

1. General Government Issue

During an artist residency in Vermont I bought a wool cap, originally issued by the Department of Defense, whose label read: "General Government Issue, 100% wool watch cap." I then translated the Department of Defense emblem to watercolor, creating 20 unique departments for each watercolor.

When traveling to and from the United States as a foreigner, the border control interviews are very personal, where I have to explain my whereabouts and intent in great detail. With my own Departments I aimed to create a more personal and private alternative, if the questioning is so personal the bureaucratic mechanism needs to be adapted.



2. Your Application is Pending

With "General Government Issue" as a starting point, I want to investigate the mechanism of bureaucracy and try the role as the investigator. With the performance piece "Your Application is Pending" I transform myself into the bureaucrat and with paper applications and a stamp of approval, I investigate the role. The participants may apply for any of my departments and are invited to a personal interview. The topic of the conversation is dependent on the content of the Department the person I am interviewing, is applying to. The questioning is also incorporating the multiple problems of the bureaucratic format: the surveying of citizens, the request of

personal transparency, yet lack of compassion. I have done the performance in three different cities: Stockholm, Brussels and Miami, to research if the bureaucratic roles is different in various countries, if the role of the immigrant changes and where people dream to travel too.

11 min documentation of the performance in Stockholm, 2013

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FEsCzp4tFr8>



3. The Analog Database

The Analog Database is an archive consisting of personal files of everybody interviewed during my performance "Your Application is Pending." In the file I gather application forms and transcriptions of the content of their interview together with a small watercolor portrait. The file as identification, is the file not very useful, it is not informative nor very similar to the real person. It is rather an archive of pointless knowledge, dreams and memories of semi-fictional characters. For me, an archive is an image of a society that wants to control their citizens, with a need to order information and create systems. My files are like a shadow archive, a reflection of the bureaucratic labyrinths and the mechanical production of information. I also want to bring forth the aspect of labor and how we value an endless task without purpose. There are currently approximately 70 files in the Analog Database.

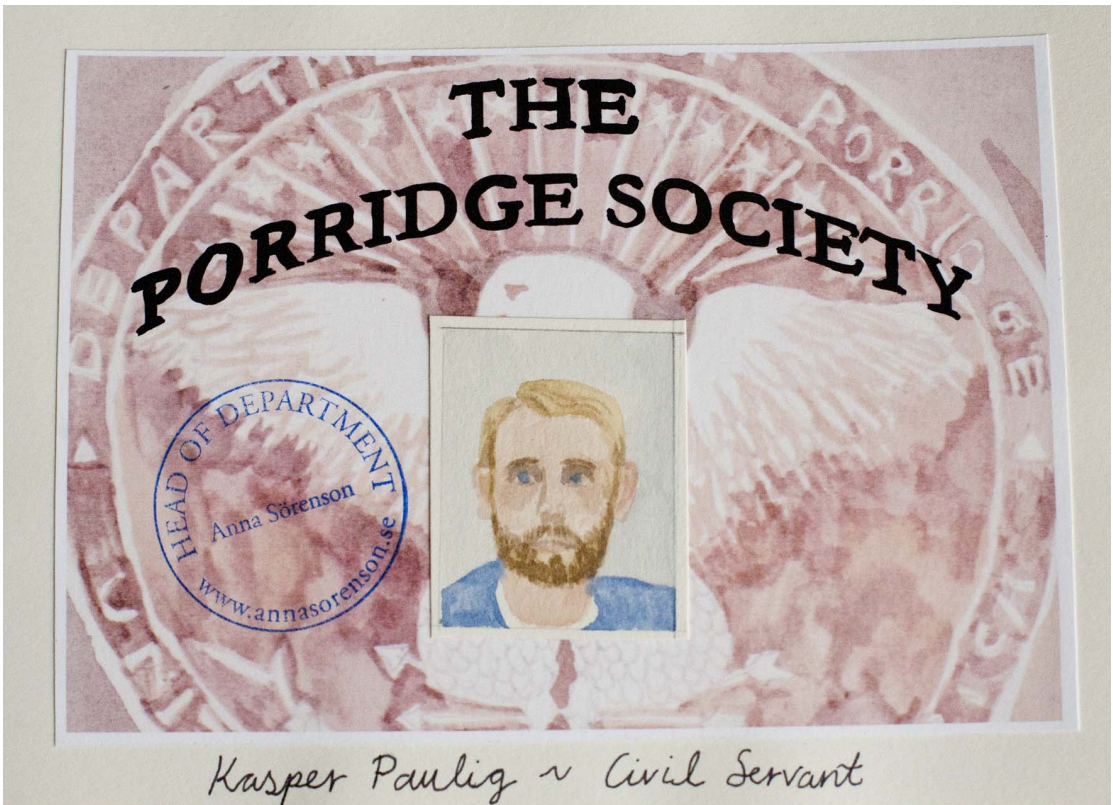


4. The Porridge Society

As a part of my works *General Government Issue*, *The Department of Porridge* opened *The Porridge Society* as a collaborative artwork with the performance artist and chef Rares Craiut. The collaboration was formed after an urge to experiment with the bureaucratic format in relation to the politics of food, porridge to be specific. To follow the bureaucratic protocol we announced ourselves with titles: Anna Sörenson, Head of Department of Porridge and Rares Craiut, Secretary General of *The Porridge Society*. We made a public invitation to apply to *The Porridge Society* in mid November 2013. There was an open call for applicants and during the interviews they all got to envision what they wanted the society to be. Using the stories and dreams of the participants we formed the Porridge Society after their wishes.

