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Death Note.

16 852 characters without spaces. 3 345 words. 9 pages

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OSLO NATIONAL ACADEMY OF THE ARTS  
THE ACADEMY OF FINE ART  
MA ESSAY

# — DEATH NOTE —

16 852 CHARACTERS WITHOUT SPACES

3 345 WORDS

9 PAGES

BY: JON VOGT ENGELAND

FEBRUARY 2015

My name is Jon Vogt Engeland and this is my death note.

I was several years ago recruited as an informant and undercover agent by PST (Norwegian Police Security Service). My object was to infiltrate the Norwegian branch of contemporary art. PST-agents first approached me right after I'd completed high school and was applying for higher education. They said my family- and class background, my cultural interest and political engagement gave me a perfect alibi for such a venture. I was told I would play a crucial role in the wellbeing of the nation. The safety of the Norwegian people depended on me. I was twenty years old and I was thirsty for adventure. University didn't lead me into temptation so they did not have to argue further.

After all ideologies and religions had reached the mutual agreement of simply ceasing a few years earlier there were global speculations in wherefrom the next serious terrorist threat would originate from. The panic of not having a defined opposite was extraordinary. In this vacuum the Intelligence Services across the world found themselves, for the first time, in lack of enemies. They scanned the remains of cultural producers and metaphysical manufacturers for an enemy that would prove more resistant than ideology and religion. Among them they found Fine Art. As the historians could tell them, the activity of Fine Art had far preceded the occurrence of any organised collections of belief, any cultural system or any coherent narrative of symbols whatsoever, and would by far exceed any of these. They were told Fine Art would survive an atomic war, along with the cockroaches. Under the International Summit of Intelligence Services the choice of enemy fell on Fine Art in favour of the cockroaches.

————— VIDERI QUAM ESSE —————

“Every time the President comes up with a new secret tactic to take down al Qaeda, the media blows its cover. Torture, monitoring our phone calls, monitoring our emails, secret prisons, all perfectly reasonable temporary concessions of freedom that will only be in effect as long as our never-ending war on terror” - Stephen Colbert on *The Colbert Report*.

In the shape of Fine Art terror rematerialised from the ashes. All the time the Intelligence Services had occupied themselves with ideologically and religiously informed threats artists had thrived freely without bounds. Now the Intelligence Services realised they were being painfully arrears. A vast recruitment program was launched to educate and assign undercover agents like me. The service proved dangerous, many did never return from their missions buried deep into the art community. However, the tragedy of an informant were taken on the expense of the terrorists and not the Intelligence Services. They could sprinkle us into conflict zones only to see a fare share of public support in return. Diminishing budgets were again inflated and governmental earmarks resumed frequent appearance. To an intelligence that after ideology and religion had been considered obsolete all this simply proved to be Christmas.

Over his fireplace Colbert have had the latin words *Videri Quam Esse* engraved, meaning something like: “to seem to be rather than to be”. Quoting Niccolò Machiavelli he exposes a willingness to manipulate his audience as a news anchor in the interest of society as a whole. Machiavellian thought had an omnipresence in the final age of ideology and religion, and was regarded as a main contributor to their suspension. Modes of manipulation, deceit, dishonour and general psychopathic traits had to be revitalised to overcome the new threat in Fine Art. “I can add colours to the chameleon, Change shapes with Proteus for advantages”, (Shakespeare, *Henry VI*) the PST agents chanted to me. “Rules and borders that restrict us don’t apply to artists. We must break the exact same rules as the artists break if we are to catch up with them, and further more if we are to get them. The distance between us and them must collapse. You must merge with the artists and no one must see the difference between you and them.”

