification or evaluation, as if it has no recognizable value. I find that liberating.

FEMME – 5 (fem) in Swedish, woman in French – a term holding a bouquet of meanings.

The BLOD method is actively trying to create a feminine (Fig. 4) gaze – cyclic, spiraling, rhizomatic, kaleidoscopic, layered – in states of **FEMMES**³:



Fig. 4 BLOD logo.

3 Fun fact: Professor of gender studies Ulrika Dahl's uses femme as a figuration in discourse on femininity.

Breaching one's **FOLD** by grabbing its bottom, turning inside out, turning words into worlds. Making the movements performed by movers in a movie felt through shape and content. The movement of the movie is of a transformative nature. Like snow.

The cyclic singular that in a concrete mode dissolves in a whole. The single snowflake with its own limited extent changing form and metamorphoses through its aggregate forms.

A quality strived for when writing the manuscript and then manifested in the editing.

Mooching off Daddy Lacan's⁴ again (encore) as the world's most **EROTIC** word, exploring looping premises of life and cinematic storytelling.

Again and again – bickering with his buddies – connecting creativity, death, eroticism.

Any other middle-aged girl who feels like a **MONSTER**?

Of the Latin monstrum or monstros; ultimately from the infinitive monere – recall, urge.

Related to the verb think – to make think of.

Not so far-fetched if considering the literal proximity to monstrare to be found embedded in demonstrate – easily becoming *pattern* with a few dots (in Swedish that is → mönster).

Zebras don't change their stripes, those who speak English say. (The Spanish claim that no matter how much the raven washes, it will never turn white.) Monsters frighten. But there is a difference between m & m. In feminine and masculine horror. Monstrously feminine is charged with biological aspects. For reproductive and maternal functions (Creed, 1993).

PUSSY BLOOD MILK CARE EGG;

Rabbit-boiler Carrie Nanny Psycho-mom The Eighth Passenger.

Whore, vampire, siren, obsessed, castrator, animalistic, ghost & witch;

in the saga Pomperipossa, in the Bible Lilith, in the mythology Medusa.

Medusa with mouse – a Muse. Turns on mice and humans (Poseidon).

As punishment for the rape, anyone who sees her face turns into stone.

Since she becomes angry, violent, vengeful, and murderous, also the female victim can be considered a monster – and thus seen as a perpetrator (Clover, 1993).

The self that is not me. Neither subject nor object. Thus abject.

Abjection dissolves the boundaries between subject and object, between human and inhuman. Psychoanalyst & cetera Julia Kristeva (1982) defines abject as the place where meaning collapses. When meaning ceases, abnormality occurs. Monstrosity arises when the struggle to get it together – linguistically or rationally – crashes.

What cannot be understood must be demonstrated, as the word itself suggests; what cannot be named can only be de-monstrated.

Attempting to rewire and relearn – repetition is the **MOMMY** of learning.

All roads head there, far from everyone has been there. In Rome.

(In Swedish Rome backwards is mother.)

Our practices, the practice of mothering, is wicked werk. Out of the blue thinking amore...

À Rome as they would answer in Finestère, when asked: où mène la route?

While exploring blood experiences with a loving gaze and attention, listening to **ECHOES** of (feminine) experiences reverberating through time and space.

Trying to see every day human conditions – as old as time and repeated through generations – anew.

Aiming to avoid making sharp distinctions between art, everyday life, and politics – allowing it all to echo through the project.

Obsessively picking at **SCARS** of life and story.

RELATION RECYCLING ROTATION ⇒ RRRRR – R as SCAR:

In Swedish the letter R is pronounced ÄRR

4 Daddy Lacan refers to psycho-analyst Jacques Lacan whose seminar XX is named Encore.

(closely pronounced as the first syllabus in the English word errand but with (north) Swedish rolling Rs (similar to old fashion Bourguignon Rs) (and Irish-ish).)

The Swedish word ÄRR translated to English is scar. (Narbe in German, cicatrice in Italian and French, in Spanish cicatriz, 疤痕 in simplified Chinese and in Arabic بـجـن. Ergo all of them scars. R is embedded in scar. R as in to be. Or not to be. And instead becoming.

FEMMES (5) became an organizing principle for BLOD. Five story threads: FEMALE BLEEDING, HOSPITALIZATION, FILM-MAKING, PERFORMANCE AND THERAPY. The THERAPY thread deals with crises and breakdowns of relationships in the wake of the blood. Five couples are in treatment, each couple having 5 sessions in 5 different locations. Each session written as a scene with internal progression, the 4th of the 5 is a dream-scene. (Wanting to form a structure – hamlet, hoard, hovel, hut, hydra – with the least possible wastage: make it pentagonal.)

