

A photograph of a brick wall with a patterned cloth and a glass on the floor in front of it. The wall is made of light-colored bricks with some mortar visible. The floor is made of dark, irregular cobblestones. A light-colored cloth with a dark polka-dot pattern is crumpled on the floor. A small, clear glass with a label is partially visible under the cloth.

# ABOUT GIVING AND TAKING

An exhibition by Fabian Schmid

Galleri Monitor

Akademin Valand, Göteborg

May 1-5 2015

Vernissage: May 1, 5-9

## About the exhibition

When the initial concept of this project started popping up in my mind more frequently, I was tied to the idea of shooting a series of carefully composed, highly aesthetic close-up portraits of homeless people. I started talking to a handful of people about my intentions and the ethical dilemmas I was facing. About how I felt bad about gaining something out of the indigent situation of others – even though they would benefit from it too, as my photographs would tell those poor characters' stories and provoke empathy in the people who would look at them.

Around the same time, I watched a documentary called *Episode III: Enjoy Poverty*, made by the Dutch artist and filmmaker Renzo Martens. A few confused weeks with thoughts running through my head wildly and an array of conversations with a couple of people around me later, I had shaped the concept for this exhibition and was determined to do this – in a completely different manner than initially planned. I ended up doing what I had to do – killing my darling, the aesthetic portraits – and working towards what my intentions really were: to talk about our motivation for giving, and for doing work about the poor. To explore the concept of feeling empathy.

Communicating with the beggars was not easy. Even though I had translations of the core of my conversation subject in Swedish, English, Romanian and Bulgarian, I rarely managed to communicate my concept in full. The language barrier was bigger than anticipated, as many of them were not good at reading – and all my attempts to pronounce the Romanian or Bulgarian sentences failed miserably. Most of the beggars I talked to thought that I was intending to take their photo – some even stood in front of the lens and waited for me to press the shutter – and it took me quite some time to clarify my intentions.

I am not willing, nor able to propose a solution – to a problem I am unsure whether exists or not. To me, this project is mainly about revealing the position of the viewer, the author, and perhaps the artwork itself. It is also about feeling uncomfortable, leaving my comfort zone. By talking to beggars, whom I can hardly communicate with, by exhibiting images of myself, by creating an exhibition project that is less about the actual photographs, than the act of taking them. That is more about reflection, thought, discussion perhaps, than about beauty and aesthetics.

Fabian Schmid, Gothenburg, April 2015

Thank you,

- You, for visiting my exhibition.
- Seraina Mandra, for tolerating my talking about this all the time, for helping me sort out my thoughts, for constant feedback, and for much more.
- Renzo Martens, for inspiring me through your work and your talking about it.
- Anna Strand, for your tutoring and the inputs along the way, and for recommending Renzo Martens's film to me.
- Yacob Raapasqua, for the conversations about this project and its topic.
- Nelly Ditchewa & Aura Camelia, for helping me with Bulgarian and Romanian translations, as many of the beggars in Gothenburg are from these countries.
- Heinrich Ehnert, for helping me hang the exhibition and set up the gallery.

