

TRUTH OR DARE

TROND HUGO HAUGEN
MICHAEL JOHANSSON
HENRIK LUND JØRGENSEN
JONAS LIVERÖD

“OCH YNGLINGARNA REDO SAKTA ÖVER BRYGGAN”

During the early half of the twentieth century, art was considered a sport among others within The Olympic Games.

Architecture, painting, music, sculpture and literature were the events in which nations measured up to one another. In 1900 The Olympic Games took place in Paris, alongside the now famous Exposition Universelle Internationale – The Paris World Fair.

Headed by Carl Snoilsky, respected member of the Swedish Academy, a team consisting of philologists, poets, professors of literature and writers competed in the Olympic event literature. Putting their efforts together they constructed the poem containing a sentence which would take the small Nordic country to the top of the winner's stand.

Carl Snoilsky died only three years later but will always be remembered for the string of words which gave Sweden its first and only Olympic gold medal in literature: “och ynglingarna redo sakta över bryggan”.

PRINSERNE FRA SERENDIP

AT SNUBLE OVER DET UVENTEDE

I 1754 skriver den engelske forfatter Horace Walpole et brev til en god ven, hvor han genfortæller et persisk eventyr om tre prinser fra Serendip¹. Prinserne er på rejse, hvor de opdager og erkender helt andre ting på deres vej, end dem de i første omgang satte ud for at finde. Ud fra eventyrets titel opfinder Walpole begrebet *serendipitet* til at betegne det, der sker, når man tilfældigt gør helt andre indsigter, end man havde forventet. Christopher Columbus' opdagelse af Amerika eller Wilhelm Röntgens opdagelse af røntgenstrålen er bare få eksempler på, hvordan man ved at give plads til tilfældighederne kan snuble over lige præcis det vigtige, man ellers ville have overset.

Verden omkring os er fyldt med små ting, der ikke rigtig stemmer. Omvendt synes tilfældigheder ofte at være forbundet i en struktur, hvor sammenfald mellem begivenhederne er iøjnefaldende. Man putter en krone i en tyggegummiautomat og ud kommer tre stykker i stedet for et, alle tilfældigvis røde.¹¹

Prinserne fra Serendip blev sendt ud på rejse af deres far, som ville, at de skulle gøre empiriske opdagelser i verden. På landevejen registrerede de fænomener af højst mærkværdig art. Græsset var grønnest på den ene side af vejen, men alligevel var kun det visne græs på den anden side spist. I sandet var spor af tre fødder, og ivrige fluer stimlede sammen i en lang bane i vejkanten. Prinsernes opdagelser virkede som en sum af mærkværdige tilfældigheder uden egentlig sammenhæng, indtil de møder en mand, der har mistet sin kamel. Da han spørger, om de har set den, fortæller de, at der sikkert har rejst en kamel på deres vej, der var blind på det ene øje, lam på det ene ben og med en krukke med honning på ryggen. Da manden tror, at prinsernes viden er funderet i, at de har stjålet kamelen, fortæller de, at de på deres rejse blot har registreret forskellige ting, som de først nu kan samle til en større helhed. At græsset kun var spist i den ene side af vejen vidnede om kamelens blindhed, de tre fodspor afslørede det fjerde ben som lamt, og fluerne måtte være tiltrukket af honning, som på grund af den skæve gangart var dryppet ned fra en krukke på kamelens ryg.

FREMMED I KENDT

Siden Walpoles brev i 1754 har hans opfindelse af serendipitetsbegrebet været brugt om alt fra fortælle teknik i børnebøger til forskningsmetode inden for medicin og sociologi. I de æstetiske fag bruges serendipitetsbegrebet blandt andet til at betegne det skabende princip i kunsten.

"Hos en række kunstnere bliver det et komplekst spørgsmål ikke blot om tilfældighed men om konstruktion af serendipitet [...]. Værket bliver i sig selv en gådefuld og ikke lineær vej som i arabesken."¹¹¹

Arabesken er et fabulerende og organisk mønster, der kan illustrere den uforudsigelige erfaring, man gør sig, når man giver sig hen til serendipiteten. I udstillingen *Truth or Dare* er der al mulig grund til at inddrage serendipitetsbegrebet som en frugtbar drivkraft, der udmønter sig både i værkerne og i deres greb på beskueren. De fire kunstnere, Trond Hugo Haugen, Michael Johansson, Henrik Lund Jørgensen og Jonas Liveröd, bruger kunsten til at udfordre enhver fasttømret idé om verden som et færdigt og entydigt billede. I stedet fortælles kunsten som noget, der opstår i et uforudsigeligt hybridrum, som ganske i serendipitetens ånd åbner for tolkning og tilfældighed. Bedst som vi tror, vi kan definere værket, bevæger det sig væk fra det, det foregav at være ved første øjekast. Genkendelige figurationer fjernes, fordrejes eller ommodelleres, så værket opstår imellem dets egne mærkværdige detaljer og den oplevelse, publikum får.

Et af Trond Hugo Haugens værker, *In Memory Of*, er en biograf uden billeder, hvor lyden af et opvarmende symfoniorkester lægger op til en koncert, der aldrig kommer. Som publikum sidder man i sæderne og venter. Og venter. Øjeblikket står tilbage som en lille tidslomme, der peger tilbage på os selv

og de ting, vi er vant til at få serveret fra medierne. Værket refererer blandt andet til John Cages musikstykke 4'33, hvor kunstneren sidder stille i over fire minutter uden at røre sit instrument. Værket bliver den handling, der ikke sker og publikums forventning om at blive præsenteret for en færdig komposition. Hos Haugen bliver kunstværket dermed en scene, der sætter spot på, hvordan vi forventer at kunne forstå og ordne det, vi sanser, i en rækkefølge, der giver logisk mening.

I *Friends He Lost at Sea* hiver Henrik Lund Jørgensen Skagensmaleriet ud af sin kanoniserede reception, når han med udgangspunkt i to af Michael Anchers berømte malerier erstatter malingen med video og fiskerne med flygtninge. Ud over værkets etiske undertoner foranlediges samtidig en æstetisk refleksion over, hvordan samfundets forståelse af virkelighed ændrer sig over tid. Er den romantiske æstetik, som er knyttet til Skagensmaleriet i virkeligheden ikke noget eftertiden har tilskrevet Anchers måske mere socialrealistiske projekt? Jørgensens film præsenterer flere fortællinger på samme tid, og vores oplevelse af værket væves sammen af både fiskernes og flygtningenes historie, skildringerne af dem, og hvordan vi typisk forstår dem. Værket er dermed en anderledes iscenesættelse af både flygtninges vilkår i Vesten og af Skagensmaleriet, men gør os samtidig bevidste om vores reception af begge dele: At de billeder, vi maler af virkeligheden, er historisk foranderlige.

Michael Johansson piller ikke ting fra hinanden, tværtimod. Han ordner, systematiserer, ophober og arrangerer ting og sager i kompakte miljøer, hvor objektet nærmest synes at være overpakket med sig selv. Så overdrevet at værket dirrer på grænsen mellem at implodere og eksplodere. Det er, som om tingen har fået en egen kraft som en form for subjekt, der organiserer sig og gør ting i rummet, der ændrer vores forståelse af tingen og den hverdagslige omgang, vi plejer at have med den. I værket *Monokrom Anakron* er kufferter, glaskarafler, tæpper og bøger surret sammen i noget, der både minder om et skuffesystem og et vildfaret stilleben. Tingen er ikke længere noget, vi kan bruge, men noget, der foregår. Ved at sammensætte genstande i sådanne pakkede miljøer viser Johansson et komprimeret uddrag af tingene omkring os, og publikum efterlades i et paradoks. På den ene side er der påfaldende mange ting, der passer sammen, og på den anden side får man fornemmelsen af, at det blot er en vilkårlig samling af ting, der kunne udskiftes med andre. Verden hænger usædvanligt godt sammen, men kun fordi et udvalg af dens genstande er pakket sammen i en given orden, som i princippet kunne omroteres.

Jonas Liveröds installationer og tegninger er skæve miljøer, der dirrer af noget fascinerende, men også nærmest uhyggeligt. Værkerne er på grænsen mellem noget genkendeligt, vi kan styre og forstå, og noget hemmelighedsfuldt, hvor kun fantasien sætter grænser. Til *Truth or Dare* er blandt andet bygget en installation, som er inspireret af en kirke i Tjekkiet, der er udsmykket med ben og kranier fra døde mennesker. I stedet for knogler sammensætter Liveröd mærkværdige genbrugsmaterialer i et barokt rum, der stritter af stemmer og disharmonier. Ud af pels, perlekæder, lamper, skum og meget andet bygger han en dragende, men udefinerbar krop, publikum kan træde ind i. Sigmund Freuds begreb om *das unheimliche* er væsentligt for hans arbejde; et begreb der betegner en tilstand, hvor det fortrængte i vores liv bevæger sig op til overfladen og uventet infiltrerer vores reaktionsmønstre. Liveröds værker standser et lignende sted midt imellem det genkendelige og det fremmedgørende og bliver dermed både begge og ingen af delene. Her dirrer værket i et magisk øjeblik, der virker både storslået og mislykket, og hvor man får lyst til at pille ved overfladen for at komme ned til en dybere forståelse af de figurer, der både tiltrækker og foruroliger.

Truth or Dare iscenesætter alt i alt forunderlige scenarier, som inddrager publikum i en dialog, der sammenfletter værkernes konkrete komponenter med den historie, som hver enkelt betragter ser i værket. Her starter serendipiteten, hvor små ting kan få stor betydning og alting opføre sig radikalt anderledes end normalt. Kunstnerne udfordrer både værk og beskuer til at konstruere historier, der opblø-

der det genkendelige med skæve vinkler. Det gør begribelsen af værket til noget, der i høj grad kræver, at publikum først og fremmest oplever værket og ikke nødvendigvis forventer, at det formulerer nogen færdig forklaring. Det gør ikke noget, at vi ikke forstår, eller at vi misforstår. Det vigtigste er at tage del i de kompositioner, værkerne udgør, sanser detaljerne og give plads til, at nye historier bliver konstrueret hen ad vejen.

AT UDHOLDE KAOS

At overlade sig selv til mulige fortællinger kræver sit publikum for hvad finder man? Finder man afklaring og sammenhæng som i eventyret om prinserne fra Serendip?

