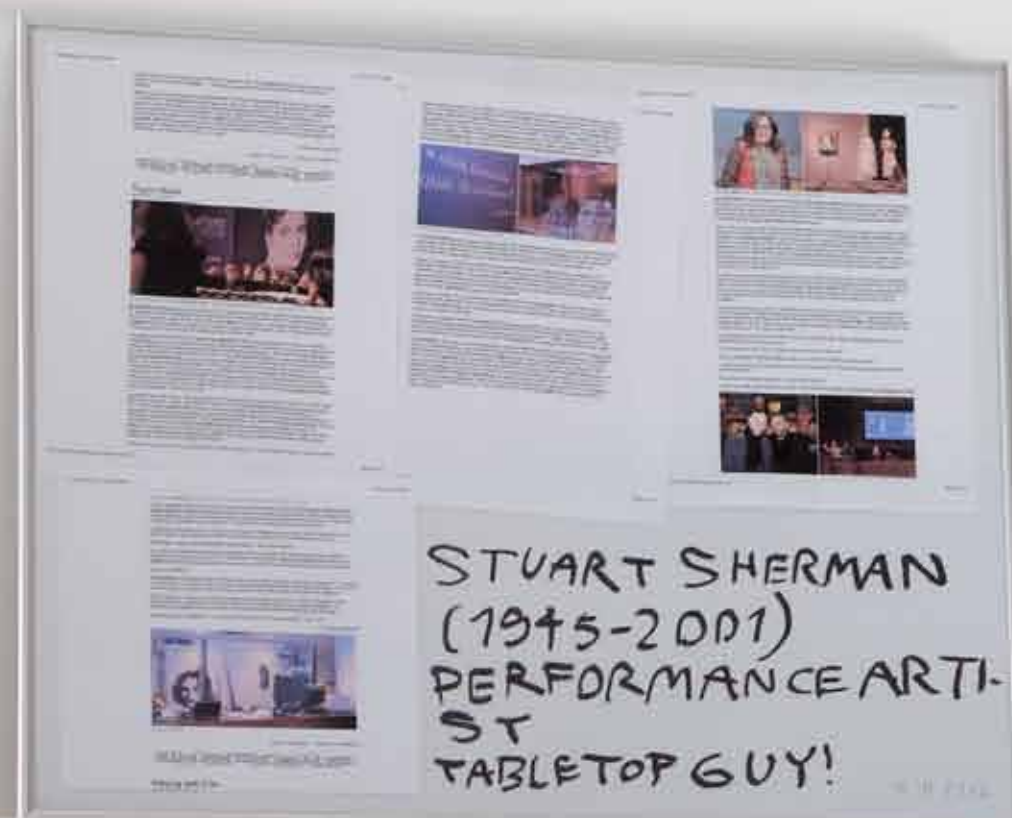


karl holmqvist are you 'k?



C	O	C	A	C	O	C	A	C	O	C	A	C	A	C	O	L	A	H
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B	E	B	A	C	O	C	A	L	O	C	A	C	O	L	A	H	O	L
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O	C	A	L	A	L	A	L	O	C	A	C	L	O	A	C	A		

RAINBOW FAMILY
RAINBOW FAMILY
IT'S SO ME
WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER
COME TOGETHER
LET'S GHETTOGETHER
RAINBOW FAMILY
RAINBOW FAMILY
I COULD BE ANGELINA
JOLIE
HAVE SIX KIDS
AND SLEEP WITH BRAD
PITT
RAINBOW FAMILY
RAINBOW FAMILY
RAINBOW FAMILY
RAINBOW FAMILY

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RAINBOW FAMILY
RAINBOW FAMILY
WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER
COME TOGETHER
BUT MOST OF ALL
I WOULD GO TO DARFUR
AND THE CAMPS IN GAZA
WHERE WOMEN SIT
ON THE GROUND AND KIDS
ONLY HAVE DIRT
TO PLAY WITH

RAINBOW FAMILY
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IT'S SO ME
WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER
COME TOGETHER
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THE RICH VISIT THE POOR
THE RICH VISIT
HAVE-NOTS AND HAVE-A-LOTS
THE RICH VISIT THE POOR
THE TIME-POOR VISIT THE
TIME-RICH
TIME IS MONEY
IF THIS PLACE, IF THIS
PLACE WAS AN AIRPORT
I AM THE RUNWAY OF YOUR
THOUGHTS
IF THIS PLACE, IF THIS
PLACE WAS AN AIRPORT
I AM THE RUNWAY OF YOUR
THOUGHTS
WE WOULD HAVE TO STAND
ON LINE
I RAN IRAQ
THE RICH VISIT THE POOR
THE POOR VISIT THE POOR

RICH
THE TIME-POOR VISIT THE
MONEY-POOR
THE MONEY-POOR VISIT THE
POOR
THE TIME-POOR VISIT THE
RICH
THE MONEY-RICH VISIT THE
POOR
THE POOR VISIT THE POOR
THE TIME-POOR VISIT THE
RICH
THE RICH VISIT THE POOR
THE TIME-POOR VISIT THE
POOR
THE TIME-POOR VISIT THE
RICH
THE RICH VISIT THE RICH
WILL HAPPINESS FIND ME?