We follow up our project with an Official Porridge Dinner for the selected group members. The first dinner was created, cooked and presented by Rares and myself. As creators of this society, we gave the task of maintaining the society back to the members. As a society, they are now concerned with the cultural, economical and the practical aspects of porridge. They are also constantly reformulating what porridge is and could potentially be, both on a recipe basis but also in a larger global context.

Link to the website: <http://departmentofporridge.com/>



5. Therapy with a bureaucrat

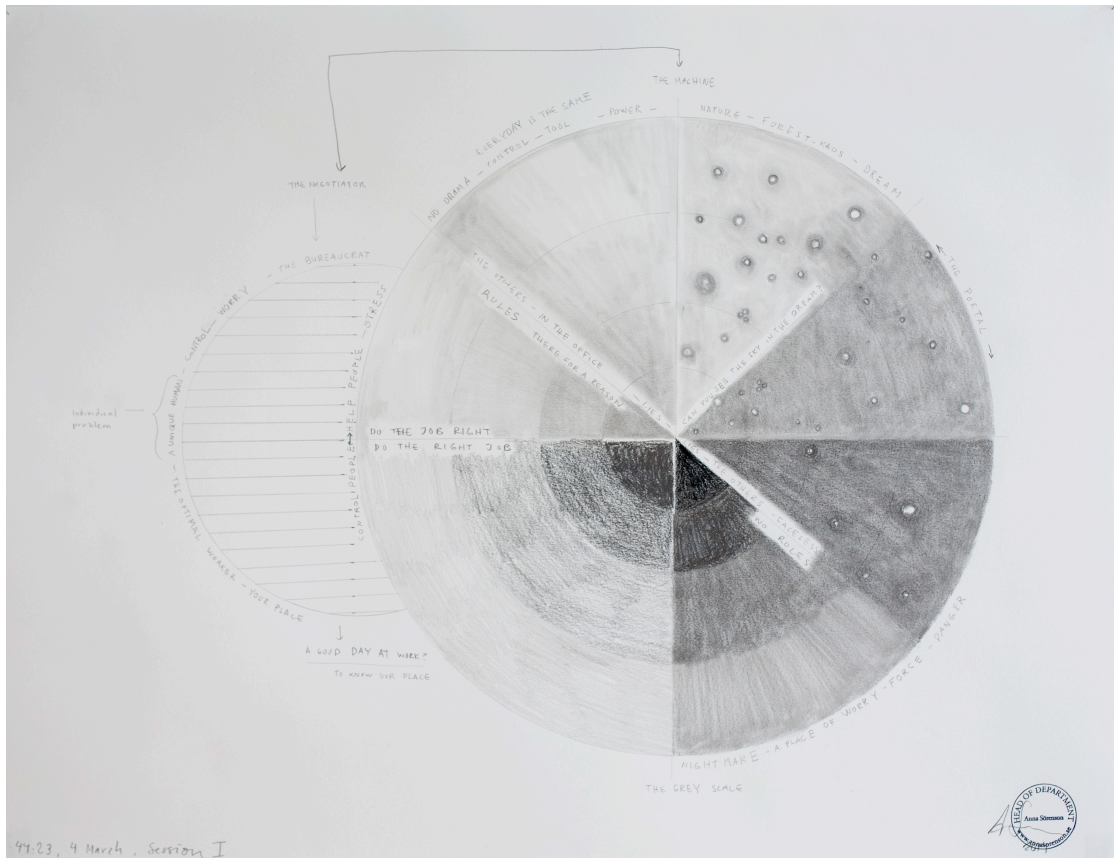
I wanted to question how we view and treat the bureaucrats around us, are they human too or just parts of a machine of society? Are they providing us services or are they there to control us? To explore my bureaucrat persona, as a character that feels dissolution in relationship to both society and other people, I created “Therapy with a Bureaucrat,” a film, to be presented as a video installation on a loop, where my bureaucrat persona goes to therapy. In the film my character and therapist Magnus Ivarsson improvise around the subjects of the ethic responsibilities and possibilities of being a middleman in a bureaucratic system, loss of ideals and the impossibility of thinking outside the system.

Camera: Fredrik Streiffert
Therapist: Magnus Ivarsson
Length 27 min. 2014



6. The Analyst and The Surveillance Room

Listening to the recordings of the therapy conversations, I felt that I was surveying my character and myself. In the film “The Analyst” I take on the role of the one indexing, organizing and visualizing the content of the conversation. As the analyzer, I could decide what was important, I could decide on a new narrative. I made five drawings, one for each session. When I displayed the drawings, I wanted to keep the intimate feeling of listening to the dialog. I transcribed the conversation and translated it. Together with voice actor and radio personality Ryan Tebo as the therapist we re-performed the therapy sessions in English. The drawings, the films and the English text came together with the audio track of the conversations.



7. The Therapy Sessions

This text is a play for three parts: the bureaucrat, the therapist and the analyst. The catalog was printed as a tool to try out one, or all, of the characters, something to take home from the exhibition “Thresholds” in Brussels 2014. It can be read as just a piece of text, a dialog between two people or seen as a part of the installation “The Departments of Anna Sörenson.”