

MORGEN

VOGEL

REAL

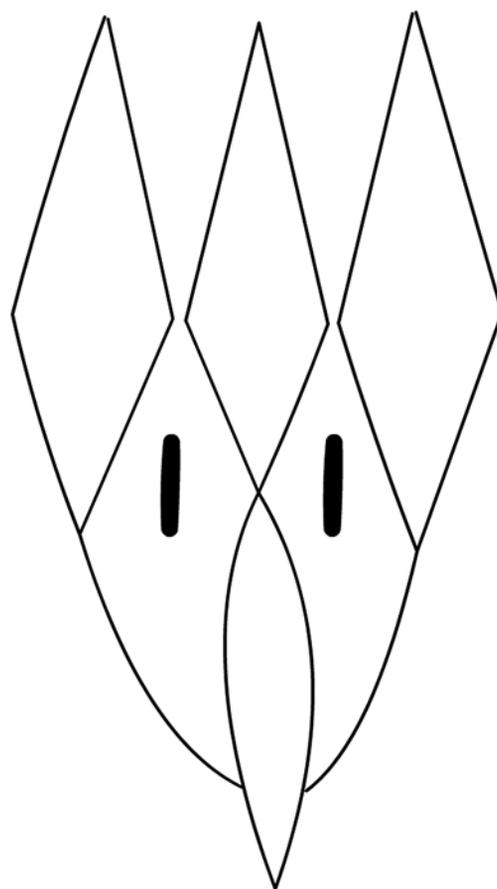
ESTATE



MARIA-LEENA RÄIHÄLÄ
MANUEL BONIK

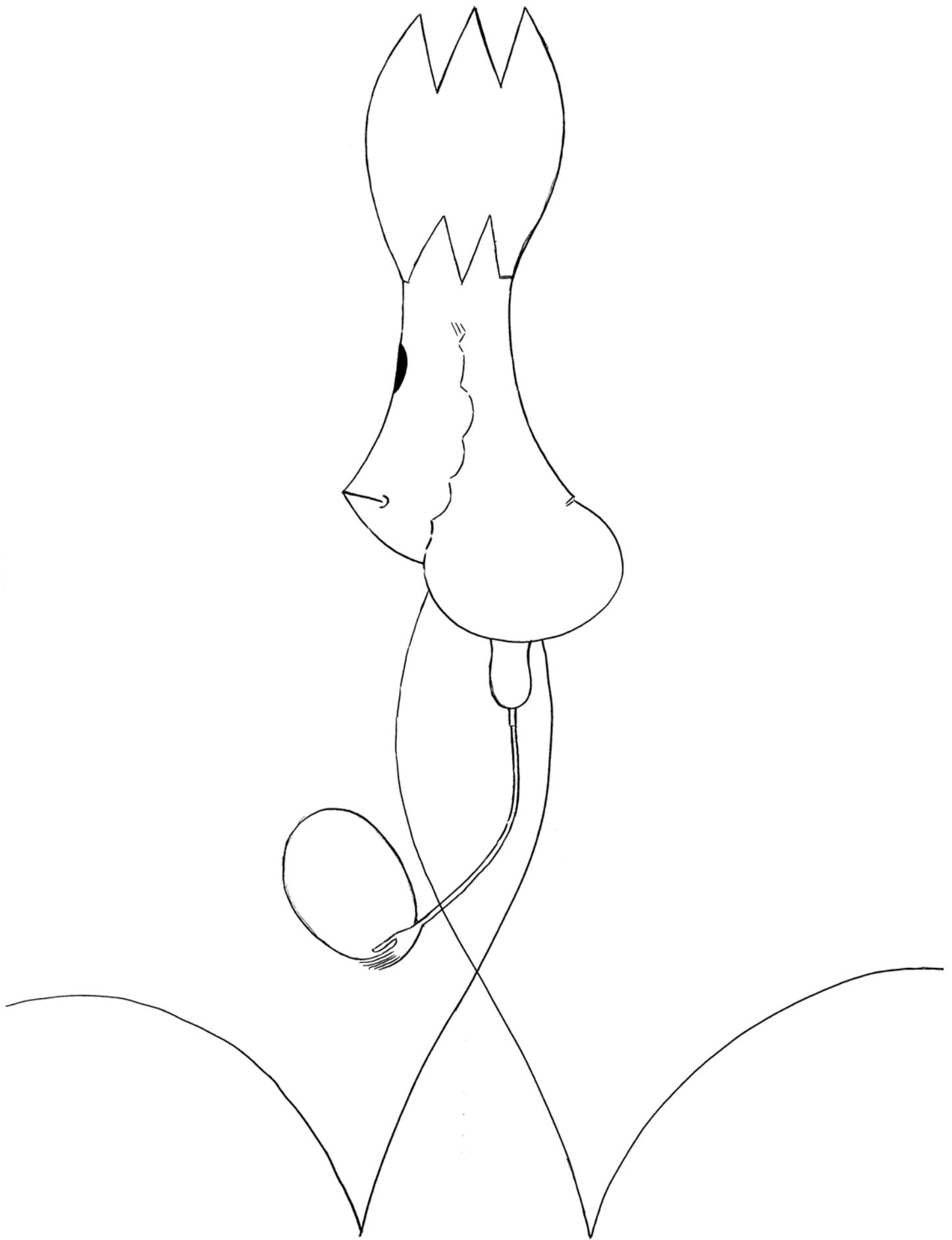
MORGENVOGEL REAL ESTATE

Maria-Leena Rähälä and Manuel Bonik



gegenstalt Press

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Naturally, you could tell our story with a completely different twist. For example, it could go something like this: In the beginning was the *Cosmic Egg*. And it was very good. Then came the Morgenvogel (“morning bird”). And then Maria and Manuel gave each other a big fat kiss. The egg that was born therefrom was none other than... Morgenvogel Real Estate!

Or we could speak of the *mauerspechten* (the so-called “wallpeckers” who chipped away the Berlin Wall after the border opened) and congratulate them on their 25th anniversary. Perhaps we could mention the Berlin woodpeckers (the bird family, of course, not a sports team) that have benefited from the trend of installing new insulation on older buildings that has given them something new to peck on (the consequence of which is the creation of living space for other birds). These are our natural allies.

Or perhaps so: Founded in 2007, MVRE has been a bit migratory. It has existed as a shop and art space in Berlin Mitte, as a festival in a local church, as the exhibition *Morgenvogel Uncaged* on tour in galleries and project spaces, and as a virtual nest at morgenvogel.net.

The main product of MVRE is the Morgenvogel birdhouse: handmade of solid wood in a Finnish design; unfinished or painted in white; easy to install in trees, windowsills, and balconies; suitable for sparrows, tits, nuthatches, and pied flycatchers. Upon request, there are also models for starlings and boxes for swifts. An ever-expanding map indicating the current distribution of Morgenvogel houses can be found at morgenvogel.net/morgenvogel-map.html.

A bevy of artists, musicians, and scientists has grown around MVRE, many of whom have contributed to the concept in unique ways. A few examples of the results of their work are elucidated in this book. Peter Berz contemplates the relationship between poetry and birdsong. Helmut Höge observes the broad field of birds and architecture. Wolfgang Müller explores Icelandic and Berlin birds, while Axel Roch muses about Maria’s drawings. You will find examples of these drawings throughout, along with some prose by Manuel. As with the visual arts, the topic of birds also inspires music. No surprise, then, that we created *Morgenvogel Uncaged*, a collection of music with an affinity for the ornithological, as well as a performance troupe called *The Birds, Too*.

Birds aren’t the only ones displaced by a developing city. Humans also have a high price to pay. MVRE attempts to ease the burden with |+|, a listing of habitable spaces in Berlin that circumvents the standard tactics of real estate brokers in this booming city. As we all know, artists are usually the ones whose efforts first make a particular street or district especially attractive. Unfortunately, the places become so attractive that they become expensive – too expensive for the artist pioneers, who are then forced to start the game all over again somewhere else. (Keyword: gentrification. More about that later).

Maria’s Morgenvogel concept has had a strong influence on her art, which has been and continues to be expressed in drawings, animations, interventions, and (sound) sculptures. From the beginning, rockets and other things of the air were part of the bigger picture, as you will discover.

Wherever refugees of capitalism and hunters of concrete gold ensure that the cranes of Berlin remain in constant motion – daily destroying the habitats of songbirds – there is continuous need for replenishment. Thus is every day the perfect day to hang a Morgenvogel birdhouse, and not just in the predictable brooding season during the spring. Indeed, even in winter, a roof over the head of a feathered friend goes most appreciated.

In the meantime, we cheerfully spread our wings and wish all of you dear readers a good flight!

MORGENVOGEL IS A ROCKET, AIRPLANE,
ANGEL, BIRD AND ALIEN
ILLUSION OF HOLY SPIRIT
CONNECTED WITH DESTRUCTION
AND CREATION
DOES HAVE IT'S NEST IN MY HEAD
GETS NOW NEW NEST HERE IN NET
LOVELY BIRD
BUT WHO KNOWS WHAT COMES NEXT

MLR, 1999



Ur-Ei, 2009



The Morgenvogel Church and the Cosmic Egg

Some birdhouses are bigger than others. But the biggest one that Morgenvogel has ever worked with has been the Zion church (Zionskirche) in Berlin Mitte. Eight events were organized over two weeks. In fact, you might call it a festival – and it would answer to the name of *Morgenvogel Church*. Part of our preparations involved hanging swift bird boxes on the third floor of the church (which is as high as the sixth floor of a regular building), our knees shaking as we scurried around the outer gallery. We hung a number of tit houses near the church, with the support of many bars and restaurants (*Café Kapelle*, *Macke Prinz*, *103, W, Hangi* and especially *Il Santo al Parco*, which also sponsored catering for the artists).

Together with Anja Penner, Maria made field recordings of Berlin blackbirds and nightingales, which became the central soundscape for the church – and with curious effects. The ongoing chirping inside the building, which continued past sundown, inspired the blackbirds living around the Zion church to respond intensely. This, in turn, confused the human visitors, who had to wonder what was recorded and what was coming from a real-time bird. Our chirpy little special friends, the sparrows, couldn't pass up the opportunity to take a peek inside, whereby we were unable to determine whether they enjoyed a cultural or a spiritual experience, or perhaps something else altogether.

The optical/atmospheric and, if you will, theological centerpiece of the exhibition was Maria's *Cosmic Egg*, a gigantic air balloon that dropped down from the ceiling as the *Morgenvogel Church* began at Pentecost, floating down to hang in front of a cross, which was thus obscured. In preparatory discussions, Pastor Lohenner said that a bit of irritation couldn't hurt. Later he wondered about his own boldness in allowing such a massive intervention, which could easily have been interpreted as wholly blasphemous – and

indeed which some perceived as such. But let's not get into the topic of scandals and controversies within protestant parishes in Berlin. Let's just say that this parish tolerated the exhibition to the end. The one compromise was that the *Cosmic Egg* would need to float back up into the dome during Sunday services.

We can speak here only as theological laypeople, but as such we can clearly observe that the Easter egg did not originate in the Bible, but rather from pagan and pre-Christian traditions. Maria's *Cosmic Egg* and her accompanying animation integrated the multifaceted international cosmogonies in which eggs play a role, such as in the Finnish national epic of *Kalevala* (see page 14). To the best of our knowledge, the universality of the *Cosmic Egg* first appeared in Chinese mythology, which suggests that the world originally existed only as an egg-shaped mass together with the cosmic principles of Yin and Yang. From this emerged Pangu, the first living being. The great Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz referred to the Tao in his attempt to understand the world as a binary-mathematical phenomenon – to Yin as 0 and Yang as 1. "According to Leibniz, the omnipotence of divine creation can best be represented by the genesis of the numbers zero and one." (Horst Bredekamp, *Die Fenster der Monade*, Berlin 2004).

For Maria, in any case, the egg at Pentecost was a symbol of the Holy Spirit. And because it was Pentecost at the time, we reached deep into our bag of miracles and pulled out the film *Das Unsagbare sagen* (*Speaking the Unspeakable*) from Valie Export and Ingrid and Oswald Wiener, a wonderful documentation of types of glossolalia ("speaking in tongues") as found in various shamanic traditions, as well as in American Pentecostal churches and different forms of psychosis.

I won't subject anyone to a long recounting of the entire festival, but a few things need to be mentioned. The performance

by Manami N. was conceived as a Buddhist prayer for the birds affected by the Fukushima reactor catastrophe in Japan. The third *Flying Film Festival* was also presented, this time curated by Kevin Merz and Lars Künstler. And during the tango performance by the duo Timo Valtonen and Valentin Butt, it became difficult – for the purposes of preserving the dignity of the location – to keep the people in their church pews, especially some members of the congregation. Other emotional moments included Holger Steen from Hamburg, well known as *The Singing Tulip*, with his deeply melancholic singing, and the Berlin multimedia artist Heinrich Dubel with his erratic and hilarious (but not necessarily suited for minors) slide show lecture *Örnhölogie*. Spread throughout the entire space, *The Birds, Too* discovered an ideal concert ambiance. (Standard stage concerts in reverberant churches are famous for their overwhelming acoustic challenges). The band chirped and piped – and all of it magically. Lyndsey Cockwell and the *Berlin Pop Choir* sang bird songs, including pieces the choir director composed specifically for *The Morgenvogel Church*.

The funniest part of all (except for those who were subjected to it) was something that the audience itself never even had a chance to experience. We had commissioned a composition from the Canadian composer and pianist John Farah (johnfarah.com),



who one morning found himself diligently rehearsing an avian song with the vocal ensemble *Vox Nostra* (voxnostra.com) – in a large church that was undergoing renovations. Unforgettable! A bunch of baby strollers blocking the altar; from the sacristy the blare of crying babies during a children’s service, and through the church windows the recurring blasts of jackhammering. Amidst it all was the valiant John at the organ and the quartet from *Vox Nostra* with their ethereal vocals in a style between Renaissance and minimal music. Even two years later as I write this, I have to laugh. Forgive the feuilleton style, but I must say that the concert that night could move a person to tears. At some point, hopefully, a studio version will be available.

Despite that the *Morgenvogel Church* project didn’t manage to establish a new religion, we are still extremely grateful to all of those people who helped us bring it to life. Apart from all the participating artists, we extend our special appreciation to Petra Brüggemann and Oliver Penndorf (finances), Christopher Fröhlich and Kevin Merz (documentation), Andreas Schaale and Micha Schroetter (general practical assistance), and the many motivated ladies (and a few fine gentlemen) from the Zion church parish for their assistance.

General information about *The Morgenvogel Church* at

morgenvogel.net/morgenvogelkirche.html



Morgenvogel Church Participants

Chris Beak, Peter Berz, Miles Chalcraft, Lyndsey Cockwell and *The Berlin Pop Choir*, Heinrich Dubel, John Farah and *Vox Nostra*, Andreas Gysin and Dean McNamee, Helmut Höge, Lars Künstler, Kevin Merz, Manami N, Anja Penner, Matthew Ramolo, Lars Scheibner and Mareike Franz, Ravi Srinivasan, Holger Steen, Timo Valtonen and Valentin Butt, Ingrid und Oswald Wiener and Valie Export, *The Birds, Too*.

Participants of Flying Films Festival 3

Rosane Chamecki, Attila Fias, Christopher Fröhlich, GUP-py, Phil Harder, Tetsuschi Higashino, Michael König, Körner Union, Andrea Lerner, Pleix, Miranda Plusser, Barbara Rosenthal, Charlotte Seidel, Malte Steiner, Ilaria Turba, Hannes Vartiainen, Pekka Veikkolainen, Anthony Vourdox, Carolin Weinert. Trailer: morgenvogel.net/fff3-trailer.html



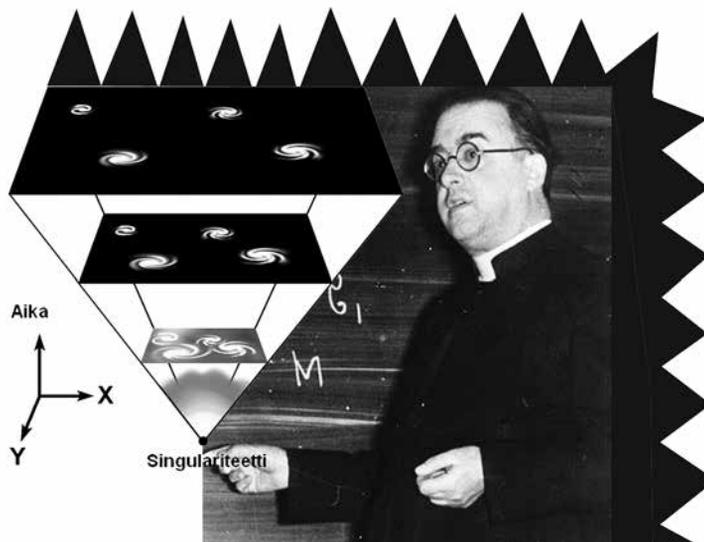
Facing page: Lyndsey Cockwell and *The Berlin Pop Choir*, Photo: Christopher Fröhlich.

Left: *John’s Fingers*, Animation by Maria for John Farah’s music.

Right up, down: *The Birds, Too*.



THE COSMIC EGG, 2009



BIG BANG

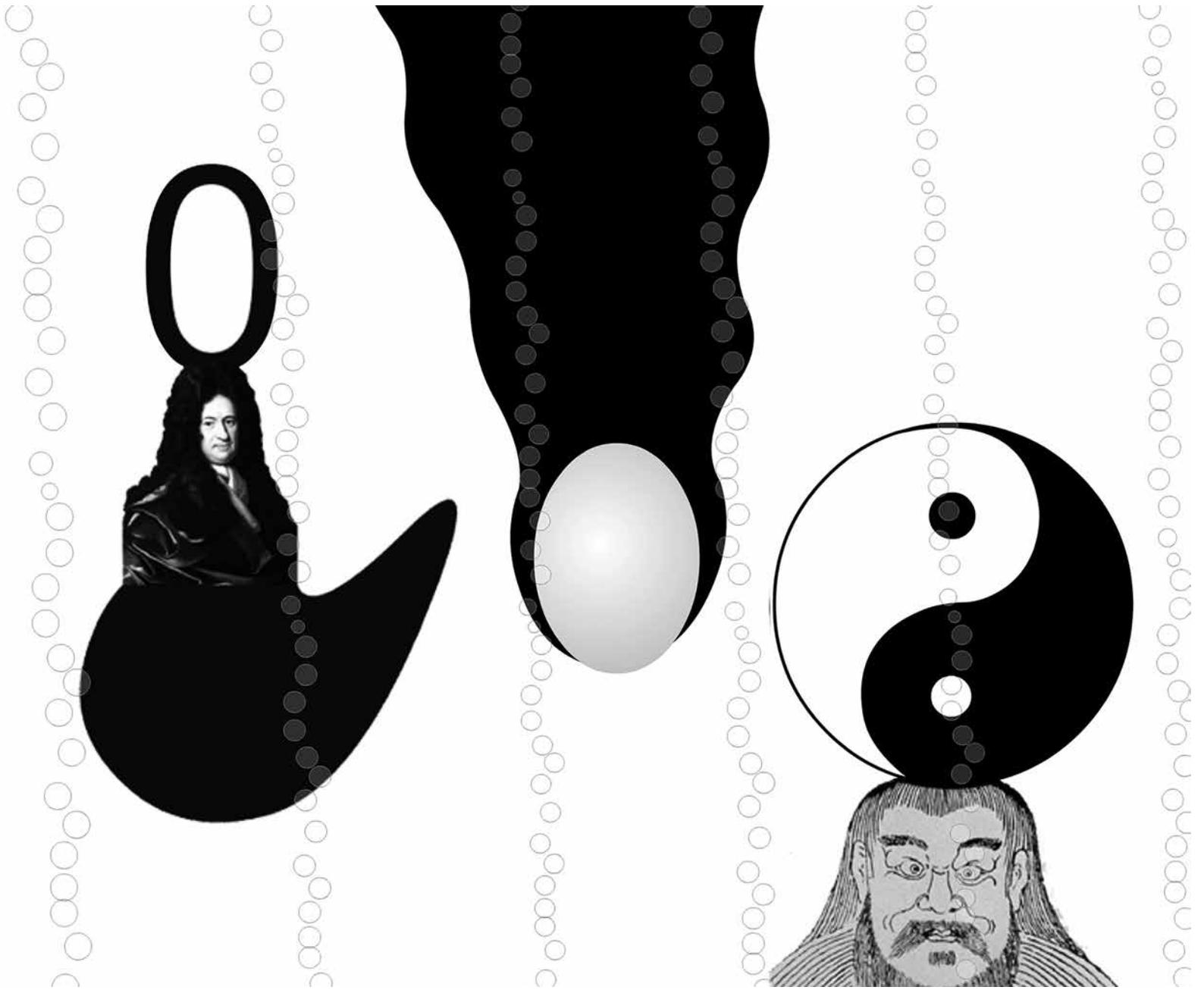
Georges Edouard Lemaitre (Belgium, 17.7.1894-20.6.1966)

Of all people, it occurred to a theologian – who had an idea which controverted not only the Old Testament’s seven-day-creation mythology, but also left its mark on scientific cosmogony, even until today: There must have been a big bang. Lemaitre explained the origin of everything as a “primary atom” – a “cosmic egg” – which exploded at the moment of the appearance of the universe. For him, all matter was contained in this egg, an idea consistent with the Hubble effect of wide distant galaxies. Other scientists, such as Einstein and Eddington, disclaimed the notion for many years and critics stamped it with the ironic moniker “The Big Bang Theory.” In the end, however, Lemaitre’s musings managed to persuade Pope Einstein.

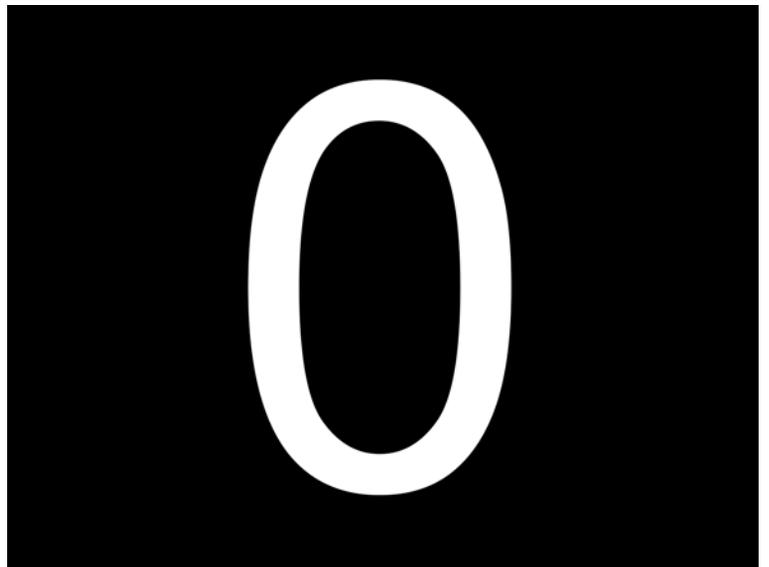
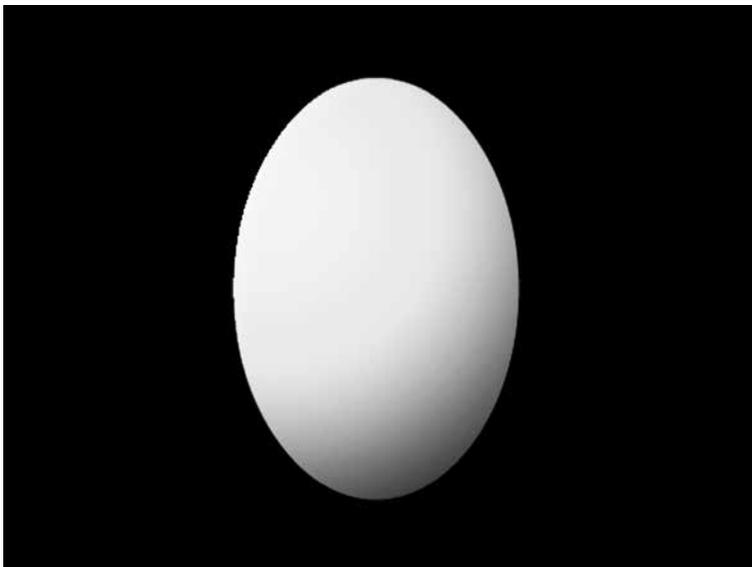
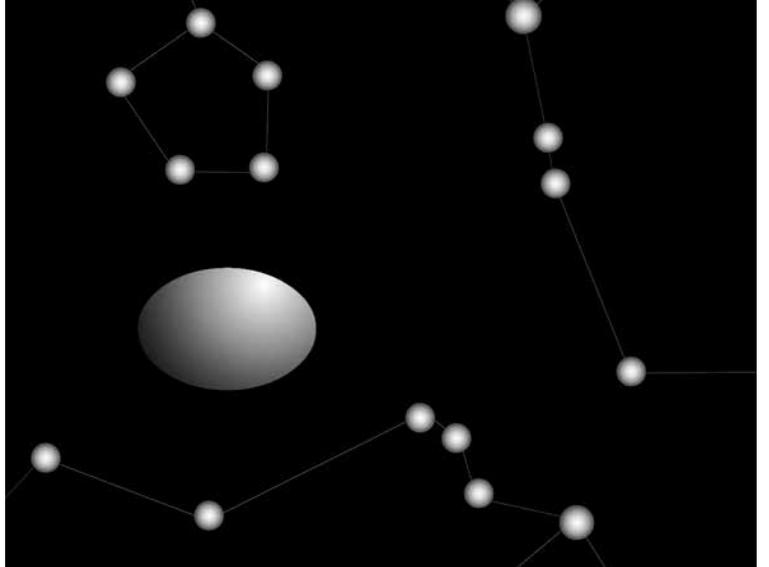
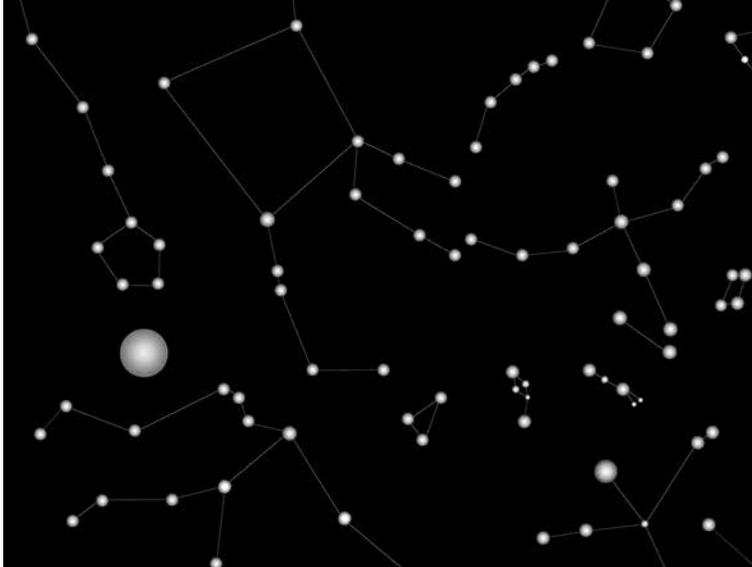
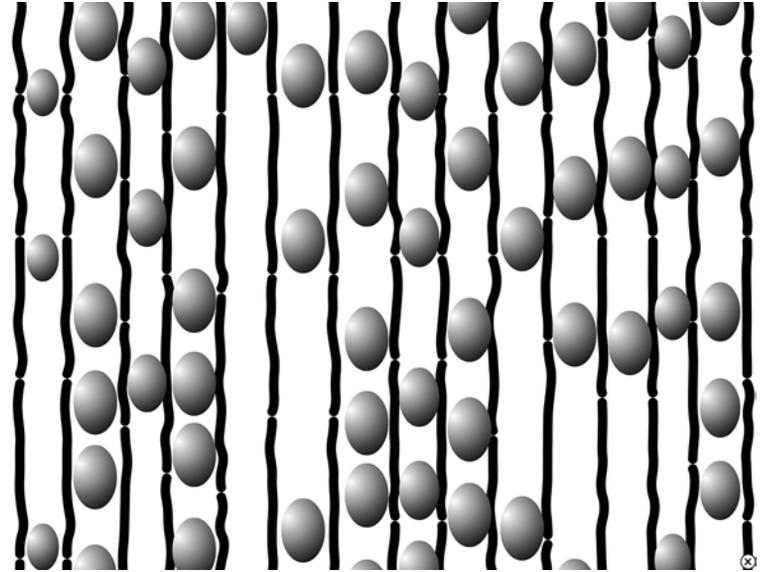


TELKKÄ

Common goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*), a sea duck from the Nordic conifer forest zone. Laid the cosmic egg in the Finnish national epic, *Kalevala*.



Leibniz, Pangu, and The Cosmic Egg, Flash animation, 2011



Kalevala

Short the time that passed thereafter,
Scarce a moment had passed over,
Ere a beauteous teal came flying
Lightly hovering o'er the water,
Seeking for a spot to rest in,
Searching for a home to dwell in.

Eastward flew she, westward flew she.
Flew to north-west and to southward,
But the place she sought she found not,
Not a spot, however barren,
Where her nest she could establish,
Or a resting-place could light on.

Then she hovered, slowly moving,
And she pondered and reflected,
"If my nest in wind I 'stablish
Or should rest it on the billows,
Then the winds will overturn it,
Or the waves will drift it from me."

Then the Mother of the Waters,
Water-Mother, maid aerial,
From the waves her knee uplifted,
Raised her shoulder from the billows,
That the teal her nest might 'stablish,
And might find a peaceful dwelling.
Then the teal, the bird so beauteous,
Hovered slow, and gazed around her,
And she saw the knee uplifted
From the blue waves of the ocean,
And she thought she saw a hillock,
Freshly green with springing verdure.
There she flew, and hovered slowly,
Gently on the knee alighting,
And her nest she there established,
And she laid her eggs all golden,
Six gold eggs she laid within it,
And a seventh she laid of iron.

O'er her eggs the teal sat brooding,
And the knee grew warm beneath her;
And she sat one day, a second,
Brooded also on the third day;
Then the Mother of the Waters,
Water-Mother, maid aerial,
Felt it hot, and felt it hotter,
And she felt her skin was heated,
Till she thought her knee was burning,

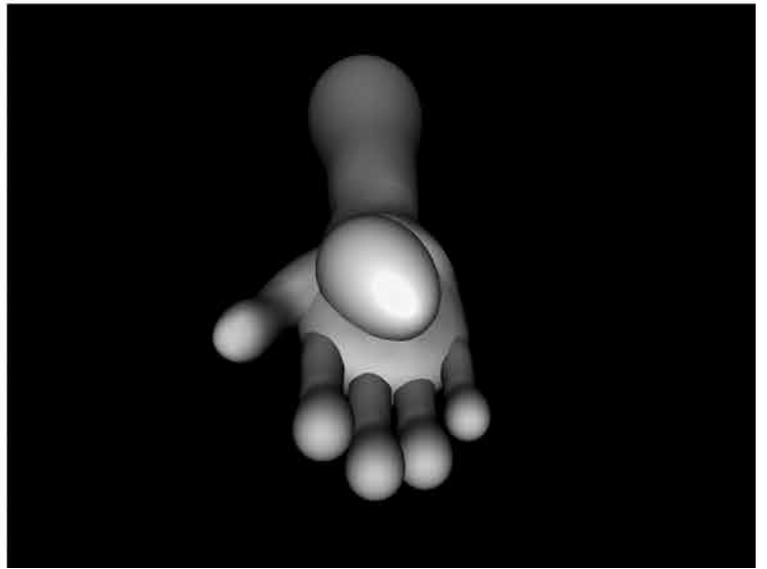
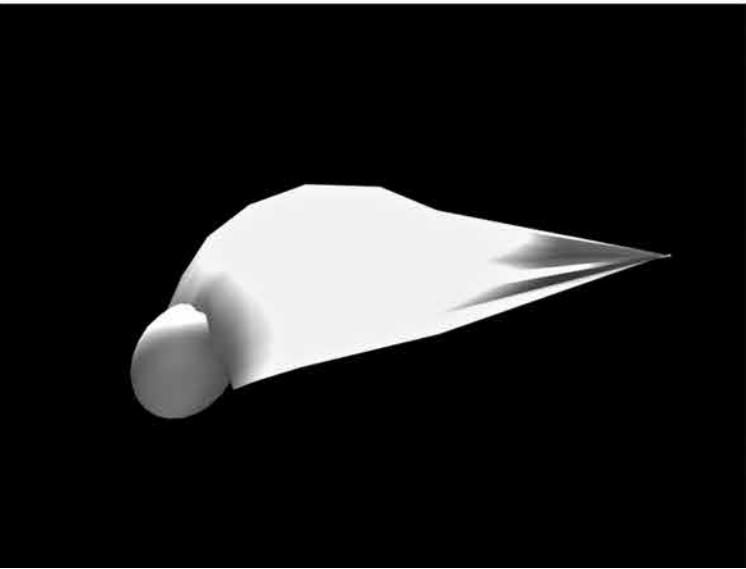
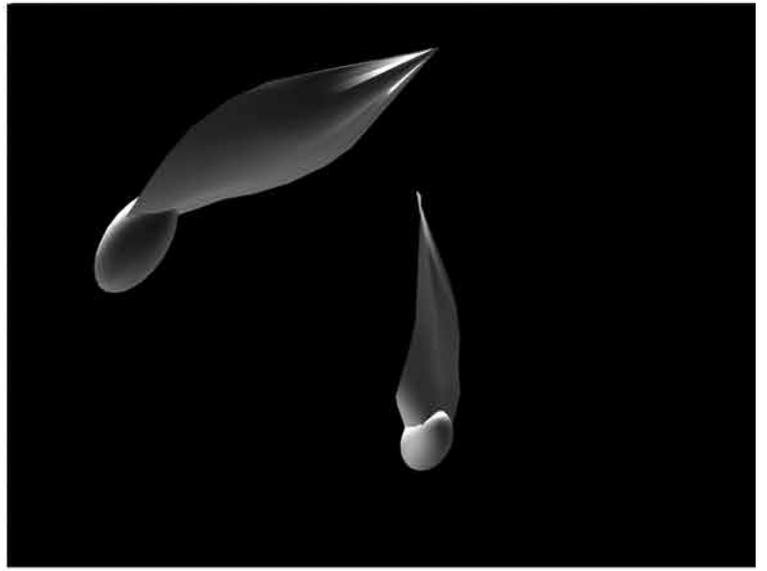
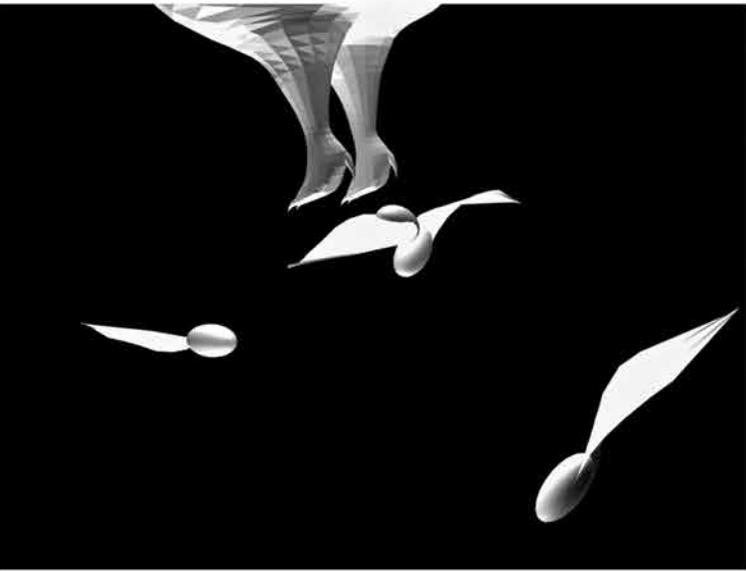
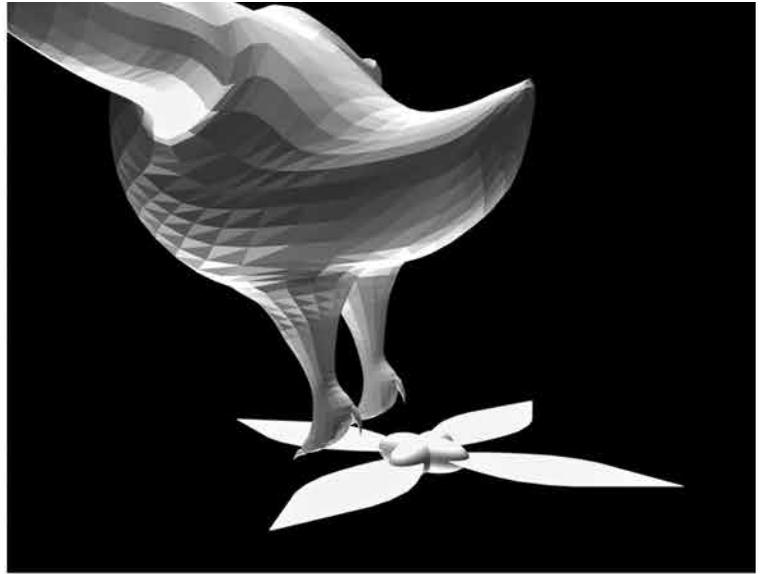
And that all her veins were melting.
Then she jerked her knee with quickness,
And her limbs convulsive shaking,
Rolled the eggs into the water,
Down amid the waves of ocean,
And to splinters they were broken,
And to fragments they were shattered.

In the ooze they were not wasted,
Nor the fragments in the water,
But a wondrous change came o'er them,
And the fragments all grew lovely.
From the cracked egg's lower fragment,
Now the solid earth was fashioned,
From the cracked egg's upper fragment,
Rose the lofty arch of heaven,
From the yolk, the upper portion,
Now became the sun's bright lustre;
From the white, the upper portion,
Rose the moon that shines so brightly;
Whatso in the egg was mottled,
Now became the stars in heaven,
Whatso in the egg was blackish,
In the air as cloudlets floated.

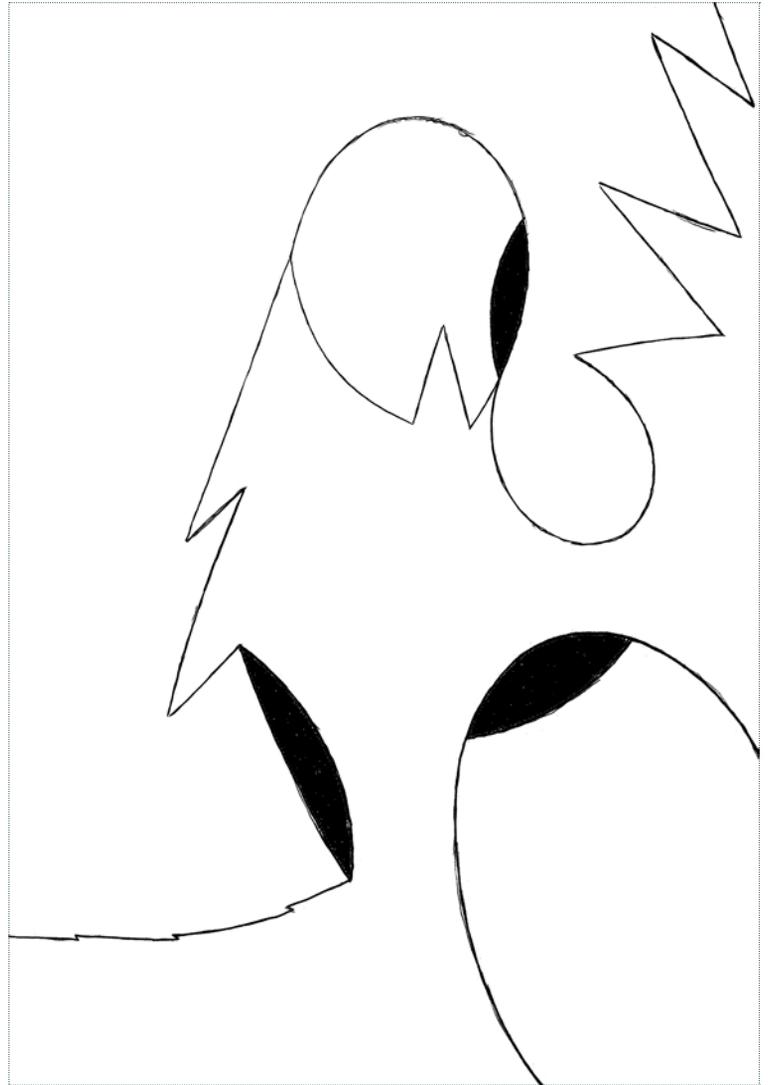
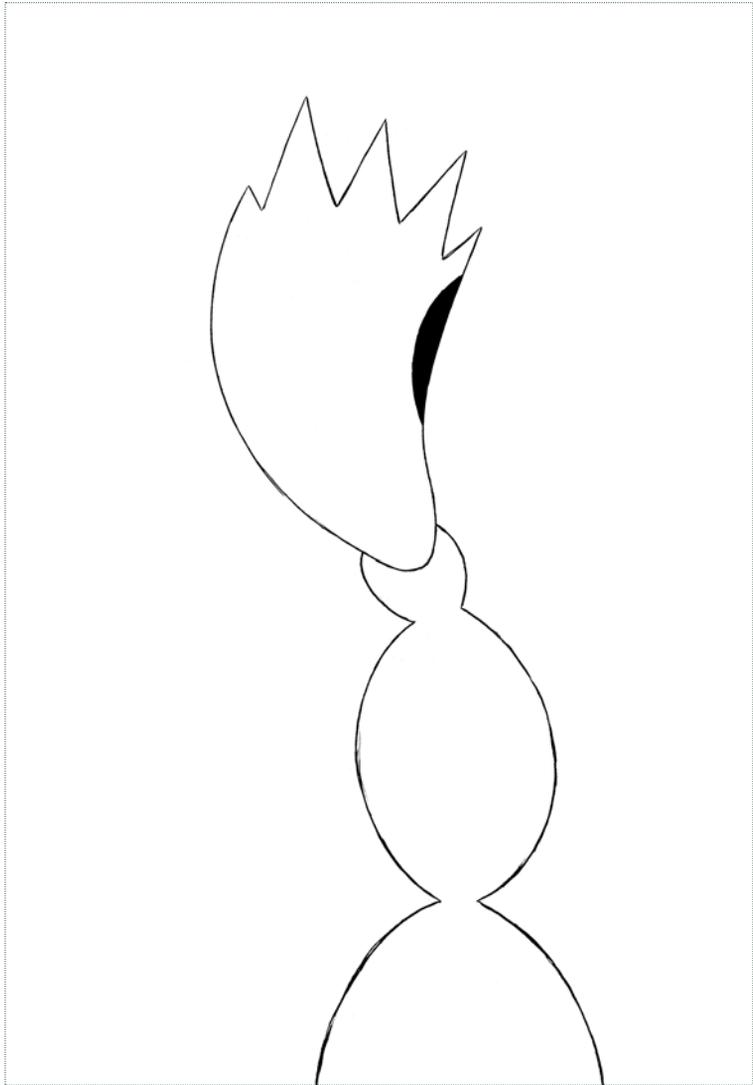
Now the time passed quickly over,
And the years rolled quickly onward,
In the new sun's shining lustre,
In the new moon's softer beaming.
Still the Water-Mother floated,
Water-Mother, maid aerial,
Ever on the peaceful waters,
On the billows' foamy surface,
With the moving waves before her,
And the heaven serene behind her.

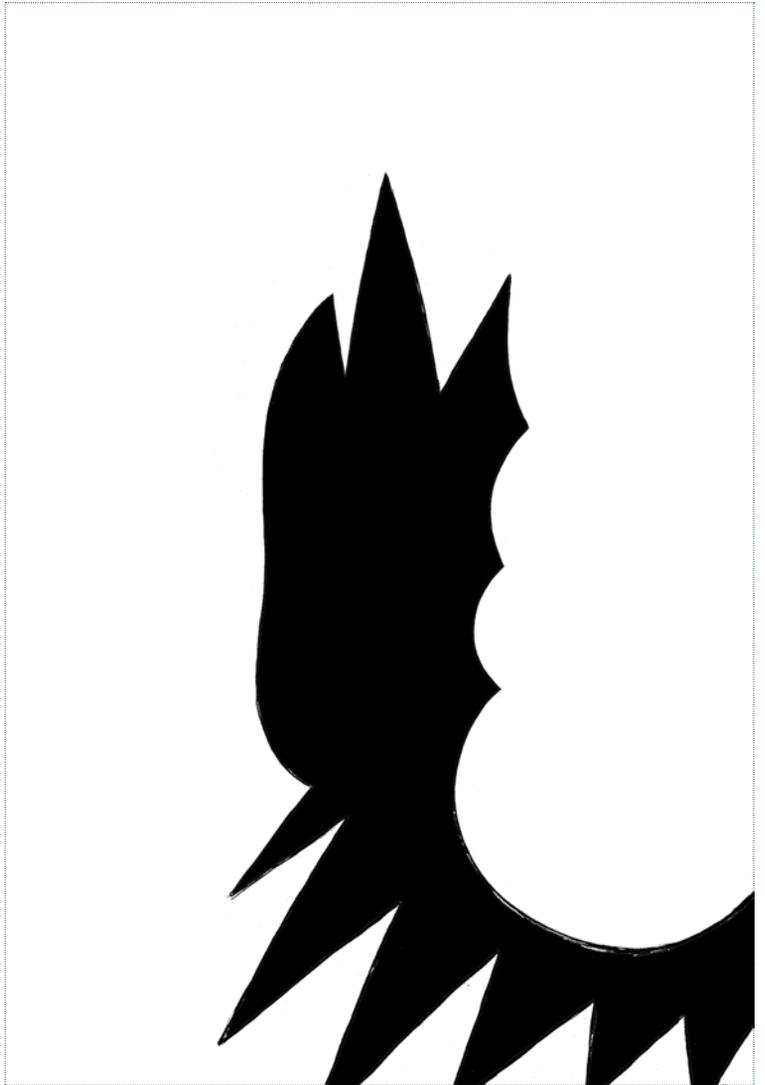
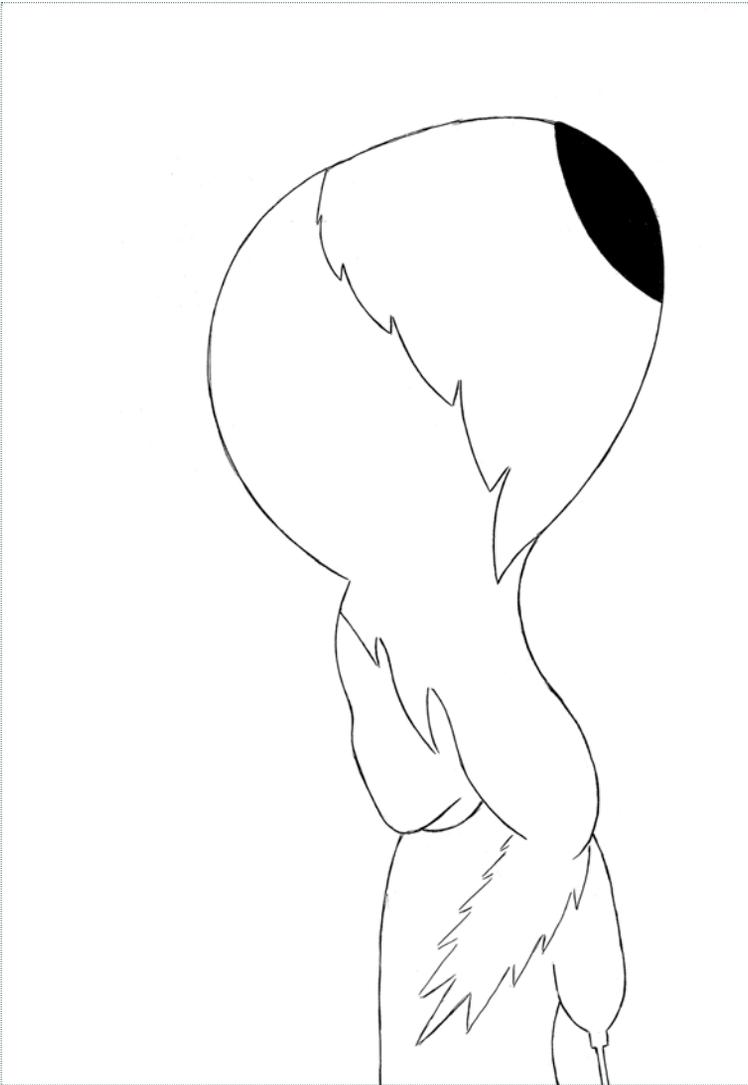
When the ninth year had passed over,
And the summer tenth was passing,
From the sea her head she lifted,
And her forehead she uplifted,
And she then began Creation,
And she brought the world to order,
On the open ocean's surface,
On the far extending waters.