KERSTI: *Costumes*

The costume design is centered on 17 pussy-bow frocks (Fig. 5) with similar cuts from different fabrics in an array of colors, patterns, and textures. The frocks designate certain characters in blood and dream scenes, and function as female power-suit, lab coat, hospital gown, evening dress, etc. The color choices carry symbolic meaning while also being tied to location and props (Fig. 6). Other costume choices are connected through their story threads; plaid shirts, printed sweatshirts and jeans for the filmmakers, underwear for the therapy-clients.

To include the sewing of costumes for BLOD in the research is a way to embody the characters wearing them. Since we played all the parts and Annika wrote the dialogue, the sewing was my opportunity to approach and inhabit the characters through a hands-on creative act before playing them in film scenes. Deciding to do it, I had thought less about all the time I would spend cutting and sewing. The slowness of it. The forced reflection through another medium. A blank page between louder voices in the film making process. The time and effort spent making them also correlates with their presence in research documentation and presentations: a concrete mode for exposing their importance in the project.

ANNIKA: *Sets & Location*

A story needs a place. One patient meeting the OB-GYN surgeon in a boxing ring, another getting her cancer verdict in a pool, a teenager seeing the midwife on a squash court – ideas in hindsight echoing philosopher Michel Foucault's *Of Other Spaces* (*Des Espaces Autre*). Reading Foucault (1986), a heterotopia creates meaning by disturbing the order we have created, and perhaps saying something about life and society by the twisted operation of a familiar space. Haunted by that image of a bleed-out woman on a gurney on an empty soccer field. Recreation of a life event that lingers. How to make it without making it? Recreating it better than in reality; placing it in real but alien contexts; complicating the matter until reaching simplicity – like peeling an onion – at the end only tears.

Gaia is hurt. How we conduct our artistic practice is acutely critical. The climate crisis happens in all our actions and



Fig. 5 The BLOD frocks.

dealing with it is all about action. A consciousness to not take more than we give; and creatively and critically explore what that could imply in a film context. So, we film locally, close to our homes and workplaces. We also choose locations we have history and personal connections with – to reveal ourselves, our privileges, and our reference points.

Ginger and junk. There is a junkyard component to the aesthetic expression, a problem-solving aspect. Arriving at the borrowed apartment where the 'Predicaments'-scenes will be filmed, bringing nothing but the costumes. Inventory of what is at hand, taking things out of cupboards, refurbishing. This is on-going DIY; working with what is, with what to get hold of when reaching out; using, reusing – leveling up the unstitching and remaking. Relating to a wounded planet, rethinking relations between subject and object, between human and more-than-human. Junk and ginger. With its mass of roots growing horizontally, skilled in letting new shoots grow upward. A rhizome – a model for coappearance – gifted to enrich the soil it grows in and host other organisms.

A place is not just a place. We chose sites for BLOD-happenings by their potential to engage with people outside of the artistic research context. These encounters – when asking for filming permissions, planning practicalities, explaining the research – not only put the project in motion. They also bleed back into manuscripts. Having coffee with curling hall administrator L, planning for our scene with a mother changing diapers on her newborn daughter (and discovering her baby girl has bled). Two hours of sharing artistic endeavors, midwife

dreams, childhood memories. *I thought I was an imbecile; why did I never get help with my homework!*



CLIP – Playground therapy

KERSTI: Directing & Cinematography

Once on location, we start staging the scene and working out storyboards with image composition, camera angles, lighting, etc. as shared artistic practices. There are sliding shifts in who weighs in harder on what, according to past experiences. In the directing situation Annika takes the lead on movement in the room and I take the lead on camera placement, but we work the scene in the space and for the camera until we are both happy with it. NO COMPROMISES! is our manifesto point 3.

Directing and cinematography prioritize movement and relation-building. There are very few instances of camera movement since we are the only people on set and mostly both in front of the camera. Cameras are placed to capture movement in the physical space through action and reaction, attention and diversion, and spatial conditions. The spatial component of relation-building concerns characters, objects, and places. Both directing and cinematography deal with creating potential connection points between a multitude of scenes and sites; through image composition, stylization, colors, costumes, set design, performance mode, and choreographed movement.



Fig. 6 Stills from BLOD.

This preparation for temporal relation-building goes beyond the cause and effect of narrative events unfolding.

All footage is made for multiple editing options. Most scenes are shot with several cameras on tripods, a directional microphone mounted on one, and wireless receivers mounted on another. This setup provides material with equal options, whether fully scripted or more improvised. Fictional continuity can be achieved either by cutting between multi-camera angles or by cutting between slates and takes. Also, shot in 4K for HD output infuses the material with options for reframing in the editing.