”Lige så frit og spændende det kan synes at kaste sig ud i et land uden rammer og grænser for, hvad der er tilladt, lige så udfordrende er det at turde overlade sig selv til fortællingen. Dette gælder både for kunstneren og for betragteren – hvad bliver konsekvensen?”^{iv}

Som titlen *Truth or Dare* indikerer, er udstillingen en leg med sandhed og konsekvens, hvor det værk, vi ser, i lige høj grad er noget vi præsenteres for, som det er noget, vi selv skal være med til at udfolde. Om afklaringen indfinder sig, må være op til den enkelte beskuer at bedømme. Serendipiteten i *Truth or Dare*, og i megen samtidskunst generelt, drejer sig nemlig mere om at tillade værket og modtagelsen af det at være i tilblivelsen, som noget der foregår, snarere end noget der er færdigorganiseret. Det gælder ikke om at udholde kaos i den tro, at alle brikker falder på plads til sidst, men om at opleve magien i at gå på opdagelse i værkets skæve detaljer. Her kan man undslippe konventionel tænkning og i stedet forme præmisserne for sin egen erkendelse. Friheden i at tænke lateralt; nemlig at udfordre sig selv til at tænke i andre baner, end man er vant til.

Kunstnerne har arbejdet ud fra en lignende udfordring. I stedet for at søge sandheden i den kunstneriske gengivelse har det fælles afsæt været at demontere begreber som objektivitet, sandhed og historie. Dette bevirker også en uhøjtidelig kunstnerrolle, for kunstnerne er ikke ophøjet til geniale katalysatorer for indsigt; de er nærmere iscenesættere af det rum, hvor fortællingen og den subjektive betydningsdannelse kan finde sted. De stiller spørgsmålet, om ikke al historie og sandhed i virkeligheden er subjektivt skrevet? Og hvad der skal til, før en historie virker troværdig?

Katalogets indledende citat er et godt eksempel på dette. Citatet har været grundlaget for udstillingen; et tekststykke der fortæller om en historisk begivenhed, hvor kun dele af beretningen er sand. Teksten oplyser, at kunsten i starten af 1900-tallet blev praktiseret som en konkurrencedisciplin på lige fod med de andre sportsgrene i De Olympiske Lege. Så langt, så godt. Videre digtes det imidlertid, at Carl Snoilsky fra det Svenske Akademi vandt guldmedalje for den poetiske sætning ”och ynglingarna redo sakta över bryggan”^v sammen med et hold af særligt udvalgte talenter. Faktisk person, men fiktiv begivenhed i en reel historisk ramme. Citatet stiller os i en position, hvor vi må afkode, hvad der er sandt og hvad der ikke er sandt i beretningen og dermed tage stilling til sandhedsværdien i de fortællinger, vi læser og påvirkes af. Kunstnerne leger med vores forventning ved at vise, hvordan historien om vores kultur kan omskrives til noget usandt, men troværdigt, hvis blot den fortælles i den rigtige tone.

ARABESKE AFARTER

Selv om det er forholdsvis kendt i dag, at historieskrivningen ikke nødvendigvis afspejler en absolut og sand fortælling, fortsætter vores forsøg på at indfange sandheden alligevel: vi søger den historie, der kan forklare alle de andre. Også Walpoles serendipitetsbegreb bygger på en sådan romantisk længsel efter

en større sammenhæng. I det romantiske verdensbillede kan man nemlig opnå forbindelse til en større mening ved at hengive sig til intuitiv og sansebåret oplevelse – ligesom det er illustreret i eventyret om prinserne fra Serendip. En sådan enhedstanke udmønter sig også i opfattelsen af, at der findes én samlet Historie, som repræsenterer alle begivenheders gang.

Kunstnerne på udstillingen *Truth or Dare* arbejder med omvendte fortegn og skriver sig op imod forestillingen om det entydige og sande. De henter blandt andet inspiration fra surrealisternes oprør mod de kulturelle og rationelle strukturer, der typisk styrer vores forståelse af verden. Ligesom surrealistene finder disse kunstnere indsigt i de ubevidste strukturer, der styrer vores tanker – dog uden at de som surrealistene finder entydig sandhed i det ubevidste.

I *Truth or Dare* er det vedtagne verdensbillede altså i opløsning, men kunstnerne interesserer sig mere for de nye historier, der kan opstå i kølvandet på kritikken af verdensbilledet, end de dyrker nedbrydningen i sig selv. Det er derfor ikke bare væsentligt for kunstnerne at pege på, at historiefortælling altid er en subjektiv foreteelse, men i det hele taget at undersøge hvordan historier bliver fortalt, og hvordan man kan rykke ved forestillingen om den objektive, underliggende kulturfortælling. Her kan serendipiteten fungere som en strategi eller "en proces som søger efter uforudsete forbindelser eller knudepunkter [hvor] ingen besidder processen og ingen besidder den endelige betydning. Tabet af 'hjem' er et tragisk vilkår, men det nomadiske og provisoriske er samtidig en styrke som på alle måder skaber et dynamisk og bevægeligt teater."^{VI}

At forholde os åbent til de ting, vi sanser i verden, er vores bidrag til at være medfortællere på en historie, som ingen i virkeligheden ved, hvor ender. Måske er historiens bevægelse nærmere en arabesk mønsterdannelse end en enstrenget, lineær fortælling. Noget der opstår i en foranderlig bevægelse snarere end i det at forbinde verden i entydige kausalrelationer. Arabesken er sprudlende og uforudsigelig, og alle dens ender når ikke nødvendigvis sammen. Men mønsteret, der dannes hen ad vejen, kan blive usammenligneligt smukt.

Sanne Flyvbjerg

STUMBLING OVER THE UNEXPECTED

In 1754 the English writer Horace Walpole wrote a letter to an old friend, in which he retold a Persian fairy tale about three princes from Serendip^I. The princes set out on a journey, and on their way they discovered and realized a number of things that were totally different from the things they set out to find in the first place. Based on the title of the fairy tale Walpole invented the term *serendipity* to signify what happens when accidentally gaining an unexpected insight. Christopher Columbus' discovery of America and Wilhelm Röntgen's discovery of x-rays are just a few examples of how it is possible – by leaving room for accidental discoveries – to stumble over exactly the most important things, which would have otherwise been overlooked.

The world around us is full of things that do not really make sense. On the other hand accidental occurrences often seem to be related to one another in a framework where coincidences between incidents seem conspicuous. You put a coin in a gum machine, and out comes three pieces instead of one, all randomly red.^{II}

The princes of Serendip were sent out on their journey by their father who wanted them to make empirical discoveries in the world. On the road they discovered a series of phenomena of a most peculiar kind. The grass was greener on one side of the road, but still only the withered grass on the other side of the road had been eaten. They saw prints of three large feet in the sand, and eager flies were buzzing around along the road. The discoveries made by the princes seemed to be a series of odd coincidences without any real connection, until they met a man who had lost his camel. When he asked if they had seen it, they told him that a camel had probably been traveling on their route. A camel that was blind in one eye, lame in one leg and carried a jar of honey on its back. When the man suspected that the princes' knowledge was based on the fact that they had stolen his camel, they said that on their way they had registered a number of things that they were only now able to assemble into a larger picture. That the grass had only been eaten on one side of the road testified to the camel's blindness, the three footprints bore witness to the lame fourth leg, and the flies had to have been attracted by honey dripping down to the ground from a jar on the camel's back because of the camel's uneven way of walking.

UNFAMILIAR WITHIN FAMILIAR

Since Walpole wrote his letter in 1754 his invention of the notion "serendipity" has been used in connection with everything from narrative techniques in children's books to a research method within the world of medicine and sociology. Within the aesthetic field the notion of serendipity is used, among other things, to denote art's creative principle.

"Among a number of artists it becomes a complex question not just about accidental occurrences but also about the construction of serendipity [...]. The work in itself becomes an enigmatic and non-linear road, just like in the arabesque."^{III}

An arabesque is a free-wheeling and organic pattern that can be used to illustrate the kind of unforeseen experiences that occur when one is open to serendipity. At the exhibition *Truth or Dare* there is every reason to credit the notion of serendipity as a fruitful factor that is implemented in the works themselves as well as in their hold on the spectator. The four artists, Trond Hugo Haugen, Michael Johansson, Henrik Lund Jørgensen and Jonas Liveröd use their art to challenge every solid image of the world as a finished and unambiguous place. Instead their art is presented as something that comes into existence in an unpredictable hybrid space, which – true to the spirit of serendipity – opens itself to interpretation and

I *Serendip*: arabisk betegnelse for Sri Lanka.

II Tobias Tobi: *Serendipity*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2000.

III Erik Exe Christoffersen: "Serendipitet som skabende princip" in *DRAMA*. Nordisk dramapedagogisk tidsskrift. Nr. 3 2004, s. 21.

IV Fra kunstnernes projektbeskrivelse til *Truth or Dare*, 2008, min oversættelse.

V En mulig oversættelse af sætningen kunne lyde: "Og ynglingene beredte langsomt over broen".

VI Christoffersen, Erik Exe: *ibid*.

chance. Just when we think that we are able to define the work, it moves away from what it appeared to be at first glimpse. Recognizable figures are shifted, twisted or remodeled, so that the work arises from its own odd details and the experience of the spectators.

One of Trond Hugo Haugen's works, *In Memory Of*, consists of a movie theatre without images, where the sound of a symphony orchestra warming up builds up to a concert that never begins. As a member of the audience you sit in your chair and wait. And wait. The moment stands as a little pocket of time pointing back at ourselves and the things we are used to being served by the media. Among other things the work refers to John Cage's musical piece 4'33, where the artist sits still for more than four minutes without touching his instrument. The work transforms itself and becomes the action that does not take place and the audience members' expectations of being presented with a finished composition. In Haugen's installation the work of art becomes a stage that emphasizes our expectations about being able to understand and bring structure to our sensorial impressions in a logic and meaningful way.

