

The Participatory Monument

*Remembrance and Forgetting
as Art Practice in Public Sphere*

Merete Røstad

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Abstract – Merete Røstad

Title: The Participatory Monument—Remembrance and Forgetting as Art Practice in Public Sphere

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This artistic research reflection deals with what I call the “participatory monument”, the intention of which is to bring members of the public into the artwork and to openly share related experiences with them, thus providing evidence of the existence and potential transformative power of collective memory. *The Participatory Monument—Remembrance and Forgetting as Art Practice in Public Sphere* is a practice-based research project and consists of two artworks: *Folkets Hus* (2015) and *Kammer* (2017).

This reflection investigates collective memory and remembrance through artistic research and practice in the public sphere, that is, in public space and the public imaginary, by means of the artworks *Folkets Hus* and *Kammer*. In addition, this research examines how remembrance and memory are transformed into works of art. *The Participatory Monument* seeks to expand the understanding of memory by exploring it as an embodiment of sensorial practice and as an extended social vocabulary. Memory resides in our everyday rituals and social relationships as well as in memorials and traditions of remembrance.

Accordingly, in my art practice I look at the politics of remembering and forgetting by focusing on our personal experiences as witnesses in the public sphere. Undertaking research through the examination of historical material and the conducting of interviews, I *translate* these lived experiences into an archive of methodology and a vocabulary of remembrance and forgetting. I contend that the more we delve into the field of collective remembering, the more we can glean an understanding of ourselves and

our place in the world. Therefore, research into how we choose to remember and what we choose to forget can play an integral part in art, though it requires that informed ethical practices be put in place. Moreover, to an artist working in the public sphere, this offers the opportunity to further probe the role of the artist in the social realm.

Folkets Hus was called *Peoples Palace* in the English translation. The two titles were used in tandem at the time of the project. The multiple works that were made as part of the project *Folkets Hus* were cumulatively called *Framtidsmonument (Future Monument)*. It contained a series of actions, including a floodlighted facade, centennial dinner, and seminar.

Kammer was called *Chamber* in the English translation. Both titles were used in tandem since the work itself was presented bilingually. This work was comprised of a sound sculpture, an archive bicycle, and a seminar.

To My Readers

This reflection was written to call attention to specific aspects of practice-based artistic research as well as to encourage conscious and ethical processes when working with participatory and socially-engaged art. It takes into account how knowledge, cultures, and identities impact our behaviour, relationships, and policies, and therefore profoundly shape our lives. A crucial part of practice-based artistic research is uncovering and contextualizing the processes in art making. The primary concern in *The Participatory Monument—Remembrance and Forgetting as Art Practice in Public Sphere* is how art making and reflecting on art making are parallel processes that cannot be separated. Thus, by shaping and extending the frameworks in practice-based artistic research, I attempt to assemble an archive of methodology and a vocabulary for artists working with remembrance and forgetting in the public sphere. To contextualise my artistic research I have chosen to write a reflection built up by six sections:

- 1) *Vocabulary* containing terms that are central to my practice based artistic research.
- 2) *Exercises in consciousness* is an introduction to reflection.
- 3) *Vs.* introduces two opposing terms and clarifies their importance and usage in my artistic research.
- 4) *On* takes on my understanding of terms and contextualises them in my art practice.
- 5) In the final part I introduce my art projects *Folkets Hus* and *Kammer* and describe the art projects and the process of their making. In the end, I introduce *Høring* and *Archive* as the formats of representation of my artistic result of my practice-based artistic research.
- 6) To conclude I describe the participatory monument.

It is important to know that when I talk about *participatory monuments* in my reflection I am referring to *Folkets Hus* and *Kammer*.

Merete Røstad, June 2018.

A–Z

This A–Z is a vocabulary of the terms I use in my practice-based artistic research project, *The Participatory Monument—Remembrance and Forgetting as Art Practice in Public Sphere*. The vocabulary is integral to my practise and represents a way to enter the discourse surrounding my artistic research project.

