

## Tarik Kiswanson

The word 'metamorphosis' is of Greek origin and occurs in Greek mythology. It describes change, as when a human becomes an animal, a plant or a stone. In zoology and geology, the term refers to the complete transformation of certain animal species or the erosion of specific earth materials, enabling mountains to 'move' over time and across physical distances. A well-known example of metamorphosis is the transformation of a larva into a fully grown butterfly. We humans also undergo changes throughout our lives. Every seven years, nearly all the cells in our bodies are renewed – a process that is both slow and fast. Similarly, our life stories are shaped by constant change. Something similar happens in Tarik Kiswanson's multidisciplinary artistic practice, where personal memories and experiences reflect collective narratives.

The film *I Tried as Hard as I Could* (2019) depicts a child practicing Arabic writing, erasing and starting anew. This action is condensed into a perpetual loop. The scenario resembles that in *The Reading Room* (2019), where a child attempts to pronounce words from academic philosophy books. A circular process that feels both present and distant. 'History is hysterical', writes the French philosopher and semiologist Roland Barthes. 'It is constituted only if we consider it, only if we look at it – and in order to look at it, we must be excluded from it.'<sup>1</sup> In Kiswanson's series *Recall* (2010–23), five distinct objects are trapped in blocks of resin. A ballpoint pen is frozen in a bursting moment of blue dissipating ink, while a candle is encased in stearin drops, as if it had just been blown out before our eyes. Each piece in the series can be traced back to Kiswanson's family history, often reconstructed from memory.

*Anamnesis* (2024) features a plan of his childhood home in a suburb of Halmstad, where he lived with his family and where his parents ended up after arriving in Sweden as asylum seekers. This flat exists only as a memory of their time there. Like time capsules excavated from layered earth, these works serve as storage facilities for stories that, in some distant future, will reignite memories.

In the front hall of Lunds konsthall, where the exhibition begins, we are welcomed by the sculpture *Foresight* (2025). Finn Juhl's classic Reading Chair has been fused with a Móveis Cimo chair from the Brazilian Office of Immigration. Both chairs were crafted in 1953, but in entirely different locations and under very different circumstances. These two geographic poles converge in Kiswanson's vision, allowing their differing historical contexts to simultaneously connect them to regeneration and renewal on both intimate and social levels. In the installation *The Wait* (2023), two wooden chairs are positioned in a room, with an oversized white monochrome oval balancing on the edge of one of them. These works are based on furniture whose original function has been replaced. They are distinctly hybrid assemblages of historical objects and materials that 'speak to us' without access to solely linguistic means.

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<sup>1</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (transl. Richard Howard, New York: Hill & Wang, 1981), p. 65.

Yet we are captivated by how these materials embody a recognisable location – akin to looking at a photograph and recalling a scent or the feeling of a hug.<sup>2</sup> Kiswanson encapsulates this essence. It resembles a poem that, unlike a novel, has been distilled into a few words or sentences, now detached from their physical contexts. In front of Kiswanson's work, this anamnesis is reactivated, this inherent knowledge that aids us in rediscovering the narratives within ourselves. Something invisible suddenly takes form.

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<sup>2</sup> See Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins* (transl. Pascale-Anne Brault & Michael Naas, University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 51.