In *Friends He Lost at Sea* Henrik Lund Jørgensen tears the works of the Skagen-painters out of their canonized reception, when he, with a starting point in two of Michael Ancher's famous paintings replaces paint with video and the fishermen with refugees. Aside from the ethical undertones the work also induces an aesthetic reflection about the way in which society's understanding of reality changes over time. Is the romantic aesthetic attached to the works of the Skagen-painters actually just something that posterity has attributed to Ancher's maybe more social-realistic project? Jørgensen's film presents several stories at the same time, and our experience of the work is woven together by the story of both the fishermen and the refugees, the depiction of them and the way in which we typically understand them. In this way the work represents a different staging of the conditions for refugees in the West as well as the Skagen-painters, but at the same time we are made conscious of our reception of both. The pictures we paint of reality are historically fickle.

Michael Johansson does not pick anything to pieces, on the contrary. He arranges, systematizes, builds up and organizes things in compact settings, where the object almost seems to be over-stuffed with itself to the extent that the work quivers on the edge between imploding and exploding. It is as if the thing has gained its own strength as a kind of subject organizing itself; doing things to the space that changes our understanding of the object and the everyday use normally associated with it. In the work *Monochrome Anachrome*, suitcases, glass carafes, rugs and books have been lashed together to form something that makes you think of both a set of drawers and a stray still life. The thing is no longer something we can use, but something that happens. By grouping objects in tightly packed settings in this way Johansson presents a compressed extract of the things surrounding us, and the spectator is left in a paradox. On one hand there are a surprisingly large number of things that fit together, but on the other hand you get the feeling that it's just an arbitrary collection of things where each individual item could be replaced with another. The world is genuinely well-ordered, but only because a selection of its things has been lashed together in a given order which in principle could be altered or reshuffled.

Jonas Liveröd's installations and drawings are lopsided presentations trembling with something fascinating and at the same time almost frightening. The works balance on the edge between something familiar that we are able to control and understand, and something secret where only our imagination marks the limits. For *Truth or Dare* Liveröd has built an installation inspired by a church in the Czech Republic, which has been adorned with bones and skulls from dead people. Instead of bones Liveröd joins odd recycled materials in a baroque space disturbed by voices and disharmonies. By means of fur, strings of pearls, lamps, foam and a bunch of other materials he builds a compelling but also indefinable body that the visitors can step into. Sigmund Freud's notion about *the uncanny* is an important feature of Liveröd's

work; a notion indicating a state, where repressed aspects of our lives move up to the surface and unexpectedly infiltrate our reaction patterns. Liveröd's works stop at a similar spot between recognition and alienation and thus turn into both as well as none of them. Here the work trembles in a magic moment that at the same time seems grandiose and failed and where you feel an urge to fidget with the surface in order to gain a deeper understanding of the figures that at the same time attract and disturb.

Truth or Dare is a staging of a number of puzzling scenarios that involves the visitors in a dialogue where the concrete components of the works are intertwined with the story that each visitor reads into the individual work. This brings us back to serendipity, where little things can gain a significant meaning, and where everything behaves radically different from what we are used to. The artists challenge the works as well as the visitors to construct stories that bend the familiar aspects by adding odd angles. This means that to a large extent the experience of the individual work demands that the visitor first and foremost experiences the work without necessarily expecting it to present any finished explanation. It doesn't matter that we don't understand – or that we misinterpret. The most important thing is to take an active share in the compositions represented by the works, sense the details and leave room for new stories to arise along the way.

ENDURING CHAOS

Being open for any outcome makes a demand of the audience, for what will you find? Will you find clarification and coherence like in the fairy tale about the princes of Serendip?

"Just as free and exciting it might seem to throw oneself into a territory without borders and limits for what is allowed, just as big a challenge it would be to dare oneself to open up to the story being told. This goes for the artist as well as for the spectator – what will the consequence be?"^{iv}

Like the title *Truth or Dare* indicates, the exhibition is a game, where the work we see is just as much something we are presented with as it is something we have to help unfold. It will have to be up to the individual visitor to decide if clarification occurs. The serendipity of *Truth or Dare*, and in general of a large part of contemporary art, is more about letting the work and our perception of it be in the making – something that is happening rather than something that has been completed and organized for us. It's not a question of enduring chaos in the sense that in the end all pieces will fit together, but about experiencing the magic of exploring the twisted details of the work. Here it's possible to escape conventional thinking and instead shape the premises for one's own recognition. The freedom of lateral thinking; to challenge oneself to think in other ways than one is used to.

The artists have been working with a similar challenge. Instead of searching for truth in the artistic representation a common starting point has been to dismantle notions like objectivity, truth and history. This also leads to an unceremonious artist role, for the artists have not elevated themselves to brilliant catalysts of insight but rather have become managers of the space where the story and the subjective creation of meaning can take place. They ask if all history and truth actually have been written in a subjective way? And what it takes for a story to seem trustworthy?

The catalogue's introductory quote is a good example of this and forms the basis for the exhibition; a text piece telling about a historic event where only parts of the account are true. The text informs us that in the beginning of the 20th Century art was practiced as a competitive discipline at The Olympic Games just like any other sport. So far, so good. But the text goes on to fabricate a story about Carl Snoilsky from the Swedish Academy, who won a gold medal for the poetic sentence "och ynglingarna redo sakta

över bryggan^v – together with his team of specially selected talents. Real person, but a fictional event in a real historic setting. The quote puts us in a position where we have to decode what's true and what isn't true in the account – and thus also to consider the truth of the stories we read and let ourselves be affected by. The artists play with our expectations by showing how the story about our culture can be rewritten to something untrue, but believable, if only the story is told in the right tone.

ARABESQUE VARIETIES

Although it is now relatively well-known that historiography does not necessarily mirror absolute and true history, our urge to chase the truth nevertheless continues: We seek the story that we can use to explain all other stories. Walpole's notion of serendipity builds on a similar romantic longing for a larger coherence. In the romantic picture of the world it is also possible to reach a connection to a larger meaning by indulging in intuitive and sensuous experiences – just like the fairy tale about the princes of Serendip illustrates. Such an idea of union is also implemented in the notion that there exists one true History that represents the passing of all events.

The artists participating in *Truth or Dare* work with the sign reversed and challenge the notion about unambiguousness and truth. Among other things, they find inspiration in the rebellion of the surrealists against the cultural and rational structures that typically define our understanding of the world. Just like the surrealists the artists find an insight in the unconscious structures that rule our way of thinking – although, unlike the surrealists, they don't find an eternal truth in the unconscious. In *Truth or Dare* the conventional world picture is dissolving, but the artists are more interested in the new stories that might arise in the wake of the critique of the world picture than they are in the demolition itself. Therefore it is not only important for the artists to point out that story telling is always a subjective discipline, but overall to examine how stories are told and how it's possible to influence the notion of the objective, underlying cultural tale. Here serendipity might function as a strategy or as "a process that searches for unexpected connections or junctions [where] nobody owns the process and nobody owns the final meaning. The loss of 'home' is a tragic condition, but at the same time the nomadic and provisional qualities are a strength that in all ways creates a dynamic and movable theatre."^{vi}

Relating openly to the things we sense in the world is our contribution to the telling of a story that has an unknown end. Maybe the movement of history is more like an arabesque pattern than like a single-stringed, linear tale. Something that arises in a changeable movement rather than by uniting the world in unequivocal causal relations. The arabesque is effervescent and unpredictable, and all its many ends do not necessarily meet. But the pattern created along the way can be immeasurably beautiful.

Sanne Flyvbjerg

I Serendip: Arabic name for Sri Lanka.

II Tobias Tobi: *Serendipity*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2000.

III Erik Exe Christoffersen: "Serendipitet som skabende princip" in *DRAMA. Nordisk dramapedagogisk tidsskrift*. Nr. 3 2004, p. 21.

IV From the artists' project description for *Truth or Dare*, 2008.

V A possible translation of the sentence could be: "and the youths rode slowly over the bridge". In Swedish the word "redo" has a double meaning: "rode" or "prepared"

VI Erik Exe Christoffersen: *ibid.*

TROND HUGO HAUGEN

the film starts in
14:12
minutes



Trond Hugo Haugen. *In Memory Of*. 2009

cwpredicate@fab-sas.co.uk

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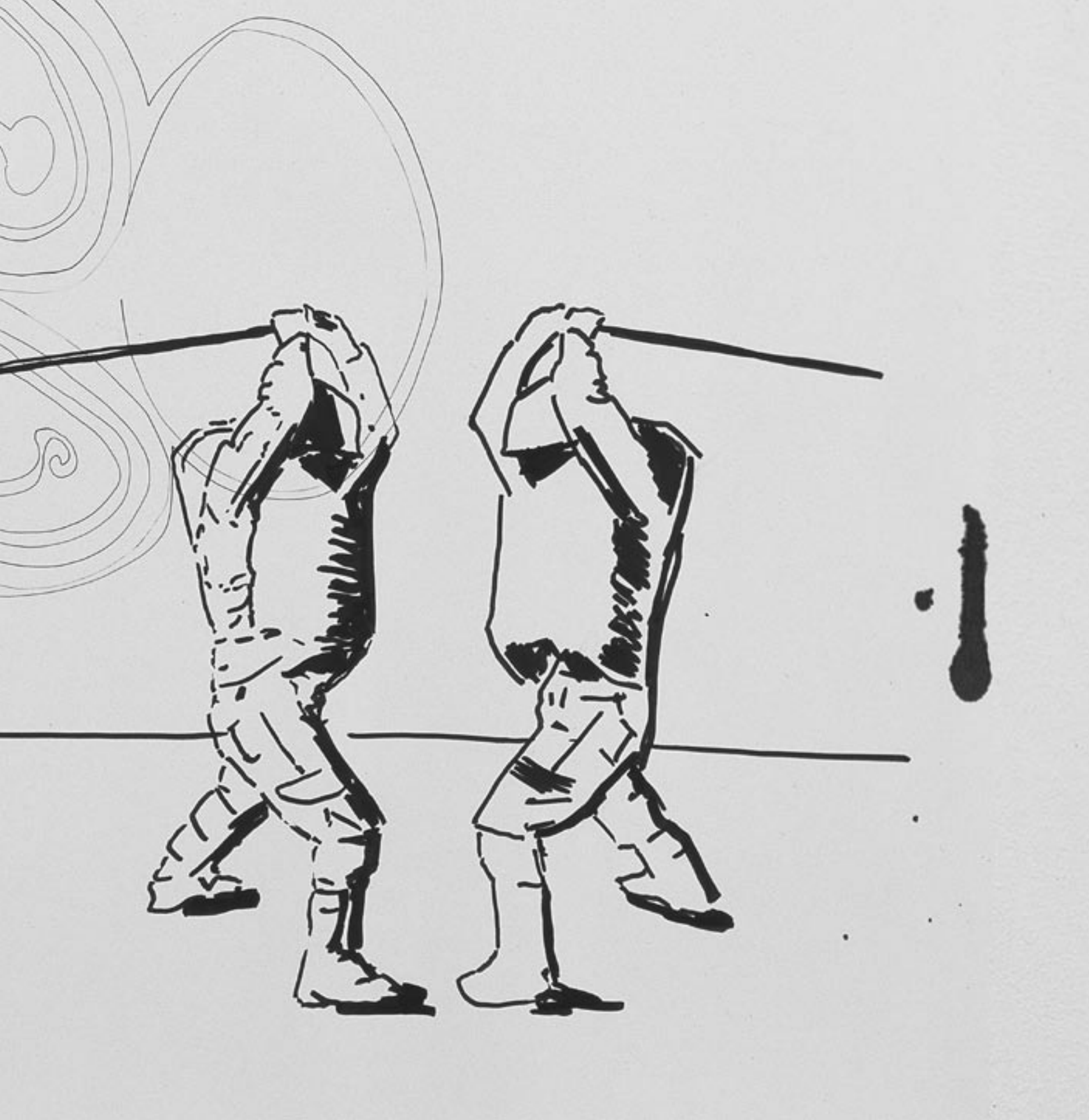
YOU HAVE BEEN SELECTED