Anti-monument
Archive
Artistic research
Audience
Collaboration
Collective
Collective memory
Collective trauma
Community
Conditions to occurrence
Consciousness
Counter monument
Displaced
Distance
Documentation
Elimination
Emancipation
Embodiment
Empathy
Ephemeral
Erasure
Experience
Failure
Fall
Fieldwork
Forgetting

Found
Gender
History
Identity
Imaginary
Insistence
Intuition
Knowledge
Lament
Language
Layer
Line
Listen
Listening
Loss
Map
Memorialisation
Narrative
Nostalgia
Oral history
Participation
Participatory monument
Past
Patience
Performative monument
Permanent
Perspective
Place
Position
Presence
Process
Public
Public hearing
Public realm
Public space
Public sphere
Re-enactment
Recall
Recapture
Recording

Remains
Remembrance
Representation
Sculpture
Silence
Site
Social sculpture
Sound archive
Soundtrack
Sound space
Stich
Story
Strategy
Survival
Temporality
Testimony
The political
Time
Trace
Translation
Trust
Unconscious
Urgency
Voice
Witness

Exercises in Consciousness

The Participatory Monument investigates collective memory and remembrance through artistic research and practice in public sphere. In addition, the research examines how remembrance and memory are transformed into works of art. The intention of *The Participatory Monument* is to expand the understanding of memory by exploring it as an embodiment of sensorial practice and as an extended social vocabulary. Memory resides in our everyday rituals and social relationships, as well as in memorials and traditions of remembrance. Accordingly, as a part of my investigation, I look at the politics of forgetting and collective memory through the lens of the personal experiences of others as witnesses in public space, giving them form in my art. I contend that the more we delve into the field of remembrance and forgetting, the more we are able to understand ourselves and our place in the world. Therefore, research into consciousness plays an important part in art, demanding ethical art processes to work with collective memory.

However, for the artist working in public space, this is not only an ethical issue, it is also one that fundamentally probes the role of the artist in the social sphere. When I am engaging with community members, I am attempting to open up a broader dialogue in public space, one that transcends the boundaries of academic disciplines. Throughout my art practice, I draw upon research findings from historical and found material, “translating” them into an archive of terms and a vocabulary of remembrance and forgetting. Thus, the exploration constitutes an investigation into the realm of the imaginary of collective memory. The vocabulary of key terms was developed during my artistic research fellowship and is central to the contextualisation of the discourse. Selected terms in the vocabulary are discussed further in the chapters in my reflection.

I initiated the work *Folkets Hus* as part of a commission by Akershus Kunstsenter to make a work that involved the city

and the local communities. Using *Folkets hus* (People's house), a phenomenon in the Norwegian labour movement, I tried to engage analytical and critical reflection and imagination about the past, the present, and the future of remembrance and forgetting as collective memory. My art project *Folkets Hus* started off by elaborating my ongoing research on “performative monuments” and “temporary memorials”. In this artistic research project, I argue that the discourse requires a renewal of historical, theoretical, and artistic vocabulary to engage commemorative methodology, the practice and materiality of monuments, and memorial's position in society today.

In the city of Lillestrøm, Norway in 2015, 100 years after its opening, *Folkets hus* (Peoples house) was demolished to make space for a new city development. Throughout its existence, the house had been the centre for a number of key events in people's lives. It was a place where human actions, dialogue, and solidarity shaped a society and its culture as well as building a political identity. Witnessing the disappearance of *Folkets hus* from everyday life in Lillestrøm and Norway in general made me aware of the urgency of addressing the role of artists working in communities.

The central thought behind the art project *Folkets Hus* is the artist's role in activating and staging the structures of society through ideas, action, and debate. *Folkets Hus* started as an investigation of Joseph Beuys's (1921–1986) concept of social sculpture, a term which illustrates the concept of understanding art's potential to transform society. Translated into Beuys's formulation of the idea of social sculpture, society as a whole was to be regarded as one all-embracing art form (the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*) to which each person can contribute creatively. Beuys said, “Everyone is an artist.” However, I do not think the statement was meant to suggest that all people should or can be creators of artworks. Instead, it indicates that we should not see creativity as a realm just for artists, but that everyone should apply creative thinking in their own area of practice.