They stationed me at Blindern, Oslo, as an Art History student. With a fare share of youthful courage and patriotic ambition I studied the course of history that had enabled this terrorist organisation to rise. Fine Art started in the caves and hollows east of the Mediterranean. No one made Fine Art in broad daylight yet. Some time later it discreetly crawled up onto small rocks and everyday objects, almost without alerting normal people. Jars, combs, tiles, weapons and jewellery turned into art, unnoticed. Later on it spread onto heroes, mythical creatures and gods like a sexually transmittable disease. It seemed heroes and gods had a particular vivid imagination concerning everyday objects. On from there it infected the surrounding buildings, columns, temples,

water fountains, walls, churches, monuments and bridges, there were no limit really to what the heroes, beasts and gods would regard as sexual receivers. Fine Art manifested itself as a plague more persistent than genital warts. Measures had to be taken and the iconoclasm was launched. For a long time all artistic expressions were fought like Lucifer himself, but Lucifer knew his way around. He hid in cupboards and sheds, in pockets and pants. Fine Art vanished from the surfaces of scrutiny but persisted and flourished in the margins and fractures. At this point in time reality had crumbled into a conditions of dissolution and fractures appeared everywhere. Reality was on the verge to disintegrate into complete pulverisation. But when the mill grinds grain into flour, Lucifer joins flour into bread. To secure a minimum of continuum the iconoclasm was lifted and Lucifer could open his cupboards and sheds, his pockets and pants and reveal himself more virile than ever. His face would be on sacred surfaces and his name on holy tongs. Fine Art would expand its territory increasingly in all directions towards the present until the world was united under one creative, terrible, rule.

—— ESSE QUAM VIDERI ——

Being a chameleon always mimicking the environment, more than anything, Machiavelli was always a chameleon. His wily quote inverts the meaning of it's opposite original, the latin maxim *Esse Quam Videri*, meaning "to be, rather than to seem", first appearing in the tragic works of Aeschylus and later on in Cicero's writing on rhetoric. The maxim has become incredibly popular as representational mottos for educational institutions, fraternities, and distinguished family lines. It conveys characteristics like integrity, authenticity and soberness, properties PST had as their object to protect, but with its very opposites. I had to learn to bury these properties in myself and rather breed my dishonest, corrupt and disruptive abilities in order to successfully blend into the art world.

After studying the history of Fine Art PST re-stationed me to Goldsmiths, London, a place known for fostering one of the most dangerous generations of vicious artists called the YBAs. Later generations had clearly been inspired by their predecessors because the city was a hotbed for terrorist activity. My colleagues at Goldsmiths didn't confine their activity within the walls of designated art galleries and museums. They downright occupied warehouses, old factory premises,

abandoned apartments and garages. It was overwhelming to see a terror regime operate so openly with no apparent resistance from the city police force. I learned that London had chosen a tactic that allowed artists to produce art openly, in fear that restriction and exclusion only would turn Fine Art into a tinderbox. At the same time it had cut all financial ties to the the art world in hope that hunger and poverty would limit the ever rising number of artists. So far it had only proved that artists would rather starve than stop making art.

The wild ravages by the YBAs in the 90's and the further devastations by their descendants in the 00's had left certain parts of London in social and economic depression. The resourceful population, the local businesses and the bustling street life were forced out in favour of a homogenous community defined by the rule of art and its leading figures. There were reports claiming the city police forces simply didn't dare to enter some of these areas, some of which had developed into isolated parallel societies. The government was criticised for failing in integrating artists and adolescents disposed for art into the greater British society. A general attitude of contempt for artists was growing in the British population.

After experiencing the horrors of London, PST sent me to Konstfack, Stockholm. I realised Goldsmiths had an almost legendary status there and I was practically regarded as a direct descendant of the notorious YBAs. When I informed them about my familiarity with Gillian Wearing and Edgar Schmitz they were overcome with enthusiasm. These were prophets of great moral inspiration and it gave me a serious advantage in infiltrating the higher ranks of the art community. Together with colleagues of mine and inspired by what I had seen in London we founded an artist driven project space working according to guerrilla tactics. In the terrain of Stockholm we established a network of secret art hubs connected by invisible underground tunnels. It was impossible to predict where we would appear next. This enabled me to have eyes and ears on virtually everything that was going on in the art world and the intelligence I gathered informed several anti-terror operations throughout the time I spent there.