*The Project Gutenberg, Kalevala, Volume 1 (of 2),
by Anonymous, translated by W. F. Kirby*



Girl and The Magic Egg, 2002





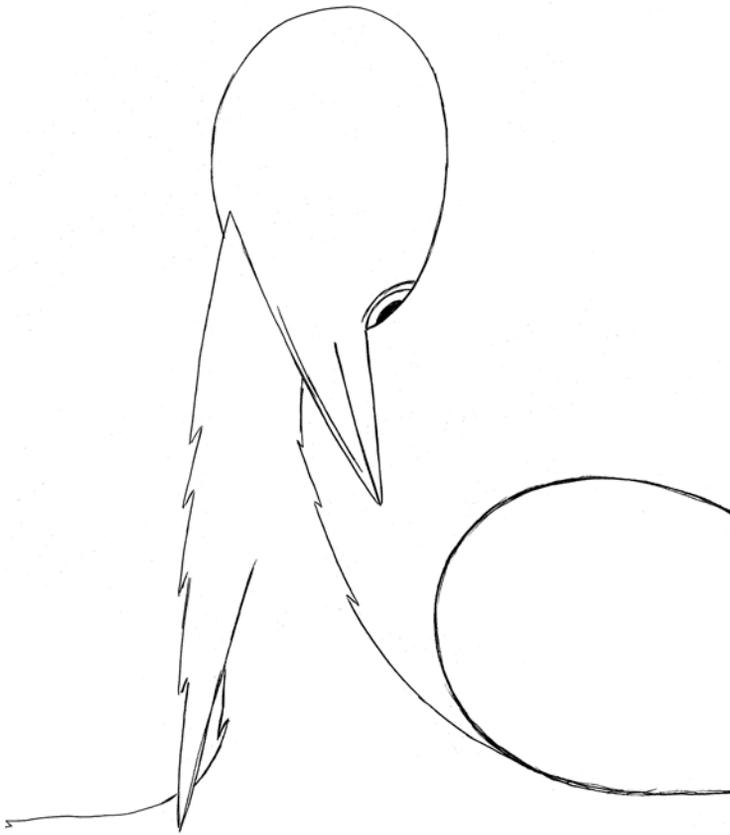
Helmut Höge
Birds and Architecture

“Architecture is both the process and the product of planning, designing, and constructing buildings and other physical structures.”

WIKIPEDIA, *ARCHITECTURE*

“For many birds, nothing could be sexier than building a nest.”

VITUS B. DRÖSCHER



Perhaps we can first speak about the nest boxes that humans consider architecture? – Karl Marx writing in *Capital*, Vol. 1: “A bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this: that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labor process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the laborer at its commencement, thus as an actual idea.”

The East German biologist Matthias Freude published an illustrated volume about *Buildings By Animals* for the Berlin children’s book publisher Berliner Kinderbuchverlag. He defines a building as only “those constructions created by the independent activity of the builder.” He therewith quickly disposes of the Marxist differentiation between nature (instinct or gene) and culture (consciousness).

Still, it is true that a bird’s nest construction and an architect’s house construction are always focused on the same essential elements: roof, wall, floor, door – and then maybe a window and a balcony... Rem Koolhaas, Curator of the Architecture Biennale in Venice, listed a total of only 15 elements. With most bird

nests, the parents provide their young with a roof, but generally speaking, most bird-made structures tend to ignore windows.

Building nests is not something that needs to be learned, as is the case for young orangutans that learn to construct nest beds every evening in the crotches of trees. Rather, it is an ability birds are born with. However, this says nothing about the sheer diversity of their nest constructions. Darwinian biologists would say that the human art of building is individualized, while the bird’s is appropriate to its species. On the other hand, their nests and cavities show consistent variation in relation to location, differences in climate, building materials, neighbors, food sources, enemies, and the like.

In the words of the Munich ecologist Josef Reichholf, “Birds are capable of learning [...] There are species now living in cities that originally lived amongst rocky cliffs, as well as forest and water birds that one would assume would require large open waters.” The tree-breeding birds have the greatest challenge to seek alternatives, due to the lack of old trees full of holes located in cities – an outcome of concerns involving insurance risks.

Some species of songbirds have been known to peck out cavities in the thinly plastered insulation material applied to building exteriors. Japanese crows have recently started to build nests on utility poles using wire clothes hangers. In Mecklenburg, Germany, half of all the ospreys have made high-voltage poles their breeding ground. And near Cologne, peregrine falcons bred on a brown coal excavator that then moved 50 kilometers during the middle of the brooding period. Even more extreme was a male black redstart, who built his nest in the axle bore of a cable lift car using toothpicks from a nearby restaurant and steel wool from the machine room. After the female had laid five eggs and they began to hatch, the season started and the car was put back into service. “At first he flew for a bit alongside, but he soon turned around, noticeably upset.” As the young were hatched, however, he began to feed them – at the lower station. “Then the car swung uphill. But this time he didn’t turn around [...] He flew up with it, constantly circling it. There he fed his hungry family with flies he had picked from restaurant windows. Below at the parking lot for the lower station he could find plenty of insects stuck to the grilles of the parked cars.”

I saw an oystercatcher at the Eider estuary brooding while “protected” by a traffic sign directly next to the highly traveled coastal street. The nest was comprised of a feather-lined hollow. Not far away, countless sea swallows brood on concrete each year, hardly a meter away from onlooking tourists. Their nests are made of quickly gathered refuse washed up by the tide. They only attack the ornithologists (if they allow themselves to be seen at all). Every year they put bands on the young, which the birds perceive as a disturbance if not an outright attack.

The opposite is true for the grey goose. Since they realized that they were relatively protected in the Wadden Sea National Park, they brood on the islands of The Halligen where no fox can reach them. To build their nests, they quickly gather the various objects that have washed up. Unlike the Siberian brent geese, however, their young cannot feed on the salt-laden Hallig grasses, which means the parents are forced to walk them over to the mainland (or swim with them at high tide) as soon as they hatch. They are stalked by countless gulls and cranes, who have their sights on the

newly hatched young. When the survivors finally reach the dike, they are so exhausted that they can barely make it up. Behind that is a highly traveled coastal road, and then only after that a grassland with a large freshwater lake, which is where the parents are generally heading. To help them, the ornithologists meet the tired young geese at the foot of the dike and carry them over to the lake in pails, where they are then reunited with their parents. With each year, the population grows, thanks in part to the bird conservationists.

Regarding the building of their nests, herring gull researcher Nikolaas Tinbergen writes, “If they are truly engaged to be paired, they begin searching for a place to live. They break away from the (singles) club and move into some region within the colony. Here they begin to build their nest. Both collect various materials and carry them to the nesting site. Then they take turns scratching out a shallow cavity and lining it with grass and moss.”

The great crested grebe builds its own little island using reeds and leaves – a kind floating nest. Other types of grebes, according to David Attenborough, don’t build nests at all, choosing instead to secretly distribute their eggs in the nests of ducks – not unlike the female cuckoo. According to Reichholf, cuckoo young are “influenced by the host with which they matured,” while the grebe young are not influenced at all because they leave the host nest immediately upon hatching and go out into world to live alone for the rest of their lives. And unlike the hatched cuckoos, they haven’t pushed the eggs or the young out of the host’s nest. They never get to know any parents.

For building, maintaining, and using the nest, there is great variation in the level of cooperation between the male and the female. For the buttonquail, which is similar to the common quail and sometimes called a “fighting” quail, “the significantly larger female sports her nuptial plumage, performs a courtship display for the male and even practices polyandry,” according to Herbert Wendt, the publisher of *Grzimeks Tierleben*. “The plainly plumed male sits on the ground, making pathetic little sounds. The hen, meanwhile, runs in circles around the cock, cooing and buzzing, whistling and drumming, stomping and scraping its feet until the cock finally yields to her advertisements. After mating she lays several eggs in a natural depression in the ground and leaves the male to brood and care for the offspring. While the cock tends to the eggs, she’s off dancing around another potential mate. In this way, a single buttonquail hen can win three to four males in a row, filling just as many nests with her eggs.”

The tropical jacanas and the north Scandinavian grey and red-necked phalaropes approach things similarly. One mother mates with up to four males, who do everything from building hollows on little raft-like islands using pieces of plants, to raising and feeding the young. According to Dröscher, “they do all the work of the ‘housewife’ while the female never again has any close contact with her children. Only if an enemy approaches and the frightened father calls for help does the mother return immediately to defend her own.”

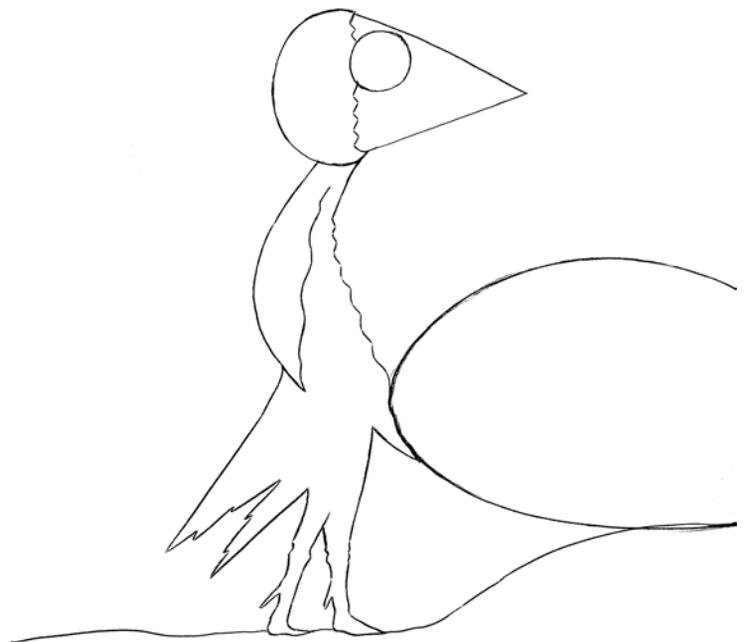
The African pied kingfisher burrows in loamy cliffsides, in which it broods. If one of its male offspring reaches the age of one or two without finding a mate, it will return to its parents’ nest to help rear the brood. Dröscher is of the opinion that this behavior is related to the dearth of females among pied kingfishers. The African terrestrial barbets, on the other hand, suffer a dearth of

males, which compels the females to return to help the parents. With the Australian laughing kookaburra – another type of kingfisher – unmated sons and daughters both help their parents to rear the young. The reason for this is suspected to be the lack of nesting cavities in old trees.

With the African red-billed wood hoopoe, the brooding pairs are helped by up to 14 of their unpaired fellow species. They reside in tree cavities. The females of a flock gather at night in one cavity while the males gather in another. “Females and males sacrifice up to five of their maximum eight-year lifespan to assist other members of their flock before they begin to brood themselves,” writes Dröscher. David and Sandra Ligon, who research these birds, suggest that, “a breeding pair that enjoys the assistance of 14 helpers rears just as many young as a pair that gets no help at all.” The difference has no statistical significance, as Dröscher concludes that, “In the end, the helpers are only helping themselves!” But at the same time he offers the example of the red-billed wood hoopoe: “For animals the creator of all great things is not war, but rather a mutual willingness to help each other.”

In another case, that of the Arabian babbler, pairs also get assistance in nest building and feeding from others of their species. They construct their half-shell shaped nests in dense brush. The Israeli ornithologist Amotz Zahavi interprets their almost classical case of cooperation – these days referred to as altruism – simply as an “egomaniacal behavior” which he then thoroughly explains with a kind of Darwinian business theory logic. “The individuals compete with each other to invest in the interests of the group [...] Higher-ranking animals often keep lower-ranking ones from being able to help.” It’s about “promotion,” “quality of the investor,” and “motivations.” Finally, using an almost micro-Nietzschean reasoning, Zahavi attributes the birds’ desire to help to an egotistical gene, in which individual selection favors “intervention and competition in order to find opportunities to help”. Otherwise, the selection mechanism remains intact.

With some species, offspring are already helping in the nest. According to Dröscher, the oldest offspring in the nest of barn



owls assumes the responsibility for distributing the mouse meat, which the parents hand over as quickly as possible. An Internet site from the NABU (German national nature conservancy) adds that, “Barn owls do not build nests. The eggs lay on the ground, at best with a layer of pellet as a pad.” With forpus parrots, the unpaired females help not only their own parents with rearing young, but also their paired sisters. And with wild turkeys, the younger brothers help their bigger brothers with courtship displays.

Small cavity brooders, such as tits, suffer from a lack of brooding places, which is why a lot of bird lovers like to hang nest boxes for them. However, according to Reichholf many parasites, such as bird fleas, accumulate in the boxes such that “they cannot be used as nesting places for several years. This is just another reason that woodpeckers construct their own breeding cavities – and always anew.” Maria-Leena Rähälä, who has so far hung 200 of her Morgenvogel birdhouses in Berlin alone, says, “I am not aware of such a thing. I have cleaned many birdhouses myself, and many have hung for years without being cleaned, and there were still several layers of nests. Friends have also told me that tits come several times throughout the year, although their houses are not cleaned each year. Still, cleaning the nests is a difficult decision, for example in the fall. Sometimes I leave just a little bit of the upper layer in the house so that the birds are a little cozier. Sometimes I also notice that a spider or other insect has been living in there, too, but that doesn’t seem to bother the birds. I think this kind of communal living makes more sense than these ridiculous insect houses in fashion now.”

Not only tits, but also the kingfishers, bank swallows, and bee-eaters that nest in tubular cavities on riverbanks are suffering from a “catastrophic dearth of nesting places,” because, according to Reichholf, most waterways have been straightened, while the banks have been sloped and secured from erosion. A similar housing shortage is also prevalent among the city’s mallard ducks, which are known to brood in high-rise balcony boxes because of the lack of suitable nesting areas. After hatching, the young ducks have to jump down and meet their mother, who guides them across sometimes very busy streets to the next body of water. Every year, pictures of their excursions are printed in daily newspapers. Many municipal lakes offer so-called “floating duck houses” for breeding, which are available in a variety of designs and price ranges. Park management is usually the one to acquire the houses, which are not only called “duck houses” but often look a lot like standard single-family homes for humans, with pointed roofs and even windows. In eastern Germany following the reunification, many municipal lakes installed duck houses, which were made by unemployed workers as part of a work program. Among the cities that did this was Bremerhaven, the western German city with the highest level of unemployment. But the birdwatcher Burkhard Scherer asked himself whether this wasn’t another case of the right hand not knowing what the left hand was doing. The duck-friendly initiative actually encouraged the birds to multiply very rapidly. As a result, various measures were considered, including the removal of the duck houses, eliminating duckling slides, and using unemployed workers to collect the eggs – an idea suggested by the Senator for Employment. Finally, the feminist department chair responsible within the Environment Senate had her way. This single mother



observed that the male ducks not only play no role in rearing the young, but they also ambush the poor mother ducks in order to repeatedly rape them, which can all too often lead to the death of the ducklings. She quickly decreed that practically the entire drake population be captured – and killed. And that’s exactly what happened.

Populations come and go. The crested lark first arrived from the Balkans and then expanded along the paths of newly constructed streets and railways farther and farther north. In 1824 they reached Oldenburg, Germany via the newly built Bremer Avenue. In Zurich, the crested larks nested in the rail yards. Honored and protected by the railway employees, they were soon comfortable with humans – at least those in a rail uniform. However, few are left in Zurich these days.

There is also some concern about the synanthropic swallows. House martins are gladly offered nesting help in the form of small wood boards, so that their nests – made of mud and saliva – do not fall from the wall under protruding roofs. Reichholf suggests that an even better alternative can be found in synthetic nests built of a mix of wood and concrete in natural shapes, painted a light color and available as a single or double nest.

A supportive underlayment is useful for the nests of barn swallows, which prefer to nest inside various spaces (such as barns), and which require only a small open window through which to fly in and out. There are also artificial nests available for these birds, which are more open than those for house martins.

In cities the swallow is slowly being pushed out by the common swift. Both species arrived together around the beginning of the nineteenth century. The City of Zurich biologist Stefan Ineichen explains the shift in populations as having to do with the swift being “more comfortable in the big city and more modern than the swallow.” Their brooding areas are normally located in openings in buildings or roof overhangs. Their nests are made of gathered feathers, blades of plants, and other things floating through the air. According to Wikipedia, “Except when nesting, swifts spend their lives in the air, very likely non-stop for months at a time.”

Maria says that the Morgenvogel birdhouses are normally inhabited by tits. Her standard nesting boxes are made in series (with the help of Berlin’s Kufa Holzwerkstatt wood workshop) and are a combination of a Finnish birdhouse design and strict standards of NABU. It’s dimensions have been selected specifically for tits, sparrows, nuthatches, and peid flycatchers: 28 cm high, 15 cm wide, 15 cm deep, with an entrance hole diameter of 3.5 cm. Starlings require an entrance hole diameter of 4.5 cm. All four walls and the floor are constructed of solid wood. The flat roof hangs over significantly in order to keep out rain and enemies, such as crows. There is no perch under the entrance hole, as Maria suggests these only serve to perpetuate an aesthetic cliché while aiding the enemies of the inhabitants. Human predators are inhibited by the fact that Morgenvogel birdhouses are not easily opened by hand, but rather require a Phillips head screwdriver. Bird lovers can purchase the ‘MV House’ and hang it in a tree or on a wall, window, or balcony of their own house. In Berlin there is also the option of the MVRE hanging service for people who can’t quite hang one all by themselves. People who use this service often opt for the ongoing Morgenvogel Real Estate maintenance plan.

Compared to many other large cities, Berlin still has a large sparrow population. However, with the boom in renovations since 1990, nesting opportunities have been significantly reduced.* Strangely enough, this does not apply to swifts. The NABU nature conservation group suggests that they are taken over by the sparrow nests. The NABU internet site indicates that, “In late summer you can see swifts flying into cracks and crannies in buildings all over the city. They’re looking for a brooding spot for the coming year because then things will need to move along quickly. They are one of the last species of bird to come to Berlin and they have been the first to leave.”

Here we should also mention the swiftlet, an Indonesian relative of the swift. “Saliva is their sole construction material for their nests,” which they attach high up on the stone walls of caves. Their nests are sold by the locals because they are considered a delicacy around the world, writes Matthias Freude, who also offers a brief history of nest construction. In the beginning there were only “simple scrape nests. Many shore birds, as well as desert and steppe inhabitants still build these kinds of nests to this day.” Their young are precocial, meaning they are relatively mature and mobile from the moment of birth or hatching. Ducks, swans, and geese also build their nests this way. The offspring of songbirds, on the other hand, are altricial, and “remain in the nest for weeks to be tended to by the parents. They require a warm and protected nursery, otherwise they wouldn’t be able to survive.” Among the tree brooders there are

many species that build “artfully braided, knotted, and even woven nests. Others, such as crows, eagles, storks, herons, and cormorants build cumbersome nests made of branches, sticks, and twigs.” They are not suitable for smaller birds, as they are not sufficiently insulated. These birds use “stems, plant fibers, and rootlets” for their mostly “cup-shaped nests.” Some species, such as the chaffinch, goldfinch, and kinglet add spider webbing and moss, which they are able to combine into especially dense, felt-like nest walls.

The females are the ones usually responsible for building the nests. The almost spherical nest of the long-tailed bushtit is built on trees, close to the trunk, but the nests of the wren and leaf warbler are usually closer to the ground. With the penduline tit, the male begins the construction process, but when the female is satisfied with the frame she finishes it herself, down to the lining. This is what makes them a pair. The felt-like material is so durable and warm that the nest pouches were once gathered by children in Eastern Europe and used as slippers.”

“This is the high point of nest construction among the songbirds, achieving its most artistic form,” writes Reichholf, who also considers the nests of penduline tits “the most artistic.” Other ornithologists say the same thing about the nests of the African weaverbirds, whose males are also the ones to initiate nest construction. But in this case the females look on more critically, and actually test the nest for its stability. If they find it satisfactory, they will finish the nest. To build proper nests, young weaverbird males seem to need a few years of practice, much like the young nightingale males need to sing.



At home, in my parents' studio, we had a dozen weaverbirds – silverbills – flying around. We purchased their nests – made of coconut fibers with a horizontal entrance hole – at a pet store. A sparrow once arrived and immediately got along well with them, whereby it stayed and slept on top of the closed nests. It was too big to get into the entrance hole. Besides that, it was quite tight inside. Sometimes some of the weaverbirds would join the sparrow and sleep together on top of the nests.

Reichholf finds the “communal nests of the social weaver especially unique: they occasionally take over the entire crown of a tree.” The nests of other weaverbirds are also built and hung freely with the entrance hole at the bottom, “such that even the most cunning snakes fail to find a way into the nests.” In South America, small species of parrots also build “large communal nests.” The nest artistry of local songbird species also has “much to offer.” The oriole, for example, builds a “thin nest cradle” that is like a small hammock woven between two branch forks. And the reed warbler fastens its bowl-like nest “between reed stalks like little baskets with handles on the sides.”

The emperor penguins living in the Antarctic have endogenous nests much like those of the marsupials, only in reverse. The female lays an egg on the feet of the male and he covers it with a fold of his belly. Brooding and rearing lasts 251 days for both parents. Each year they have 15 days to recover from the stress. Their desire to parent is so strong that if they ever lose an offspring they will fight with others in order to be able to adopt one. The young have to be careful to keep themselves safe from the newly childless parents.

For the sungrebe, which lives on the waters of Central and South America, a “flying bird nest” has proven to be most effective. “The male has two ‘arm pits’ like carrying bags into which the mother places the young after hatching. The father feeds them there until they are fully fledged,” writes Dröscher. In the event of danger on the water, the father rescues them by lifting them into their air, while in the event of danger in the air he dives with them under the water.

With city pigeons, the male collects the nesting materials, which according to *Wikipedia* normally consist of a thin layer of branches, roots, reeds, feathers, and shreds of paper and plastic. In many cases the eggs are laid directly on the bare floor of the brooding place, such as a niche in a wall. But new buildings no longer have such things. If a pair does manage to find a niche, however, the female will hatch up to four times a year there, two eggs at a time. The young are fed with crop milk by both parents.

Flamingos feed their young in a similar way, although their crop milk contains red blood cells. Dröscher calls it “lifeblood as baby food.” The flamingo broods in colonies. They use their beaks to roll mud together into a dull cone shape, upon which they lay an egg.

Reichholf mentions two extremes when it comes to nest construction and brooding behavior. One involves the Australian-Papuan dusky scrubfowl, which scrapes together a huge mound of earth and plant material in which it lays its eggs, then allowing the heat generated by decomposition to do the incubating. It regulates the temperature by adding or subtracting materials. The scrub fowl has a beak that is very sensitive to temperature, and is thus sometimes also referred to in German as a thermometer fowl. Dröscher adds that the “nest” of the female – only as big as



a partridge – reaches a base diameter of 12 meters and a height of 5 meters. “These are the most monumental constructions that any bird in the world piles up. It takes an unimaginable amount of work.” If they are lucky, they might also find a geyser in a volcanic landscape. Such locations attract several thousand scrub fowls. They dig out caves into which they disappear, tunneling deep enough to register a temperature of 33 degrees on their “‘thermometer,’ which is their desired brooding temperature. They then quickly lay an egg there and disappear again into the jungle.”

The white tem, which broods on tropical islands, exhibits the opposite effort. It builds no nest at all, preferring to lay its egg on a fork in a branch and brood there. “The hatchling remains sitting in exactly the same place.” A South American species of parrot broods in tree cavities, whereby the female sits on the eggs while the male closes off the entrance, leaving only a small hole through which he feeds her during the brooding period. The opposite is true for the Indonesian hornbills, for which according to Annie Francé-Harrar it is the female that prepares the tree cavity, lining it with fine wood shavings and dried moss. During brooding, it then “gradually closes off the entrance hole using its own thick and sticky scybala.” The hole remains open only enough so that the male can feed it. After hatching a maximum of three young, the male must free the weakened mother by “violently pecking at the calcified, rock-hard wall blockading the nesting cavity.”

Tree cavities, by the way, are often comprised not only of a horizontal entrance and a vertical hole, rather the cavity entrance makes an arch and the floor of the tube is reinforced. A South

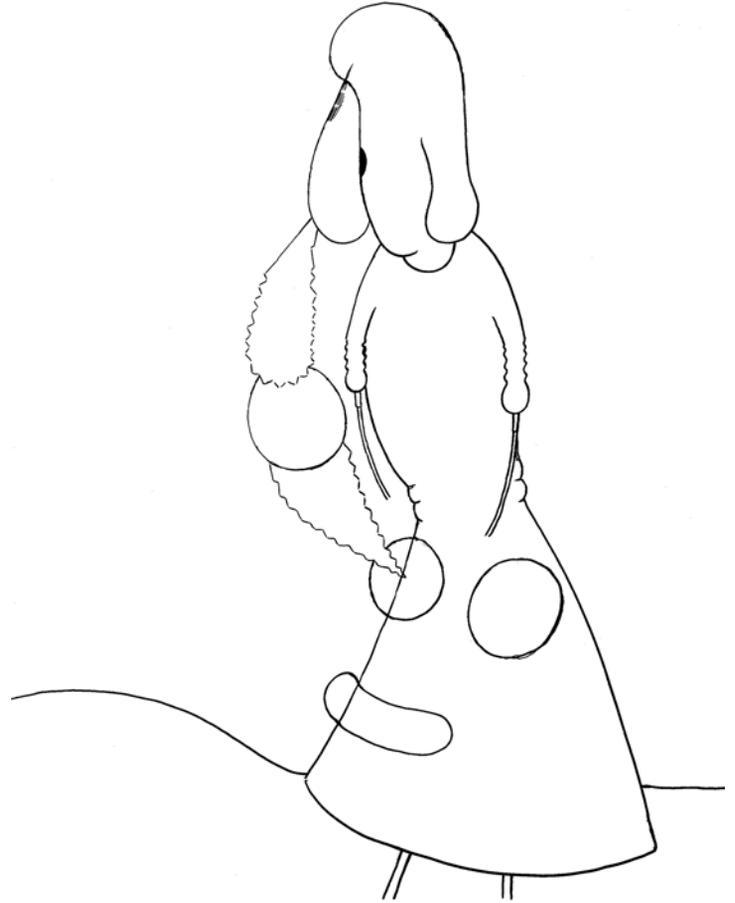
American species of parrot that also broods in tree cavities digs its nest so deep that the young are totally in the dark. The rim of the young bird's beak glows so that it can be located for feeding – a characteristic that remains until adulthood. The estrildid finches of Africa are similarly equipped. “They build a spherical nest that hangs from a tree, which is only accessible by an entrance hole on the side,” writes Dröscher. So that the parents can feed the young within the dark nest, “the young have glowing colorful ‘reflectors’ on the rim of their beaks and brightly colored ‘targets’ in their throats [...]. None of the nestlings of the 125 species of estrildid finches has the same throat pattern. All it would take is to paint one spot of color differently and the parents would stop feeding the chick.”

We can't conclude the list here without mentioning the Australian-Papuan bower bird, which devised something “that otherwise only humans are able to do,” according to Herbert Wendt. The male builds a pergola that is open in the front and back and has a round roof. A little twig is then worked into a paintbrush with which it takes the blue juice of a crushed berry and colors the interior. Finally, they create a kind of large mosaic around the pergola, made of “snail shells, beetle wings, parrot feathers, leaves, brightly colored seeds and flower petals, which they replace when they become faded. In modern times they began to add glass shards, paper scraps, and other refuse of human civilization” for their artworks, for which the blue bower bird males prefer the color blue. They are constantly making improvements and augmentations. Sometimes while they are out searching for new objects, another male will come along and steal something. “Each of the 19 species has a different aesthetic preference.” But all of them are concerned with attracting at least one female to the pergola to mate with her there, whereupon the female flies away to build her own relatively uninspired half-bowl of a nest while the male continues to work on his mosaic. This artwork is serious food for thought for those who think nature and culture are two different things.

Finally we need to mention the crows, which have a few good ideas of their own. The *corvidae* (crow) family of birds originates from the island world of New Guinea, which is also where their relatives, the birds of paradise and the bowerbirds, come from. The last two families are still living there, although they are threatened with extinction. At the same time, the crows have managed to spread themselves across the entire globe and have begun to migrate en masse from the country into cities. They were able to accomplish all this, as Reichholf writes, because these black birds – as opposed to the colorful ones – took up the cause of “progress.”

The male paradise birds are able to impress the females with their beauty and the bowerbirds manage to get attention with their colorful ornaments in specially built pergolas wherein they mate at lightning speed. Some of the males then disappear, leaving the female to finish building the nest. This is not the case with the *corvidae* family. Like the other two families, they are not able to sing very well, and are neither artistically endowed nor can they impress the females with their beauty, since they all look basically the same. So what can they do? The crows simply participate in nest construction, defend it, and feed the brooding female. Then they raise the young together. This “idea” was “super progressive” in Reichholf's opinion.

Human beings basically followed suit. Meanwhile, the crows have gone even further. In Munich, for example, half of all females live together with two males. But because only one sits in the nest at a time, this new lifestyle has had no effect on nest construction. For crows and many other birds, it is also true that the nest is only used for rearing young – meaning only a few weeks each year – and often only once, which means a new nest is built each year or the nest of another bird is taken over and renovated.



“For several species of bird, the groom has to be able to prove he owns property. This is particularly the case for birds that brood in cavities,” writes Dröscher. Consequently this would be the case, for example, for woodpeckers as well as for sparrows. Others, such as the males of the Australian pelican, offer nest-building materials to the female (such as a mangrove branch). South African cape gannets offer “a colorful feather for decorating the home,” which they bring along at the time of relieving the female from brooding. The flightless cormorants on the Galapagos Islands offer a tuft of seaweed, a sea urchin, or a seashell. Only with such a “gift” is he allowed to return to the nest. “Otherwise he is chased away.” The females of the Australian red-browed finch also expect the males to decorate the nest “with exotic feathers and colorful berries.”

*Note

The German conservation group NABU declared the endangered house sparrow “Bird of the Year” back in 2002. NABU (Nature Conservation Association) was originally called the Association for Bird Conservation and then, more specifically, the German National Association for Bird Conservation (RfV). In the context of the national government’s attempts to become independent, in 1936 the RfV called for the use of more bird feed from domestic raw materials in order to lessen the dependence on foreign goods. In 1937 some schools organized fruit seed gathering activities. In addition, there were attempts to selectively feed. For example, the useless sparrows would be given nothing. In 1912 the German Association for Bird Conservation secured rights to special bird feeders with names translating to “Anti-Sparrow,” “Contra-Sparrow,” and “No-Sparrow.”

At the beginning of the war, bird conservation was considered part of the war controls. Sparrows were then actively combated and the killing of sparrows was carried out exclusively by the national association.

For winter feeding, local groups had to report the anticipated requirements for hemp seed and sunflower seed, whereby the national association for bird conservation would report the total amounts to governmental offices. The corresponding amounts were then delivered in the fall. The groups received deliveries from Giengen or Stuttgart. Sometimes the winter feed was distributed via local offices of various relief organizations – upon the presentation of a RfV ID card. The process was maintained until the final winter of the war. As late as 1944, 5000 feeders and nesting boxes were distributed by the office at Giengen. Even in February 1945, as much of the infrastructure of the German Reich was significantly destroyed and rail capacity was essentially commandeered for troop transport, the RfV sent hemp seed on cargo trains to its groups in the areas of the country which were not occupied. On the front as well as on the bases, bird conservation was a welcome distraction from the atrocities of the war. For the German soldiers in Norway, for example, High Marine Command ordered the production of 200,000 copies of instructions for building nesting boxes and a one-sheet about feeding devices. Countless members of the armed forces sent

photos to Giengen of the winter feeding in front of their bunkers or nesting boxes on the Siegfried Line. Despite their passion for birds, however, they still harbored much disdain for the sparrow.

But this changed. In the meantime there are several providers of so-called “sparrow communes” in which two to four nests can be accommodated. Nesting boxes are also available in any number of forms, materials, and colors, including gutted cuckoo clocks hung on trees. For exotic birds there are indoor nests that can be hung in cages or aviaries. In the window of a gift shop in Pankow, a district of Berlin, I discovered tiny little houses with doors, windows, and all the trimmings – which were actually nesting boxes. They weren’t cheap. I thought they took the human capacity to design architecture a bit too far. At the zoo in Friedrichsfelde, another part of Berlin, there is an entire boulevard filled with various nesting boxes. There is also the recent phenomenon of insect hotels in parks and private gardens, which are supposed to act as a nesting aid for wild bees, bumblebees, butterflies, and other insects. The idea behind them is a good one but perhaps difficult for city-dwellers to accept: without insects, you have no birds – except maybe for the pigeons, who as we know, feed their young with their own homemade crop milk.

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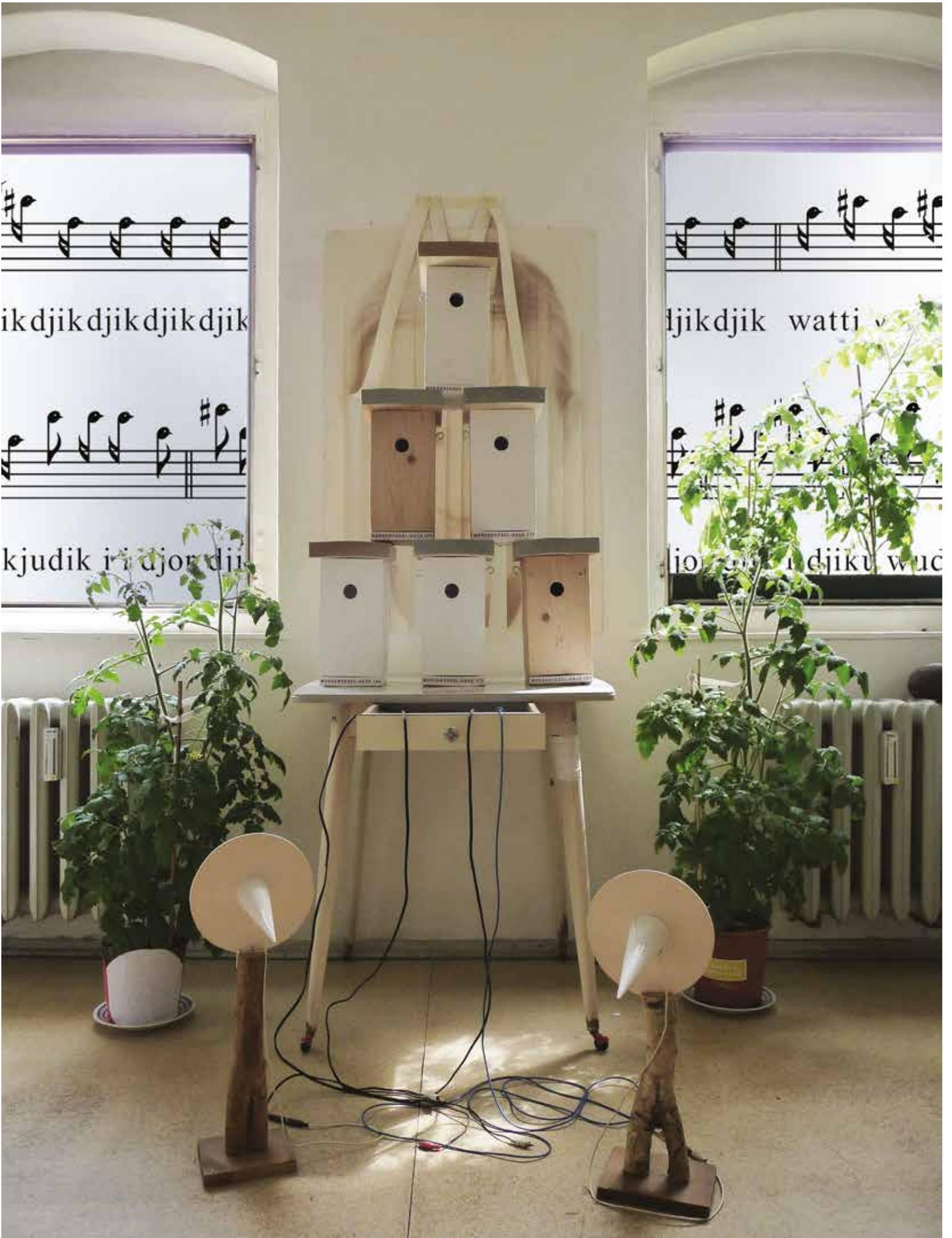
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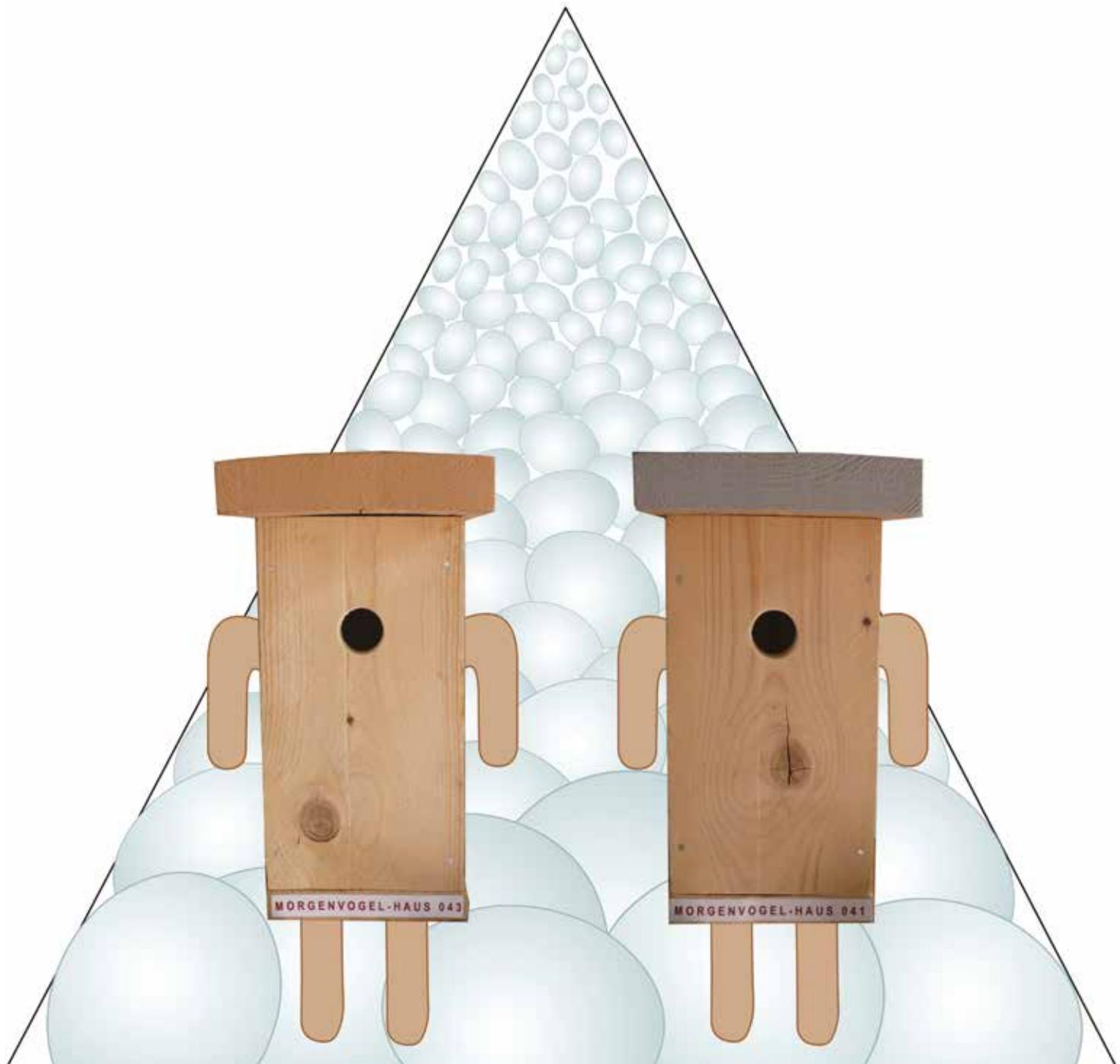
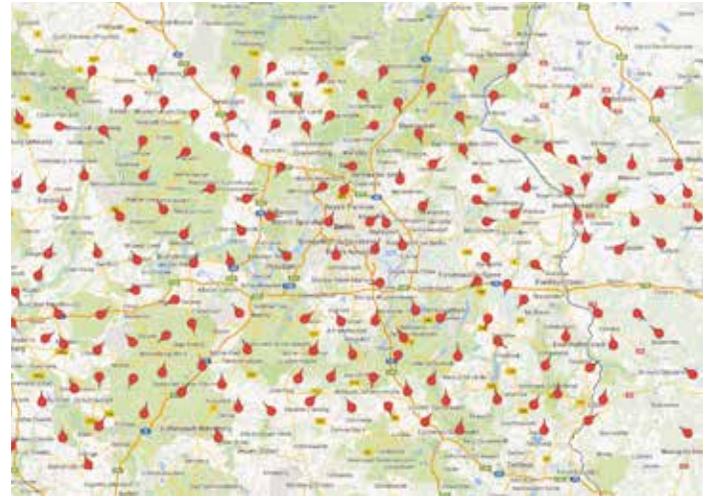
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MORGENVOGEL REAL ESTATE

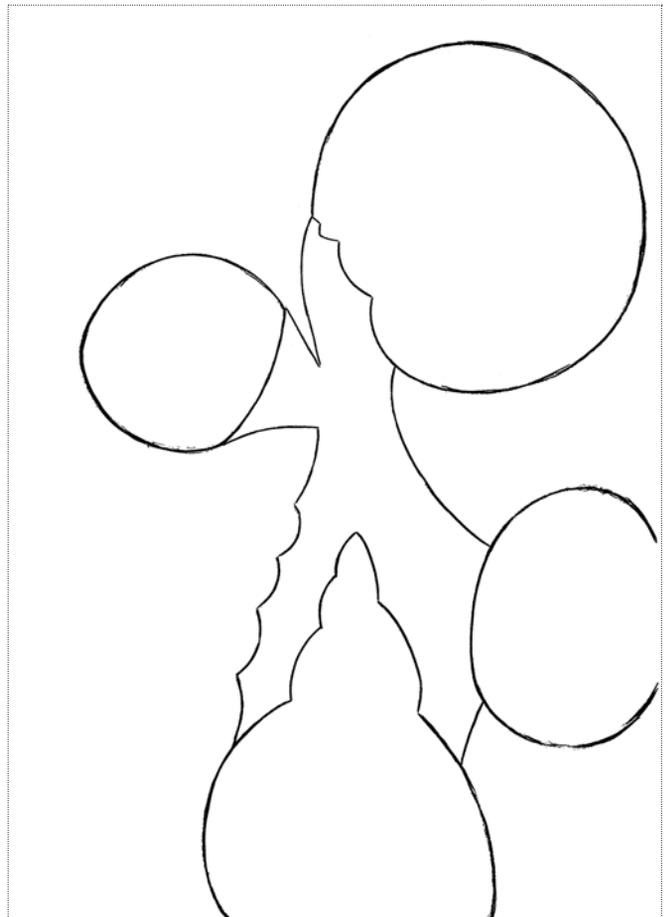
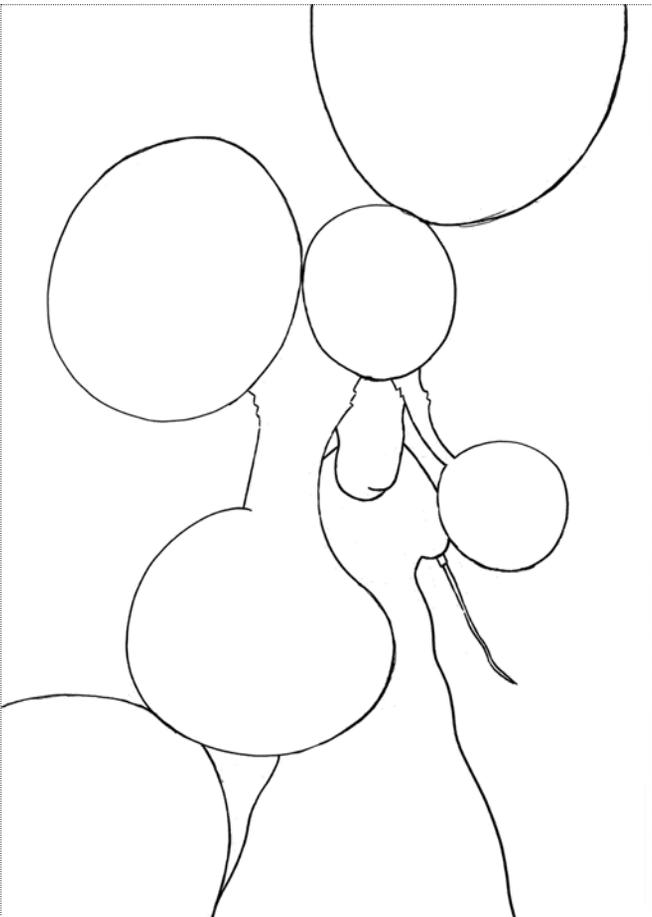
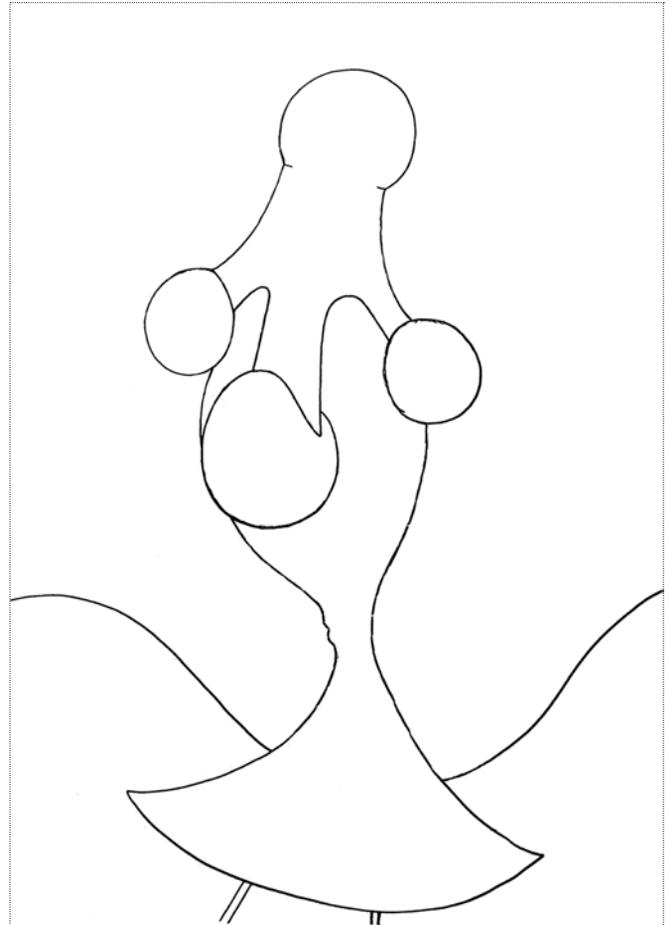
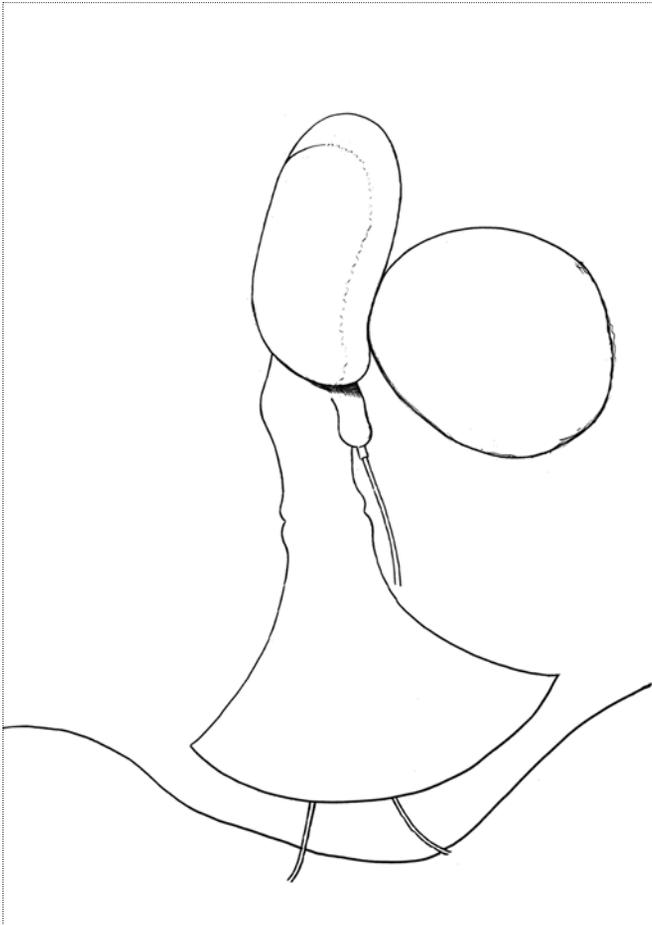


Animated Morgenvogel-house characters of 2009. Above: The Morgenvogel Real Estate-map as of 2014: morgenvogel.net/morgenvogel-map

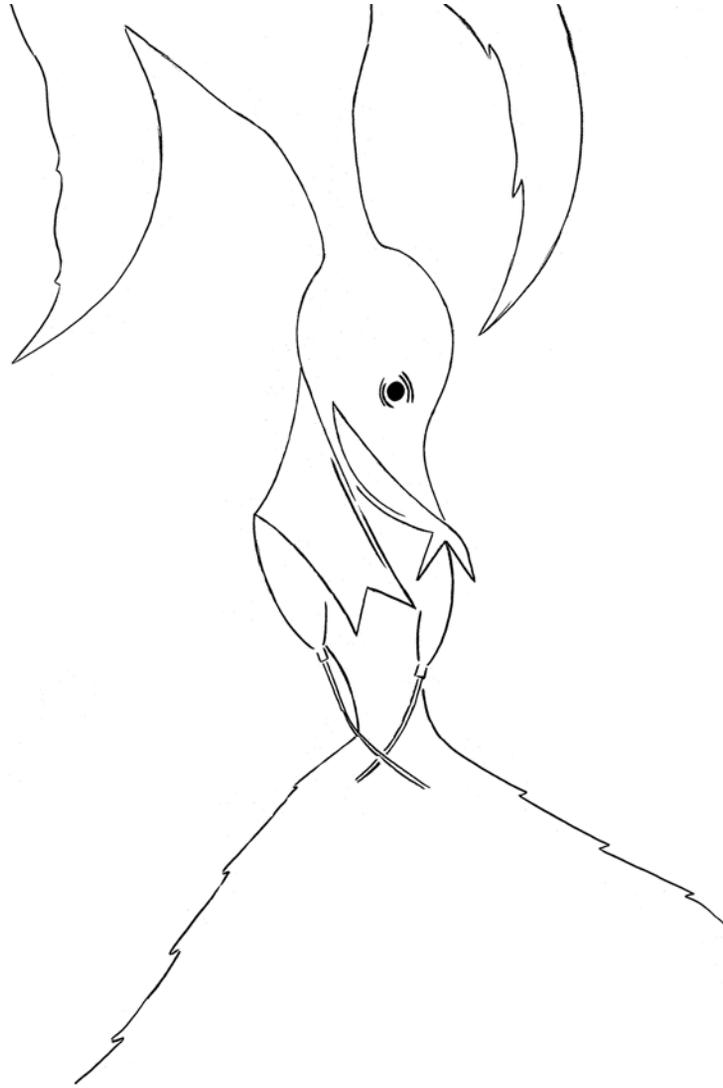




Midsummer Night's Egg Tree Dream, 2009



Marsh and Treetop. A Couple of Birdsongs



*Orioles in the deep wood, the length of their vowels,
In tonic verses the singular measure.
But only once a year it happens,
that the long duration of nature pours out,
in the meter of Homer.*

*This day yawns like a caesura,
From the very early morning silence and heavy long syllables;
Oxen in the field, a golden idleness,
Drawing the richness of an entire note from a single reed.*

OSSIP EMILJEWITSCH MANDELSTAM, 1914¹

Oriole song (sound recording)²
morgenvogel.net/pirol.html

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Please allow me, with this song and this poem, with this poem and this song, to usher you into a different world. Because the world of the crow, of which Helmut Höge just told,³ is only to a certain extent an acoustic or musical one – a world of calling, hearing, and singing, alone or in groups. The corvids (crow family)

are mostly familiar with calls possessing a sonic overtone spectrum. For the German carrion crow, *Corvus corone*, this transliterates to *krah* or *käh* or *kjorrrrrja ka kjar kjorrrrja ka* or *krrr* or simply, as though Kirkes' weaving loom was at work: *chrk*. It's a bit different for the jackdaws of Konrad Lorenz. Lorenz realized that the sound quality of the young jackdaws that fled from the nest was different than that of those that returned home. One group called *kja* and the other called *kjuh*. Both calls were saying, "Fly with!" but one said, "Fly with, far away" while the other said, "Fly with, back home!" In Lorenz's transliteration of the call, the vowel "a" connotes distance, while the vowel "u" connotes home. A strange coding, a strange alchemy of vowels:⁴ "a" for leaving, "u" for returning.