TEACHER OF DANCE

[illegible]

WILL HAPPINESS FIND ME?
THE TIME-POOR VISIT THE MONEY-RICH
THE TIME-POOR VISIT THE MONEY-POOR
THE MONEY-POOR VISIT THE POOR
THE TIME-RICH VISIT THE TIME-POOR
THE MONEY-RICH VISIT THE MONEY-RICH
I'M ONLY HAPPY WHEN IT RAINS
POUR YOUR MISERY DOWN
I'M ONLY HAPPY WHEN IT'S COMPLICATED
IT'S COMPLICATED
TWO TONS OF FUN
I'M ONLY HAPPY WHEN IT RAINS
WHEN IT RAINS IT POURS
I'M ONLY HAPPY WHEN IT RAINS
WHEN IT RAINS IT POURS
I'M ONLY HAPPY WHEN IT RAINS
WHEN IT RAINS IT POURS
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[illegible]

Karl Holmqvist is a Swedish born, Berlin based poet who creates immaterial art by quoting, repeating and reassembling more or less familiar texts. In galleries, these texts are applied directly to the wall as loose handwriting, or pasted black and white printouts, and he performs them in an impersonal monotone that resembles either text-to-speech software or a religious chant.

Holmqvist's work challenges current ideas of individualism and representation. His books are titled What's My Name, the K and most recently, simply 'K (a playfully abbreviated are you OK?). To make the title even more ambiguous, poems in 'K are titled K is for Kitty Kraus and AKA. Often, his work is constructed from material he didn't write, with a particular interest in reframing the i's, you's, us', we's and them's from popular sources (popular meaning anything from Beyonce to the bible).

He's also known for his books, made in close collaboration with designers, where concrete poetry is merged with punchy minimalist graphic design. Included here are poems from 'K, some collages, and an interview for January Biannual.

Interview by
Quenton Miller

JB

Are irony and sincerity, cynicism and action things you think about a lot?

KH

I do, since most of the material I use comes from 'borrowed' sources, part of what listeners need to figure out while I read them, is where these sources are from, if they recognise them. But also perhaps whether I actually mean for them to say what they do, and that even goes for myself sometimes. As I work with double meanings and ambiguity a lot, it sometimes takes me quite a while to figure out what a text or poem actually means. And then, this can always change again ...

JB

What traditions are you holding onto by using the name poetry when making work for galleries?

KH

The idea of poetry seems to invite more of a freedom, and DIY spirit. Anyone can write a poem, especially a bad one.

JB

Could you talk about Buddhism and its relation to your practice and individuality as an artist?

KH

I've been interested in Buddhism and the way it influenced artists such as John Cage and Allen Ginsberg to certain attitudes of chance operations, improvisation and playfulness. It also encourages a kind of anti-materialism that seems very urgent. There would be traces of other religions in what I do also however, such as Muslim iconoclasm, Sufi mysticism or even the Christian message of love and acceptance that so often seems to be misconstrued.

JB

Typography and performance play an integral part in your work. When did the transmission and materiality of language stop being part of a writer's job, and what have you found by making design, performance and distribution part of your writing?

KH

This comes from a love of beautiful books and an interest in these things. Obviously, I'm into more of a cross-disciplinary approach. Starting to lay-out pages together with a friend is often what inspires me to get poems 'finished' and I often change things after they have been laid out. Sometimes a number of times. There's also been an interest in exploring things such as lettrisme and concrete poetry that pretty soon became a kind of endgame. A crossing of the composer Xenakis' name written twice and forming a cross, for instance. Or the cup of coffee I made as a mural for the Venice Biennial where the outline is made from various 'Italian' words for coffee such as espresso and cappuccino that tend to be used all over the world.

JB

Have you ever written a sign at a protest, or one of your texts on a wall in public and unsolicited?

KH

So far, it's mostly been posters, stickers and tote bags ... I'm a big fan of street art, but a bit too much of a coward to go all out and start doing paintings and tags ... maybe as I get older, I'll get around to it!

JB

Why give poetry a try?

KH

Because as I said, it's for free and anyone can do it. It's good to channel one's emotions through language, whether they are passionate or hateful or sometimes just weird. You need to get that down and then you can look through it and maybe understand things better. It's also fairly easy to write poetry, because it basically has no rules. It's about language reinvention! 'Make it new' as Ezra Pound was saying already a hundred years ago.

JB

I heard a line of a recording of your work as 'sheikhs with dicks'. When I read the poem I think it said 'chicks with dicks'? With who does the responsibility for shifting meanings lie?

KH

Misunderstandings are usually very productive! Sometimes it seems it's all people do!

JB

How do you sort and edit your source material?

KH

It's done intuitively with a view to a certain content or context that I want to express. Sometimes I make things clearer and sometimes more blurred, often with a view to a certain duality ... Men and women for instance is a classic. It can seem very popular when I borrow lines from mainstream singers such as Rihanna or Beyoncé and read them out in my typical kind of motorised drone ... Those women are machines as well, but of a very different kind!

JB

Do you have a good memory?

KH

I seem to have a really good recall of phrasings and melodies of language. If I write, I can often have a sense of what a sentence sounds like before I remember what it actually says. Likewise I seem to have some kind of tinnitus, and snippets of conversations that I overhear in public or maybe from a film on TV can stay in my memory sometimes for weeks after ...

JB

Are you concerned about the way politics and public language are headed in Europe?

KH

Well, part of what I do is to bring back ambiguity to counter the type of one-truth 'objective' language you have in journalism and politics. On the other hand, these people are always busy telling lies with their clear 'rational' language, so of course it's disconcerting. The kind of intuitive and emotional things that can be expressed through poetry in the end seem more universal and honest.

JB

Will you ever be a Penguin Classic?

KH

I certainly hope so!

“ The idea of poetry seems to invite more of a freedom, and DIY spirit. Anyone can write a poem, especially a bad one. ”