At some point during their career every undercover agent have to face the choice of becoming an accomplice of an act of terror or blow their cover. No one in the art community can only be a bystander over a longer period of time. Then they will be excluded at best. This is a deliberate

strategy to detect and expose moles. When I had to face this choice for the first time I was morally bewildered. Should I keep my path clean and blow my cover? Or should I commit this act of terror and continue my work against greater threats? I seriously considered informing my colleagues about my status as a PST informant and try to persuade them to quit their engagement with Fine Art. PST picked up on my doubts and ordered me to stop. “Your job is to collect intelligence about terrorists, not to make them stop being terrorists. The way you carry on we will all be out of jobs soon”. I was forced to execute acts of terror against civilians, for the greater good of the civilised world. I will not deny the psychological traumas this inflicted upon me.

—— ESSE NON VIDERI ——

A variation of *Esse Quam Videri* is the Wallenberg family motto *Esse non Videri*. It has in different contexts incorrectly been translated into “to be, not to be seen”, but means rather “to be, not to seem”. Interestingly, the incorrect translation might serve better in representing the Swedish Wallenberg family. For a couple of centuries they have dominated Swedish finance and at the same time managed to keep a minimal public profile. To the average Swedish citizen, the Wallenbergs are invisible. On my way back to Norway from Stockholm I dwelled on this and I decided to adopt the motto as a guidance for my operation in the Oslo art scene.

Ever since the abolition of ideology and religion there had been heated public discussions in all media about the new threat in Fine Art. The popular demand was that immediate measures had to be taken, and that they could not be forceful or efficient enough. Politicians saw the opportunity to score points in presenting extensive social and military programs to limit and throttle the recruitment to the art community. The social programs would target individuals who, judging by their demographic and social background, was predisposed for engaging in art production, and they would be implemented into all institutions covering the the span of a human life, from the labour ward to the morgue. Cash-for-care subsidy was proposed to be withdrawn from guardians with artistic sympathies if they did not show effort to integrate their offspring into civil society. Unemployment benefits would not be paid if someone was proven to participate in any kind of artistic activity. The corpse of recognised artists would be buried at sea in order not to have their

grave turned into a pilgrimage for aspiring artist. The proposed military programs revolved around neutralising specific targets with clinical precision for deterrent effects. Several of them were carried out with massive effect. The operation against the artistic magazine Charlie Hebdo in January 2015, where the French Secret Intelligence cooperated with paramilitary forces, resulted in 17 dead terrorists and 22 wounded, and massive public condemnation of Fine Art. Also, the upgrading of the Swedish artist Lars Vilks' status as a military target has not led to his termination yet, but has shown a series of successful armed operations causing several wounded and neutralised accomplices, the most recent in February 2015 in Copenhagen. Lars Vilks has had to go underground and cannot appear in public anymore to propagate the violent and oppressive nature of Fine Art.

Officials have also tried to follow and choke the channels in which the artist community are feeding and nurturing off of the government budget. Few knew how bad the situation were until Julia Brännström addressed the issue at the national congress of the Norwegian far-right-wing party FrP (The Progress Party) in 2011 saying: "Norway is a nation with great economical resources, but not many notice the wealth we dispose. If it's one profession that has forced a straw right down in the wallets of the common man it must be the artists. The 'Red-Greens' [Stoltenberg's Second Cabinet, a coalition between the Labour Party, the Socialist Left Party and the Centre Party from 2005 to 2013] are offering scholarships no other profession see the equal of. The artists can be granted a scholarship of 208 000 NOK every year until the day they retire. With this sum of money one would think that these artists had to benefit society, but no, they have no requirement of benefiting anyone. What does society get in return for these money?" Brännström asks rhetorically, and the answer is, of course, terror. Through intricate mazes of governmental funding, artists had acquired direct access to some of these funds, and were using them entirely according to their own agenda. Many conspiracy theories were launched, arguing the state was conniving with the art community. The allegations were never proven, and the 'Red-Green' coalition as well as the subsequent 'Blue-Blue' coalition (Solberg's Cabinet consisting of the Conservative Party and the Progress Party) did both show extensive effort in cutting any economical ties between the government and the art community.