But the sound of the oriole is not a call. As the ornithologists say, it is a song. And it would be interesting to introduce this differentiation between song, call, and invocation to literary studies with the same precision as we find in biology. Like all songbirds, the oriole knows not only songs but also calls. However, they have very different functions and acoustic structures, especially when they are occasionally mixed.

According to the teachings of Friedrich Kittler, song is an event that is only possible through vowel sounds. – Mandelstam:

*Orioles in the deep wood, the length of their vowels,
In tonic verses the singular measure.*

The Mandelstam poem is a big riddle of vowels and verses from the oriole's song. When we first consider the history of poetry, the "tonic verse" is a verse with accentuation, meaning things are stressed or unstressed. The syllabo-tonic verse, first brought properly into play within Russian lyric by Lomonossov and then Pushkin, follows the peculiarities of the Russian language in that all words strictly have only one possible accentuation.⁵ These words are also normally much longer than those in German. If a verse is supposed to be constructed by always following a stressed syllable with an unstressed syllable or vice versa (iambic or trochaic), almost exclusively two-syllable words are able to be used. Lomonossov and Pushkin introduced that the tonic weight, the accentuation, in the 8- or 9-, 10- or 11-syllable verse can also be absent: the well-known half-stress, *poludarenie*, which can be different in every verse.⁶ It opened up a new world, in terms of that which was able to be communicated by a poem.⁷

The meter of Homer and the entire Greek epic and lyric, however, knows no accentuation, rather only long and short vowels.⁸ Take that part of the *Odyssey*, in which *aíthya* appears – a bird, probably *Mergus serrator*, which in English is called the red-breasted merganser. It is a shorebird that feeds on that which washes up and whose mere appearance announces salvation for the shipwrecked Odysseus, who now knows that the shore cannot be far away. Apart from that, this *Morgenvogel* (morning bird) of impending salvation is the figure of *Leukothea*, a former mortal and thus graced with speech – as a goddess and bird! Now read the verse from Homer aloud:⁹

αἰθυῖη δ' εἰκυῖα ποτῆ ἀνεδύσετο λίμνης

or in phonetic transcription (the underline indicates long syllables):

aithyie d'eikyia pote anedyseto limnes

– then the hexameter works entirely without accentuation and independent of it.

The question would now be whether the heavy beat of the oriole song (listen to the sound recording) echoes a Greek verse. Or in Mandelstam's Russian:

Есть иволги в лесах и глазных долготы
в тонических стихах единственная мера

or in transcription (with accents and caesura):

*Jest' ivolgi v lesách ˇ i glásnych dolgótá
v tonítscheskich stichách ˇ jedínstivenaja méra.*

Even if long and short vowel sounds were to play no role in the Russian verse, one hears the caesura and pauses very distinctly. And you can also hear them in the oriole song, which is presented very sporadically with pauses.¹⁰ For Mandelstam, however, the pause ultimately carries the entire poem. It is a midday poem. Echoes in the midday of nature, of the day, indeed of the year, perhaps even of the times themselves. This poem exists but once, in this moment of the midday. In southern cultures the midday corresponds exactly to our midnight, with all its ghosts and spirits, etc.¹¹ But where is the midday celebrated here? Among the reed beds, amidst the marsh, with the Greek Pan, with the Roman Faunus. By those who charm the notes and tones from a reed, such as to blow on the Greek aulós or perhaps the pan pipes. Pan, in fact, lives on the line between nature and culture. He always shows up, as the archaeologist Hans Walter describes,¹² in the context of departure, in turning away, at the edge of the wood, if someone has wandered too far from the village.

But now we find a few things in Mandelstam's poem to turn the stomach, even that of an amateur ornithologist like myself. And this despite that Mandelstam attributes an "anti-Darwinistic soul" – akin to his own – to his best friend of later years, the biologist Boris Kusin. How was it that the ornithologically advanced Eckermann expressed his dismay as he strolled with Goethe, who mused fantastical ideas about the life of birds: "Such a great man, a gifted poet, but unfortunately not a clue when it comes to birds."

To begin with, the oriole is not a midday bird. It is definitely a morning bird – a Morgenvogel. "For the oriole, the intensity of the wake-up sound is equivalent to the intensity of the call..." – as they say in Ornithologist-speak.¹³ Around a quarter to three in the morning it begins to "play its reveille." Peter Altenberg (see box), a friend of the great Viennese lamarckist and amphibian researcher Paul Kammerer, hears things even more specifically than Mandelstam.¹⁴ By five o'clock in the morning, the oriole has "gone through 25% of its daily calls (totaling 1640 individual calls)." Peak calling until around nine in the evening is at a lower level than in the morning. However, "During midday – 10:30 to 2:30 – the oriole calls little if at all."¹⁵ In 1861, Father Brehm occasionally heard the oriole singing past midnight – during mating season. During the brooding period it sometimes sings all day long. Humid weather in particular excites the bird to sing – shortly before a storm when all the other birds have shut their

beaks. For this reason, some regions refer to the bird as a "rain cat." Perhaps Mandelstam heard an oriole at just such a time, during a caesura, holding the breath shortly before the storm hits. It stops singing and calling at the end of June, but resumes at the beginning of August. Only when captured is it completely out of its environment and its rhythm. "In 1900 Kullmann described an oriole who in captivity began to create poetry around Christmastime and soon thereafter began to make loud calls."

In any case, the oriole certainly does not live among the reeds and amidst the marsh, the environment of Pan. It lives "at great heights amongst the leaf canopies of the forest," such as the cottonwoods. Melde and Melde consider it a "sun bird,"¹⁶ that loves summer and warmth and arrives first in May. But it doesn't show itself much. One is more likely to hear it than see it. This means it sings way up high and "in secret." Unlike the blackbird or starling, it doesn't sing from open perches, from treetops, or the roofs of houses, or on telephone poles or power lines.¹⁷ The frequency in which it sings is lower than its size would suggest. "I [the oriole researcher Feige] can hear it as far as 1.6 km away."¹⁸ It is not considered to be very sociable. However, on June 27, 1963 in Erlangen, Germany, one could hear it singing in a group of up to 20 orioles. It was a kind of singing "that seemed like a small group of roosters entertaining each other."¹⁹ Duets between males and females have also been observed.²⁰

But the relationship of a bird song to a human song (alias poem) initially has nothing to do with the question as to which environment the song is sung in. It lies decidedly in the acoustic material itself. Just what is it that makes it a bird song? And what role does it play for us, the learned animals, as opposed to those beings who sing the songs, such as the alluring song of the cock for its hen?²¹ For the only animal having a written history, the song of the oriole is there because this animal captured it – as poetry, as acoustic event, as philosophy.

Referring to birds and human language, Aristotle constructed four levels:²² "Noise (*psóphos*) and voice (*phoné*) are two different things, while a third thing is language (*diálektos*). No other part of the body except the pharynx can vocalize (*phoneín*). Therefore, only those animals with a lung can make sounds (*phténgetei*). Language (*diálektos*) is the articulation (*diárthrosis*) of the voice by the tongue. Vowels (*poneénta*) are thus brought forth by the voice and the larynx; consonants (*áphona*) by the tongue and lips. From these two sources emerges language (*diálektos*)."²³ For human beings, a fourth level is added: *lógos*.

Thus birds have voices, with which they make more than just noises. For Hegel, who as the first philosopher after Aristotle managed to open the doors of philosophy to the animal world, the bird is the ultimate philosophical animal because it doesn't whinny, grunt, purr, or hum – rather, it sings. "The theoretical discourse (Hegel's "Sich-Ergehen") of the bird, which sings, is a higher form of the voice" than the sounds made by a horse, pig, cat, or bee. Where Hegel's famous owl begins its flight at dusk, the singing bird is the morning bird (Morgenvogel), heralding the dawning subjectivity. Thoroughly integrated into its element, milieu, or medium – air – all the way through to the tips of its feathers, "the bird floats freely in its element, separated from the objective gravity of the earth, filling the air with itself and expressing its sense of self in this special element." That is because

the subjectivity exists “in that it trembles,” which happens from a physical perspective in the materiality of sound itself. It “only trembles the air.” It is the “pure process in time.” The tone of the voice disappears or negates itself at the same moment it posits itself. Exactly for this reason the “abstract pure trembling” as voice is also “closest to thought.”²⁴

Aristotle went one better: the singing bird is aware not only of its voice, but also the organization and articulation of it. Without this there could be no song. For Aristotle, the song of the bird is not a result of the trembling material of its subject, but rather originates from the tongue. The bird has a long and freely movable tongue, as opposed to many “viviparous four-foots with blood,” whose tongue is hard and thick and constrained. Its tongue enables the bird’s articulation and dialect. But the one with the “freest, widest, and softest tongue of them all” is the *lógos*-animal, the human. He also possesses the softest and most flexible lips of all.²⁵ Both tongue and lips known not only for speaking ... Ornithological acoustics make a much more simple distinction, although not far from Aristotle, by identifying three classes of sound phenomena: noises, tones, and sounds. Somewhere biologically in between we find the birdcall and bird song.

The tone is a special limited frequency spectrum, something like the sound of a recorder (flute). The sound is a frequency spectrum with all overtone spectra, something like the sound of a violin. The overtone spectra are recognizable as frequency bands. For noise, the frequency bands can barely be recognized because the acoustic activity is spread out across an entire spectrum: click or hiss. The noise can also be created with an instrument, with the beak or wing. “Each vocal expression is connected with exhaling, which excludes instrumental sounds.”²⁶

But how does a written account establish the structure of a song or call? The writing down of human songs and its history since Homer and the Greek alphabet²⁷ is much more familiar to us than the writing down of bird songs. Over time, four different processes have been developed in order to write them down.

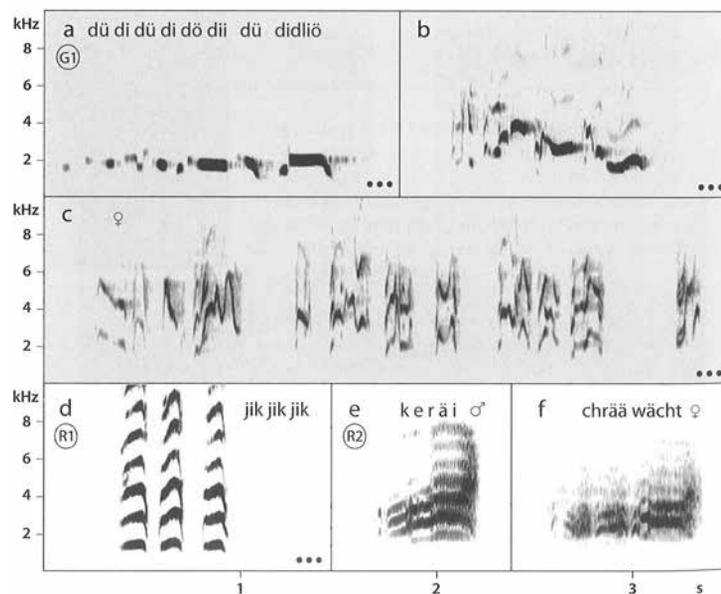
1. The oldest: one selects syllables, vowels, and consonants that correspond to the bird song.

2. The second is a kind of stenography developed in 1894 by the ornithologist Alwin Voigt: dots in various distances from each other and straight lines at various heights for the tone pitches and at various thicknesses for the volumes. In addition, there is an inclining or declining arc for rising or descending pitches of particular passages. The oriole call is then recorded very simply: one line plus three dots and then an inclining arc.²⁸

3. The third is musical notation. For bird songs, its limitations are soon reached. For one thing, the tempo of the song is much too fast for transcribing by ear and hand. A bird’s hearing capacity accommodates a much higher temporal resolution than a human can assimilate. It produces infinitely variable sounds that can no longer be notated even by twelve-tone music, the tiniest steps impossible to be captured by the semitones of a well-tempered tuning.

4. The fourth process is technical-acoustic, described as a sonogram. Its history, which still requires some research, begins with the sonograph, a device that records a graphical representation onto a magnetic tape. The bird song only begins to take some kind of discernible form with the use of

magnetic tape. How appropriate that such technology should be discovered in the 1950s, a time when William S. Burroughs introduced magnetic tape to literature, the theory of evolution, and metaphysical speculation – all under a title that would sound good to the *Morgenvogel*: “The Watergate Scandal Happened in the Garden of Eden!”²⁹



Sonogram of an oriole

(A sonogram, seen here, presents the temporal progression initially from left to right: the sharper the thin line ascends, the finer (shorter) the temporal resolution of the auditory event. Secondly, it represents the frequency spectrum. A noise (closely: *keräi*) includes almost every frequency within a certain range. It is a strip, visible more or less as a wide, dark bar. In comparison, a pure sinusoidal tone without overtones would be represented as a thin, horizontal line. The song of the oriole is measured at less than 2000 Hertz along a bar that is almost as thin as that of the nightingale).

The sonogram of the oriole song would be the technical-acoustic answer to Mandelstam’s syllabo-tonic poem about the oriole – two versions of the same vocal event. Even the modern and highly technical biology of bird books and ornithological literature hold fast to the syllable. We seek, count, and systematize syllables. The syllable, which was first recognized by the Western World as a means of notating song (around the time of the Cretan-Minoan scripts LINEAR A and B; before the Greek vowel alphabet) is itself an ornithological medium. It establishes the point of intersection between human speech and birdsong. “Syllabic writing does not take account of the level of pitch. For many sounds in our language, the corresponding syllables are completely missing. What’s more, we are shaped by our language and attempt to draw parallels. Anyone who would like to become skilled in imitating birdcalls need only ask a bird expert from a different country to describe the song of a particular type of bird. Even a totally non-musical person would be perturbed at the differences in the ways the two experts would imitate the exact same bird. Yet more obvious would be the difference in comparing the syllabic writing in German and foreign bird books.”³⁰ Our language and that which we hear from the birds are extremely closely related!

The oriole possesses a repertoire of around 50 types of verses that create local as well as location-specific “dialects,” as well as individual dialects that distinguish certain oriole males from others. And then there’s the “subsong”, which is “full of chatter and polymorphic”³⁴ or “quietly babbling”³⁵ and is to a certain extent sung secretly when the normal level of “readiness to sing” has not quite been attained. The imitation of other dialects also occurs, to attract other males within the territory. Juvenile orioles, in particular, enjoy imitating. “One of this year’s orioles, startled by a cat, let out a loud cry that sounded a lot like a blackbird.” Kestrel- or woodpecker-like cackling has also been reported: *jik jik jik, uick uick uick, wiächt, riärr, gijick*.

Precisely at this point, based on an old idea of Cord Riechelmann,³⁶ the other end of the oriole song becomes audible: the song of the marsh warbler (*Acrocephalus palustris*):

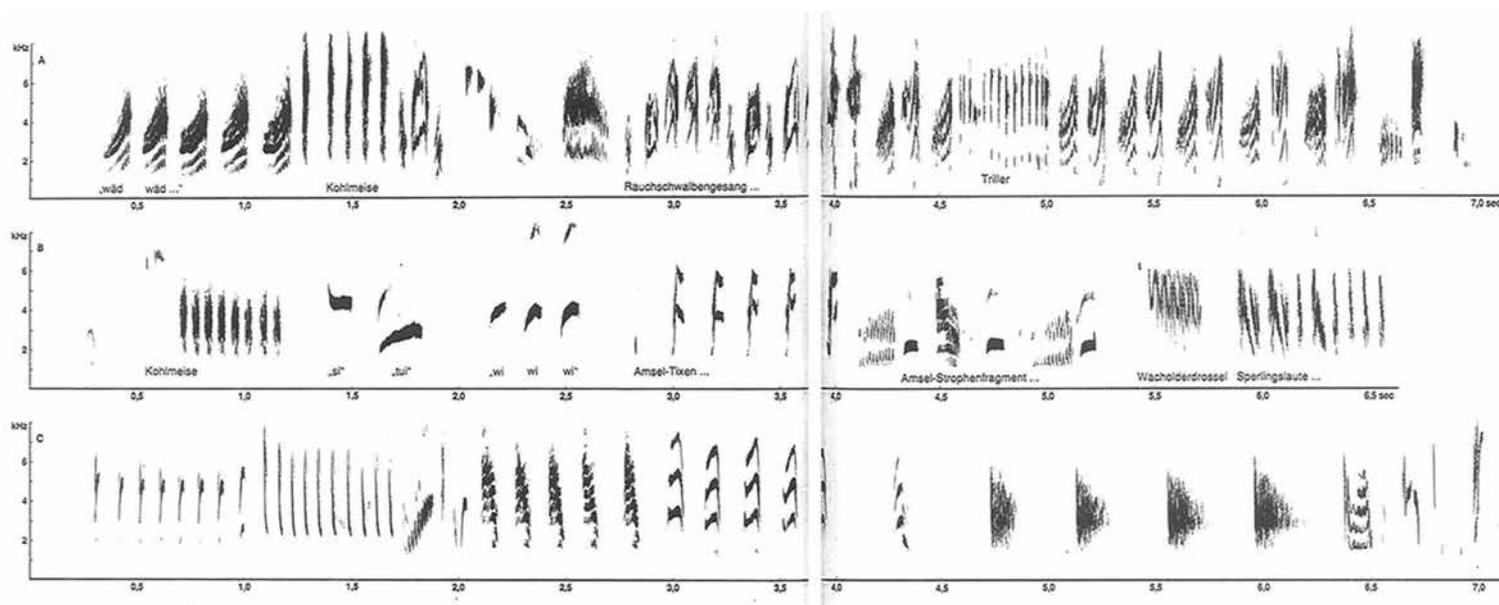
Marsh warbler song (sound recording)³⁷
morgenvogel.net/sumpfrohrsanger.html

Compared to the classical solo singing of the oriole, this bird offers a call that can hardly be referred to as a song. It is the creation of highly acoustic density and rhythm, without pauses or caesura. The acoustic atmosphere, the soundscape of this call, is not found quietly up in the treetops at 3:30 in the morning, but rather amongst the reeds of a riverbank, an endless chirping, whistling, and chattering from thousands of tiny throats. (In the soundscape recording of the mustached warbler, made on 6 May 1972 in Breitenbrunn at Neusiedler Lake (see also Note 38), tree frogs and pheasants are also part of the chorus!) The marsh warbler, whose habitat is not only different than that of the mustached warbler but also different than its name suggests,

lives more commonly at the edges of fields and forests. Its song has a completely different temporal structure than that of the oriole. The marsh warbler sings around 347 elements per minute, for hours at a time and without a pause.³⁸ Its song is widely recognized because it is composed almost exclusively of the imitated songs of other birds. As a young bird, it only goes for four weeks without singing a recognizable imitation – “the pure voice of youth” (Hölderlin). In contrast, the song of the adult bird, both male and female, knows almost nothing of sounds specific to its own species, and exists as a series of other bird songs from any number of families and genera. The marsh warbler imitates around 212 other species, creating a virtually endless repertoire of serial sounds. It often makes quick and rhythmic repetitions of individual calls (see also the marsh warbler sonogram).

The possible combinations are so rich that each bird seeks a very specific “personal rearrangement of its samples.” It is often possible to distinguish individual birds from each other based on which mode of imitation they are using.³⁹ The song fragments are recognizable as imitations because they often have fewer overtones than the originals. This is why (but also because the song timing of imitator and imitated are often very different) the marsh warbler’s imitations barely result in responses from the birds being imitated – or Burroughs-esque rebellions from amongst the reeds.⁴⁰

Even if the marsh warbler is the only one with a different habitat, the family of warbler relatives inhabit Pan’s World, as Mandelstam’s poem evokes: lakeshores, reed beds, and swamps with their exuberant world of birds. Songs that emanate from here are not sung from open perches or hidden in the treetops, rather they come from the dense acoustic atmosphere of the chirping, twittering, and chattering of a swamp shore or riverside. Because

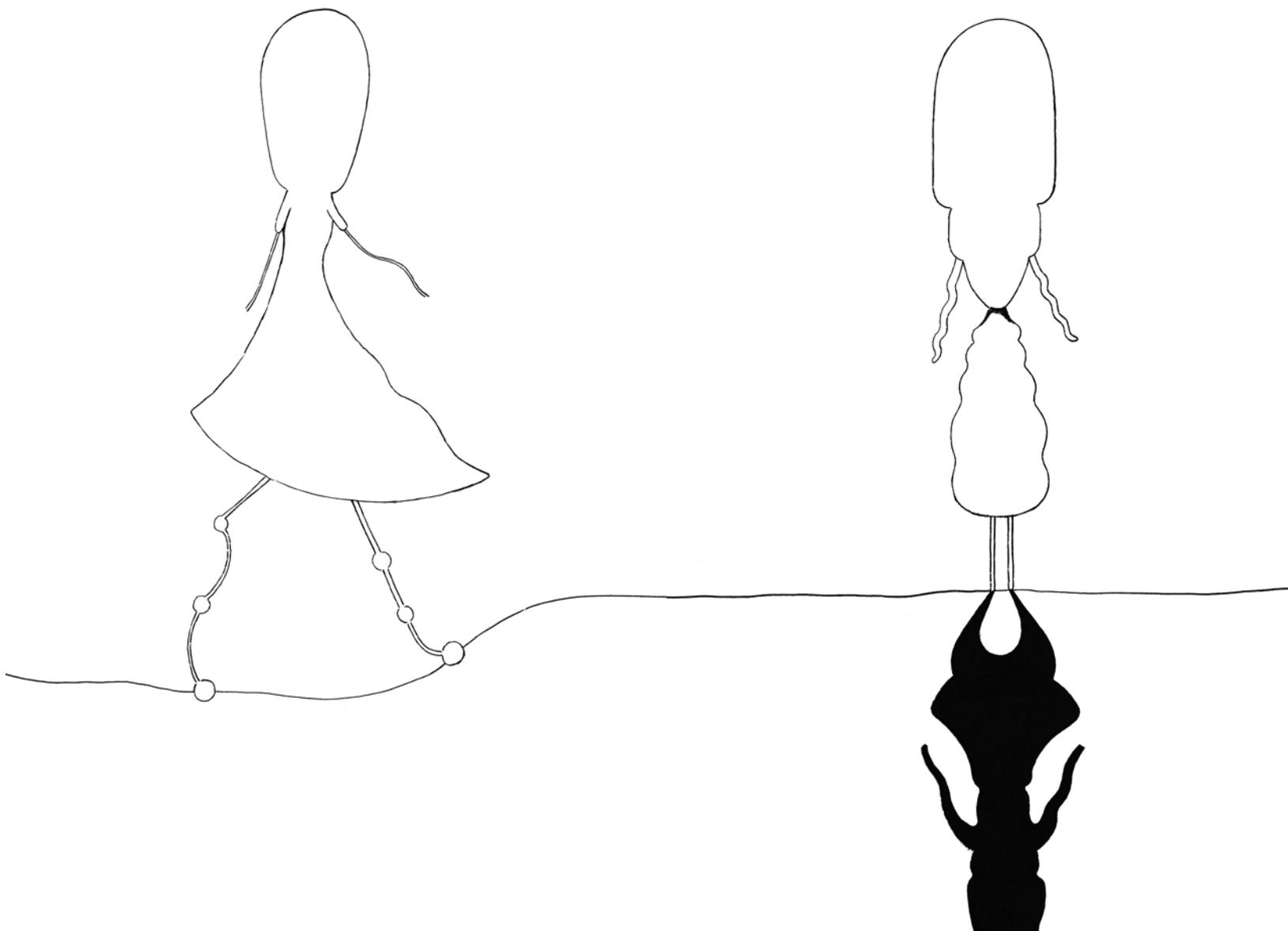


Sonogram of a marsh warbler. Under the pattern the name of the birds imitated.
 Facing page: Pearlfoot and Shadowgirl, 2012

they are so completely and lamarckistically embedded into their environment, the songs of the marsh warbler in Erlangen, Bavaria Germany, are often fundamentally different than those from Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. However, when determining the imitated patterns (over 20% of the calls of the marsh warbler have not yet been identified), there is particular difficulty due to the fact that the marsh warbler is a migratory bird.

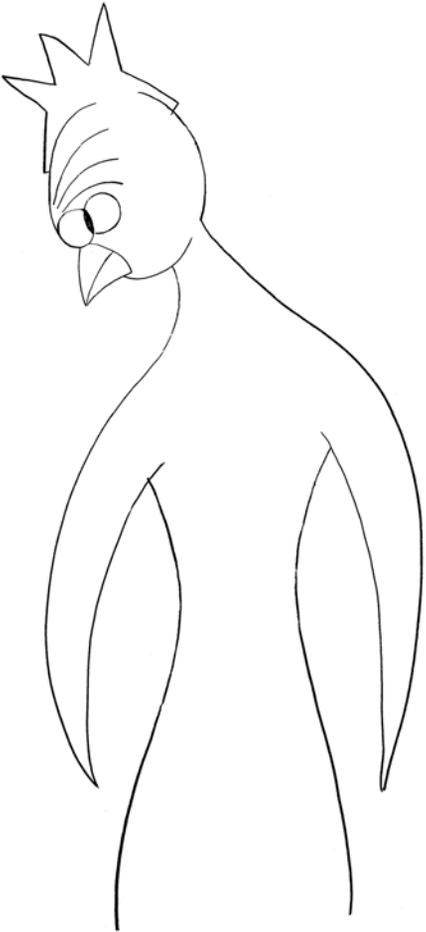
It winters in Africa, often south of the Sahara. From there it returns with many songs from African birds it met while wintering or traveling, the number of which is practically infinite. To be able to recognize the different species and names by listening to the calls of the marsh warbler (an immigrant to Europe) is a major ornithological feat.⁴¹

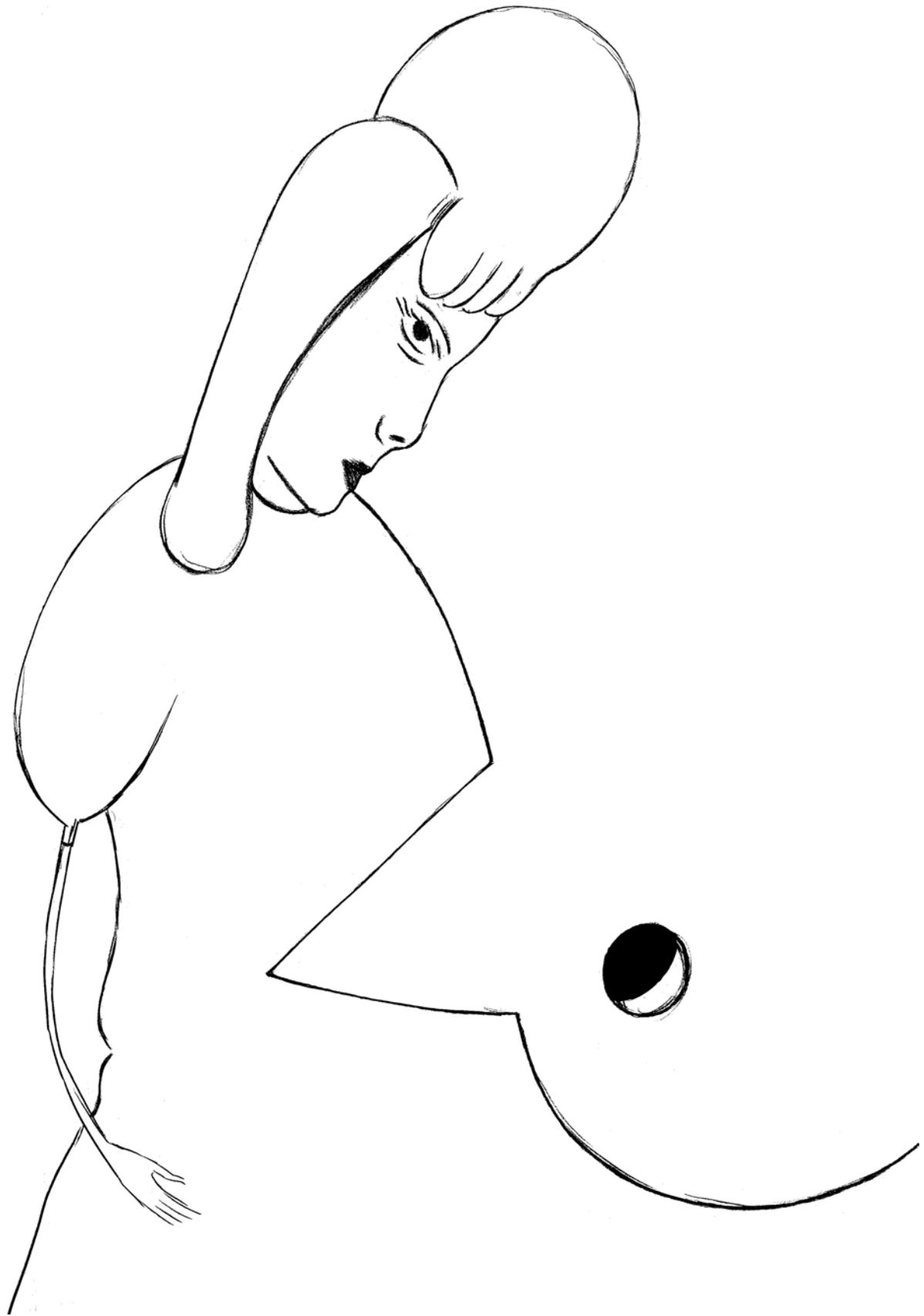
There is one, however, that even outrivals the ornithologists and the marsh warbler: the Eurasian reed warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*). It imitates less, but one of the things it imitates is its neighbor – the marsh warbler (*Acrocephalus palustris*). It imitates the imitation and then its own imitation again. Perhaps, therefore the subjective spirit did not begin in the song of the birds, as with Hegel. Indeed, if poetry is celebrated in Mandelstam and Altenberg by the song of the oriole, the song of the Eurasian reed and marsh warblers could be an impetus for biological media studies. Media, after all – and according to Thomas Macho, the great animal researcher from Berlin – are characterized by their recursiveness.



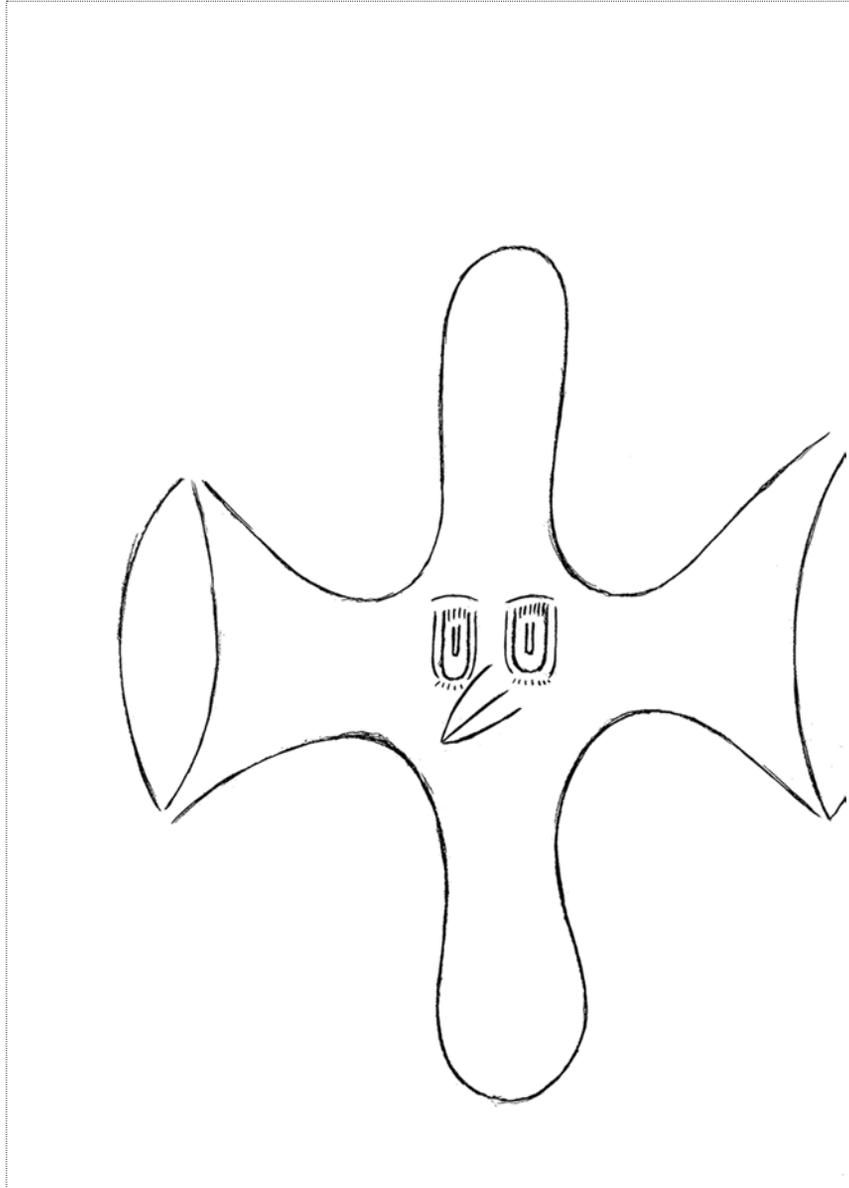
Notes

- ¹ Ossip Emiljewitsch Mandelstam: Kamen', Der Stein (Russian 1913, expanded 1916), in *Der Stein. Frühe Gedichte 1908-1915* russ./ger. (trans. and publ. by Ralph Dutli), Zürich (Ammann) 2000, p. 132.
- ² Hans-Heiner Bergmann, Hans-Wolfgang Helb, Sabine Baumann: *Die Stimmen der Vögel Europas*, Wiebelsheim (Aula-Verlag) 2008, CD Rom: sound recording (mp3) 267, Pirol Oriolus oriolus Gesang G1 (Bergmann). Available at: www.morgenvogel.de/pirol.html
- ³ Directly following the exhibition *Morgenvogel-Kirche* on 5 June 2012, Helmut Höge read a text about the ravens of Bambay.
- ⁴ Arthur Rimbaud's delirium about Alchimie du verbe offered a poem about vowels: „A noir, E blanc, O rouge, U vert, O bleu : voyelles, / Je dirai quelque jour vos naissances latentes / ...“ (probably 1871).
- ⁵ In German somewhat more flexible, as long words can also be stressed at two places.
- ⁶ There can only be one or three unstressed or half-stressed syllables between stressed ones.
- ⁷ Compare the wonderfully concise introduction by Ludolf Müllers in: *Russische Lyrik. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Russian/German), publishers Kai Borowsky, Ludolf Müller, Stuttgart (Reclam) 1983, pp. 23-41.
- ⁸ The rhythm in choral singing, as Oliver Primavesi has shown, comes from stepping or dancing superimposed over the long and short sounds within the meter.
- ⁹ Odyssee, Song ε, Verse 337.
- ¹⁰ Olivier Messaien's composition of the oriole song specifically addresses these pauses, working with them and around them.
- ¹¹ The French philosopher Roger Caillois – more a lover of insects than of birds – dedicated his dissertation, while a young man, to the “midday ghosts.”
- ¹² Hans Walter: *Pans Wiederkehr. Der Gott der griechischen Wildnis*, Munich and Zurich (Piper) 1980.
- ¹³ Klaus-Dieter Feige: *Der Pirol. Oriolus oriolus* (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei Nr. 578), Heidelberg Berlin Oxford (Spektrum), 2. unabridged ed. 1995 (1. ed. 1986), p. 98.
- ¹⁴ Richard Engländer chose the name Altenberg, because as a young boy in Altenberg on the Danube he was in love with the woman who would later become Konrad Lorenz's (the famous ornithologist) first teacher in elementary school. She was the neighbor of the Lorenz family estate in Altenberg and her nickname among her brothers was “Peter.”
- ¹⁵ Feige: *Der Pirol*, p. 98. Feige himself made the observation.
- ¹⁶ Nach I. and M. Melde: *Zur Biologie des Pirols*, in: Falke 1977, Vol. 24, pp. 258-263, cited by Feige: *Der Pirol*, p. 99.
- ¹⁷ For the blackbird compare *Stimmen der Vögel Europas*, p. 504. – In Robert Musil's well-known story *Die Amsel* (The Blackbird) the environment of the open perch (freie Warte) becomes almost metaphysical.
- ¹⁸ Feige: *Der Pirol*, p. 91.
- ¹⁹ *Handbuch der Vögel Mitteleuropas* (pub. Urs N. Glutz von Blotzheim) [HBV]: Vol 13/II Passeriformes (edited by U.G.N. von Blotzheim and Kurt M. Bauer), Wiesbaden (Aula-Verlag) 1993, p. 1081.
- ²⁰ Feige: *Der Pirol*, p. 97.
- ²¹ Hegel would consider this type of birdsong a kind of marriage ceremony necessary for the reproduction of the species as a stage in the history of subjectivity.
- ²² Compare mainly Friedrich Kittler: *Musik und Mathematik*, Vol I: Hellas, Part 2: Eros, Munich (Fink) 2009, pp. 174-181, songbirds.
- ²³ Aristoteles: *Historia Animalium*, Book IV.9, 535a 28 to 535b 1.
- ²⁴ Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel: *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1830). Part Two: Die Naturphilosophie (mit den mündlichen Zusätzen), in: same, *Works*, Vol. 9, Frankfurt a. M. (stw) 1996, p. 433 f.
- ²⁵ Aristoteles: *De partibus animalium*, Book II, 659b 31 to 660a 28.
- ²⁶ *Stimmen der Vögel Europas*, p. 11.
- ²⁷ cf. Friedrich Kittler: *Musik und Mathematik*. I. Hellas, 1. Aphrodite, München (Fink) 2006.
- ²⁸ cf. *Wir beobachten Vögel* (pub. and translated from the Danish by Hans Schildmacher), Jena (VEB Fischer), 1970, p. 198. cf. also Alwin Voigts 12-volume work (1894 to 1996) *Exkursionsbuch zum Studium der Vogelstimmen*, 4. ed., Leipzig (Erwin Naegele) 1906, pp. 16-25: Die schriftliche Darstellung von Vogelstimmen, and pp. 144-148: Der Pirol.
- ²⁹ cf. upcoming Till Greite, Berlin!
- ³⁰ Karl Eduard Linsenmair: *Wie die Alten sungen ... Warum singen Vögel?* (Kosmos-Bibliothek 258), Stuttgart 1968, p. 23 f.
- ³¹ HBV 13 II, p. 1081
- ³² HBV 13 II, p. 1083.
- ³³ *Stimmen der Vögel Europas*, p. 345.
- ³⁴ HBV 13 II, p. 1082.
- ³⁵ “Indeed it makes a difference as to whether one composes like the reed warbler, with its little collages of frequently repeated “tiri” sounds and noisy scratching rhythms amongst the reeds at lakeside, or if one, like the oriole, whistles a quiet sonorous “düdlio” in the clearing of a deciduous forest.” (Cord Riechelmann: Der Pirol hat mir sein Lied erzählt, in: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/wissen/natur/musikalische-tierwelt-der-pirol-hat-mir-ein-lied-erzaehlt-1742583.html>)
- ³⁶ The following primarily HBV 12 I, pp. 382-393.
- ³⁷ *Stimmen der Vögel Europas*, sound recording (mp3 and wav): 332 Mustached warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* Song G1 (Krey); 336 Marsh warbler *A. palustris* Song G1 (Bergmann). Available at: morgenvogel.net/sumpfrohrsaenger.html
- ³⁸ HBV 12 I, p. 383.
- ³⁹ HBV 12 I, p. 388.
- ⁴⁰ The theory of William S. Burroughs, the magnetic tape philosopher: recordings on magnetic tape in public places, in bars, or on the street, work as a cut-up of a soundscape to create unpredictable effects when played back at the same location shortly after being recorded: panic, accidents, mass hysteria.
- ⁴¹ One is bewildered that nevertheless among the 212 imitated species identified at the end of the 1970s mainly by Ms. Lemaire, Mr. Dowsett and in the end Ms. Dowsett-Lemaire 113 could be described as African species (cf. HBV 12 I, p. 386)!