microsoftonline109@libero.it

Hello!!!

ffbcandy@lini.co.id

This is your chance to finally make the right move.



Trond Hugo Haugen. *Hundred Days Of Confusion*. Details. 2006-2008



Trond Hugo Haugen. *This May Take Several Minutes*. 2007



Trond Hugo Haugen. *In This City*. 2006



MICHAEL JOHANSSON



Michael Johansson. *Monochrome Anachron*. 2008







p. 24-25: Michael Johansson. *Bunker*. 2007

p. 26-27: Michael Johansson. *Platsspecifikt (Particularly placed / Placed particularly)*. 2007

p. 28: Michael Johansson. *Ghost*. 2009

P.29: Michael Johansson. *Tetris - Liljevalchs Konsthall*. 2009





Michael Johansson. *Vi hade i alla fall tur med vädret* (At least the weater was nice). 2006



Michael Johansson. *Garden Pack*. 2008



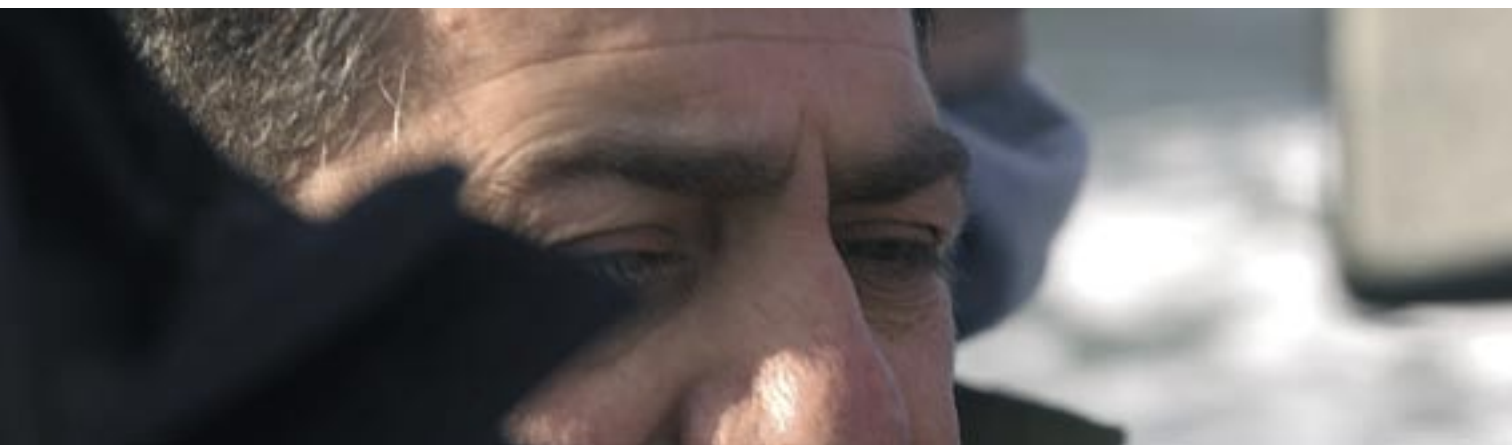
HENRIK LUND JØRGENSEN



Skitser. Reproduktioner af Michael Ancher malerier



Henrik Lund Jørgensen. Optagelse af *Friends He Lost at Sea*. 2009





Henrik Lund Jørgensen. *Friends He Lost at Sea*. Still. 2009



Henrik Lund Jørgensen. *Friends He Lost at Sea*. Stills. 2009



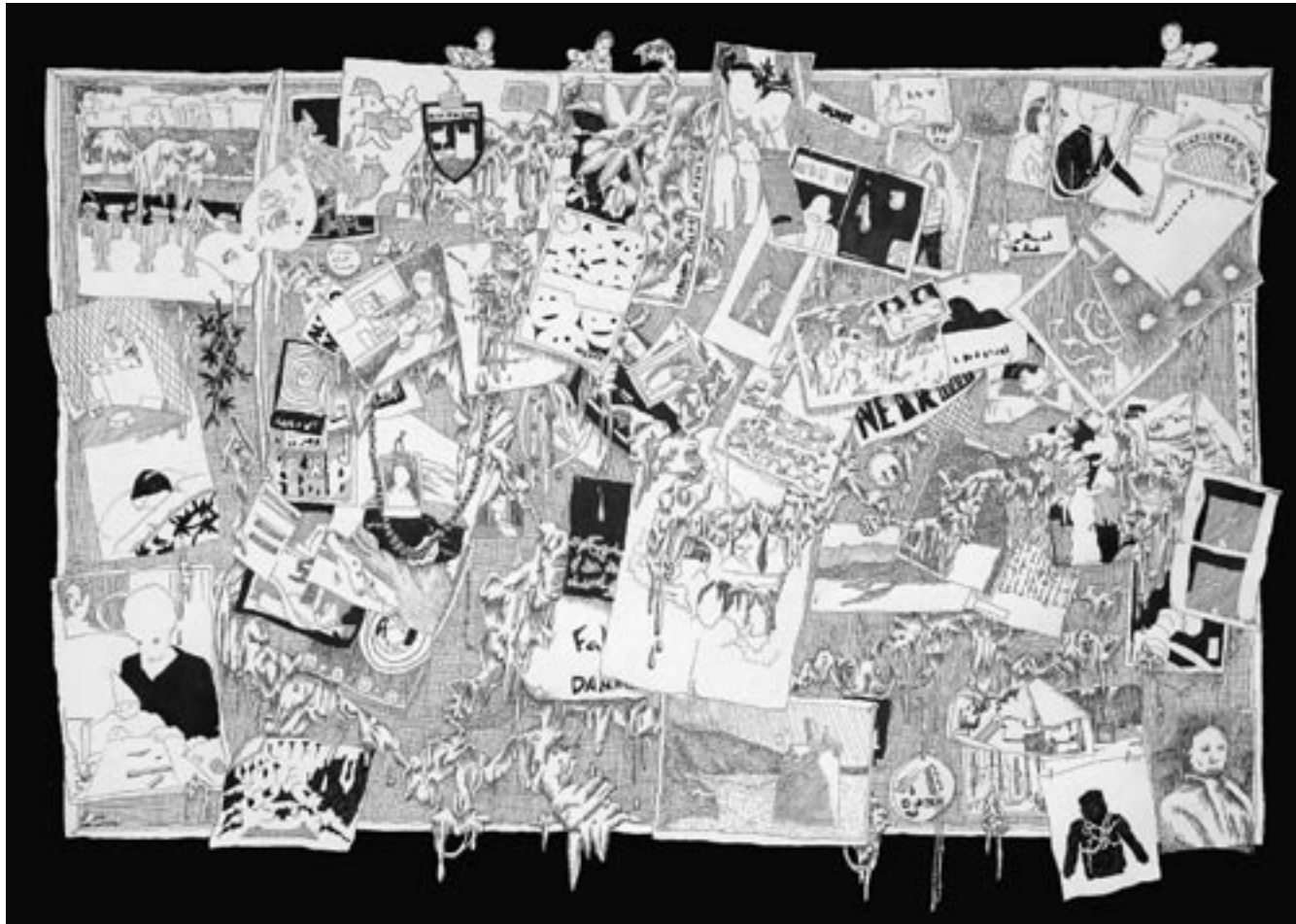
Henrik Lund Jørgensen. *Friends He Lost at Sea*. Still. 2009

JONAS LIVERÖD



Jonas Liveröd. *Theme from Psycho (The borg years)*. 2008

Jonas Liveröd. *Playing with Dead Things*. 2009



Jonas Liveröd. *Self-portrait as a Noticeboard*. 2008



Jonas Liveröd. *Decline*. 2008





Jonas Liveröd. *A Weird Light*. 2009



Jonas Liveröd. *It's Pure Anthropology*. 2008



Jonas Liveröd. *Passed Out There*. 2009



Jonas Liveröd. *Now is the Winter of Our Disco*. 2008

Jonas Liveröd. *A New Magnificently Fucked-up Generation*. 2009

Jonas Liveröd. *Oviloläge*. 2008

GAMLE REMEDIER / NYE BILLEDER

OM MEDIER OG MATERIALITET – PENSLER, HUMOR, VOLD OG FILMISKE FORVENTNINGER PÅ UDSILLINGEN *TRUTH OR DARE*

KNUSTE MALERDRØMME

I 2008 blev det, sikkert for mange ukendte, svenske BBD-stipendium på 1.000 kr. uddelt for tredje gang til en lovende maler ved Konsthögskolan i Malmö. Initiativtageren til denne hædersbevisning er en af *Truth or Dare*-udstillingens kunstnere, Michael Johansson. Som afgangprojekt fra Konsthögskolan i Malmö i 2005 gennemførte Johansson værket *Boulevard of Broken Dreams* (BBD!), hvor han nøje iscenesætter en afståelse af de store mængder ubenyttede pensler, lærreder, malertuber m.v., som han havde samlet i sit atelier. Malergrejet stammede fra en periode, da han forsøgte at overbevise sig selv om, at den helt rigtige måde at blive kunstner på var at dedikere sig til et medium – maleriet. Han kom imidlertid aldrig til at male, men nøjedes med, som han selv siger, at overkompensere ved at hobe maling og pensler op.¹¹

Til *Boulevard of Broken Dreams* arrangerede han alle disse forsømte materialer i en udendørs opstilling, der – måske bortset fra sin gennemført farvekoordinerede og smagfulde opstilling – mimer ethvert andet gadesalg eller loppemarkedsbod. Herfra solgte han beviserne på sine tidlige forestillinger om den rigtige, mediebevindte kunstner og oprettede med midlerne fra salget BBD-stipendiet. Pensler og maling endte altså alligevel med at indgå i Johanssons kunst – bare på en helt anden – konceptuel og installatorisk – måde end han havde forestillet sig.

