



Back: Julia, Nicolas, Charlotte and Jane doing a QUAD “publicly” in class. Front: Åsta helping out.

Friday February 24th 2023 Herman Enkerud asked for permission to create an *obstruction* during a weekly event on our curriculum: the public QUADs that we do in class, this year, for the first time. Up till now, the QUADs—group work with 4 members with scripted roles—have been left to their own means outside of the classroom. During the first such public QUAD, in which he was a participant, Herman proposed to introduce a performance-element into the QUADs.



waffle-obstruction in Norwegian—Herman Enkerud

BBs and *discussing* ideas.

In its humble beginnings these QUADs—that are *public* in the sense that they are conducted before the class with comments from the professor and the audience—resemble master-classes in music. Based on the idea that adding the performative element to the students’ work with their *logbooks* (called BlackBook/BB) the roles would become *clearer*, because they would have to ready themselves, either by preparing a rudimentary structure, or mobilising on the spot.

The upside was that this worked. The downside was that the rest of the class were turned into spectators, and passivised unto clear signs of boredom. Of course, boredom is a *material*. But only if you get to *work* on it. Instead of the rudiments of preparation—since the QUAD is an example of the course’s number of *semi-structures*—the *obstruction* introduced by Herman was for the QUAD members to take charge of a simple task while they were running the QUAD.

The task was to make and bake *waffles*. So, after a note of pitching how the logistics could be solved (by delegating parts of the tasks to the audience) the task eventually was reduced to the baking and serving the waffles, as they were ready, to the audience in our *learning theatre*. The members of the performing QUAD were: Nicolas, Jane, Charlotte and Julia. After some initial confusion and hiccups, the group got into the flow of *comparing*

There are elements of this turn, in the *public performance* of a QUAD, that tie up with the *learning theatre*. That is, the deepening in our understanding of the latter. Hence the relevance of two observations: **1)** the gap between the QUAD and the audience was replaced by an *interface* [the making, baking and distribution of waffles]; **2)** the wall-projection of materials, which in the regular mode are brought to the table interfaced by an iPad on a goose-neck, were now *shown directly*.

That is, they were held and shown from the table arrangement used as the *podium* in the standard operating mode of the *learning theatre*, and circulated if they were smaller elements. Knowing Herman's previous work—e.g. his BB last term featuring *papier-mâché* projects on a web page—the intervention was not sentimentally motivated by a predilection for material aesthetics, before and against digital technology. This point was made by the course leader in class.

Also a reference to Lars von Trier's movie [Five obstructions](#) was mentioned: Lars von Trier's challenge to his mentor Jørgen Leth moving an immaculate masterpiece—*The Perfect Human*—from the pedestal by asking Jørgen Leth to do *re-makes* of this work, according to constraints dictated by Lars von Trier. Jørgen Leth couldn't help himself: he made, each new one, another, and regularly unexpected, *masterpiece*: it is a movie about *chance methods* and *constraints*.

Lars von Trier, who had hoped to send off Jørgen Leth on a journey to *sand down* his formal perfectionism, observed (to his frustration) that the opposite was happening. The movie concludes with a monologue where von Trier makes a statement of this, their journey, his own ego in wanting to try Jørgen Leth, and ended with a strange mix between self/criticism and affection. Somehow, the movie's message significantly was brought to express von Trier's values as a director.

What doesn't come out of this movie—but, in my view, does from what Herman's *obstruction* did in the *learning theatre*—was to direct our attention to the possible impact from a certain category of *signal*. This is the category of signal that we could call *weak signals*: because they are *weaker* than the signals we receive, amplify and transmit with our *computers* (that, is through an *IP address*); and *weaker* than the meta-data *addresses* we record in our *APA7th references*.

Yet, intercepted and felt—e.g., the *hiss* of the waffle baking while Julia was making articulating her idea and task of working with the poetics content/container relationships—at which NiPe asked “what is a *hiss*?” and Alejandro suggested that Julia might not want her container to be contained. So, arguably (and perhaps demonstrably) *weak signals* come from how we dock a *task* (here, the QUAD) with an *occasion* (w/people) and design a cultural organisation of the *encounter*.

In the present case, working on and facilitating the gap in a performance-audience situation. It clearly links up with a topic that emerged during the discussion of Charlotte's BB-idea: namely, the relevance of ‘levelling with the *other*’ as the topic of what might be conceived as investigative *ethics* (that is, a sequel to the investigative *aesthetics* that we had been discussing thus far). That is, using aesthetic means to inquire into a situation people are the *other* to *one another*.



Jørgen Leth casted himself in the role of ‘the perfect human being’ in a dinner table version of the original movie. Lars von Trier's obstruction: remake the original in a red-light district of Mumbai, without showing the people living there. As the reader will note, Leth did *not* comply (plastic screen). This almost broke the relationship between him and von Trier. But is of the essence to us here: since we were discussing works in the BlackBooks where the *superposition* of content and container, embossed text and drawing, language and drawing and investigative ethics were discussed.

Like the performance-audience situation we had with the QUAD in class, where the waffle obstruction comes in as an aesthetic means. But without reducing it to [relational aesthetics](#) (Bourriaud) since the ground-rule of the learning theatre. is that *learning* should happen. So, the *ethics* of the situation enjoined us to make it work. *Not* in a forced way, but in making creative use of whatever is *available* (in this case the waffle obstruction) as a *resident principle* (N. Potter).

So, we move *from* a situation where the participation of an audience of eager note-takers is *assumed*, to a situation where *nothing* is assumed but where *assignments* can emerge continuously between the QUAD panel and audience. Which it did. Using our course fable—featuring angels, cats and termites—IP-addresses are for *angels*, APA7th references are for *cats*, and *weak signals* (on which we depend to mind and work with gaps) are for *termites* (leaflet **C**).