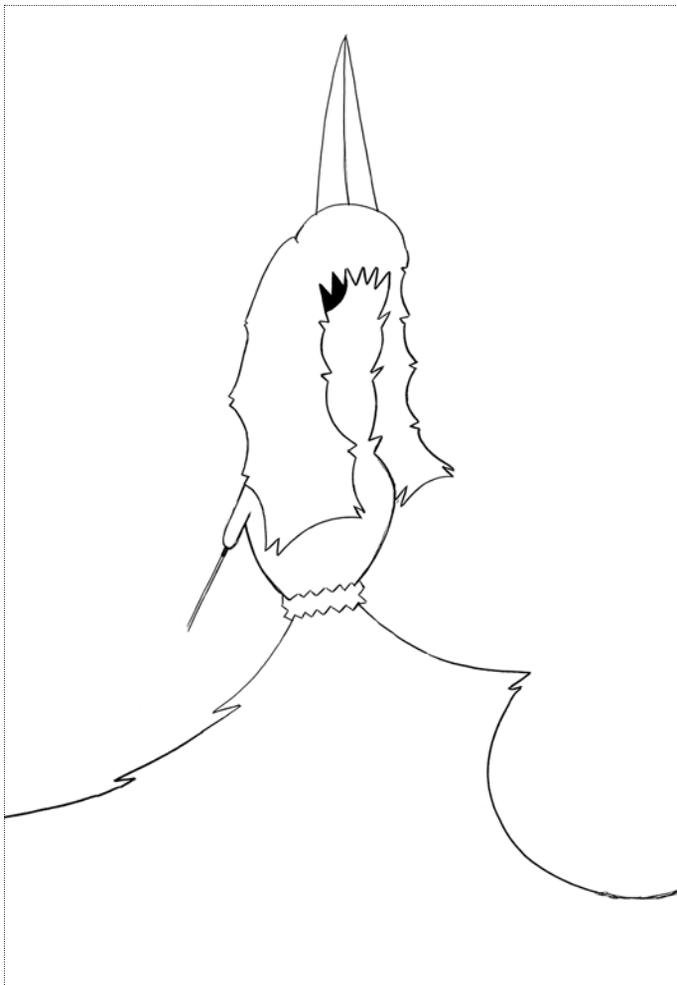
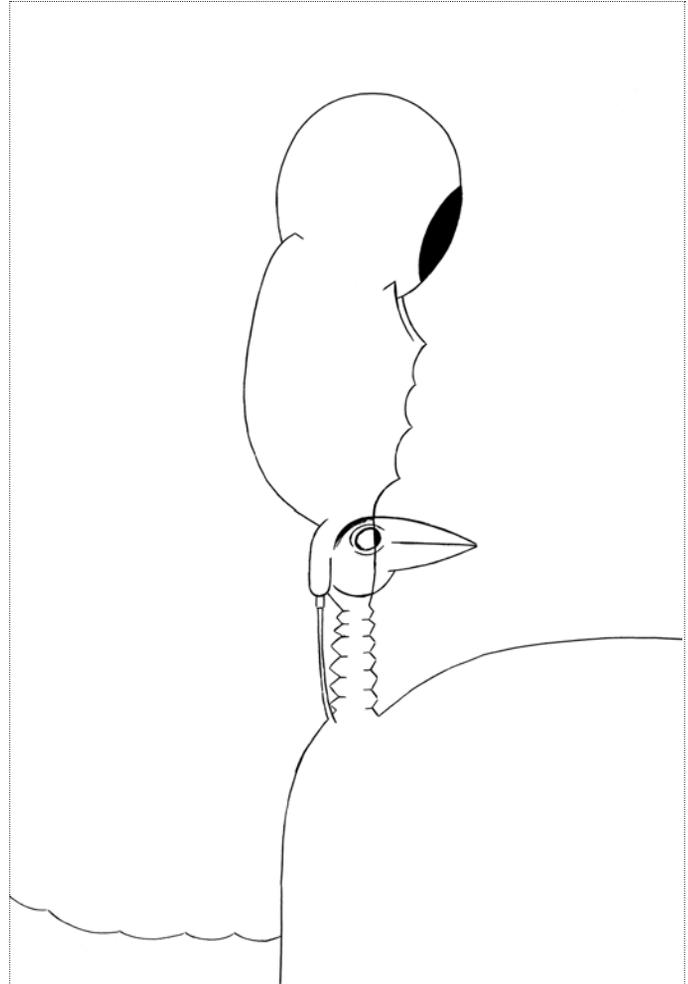
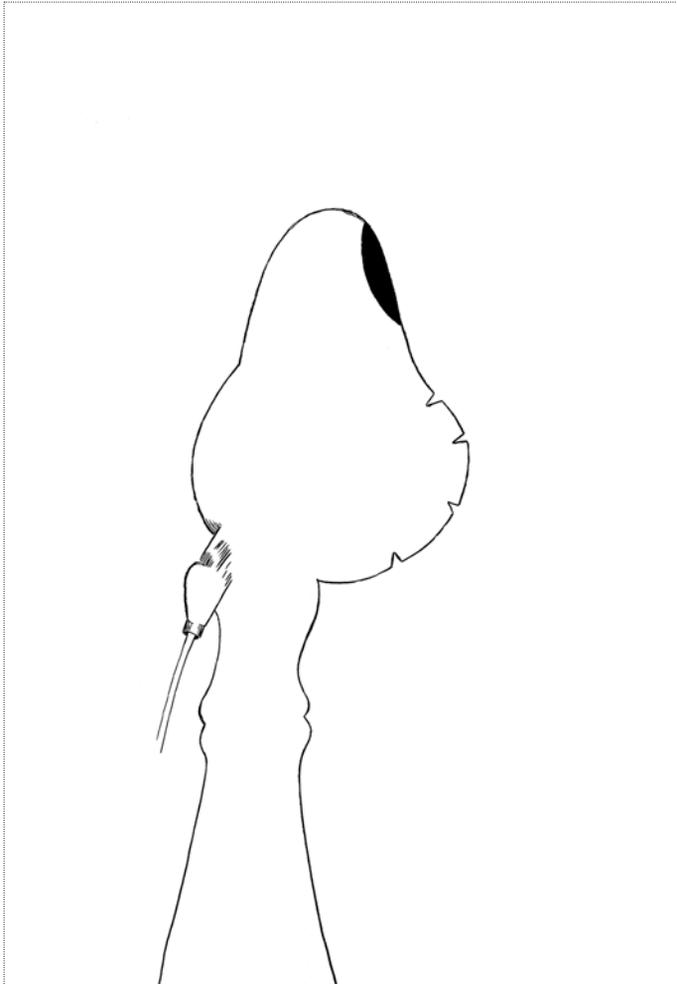


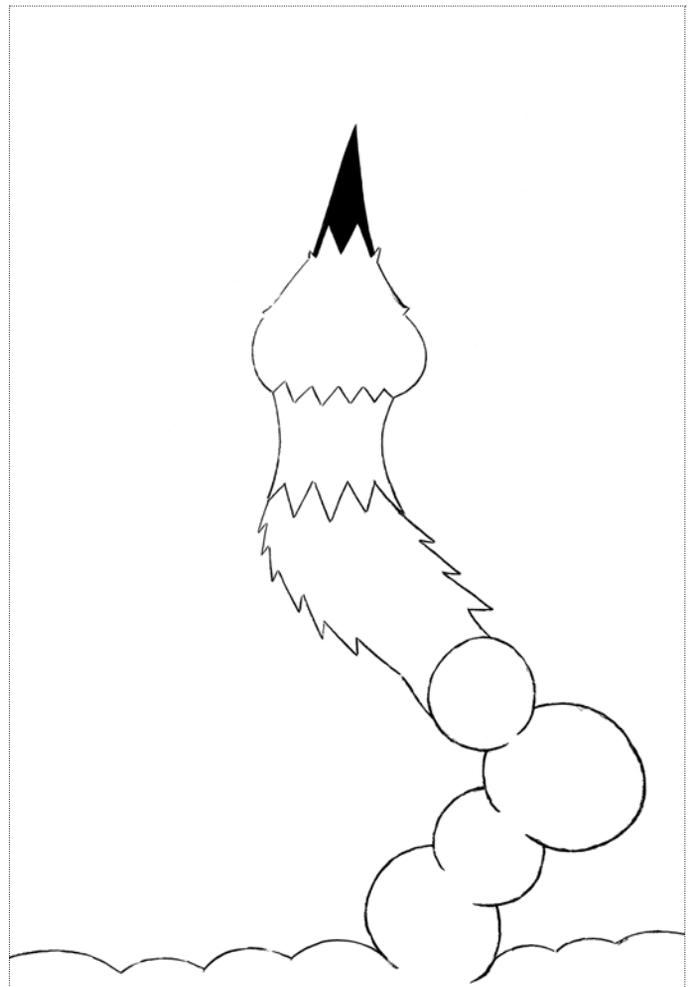
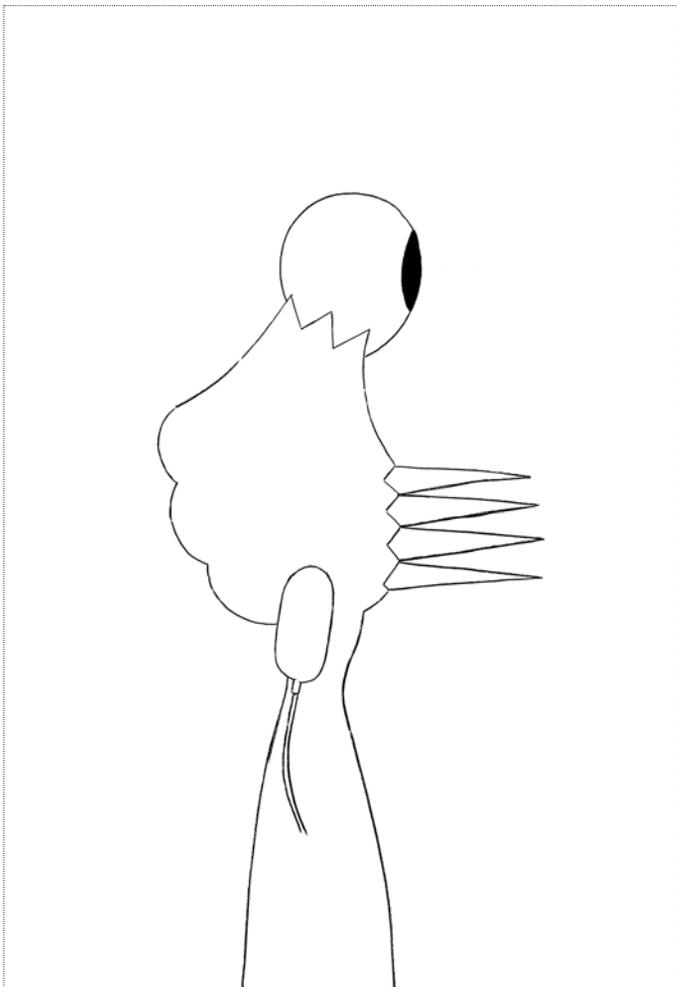
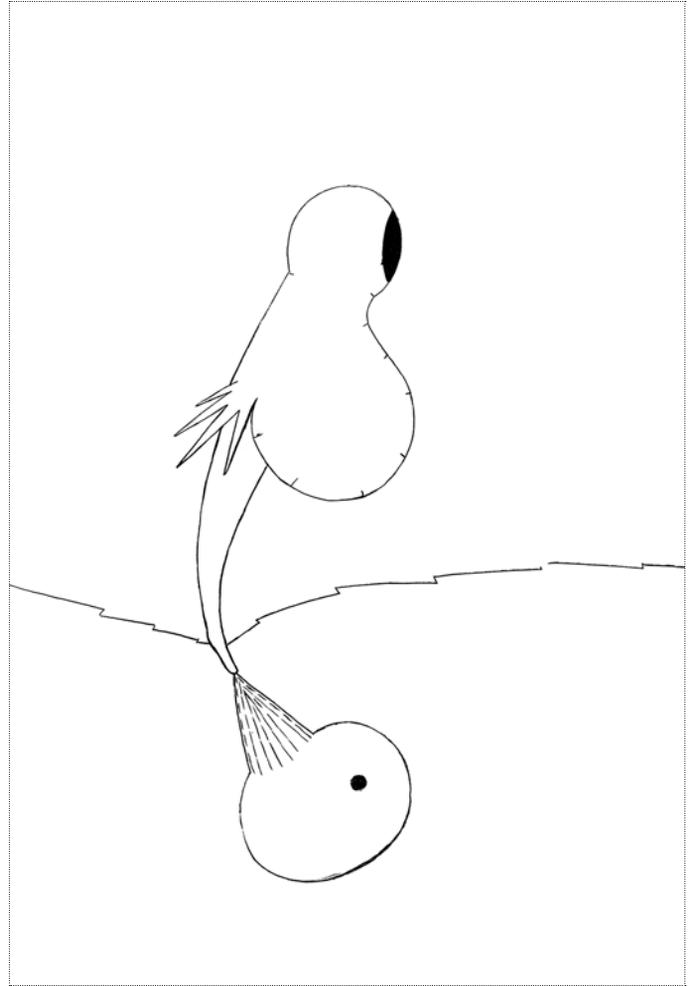
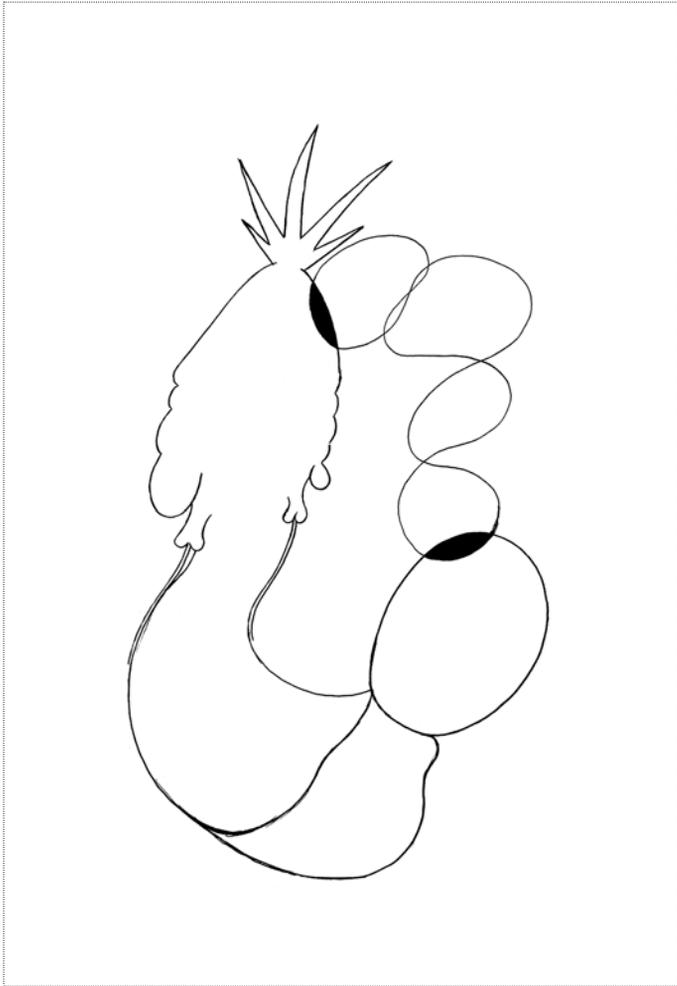


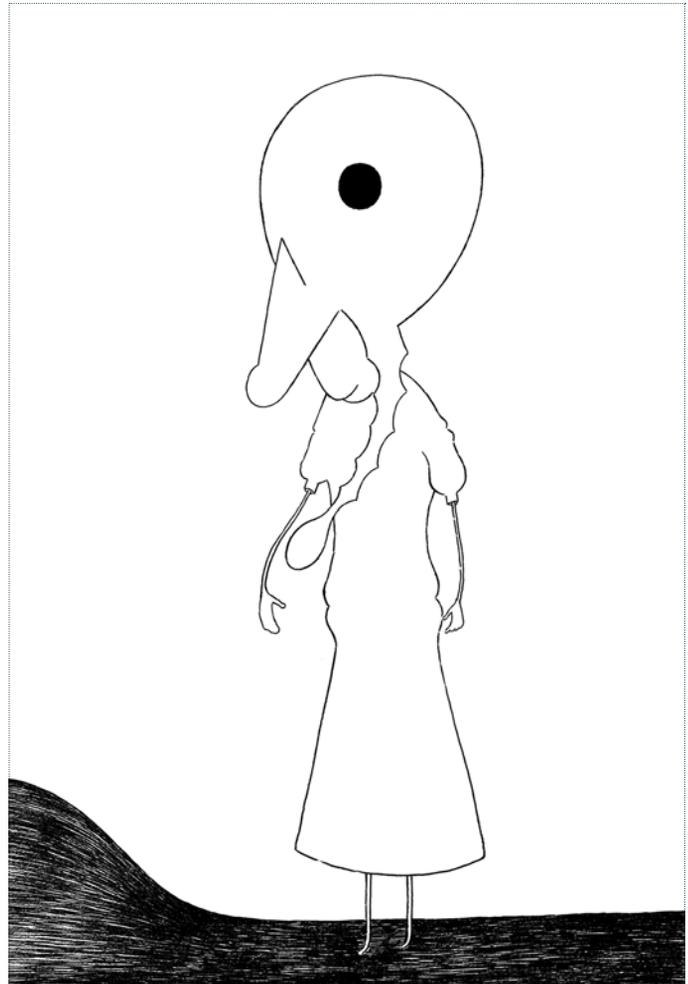
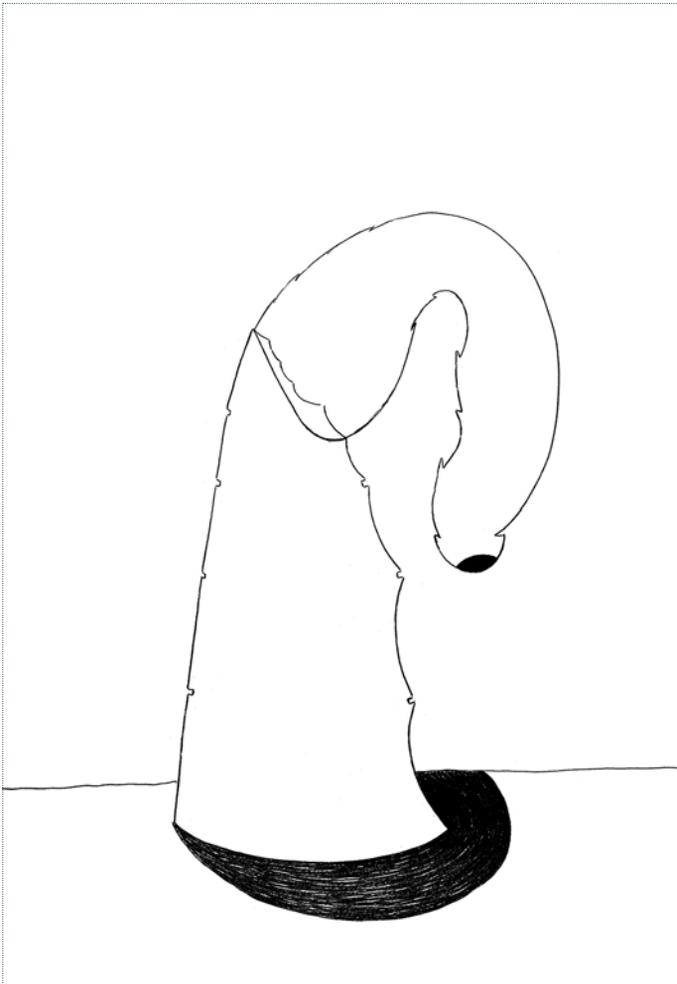
Leda, 2012



Egg-Machine, 2014



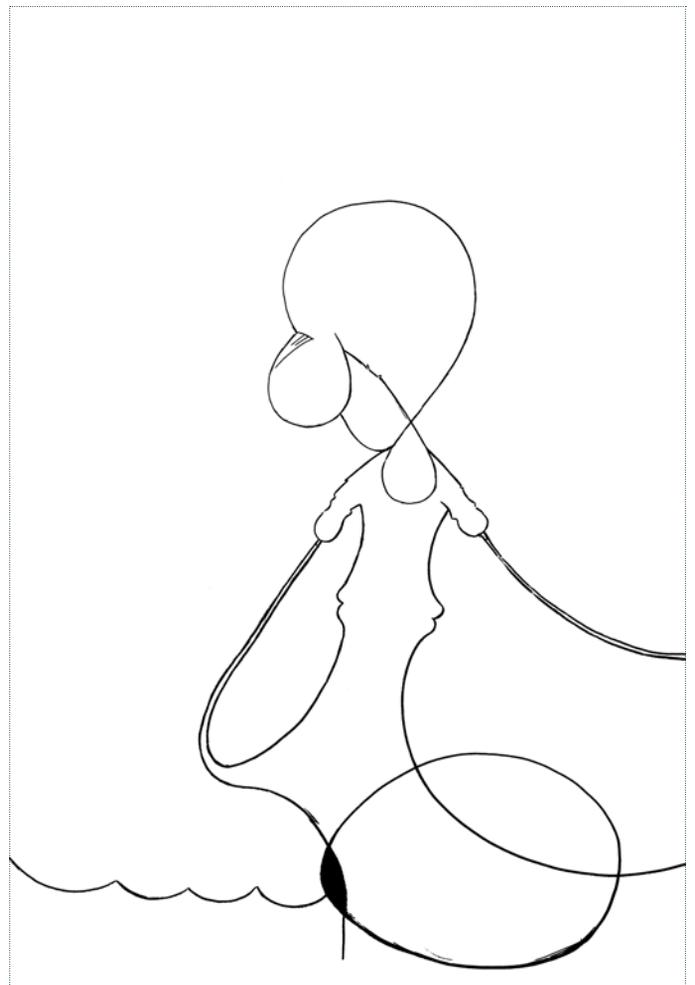
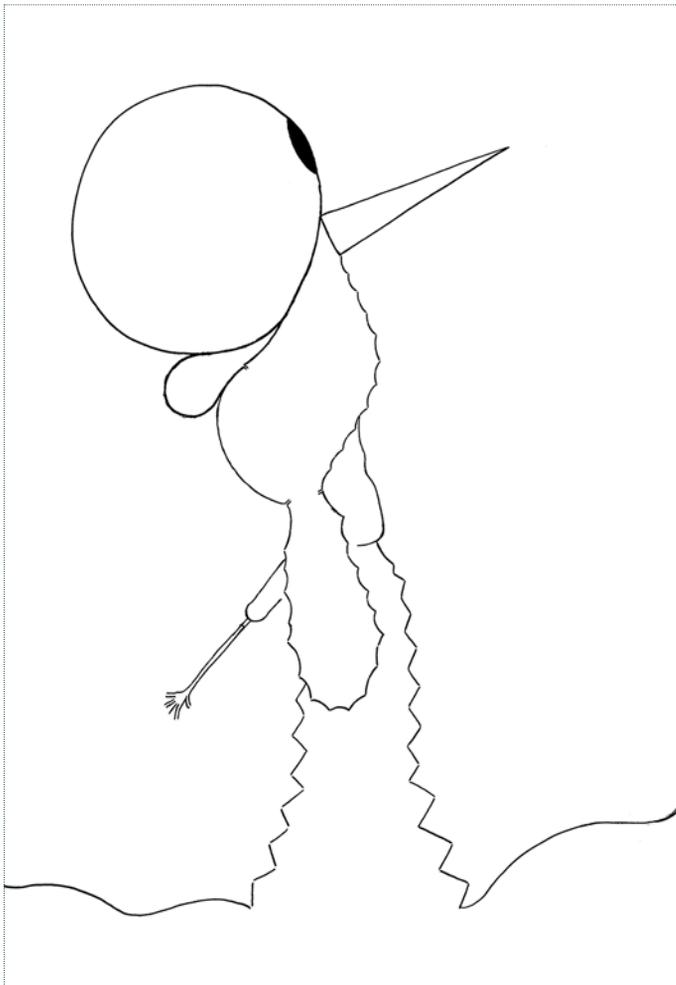
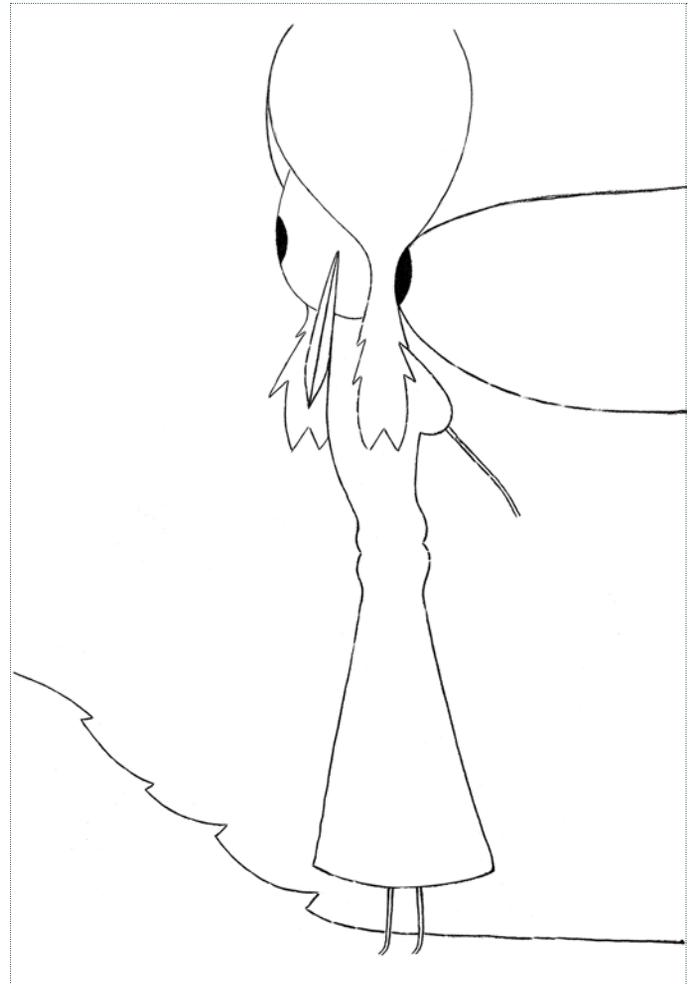




Eiermann 2

Denk ich an Meier, denk ich an Eier.
Denk ich an Eier, denk ich auch an meine große Liebe.
Wie macht Meier das?

MB 1996



A Very Serious Location, Location, Location

Brunnenstraße, Berlin Mitte, 2009/10

If you're looking to be a successful artist in Berlin, or you would just like to make a few birds very happy, you should definitely consider getting yourself to Mitte to embark on a career in real estate. No space has ever been SO temporarily used! Exhibitions, readings, concerts, DJ shows, performances, film festivals, and any number of other tricks, are all used to entice innocent city dwellers into stocking up on Finnish-style birdhouses.

As Maria and I opened our first store on Brunnenstraße in Berlin-Mitte in 2009, my essential contribution was the formulation of the name: *Morgenvogel Real Estate*. At first, it was a funny idea to describe the situation in which we found ourselves – basically just wanting to sell birdhouses in this area where, a few meters away, a whole Berlin Wall was torn down to make room for hostels and townhouses. (Here we would like to explicitly thank Torsten Böcker, who provided us with an extremely affordable temporary use space. His restaurant *Raja Jooseppi* was a few meters closer to the former “death strip” (no man’s land) and derived its name from the northern-most border crossing between Finland and Russia).

We could have called the store *Maria’s Morgenvogel Birdhouse Paradise* or *Titbird Delight* or *Get Your Morgenvogel Birdhouse Here!* or *Take This House and Hang It* or *Tweeting Happens Here!* or *Morgenvogel Twitter Forces* or *Morgenvogel’s Bird Heart* or *Morgenvogel Bird Girl* or *We Can’t Think of a Name for this Morgenvogel Store* or *Last Morgenvogel Birdhouses Before the Border*, be we would have found it all a bit too much in the way of eco-kitsch or pretentious artsy fartsy. No. Just *Morgenvogel Real Estate* – that was *cool business!*

How cool indeed, we always thought, when after a long day during which frustratingly few to no visitors were interested in birdhouses or art – despite Maria’s increasingly refined efforts to entice them – the door would open and in would walk a necktie or a black suit thinking we actually had concrete gold for sale. Oh yeah! And they would be gone just as quickly as they came when they realized we had no “gated community” on the “pulse of the scene” to sell (or whatever other paradoxical marketing approach was being used at the time). Sometimes we were unable to resist the idea that speculation involving actual real estate necessitates a particular mindset, in which neither subtlety nor bird-loving has any place. (There are exceptions, of course).

All the while, the death strip next door on Bernauerstraße ascended into a prime location and every square centimeter of corner property became a source of great jubilation for

investors willing to turn an avian habitat into a boring neighborhood for boring people or simply to put up some luxury lofts into which no one could afford to move.

So here you have it: an artistic and – although the location, location, location is very serious – cheerful attempt at anti-gentrification, at least for the winged ones.

To this day, it has not been the last.





Fir Tree Rocket M4PL under construction, 2010. *Left*: Cables are serious, too.



How to build a Morgenvogel rocket: In the beginning there was a performance by **Mimosa Pale**. She erected and climbed an erotic obelisk, up to the sky of **MVRE**. Then she grabbed the golden instrument she once had won in a Finnish musical saw contest, and played music together with **John Blue** on cello and electronics.

The next days **Maria** worked on on the obelisk body, with good advice from **Manuel** and **Bolle**. Material was easily found in the bins on the street. The primordial Morgenvogel house has received a place of honor on the rocket.

Eventually **Martin Kuentz** installed solar-driven electronic devices – in his own words:

“The measurement instrumentation built into the projectile payload consists of a broadband high-frequency receiver for the detection of radio signals and networks for automated course correction during target acquisition. The receiver is able to indicate a high-frequency signal in a dynamic range up to 70 dB 0 ± 3 dB DC in its voltage output. A LED display indicates the dynamic variations in the target area of the rocket for testing purposes.”

And ready to go is “fir tree rocket” **M4PL** (**M**imosa, **M**aria, **M**anuel, **M**artin; **PL** is for **P**eter **L**ang)! It was launched in April 2010 on occasion of the one year anniversary of **Morgenvogel Real Estate**.



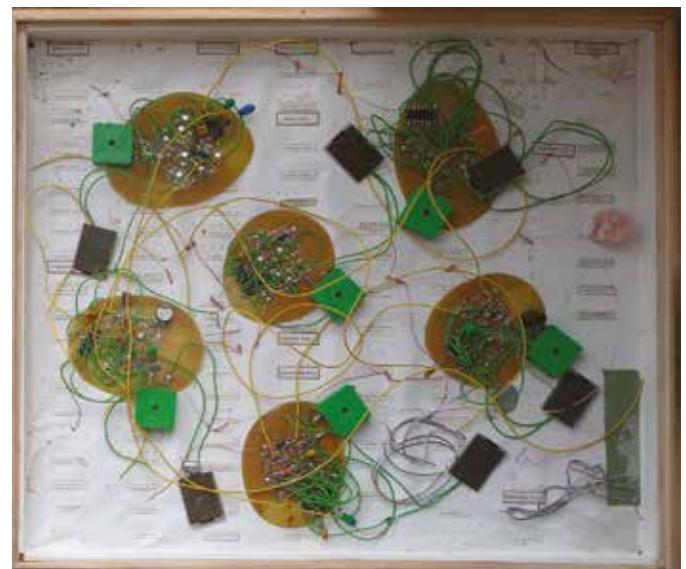
Top: Mimosa Pale, Photo: Bernhard Ludewig; *top right:* Martin Kuentz, *bottom right:* M4PL. *Facing page:* Micha Schroetter.



At **Morgenvogel Real Estate** in Brunnenstraße about two dozens events were hosted. **Hans Bramm** was the first to be inspired by the atmosphere of the shop and fixed an audio installation with bird sounds twittering to the ceiling; then **Martin Kuentz** and **Maria** produced solar energy driven sound sculptures which changed their tones with the altitude of the sun; they were accompanied by a performance and a presentation by **Peter Blasser** from Baltimore, a specialist in synthesizers. **The Birds, Too** performed a concert of bird music which made the room vibrate; the *Flying Films Festival*, curated by **Lars Künstler**, presented artists' videos on the subject of flying, among the participants were **Lucio Auri**, **Daniela Butsch**, **Stefan Heinrich Ebener**, **Undine Goldberg**, **Dirk Holzberg**, **Barbara Rosenthal**, **Ira Schneider**, **Philine Sollmann**, and **Markus Wirthmann**. *Schwan-seelig* was the title of lectures on swans by **Peter Berz** (Humboldt University) and **Helmut Höge** (die taz). Curator **Peter Lang** held a slide talk on **Karl Hans Janke**, a 20th century psychiatry patient who left blue prints of visionary rocket constructions. Audio sculptures and installations were shown by **Gaby Schaffner** and **Thomas Judisch**, and by the title of *Music for Birds* **Christopher Fröhlich** and **Jörg Pfeiffer** made the space twitter in an electronic way. **Manuel** was the very resident DJ and, together with physicist and management consultant **Andreas Schaale**, held a lecture on Berlin real estate market (for humans) by the name of *Wolkenkuckucksheim* ("cloud-cuckoo-land"). *The Cosmic Egg* was an event with texts on the multifarious cosmogonic notions (like in Finnish national epic *Kalevala*) that earth has developed from an egg; among others **Ana Teixeira Pinto** (Humboldt University) and

Oliver Kohlmann (Vestibül Gallery) were involved. Then came another lecture by **Peter Berz** and **Helmut Höge** on the *Metaphysics of Sparrows* and the exhibition *Birdshow* by **Thomas Judisch**. **Heinrich Dubel** held a video lecture *Helicopter Hysterics TWO* about the hidden meanings of helicopters in fiction movies. At Finnish midsummer night **Maria** showed her sculpture *Midsommernachts-Ei-Baum-Traum* ("Midsummer Night's Egg Tree Dream" – see p. 28). Next was **Anselm Weidner's** lecture *The Larks of Brodowin – Learning Voices by Imitation* and **Barbara Rosenthal's** book presentation and screening *Existential Flight*. **Brendan Howell** and **Lars Künstler** showed their praxinoscope machine by the title *The Animation of the Same Soul Quickening the Whole Frame*. Then came another concert by **Mimosa Pale** played on the singing saw. *Flying Films Festival #2*, curated by **Kevin Merz**, featured contributions by **Loimi Brautmann**, **Chris Brandl**, **Fernanda D'Agostino**, **Dominik Eggermann**, **Christopher Fröhlich**, **Undine Goldberg**, **Miriam Jakobs** and **Gerhard Schick**, **Lemeh 42**, **Sabine Linse**, **Birgit Möller**, **Eva Münnich**, **Barbara Rosenthal**, **Maren Strack**, **Björn Ullrich**, **Marcelina Wellmer**, **Tina Willgren**, and **Claudia Zweifel**. MVRE's big finale on September 25th 2010 presented **Miles Chalcraft's** rocket performance *BirdBrainBox*.

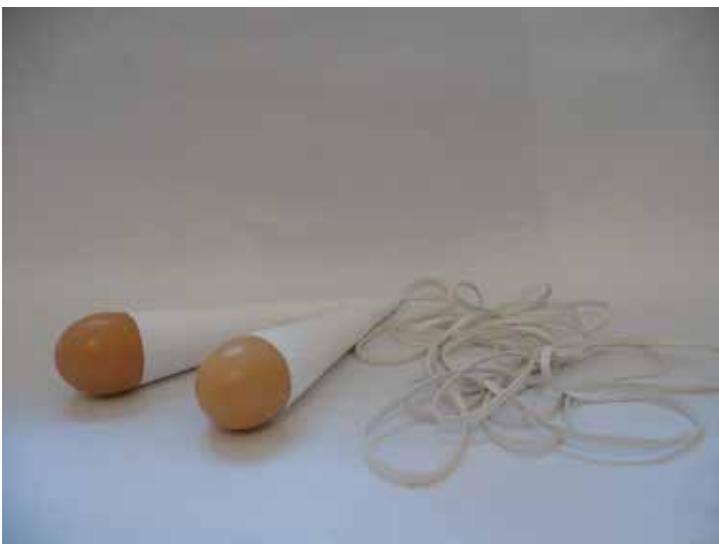




Tweet!: Installation by Maria-Leena Rähälä and Martin Kuentz. The solar moduls consume light for twittering. At the window the sounds change with the position of the sun. 2009



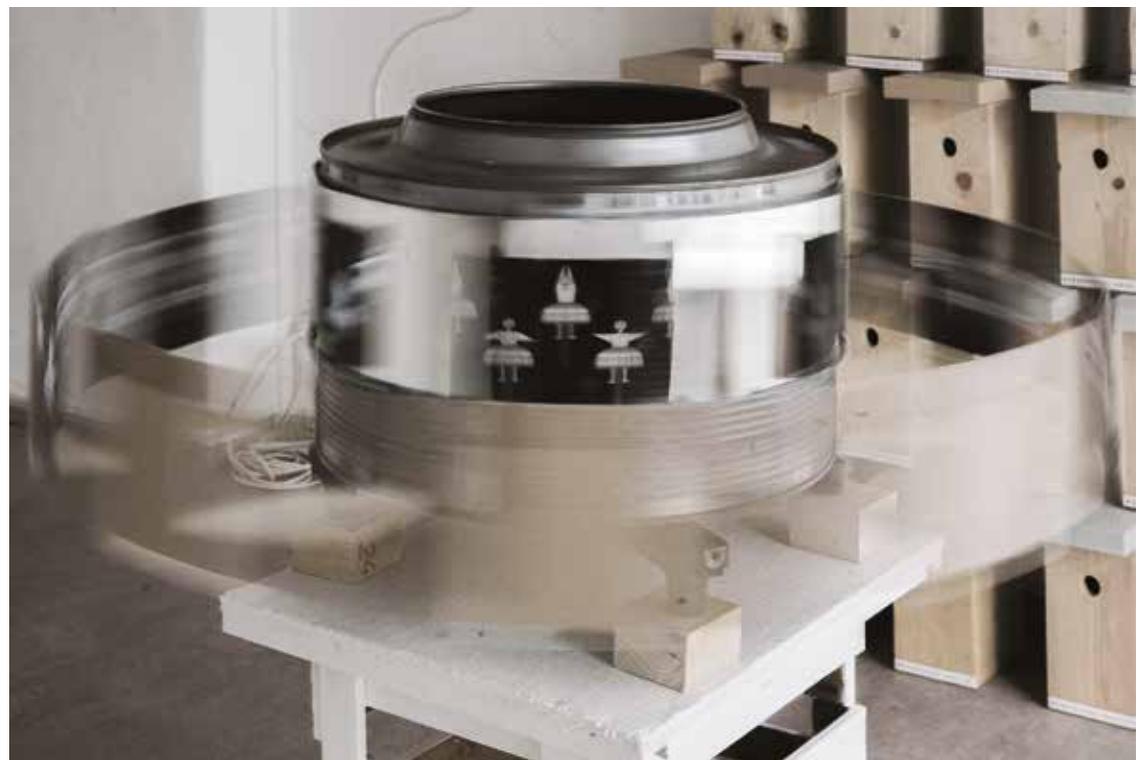
Maybe the attempt to make the Morgenvogel houses building themselves. Didn't work, however. 2009



Wolkenkuckucksheim (cloud-cuckoo-land): Andreas Schaale and Manuel Bonik during a situation report over the Berlin real estate market.
Egg-Microphones by Maria-Leena Rähälä, 2009



Morgenvogel-Haus-Pyramide, 2009

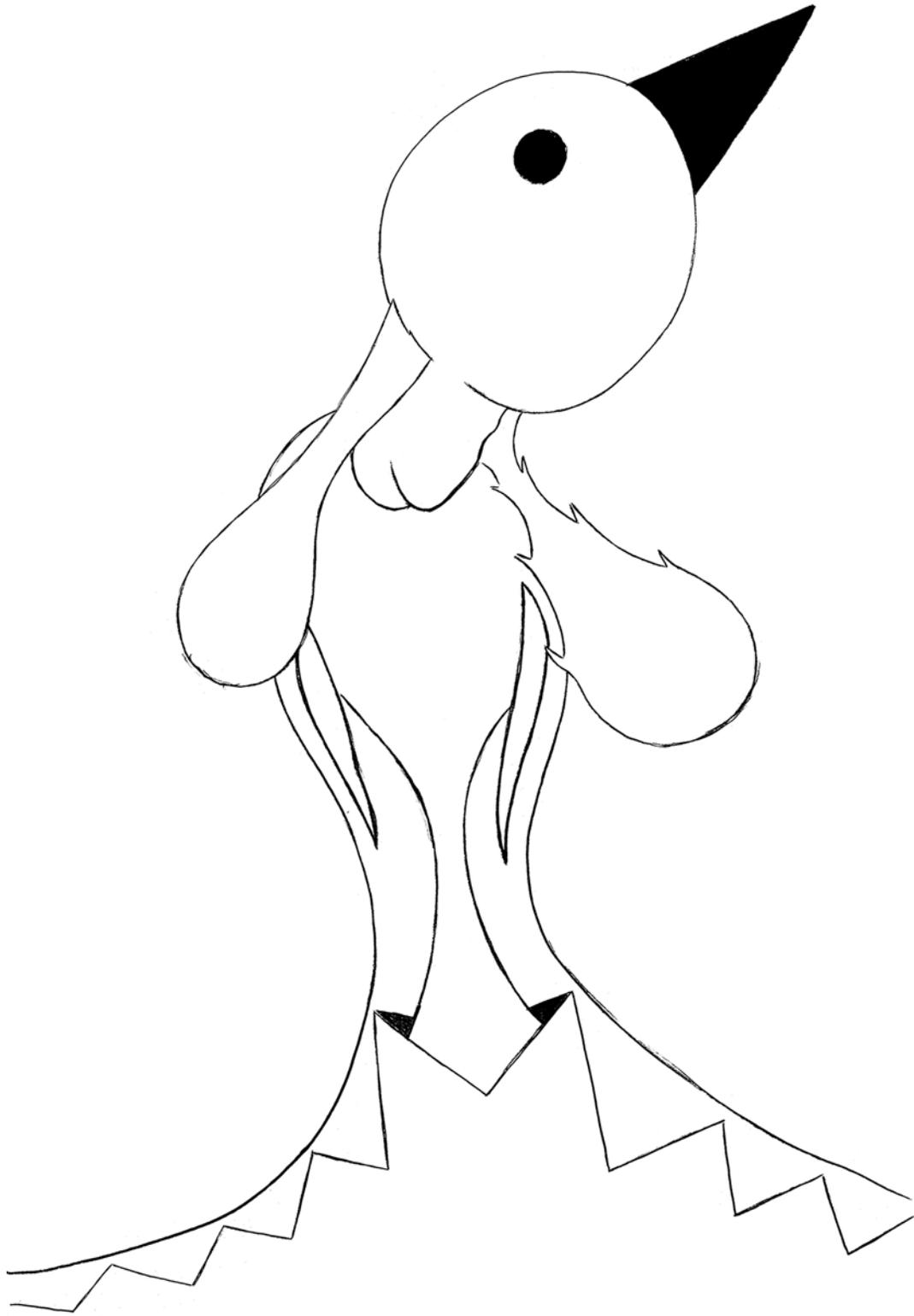


One small step for a reader – a giant book for ...



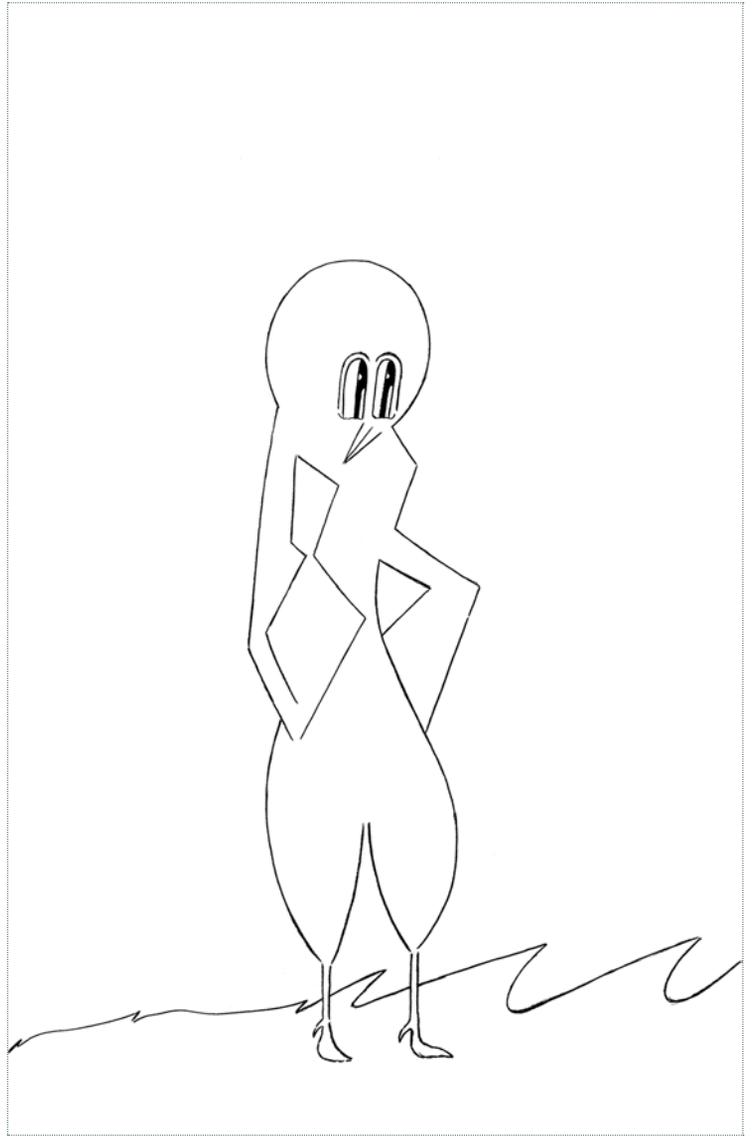
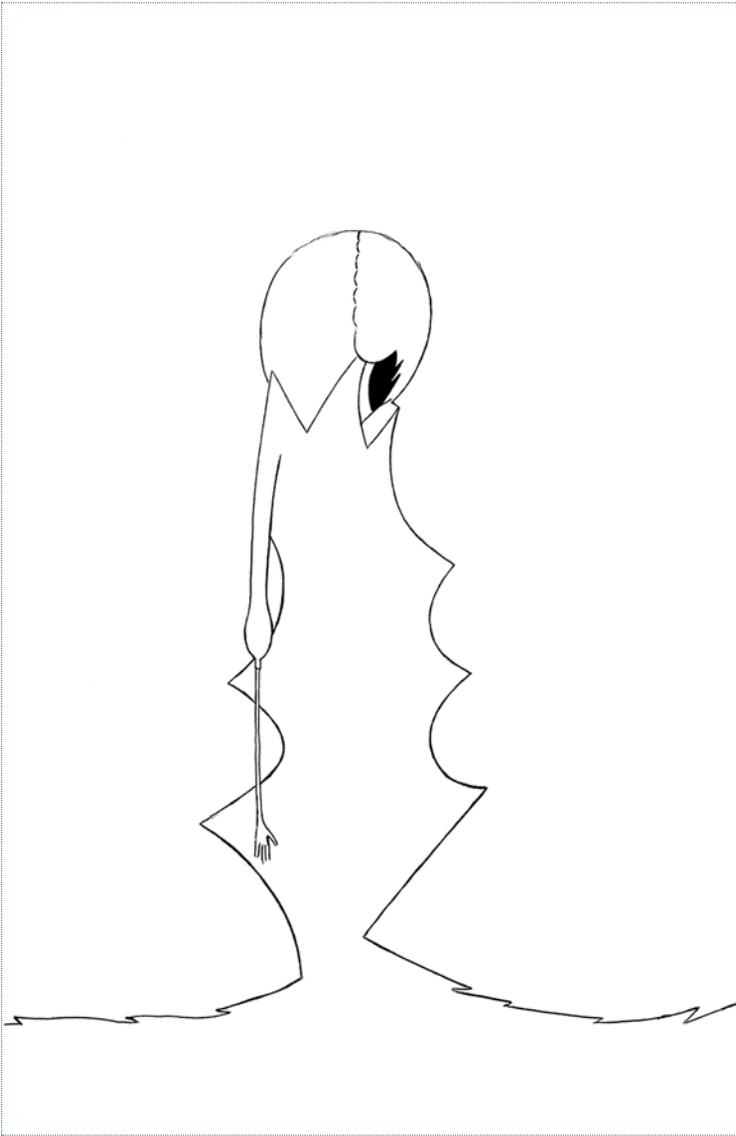
Drawing Chair, 2009

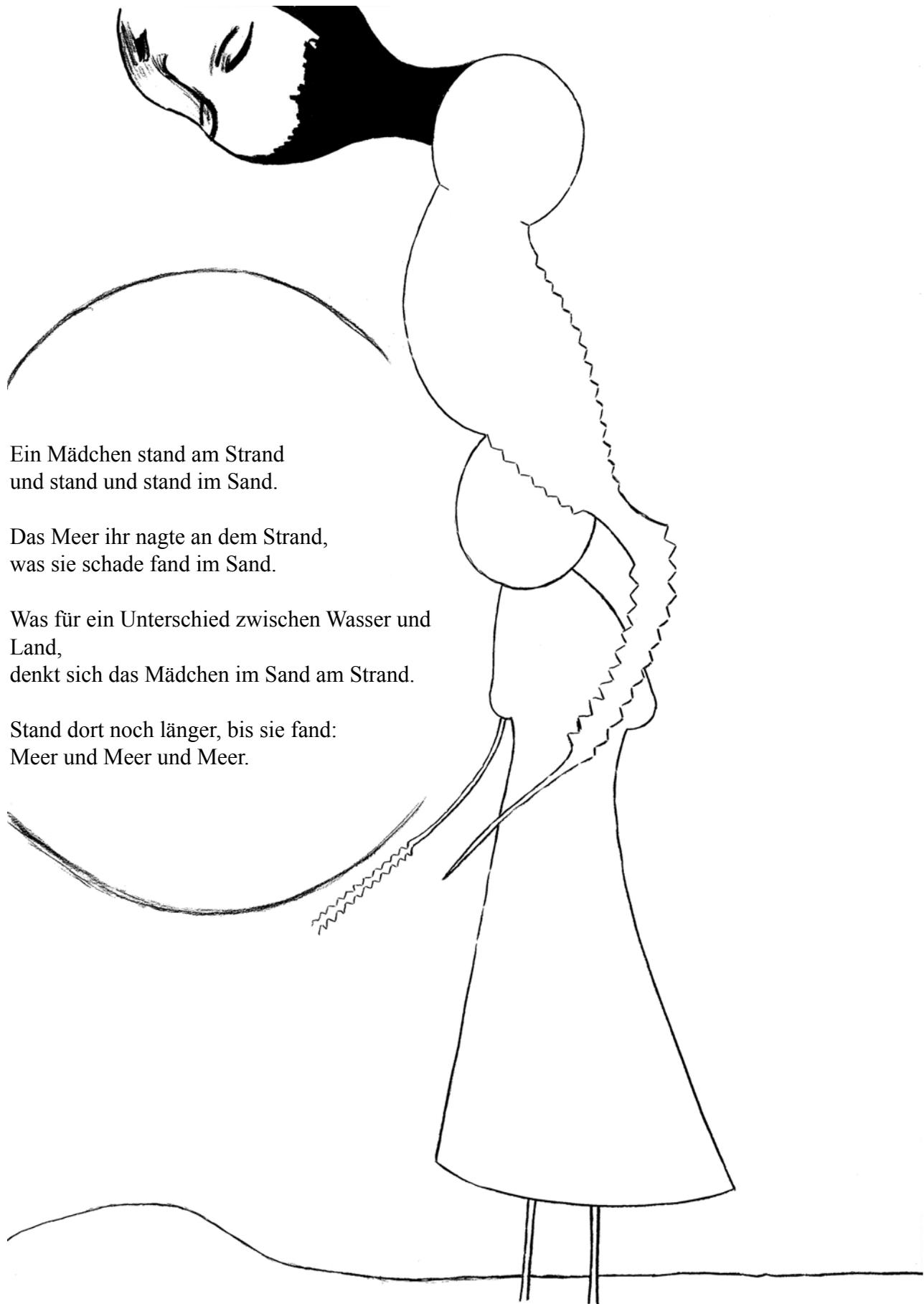
Left page, bottom: Brendan Howell and Lars Künstler:
The animation of the same soul quickening the whole frame, 2010 (praxinoscope).
Photo: Peter Gesierich





The *Morgenvogel-Uniform*, 2012. Model: Swetlana





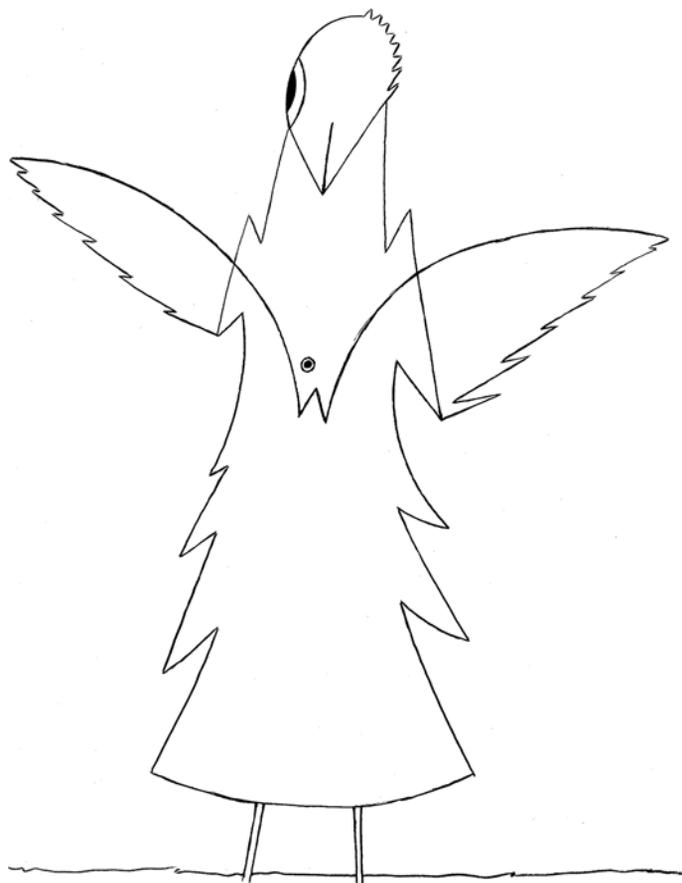
Ein Mädchen stand am Strand
und stand und stand im Sand.