FORESTILLINGER OM DET POST-MEDIALE

Boulevard of Broken Dreams er et eksempel på, at brugen af selv umiddelbart meget velkendte og traditionelle materialer absolut ikke behøver resultere i et kunstværk, der udfolder sig inden for rammerne af et traditionelt medium. En liste over den materielle, fysiske del af værket – lærreder, pensler, maling osv. – ville højst sandsynlig ikke skabe billeder hos os af gadesalg og uddeling af stipendier. I den forstand er værket eksponent for den såkaldte "post-medium tilstand", som en række forfattere og kunstkritikere har foreslået som karakteristik for den særlige blanding af koncepttænkning, præfabrikerede materialer og improvisatoriske omgang med medier, som store dele af samtidskunsten benytter sig af.

Værkerne på *Truth or Dare* handler om mange forskellige ting og skal ikke her tjene til at sandsynliggøre kunstens eventuelle post-mediale tilstand. Forestillingen om det post-mediale rummer imidlertid perspektiver, som er interessante at have i baghovedet, når vi efterfølgende skal se nærmere på nogle af udstillingens værker. Det gælder både (gen)brug af medier, materialepluralisme og inddragelsen af de billedstrømme, vi befinder os i netop nu.

At samtidskunsten befinder sig i en "post-medium tilstand" – at det med medier med andre ord er et overstået kapitel – kan forstås således, at hybride, eller 'urene', kunstneriske former og teknologier har fortrængt de mere traditionelle, formalistiske definitioner af begrebet 'medium'. Traditionelt set involverer forestillingen om et medium et bestemt forhold mellem en teknisk eller materiel del (fx pensel, maling og lærred) og så en kunstnerisk traditions konventioner, hvorudfra disse materialer bearbejdes (fx at malingen påføres lærredet med penslen i overensstemmelse med malerihistoriens viden om farve- og perspektivlære).

I teksten *Art in the Post-medium Condition* fastslår den amerikanske kunsthistoriker Rosalind Krauss imidlertid, at medier aldrig er "enhedslige" og ikke kan forstås ud fra deres fysikalitet, men altid må tænkes med udgangspunkt i forestillinger om forskellighed.¹² Eller som W.J.T. Mitchell, en anden amerikansk kunsthistoriker og medieteoriker, har udtrykt det: "All media are mixed media"¹³. Pointen er, at forestillingen om det rene, skarpt afgrænsede medium er – og altid har været – en illusion, også når det gælder ellers "kanoniserede" medier som fx maleri og skulptur.

Til diskussionen om kunstens mediebetegnelser kan man indvende, at rigtig mange kunstværker – og kunstnere – er ligeglade med, om de passer til denne eller hin påklistede medieetiket. Ja, faktisk

er det ofte en pointe, at de bevidst tilsidesætter eller stikker en kæp i hjulet på de konventioner, der karakteriserer et medium (som vi fx så det i *Boulevard of Broken Dreams*). Diskussionen om en eventuel post-medial tilstand for kunsten har imidlertid rod i en anden, mere vidtgående, debat. Nemlig om kunstens mulighed for at råbe verden op i en tid, hvor det kulturelle rum, mener nogen, er totalt billedmættet og vores æstetiske oplevelser foregår overalt og hele tiden, hvilket gør forestillingen om kunsten som en særlig privilegeret æstetisk sfære fuldstændig forældet.^v Når kunst så optræder i totalt hybride udtryksformer og frakender sig sikre mediale kendetegn, umuliggør det blot i endnu højere grad en skelnen mellem kunst og alle mulige andre kulturelle indtryk.

Forestillingen om en post-medial tilstand kan således bruges til forholdsvis objektivt at betegne en kunsttilstand hinsides traditionelle formelle medier som maleri, skulptur og fotografi, men henviser også til kunstens og det æstetiskes ændrede grundvilkår. Og, hvis man accepterer disse analyser, kan man enten vælge at konstatere, at det nu engang er de materielle og samfundsmæssige vilkår, kunsten må operere indenfor, eller man kan som Krauss vælge at beklage, at kunsten overgiver sig til en senkapitalistisk logik, hvor strøgtursshopping og det at opleve kunst bliver to alen af samme stykke.^{vi}

STYR PÅ VÆRKTØJET

Mange af Michael Johanssons senere værker er delvis præget af samme monomane materialebevidsthed som *Boulevard of Broken Dreams*. For Johansson er en samler. Og som alle samlere ved han, at én af en ting, ja, det er bare en ting, men når man samler flere, ofte mange af den samme eller beslægtede genstande, så opstår der noget nyt. Objekterne i en samling tilfører hinanden logik, nærvær og betydning.

Det kan være ting med en vis patina, Johansson samler, og, fx som i *Platsspecifikt* fra 2007, stuver omhyggeligt sammen under en velbrugt høvlebænk. Ting der hører til et arbejdsbord – boremaskiner, brugte malerbøtter og diverse redskaber og dingener – men også ting (fx metalbøtter til kantinemad?) der ikke normalt hører hjemme her, og som bringer en vis uro i den tilsyneladende stringens og orden, der hersker inden for høvlebænkens territoriale rum. Samtidig bibringer hele set-up'et naturligvis alle disse normalt vældigt praktiske genstande et skær af uvirkelighed, idet værket gør diskret grin med den velorganiserede husfaders velorganiserede arbejdsrum, hvor han udfører praktiske løsninger på familiens praktiske problemer. For denne høvlebænk er så struktureret og tætpakket, at tingene er blevet gjort ubrugelige. Vi kan ikke mere komme til dem. De skarpe, kubiske grænser, som den samlede organisering af tingene danner, indhyller genstandene i en utilnærmelighed. Hvis man griber ud efter noget og river det løs, forstyrres jo en hel verdensorden – alting falder fra hinanden og bliver meningsløst. Alt det gamle skrammel lades pludselig med betydning – den poetiske side af Johanssons arbejde – men gør også lidt grin med os, udfordrer os: Skal der så lidt til at rokke ved de værdier, vi tillægger vores omgivelser – er vi så påvirkelige overfor små indgreb i de tilstande, vi konfronteres med. Ja, afslører Johanssons værker for os, det er vi.

Johanssons værker kan ses som klunserens eller samlerens polemiske svar på den traditionelle stramme, geometriske minimalistiske skulptur. Imidlertid arbejder han også stedspecifikt og intervenserende. På det enkelte udstillingssted – også i forbindelse med Århus Kunstbygning – går han simpelthen på materialehugst i magasiner og værksteder. Ud fra det fundne bygger Johansson værker, der altså, i den tid udstillingen varer, fratager en del af stedets "værktøj" – fra skillevægge til skrivemaskiner – deres vante funktion. Hvis vi tænker på forståelsen af det post-mediale som en tilstand, hvor fysikalitet – eller værktøj – og værk på ingen måde definerer hinanden, så bliver Johanssons værk næsten en parodi på disse forsøg på generelle karakteristika af samtidskunstens nye omgang med medier og materialer.

SORT HUMOR OG DAGSLYS

Et fællestræk ved værker af de fire kunstnere på *Truth or Dare* er en humoristisk velvillighed, undertiden en legende underfundighed, som imidlertid folder sig ud i relation til mange forskellige temaer og temperamenter. Jonas Liveröds tegninger, bøger, skulpturer og installationer bekender sig til en absolut sort humor – både i overført og konkret forstand. Sort er således en fremtrædende farve i Liveröds univers, og fx bogen *The Violence* består af sort/hvide tegninger, manipulerede fotografier, statements og citater. Den er en del af det serielt anlagte udstillingsprojekt, *Permanent Daylight*, som Liveröd arbejder med i 2008-9. På side 121 i *The Violence* kan man læse:

Pony Drawing Joke

Teacher: What are you drawing, Sammy?

Sammy: It's a picture of a pony in a field eating grass.

Teacher: I can't see any grass. Where is it?

Sammy: The pony ate it.

Teacher: And I can't see the pony either. Where's he?

Sammy: He went back to his stable. He didn't want to stay in a field where there wasn't any grass.

Logikken i Sammys historie gør det forståeligt nok umuligt for ham at tegne noget, som læreren kan genkende og skabe en sammenhæng i, selvom elementerne – ponyen, marken, græsset osv. – egentlig er simple nok. På lignende måde kan man som oftest genkende strukturer og elementer i Liveröds detaljerede, spindelvævsfine tegninger. De minder os om billeder og universer, vi har set før – men samtidig nægter sammenhængen for alvor at indfinde sig; den glider os af syne eller af hænde, og det vi ser forbliver fremmed. På én gang kendt og utilgængeligt. Som interiører eller hjem hvor møblerne er draperede, så man kan skelne deres konturer, men ikke rigtig blive fortrolige med dem.