The use of multiple cameras and 4K is also a way to care for the performance by limiting the number of slates required from a laborious filming situation where the two of us do everything. After framing and setting the camera focus and aperture, each scene is performed and filmed with un-manned cameras. After each take, we watch it and jointly decide to do another or move on to the next slate. It is a slow process with built-in reflection time (Fig. 7). It also affects our performance that nobody watches us in real time. The camera is strongly felt in its recording capacity, but it is not a judgmental witness. Our performance is shaped by the multiple temporalities of the process: first making the directing and cinematography choices, then performing, and then evaluating the camera version of the performance. This process adheres to manifesto point 8. PROTECT YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS!

Section 2. Summary

Material creation in the BLOD method highlights the making of cinematic building blocks that can be combined to create a whole, have integrity on their own, and can spark movement, impulse, and unpredictability.

Section 3. Material composition

Material composition focuses on BLOD manifesto points 9 & 10 and is about compositional aspects of cinematic practices, especially film editing. This third section contains Anni-ka's and Kersti's individual takes on what a film kaleidoscope might mean. A joint text on dramaturgy as a weaving practice gives way to Kersti's essay on film editing as composition.

The BLOD method supports exploration of different forms and outputs through the same raw material – in short films, plays, installations, episodic drama. The method implores kaleidoscopic composition strategies where scenes are cut up and mixed, threads and storylines intersected, and dramaturgies are created in the editing and beyond the screen.

Manifesto points 9 & 10 as applied to Material composition in BLOD

9. KEEP RESTRUCTURING TO THE LAST CUT!

Most scenes have written scripts with lines. Others are improvised based on themes for conversations or dancing. Filming situations also spark ideas for new scenes. The open nature of the scripted scenes and the large amount of raw (fiction) footage call for a documentary selection process. The story for each specific output is finalized in the editing.



Fig. 7 Behind the camera, June 2017.

10. ALL FORMS ARE PERMITTED!

BLOD oscillates between the abyss and the trivial, lurks in the tension between pain and humor. Associative and condensed. Surreal and poetic. Style and tone change wildly. Dreamlike and concretely; humor, brutality, ridicule, emotional expressiveness, consistent style element, rule-breaking, questioning, self-criticism without self-censorship, absurdities, and intimate songs.

ANNIKA: *Kaleidoscopic handling*

Derived from Ancient Greek: καλός (*kalos*) beautiful, beauty; εἶδος (*eidos*) that which is seen: form, shape; σκοπέω (*skopeō*) to look to, to examine; hence 'observation of beautiful forms'.

In most vertebrates and mollusks, the eye works by projecting images onto a photosensitive membrane. In the work with BLOD I let my irises see the world through a different kind of reflex contractions. Because the essential was that the vision cleaved in various pupils.

The first sensation of BLOD appeared as an image. But with it, a desire to forge a film with a kaleidoscopic dramaturgy. The metaphor limps. A film will be fixed. A kaleidoscope creates new patterns and images again and again and again. But still, there is a kaleidoscopic effect created by BLOD's structure returning to themes and stories that are constantly reshaped.

Through performative writing – experimenting with theatrical qualities, searching for a precise condensed articulation in the dialogue and caring for the integrity of the words without closing the scene – I aim to leave room for the viewer. The audience co-creation of the film – bringing their worlds; relating to, or questioning, inherent *things*; sensing memory; exploring gaps; listening to dreams – could be thought of as a hand turning the kaleidoscope. A film encounter that is an experience over time, remaining in the minds of the viewers, shifting, reshaping, transforming, creating reflections.

BLOD kaleidoscopic handling takes on the question of how an artistic practice transforms in collaboration, which also activates the question of relation-building in performance and how an artistic practice is perceived. The performative contracts we aim to establish when engaging with anyone who encounters the research can be considered relation-building attempts. In which interacting might hold a different proposal of being-together than participation. Hoping to invite interaction where something emerges that could not be preconceived. Challenging the factory temporality in filmmaking by emphasizing strategies that favor relation-building over product or result, and elevate the status of process and of dreaming together.



CLIP – Boxing and filming

KERSTI: *Material creation for a film kaleidoscope*

I relate to kaleidoscopic very literally and in two ways. One is the bits and pieces that get rearranged into images when a kaleidoscope is turned. The other is the story that emerges when these images are viewed one after the other.

"The first 20 minutes are boring" – how many times have I not heard that about a film I've worked with. Thus, the industry urge to set up an exciting mystery (to be solved) or a juicy dysfunction (to be changed). And, as a consequence (re-)producing the same linear kind of dramaturgy over and over again. "Could what happens at 20 minutes come earlier?" – another question echoing through years of editing. My most common reply: "it's the 20-minute build-up that makes it interesting".