Das Meer ihr nagte an dem Strand,
was sie schade fand im Sand.

Was für ein Unterschied zwischen Wasser und
Land,
denkt sich das Mädchen im Sand am Strand.

Stand dort noch länger, bis sie fand:
Meer und Meer und Meer.

Wolfgang Müller
News from the Misconception Sciences
The Canard as Medium



Blue tits at your local delicatessen, On the extinction of the sparrow, and The bittern from Engelbecken

We live in an age in which ideologies have become obsolete: the Media of late has been quite successful in communicating this particular point of view to humanity. In the post-ideological or neo-individualist age,¹ all that is left is the enlightened, rational individual and a couple of crazies still clinging to an outdated ideology or religion – the deluded, egomaniacs, autistics, the deranged, fanatics, and dreamers. They exist within a Utopian delirium or wallow in sentimental memories. The world is currently touted as wholly void of any alternatives.

This is the point at which nature enters the picture. Because a totally and completely rational and enlightened world – aroused only now and again by the odd bomb attack from an insane terrorist or religious fanatic – would be... well... pretty dismal. One's own death would seem to be the glimmer of hope, the only surprise in a life void of alternatives. The ability to select among one hundred and fifty-seven liquid soaps at the drugstore can hardly be offered to humanity as evidence of an endless cultural diversity and permanent metamorphosis, a satisfying replacement for true meaning. The knowledge of an unfathomable variety of animals, plants, fungi, the whole diversity of creation – whoever or whatever is responsible, be it God, Allah, or Darwin – clearly offers a certain cohesiveness,

lending support in the maelstrom of a neo-individualist age. It is no coincidence that the natural sciences and the arts in this epoch enjoy increasing credibility as compared to politics, economics, and religion, in whose representatives less and less faith is bestowed. And it therefore follows, especially for art – which is considered equally as pushing boundaries and destroying ideologies – that the natural sciences have become an anchor in a sea of arbitrariness and enlightenment. The artist Damien Hirst shot to art superstar with his animal corpses preserved in formaldehyde, akin to the way creatures are conserved in museums of natural history. Gunther von Hagens came from the other direction – science – desiring to enhance the arts with his sculptures made from preserved human cadavers. This sensation of animal and human taxidermy filled magazines and TV events with headlines and exhibition halls with massive audiences. The “real” was staged amidst a fusion of culture and nature.

Locusts and sharks. In the age of this neo-individualism, all political parties would be compatible with each other and interchangeable. Only on TV talk shows would their representatives continue to simulate irreconcilable differences between their world views. Indeed, however, even the German city of Hesse's ultraconservative CDU party – considered to be reactionary – and its Green party – considered to be far left – had no problems forming a coalition in 2013. In Berlin the Left party (Linkspartei) and the SPD peacefully governed together for an entire year – while selling off 75,000 state-owned flats. Since then, even the locusts and real estate sharks have given up their fears of communism. This is the point at which the authority of nature enters the picture: sharks and locusts? Irrational forces of nature? Outrageous rent increases, forced evictions, wage cuts, and redistribution from the bottom to the top as the consequences of natural phenomena?

Nature, naturally. On August 28, 2014 in the daily newspaper *Welt*, the 29-year old CDU delegate from Sachsen, Mr. Wendt, used a bird-and-fish analogy to attempt to explain his rejection of gay marriage (an officially registered union of two members of the same gender) as he referred to facts from nature. It went something like this: “The fish cannot fly, and the bird cannot swim. Even if the fish wants to fly, it will never be able to.”²

“*Bouvard und Pécuchet.*” The daily *Welt* offer reassurance: “Wendt's perspective is not evil, but rather the expression of a reality of life.” Indeed, the reality of this politician's life is similar to that of Bouvard and Pécuchet, the two retired scribes from Gustave Flaubert's novel – except that Wendt comes from the opposite direction. Only in the practical application of their encyclopedic knowledge, gathered by all their reading, do Flaubert's heroes precisely discover its unexpected gaps, blind spots, and inconsistencies. Their practical understanding unleashes a chain of grandiose failures within every discipline. Here, among the back-benchers from Saxony, Flaubert's dictionary of platitudes and inane idioms³ simply begins to babble – even before the novel begins. It would be pointless to send the politician a long list of bird species that are good swimmers and that can barely fly, if at all – such as the whole group of penguin and many North Atlantic representatives of the *Alcidae* family. Or should

one speak of flying fish, able to glide several meters at a time? On the basis of three case studies, specifically the breeding blue tit, the great bittern, and the extinction of the house sparrow, I shall explore several misconceptions whose emergence in the media set off a chain of events and eventually established their own realities: the canard is a medium.

The blue tit

Common parlance suggests that “Nothing is as old as yesterday’s newspaper,” pointing to the forgetfulness inherent in the medium. Some of the most beloved news stories are those about cases of extinction, the rediscovery of a creature long-since extinct (the “Lazarus Effect”), or the detection of a previously undiscovered animal. The medium – itself presently threatened with extinction for numerous reasons – is forced to dispatch one sensation or grotesque opinion after the other on a daily basis in order to secure the constant attention of its readers.

Canards. Sensations that eventually prove to be misconceptions, fallacies, or unsupportable ideas are referred to as *canards*. Canards are laid and hatched by human beings. This involves absolutely no risk, as long as it deals exclusively with animals. Which barn owl, which crested newt, or which little owl would think to demand a rebuttal because it had been confused with another type of animal in some publication, or because complete nonsense about its activity was being proliferated? “Contrary to your assertions in the issue from the third of March, I do not lay 16 eggs annually, but rather only three – at the very most.”

In 1994 I had the opportunity to create a canard myself. Daily newspapers such as *FAZ*, *SZ*, *Die Welt* and weeklies such as *Die Zeit* make strict distinctions between obvious satire and serious issues. In contrast, such boundaries are quite unclear in the more left-leaning alternative *taz*. The serious and the satirical, the scientific and the esoteric, appear in a colorful interplay, often on the same pages. The unconventional relationship between reality and satire is the mark of tabloid journalism and an excellent hatchery for canards. The probability increases that the reader takes satire at face value, at the same time it interprets the serious as satire. This phenomenon intensifies as topics are explored with which the readership strongly identifies, such as environmental protection, ecotourism, and organic foods.

Blue tits at your local delicatessen

Berlin (taz) – The artist Wolfgang Müller (36) has nesting boxes hanging from the windows of his flat on Wiener Straße in Kreuzberg. Across the street is Görlitzer Park. Each spring, blue tit and great tit birds fly to his nest boxes. Müller, however, is no animal lover. On the contrary: just a few weeks after the offspring are hatched, he sells the cute little birds to an upscale Italian delicatessen. Müller says, “They are an essential ingredient in a well-known Italian specialty.” He suffers no misgivings. “I am not capturing wild birds. Instead I am breeding them at the window of my flat. Besides, the birds come to me of their own free will.” The former art student began breeding after his annual student loan subsidy was reduced to 560 marks. The side job brings in around 200 to 300 extra marks each year. A pair of blue tits can produce up to 14 offspring and breed twice a year. “As I completed my studies, I had even less money and desperately had to search for extra work,” says Müller. Next year he wants to put

up starling nest boxes. “Starlings weigh twice as much as tits, but the nest boxes only have to be a little bit bigger. Restaurants pay based on weight.” To wit, Müller discovered that starlings – like cranes, magpies, and ravens – are scientifically considered to be belonging to the group of songbirds. Claudia Schandt

A day after publication, criminal investigators made a visit to the *taz* building. Appalled callers filed criminal complaints. The investigating officer, one Mr. Heinz, demanded that the paper’s culture editor, Harald Fricke, provide written confirmation of the article’s author. I then sent the investigating officer the following fax:

Berlin, 29 March 1994

Mr. Heinz

Criminal Investigator

Department of Eco-Crimes and Species Conservation

Fax 30756889

Wolfgang Müller, Wxxxxxxxstraße 48, 10997 Berlin.

Dear Mr. Heinz,

Mr. Harald Fricke from taz gave me your fax number and informed me that I should contact you immediately.

The article “Blue tits at your local delicatessen,” which I penned under the pseudonym Claudia Schandt, was a satirical text. Because tits are territorial and require some distance between nest boxes (several meters), and never breed when crowded, I assumed that any ornithologist would immediately recognize that commercial breeding of tits is totally impossible. I would very much like to interview you, Mr. Heinz, on the topic of species conservation. Would that be possible?

Sincerely, Wolfgang Müller

After several weeks I received a message from the Berlin criminal investigation department. The proceedings against me involving a violation of species conservation law had been suspended. My question to Mr. Heinz about an interview remained unanswered. Instead, two years later, the production company for the ARD TV talk show *Fliege* contacted me. The show presented me as a “media victim”: “The Blue Tit Butcher from Kreuzberg.”⁴

The house sparrow

Extinction of the house sparrow: Among the more commonly reoccurring canards are reports of the extinction of the house sparrow. The fact that the second most common bird in Germany with up to an estimated 10 million breeding pairs – 500 million pairs worldwide, and the birds have even started breeding in Iceland – is at best worthy of a headline in the Icelandic papers. For Iceland to be mentioned at all in the local media, the Bardarbunga volcano would need to erupt. Because humans are so fond of the house sparrow – scientists argue this is because of its great population fluctuations – it has managed to become classified as a “near-threatened species”. (Fig. 1)

Housing shortage: How do you explain that storks at some point began to prefer chimneys and roofs built by human beings – to trees? Did they feel more comfortable or safer? Will there come a day when a biology book includes the sentence “Around

the year 1000, storks began to migrate increasingly away from the German forests to the rooftops of their human neighbors – a result of late-Roman decadence”? Indeed, the blue tit,⁵ for example, is exceptionally creative in discovering new places of habitation. The bird will even breed in a stocking that is hanging on a clothesline or in a mailbox in the middle of the city – not unlike some humans who live in construction trailers or tents. Clearly, necessity (for shelter) is the mother of invention. At first, the birdhouses of Maria-Leena Rähälä are a practical, concrete option for the breeding of certain species of birds – without any intention of using them for commercial purposes. For humans, however, they offer not only the inherent aesthetic as object and sculpture, but also the challenge to consider the ideas of rent-free habitation and habitation as a human right. Of course, they could also be seen as a plea for recognizing the human right to squar a house. (Fig. 2)

The bittern

One of the loveliest canards of the last decade is the sensational discovery of a bittern in Berlin’s Engelbecken (Angel Pool). One day, *taz* reported in its local Berlin section that the extremely rare marsh bird was discovered amidst the densely populated area of Kreuzberg during breeding season. A biologist was cited as the discoverer of the breeding place. This scientist, it was reported, “would tell no one” of the exact location in the park where the breeding sensation could be found.

According to the prevailing literature, the night calls of this shy bird can be heard for kilometers. I imagined how the inhabitants of the new luxury lofts at Engelbecken might be

shocked awake at night and how I, a hardcore opponent of rabid high-class renovation (and myself only three hundred meters away in an old apartment building) would one day observe the monotonous nocturnal drone of a rare moor ox.

But nothing happened. My doubt about the existence of a breeding bittern in Kreuzberg was indignantly repudiated by the article’s author, who emphasized the expertise of the biologist. Having become curious, I sent an email to the bird expert Dr. Böhner, responsible for tracking the population of all species breeding in Berlin. He indicated to me that the great bittern has no breeding ground in the Berlin area: *Botaurus stellaris*, the very shy and rare species of heron, breeds only in large, hidden reeded areas.

Metamorphosis. The great bittern of Engelbecken initially transformed into a tabloid sensation. It became canard, phantom, vision – or also the object of a mix-up with the gray heron. With so many resulting truths, in the end not everything needs to be explained.

Surprisingly, a counter-statement appeared a few weeks later. Not from the bird itself, of course. Presumably to protect his reputation as a scientist, and as the discoverer of the breeding bittern, the biologist cited made a public denial in the music magazine *Spex*. In his letter to the editor he indicated that in his *BZ* column “Berlin Safari” he never reported about the great bittern, but rather solely about the little bittern from Pichelsee lake.⁶

The new discipline of misconception science has made it its business to investigate the emergence of misconceptions and their formation to the point of becoming realities, looking beyond claims to the absolute verity of their portrayal, which are strongly influenced by human perceptions and interests. These nests, eggs, and breeding grounds come to light as phantoms, visions, or canards are hatched, becoming integral aspects of our present reality. And so does this new science bring enlightenment and art together in equal measure. Whether its form is revealed in gesture, sound, tone, image, object, hoax, or language remains to be seen.

Gráspörvarnir á Hofi

HJÁ gráspörvunum á Hofi í Örfæfum ríkti stöðugleiki og fjaldsemi í sumar sem og undanfarin ár. Fimm til sjö þörur, hvert þeirra yfirleitt þrisvar og gekk útungun og ungauppleldi vel. Þetta eru álfka mörg þör og orpið hafa undanfarin ár og enn verður þau nær eingöngu í einu húsi í bæjarþyrpingunni á Hofi.

Gráspörvarnir hafa orpið á Hofi síðan 1985. Þeir sjást ekki á nálægum bæjum, þó talið sé að einn og einn ungfugl kunnist að slæðast eitthvað um nágrennið. Á veturna týna fuglarnir tölu m.a. af völdum smyrla en þeir halda gjarnan til í útihúsum og eta skepnu- og hænsnafóður.

Staðbundinn gráspörvastofn á Hofi er einu sinni áður myndast hér á landi, á Borgarfirði eystra urpu gráspörvar á árunum 1971–1980 og héldu fuglarnir til í kornskemmu kaupfélagsins á staðnum. Köttur útrýmdi þeim stofni veturinn 1980–81.

Gráspörvar eru einkennisfuglar borga og bæja nágrennalandanna og lifa þeir ávallt í nánú sambyli við manninn. Þeir leggjast ekki í langferðir og er talið hugsanlegt að gráspörvar sem hafa náð til Íslands hafi komið með skipum.

MORGUNBLADID, Kringlunni 1, 103 Reykjavík. SÍMAR: Skiptiborð: 569 1100. Auglýsingar: 569 1111. Askritir: 569 1122. SIMBRÉF: Ritstjórn 569 1329, fréttir 569 1181, íþróttir 569 1154, sérblöð 569 1222, auglýsingar 569 1110, skrifstofa 568 1811, gjaldkeri 569 1115. NETFAN RITSTJ@MBL.IS, / Askritargjald 1.800 kr. á mánuði innanlands. Í lausasölu 125 kr. eintakið.

Fig. 1: Sensational report from Icelandic press: The Development of sparrows colony in Hof, Germany.

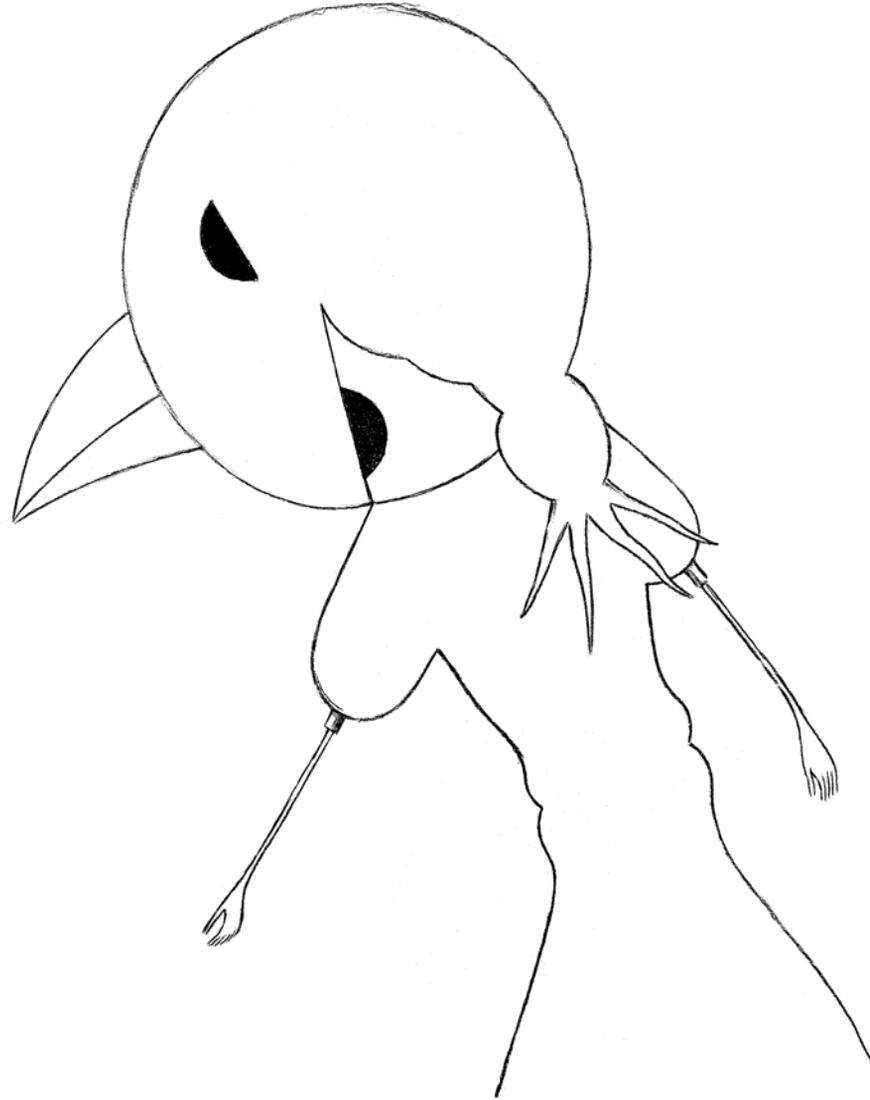
ALMKE / Hermann Elbeshausen baut Nistkästen

Zehn Eigenheime für Familie Meise



Blickfang in Almke: Hermann Elbeshausen baute in der Esche Etagenwohnungen für gefiederte Mieter. Foto: Heuer

Fig. 2: At most one couple of blue or great tits can accept the offer to take residence in this sublevel stoping. Tits are district birds who cannot tolerate it if other couples breed in the immediate surrounding. If a tit couple would agree to this offer to stay and breed they would check all other birdhouses regularly for potential competitors and chase them off.



Notes

¹ cf. Matthias Mergl, *Der Terror der Selbstverständlichkeit, Widerstand und Utopien im Neo-Individualismus*, Münster 2011.

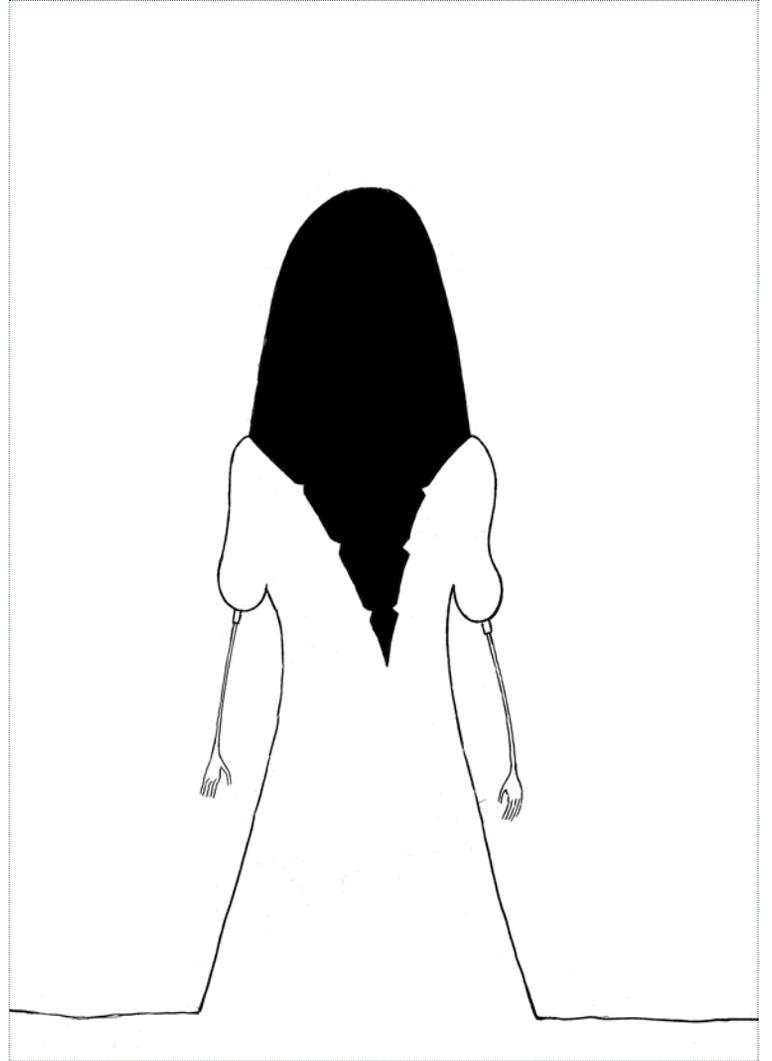
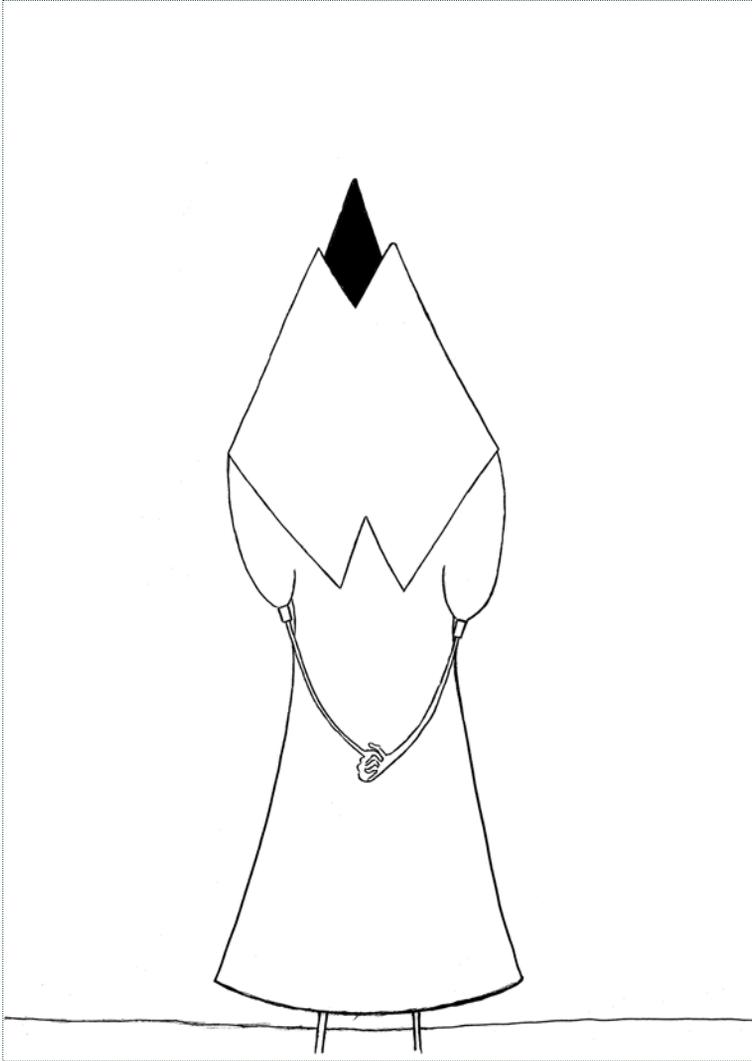
² <http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article131352643/Wer-braucht-schon-Espressotassen-fuer-20-Euro.html> (28 Aug 2014)

³ 3 Gustave Flaubert's *Dictionnaire des idées reçues* (variously translated, including *Dictionary of Accepted Ideas*) is a collection of clichés, bad puns, curiosities, and flashes of genius that have since become recognized as pure stupidity. German: *Das Wörterbuch der Gemeinplätze* (Dictionary of Platitudes), Leipzig 2012.

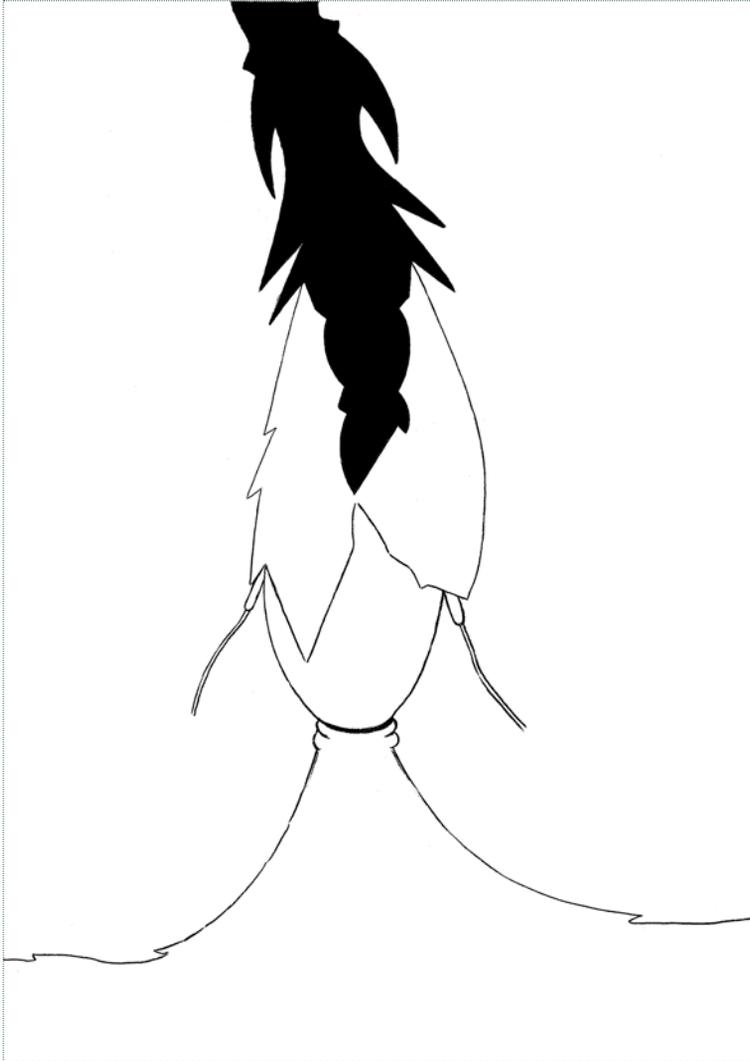
⁶ The talk show *Fliege* broadcast "One headline turned my life upside down" on July 2, 1996 on the ARD network. See also "Jetzt hat Fliege eine Meise" from Oliver Gehrs, *taz*, July 2, 1996.

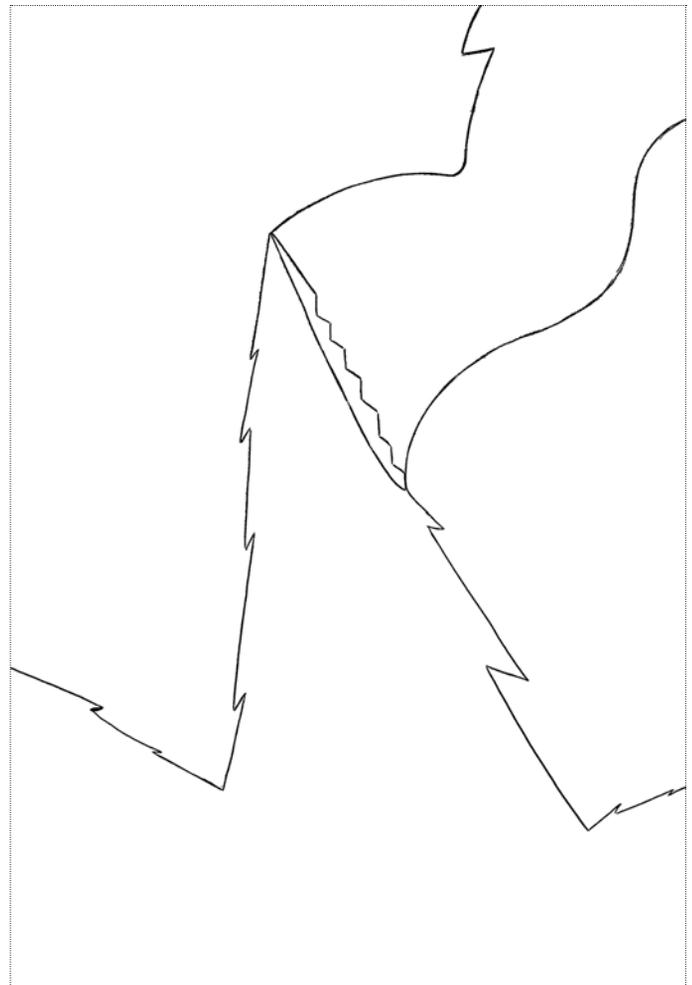
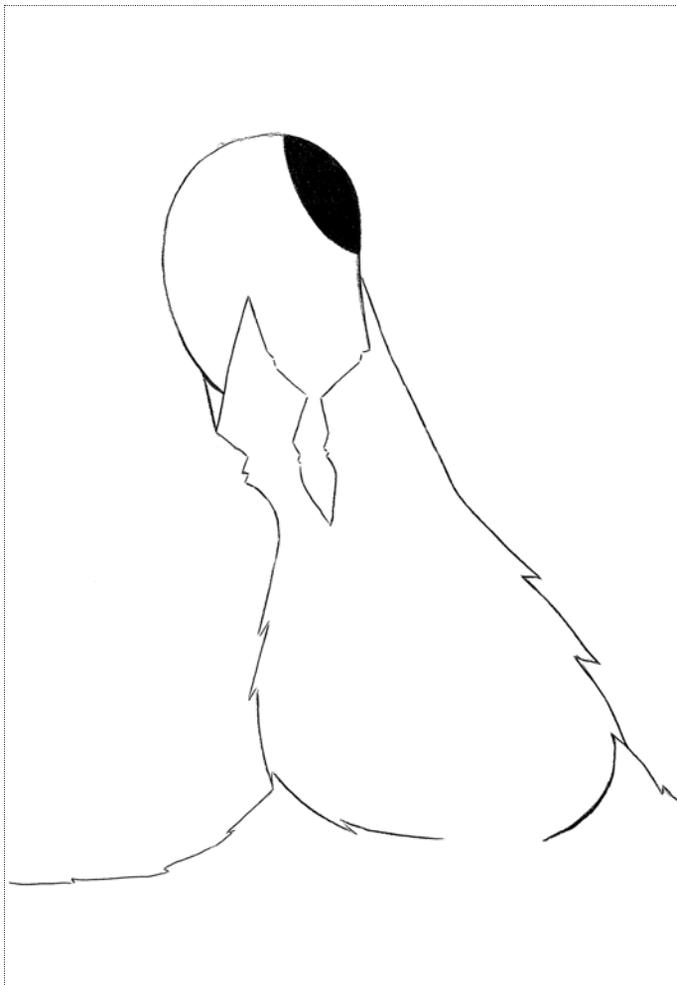
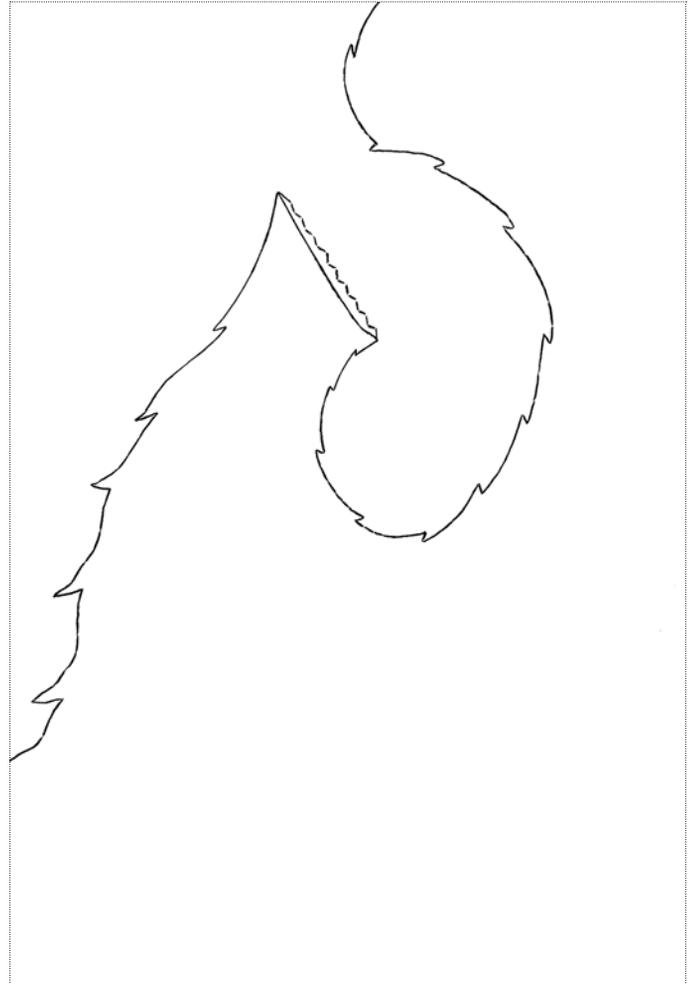
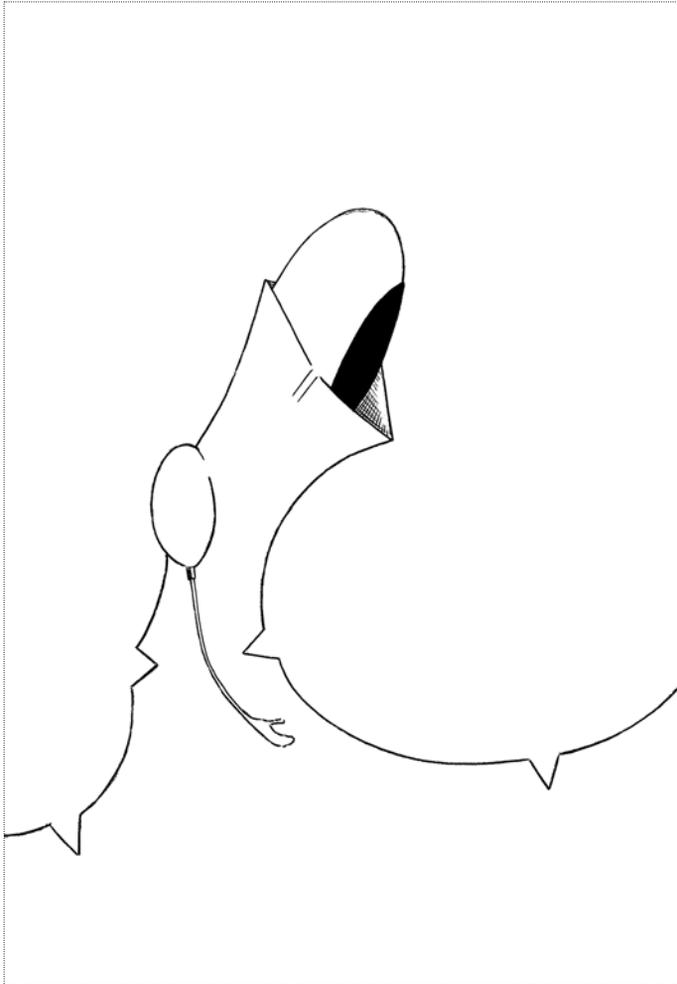
⁷ Estimate of blue tit population (1982): 1,800,000 to 3,800,00 (West Germany) and 520,000 (East Germany) according to Urs N. Glutz von Blotzheim, *Handbuch der Vögel Mitteleuropas*, Wiesbaden 1993. From Blaumeise Yvonne, in: Wolfgang Müller, *BLUE TIT, das deutsch-isländische Blaumeisenbuch*, pp. 253-255, Kassel 1997.

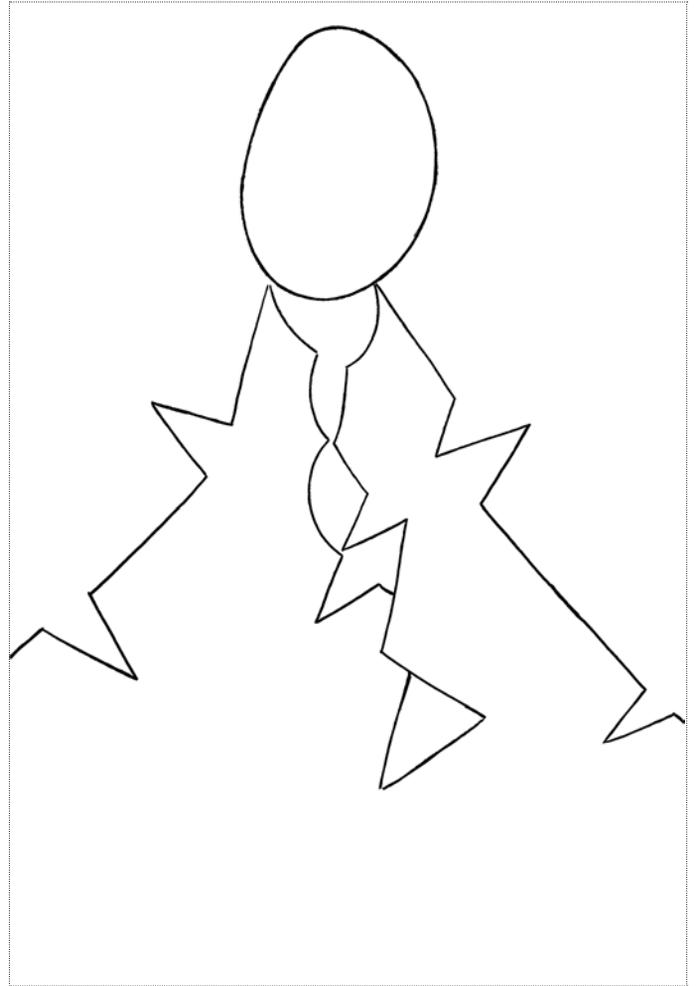
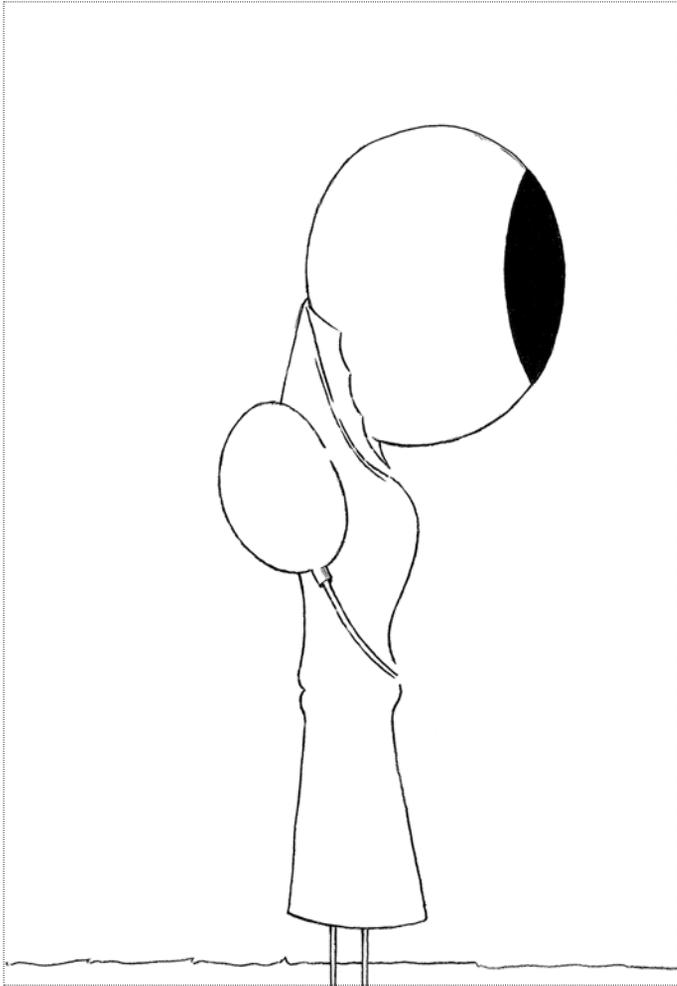
⁸ cf. „Die Rohrdommel vom Engelbecken“, in Müller, Wolfgang, *Subkultur Westberlin 1979-1989. Freizeit*, Hamburg 2013, p. 332ff.



Haamubuu, 2013







Morgenvogel Uncaged – a Playlist

Air and Alessandro Baricco – *Bird* • Amon Düül II – *Fly United* • Jonas Andersson/Christian Dick – *Oi katsele lintua*
Antony and The Johnsons – *Bird Gehrl / Candy Says* • Sylvinha Araújo – *Blackbird*
Angelo Badelamento / Julee Cruise – *The Nightingale* • The Barbarians – *Hey Little Bird*
The Beatles – *And Your Bird Can Sing / Blackbird / Free as a Bird*
Tim Buckley – *Wings* • The Byrds – *Chimes of Freedom*
Harry Belafonte – *Cu Cu Ru Cu Cu Paloma / Sunbird*
Berlin Pop Choir – *Candy Says*
Jane Birkin – *Le canari est sur le balcon*
Marc Bolan & T Rex – *Ride A White Swan*
David Bowie – *I'd Rather Be High*
Buffalo Springfield – *Bluebird / Expecting To Fly*
Eric Burdon & The Animals – *Sky Pilot*
Camille – *Canards Sauvages*
Citay – *On the Wings*
Coco Rosie – *The Moon Asked the Crow*
Leonard Cohen – *Bird on the Wire*
Country Joe and The Fish – *Superbird*
Cranium Pie – *Awakening Of The Birds*
Miles Davis – *Bye Bye Blackbird*
Donovan – *Song of the Naturalist's Wife*
Simon Dupree And The Big Sound – *Kites*
The Electric Prunes – *Long Days Flight*
Brian Eno – *Breath of Crows / Dead Finks Don't Talk / Dreambirds*
The Fall – *Cyber Insekt* • Simon Finn – *Butterfly*
Ella Fitzgerald – *Lullaby of Birdland* • Charlotte Gainsbourg – *AF607105*
Serge Gainsbourg – *Boomerang / Sous Le Soleil Exactement*
Astrud Gilberto – *Stay* • Paul Giovanni – *Maypole*
Goblin Soundtracks – *The Swan* • Adam Green – *C-Birds*
H. P. Lovecraft – *High Flying Bird* • Bruce Haack – *The American Eagle / Elizabeth Foster Goose*
Richie Havens – *High Flyin' Bird* • Lee Hazelwood – *I'm Gonna Fly*
Jimi Hendrix – *Little Wing* • Jana Herzen – *This Autumn*
The Holy Modal Rounders – *If You Want To Be A Bird* • Hrvatski – *Cirrus Minor*
Into a Coma – *Flamingos (for Colbert)* • It's A Beautiful Day – *White Bird* • The Jackson Five – *Rockin' Robin*
Kaleidoscope – *Flight from Ashiya* • Kim & Buran – *My First Cosmic Love* • Otto Kotilainen – *Varpunen jouluaamuna*
Late Night Alumni – *Of Birds Bees Butterflies Etc.* • Johnny Mann Singers – *Up Up And Away*
Dean Martin – *Volare* • John Mayall's Bluesbreakers – *Bye Bye Bird* • Curtis Mayfield – *Superfly*
Stephen P. McGreevy – *London Whistlers Batt Park* • Olivier Messiaen • Mr. Bungle – *Egg*
Steve Miller Band – *Fly Like an Eagle* • The Monkees – *Birds Beas & Monkees* • The Monks – *Cuckoo*
Unto Mononen – *Satumaa* • Ennio Morricone – *Cockey's Song / My Name is Nobody*
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart – *Die Zauberflöte*
Music Explosion – *Road Runner* • Music Machine – *The Eagle Never Hunts the Fly*
Nico – *Littler Sister* • Ian Niel – *Kingdom Of The Birds* • Onna – *The Swan Song*
Lee Perry & The Upsetters – *Bird in Hand* • Pink Floyd – *Cirrus Minor / Scarecrow*
Porn for the Blind – *Birdman of Alcatraz* • Prefab Sprout – *Nightingales*
Francois de Roubaix – *Journal De Bord* • San Francisco's Shiver – *Interstellar Vision*
John Scofield – *I'll Fly Away* • Jean Sibelius – *Tuonen lehto*
Silver Apples – *Whirly-Bird* • Rauli Badding Somerjoki – *Pilvet karkaa niin minäkin*
The Strawberry Alarm Clock – *Birdman of Alkatrash / Birds In My Tree*
They Might Be Giants – *Birdhouse in Your Soul* • Trentemoeller – *Snowflake*
Jan Turkenburg – *In my Spaceship* • Velvet Underground – *Candy Says*
Antonio Vivaldi – *Frühling* • Patrick Watson – *Big Bird in a Small Cage*
White Noise – *Firebird* • The Wings – *Bluebird* • Neil Young – *Danger Bird*



The Birds, Too @ MORGENVOGEL STATION

Veteranenstraße, Berlin Mitte, 2006



Morgenvogel Station was Maria's project room on the first floor of Bay Youm's legendary club *Bergstüb'l* on Veteranenstraße, ambitiously seeking to become a Gesamtkunstwerk. Walls and ceilings were, between other things, covered with scores by Heinz Thiessen, a Berlin composer who in the 30s had tried to notate bird singing in words and scores (see Heinz Thiessen: *Der Gesang der Vögel*, Darmstadt 1978). Birds have taught humankind so much music that we wanted to give something back to them. Support their power of song while in Summer 2006 everybody and everything else was obsessed with the soccer world championship. (We totally ignore the major topic of "birds and soccer stadiums" here, but google "eagle owl soccer Finland" and see what you get!)

