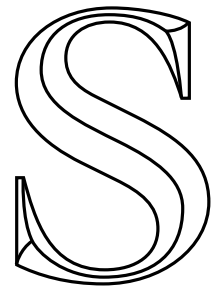


Sara Sjölin's Special Improvised Comedy Routine
Curated by Cassidy Toner for fiancé
17 September – 7 November 2020
Opening Reception: Thursday, 17 September, 12–6pm



Live acts:

4:30 PM Stand-up: Sara Sjölin

5:00 PM Performance: Martin La Roche (later available via PRIMO Print in Motion, see 8)

5:30 PM Concert: Groto and Naim (Immortal Rage)

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Andy Kaufman famously said, "I never told a joke in my life." I think this sentiment most accurately encapsulates the work of Sara Sjölin. Though the final product is often cloaked in a comical tone the underlying structure of her pieces are composed of discomfort and agony. This is the foundational element of all comedy.

"These people are paying to laugh at your pain. And it made him angry because that shit was really hurting him, and everyone's like, "Oh, we love you. You're great." And he's like, "What? You know how painful that shit was I had to go through to make you laugh?"

- Mike Epps on Richard Pryor

There are always two sides of comedy- the inner-life and the outer-life. What's presented to an audience is the aftermath of a period of internal reflection. Sjölin's exhibition at Fiancé could be considered a physical manifestation of this idea. On the exterior wall of the exhibition space the artist has mounted two large television screens to display her videos. The first piece, *Hotel Scene* (2020), depicts Sjölin as the musical entertainment for a hotel lounge. In her own words she chose to do this without, "ever having attempted to make music before." She plays with the idea of musicians being praised for their vulnerability. Not some lip-synching fake, but like Taylor Swift crying in her bedroom.

Accompanied by a piano Sjölin croons,

you just come up with a melody from nowhere...

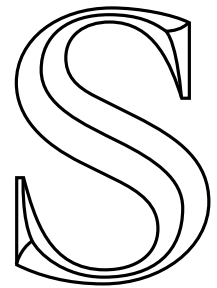
somehow you have to repeat the melody...

if you repeat the melody then...

well it's hopeless...

Housed inside the exhibition space is an aged newspaper clipping, aptly titled *My dad played the clarinet as a little child, (1956/ 2020.)* At the end of *Hotel Scene* Sjölin begins to reminisce about her father's time as a musician before the video abruptly cuts off. The rediscovery of this newspaper fragment led Sjölin to question her identity as an artist. Her attempts to harness the musical genes she's surely inherited have failed as the hotel guests yawn and look generally exacerbated by her lackluster performance.

Plenty of comedians have explored the notion of failure. There are the classics like Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin, but I'm reminded more of Kristen Schaal's stand-up special, *Live at the Fillmore* (2013.) Part way through it totally derails as Schaal stumbles on a word- the audience walks out, and the final scene depicts Schaal, in a futuristic hospital bed, still in a psychosis from the performance. It's the feeling you have in the moment of failure- you'll never get over this. I'm constantly in awe of Sjölin's ability to savor these moments. She even has the discipline to sit in them like a Buddhist monk and stretch the moments to minutes. So it made sense when she began performing *Improvised Comedy* (2020.) This is the second work presented on the exterior of the space. The videos chronicle Sjölin as she performs her stand-up routine at various clubs across Scandinavia. In her act she recalls her first experience with stand-up comedy, which wasn't great. The comedian performing began to make fun of Sjölin as she watched from the crowd. Naturally, Sjölin turned the tables in her stand-up act and made fun of the comedians skills for nearly berating an audience member (warranted or not.)



Sjölin's exploration of stand-up has led her to create a new work for Fiancé. The piece, Blodad Tand (2020,) comes from her recent experience with having a dead tooth removed. Like most comedians Sjölin tends to over analyze things many of us take for granted in our daily lives. She goes as far as to contemplate whether having this dead part of herself removed will free her emotionally in some way.

While I've said all of this is true and honest emotions I should admit Sjölin is laughing at you and me (because I fell for it.) Everything is prerecorded and lip-synched. I'm not surprised. I always knew Sjölin was a world class musician in disguise as an artist.

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List of works:

Hotel Scene , 2020
Video, 8.30 minutes
Sara Sjölin in collaboration with Søren Rye

Improvised Comedy, 2020 (documentation of performance)
-Rookie stand-up Stockholm: 5 minutes
-Improvised standup routine Copenhagen: 21 minutes
-Open scene stand-up routine Malmö: 21 minutes

My dad played the clarinet as a little child, 1956/ 2020
Newspaper clipping
14.8 x 21 cm

Blodad Tand, 2020
Tooth
dimensions variable