

Fuga

Some thirty kilometres before Kristiansand, where we would leave Norway behind us, we came upon a magnificent sheer granite wall covered in diagonal grey-black lines and decided to stop for one final lunch break. When we had eaten, Gerhard went on ahead. I was going to pick him up in the van later, allowing me time to run my fingers over the stone wall and take photographs before we came to the dunes in Northern Denmark: the absolute end of solid ground. Out of the blue, there it was and everything fell into place. I saw the head in front of me, lying beside the wall; its size and shape were perfect, the grey-black lines a tiny replica of the vast wall of rock. The music flared up in my mind. Cautiously, bearing the heavy rock, I walked back to the van, where I laid it in among the remains of lunch and gazed at it eagerly from all sides.

All through our two month journey round Lapland, the music had haunted me, cropping up at regular intervals, although I was the only one who ever seemed to notice it. Gerhard never heard it at all. I knew I had to use it somehow, but had no idea how. It reminded me of an angular building, full of hidden nooks and crannies, but with infinitely clear contours. Designed with immeasurable passion and profound rationale. A tremendous mass and yet quite transparent at the same time. An encounter with a masterpiece.

The three tons of column basalt I had collected for the sculpture in my workplace in Vlissingen emerged as a new unforeseen adversary. While the granite had filled the room with a thick layer of white grit, the basalt turned it into a gloomy black den. On dark days, especially, the mere idea of entering the studio was unpleasant. To make matters worse, it soon became clear this stone acted like a glassy mass. Splinters flew off the blocks like shards of glass, boring into the skin on my face and bare limbs, or skimming past my ears, zooming like a bluebottle, to land quivering, somewhere high up on the wall.

In the far north of Finland, on one of those rare days not devoted to work, I parked the van with its nose facing the water. A clear blue sky, so typical of these northern climes, drew an arc above the crystal-clear water, churned up by the harsh icy wind and reflecting the blazing sun in a thousand shining mirrors. Gerhard got ready to go for a walk, while I settled down behind the broad windscreen in the serenity of the sunny cabin, with a pot of freshly-brewed tea and some notepaper. Without even looking, I found the tape among all the others in our large collection of music and soon I was sitting bolt upright, listening as if hypnotised, marvelling at the strong resemblance between the kaleidoscopic reflections on the water before me and the inimitably developing fugue. What began with the four voices of the string quartet, seemed to

swell to a multitude, a rising threatening chaos, subdued in the end by a compelling cadenza and flowing with ease into the main theme of the quartet containing the fugue. As if the wind had merely died down, hushed, calming the surface of the water. The storm was part of the same order. During the second squall of wind, Gerhard came in, sweeping the cold in with him and asking for the music to be turned down. Bewildered by this sobering reality, I switched the music off. He didn't seem to hear.

The first few months were entirely taken up with stacking the basalt blocks. Molten lava streaming into a thick layer, then hardening fast and – under ideal circumstances – shrunk to a hexagonal column design. My blocks – under no such circumstances – had the random appearance of five-, six-, seven- and even eight-sided pillars. The result was an intricate puzzle and in time the construction was literally way above my head. Using a framework of trestles, planks and steps, I dragged the heavy blocks up higher and higher. The image of the angular building loomed before me now and then. The impenetrable darkness of the stone was contradicted by the seams in the stack: you could see right through them, revealing a vulnerable streak.

When we came to the end of our more than 5000 km circular trip through Lapland, we decided to cut through Sweden and make our way south through Norway. With a strange void inside after the pressure and focus on the project in the weeks gone by, we drove through the Swedish landscape and I turned on the radio. Out of the torrent of garbled sounds, a few familiar words rose to the surface and made my hair stand on end: 'Grosse Fuge' and 'Ludwig van Beethoven'. Wearily, I began to realise that another project had already begun.

Two years after our journey, I gave the fugue a place in my sculpture. Following a vertical line shown by the stack, I slid half the stones ten centimetres away from the other half. The only part of the sculpture that had lain untouched since I had found it in Norway was the head. But that head embodied a dilemma: the working title for the sculpture had been 'Grosse Fuge' from the very start. While I'd known I could never call the sculpture that, I'd chosen not to face up to it before. Now, however, the dilemma loomed in front of me: I placed the almost sacred head on the displaced figure, but it just didn't fit. No matter how I moved or turned the stone, it simply didn't belong.

Dismayed, I climbed down from the ladder and stepped back from the sculpture. And then I saw the obvious solution and the dilemma dissolved into thin air as if it were the most natural thing in the world: I removed the head and split it in two, continuing the dislocation. From that moment on, the whole story of the journey was merely the occasion for this sculpture entitled 'Fuga'

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