And thus we founded our performance troupe *The Birds, Too*. It was equipped with bird masks designed by Maria and with the concept that all musicians would imitate the singing

and/or behavior of birds. The founding members were: Udo Lindemann (woodpecker drums, organ, bird houses), Eric Gradman (violin), Christopher Fröhlich (sampler, tapeboard), Jörg Pfeiffer (records), Micha Schroetter (voice, performance), Mic Mikina (sampler), Maria-Leena Rähälä (masks, video animations) and Manuel Bonik (poetry, flutes, keyboards). Later line-ups saw among others Jörg Janzer (trumpet, mouth harp), Martin Kuentz (electronics), Sean Derrick Cooper Marquardt (accidental guitar, electronics), Anna Staffel (performance), Kerstin Weiberg (performance), Adam Wiener (glass flutes), Marta Zapparoli (electronics).

As of 2014, The Birds, Too are still developing their special kind of chirping and tweeting. Videos can be found at vimeo.com and the Morgenvogel website.



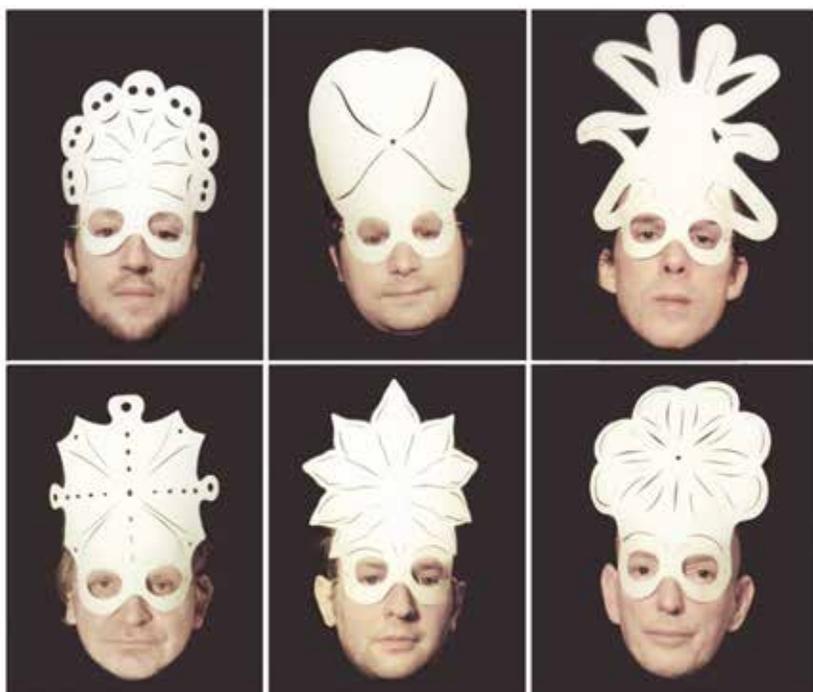
First performance by *The Birds, Too*, 2006.
Photos: Eve Hurford

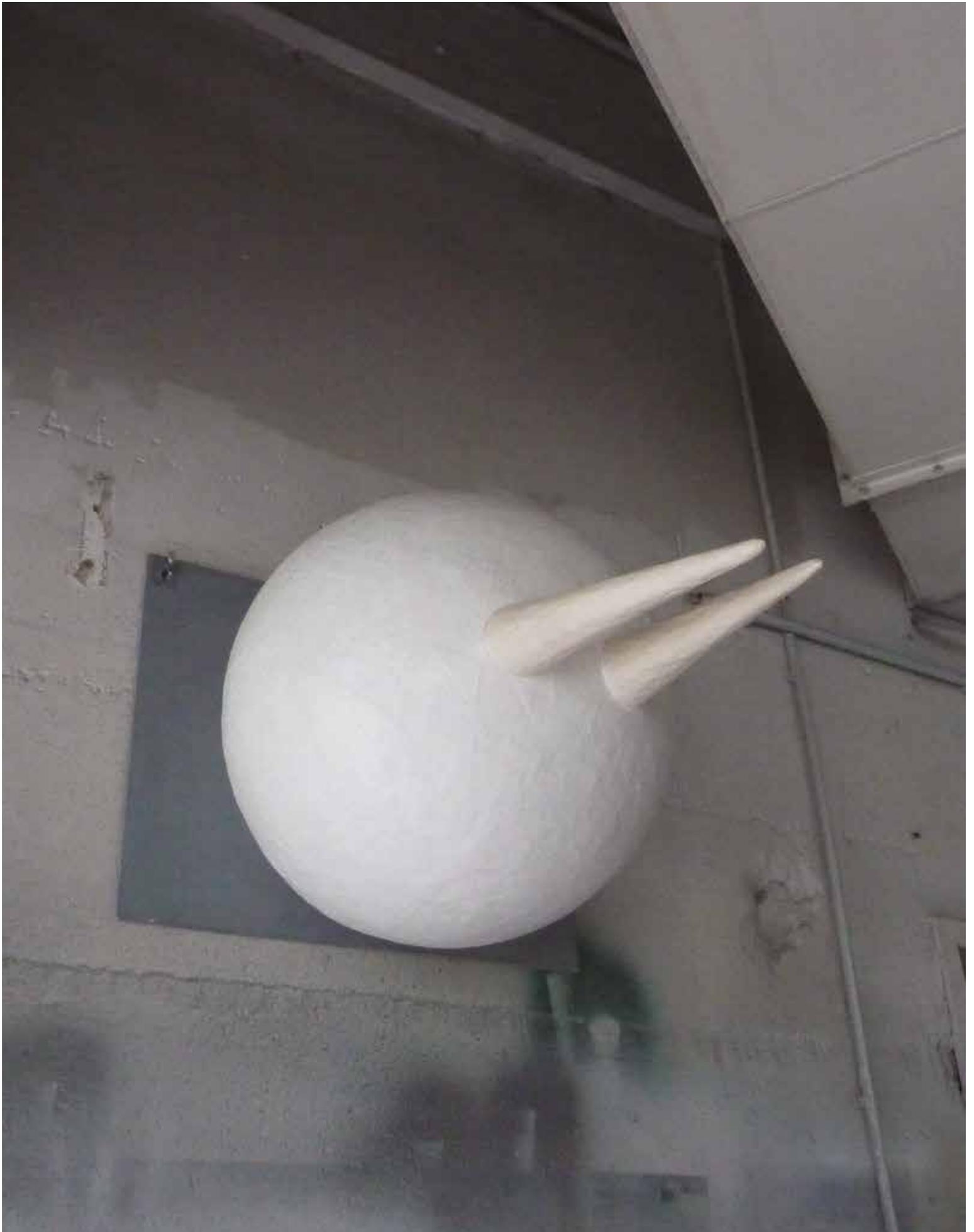
GEISTER/GHOSTS

The Birds, Too aka *The Return of the Think Thing*
@ *WestGermany*, Berlin, 2007

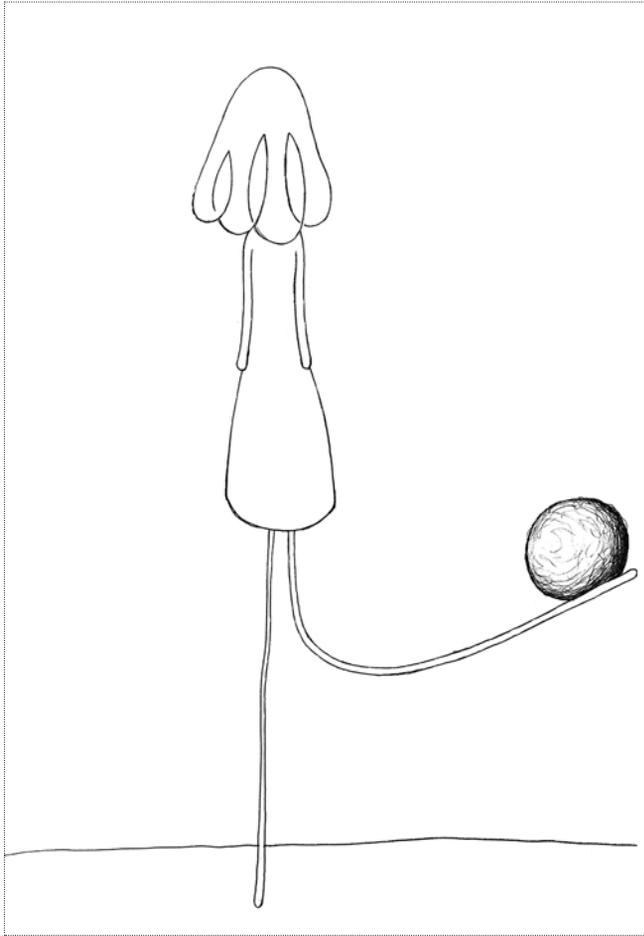
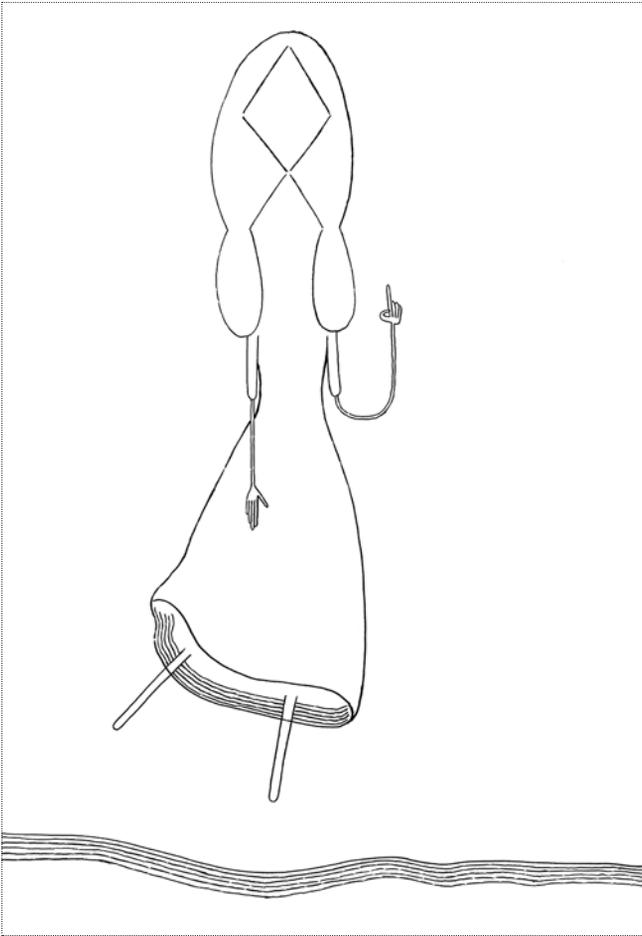
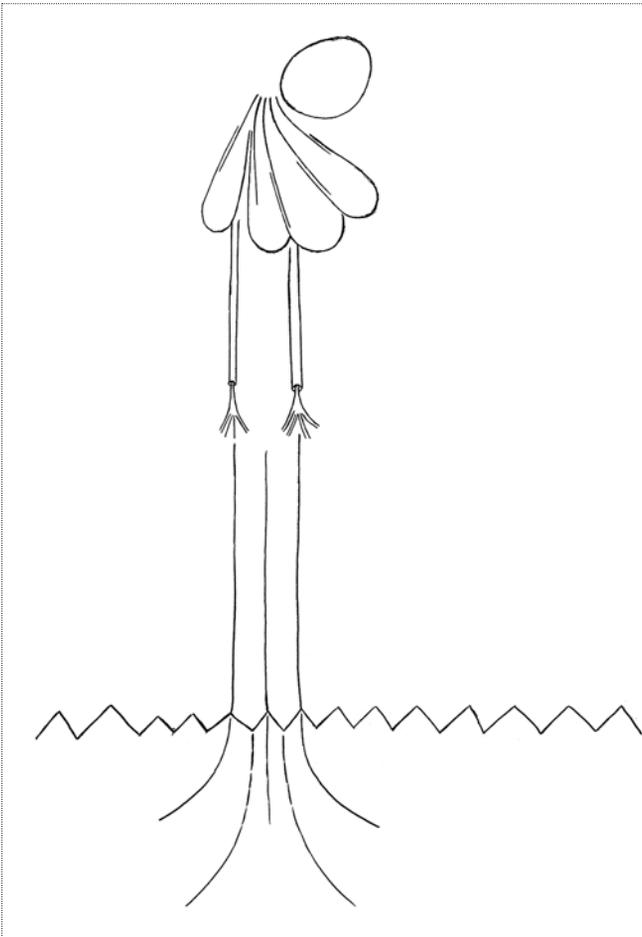
No way birds can turn into ghosts? No problem!
We speak Owl-ish, and Nightingal-ish, of course.

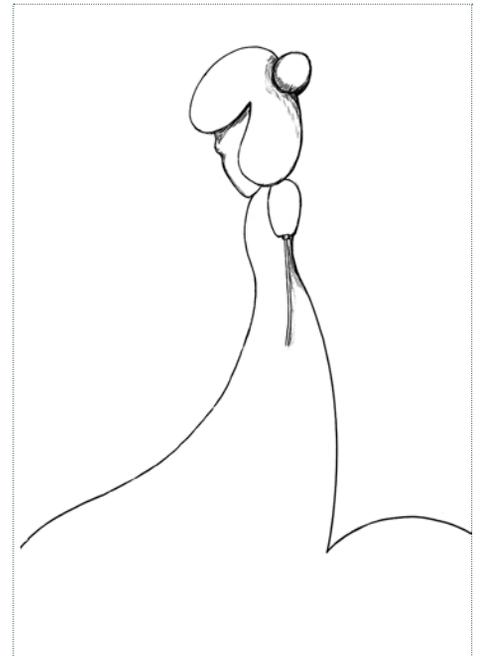
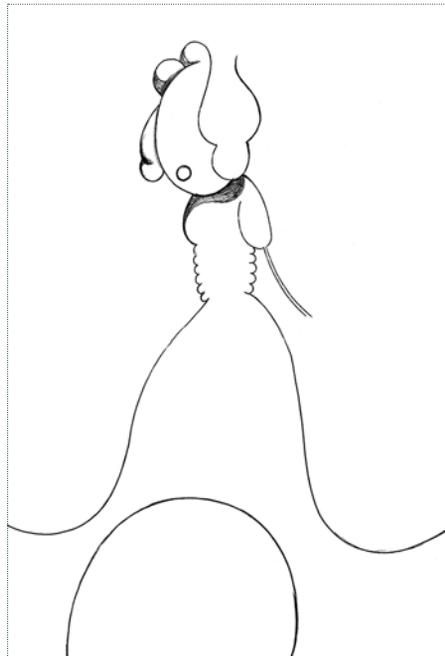
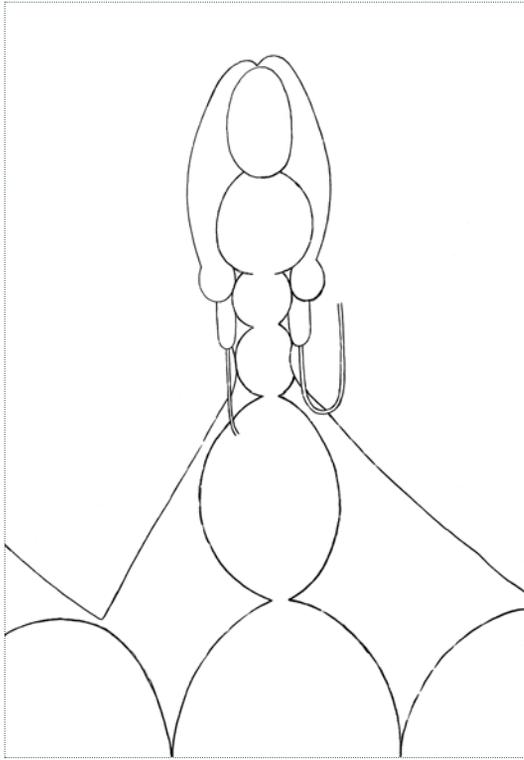
Masks and photos: Maria-Leena Rähälä

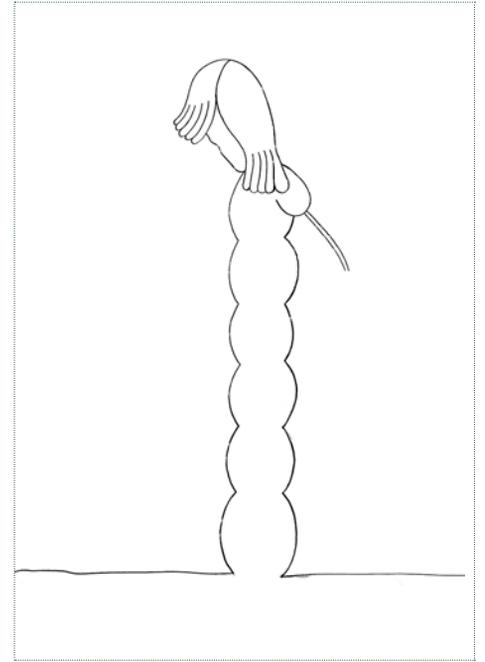
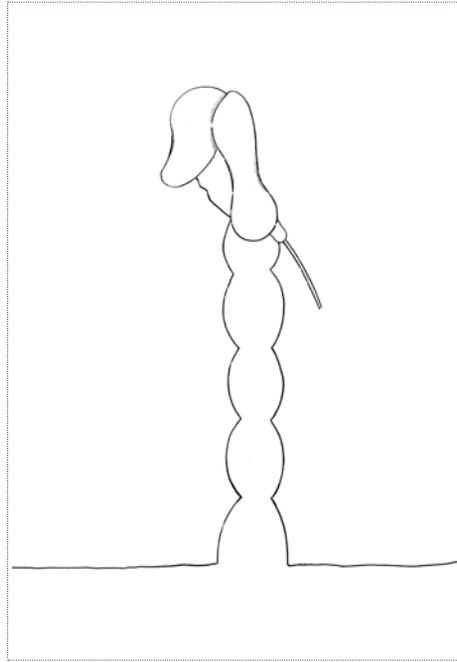
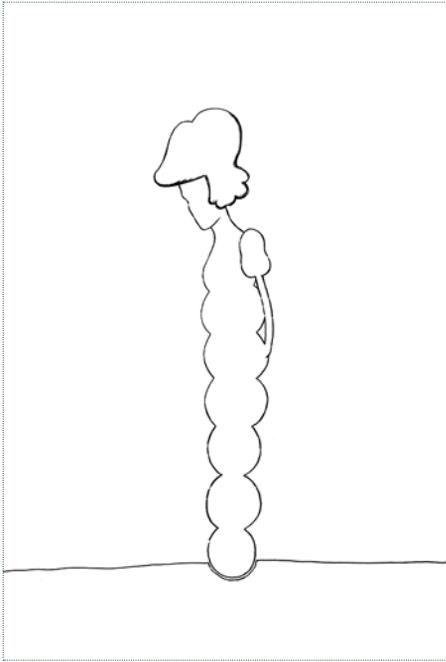




Schneemanns Lieder, sound sculpture with a mix of modified owl singing. *Right: S-L-Zeichnungen*, 2009





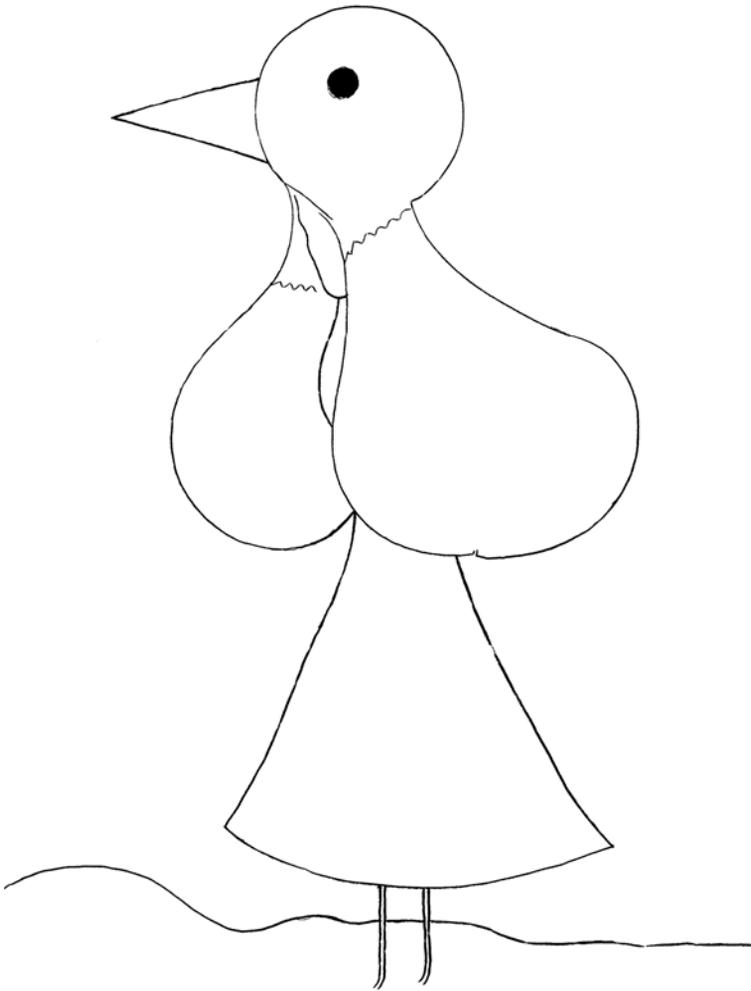


*Lumisten laaksojen
valkeat vaeltajat
laulavat lempeitä sävelmiä
silmissään jäiset kyynleet*

MLR: Schneemanns Lieder, 2007

Axel Roch
No Bachelors, but Birds.
Maria-Leena Rähälä's Drawings
as Poetological Sketches

*And I'm floating in a most peculiar way
And the stars look very different today*
DAVID BOWIE, 1969



One fine day in 1987, in a living room in Berlin's center, Maria-Leena Rähälä – a.k.a. the Morgenvogel – started with her so-called *Flugübungen* (“Flying Exercises”; see page 96). Thousands of drawings and sketches would evolve from them over the following decades. The light, repeating, curved, wavy motions of her arms, hands, and fingers, like flaps of a bird's wings, are in direct tension with the metaphor of new technology and electronic media: the rocket. Maria's *Flugübungen*, as well as her drawings, reposition radical developments and ugly excesses of modernity into a reign of imaginary situations, fantastic motions and encounters, in an area somewhere between heaven and earth. They are space and rocket oddities.¹ With the *Flugübungen*, Maria declares her own qualitative revolution: her *Man-Machine-Revolution*.

At this point in time, the history of literature could already look back on several forms and variations of the popular genre science fiction: novels, magazines, cartoons, even as cyberpunk Sci-Fi is thoroughly established in our media cultures, just like Hi-Fi in cinema and in our living rooms. Marshall McLuhan's first book *Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man* was published decades ago, his media theories fashionable since the 1960s. Norbert Wiener's book *Cybernetics or Communication and Control in the Animal and the Machine* was even older, often read, cited and discussed widely in more and more loops. In short: man-machine-communication, man-machine-interaction, high-fidelity-sound immersion, or man and technology in general, in 1987 already were intertwined in many ways; in plenty of laboratories, more or less experimental, and in all sorts of escapades into literary or scientific fantasy. So how is it then possible that – in 1987 – an artist, with a few sweeping movements, can claim or even evoke a revolution? And what's the point of this revolution? Can drawings or imaginary artistic motions be a revolution at all?

The drawings of the Morgenvogel envision to us a different interaction between civilization, culture, technology, man and nature compared to that which dominates us these days: in our technical-administrative world. Our time codifies the relationship to our environment or nature through technology, electronics, science or pure capital, as it is obvious in the societies of real estates and their administration. The revolution proclaimed by Maria, however, is not only a technological one. The poet Charles Baudelaire expressed in a letter from 1856: “I've been saying for a very long time that the poet is supremely intelligent [...] and that imagination is the most scientific of faculties, for it alone can understand the universal analogy, or what a mystic religion calls correspondence. But when I try to publish such statements, I'm told I'm mad.” There are more than codified, striated relationships with our real environments, more than “one-way-”, “two-way-”, “multiple-loop-feedback-communication-channels”. Our world is not only an artificial or codeable environment. You cannot simulate it, other than in parts or in models. „Der Morgenvogel kommt“ (the early bird arrives) is the radical inclusion of poetry in every area of society's progression, while at the same time transforming current technology and administration back into nature qua imagination. The Morgenvogel tweets to us: the artistic imagination's execution, through the flaps of many wings, is the condition of possibility, a possible rescue of our technically dominated world. That is why Maria's revolution is in fact the very oldest revolution, not a bio-technological one, not a genetic one, not scientific – in its entire concept it is a bio-poetic revolution.

A similar revolution in the *Denkungsart* is attributed to art philosopher Gaston Bachelard. It is claimed that he diagnosed and demonstrated a Copernican revolution of the imagination through his study of poetry. The Copernican revolution in physics refers to the object, to objects. The earth revolves around the sun, not the other way around, its own movement being postulated. The Copernican revolution in philosophy is, in analogy, based on the movements of the subject by itself or the subjective synthesis as a condition of any knowledge or experience. Moreover, the



Copernican revolution in art philosophy, after Bachelard, asks for a dynamic and not just an abstract-formal-synthetic imagination as the absolute condition for any possible or imaginable world. As the earth rotates around the sun, as any possible experience is conditioned by a subjective synthesis, so is poetic imagination not just mathematics, technology, or procedure; it is in principle dynamic, in the air, in flight. Such a “revolutionary” imagination is not a revolution of the earth, of the city, of architecture, mathematics, technology, or of machines – it is a revolution of the air, of birds, of dreams. It is oneiric. Bachelard lipreads from poets, specifically William Blake, whom he called a “poet of vertebral dynamics”: the dynamic-imaginary is eventually the absolute, the condition of any possible world – “the priority of dynamic imagination over formal imagination” and “absolute imagination which controls matter, forces, forms, life, thought.”² Thus, the poiesis of the Morgenvogel is, in accordance with Bachelard, always between heaven and earth, in verticality.

So then, how is the Morgenvogel about to arrive? Is it announcing itself? Is it already here? There are hints: the Morgenvogel flaps its imaginary wings throughout Maria’s drawings and sketches. She produces, outlines and drafts again and again complex, ambiguous interrelations between man, culture and nature, which propose a different, alternative development of our civilization, which redraw and proclaim a different world. At the same time, it is still our world. One of the essential differences between nature and men, animals and men is that nature does not have the ability to differentiate between models and the world, to design reality. A nest is not architecture, not a house. Since men have memory, they are, more than animals, able to live their dreams, write them down or draw them, and thus they are able to build different, new houses which might be like a nest. Birds can’t build houses, while men can build nest-like houses. In spite of this ability of humans, most media theories of today could hardly make propositions which would draft a poetic relationship between technology and environment – that is to say, a relationship mediated by imagination. Even artists like Marcel Duchamp surrendered in the face of technology

and media. Duchamp’s art is critical and reflective, all in all diagnostic, thus, less imaginative, therefore also less poetic: *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*.³ Marshall McLuhan’s book *Mechanical Bride* (the title already suggests Duchamp) diagnoses a simple convergence of sex and journalism. Maria’s Morgenvogel, however, in contrast to Duchamp’s imaginary bride, transforms the bride. One could say: “The bride doesn’t get stripped bare by her bachelors, even, the bride unfolds in conjunction with the bird, the cosmic egg, the flowers to flirt with, etc., and moreover, there might be a few bachelors around, from time to time.” Maria, the bride, the girl, der Mensch, unfolds in these drawings, not necessarily harmonic, but in a poetic symbiosis of form between nature and technology.⁴ *The Cosmic Egg* – a primordial dwelling – is also a metaphor for an “Ur-Haus”, an original house, a primary techne, in this sense also arche-techne, thus, architecture. Instead of accessing the world in a technical way – which always implies a destruction – these drawings and sketches show dynamical, complex, and multiple metamorphoses. It is – again with Bachelard – the Morgenvogel or poetic imagination that made technology possible in the first place and thus can embrace it again at any given moment. Maria says it straightforwardly: “Birds don’t like rockets!”

After *Flugübungen* the 1990s saw several further drawings and sketches: *Rocketmädel* (1993) designed on Atari with Corel Draw; *Fly Eye* and *Flying Eyes* (1993 and 1994) a series which melted faces and eyes – visual culture, so to speak – with a bird in flight. The Morgenvogel, one might come to think, is directly attacking the face. To draw faces anew, especially one’s own face, is a form of expressing artistic-reflective imagination, a practice similarly seen in Albrecht Dürer’s pillow drawings and landscape-paintings. Of course, Maria’s drawings are speedy experiments. But they also show the nature of prosopopoetic studies, as different elements of Finnish myths and experience of nature meet Maria, her face, as a mask. German etymology derives “das Gesicht” (“the face”) from “das Gesichtete” (“the faced”), meaning “das Geträumte” (the dreamed [of]); the “faced” is the “seen”, seen as in a dream. This is visible in Maria’s

drawings, in the way that envisioned birds melt into drawn faces. Such metamorphoses of the face – technically speaking, in the sense of rockets, the “interface” (see p. 46) – are at the same time transformations of our relationship to the environment. The Morgenvogel, in its drawings, not only transforms abstract faces. It also sketches and envisions new poetic forms of artistic life, as we still live in artificial faces, interfaces of technology.

The drawings of the Morgenvogel mix various systems again and again: face/bird, girl/egg, Maria/earth/water, bride/petals, etc. Girl becomes bird, bird girl. The bird is not just a vision to the girl, the girl becomes the bird, and vice versa. Taken in the simplest form, such symbiotic conversions are intimated as Kippfiguren (ambiguous figures): for instance, *Leda* (2012) shows a bird’s bill, while at the same time being in and/or beside the belly of a young woman, the eye of the bird and eye of the girl unite into each other, the face of the bride and bird are one. The Gestalten of the Morgenvogel are abstract. As schematizations of imagination,



however, they imply several meanings: oscillating lines are curly, then wavy, then half-open, then embracing eggs. Other, more indented lines are at once grass, then feather, once stirred water, then flame, then again hair, then again a blossom, arms, etc. The face is a head, then an eye, then growing plant, then receiving or defoliating a blossom, then again a bird or the motion of a wing. In poetry the flight of the bird stands metaphorically for pure or abstract forms of imagination.⁵ Thus, it is not surprising that Maria’s content refers often to moments of birth, of becoming, of fertilization, of transformation; in short, of creation. It is also not bewildering to find Maria’s art taking possession of several Christian icons, which of course pick creation as a central theme as well: *Mariä Empfängnis* (2007), *Holy Chicken* (2010), *The Cosmic Egg* (2012) instead of Jesus’ cross, etc. The Finnish creation myth *Kalevala* (see p. 14) here is not simply an alternative, a so-called natural religion as opposed to Christianity and its symbols, but it is the poetic forms of the drawings themselves, as moments of creation, sometimes filled with Finnish content, which make Maria’s art so iconoclastic. Maria destroys, she assaults the icons of Christianity as a culture of suffering, as well as the symbols of new, modern technology. The Morgenvogel makes the wings of the rocket flap, as in *Tannenbaum-Rakete M4PL (Fir Tree Rocket)*, 2010, see pp. 44-46). The release the Morgenvogel sings of is no suffering world, no compassionate world, but rather an artistic

one; a poetic, ambiguous relationship to nature, which can be, but doesn’t have to be, mediated through technology. The bird – breeding as a neighbor – is loved even more than oneself, and so one becomes a bird. Thus, the Morgenvogel, in its artistic creation flaps around religion and technology, replaces them, not just instead of the creation myth of Christianity, of science and technology, through a Finnish national epos, but by gay poetics of imaginative forms.

Maria-Leena Rähälä does not quote in her drawings, neither implicit nor explicit, any other artists drawings or paintings. Some of the odd, bizarre, and sometimes comical miniature sketches by Paul Klee indicate, however, stories or situations which show a thematic kinship to the drawings by the Morgenvogel, not only because birds as birds and other animals, e.g. cats and chickens, are recurring motifs in both. Closely relatable themes can be found in: *Cat and Bird* (1928), *Bird Garden* (1924), *Birds Islands* (1921), *Bird Drama* (1920), *Comedy of Birds* (1918), *Traveling*



Birds (1917). In addition, both artists seem to share similar questions in respect to the exploration of their conditions for creation and singularity: *Twittering Machine* (1922) and *Birds Making Scientific Experiments in Sex* (1915), for instance, by Klee overlap with *Mariä Empfängnis* (2007), *Flirting with Flowers* (2006-2008), and other drawings by Maria-Leena Rähälä. Her drawing techniques, however, are in my view more radical than those techniques used by Klee, which were radical already in his times, the late or second half of early modernity.

What is so peculiar about the Morgenvogel’s drawings? To what extent are they poetological sketches? It is not only forms that the Morgenvogel plays with. Several symbioses, prosopopoetical figures and transformations are not just relationships of equal dependency or interrelations which are based on or even aim at identity. Drawings like *Metakollaasi* (2006), *Psychoflower* (2006) or series like *Flirting with Flowers* (2008), *Alkiot* (2008), and *Blubblume* (2008) show contradictions which mesh into and coexist with one another. They are ambiguous and open, transforming into each other, having a symbiotic, dynamic relation, as opposed to a dialectic relation of development. All in all, these drawings are ambiguous *and* projective. Actually, Maria sketches different types of ambiguity that show or hint to a coevolution of girl, bird and rocket, land and sea, egg and body,

etc. Sometimes these drawings are placed one after another, in a successive, narrative fashion, like “abstract comics” (MLR). They are not narrative, however, as they play with themselves and with the imagination of the viewer. The peculiarity is: being schemata of pure and elementary figures, they are within themselves equivocal. Maria’s drawings are schematisms of different types of ambiguity, already on the level of form, not just of content, meaning and the senses. Interpreted, read or seen in this way, they are not developed metaphors, they are more like poetological sketches. These types of drawn, sketched and dynamic ambiguities of a clear, pure Gestalt are, in my opinion, the manifesto of the revolution of the Morgenvogel. Only the paragraphs are lacking.

„Der Morgenvogel kommt.“ The Morgenvogel is arriving. It embraces old religions, our technical world and even modern art. It replaces the cross by the *Cosmic Egg*. In place of the rocket it puts the flaps of imagination. It replaces Duchamp’s agonized relationship of bride/bachelor with the symbiosis of bride/bird. Modern art, especially modern painting, always experiments with new experiences of imagination, which do not represent, depict, or identify. The artistic sign is a subjective experience, sometimes more, sometimes less. Painting, especially modern painting, investigates systems of signs that make imagination able to be comprehended: blurring, vagueness, ambiguity, openness, etc. Already in Albrecht Dürer you find such “mental sketches of imagination.” His pillow drawings hide faces, as if the dream of the night was converted into the folds of the pillow during daytime. The interior of the imagination is found turned upside down, upended as a face in the pillow. The faces, however, are fragmented. Dürer thereby provokes pareidolic aspects of the viewer’s imagination, that is to say, those aspects of imagination which search and see faces in sensory patterns. Similar and even more complex effects are classics in landscape painting. Already



in the 11th century, Guo Xi in his painting *Early Spring* (1072) depicted the wood as hair, rocks as cheek or nose, a waterfall (more or less bluntly) as the womb of a woman. Edgar Degas in his *Landscape with a Steep Coast* (1892) coded the body of a woman into the landscape. James Abbott McNeill Whistler is a master in the art of multistable drawings: in *Nocturne: Blue and Silver – Cremorne Lights* (1872) strokes of the brush are plants (bushes) as well as birds (black crows). Henri Michaux is also counted as a master of artistic ambiguity: his *Mouvements* (1951)



combine several meanings in a few lines: organic and animal, then plant, then man, etc. Gerhard Richter in *Seestück (See-See)* (1970) plays with a horizontal instability of the viewer

during the process of looking at it. In *Abstract Painting* (848-10) (1997) as well as in his series of abstract paintings he overlays vertical and horizontal instabilities, form- and colorwise. The Morgenvogel’s drawings are abstract as well, but not only unstable in the manner of Richter, or bi- and multistable in the manner of Degas, Whistler, Michaux, etc. They are, one could say, polystable. This is a special type of poetic ambiguity.



A sign, a sketch, a clear line, even a single stroke, is polystable when its meanings are not only ambivalent, but also open, in a way that these meanings can only be completed by the viewer. Abraham Kaplan and Ernst Kris, a psycho-analyst and an art-historian, wrote a paper “*Esthetic Ambiguity*” in 1948.

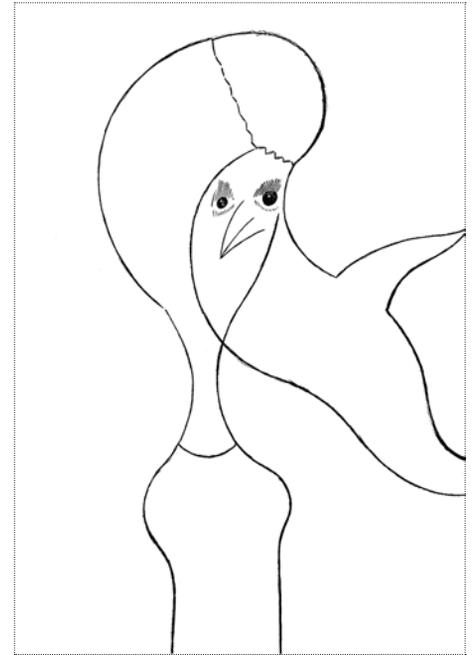
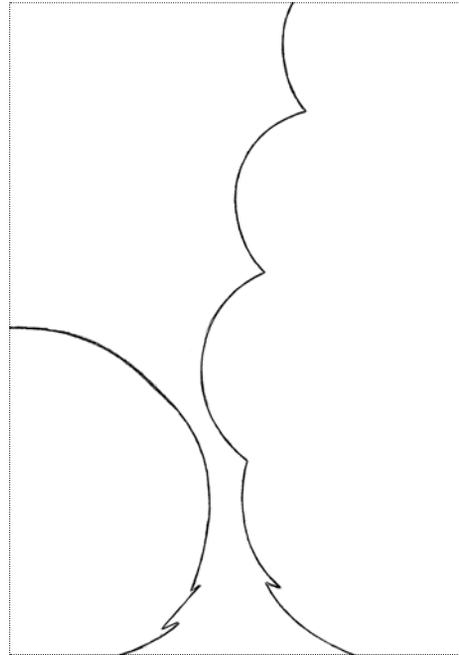
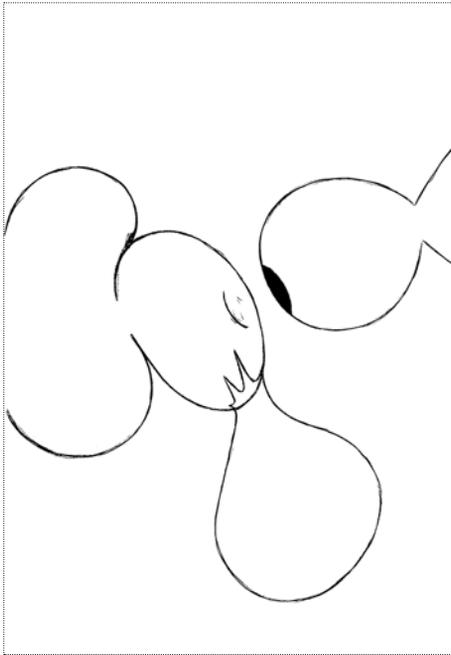
It is considered to be the first systematic proposal of typology of ambiguities (by the way, the same year that saw Norbert Wiener’s book on Cybernetics!). There they distinguish different types of ambiguity: disjunctive, additive, conjunctive, integrative and projective. The Morgenvogel combines these types, usually fusing the latter ones: conjunctive, integrative and projective ambiguities.⁶ Maria’s figures are not either/or/or, they don’t just combine this and that, they are a bit and a lot of this and that, and are to and for each other. Our technical world dearly needs such forms of poeology as structure. One may call them polystable metamorphoses, that is to say, ambiguous and at the same time projective transformations. Maria a.k.a. the Morgenvogel paints ambiguous lines and shapes at the level of schemata and during this process of schematisation figures intertwine with one another, often fragmentary, one could say: openly.

Figures from this page (all in details):

Albrecht Dürer: *Studienblatt mit Selbstbildnis, Hand und sechs Kissen*, ca. 1490

James Abbott McNeill Whistler: *Nocturne: Blue and Silver-Cremorne Lights*, 1872

Henri Michaux: *Mouvements*, 1951



Notes

¹ David Bowie's original video shows that in *Space Oddity* there exists a technical problem in the widest sense of the word. Major Tom actually feels pretty well and is not in danger at all. Ground Control's message to him "Your circuit's dead, there's something wrong. Can you hear me, Major Tom?" should not be understood as a technical problem in the limited sense of the word, such as in "Houston, we have a problem"...

² "[...] and which can give legitimacy to a philosophy that explains, as I [Bachelard] am trying to do, the real by the imaginary". It was Immanuel Kant who discovered this radical aspect of productive imagination. In 1781 he still forced it, however, more or less into the corset of formal structures. The filaments were still incisive. The categories of modality in Kant, e.g., imply aspects of dynamics, as do those of relation, but it is actually Gaston Bachelard who is later credited with combining dynamics and synthesis, Friedrich Nietzsche and Immanuel Kant, will and imagination, in the philosophy of the arts, thoroughly. In any case: art/aesthetics and their philosophies are – after Bachelard – not only pythagoreic/hegelian-harmonic/dialectic, but rather kantian/nietzscheanic-synthetic/dynamic.

Bachelard writes: "I want' and 'I fly' are both 'volo' in Latin. There is no way to investigate the psychology of will without going to the very root of imaginary flight". And on Nietzsche: "No one can understand Nietzsche's world without putting dynamic imagination in the forefront [...] A Nietzschean cosmos lives in moments rediscovered through eternally youthful impulses. It is a story filled with rising suns". In this sense, the Morgenvogel is not Minerva's owl, who starts its flight at dawn and thus only retrospectively looks on history and esthetics, like Hegel, but it is a bird of the rising sun, of the cheerful morning: imaginative and poetic, neither reflective nor dialectical.

³ Of course, any reading or even casual flipping through the fragmentary page of the *Green Box* leads to a new interpretation of the art of Marcel

Duchamp. He is a master of ambiguity. But these ambiguities are not necessarily aesthetic in nature. Sometimes, and sometimes only, connoisseurs and curators of Duchamp are able to experience his work poetically.

⁴ Remark by Peter Berz: "Didn't Lacan in line with Merleau-Ponty ask already the question: 'If a bird were to paint would it not be by letting fall its feathers, a snake by casting off its scales, a tree by letting fall its leaves?'" From: Lacan, Jacques (1981) *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*.

⁵ Gaston Bachelard writes in his chapter "Poetics of Wings": "The motion of flight produces an immediate and overwhelming abstraction, a dynamic image that is perfect, complete, and total. The reason for such speed and such perfection is that the image is dynamically beautiful. The abstraction of beauty defies all philosophers' polemics. These polemics are generally useless in all those cases in which the mind's activity is creative, whether in the rational abstraction of mathematics or in aesthetic activities, which so rapidly abstract the lines of essential beauty. If more attention were given to the imagination, many false psychological problems would readily be cleared up. The kind of abstraction that material and dynamic imagination bring about is so alive that, despite a multiplicity of forms and movements, it lets us live in our chosen matter simply by following a given motion wholeheartedly. But for those very reasons, abstraction eludes discursive scrutiny." From: Bachelard, Gaston (1943/1988) *Air and Dreams. An Essay on the Imagination of Movement*.

⁶ "When multiple meanings are jointly operative they may be more or less interactive, and dispose us to regard the ambiguity as integrative or merely conjunctive accordingly [...] The distinction of these various types of ambiguity suggests that the common dualism between scientific and poetic language has been overemphasized." From: Kaplan, Abraham and Kris, Ernst (1948) "Esthetic Ambiguity", in: *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 415-435.

A Peck of Morgenvogel Picks by Axel Roch

“Birds! whose flight is so high, what were you before being those free songs scattered above our heads? A thought–held slave, perhaps;” Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, 1839.

“The bird brings verticality to spring”, Comtesse de Noailles, 1905.

“Man [...] must be lifted up in order to be transformed”, Jean Paul, 1795.

“The bird lively, graceful, and light, prefers to reflect images of love, youth, sweetness, and purity”, Alphonse Toussenel, 1853.

“Man [...] will become a super-bird which, far from our world, will fly through the infinite space between worlds, transported by ‘aromatic’ forces into his true environment, into an aerial land”, Gaston Bachelard on Alphonse Toussenel’s *“Pteropsychological Transcendence”*, 1943.

“A sylph who is a dreamer finds a place inside an owl, a brown owl, or a screech owl. On the other hand, a sylph who is of a merry disposition and who likes to sing little songs, slips into a nightingale, a warbler, or a canary”, Vigneul de Marville to Rohault – a professor of Cartesian physics, 1691.

“A slight movement of their upraised foot seems to be enough to direct their flight”, Mlle J. Villette on Michelangelo’s angels.

“Where goest thou O thought? to what remote land is thy flight? If thou returnest to the present moment of affliction Wilt thou bring comforts on thy wings. and dews and honey and balm”, William Blake in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, 1793.

“What thou art we know not”, Percy Bysshe Shelley in *To a Skylark*, 1820.

“They say that if a lark is carried in to a sick person, it will look away if he is to die [...] But if he is to get well, the bird will look fixedly at him, and by its gaze, the sickness is relieved”, Leonardo Da Vinci on the medical gaze of birds, undated.