Story as accumulation – could it start with any scene and does each starting point create a different story? Trying a kaleidoscopic dramaturgy – adding layers in interchangeable

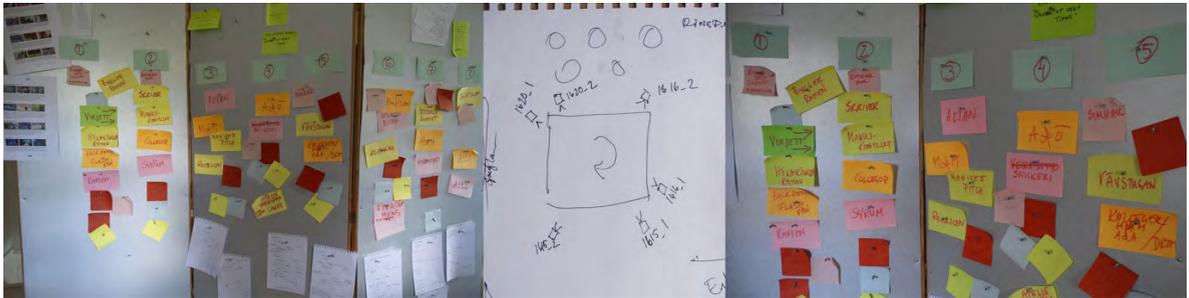


Fig. 8 Sections, post-its of scenes by story thread, weave patterns, Aug 2019.

order to slowly build a world – is about resisting the urge to set things going on clear paths, trusting that characters, form, and themes are interesting enough to invite the viewer into storytelling that is ambiguous, sprawling, and multifaceted. The key is that the reservoir of (fiction) material has project specific connection points to link different scenes without depending on narrative logic. The components for a film kaleidoscope come out of a story creation process that resembles documentary filmmaking and world-building – starting with themes and methods, adding form, characters, and events.

The feature version of *BLOD* could have started with almost anything. We had an idea for the order of scenes – a treatment – but slowly and in incremental rotation the first scene shifted from a stretcher rushed along a track in a stadium to a wrought-iron vent in a wood-paneled room with two drumming women leaning into it.

KERSTI & ANNIKA: *Weaving BLOD – the feature*

Kaleidoscopic story-making could be perceived as a weaving practice. *BLOD the feature* is a complex story with a fractured narrative created by weaving our five story threads – FEMALE BLEEDING, HOSPITALIZATION, FILMMAKING, PERFORMANCE AND THERAPY. We were aiming for dramaturgy through accumulation rather than narrative logic. Random accumulation would leave 90 minutes of sense making entirely up to the viewers – an effort requiring unreasonable patience

and cognitive stamina. Accumulation achieved by the editor going on mere impulse would reflect sensibilities and bias of one person only. The amount of footage and the myriad of weaving options could also be overwhelming to the point of creative block or complexity short-change.

So, how could we create methods for building accumulative dramaturgy with forward propulsion; that draw the viewers in and keep them interested. Ruled by the manifesto's call for complexity, we developed an underlying structure for the feature version: eight sections (of non-determined duration) were assigned at least one scene from each of the five story threads. Which scene went in what section was guided by connections in color palette, topic of story events, locations, themes, movement qualities. The section structure was in place while we were still creating more material, and as we filmed new scenes, we reworked the sections' content. The raw footage was continuously logged and organized by scene and story thread.

The feature was edited one section at a time (Fig. 8). With all the section's material at hand, Kersti could let her personal association paths and intuitive decisions free rein within that section, crosscutting between scenes, associating lines from one scene with images from another, making wild choices of takes or slates regardless of what scene they stemmed from. In this weaving process, scenes were split in many parts, dialogue from one scene could overlap with another



Fig. 9 Stills from shot 1 to 4 in BLOD/AFTER.

scene creating new connections, ends of scenes could be left to hook into story threads in the next section in an endless braid. It was all about finding the connection points in the kaleidoscope components: What in a clip catches attention and spurs association? What could be a link between clips (image objects, words, colors/light, movement, narrative etc.)? Will the cut be bridged by opposition or continuity?

This associative weaving (personal but steeped in the content matter, ethics, and aesthetics of the project) of a weave that stems from our jointly created section structure, is an emblematic application of the BLOD method. It allows for artistic expression that is both personal and collective, while creating kaleidoscopic dramaturgy that both leaves gaps for audience co-creation and drives the film forward.

KERSTI: *Compositional strategies in editing AFTER. – a BLOD short film*

One of the potentials of the kaleidoscopic BLOD method is to afford different outputs from the same material. For the short film *AFTER.*, I gave myself the editing challenge to create a character-based narrative without words, where someone is dealing with the aftermath of something never to be revealed.