In 2014 the Ministry of Culture of Norway initiated an investigation into how cultural funds leaked onto artistic activity. The report handed over to the Minister of Culture Thorhild Widvey in January 2015 was truly shocking. According to the report each individual visual artist eared no less than an average of 89 000 NOK in 2013 on their artistic activities. That's only a decrease of 11,2% from 2006, a far less decline than what the politicians had aimed for and promised. Not only could artists still perform their artistic activities relatively undisrupted, they were also paid for it in Norwegian tax money. The report confirmed a major concern in the Norwegian population: the state is, despite universal political consensus and with national security at interest, still funding terrorism with scholarships and grants distributed through cultural and financial institutions. The report also showed that artists were taking on civil labour to finance their terror production. It was a growing concern that terrorists would force out normal law abiding citizens of the labour market and redistribute the funds into Fine Art.

The efficiency of the contemporary art terrorism was due to the vast span of production methods and performance modes. Fine Art had expanded to potentially include any material and media: a contemporary artist could turn anything into art. It was therefore a challenge to identify the artists, as a perfectly normal-looking activity easily could turn out to be terrorist activity. They would also use readymades or outsource parts or the entirety of the physical art production, and authorities had little if any competence in distinguishing items of art from normal objects. These were all strategical techniques deliberately developed to serve as smokescreens and avoid official attention. Part of my work as an informant was to keep my ear to the ground and report when a piece of work was to be shipped to Norway. When the art piece arrived at the boarder, customs would confiscate and annihilate it, and prosecute those involved. In return artists had built a vast international network exceeding boarders and oceans through social media to the point where physical relocation of objects and personnel was simply redundant. I experienced an example of this during a field trip to New York where I visited the terrorist cell The Artist's Institute. In a period from Ferbruary to August 2014 the French artist Pierre Huyghe conducted an art project there without even visiting the place. Detailed instructions were communicated to producers on location who executed and assembled his artworks to a truly devastating result. The project included living spiders, rat pheromone and an element of sanding layers of paint off of the walls on the premises. New York

authorities were understandably helpless in identifying and preventing this attack before it was too late.

While Pierre Huyghe swore to the sniper rifle and the trigger by remote control others still insisted on the efficiency of the handmade artwork and melee weapon. As part of his exhibition *Idiosyncrasy Means Allergy* at UKS (Young Artist's Society) in Oslo, Ivan Galuzin exhibited reproductions of so called "trench knives": weapons designed for optimal efficiency in melee combat. This proves a prevailing will in the art community to engage in terrorist actions in their local communities and neighbourhoods. We are facing a violent threat from both domestic and international sources and must prepare for defence by attack in forms of drone programs and by sending troops abroad as well as extensive surveillance of our own population and a ruthless judiciary.

At this point I'm scared I'll never return to civil society alive. And to tell you the truth, if I had the option I'm not sure if I'd want to. I've been too scarred by the terror I've witnessed and the atrocities I've committed. Fine Art has taken its toll on my very soul. I have no longer any hope of functioning as a citizen outside the context of the art community, I know no other mode of operation anymore, I've let myself be bitten by the genital warts. I believe that in order to prevent a massive warts-outbreak, someone, me, need to go further than what PST have the possibility to do at the moment. I can reach deeper into enemy territory than anyone, but only if I cut the ties to PST altogether. I have therefore decided to cease all communication. Please don't reach out for contact, don't come looking for me, this will be my last report. However, my work against Fine Art will only continue. I will operate solely in clandestine mode, my guise will be seamless, my skin impenetrable. My life is already dedicated to the battle, now I have to perform my duties, and I do not take upon them easily. Maybe one day we will meet again, but I feel certain it will not be in this world. I will be everywhere, because the terror of art is everywhere, but I will be invisible to you. I will not make a sound, I will not breathe, I will not inhabit a human body of flesh and blood, in order to truly *be, not to be seen*.