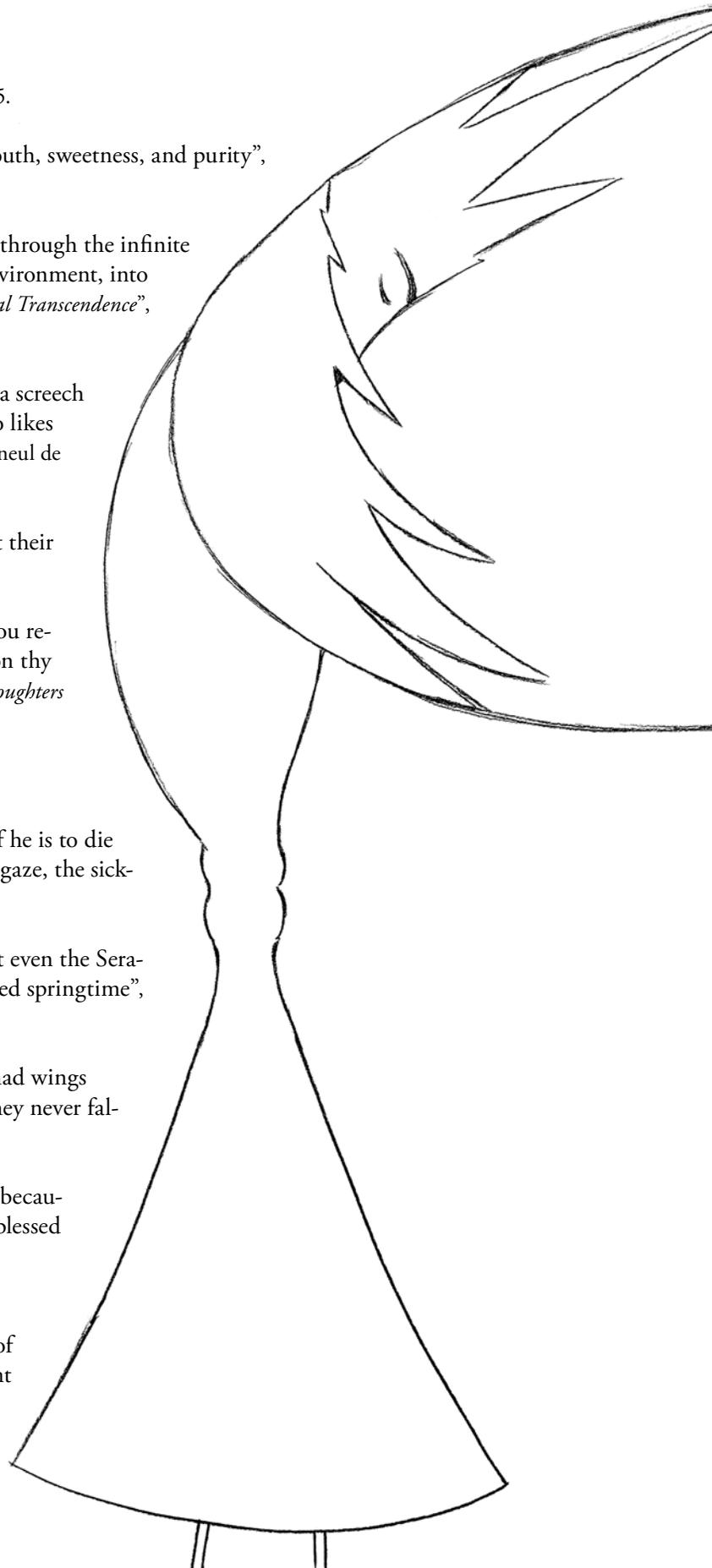
“It was a canticle of wings, a hymn of feathers and quills, so broad that even the Seraphim could not equal them. It was the vesper symphony of all of winged springtime”, Gabriele d’Annunzio, 1912.

Princess Aurora: “Do all the fairy people have wings?” Maleficent: “I had wings once. They were stolen from me. That’s all I wish to say about it [...] They never faltered. I trust them”, *Maleficent*, 2014.

“We envy the birds lot in life, and we attribute wings to what we love, because we instinctively feel that, in the domain of bliss, our bodies will be blessed with the ability to go through space as the bird goes through the air”, Alphonse Toussenel, 1853.

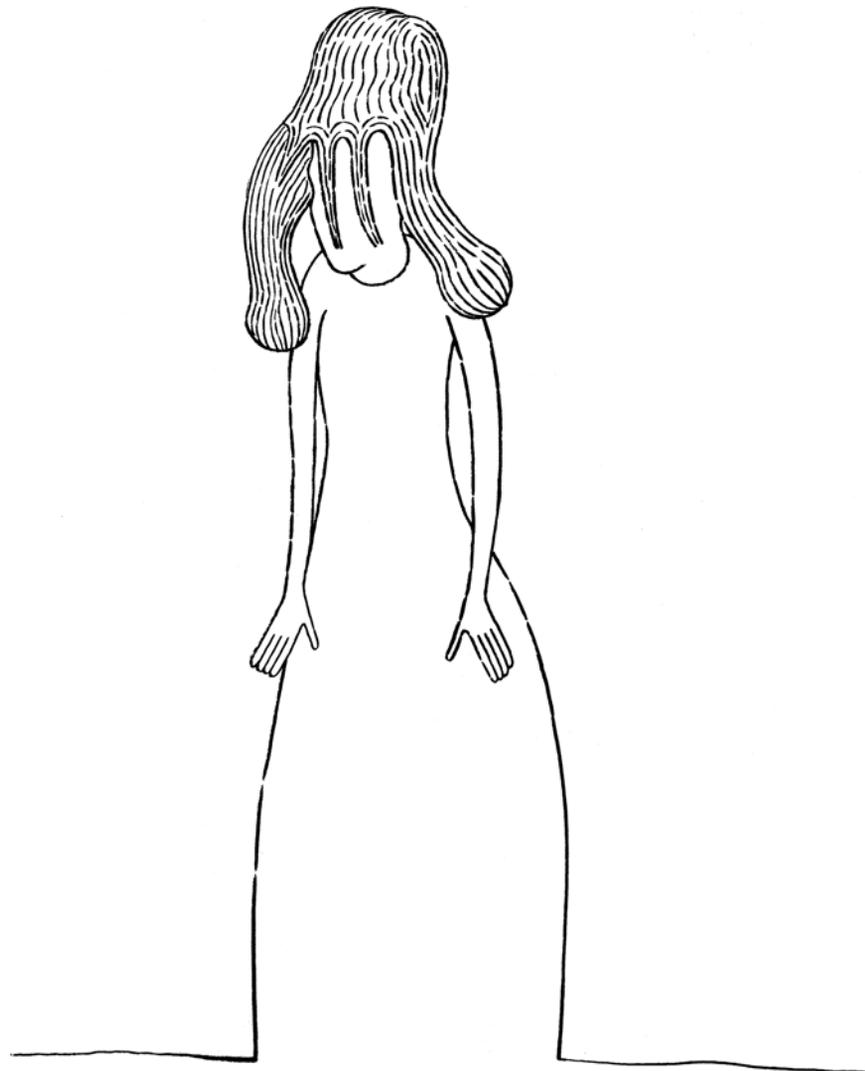
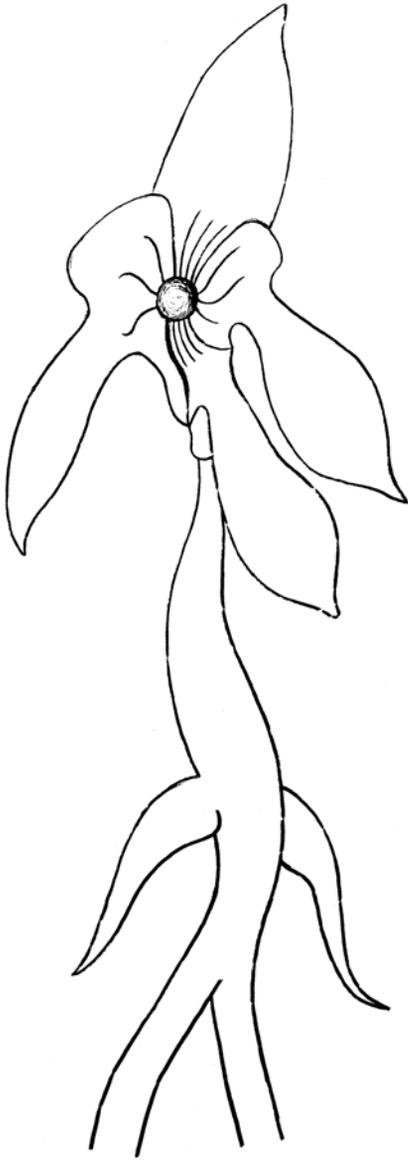
“In a dynamic dream, no bird struck by death ever falls vertically out of the sky, because oneiric flight never ends in a vertical fall. Oneiric flight is a happy phenomenon of sleep, not a tragic one”, Gaston Bachelard on vertical poetry, 1943.

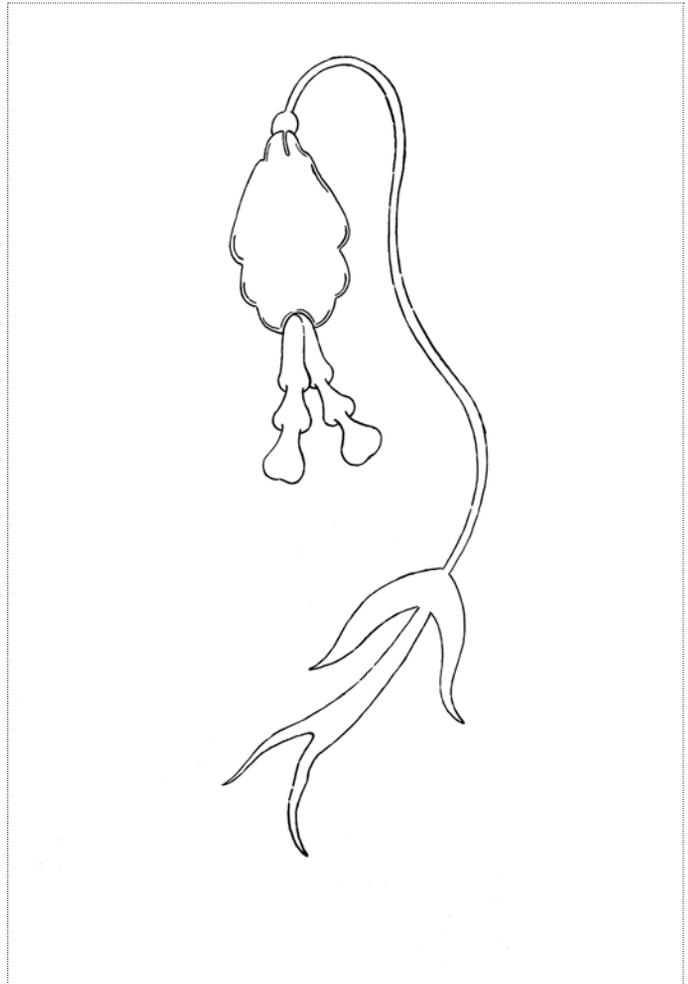
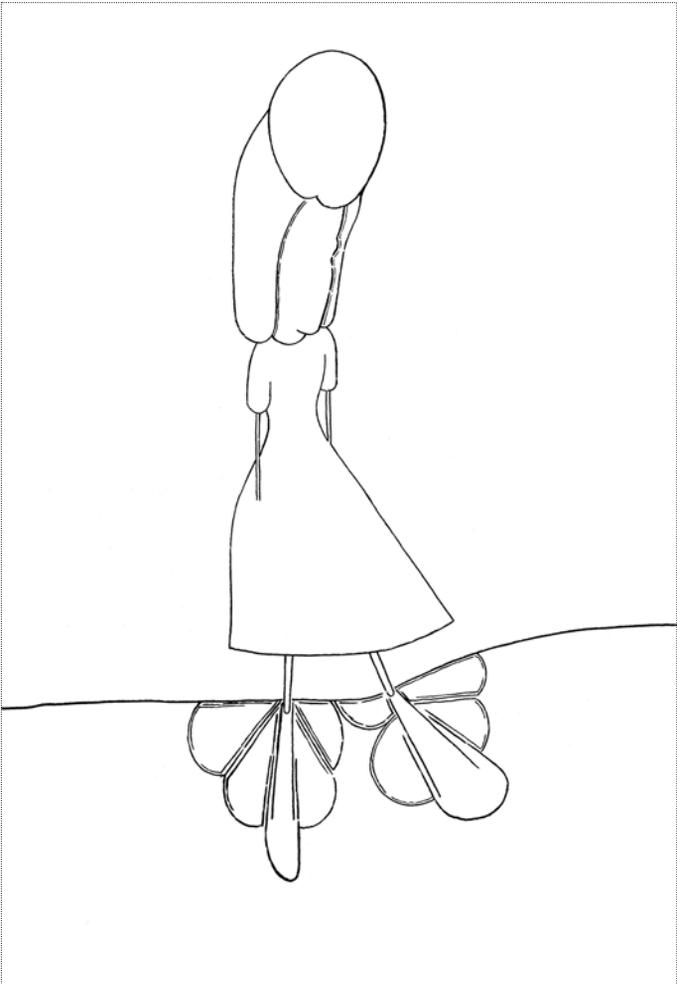
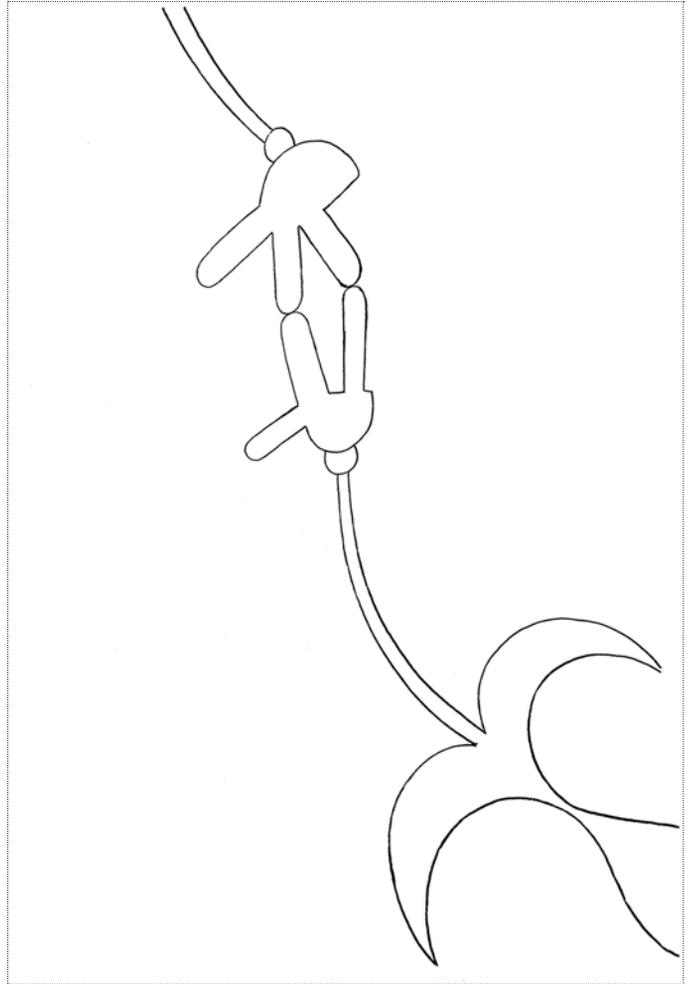
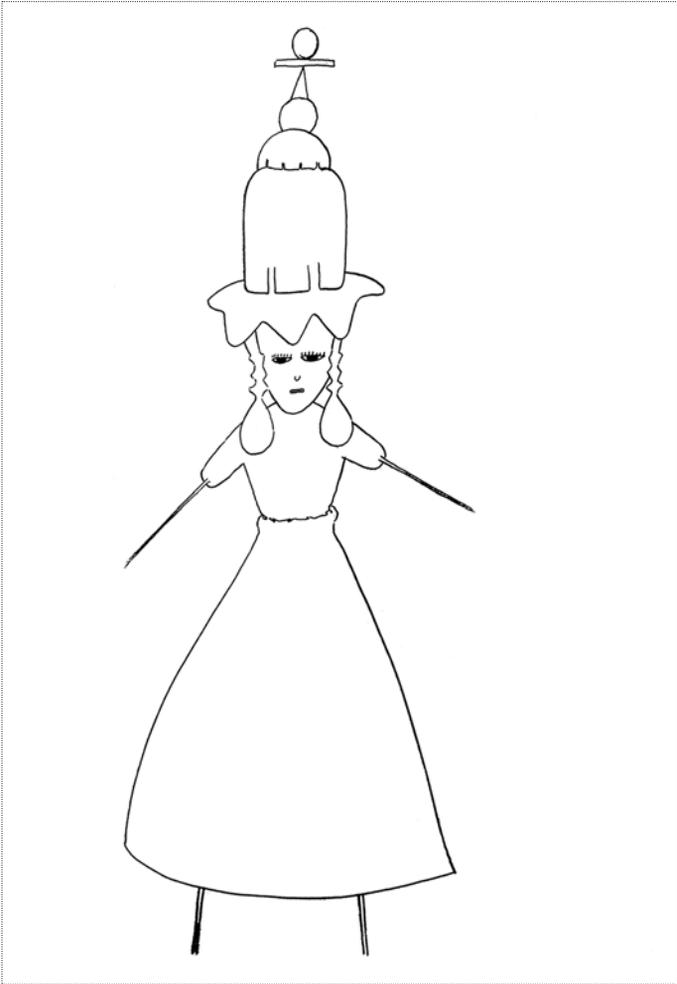
“You sing, therefore you fly”, the “axiom of the lark” (so-called after Bachelard) from *Der Jubelseniör* by Jean Paul, 1797.

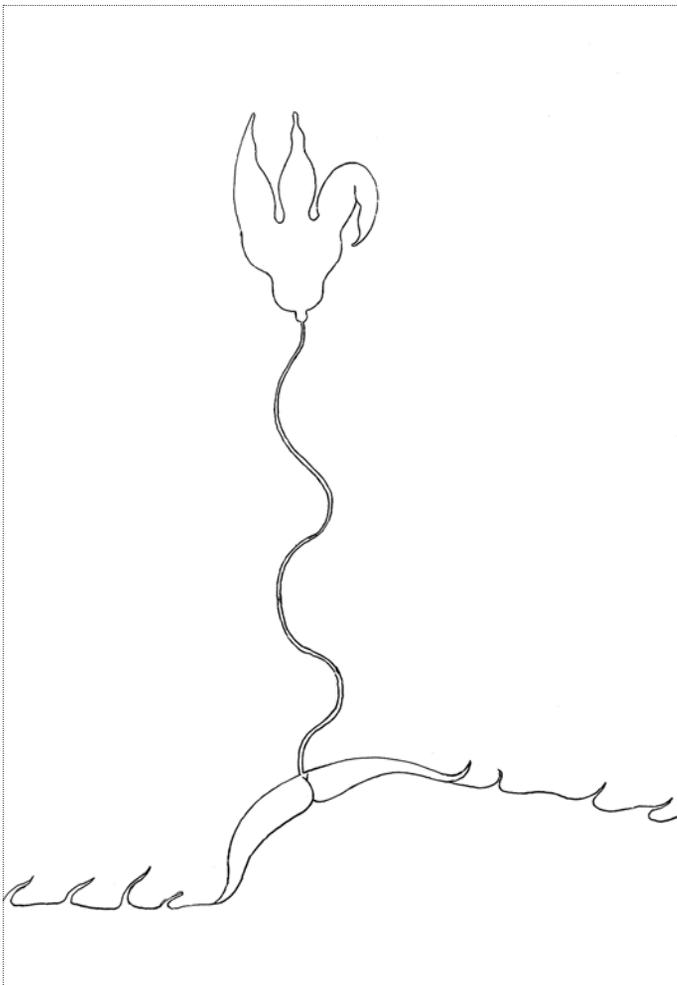
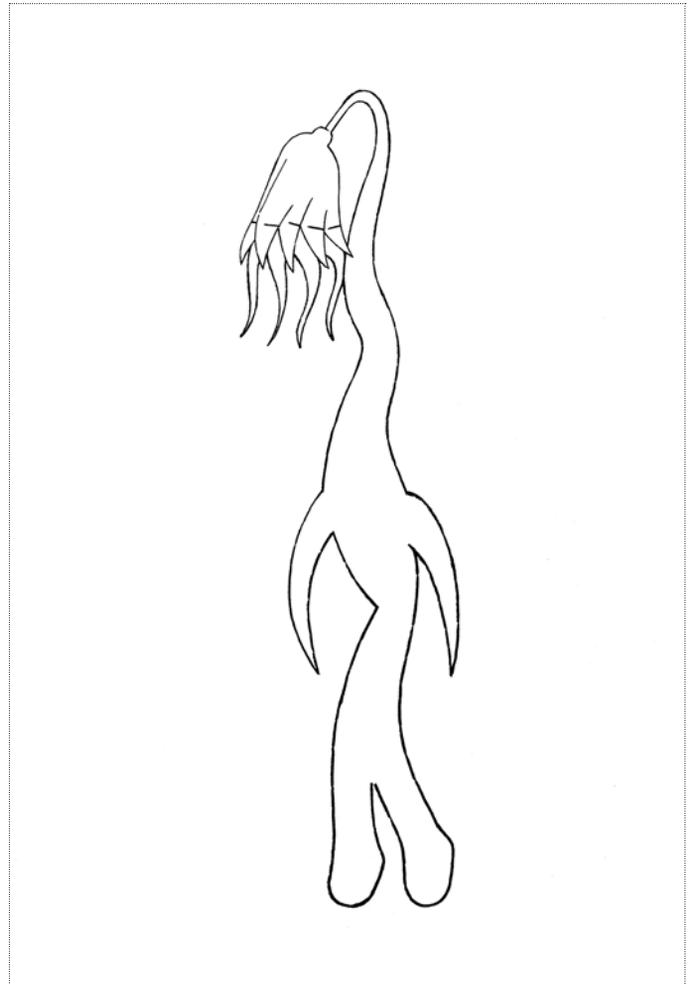
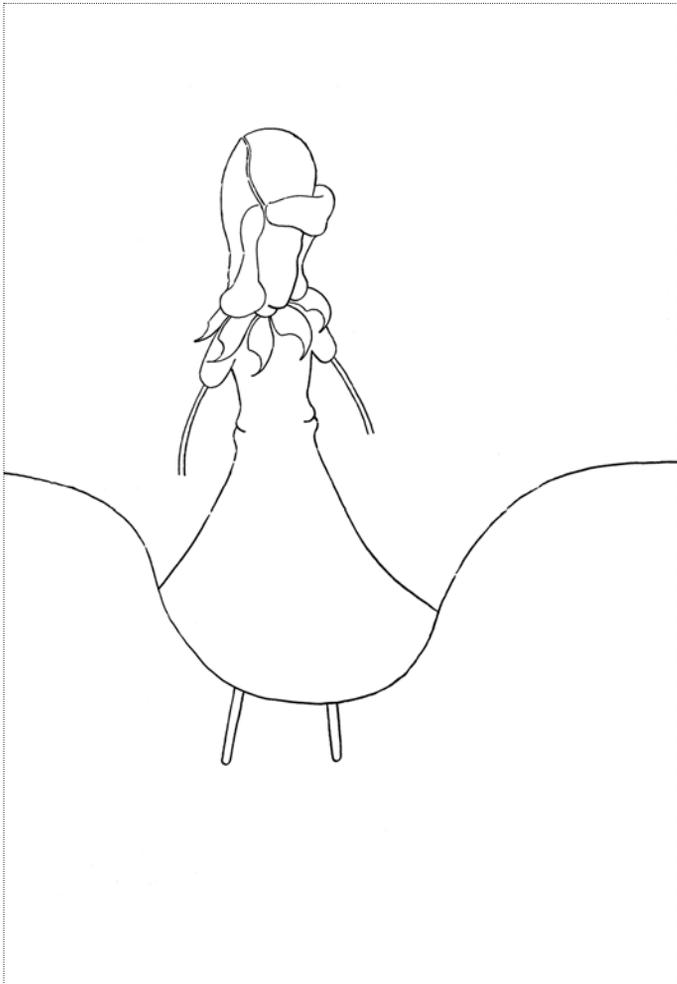


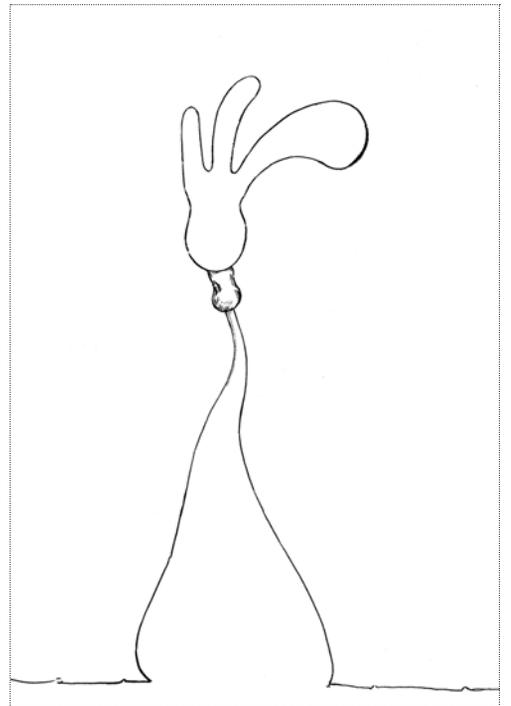
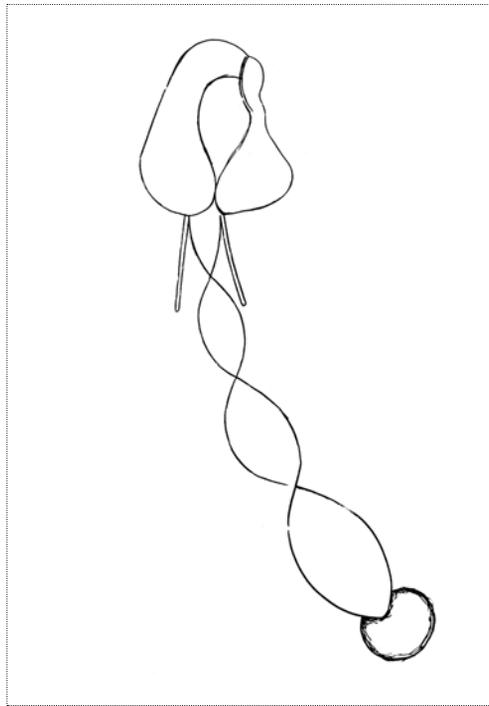
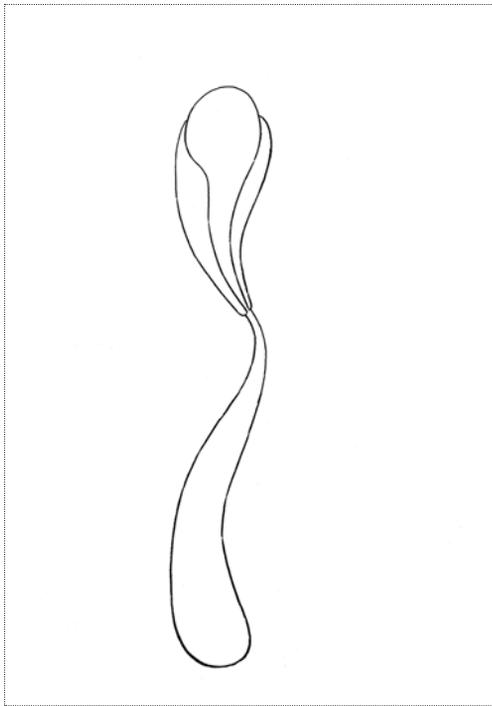
FLIRTING WITH FLOWERS

2006-2008

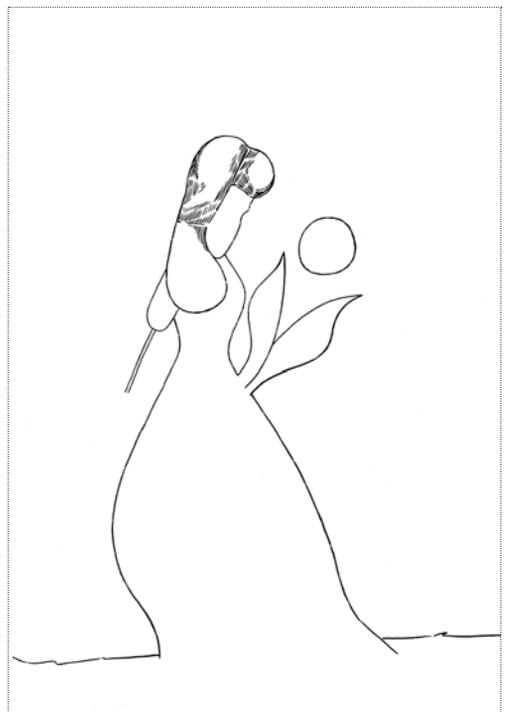
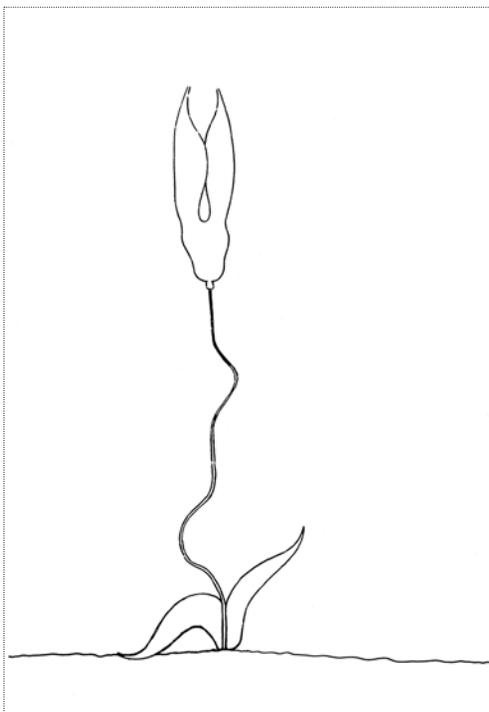
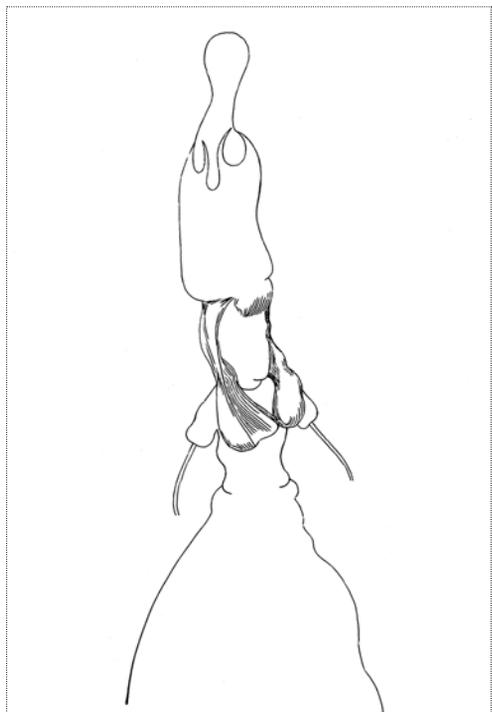




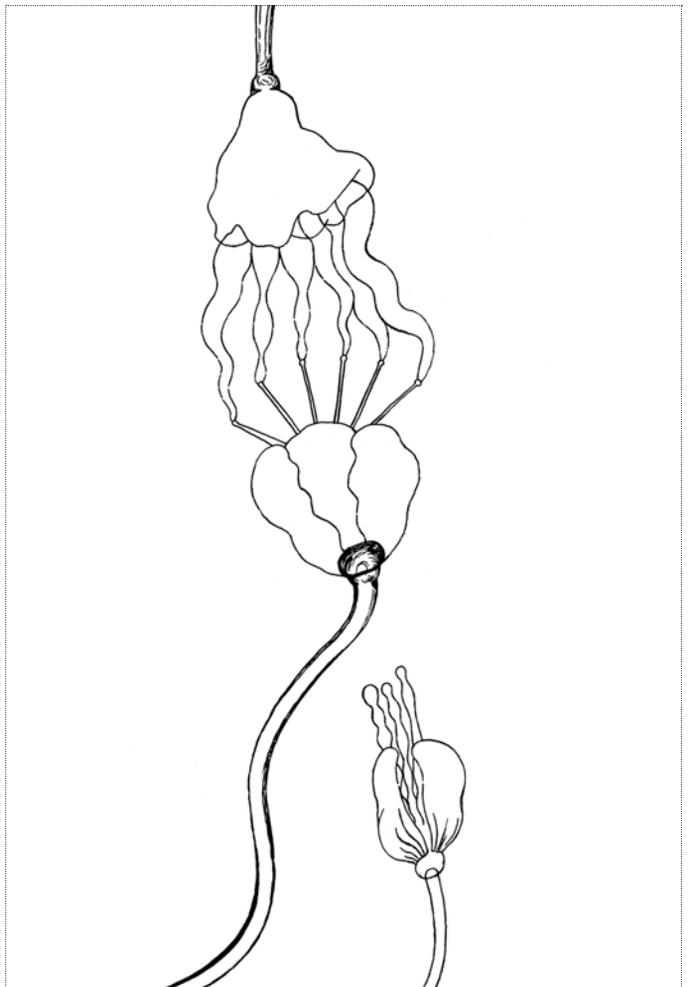
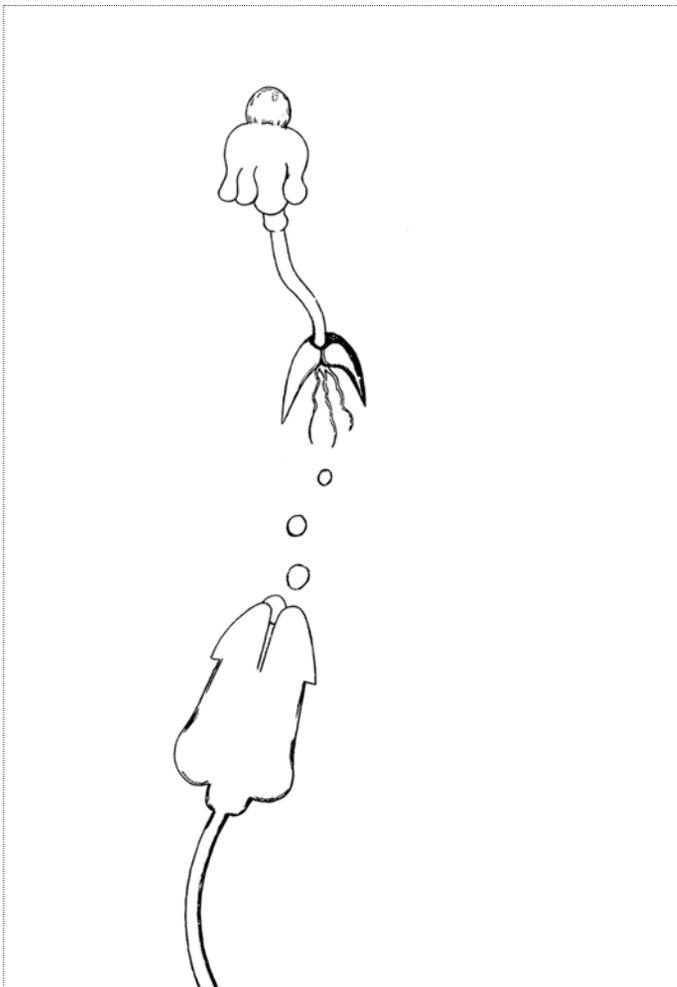
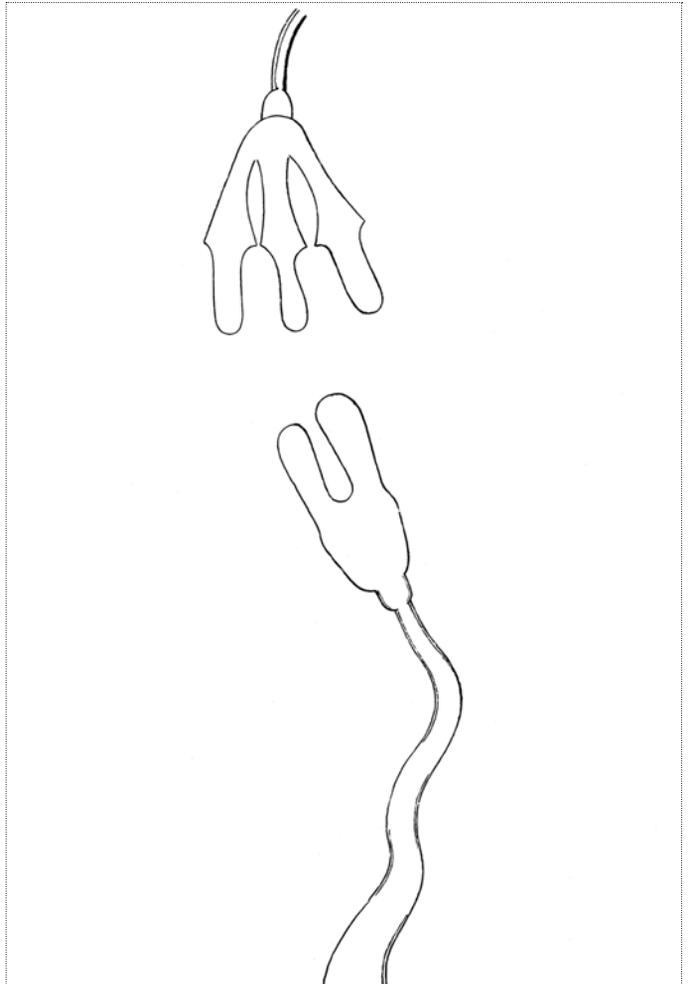
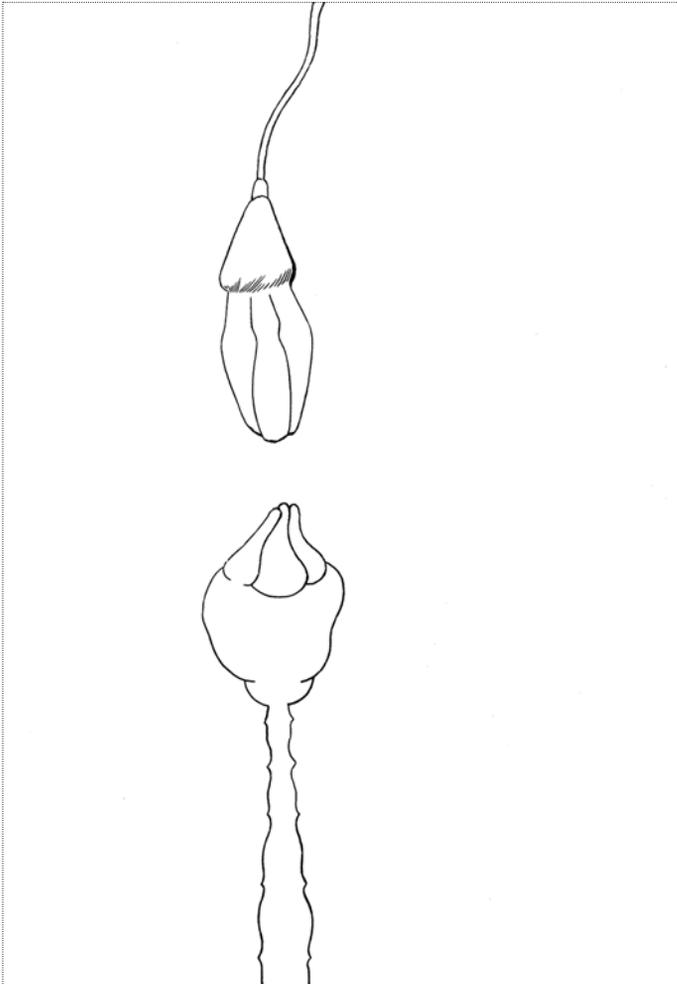


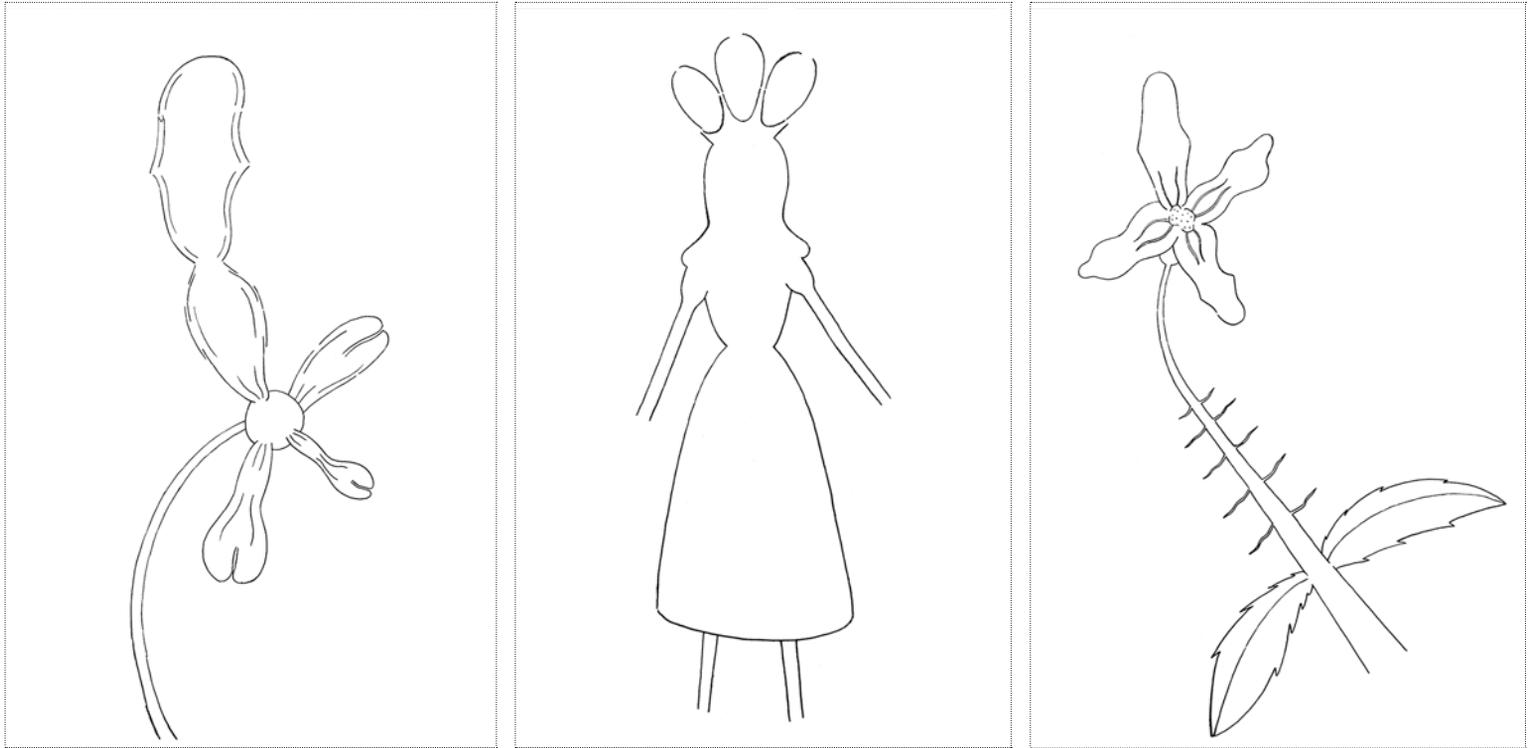


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Alkiot, 2008

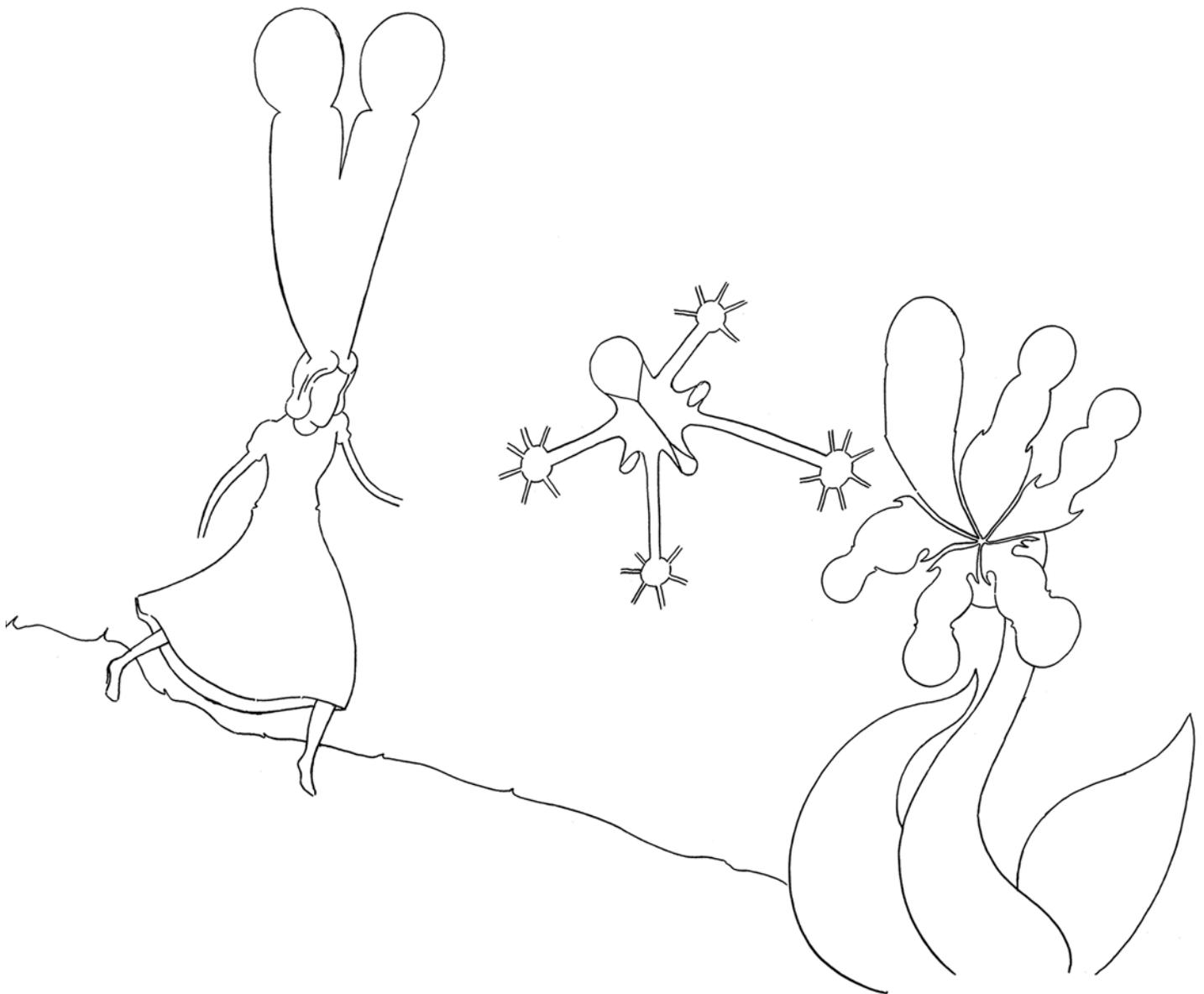




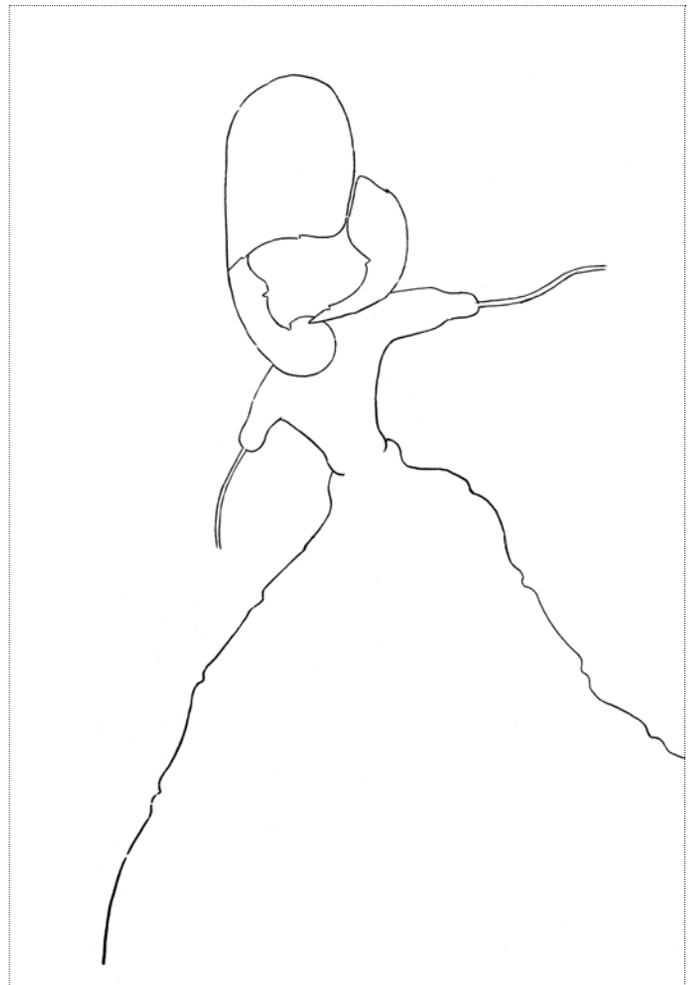
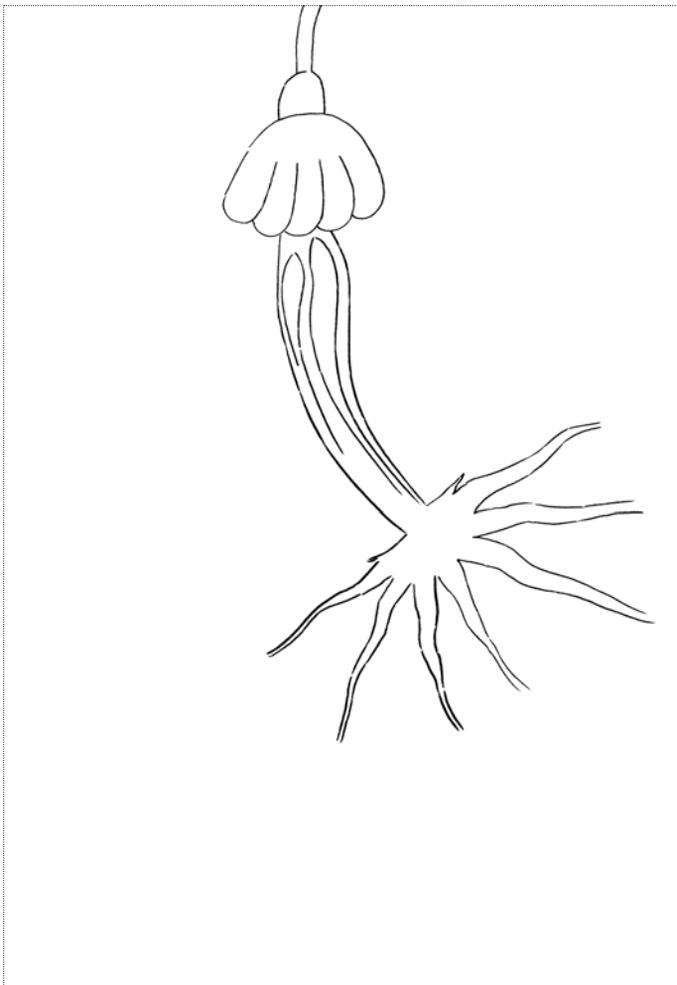
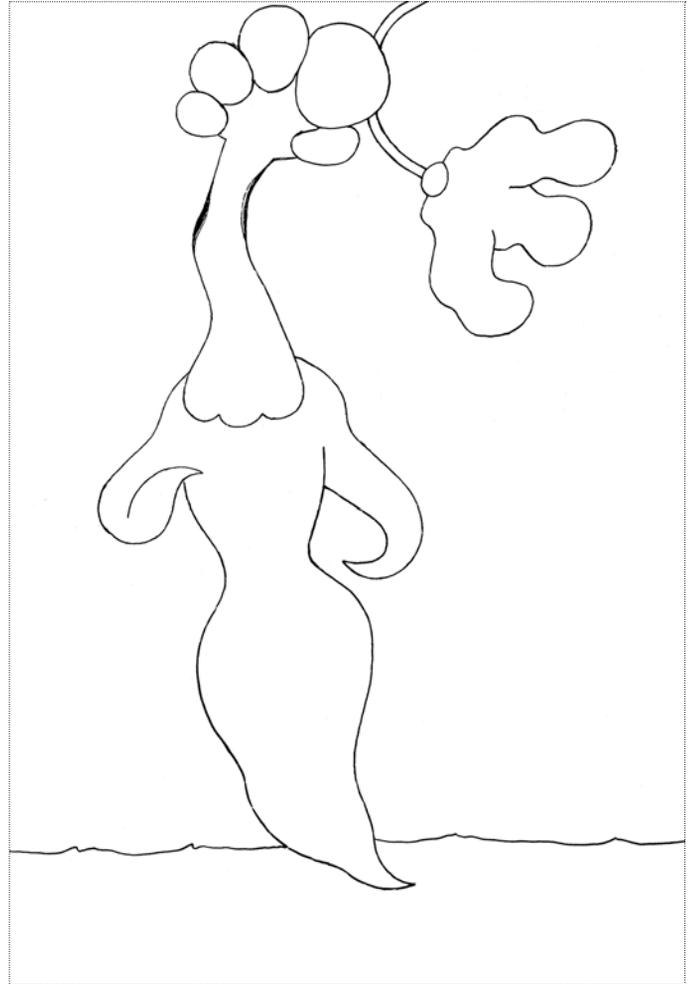
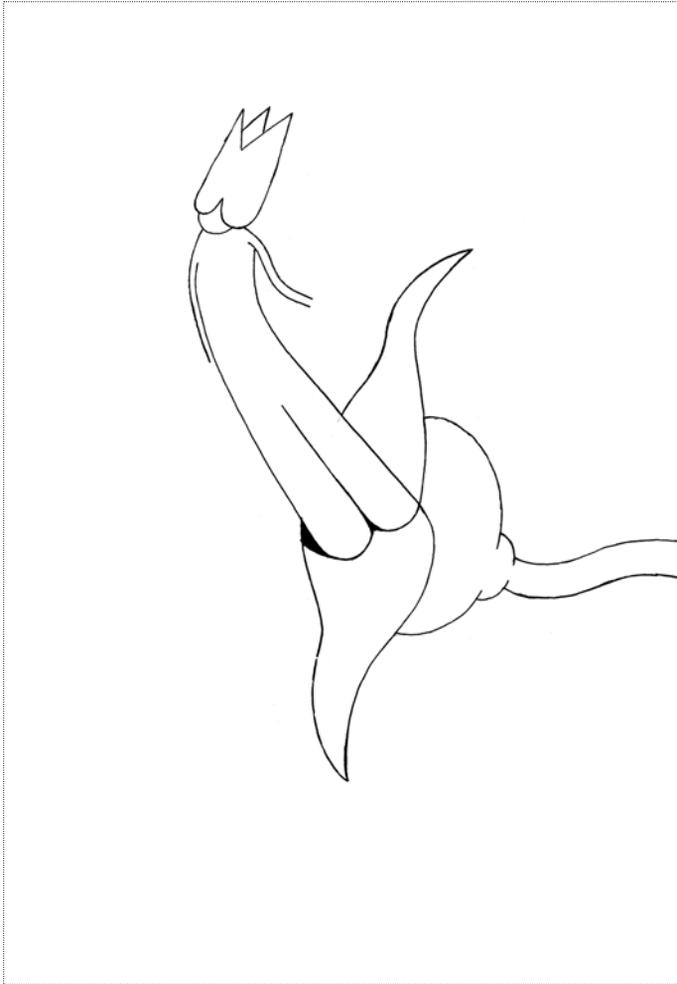
Metakollaasi, 2006