There is a wall clock that ticks every second but time is standing still (Fig. 9). The hand that shows seconds returns to the same spot after each tick. Over and over in a vacuum of after. Maybe something has happened. I feel I could stay with this first shot forever. I let it run long enough to quell any expectation that the oscillating clock hand will start behaving differently. And a bit

longer still. Building anticipation; who is watching? When I finally cut away from the clock, the second shot is of a person not watching it (Fig. 9). She keeps her eyes closed while stretching her arms out to brace herself on the walls. Once stabilized by the wall she opens her eyes and looks straight ahead.

The material with this woman in a blue room was part of the Predicaments-scenes filmed in an apartment. We had the whole three-minute improvisation-score shot with two cameras in several takes, a couple of cutaways of the character's point of view and an added ending with another character lying on the floor. Only a few seconds of this material were used in *BLOD the feature* but for the short film *AFTER.* I used almost all of it.

The third shot is out a window (Fig. 9). The fourth shot is of the woman's legs as she slides down along the wall, ending when she has slid all the way to sitting, her face in the upper right corner of the frame (Fig. 9). From here I could cut to anything. There is no hint of movement initiation by the woman nor anything in the image triggering a shift in attention for the viewer. It could be the starting point for flashback or memory or the moment before something happens in this room or someplace else.

When I started this editing process, I knew the BLOD material well from molding it into different shapes when weaving the feature film. Many of my editing decisions were fast, based on impulse and free associations between shots and scenes, still grounded in knowledge of editing craft and choreographic

composition available to me in the moment – embodied and part of my intuition.

She is crawling and I make a cut when she changes directions. It is a continuity edit – her movement is unbroken, but the camera angle shifts in the middle of her turn. A cut is not necessary to depict her action; I could have used a longer part of just one shot, but I wanted the viscerally perceived jolt of energy produced in the shift of angle and position, the activity required of the viewer to resolve the friction of the changing image. The cut is there to convey the effort of her turning.

The composition through editing is always created on several levels simultaneously. Even with the limitations of the unchangeable footage and, in this case, a simple story of the aftermath of something that will never be revealed, it is almost dizzying to think about all the aspects of each cut: what it can do viscerally, emotionally and intellectually for the viewer; how it can shape the character, the arc of a scene, and who's perspective is favored; the cut's function in creating the narrative, short term and long term patterns and overall rhythm...

Who is this character, the woman in the blue room? If I am to create a story with her at the center, what do I need to convey about her and what can I convey with the footage at hand? I don't know and don't want to convey why she is in the blue room and why she starts crawling along its walls. But I do know what naked skin on carpet feels like, what bony knees with my full weight on them feels like. When she keeps crawling it says something about her – she can and will endure discomfort. I don't know the reason she does, but I can choose takes and their timing to portray her as oblivious to these impressions or as consciously and selectively choosing to ignore them.

The BLOD method's aim to foreground embodied experiences as sources for performance and artistic expression is an approach cultivated through our dance backgrounds. In line

with that, I use choreographic strategies in cinematic composition through editing, particularly when it comes to creating character. These strategies invite me (as editor and viewer) to connect with the characters through their movements, and to interpret character reactions by their relation to a physical world rather than imagined psychology. An example: a very short close-up of a 'making-out-couple' with a door slamming shut behind them, followed by a close-up of the feet of a woman walking. This creates a narrative of her walking away from the events by the door – reacting to what happened there. The energy and the direction in the door slam are extended into her steps. The walking is much slower than the door shutting, but the two movements still feel connected because there is a match with laws of physics. Since the angle of the walking shot is low, the force of gravity has curbed the trajectory downward and the impact with the floor has absorbed some of the energy. When I edit, I know how to apply these rules of classical mechanics through my experience of living in the physical world. The same principle in reverse could create a sense of disconnection across the cut. In this project, material composition thrives on the friction between thematic cohesion of the material's connection points and the open attitude towards how they could connect – a condition for the BLOD manifesto point 9. KEEP RESTRUCTURING TO THE LAST CUT!



CLIP – Short film AFTER.

Section 3. Summary

Material composition focuses on kaleidoscopic dramaturgy and the use of embodied principles as a main compositional tool in the making of multivocal work that invites active audience co-creation.

Section 4. Immaterial causata

Immaterial causata directs attention to BLOD manifesto points 1 & 8, mapping potential traces the project leaves behind in the world and in the researchers. This fourth and last section gives an overview of the project's modes of dissemination and its reception to date, followed by Kersti's reflection on a changed research approach. To finish, Annika writes a (fictional) dialogue about evolving personal artistic practices – the BLOD method in future projects.

Part of the BLOD method is that the research process is embedded in the film material and several of the different stories created from it. Reflexivity is e.g., present in the FILMMAKING story thread where both story construction and collaborative method are visibly negotiated. The research process extends beyond presentations of it, as these encounters are folded back into the project.