Tegningerne i *The Violence* er ikke eksplicit voldelige, men de opererer alligevel mere eller mindre diskret med elementer, vi er vant til at forbinde med vold. Såvel dokumentariske som fiktionsbaserede billeder og film, man har set i sit liv, aktiveres fx uundgåeligt af de kutteklædte, men ofte ansigtsløse personer i Liveröds billeder. Det kan også blot være fornemmelsen af strukturer eller kaotiske udsnit af skove og forladte paladser, hvor stedet selv, naturen eller arkitekturen er ved at få overtaget i en kaotisk nedsmeltning eller opløsning, der ikke efterlader meget frirum til de væsner, der ind imellem har forvildet sig ind i de sort/hvide malstrømme. Billederne foruroliger ved at vise det uden om, eller lige før, det øjeblik, hvor vores værste antagelser bekræftes. Eller det punkt hvor vores associationer tvinger os i en retning, vi egentlig ikke ønsker at forfølge.

I tilknytning til tegningerne og bogprojektet bygger Liveröd i *Permanent Daylight*-serien stedspecifikke installationer op til hvert udstillingssted. Til *Truth or Dare* har han ladet sig inspirere af et lille kapel, Sedlec Ossuary^{vii} i byen Sedlec i Tjekkiet, der på ekstrem fantasifuld vis er udsmykket med menneskeknogler fra mere end 40.000 skeletter. Ophobningen af knogler til dette benhus blev efter sigende påbegyndt af en halvblind munk i 1500-tallet, hvor krig og pest havde forårsaget en usædvanlig stor tilgang af begravelse på kirkegården. I 1870'erne bliver de mange knogler arrangeret i deres nuværende skulpturelle former, hvor kunst(hånd)værk, indretning og begravelsesplads forenes i et. Liveröds værk tager bl.a. afsæt i en vældig lysekroner, hvis helt særlige træk er, at den indeholder mindst en af hver af knoglerne i den menneskelige krop.

Selvom han ikke benytter sig af menneskeknogler, bygger Liveröd strukturer op, der, som han selv formulerer det, er ladet med en "uroilig, nervøs og hallucinatorisk tilstand". Der er antydninger af

død og nedbrydelighed – men også en optagethed af det liv, der er forudsætningen for at fantasere om det hinsidige. Projektets titel, *Permanent Daylight*, rummer også denne insisterende mulighed for dobbelttolkninger; permanent daglys er jo en fysisk umulighed – selv der hvor man kan opleve midnatssol ændrer lysets karakter sig i løbet af dagen (og forsvinder helt om vinteren). Og hvor tillokkende et løfte om evigt dagslys end kan synes for en D-vitamin hungrede nordbo, så ved vi også, at permanent lys kan være en forbandelse – ja, en velkendt torturmetode.

NÅR KUNSTVÆRKET NÆSTEN IKKE ER DER

Den barokke humor – men samtidig næsten eksistentielle og vedholdende opholden sig ved detaljerne i oplevet liv – kan også opleves i forbindelse med Trond Hugo Haugens værker, om end hallucinationerne i hans tegninger og konstruktioner er af en ganske anden karakter. I bogudgivelsen *Det kjedelige kunstverket*^{viii} fra 2002 kan man i ekstremt enkle, næsten skematiske – eller kedelige! – tegninger følge et kunstværk, måske en slags lysinstallation på hjul forbundet til en stikkontakt, der stikker af fra sit kedelige liv, simpelthen flyver ud af vinduet, men via sin forbindelse til stikkontakten tager hele kloden med sig på slæb.

Bogens undertitel er "Eller kunstverket som kjedet seg", og vi opfordres indledningsvist til at overveje, hvorfor kunstværker keder sig – om det var glemt eller ensomt? Eller om al kunst faktisk keder sig? Og hvad mon kloden ser, når den sådan bliver hevet med på en flyvetur af kunsten? Grundlagsproblematikker omkring kunstens vilkår og klodens tilstand lanceres altså kækt i sammenhæng med tegninger, der ind imellem er på grænsen til næsten ikke at være; hurtige skitser af ikke altid gennemskuelige hændelsesforløb eller helt enkle landskabsfantasier. I tråd hermed spørges der afslutningsvis i bogen til, hvorvidt verden nu, efter endt flyvetur, har forandret sig – og, ikke mindst, hvad med dig, er du blevet påvirket af turen?

Også serien *Hundred Days Of Confusion* (påbegyndt i 2006), er tegnet råt, intuitivt og direkte. Tegningerne tager udgangspunkt i personlige hændelser og skal i den forstand forstås som betragtninger over livets forløb, men samtidig er det vigtigt, at de sender et signal om at være hurtigt nedkradset, uden mellemregninger. De skal vise en villighed til altid at søge noget nyt, ikke hænge fast, men lade sig bære videre. Tegning er for Haugen tænkning; det er en proces der leder tankerne på vej, men tegninger er også i sig selv tanker. Denne brug af tegning som et hurtigt, intuitivt medium kombineret med en konceptuel eller idebaseret interesse for, hvor lidt der skal til før vi har et vedkommende billede, ligger i tråd med Haugens bearbejdning af filmmediet i værket *In Memory Of*. Også her er det den tænkning og adfærd, som mediet giver anledning til, frem for selve filmen, billederne på skærmen, der er i fokus.

In Memory Of består af en minibiograf, hvor et lydspor afslører et symfoniorkester, der varmer op til den forestående koncert, mens publikum indfinder sig i salen – du kan høre dem småsnakke med hinanden. Du sidder i biografædet, forestiller dig, hvad du skal til at opleve; hvordan mon det lyder, når orkesteret faktisk spiller sammen, og hvad vil der blive vist på skærmen? Men 20 minutter går – og – der sker absolut ingenting. Efter 20 minutter går lydsporet i loop, og dine egne forventninger til, hvad dette medium i dette set-up mon kunne bringe dig, er de eneste billeder, du tager med ud af biografen.^{ix} Haugen bringer biografen og filmmediets rammer i spil, men tømmer arkitekturen for de billeder, vi forventer af dette medium og lader i stedet lydsporet generere publikums forventningsfulde indre film. Nogen vil sidde i hele loopets varighed og opdage at forventningstemaet blot gentager sig, andre vil stikke hovedet ind i ny og næ og konstatere – at filmen stadig ikke er gået i gang.

SKAGENS MALERI OG FLYGTNINGEDOKUMENTAR

I Henrik Lund Jørgensens film *Friends He Lost at Sea* (2009) er udfordringen af vores forventninger til filmmediet helt anderledes. Her mødes vi af alle mediets virkemidler – stemningsfulde billeder, betydningsladet 'speak' samt ikke mindst skuespillere og en dramatisk fortælling. Forskydningen i vores oplevelse indtræder, idet vi forsøger at huske, hvor vi dog har set historien og billederne før? – Og kommer i tanke om den danske skagensmaler Michael Anchers velkendte og elskede bidrag til den danske kunsthistorie i form af heroiske skildringer af det farefulde liv blandt fiskerne på Jyllands Vestkyst. Den motiviske opbygning i *Friends He Lost at Sea*, tager udgangspunkt i to berømte Ancher-malerier: *Vil han klare pynten?* (1879) og *Mandskabet reddet* (1894). I det første maleri skuer en gruppe fiskere ud over vandet mod et punkt uden for vores synsfelt og afventer, om redningsbådene må i vandet eller, om skibet derude klarer sig. Det andet motiv er også fra strandkanten; redningsmandskabet, der bærer på nødstedte søfolk, er netop nået i land.

Henrik Lund Jørgensen er ikke som 1800-tallets danske malere taget i kunstnerkoloni i Skagen, men derimod til en flygtningelejr i fiskerbyen Hanstholm. En livssituation der for så vidt er lige så eksotisk og fremmed for de fleste af os, som Skagensfiskernes i slutningen af 1800-tallet – selvom billederne kan forekomme velkendte, og temaet er noget, mange af os har en holdning til. Filmen er imidlertid ikke bare et politisk indlæg i debatten, snarere en meditativ fortælling, eller et billedepos der nok har et vist narrativt forløb, men fx ikke en markeret begyndelse og afslutning.

Jørgensens film understreger et ikke bare eksistentielt, men også altid samfundsmæssigt reguleret tema i Anchers to malerier, som vi måske ikke er så vant til at have øje for: distinktionen mellem at 'overleve' og at 'leve'. Uden at undervurdere de historiske og sociale forskelle mellem de to kunstners værker, så gælder det for både nødstedte søfolk i 1879 og flygtninge i 2009 i første omgang om at overleve som menneske. Men denne tilstand af overlevelse, hvor 'det rene menneske' er i fokus, er aldrig permanent; når man først er reddet i land træder lokale, nationale og internationale regler i kraft til regulering af det overlevede menneske. Eller som den italienske filosof Giorgio Agamben (født 1942) udtrykker det: "At der i nationalstatens politiske system ikke er et selvstændigt rum for sådan noget som det rene menneske i sig selv, er endnu mere indlysende, når man tager i betragtning, at flygtningestatus, også i bedste fald, altid er blevet betragtet som en provisorisk tilstand, der skal føre til enten naturalisering eller hjemsendelse. En stabil status for mennesket i sig selv er utænkelig i nationalstatens lovgivning."^x

Friends He Lost at Sea citerer både Ancher-maleriernes motiviske opbygning og bruger deres særkende – den psykologisk indlevede skildring af hver enkelt karakter i billedet. Uden at vi af den grund kan skelne dokumentarisme fra fiktion. Det dramatiske øjeblik i Anchers maleri er et resultat af nøje iscenesættelse og mange forarbejder, ligesom *Friends He Lost at Sea* nok har en klangbund af aktuel, samfundsrelevant realisme, men også er et resultat af filmmediets skuespilkunst og underlægningsmusik.

* * *

Medier og materialer bliver flittigt forskudt, citeret, kombineret, udfordret og opløst på denne udstilling. Der er en uafgjorthed på færde i de mange inklusioner og forhandlinger af velkendte medier – maleri, tegning, film m.v. – som naturligt korresponderer med udstillingens optagethed af den uafgjorthed, som vi – om vi synes om det eller ej – må leve i, når grænserne mellem fakta og fiktion, historiske begivenheder og historiske fortolkninger gang på gang krydser hinanden i et ubrydeligt netværk. Medier er ikke fraværende i en post-medial tilstand, men de er altid allerede forskudte. Og et kunstværks materialitet er ikke blevet ubetydeligt på bekostning af konceptet, men værkets fysiske fremtræden er ikke så forelsket i sig selv, at det tror sig uerstatteligt eller vælger materialer, der signalerer ønsker om et evigt liv i uforgængelig sandhed.