Folkets Hus is a work in the spirit of Beuys, a social sculpture where people meet across political and religious affiliations, exchange memories, and share a common history as a central platform for reactivating the idea of the *Folkets hus*. It is my contribution to challenge and rethink the potential of monuments in

public sphere. As I started the art project, I argued that monuments had merely become symptoms of the public's inability and unwillingness to actively participate in the process of remembrance in their time, weakening their ability to change the writing of history from within. On an affirmative note, the current traumatic and violent events over the past years in public spaces around the world have changed my position. The public is rising up against the injustice which has been taking place. They are re-framing the language and discourse of memorialisation through gestures and actions in public sphere. An example of this is the "monuments must fall" movement in the United States questioning the place for monuments with colonial undertones in public spaces. This movement has spread across the globe and activates communities to question what public monuments in their environments represent.

In this regard, *Folkets Hus* was an exploration and reflection of the idea that even small collaborative actions and gestures can reactivate the present as well as the forgotten past. It demonstrated how what we remember depends on how we engage with the world through our experience, our memory, and our very presence. This project challenged people from different communities and the politics of remembrance to build relationships for the reconstruction of a collective memory. We are the monuments. We mourn our losses.

My second art project, *Kammer*, was made at the invitation of the Munch Museum for the programming of "Munchmuseet on the Move". This work is a reaction to my in-depth investigation into representation and memorialisation in public space. In consideration of the need for a continuous revision and investigation of the official version of history, *Kammer* brings out the hidden stories of voices that are never remembered in public space. The making of *Kammer* started with these questions: What materialises when personal and collective memories collide? Who are the guardians of the city as an archive? How do our personal and collective memories evolve? Why do memory and memorialising matter? Which of our memories are the ones important enough to keep? If we could erase the most painful ones, should we? Is there ever a right way to remember?

Memory is difficult work. In our own lives, we experience keepsakes, monuments, and temporary memorials—all labours

of memory. The way we remember should be a shared responsibility. It is crucial that we continue to explore new ways of memorialisation. It will give us the tools to respond to the injustice that takes place in our here and now. The ethics of remembrance reflect our empathy and our moral compass, and should not become a weapon for the control of public space. Remembering loss is a human emotion, which we had better understand. I wonder if it isn't time to stop categorising it based on gender, race, and religion.

Through the making of *Kammer*, I took on these questions. I find it important to form a work that can represent private histories, hidden histories, which can present an intimate story in public with dignity. The work is a gesture that creates an imaginary room in which the public would form a bond through listening to the work and its environment. Many of my meetings while collecting material for *Kammer* indicated that listening was a lost art. As the work developed, I became fascinated with the listener, their position, and how it reveals a part of us. Have you ever observed people who are told a personal story? Their faces transform. It's like their masks to the world slide off.

Kammer was an imaginary chamber activated by listeners and observers. It was a time-based participatory monument staged outside the Munch Museum. One cannot build a "chamber" without the help of others—their contributions goes into its making. It has been an incredibly powerful and privileged experience to have others confide in me as I carry these fragments of their stories forward so that everyone can hear. Working with memory-bearing art in public space is a demanding process. It is our shared responsibility to recount stories that reflect everyone's role in public history, to create an awareness of who writes and who is involved in public history; it is our shared responsibility that public history should be more than a show of political power. We are all storytellers, narrators, and witnesses in time. This confirmed something to me: We are all monuments—together we create a common room, a *chamber*. So as I enter the final, reflective part of my artistic research fellowship to take a critical look at my findings, writing, and works for the presentation of reflection and public presentation, I recognise loss in the state of memorialisation but also hope that even though human nature is the cause of this loss, it may also be the salvation. This research is driven by

urgency with intuition and shared knowledge that has no conclusion, but will continue to challenge as it explores consciousness.

URGENCY
INTUITION
KNOWLEDGE

In the last phase of my artistic research project, I have recognized the terms Urgency, Intuition, and Knowledge as the core of my investigations into memorialisation art practice in public sphere. The artistic research project developed from my observation and personal experience of the urgent need to reinterpret methodology and practice in memorialisation discourse. Over the course of the fellowship there has been a shift in public discourse activated by new strategies which are the result of several traumatic events in public sphere throughout the world.

