



## Instagram Flowers

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At the very beginning of the year, before work, kindergarten, administration and project coordination had begun, sitting in the kitchen drawing with my daughter. Looking out, Berlin was not just pitch black but behind the tenebrous opacity, a grey void distributed a chorus of resignation.

I found myself drawing a flower. A lily of the valley, realizing that I had sketched something that whispers of a spring to come, the first warmth of a forest, a little sunshine that makes the soul loosen up. Initially, it's green leaves and then one day, tiny bell-shaped white flowers crossing their arms in front of the body to keep the bitterness of the cold air at a distance.

The difference between missing and longing. Some languages don't separate them, some do. In French, for example, there's only one word for both game and play. German, same thing. In English, there's both freedom and liberty. In German only freedom but no liberty, and in French there's liberty but no freedom.

Missing it has been argued speaks about wanting something to return, whereas longing is the other way around, it resonates more or less with looking forward. A Hellenistic philosopher whose name has been forgotten even proposed a binary opposition where missing was associated with spectatorship, observation and taking in, and longing was juxtaposed, associated with partaking, intimacy and opening up. He implies that missing is regulating, building barriers, and that longing, maybe a bit too enthusiastically, is relatable, inviting diversity and play. The restoration of the familiar, a desire for stability, respectively insisting on movement and the lightness of change.

I always associated darkness with stability and light with dynamics and balancing. Who knows, personal or cultural?

The lily of the valley, at least when drawn with a cheap felt pen on an 80-gram A4 paper, is a matter of longing. It's peculiar with those more abstract forms of longing. I know the spring will come, still, the longing is at times tangible, for example when imagining flowers that show up before expected. That defies the winter, that with their tiny buds are pushing through, giving a tiny, but still, finger to the weather gods.

In all that grey and idea started to grow. Not much of an idea but it grew anyway. I decided to draw a flower each day, just to keep the dark, cold, snot-filled, shivering, increased gas prices winter away. Added value, perhaps I'd improve my drawing skills, maybe my daughter would be inspired and join in, we could even learn a little something about botany.

Perhaps out of vanity, possibly because sharing is caring or perhaps my shrink can explain why, but I thought it would be cute to share a flower per day with my Instagram friends and offer them a little sunshine, some flower power, to keep the darkness at bay. One a day until spring arrived.

I don't know anything about flowers or drawing them. I decided to pick one flower per day from the internet and draw it, seriously draw it. Then post a simple, no light design or photoshopping, image on my story. It looked kind of cute with a tan tone reminding me of historical botanical drawings. Silly but fun.

Not that I had conceptualized it particularly but posting the flower as a story felt nice considering that one day later it vanished. It was as if the flower had wilted and needed to be replaced. I picked a new one, more or less randomly from the internet and posted it, the process went on. It almost felt organic.

At some point, I thought I should colour them, the old ones, with watercolour and then post them on my account's feed. They needed watering. Coloured they'd be eternalised, but until now I didn't find the right entry point and aquarelle is difficult.

It's not the first time but each time it feels refreshing to think about Instagram as an exhibition space, or maybe opportunity. Many probably think that I'm super lame or even worse, like who does he think he is, or maybe I think that people think more about what I post than they actually do? It doesn't matter, whatever direction they do or don't think, for me, it creates a lot of pleasure, fun and expectations. Maybe 150 people or so watch a drawing during the day. For me that's more than enough and if one, three or maybe even five like the story then I'm melting a little. Out of the fifty or so flowers I've posted, there are a few persons that have liked not just a random drawing here and there, but several in a row. Some seem to have made a judgment, to like or not, even if it's just a little heart. It makes my day, that somebody has made the effort to like but it also fills me with joy to sense that a flower that I picked on the internet and spent an hour drawing has made somebody feel light and a little bit less resigned.

It's not so many that look at my drawings. It's fine. At the same time, Instagram is rather big and potentially all the 1,28 billion users could see the flowers. To exhibit, if that's the

wording, on Instagram is a bit like having a tiny, insignificant show in a super large art institution. More or less nobody will drop by but the potentiality is there.

It's also so calming not to have to pass every decision through a curator. On Instagram, I make the decision. It's my drawings and I do as I wish. No committees, no technical team, no security measures, wall texts and so on that have to be checked and doubled checked.

Now the series has come to an end, and a small problem has started to cloud the horizon. What do I do with the drawings now? Put them in a folder and stash them in a cupboard. I could pass by IKEA, buy cheap frames and give a flower in a frame to friends on birthdays. A bunch of rushed cut flowers will pass away in a few days, but maybe they don't have space for my flower even if it's a small frame.

They are not worth burning, in any case, a wee bit too artistic, but I can't make myself throw them away. In fact, I don't even know if they are good, beautiful, crap or anything in between? A couple of people said they are beautiful, which was touching but beautiful can have so many reasons. Most people didn't say anything at all which might be more telling. It's strange that this difficulty only appeared after the project was finished. Usually, it's the process that is difficult not after, but for me, it's often the other way around.

Maybe what was needed wasn't where or how to store the drawings, but to write their story. Now that's done and they can rest for a while until one day in the future, when their longing is needed again. I look out of the window, the sky is blue, the sun is shining, and you know, on my way home after leaving my daughter at the kindergarten – *wirklich* as she would say, for real - I saw the first lily of the valley, with flowers.