Manifesto points 1 & 8 as applied to Immaterial causata in BLOD

1. LEAVE THE IMPLICIT AS IS!

We leave gaps for the audience to bridge by themselves. Scenes can start or end in the middle of an event. Actions can be broken up, mutate, take place off screen and beyond what is said. Perspectives can shift. Spatial and temporal relationships can be merely hinted at through fractured image flows.

8. PROTECT YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS!

The long duration of the project, the integrity maintained by mostly unconditioned financing, and our artistic autonomy create space for reflection, improvisation, repetition, and organic development. All in dialogue with the project's processes and building blocks – time, places, people, materials, ideas, experiences and technologies.



CLIP – The Pier Talks

Presentations of research project

The BLOD method favors process over product but, paradoxically, has generated a lot of output. The paradox is resolved when considering what is produced; the research process is documented as components in the film material created within the research. Any output composed from this material is an explicit presentation or exposition of the research process. By spring 2022 the output from the BLOD project includes one feature film, a stage play, a gallery exhibit, several short films, and many different performance presentations, each with performative elements extracted from the film practice. The looping nature of the research process extends beyond conceptualization, material creation and composition; its causata in the form of research presentations, film screenings, and other encounters congenially and continuously feedback into the research. The project's clear aim for accessibility has prompted sharing of creative vulnerability, open invitations into the process and recurring in-progress presentations. In the following we share descriptions of select presentations/expositions of the BLOD project, each ending with participant reflections.



Fig. 10 Collage of stills from BLOD.



Fig. 11 Serving fruit salad, Jan 2019.



Fig. 12 Stills from video documentation, Nov 2019.

Attempts at breaching the bloody framework, Oct. 2018

Research seminar (Fig. 10) at Stockholm University of the Arts (SKH). After introducing the project and research questions, we filmed a couple of slates for a BLOD therapy scene in front of the live audience. "That was so courageous, not hiding your insecurities when acting."

BLOD treatment, Jan. 2019, SKH Research Week

We raised a wooden frame made for upcoming filming while screening raw footage of a partly improvised conversation and carpentry situation shot from three camera angles. After reading a scripted scene, we took turns making fruit salad and talking about autoethnography, femininity and the scriptwriting in BLOD. Instead of a Q & A, the audience members were offered fruit salad and a chance to mingle and talk to us (Fig. 11). "I never want this project to be finished. This is DIY, middle-age-punk at its best."

I am woman, Nov. 2019, Färgfabriken, Stockholm

We screened BLOD footage around the room as six performers⁵ shared a *Lived experience from your womanhood – a situation you found yourself in and how you reacted to it*; each telling a personal story in their mother tongue: Hungarian, Greek, English, Swedish Sign Language, Norwegian, Swedish. Then we played 'the floor is lava' while building a throne for Kersti, giving a formal talk (Fig. 12).

5 Csilla Hodí, Iris Nikolau, Kersti G Brennan, Rebecca Drammeh, Sunniva Vikør Egenes, Annika Boholm



Fig. 13 Open Studios exhibit, Nov 2019.



Fig. 14 BLOD push-poster.



Fig. 15 BLOD pull-poster.

BLOD(y), Nov. 2019, Open Studios Färgfabriken Stockholm

An exhibit with *BLOD the feature*, its source materials in different forms, an exposition of work processes and works in various degrees of progress (Fig. 13). Invited guests talked on topics related to BLOD themes. We hung out in the exhibit, hoping for interactions with visitors. We showed a kid's version of BLOD in one of the monitors far down the wall, a limited edition for shorter audience members. A little boy entered the room, immediately targeting that monitor, sat down on the floor and watched the loop again and again and again. Before leaving, he pointed at us and said to his mother: "Look, a movie star". Two little girls imitated our dancing in a wall projection. One said: "You'll be the purple coat I'll be the black!". The exhibit marked the first public screening of *BLOD the feature*. "I don't think I've ever seen a film that gave such a deep sense of a friendship." "I found the film confusing and hard to get into."

what if not plum-sized...?, Jan. 2020, Karolinska Institute

Screening of *BLOD the feature* (Fig. 14) as part of training for gynecologists and obstetricians on *The Difficult Conversation*, followed by a discussion about what we do with words from a patient perspective. "Every OB-GYN should see this film to know what the patients experience."

BLOD the feature, Feb. 2020, Piteå Documentary Film Festival

Presentation of the research project, screening of *BLOD the feature* (Fig. 15), followed by Q and A. "I was shocked but liked that. It prompted a need to ask my wife something, about the past, shit, had we really dealt with it..."



Fig. 16 WeVideo editing interface with BLOD scenes.



Fig. 17 Still from live feed Collaborators.



Fig. 18 Still from video documentation Collaborators.