Lise Skytte Jakobsen

OLD REMEDIES / NEW IMAGES

ON MEDIA AND MATERIALS – BRUSHES, HUMOUR, VIOLENCE AND FILMIC EXPECTATIONS AT THE EXHIBITION *TRUTH OR DARE*

PAINTER'S BROKEN DREAMS

In 2008 the (for most probably unfamiliar) Swedish BBD-grant of SEK 1,000 was awarded to a new and promising painter at the Malmö Art Academy for the third time. Initiating this mark of recognition was Michael Johansson, one of the exhibiting artists at the exhibition *Truth or Dare*. As his graduation project from Malmö Art Academy in 2005, Johansson presented the work *Boulevard of Broken Dreams* (BBD!)ⁱ, where he elaborately staged a renunciation of the large amounts of unused brushes, canvases, paint tubes etc. that he had collected in his studio. All the painter's gear originated from a period when he tried to convince himself that the only true way to become an artist was by dedicating himself to one medium – painting. He never ended up painting, though – but only, by his own words, compensated by amassing paint and brushes.ⁱⁱ

For the work *Boulevard of Broken Dreams* Johansson arranged all these neglected materials in an outdoor set-up that – except for its thoroughly colour-coordinated and tasteful presentation – mimicked any other garage sale or booth at a flea market. Here he sold the proofs of his earlier conviction about the genuine, media-conscious artist and later established the BBD-grant with the revenue generated by the sale. In this way the brushes and paint ended up in Johansson's art anyway – only in a quite different way, both conceptually and logistically, than he had imagined.

NOTIONS ABOUT POST-MEDIUM CONDITIONS

Boulevard of Broken Dreams shows that the use of even immediately familiar and traditional materials by no means has to end with an artwork unfolding itself within the frames of a traditional medium. A list of the material, physical parts of the work – canvases, brushes, paint, etc. – would probably not result in connotations of garage sales and the awarding of grants. In this sense the work is an exponent of the so-called "post-medium condition", which a number of writers and critics have suggested is a characteristic feature of the special way of mixing conceptual thinking, pre-fabricated materials and improvised attitude towards different media types favoured by many contemporary artists.

The works at *Truth or Dare* deal with a large number of themes and are not created in order to render art's potential post-medium condition plausible. But the notion of post-medium qualities contains a number of perspectives that will be interesting to keep in mind when we take a closer look at some of the works at the exhibition. This applies to the (re)use of media types as well as the pluralism of materials and the involvement of the streams of images, which we are all a part of right here and now.

That contemporary art finds itself in a "post-medium condition" – where all concerns about media types have been left behind – can be understood in the sense that hybrid, or 'unclean' artistic forms and technologies have replaced the more traditional, formalistic definitions of the notion 'medium'. Traditionally a medium involves a certain relationship between a technical or material part (for instance brush, painting and canvas) plus the conventions of an artistic tradition on the basis of which these materials are treated (for instance that paint is added to a canvas with a brush in accordance with a knowledge of the doctrines of colour and perspective from the history of painting).

However, in her text *Art in the post-medium condition* the American art historian Rosalind Krauss states that mediums never possess a "singleness" and cannot be understood on the basis of their physicality, but always have to be understood as differential, self-differing.ⁱⁱⁱ Or, like W.J.T. Mitchell, another American art historian and media theorist, says: "All media are mixed media."^{iv} The point is that the notion of the pure, clearly defined medium is – and always has been – an illusion, also in relation to otherwise "canonized" media types like painting and sculpture.

In relation to this discussion of the designations of artistic mediums one could argue that a large number of art works – and artists – don't care at all if they fit into one superimposed media category or another. Actually artists often consciously set aside or put a spoke in the wheel of the conventions that characterize a medium (like we saw with for instance *Boulevard of Broken Dreams*). But the discussion about art's possible post-medium condition has its roots in another more far-reaching debate. The conversation about art's possibilities of making itself heard by the world at a time when, according to some, the cultural space is totally saturated with images and our aesthetic experiences happen everywhere and all the time, makes the notion of art existing in an especially privileged aesthetic sphere completely outdated.^v When art presents itself in the shape of totally hybridized means of expressions and renounces its distinctive media-marks, it only becomes even more impossible to distinguish between art and all sorts of other cultural impressions.

Thus the notion of a post-medium condition can be used to somewhat objectively signify an artistic state beyond traditional formal media types like painting, sculpture and photography, but it also refers to the altered basic conditions of art and aesthetics. And, if one accepts this analysis, one can either choose to state that these are the material and social conditions, which art has to operate within, or – like Krauss – one can choose to regret that art surrenders to a late-capitalist logic where mall-shopping and the experience of art becomes one and the same thing.^{vi}

CONTROLLED TOOLS

Many of Michael Johansson's later works are, partly, characterized by the same monomaniac choice of materials as *Boulevard of Broken Dreams*. For Johansson is a collector. And like all other collectors he knows that one of a kind is, well, just an object like any other, but when more of the same kind are collected – often a large number of the same or similar objects – something new arises. The objects in a collection give one another a sense of logic, presence and importance.

Johansson might collect things with a certain patina, and, then, as in *Platsspecifikt* (Site-specific) from 2007, stow them away under a worn workbench. The collection might include things belonging on a workbench – drilling machines, used paint pots and various tools and doodads – but also things (for instance metal cans for cafeteria food) that normally don't belong to the setting and bring a certain sense of unease to the apparent stringency and order marking the territorial space of the workbench. At the same time the whole set-up naturally gives all these objects that are normally very practical a touch of unreality, since the work discretely makes fun of the well-organized man of the house and his well-organized workshop, where he presents practical solutions to the practical problems within his family. This workbench here is so structured and crammed that it would be impossible to use the things. We cannot get to them. The sharp, cubic boundaries created by the overall organization of the objects envelop the objects in an unapproachable sphere. If you reach out for something and tear it loose, a whole world order would be disturbed – everything would fall apart and become meaningless. All the old junk suddenly gains meaning – the poetic side of Johansson's work – but it also makes fun of us, challenges us: Does it take so little to shake the values we assign to our surroundings – are we so susceptible to even the smallest interference in the situations that confront us? Yes, Johansson's work reveals to us, we are.

Johansson's works can be seen as a scavenger's or collector's polemic answer to the traditionally tight, geometric, minimalistic sculpture. However, his way of working is also site-specific and intervening. At each individual exhibition venue – also in connection with the exhibition at the Aarhus Art Building

– he simply goes looking for stuff in museum storage rooms and workshops. On the basis of his findings Johansson builds his works that – at least while the exhibition is still presented – robs a portion of the “tools” belonging to the place (from partition walls to writing machines) of their normal functionality. If we think about the understanding of the notion of post-medium qualities as a state in which physicality – or tools – and work in no way define one another, Johansson’s works almost turn into a parody of these attempts to formulate a general characterization of contemporary art’s new way of treating media and materials.

BLACK HUMOUR AND DAYLIGHT

A common feature in the works presented by the four artists at *Truth or Dare* is a humourous benevolence, at times a playful subtlety, which nevertheless unfolds in relation to a large number of different themes and temperaments. Jonas Liveröd’s drawings, books, sculptures and installations confess to a decidedly black humour – in a figurative as well as a very concrete sense. Black is a predominant colour in Liveröd’s universe, and for instance the book *The Violence* consists of black & white drawings, manipulated photographs, statements and quotations. The book forms a part of the serially planned exhibition project *Permanent Daylight*, which Liveröd is working on in 2008-9. On page 121 in *The Violence* it says:

Pony Drawing Joke

Teacher: What are you drawing, Sammy?

Sammy: It’s a picture of a pony in a field eating grass.

Teacher: I can’t see any grass. Where is it?

Sammy: The pony ate it.

Teacher: And I can’t see the pony either. Where’s he?

Sammy: He went back to his stable. He didn’t want to stay in a field where there wasn’t any grass.

The logic in Sammy’s story makes it, understandably, impossible for him to draw anything that his teacher can recognize and create a meaning in, although the elements – the pony, the field, the grass, etc. – all are simple enough. Similarly it’s often possible to recognize structures and elements in Liveröd’s detailed, cobwebby drawings. They remind us of images and universes we have seen before – but at the same time the connection refuses to present itself for real; it slides out of sight or hand, and what we see remains elusive. At the same time familiar and inaccessible. Like an interior or a home where the furniture is draped so that we can see its outlines but still not quite acquaint ourselves with it.

The drawings in *The Violence* are not explicitly violent but nevertheless operate more or less openly with elements we normally associate with violence. Documentaristic as well as fiction-based images and films that we have seen in the course of our lives are inevitably activated by the cowed and often faceless figures in Liveröd’s images. It can also be just a sense of structures or chaotic slices of forests and abandoned palaces, where the place itself, nature or the architecture gains the upper hand in a chaotic meltdown or dissolution that does not leave very much free space for the beings that now and then happen to stray into the black & white whirlpools. The images disturb us by presenting everything around, or just before, the moment where our worst assumptions are confirmed. Or the point where our associations force us in a direction in which we don’t really want to go.

In connection with the drawings and the book project, Liveröd in the *Permanent Daylight*-series builds site-specific installations for each new exhibition venue. For *Truth or Dare* he has let himself be inspired by a little chapel by the name Sedlec Ossuary^{vi} in the town of Sedlec in the Czech Republic, which in an extremely imaginative way has been decorated with human bones from more than 40,000 skeletons. The accumulation of bones for this house of bones is said to have been initiated by a half-blind monk in the 16th Century where war and the plague had led to an unusually large number of burials at the cemetery. In the 1870s the many bones were arranged in their present sculptural form, where handicraft, interior decoration and funeral site are united. Among other things Liveröd’s work is inspired by a big chandelier with the remarkable feature that it contains at least one of each of the bones in the human body.

Although Liveröd does not use human bones, he is concerned with building structures that – in his own words – represent “a restless, nervous and hallucinatory state”. There are suggestions of death and decomposition – but also a keen interest in life, which is after all a prerequisite for fantasizing about the hereafter. Also the title of the project, *Permanent Daylight*, contains an insisting possibility of ambiguous interpretations; permanent daylight is a physical impossibility – even in places where it’s possible to experience the midnight sun the quality of the light changes in the course of the day (with the light disappearing altogether in the winter). No matter how alluring the promise of eternal daylight might be for a vitamin-D hungry Northerner, we also know that permanent light can be a curse – and even a well-known method of torture.