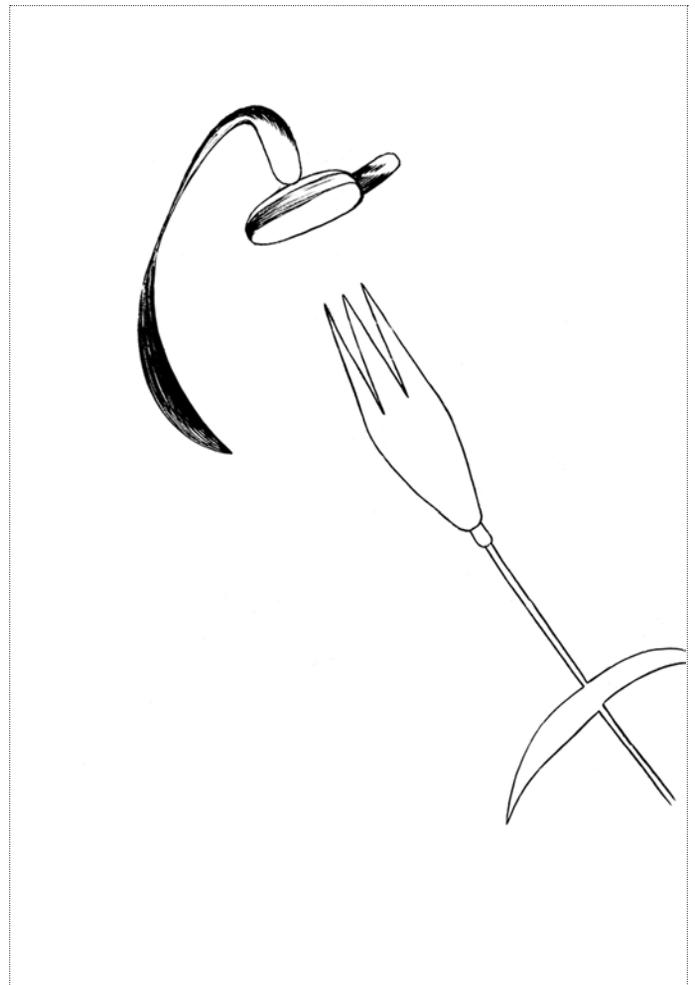
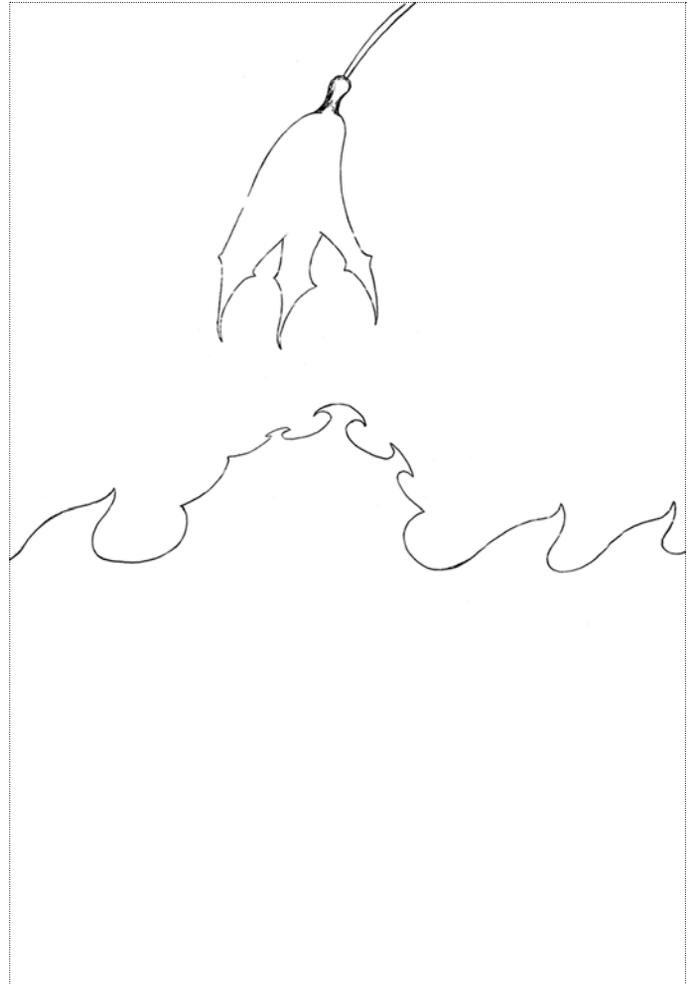
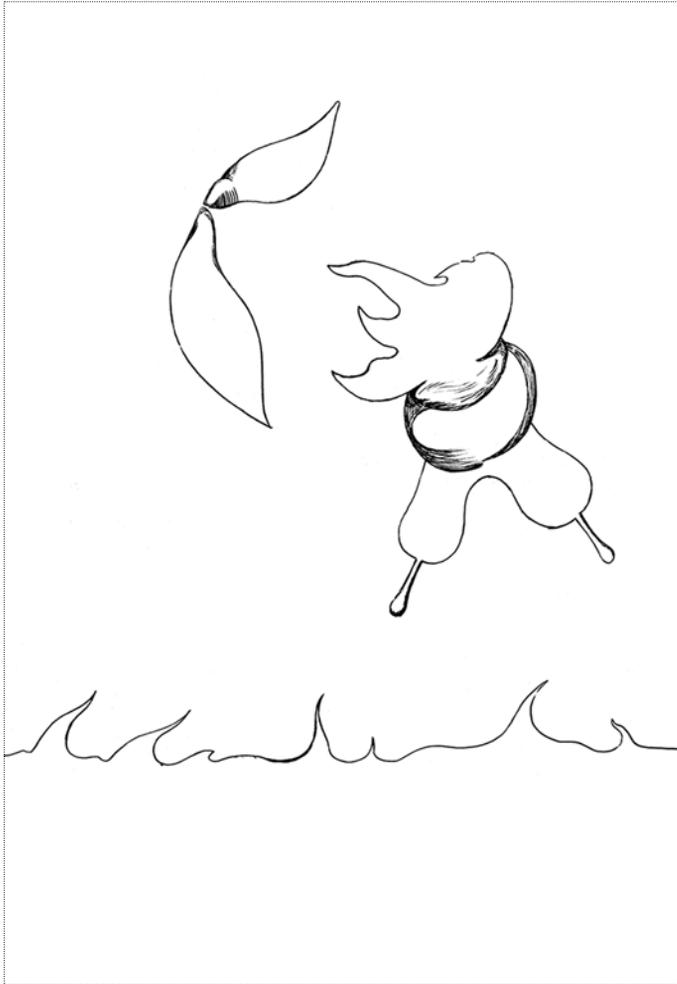


Psychoflower, 2006



Mariä Empfängnis (Maria's Conception), 2007





|+| = REAL REAL ESTATE

Art, music, film, literature – who on Earth would be interested in any of this crap? If you really want to get famous, you need to go into real estate!

The complicated story of art and real estate, especially in post-Wall Berlin, is an endless one, regardless of whether you look at it in terms of construction-related art, interior decoration, or gentrification. To cite but one example, at the end of the 1990s, a painter friend and I were the last inhabitants of a house in Mitte, and the manager of the development company probably considered the two of us as the incarnation of the darker side of evil, as hardcore profit-blocking artists. Summoned to a major negotiation showdown, we waited in the hall at her office only to discover that the walls were covered by paintings created by my friend's former professor. This lady developer turned out to be my friend's greatest collector and supporter. If there's any way to transliterate the Berlin dialect into English, we might say "Dit's de way it ghos in Ballin, ay!"

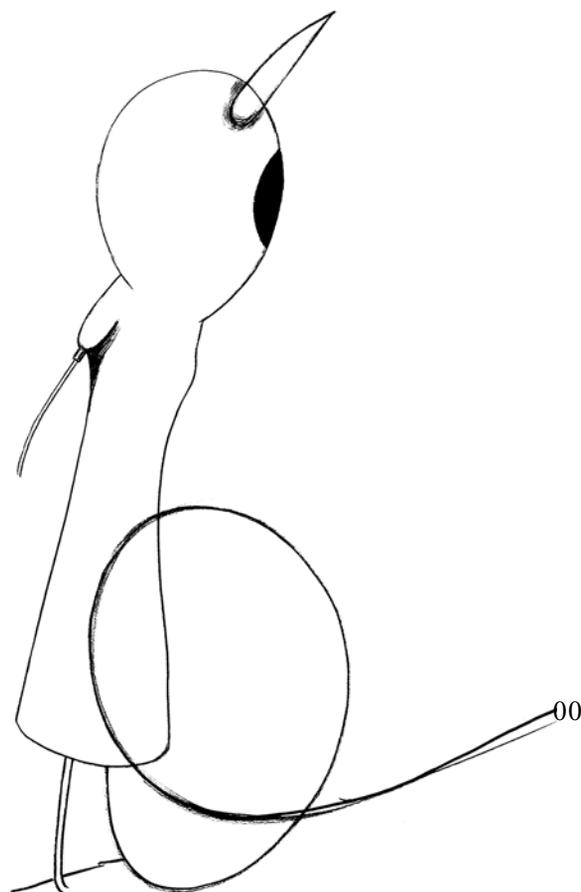
But that's one of the more pleasant stories, and it's getting on in years. Shortly after the fall of the Wall, one of the noticeable challenges was that Berlin's population actually shrunk. It was a strange situation. But suddenly, in the middle of Europe, a not-so-tiny metropolis popped up out of nowhere. What initially hatched as an ugly duckling, whose name was famous around the world, developed into a rather magnificent swan. (And here is where the Morgenvogel-esque and somewhat forced metaphor also falls). In cities like Paris, London, or New York, the rents were going through the roof. Those people who were not willing to accept that the majority of their lives would be spent toiling to make the rent – such as artists – packed up and made their way to what photographer Ira Schneider refers to as "the hole in Brandenburg." It was a huge adventure playground, essentially comprised of a missing wall and a lot of extra space.

Since then, the location-location-location has changed dramatically. For the past few years, the population of Berlin has been growing and is now in need of new residential construction. But when it comes to housing, there are other special problems. A significant percentage of the population growth is not comprised of families, but rather of singles or part-time Berliners who prefer to live alone. At the same time, international capital is tiring of these low-interest times while Berlin's concrete gold seems to be quite alluring. (This situation, however, may not continue indefinitely, as I once explored with Andreas Schaale, an expert in market cycles and real estate bubbles, in the context of our presentation *Wolkenkuckucksheim* (*Cuckoo House in the Clouds*) at the Morgenvogel Real Estate shop. In the coming years, the trend may see its end, in which case some of the new luxury rentals will be forced to reduce their prices before they implode – a scenario not without its merits for those of us "normal" Berlin residents).

In the meantime, one of the major pastimes of the 2010s is called *The Gentrification Game*, whereby the income classes push

and get pushed around from district to district. That Mitte was once a hip place to hang out is a fact known only by the somewhat more mature boys and girls in town. Neukölln finally got hit. The next likely victim will be Moabit, and sooner or later Marzahn, eventually the districts with names that a born Berliner has only ever heard tell of. But as for residing in the "happening" districts, it is one thing to live anywhere and quite another to be able to afford it. At one time, moving was considered something of an invigorating community sport, but according to many friends, a lot of people are now holding tight to their old rental agreements because moving incurs extraordinary increases in rent. (Sure, for some new Berliners the prices still seem ridiculously low, but they don't likely earn their money in the "creative industry" under Berlin conditions. The prices in these areas don't rise quite as quickly).

He who believes in the principle of supply and demand recognizes the responsibility of a city government to confront rising prices by building more public-owned housing. And wouldn't it be nice if the resources required for such a project weren't gobbled up by corruption scandals and court costs? But then just ask yourself, "Where to build?" and you begin to see the Morgenvogel aspect unfold. War-ravaged structures and vacant corner properties have become a thing of the past. The senate attempted to pinch off a sliver of the huge retired wartime airfield at Tempelhof, but a public referendum recently



What kinds of options are available? Two-room dream apartments for 300 euros are rather rare. More common are temporary rentals from one week to two years. I discard any offers with an exorbitant price tag. Affordable studios often appear on the list, as well as Berlin-international apartment exchanges. Now and then a little house somewhere in Brandenburg. A bit of this, a bit of that. And then there is always the occasional seeker of a fancy flat. People who come to Berlin as artists have started to make it a point to contact us as soon as they know they are coming. They also tell us when they depart. Once in a while, someone will unsubscribe, too, which is just fine. This only helps to keep the list – as they say in marketing speak – valid. The scenario is a bit different, for example, for advertising agencies that promote expensive contests (you agencies need no further explanation). It won't take much longer for the list to reach 10,000 subscribers.

Interesting to note is how the list has become so popular amidst certain cliques – such as the Finnish, the Israelis, the nobles, or East Coast scientists. Periodically, as web master, I have to intervene on non-artists by deleting some addresses, especially if I notice that the *Morgenvogel* “insider’s tip” has found its way into a yoga, homeopathy, or other esoteric circle. In my opinion, these people have enough cash flow and needn't, in their lustful craving, also ride the artist wave. The proliferation of “healers” and “way showers” seems to me to be an unmistakable sign of a neighborhood’s decadence.

To return to the tiresome topic of money, our nameless list also presents some direct competition, as you might expect, for related outfits such as *Craigslist* or *airbnb*. More ravenous start-up founders than ourselves could make more money by installing a fee payment system. And while this is still an option, we have never been able to take it so far, since there have always been other more interesting things to do. Such ambitions might become stronger if a more reliable payment morale existed. Unfortunately, the Internet rule seems to apply here as well – that people are not willing to pay for digital goods if they can avoid it, even when it involves such basic things as having a roof over one's head. It puts me in a really bad mood when I realize that more deals are made as a result of the list than are reflected in my bank statements. Sometimes it makes me just want to sell the list and let them pay the broker fees. But then the odd twenty or fifty lands in the right place and, once more, all is well in the world.

In the meantime, we are compensated by knowing the extent of *Morgenvogel*'s reach, particularly when I introduce myself and the not too uncommon response is a euphoric “YOU are the one with the apartment listing?!” Thank you so much for this great service,” etc., etc. One would rather be commended for his magnificent texts or great music, but alas... well, I already explained that in the beginning.

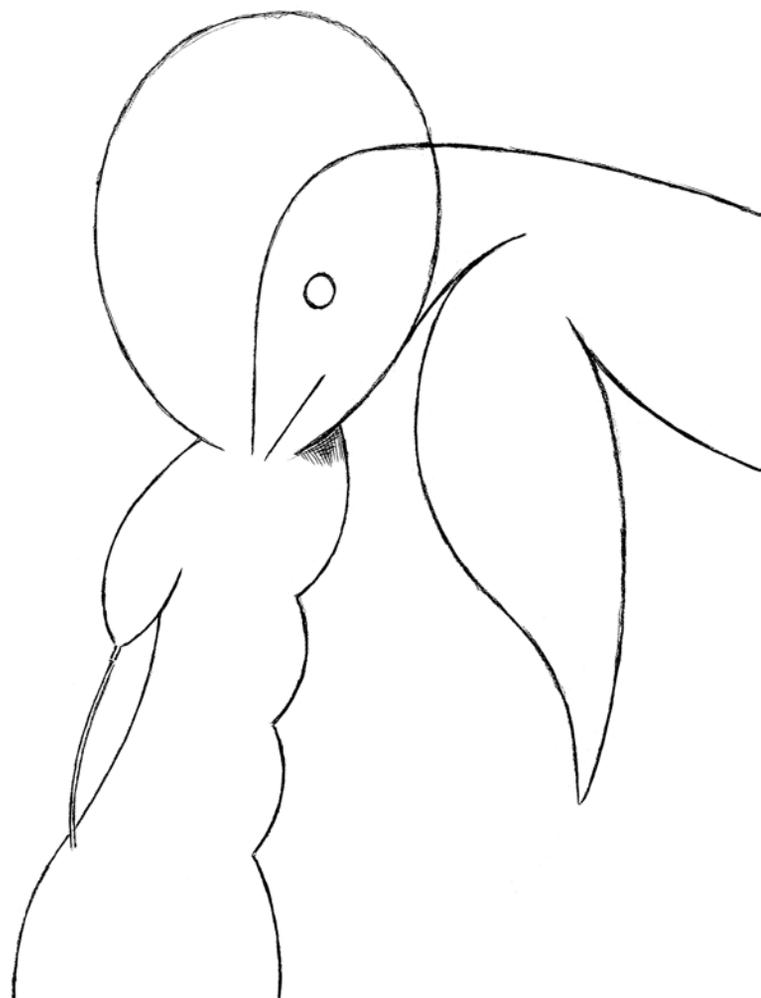




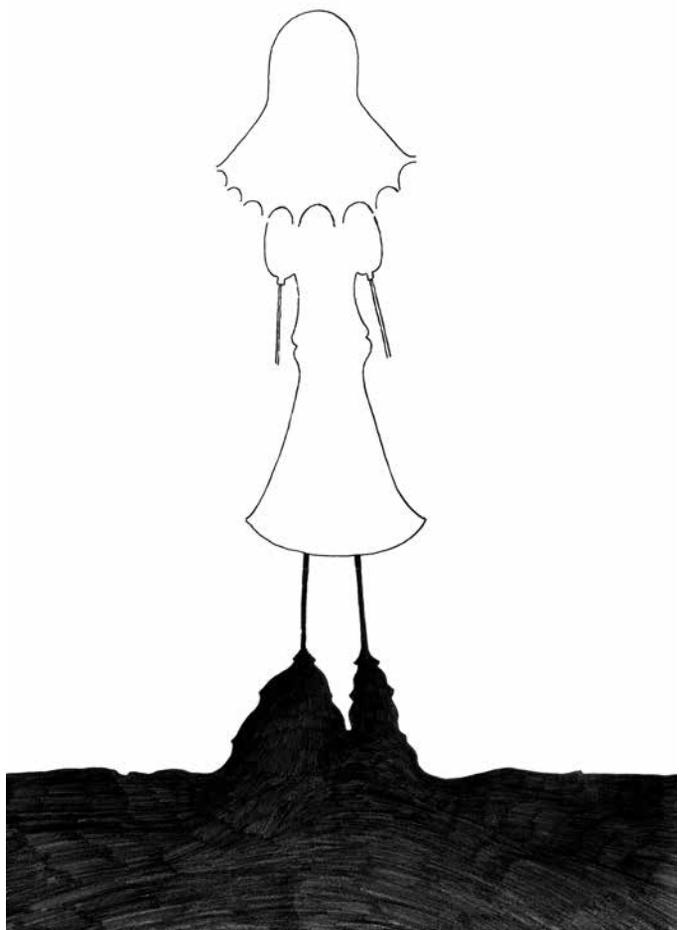
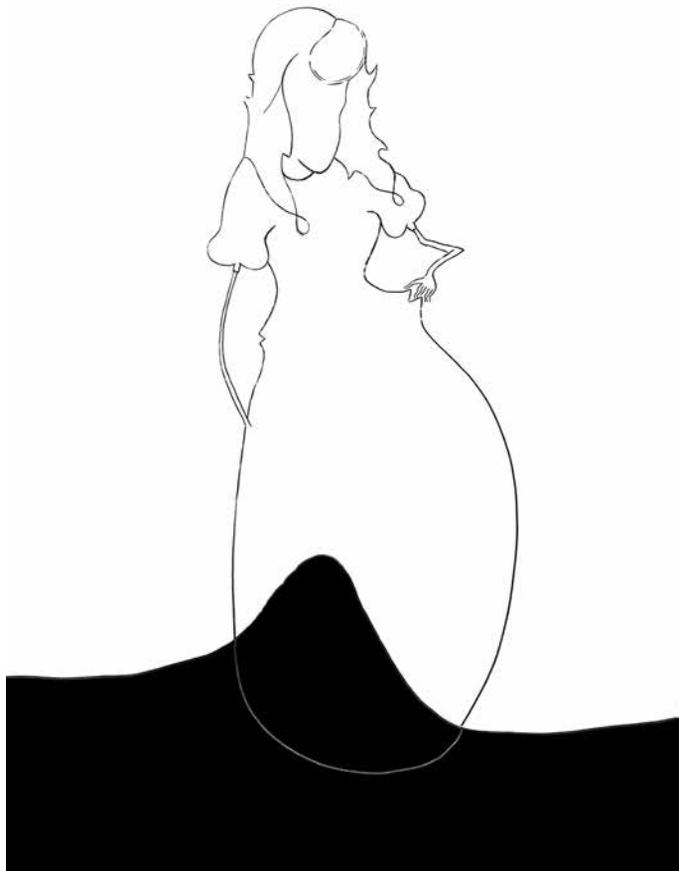
Fig. A: A successful example for the installation and acceptance of Morgenvogel houses. Sometimes it takes a year, sometimes just seconds to attract the target group. Zionskirchplatz, Berlin Mitte, 2012.

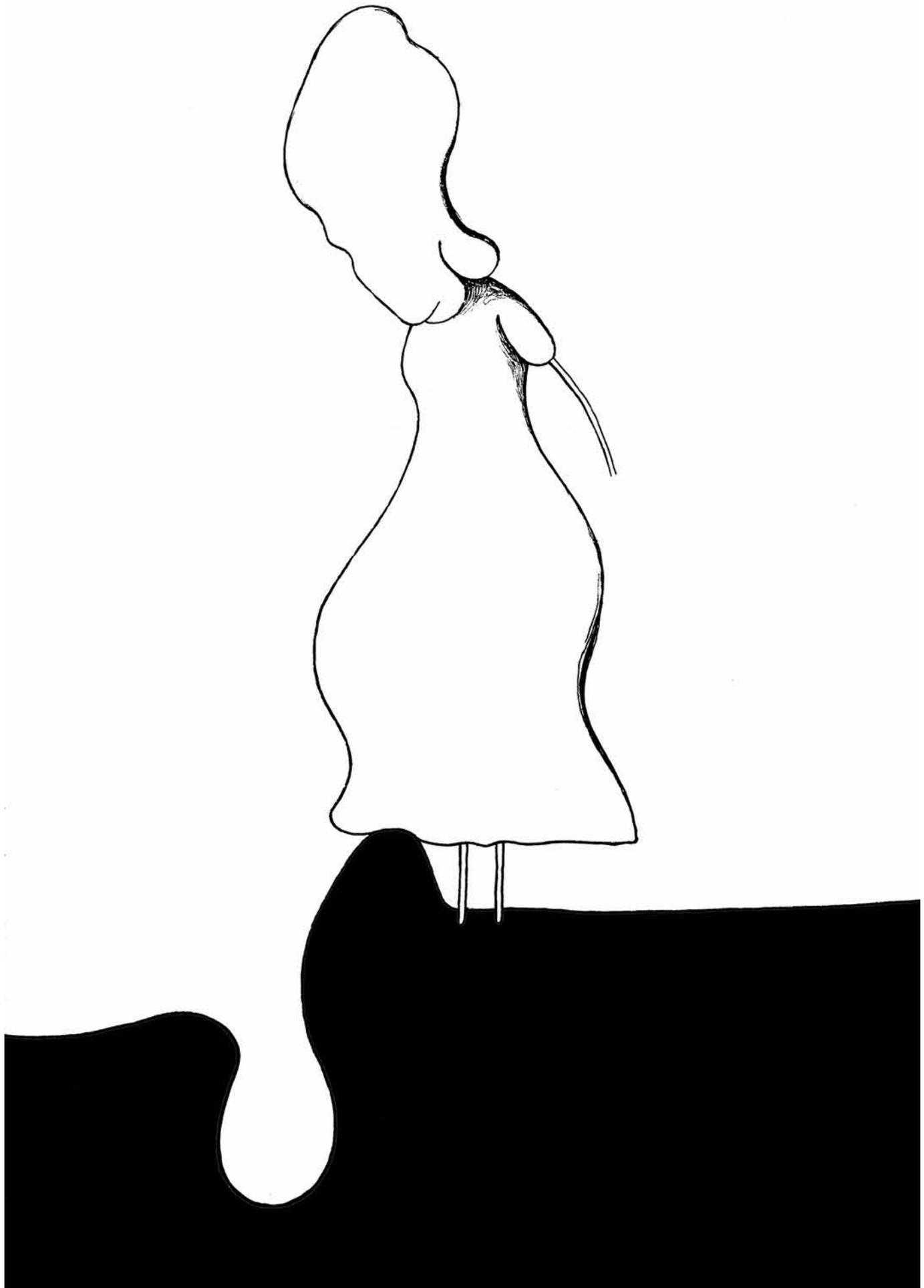


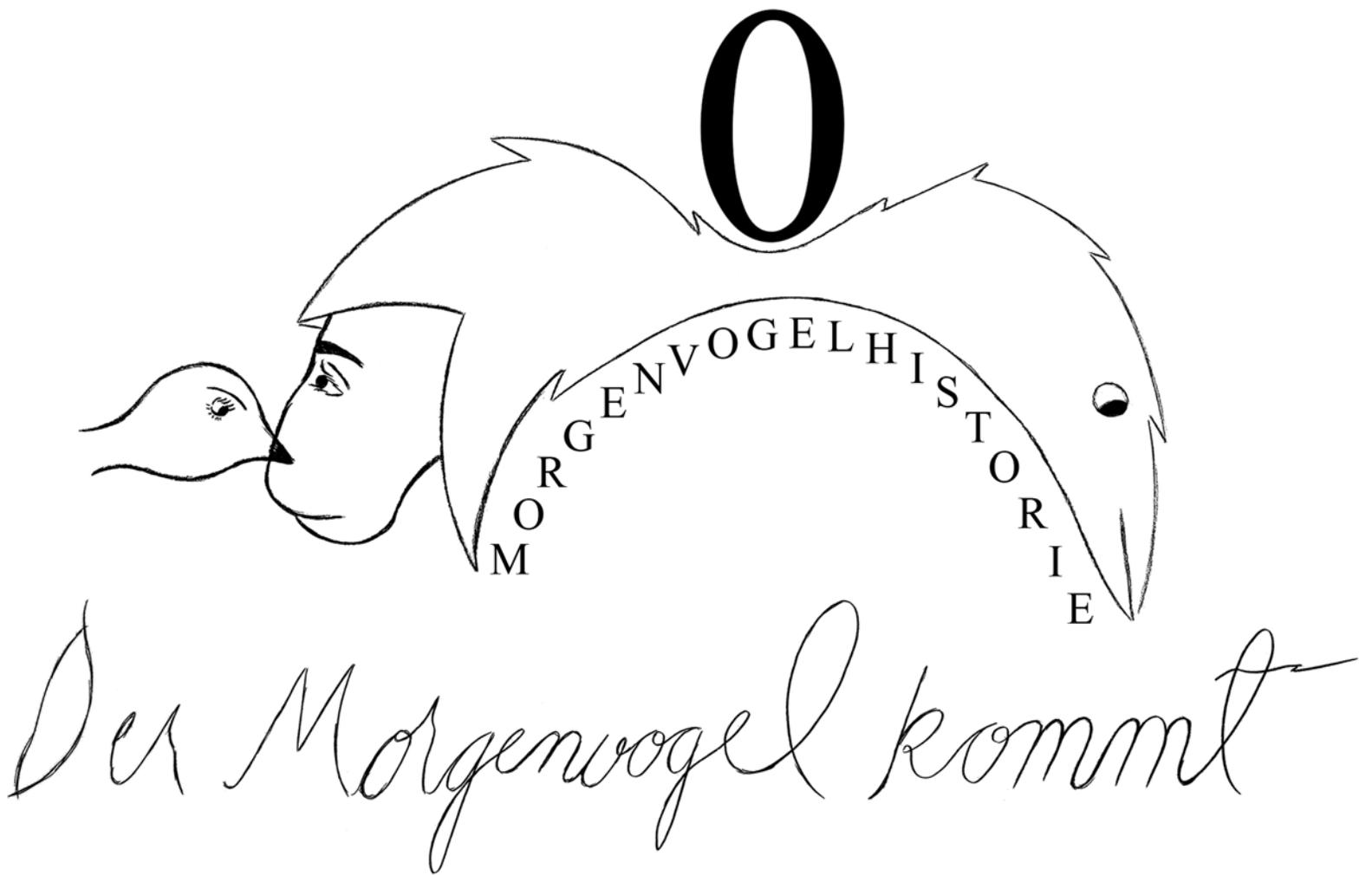
Fig. B: Is the tree cut off, you cannot fix it with Photoshop. The same situation at the same place a year later: tree gone, birdhouse gone, birds gone. Some more death – it motivates our mission.

PS: These Morgenvogel houses that Berlin parks commission take off when cutting down the trees are hung up again at the nearby Weinbergspark. On this occasion they told us that Berlin parks commission actually appreciates hang up birdhouses on public ground. They do not have a budget for this themselves.

PPS 2014: Meanwhile they planted a lot of new trees and bushes on Zionskirchplatz. Especially bushes are very important for birds.







In the Eighties I had a logo and a slogan, „Der Morgenvogel kommt“ (Morningbird is coming). There was a rocket in the middle of a female face, for me a symbol of space travelling – the dream of my youth.

Later on there came a lot of other titles and fantasies. But time after time the Morgenvogel came back again, in different forms, like drawings, objects, animations, photos, actions, installations, sound works, performances. The latest extension was Morgenvogel Real Estate, together with Manuel.

In pages 94-99 you can see a small part of historical Morgenvogel highlights, before MVRE. The drawings are mostly made with a thick Edding marker on old East German computer paper – lots of flying eyes in endless series, forms that eventually look like birds.





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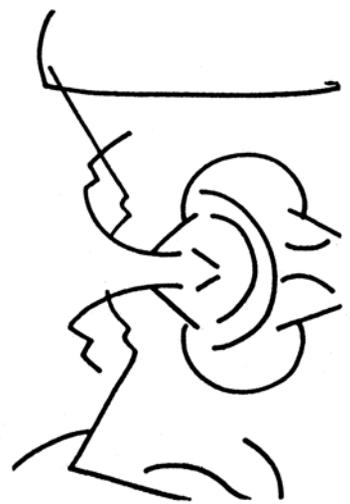
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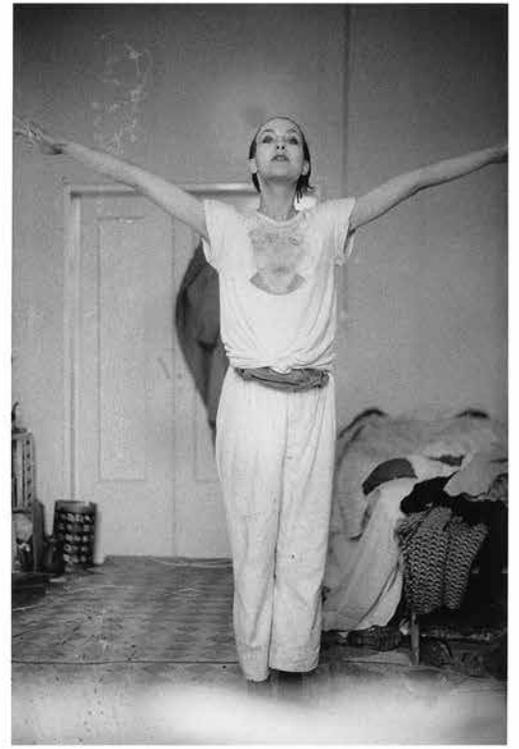
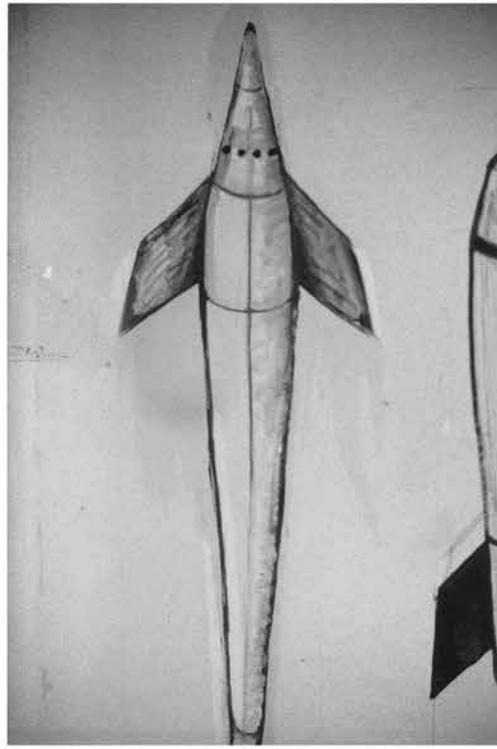
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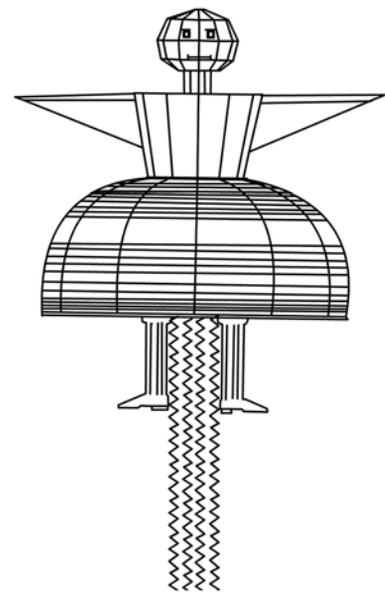
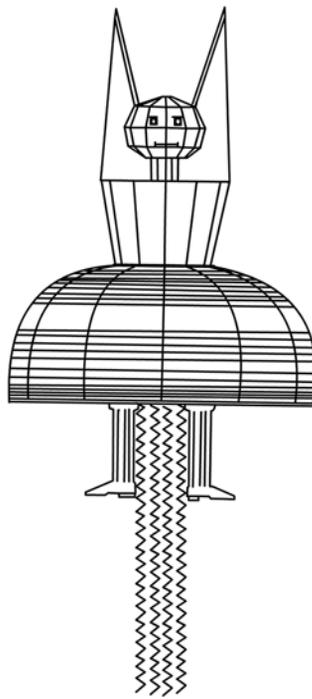
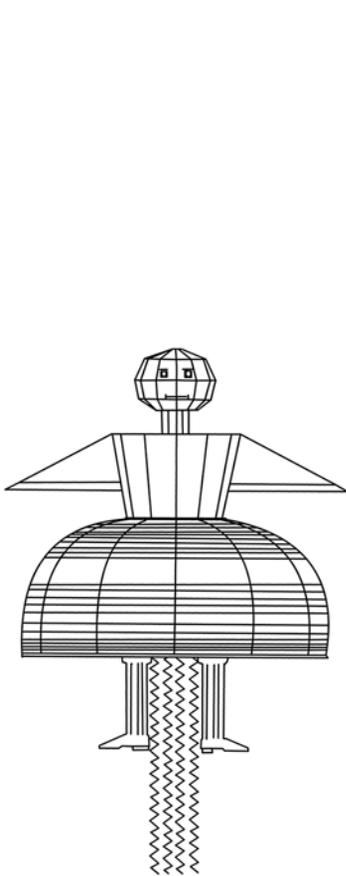
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BOB'00





Mensch Maschine Revolution, Flugübungen (Man Machine Revolution, Flight Exercises), 1987



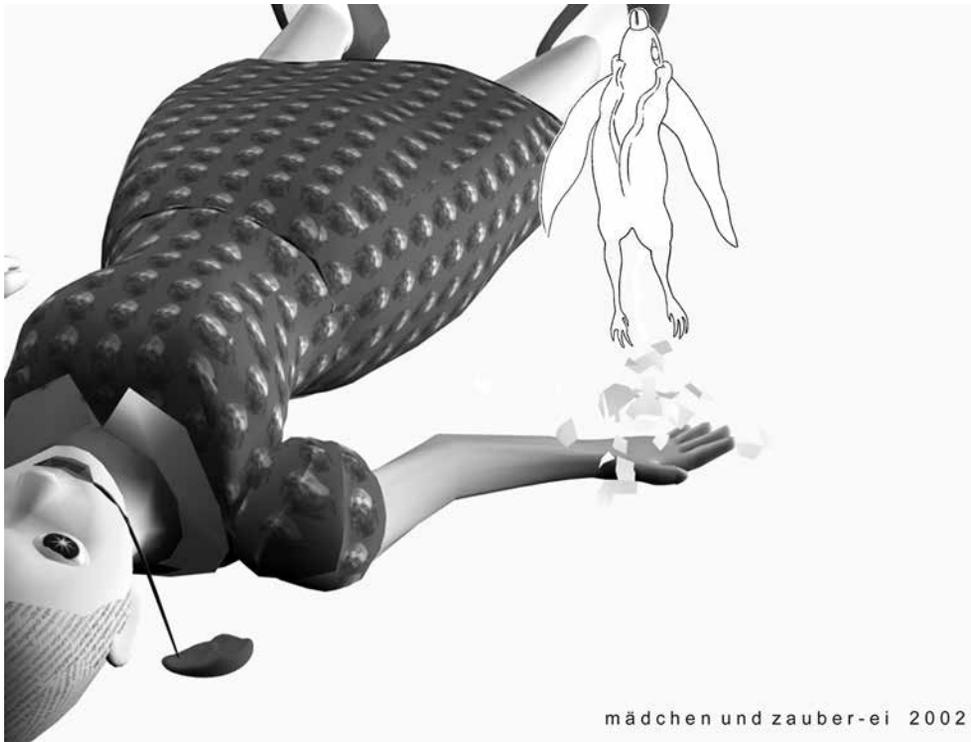
Rocketmädel, Atari-Grafik, 1995



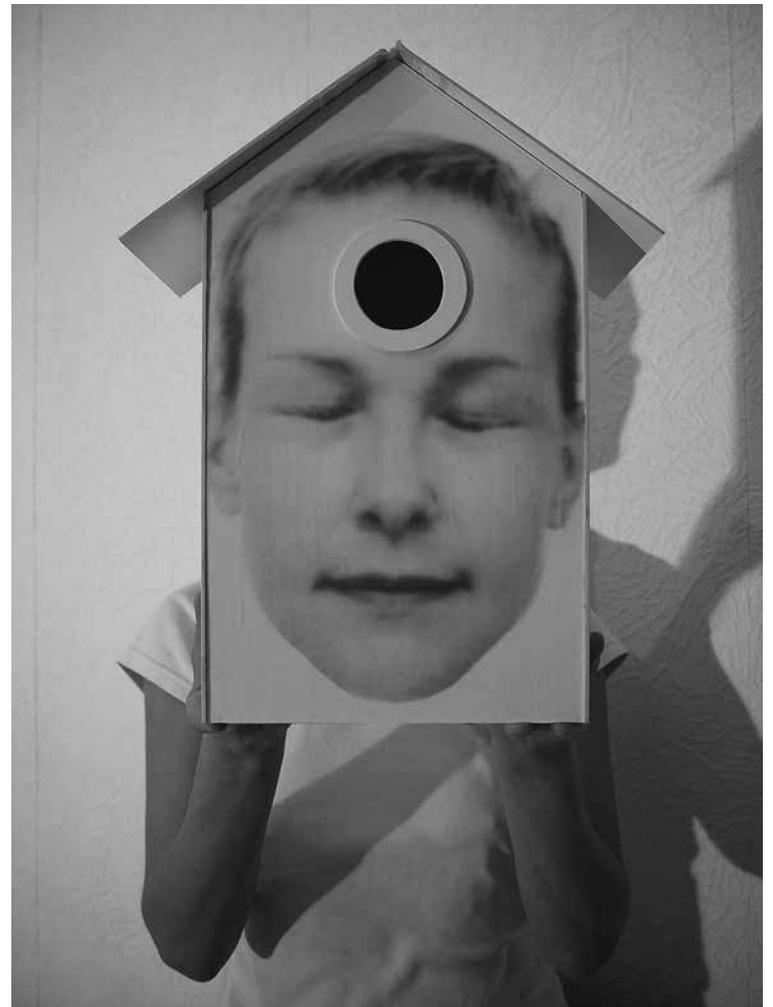
Fir Tree Birds, Kollaasi, 1997



Flying Eyes, 1994



Title frame of 3D animation *Mädchen und Zauber-Ei* (*Girl and The Magic Egg*), 2002



Birdhouse in Your Soul,
Birdhouse from cardboard with self-portrait, 1999

By that time the real birds started to fly higher in my thoughts. There also came a personal moment when my mother told me – after several Morgenvogel exhibitions – that my father was actually called “Morgenvogel” in his youth. Grandfather had learned some German in school like so many Finns in those days, and called him that name because my father used to look so much at the sky and dream. Nowadays my father is a great friend of birds, and from him I also overtook the first prototype for the birdhouses, which I am offering as an edition at Morgenvogel Real Estate. MLR



We thank all the birds in Keihärinkoski, middle Finland, who inspired us for this book: Western capercaillies, white wagtails, eagles, buteos, black-throated loons, common goldeneyes, whooper swans, gulls, crows, magpies, swallows, woodpeckers, thrushes, tits, pied flycatchers, willow warblers, and many others. And thanks also to their Berlin colleagues: Blackbirds, jays, cranes, swifts, tits, pigeons and kestrels, like also gulls and woodpeckers, ducks, magpies and crows and greenfinches, redstarts, robins, nuthatches, nightingales, starlings, and last but not least the city sparrows. And several lizards, red squirrels, rabbits, elks, foxes, wild pigs, cats and – yes – dogs, namely Ace, Akimo, Bolle, Dolly, Esther, Kira, Mika, Pipsa, Poju, Sadie, and Valie.

We do not want to bother you with a list of our special friends among insects and fishes.

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Drawings and photos from Maria-Leena Räihälä and texts from Manuel Bonik

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