(s)mash-up, Oct. 2020, Alliances & Communalities Conference, SKH

A workshop on mash-up editing with the BLOD film material (Fig. 16). Participants were invited to cross-cut scenes⁶ (pre-edited by Kersti as Annika wrote them) with focus on compositional challenges; political aspects of storytelling based on intimate and personal experience or ethical considerations in the shifts of meaning involved in recontextualizing content. The workshop concluded with participants watching and actively engaging with each other's treatment of the material through questions on what's mediated and what's performed, what's screen and what's space, what's narrative and what's not. "I wanted to make something comical but felt I couldn't. The material had an inherent tone I needed to follow."

Collaborators, Nov. 2020, The Swedish Research Council's Symposium "Working together"

The research was digitally presented through a live performance of a play with a backdrop of BLOD footage (Fig. 17). Annika wrote the play based on scenes between the filmmakers in *BLOD the feature* – an ongoing loop where lived experiences become text that is filmed, and then re-cycled into new text to be embodied in a live performance.

Collaborators, Jan. 2021, SKH Research Week

We framed a filmed version (Fig. 18) of *Collaborators* with a digital lecture. Taking off from the 45th president, it hovered around authoritarian vs. collaborative and familiarity as a criterion for good/bad. "Have you invented a new genre?"

6 Workshop using online video editing software graciously provided free of charge by WeVideo.



Fig. 19 Stills from online presentation.



Fig. 20 BLOD catalogue photo with laurel.



Fig. 21 Still from online presentation, Sep 2021.

BLOD – a film kaleidoscope, June 2021, Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLFF, Germany

The digital performance presentation focused on film as a kaleidoscopic practice. Live streamed from a three-camera tv-studio, this exposition through practice emphasized BLOD's DIY aesthetic (Fig. 19). We went in and out of character and surrounded by props, costumes, and scripts, we performed against a backdrop of recycled material from the gallery exhibit *BLOD(y)*. "Artistic research institutions are essential contexts not only for experimentation and re-excavations of history, but for furthering perspectives of *the other*, the feminist stance of the BLOD project being one of those perspectives." "The BLOD project is a great example of film where the research and its methods are embedded in the performative."

BLOD the feature, July 2021, LA Underground Film Forum, USA

A two-week run in a digital film festival by official selection (Fig. 20). The screenings had international open access.

Hello gravity, my friend!, Sept. 2021, SKH

Digital research seminar at SKH (Fig. 21). Screening of new BLOD short films (*AFTER.* and *Red Velvet*) and a guided tour of the BLOD project's entanglement in Kersti's ongoing PhD research.

KERSTI: *Reverberations, shifts and rethinking authorship*

The month I started my PhD-studies, US president 45 was inaugurated. His and his administration's aggressive promotion of 'alternative facts' quickly had strong political implications and real impact on people's lives. His reign also seemed to embolden authoritarian movements worldwide and gave credence to all kinds of fringe groups like anti-vaxxers, climate change deniers, ultra-nationalists, and religious fundamentalists. Gaslighting techniques paving the way for blind following. 2017 was also the year of #MeToo; exposing abuse of power made possible by genius worship and cultures of silence and obedience. Few fields were exempt, and it was in my field that the international fuse was lit with the fall of a certain film producer⁷.

As a documentary director but even more as a film editor, I had long felt my contributions somewhat invisible and went into artistic research to highlight the importance of the editing and the editor. But in this era of devotion to strong leaders, I keep noticing the parallels between authoritarian political movements and genius cults in arts and entertainment. Around the world, there is abundant glorification of individual achievement through endless talent shows, artists identified as brands and personal platforms that are more important than the messages delivered. And I start to sense that my quest to render the editor more visible is based on a false premise. Maybe it is not the editing or the editors that are invisible, but the collective nature of filmmaking; too often obscured by the brands of directors and stars used for film marketing.

I fully recognize the value of individual skills and unique perspectives in the filmmaking collective. But the idea that the creative process could be neatly separated by preassigned professional roles, and credit distributed accordingly, seems like an arbitrary construction to appease a need for individual point scoring. A need I too was addressing when I started

my PhD-research. But through the BLOD project, I have come to realize that I am more interested in the workings and the potential of people with different practices creating together. Going forward I will rather highlight the editing situation as an intersection of material and practices, where individual contributions are no longer distinguishable, and where something emerges that can surprise all the collaborators. Call it filmmaking magic or call it collaborative practice – either way, advocating for it, practicing it, sticking to it feels like my best counteroffer to this era where I desperately need to cultivate alternatives to genius cults and despots.

ANNIKA: *There will be more BLOD*

The day after a presentation of the BLOD project. A dialogue picking up threads from an ongoing conversation with no end in sight.

INT. DAY

KERSTI next to the woods in the company of a black cat. ANNIKA on the 8th floor in a suburb white by frost.

A: What would be the BLOD method without output?

K: Lurking in the echo rather than the source.