WHEN THE WORK OF ART ALMOST ISN’T THERE

The baroque humour – but at the same time the almost existential and persistent occupation with the details of experienced life – can also be experienced in connection with the works of Trond Hugo Haugen, although the hallucinations in his drawings and constructions are of quite another kind. In his book *Det kjedelige kunstverket (The Boring Work of Art)*^{viii} from 2002 it is possible to follow – in extremely simple, almost schematic (or boring!) drawings – a work of art, maybe a kind of light installation on wheels connected to a socket, that flees from its boring life and simply flies out the window, but because of its connection to the socket it brings the whole globe with it in tow.

The subtitle of the book is “Eller kunstverket som kjedet seg” (“Or the Bored Work of Art”) and initially we are encouraged to reflect on why the work of art is bored – was it forgotten or lonely? Or is all art bored? And what does the globe see when it is taken on a flight by art? Basic problematics about the conditions of art and the state of the globe are presented in a cheerful way in connection with drawings that now and then seem on the edge of ceasing to exist; fast sketches of not always transparent sequences of events or simple landscape fantasies. In keeping with this a question is asked towards the end of the book: Has the world now changed after the flight – and, not least, what about you, have you been affected by the flight?

Also the series *Hundred Days of Confusion* (begun in 2006) has been drawn in a raw, intuitive and direct way. The drawings take their starting point in personal incidents and in this sense they must be understood as contemplations on the course of life, but at the same time it is important to note that they send out a signal about being spontaneous and sketched in a hurry. They show a willingness to always search for something new, not getting stuck but always being willing to let oneself get carried along. For Haugen drawing is like thinking; it’s a process that leads the thoughts on their way, but the drawings in themselves are also thoughts.

This use of drawings as a fast, intuitive medium combined with a conceptual or idea-based interest in how little it takes to create a meaningful image is in keeping with Haugen's treatment of the medium of film in the work *In Memory Of*. Also in this instance the focus is put on the thoughts and behaviour that the medium results in, rather than the film itself, the images on the screen.

In Memory Of consists of a miniature movie theatre where a soundtrack reveals a symphonic orchestra warming up for an approaching concert, while the audience members find their seats in the concert hall and we hear their small talk in the background. You take your seat in the movie theatre and imagine what you are to experience; how will it sound when the members of the orchestra begin to play for real, and what will you see on the screen? But 20 minutes pass ... and absolutely nothing happens. After 20 minutes the soundtrack ends its loop and starts from the beginning again, and your own expectations of what this medium in this set-up would be presenting to you are the only images you bring with you from the movie theatre.^x Haugen brings the movie theatre and the boundaries of the filmic medium into play, but empties the architecture of the images we expect from this medium while letting the soundtrack generate the expectant inner film of the audience. Some will probably remain seated for the whole duration of the loop and discover that the expectation theme just repeats itself, while others will stick their head into the movie theatre every now and then and realize that the film still hasn't started.

SKAGEN-PAINTERS AND A DOCUMENTARY ON REFUGEES

In Henrik Lund Jørgensen's film *Friends He Lost at Sea* the challenge to our expectations of the medium of film is of a totally different character. Here we are presented with all the artistic effects of the medium – evocative images, meaningful 'speak' plus, not least, actors and a dramatic story line. The shift in our experience occurs when we try to remember where we have seen the story and the images before ... and remember the Danish Skagen painter Michael Ancher's familiar and beloved contribution to the history of Danish art in the shape of heroic depictions of the perilous life of fishermen on the West Coast of Jutland. The structure and motif of *Friends He Lost at Sea* is inspired by two famous paintings by Michael Ancher: *Will He Round the Point?* (1879) and *The Crew Saved* (1894). In the first painting a group of fishermen are gazing out over the sea towards a point outside our line of vision while waiting to see if the lifeboats have to be sent out or if the boat out there will make it. The other motif is also from a beach; a rescue party carrying shipwrecked fishermen ashore after saving them.

Unlike the Danish painters of the 19th Century, Henrik Lund Jørgensen has not spent time in an artists' colony in Skagen, but has visited a refugee camp in the fishing village of Hanstholm. A life situation which in many ways is just as exotic and foreign to most of us as that of the fishermen in Skagen towards the end of the 19th Century – although the images might seem familiar and the theme is something most of us have an opinion about. However, the film is not just a politic contribution to the debate, but rather a meditative tale or a pictorial epic that might contain a certain narrative flow, but for instance does not have a set beginning or ending.

Jørgensen's film underlines not only an existential but also an always socially regulated theme in Ancher's two paintings that we might not be all that used to keeping our eyes open for: The distinction between 'surviving' and 'living'. Without underestimating the historic and social differences between the works of the two artists, it applies to shipwrecked fishermen in 1879 as well as for refugees in 2009 that they first and foremost survive as human beings. But this state of survival, where the 'pure human' is in focus, is never permanent, because once saved and rescued local, national and international rules are put into effect in order to regulate the lives of the surviving human being. Or, like the Italian philosopher Gior-

gio Agamben (born 1942) puts it: "That there is no autonomous space in the political order of the Nation-State for something like the pure human in itself is evident at the very least from the fact that, even in the best of cases, the status of refugee has always been considered a temporary condition that ought to lead to naturalization or repatriation. A stable statute for the human in itself is inconceivable in the law of the nation-state."^x

Friends He Lost at Sea quotes Ancher's compositional elements and uses their features in the shape of the psychologically emphatic depiction of the figures in the painting. This does not mean, though, that we can distinguish documentarism from fiction. The dramatic moment in Ancher's painting is a result of careful planning and preparatory studies, just like *Friends He Lost at Sea* has a timbre of contemporary, socially relevant realism but also presents itself by means of a presentation that results from the acting and background music belonging to the filmic medium.

* * *

Media and materials are often studiously shifted, quoted, combined, challenged and dissolved at this exhibition. There's a sense of something undetermined at play in the many inclusions and negotiations of familiar media – painting, drawing, film, etc. – that naturally corresponds with the exhibition's preoccupation with the sense of undeterminedness, which we – whether we like it or not – have to live in, when the borders between fact and fiction, historical events and historical interpretations time and again cross one another in an unbreakable network. Media are not absent in a post-medium condition, but they are always shifted. The materiality of a work of art has not lost its meaning at the expense of the concept, but the physical presence of the work is not so much in love with itself that it believes itself to be irreplaceable or chooses materials that signal a wish for eternal life in imperishable truth.

Lise Skytte Jakobsen



- I Michael Johansson: *Boulevard of broken dreams*, 2005.
 II Michael Johansson beskriver projektet på sin hjemmeside: www.michaeljohansson.com
Michael Johansson describes the project on his website: www.michaeljohansson.com
- III Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea. Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, Thames & Hudson, New York 1999, s. 53.
 IV W.J.T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want. The Life and Love of Images*, The University of Chicago Press, 2005, s. 215.
 V Rosalind Krauss bygger i denne sammenhæng videre på den amerikanske forfatter Fredric Jamesons analyse af en post-moderne kultur. Se Jameson, "Transformations of the Image," i *The Cultural Turn*, 1998, s. 93-135, særligt s. 110-112.
In this connection Rosalind Krauss builds on the American critic Fredric Jameson's analysis of postmodern culture. See Jameson, "Transformations of the Image," in The Cultural Turn, 1998, p. 93-135, especially p. 110-112.
- VI Krauss' "meditation" over begrebet medium handler således også om at sandsynliggøre og forny vores forestilling er om mediers relevans, rummelighed og forandringspotentiale, således at der stadig kan udpeges et særligt erfaringsrum for kunst. Krauss er kendt for at kritisere de dele af den internationale installations- og interventionskunst, der falder i et med det sociale felt, og mener hun, dermed mister sit kritiske potentiale.
Krauss' "meditation" over the notion "medium" thus also concerns itself with an attempt to render probable and renew our notions of the relevance, spaciousness and potential for change so that a special realm of experience for art can be designated. Krauss is known for her critique of those segments of the international installation and intervention art that blend with the social field and thus, she finds, lose their critical potential.



- VII Sedlec Ossuary, Sedlec, Tjekkiet / Czech Republic.
 VIII Både Haugens bog *Det kjedelige kunstverket* og Liveröds bog *The Violence* er udgivet på forlaget noCUBE (www.nocube.com) som drives af Haugen.
Haugen's Book Det kjedelige kunstverket (The Boring Work of Art) as well as Liveröd's book The Violence have been published by the publishing house noCUBE (www.nocube.com) run by Haugen.
- IX Trond Hugo Haugen nævner selv to oplagte referencer for *In Memory of*. Dels den amerikanske avantgarde komponist John Cages komposition 4'33" fra 1952, hvor nodebladet instruerer musikeren til ikke at spille på sit instrument i løbet af de 4 minutter og 33 sekunder værket varer. Og dels den japanske fotograf Hiroshi Sugimotos serie *Theaters* (påbegyndt 1978), hvor Sugimoto har opsøgt gamle amerikanske biografteatre og drive-in-bio'er og ladet kameraet optage et enkelt billede med den lukketid som den viste film nu engang havde. Han tager så at sige billeder af films varighed.
Trond Hugo Haugen mentions two obvious references for In Memory Of – the American avant-garde composer John Cage's composition 4'33" from 1952, where the sheet of music instructs the musician to not play his instrument in the 4 minute and 33 seconds duration of the piece, plus the Japanese photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto's series Theaters (begun 1978), where he has visited old American movie theatres and drive-ins and let his camera record a single shot with a shutter speed corresponding to the length of the film in question. He, so to speak, photographs the duration of the films.
- X Giorgio Agamben, "Hinsides menneskerettighederne", i *Livs-Form. Perspektiver i Giorgio Agambens filosofi*, red. Mikkel Bolt & Jacob Lund Pedersen, Klim, 2005 (1996), s. 138-146, s. 141.
Giorgio Agamben, "Beyond Human Rights," in Radical Thought in Italy, Paolo Virno, Sandra Buckley, Michael Hardt (eds.), University of Minnesota Press, 2006, p. 159-167, p. 161.

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