A: A process encouraging creation of something never seen?

Silence.

K: What would it take for an artistic process to be acknowledged as shelter?

A: Focusing on relation-building.

K: To create conditions for open encounters?

A: Focusing on relation-building.

K: What kind of formats are needed to share such knowledge?

A: Thinking out loud as we go...?

7 Hollywood film producer Harvey Weinstein.

Long silence. STEVIE (black cat) nudges K for attention.

K: I'm so tired.

A: How can we help each other rest!

K: Quoting Deleuze: Je ne sais pas.⁸

A: ...to resist and not give up, even though our time seems totally out of joint?

K: Can't we just lay down and sleep, hoping to wake up to it all set right...

Longer silence.

A: Feel-thinking as antivenom – to dream again?

K: That there will be more BLOD!

S: Miaou –

A: But in a *weird* way as Timothy Morton (2016, p. 5) suggests.

K: A weird method to change scale and spiral away from linear to loop?

A: As Knowles said: do we have to have a clear idea of what we want before we start?

K: When there's method there's hierarchy...

A: Perhaps what's needed is poetic specificity towards the particular...

K: A method of being as open as possible to what's going on

A: ...attentiveness to what truly is happening –

Very long silence

K: The way humans act in the world, other ways of acting are urgent.

A: Perhaps method can be a way of existing and acting rather than tools and recipes?

K: As I perceive it; when research methods are embedded in the performative, how to create those methods needs to be

a prominent research question. Come to think of it. How to create and deal with method for any artistic research project should always be one of the research questions.

Extremely long silence

A: Do you think we needed to write the BLOD manifesto to stay friends?

S: Miaaaaaou!

K: Yes. A role model for social contracts in general.

Section 4. Summary

Immaterial causata directs attention to how research process and ethics are embedded in all aspects of project. The BLOD method's modes of sharing research, proposes that critical reflection and vulnerability can have a place in any production process.

Entangled conclusions

Through this paper, the BLOD method is articulated in relation to the BLOD manifesto. Our artistic choices adhering to the manifesto points are project-specific, but the manifesto itself is written to accommodate a multitude of contents, forms, and modes of collaboration (Fig. 23), while clearly demanding cross-disciplinarity, honesty and risk-taking. In this tension between open and strict, some core concepts have surfaced through the BLOD project: *project specificity*, *reflexivity*, *nurturing*, and *collectivity*. These concepts weave across the paper's four sections, offering a view of the BLOD method through another turn of the kaleidoscope.

Project specificity: The formulation of a unique internal logic for a created world includes rules for its own creation to push

8 Roughly translated as no idea, and Deleuze's answer to his own question: What is this mysterious relationship between the work of art and the act of resistance, when the people who resist neither have the time nor sometimes the culture necessary to have the slightest connection with art? (Des Pallières, 1987)

that world beyond its content and form. Emphasizing specificity of process propels the project into the unknown – the world is not created but creative.

Reflexivity: The research is not “about” something but conducted through the medium it explores and through its different layers and practices. The methods used are embedded in the manifestations of the research, be it a film, a performance, or a presentation.

Nurturing: The BLOD method takes into account how everything affects everything. It favors systems with (feminine) form and structure, that transport nourishment in non-hierarchical paths, where every node is equally important. Nurturing is also an aspect of the looping or spiraling creative process.

Collectivity: Relation building is at the center of all aspects of the method and is addressed in *Immaterial conceptualization* as an approach where content, form and modes of collaboration are intertwined; in *Material creation* as considerations of ethical relations to past, present and future conditions; in *Material composition* as striving for contextualization in time, place, and ecology; and in *Immaterial causata* as relevance to colleagues, audience, and our own artistic practice.

Much of the BLOD method concerns the process of method development. For wider potential application it might be thought of as a methodology to be used for method development in other research projects or films – especially ones that sprawl, tangle, and defy categorization by field or discipline.

References

- Bhabha, H. (1992). The World and the Home. *Social Text*(31/32), 141-153. <https://doi.org/10.2307/466222>
- Clover, C. J. (1993). *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. Princeton University Press.
- Creed, B. (1993). *The Monstrous-feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. Routledge.
- Des Pallières, A. (1987, March 17, 1987). *Gilles Deleuze: Qu'est-ce que l'acte de création?* [Film documentation of seminar]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKd71Uyf3Mo>
- Foucault, M., & Miskowiec, J. (1986). Of Other Spaces. *Diacritics*, 16(1), 22-27. <https://doi.org/10.2307/464648>
- Kristeva, J. (1982). *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (L. S. Roudiez, Trans.; L. S. Roudiez, Ed.). Columbia University Press.
- Morton, T. (2016). *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence*. Columbia University Press.



Fig. 23 Stills from BLOD.