Intuition plays a central role in my methods and can only be described as an immediate understanding of a situation. This understanding often leads to an approach and to a place, material, or roles for engaging with participants in my work. There are many ways in which Intuition can be thought of as a strategy that should be acknowledged.

Intuition leads to knowledge as a result of conscious awareness in the present. Presence is the result of experience gained in one's practice and is needed in order to position your work and method in the field. Being a research fellow provided a unique opportunity to revisit earlier investigations and re-evaluate my practice. This is a unique opportunity in one's practice that allows questions to take the lead parallel with the art making along with support from advisors and experts in the field.

What follows are the results of my research methods that take the form of new works of art (participatory monument and social sculpture). The artistic results of my research will be presented in *Archive* (2018) and *Høring* (2018).

ARCHIVE

The Archive is an assembly of written and other documentary material (sound, photographs, video, 3D renderings, video, drawings, publications, objects) and the editing of content in order

to establish a research archive. This research archive is central to my presentation of the artistic result because there will not be a traditional art exhibition. There will instead be a live event in the form of a public hearing where one can experience the methods that have been previously employed. Observers and participants in the event will be able to experience the results first hand. Experience is a key element in the presentation of the artistic result.

HØRING

In the autumn of 2018 I will host a one-day public hearing, *Høring*, on commemorative participatory art in public space. *Høring* aims to unfold the complex ethical and philosophical issues that surround participatory art projects. It will encourage the audience to form its own opinion and to determine its position. Participants include witnesses, experts, and others. Any organisation or person can attend a hearing, in order to speak or merely observe the proceedings.

It is well known that public hearings are held as part of the public inquiry process. They provide the parties involved with the opportunity to expand their knowledge on the processes involved and to discuss issues of the inquiry with guests in a public forum. We live in uncertain times, times of intensity and uncertainty concerning public monuments—especially those that symbolize enduring legacies and social inequality. We are reminded that we must find new, critical ways to reflect on the monuments we have inherited and to imagine future monuments we have yet to build.

The Participatory Monument developed into a series of new works of art which extensively explore various materials, media, and methods. There are two main case studies in the form of artworks: *Folkets Hus* and *Kammer*.

In the framework of the artistic research fellowship, I have evaluated my theoretical position as well as the contextualization of my own practice. In particular, an awareness of gender representation in memory discourse—or rather the lack thereof—has become highly significant to me. As I have delved in greater depth into artists' practices and the works of scholars, I have found there to be an imbalance in the representation of gender, one tilted towards males and male viewpoints. This is something I

am addressing, as I consciously look for alternative voices in the discourse to situate and contextualise my findings.

Awareness also led to the formation of my latest work *Kammer*, which represented the voices of marginalised women in public space. I have become critical of the colonial undertones in the vocabulary used in the field of memorialisation. Therefore, I have chosen to reintroduce alternative terms and equal balance in the representation of gender in my writings. There have been several important moments that have changed the direction of my research: 1) I have actively sought out interdisciplinary collaboration. Extending my field of knowledge and practice, finding the potential for dialogue on common themes with others in fields such as memory studies and philosophy as well as in other arts—design, theatre and choreography, to name a few—have enriched my work and complicated it in a positive sense. In addition, contact with public constituents from different walks of life has further extended my research. 2) I have launched initiatives for students and colleagues in my field to extend the vocabulary of spatial practice as an entry point to contextualizing their work. 3) With my return to sculpture, I have also re-discovered and more fully appreciated the impact that materiality can have in public space, even when the work is temporary.

My main focus is on key issues in my practice: ethics, collective memory and listening, and multilayered processes. The evaluation addresses: 1) The potential of participatory monuments in artistic practice and discourse. 2) The importance of participatory practices in addressing collective memory and memorialisation. 3) The significance of my project as a platform and strategy in northern European artistic practice regarding art and memory.

In the process of my reflection, *The Participatory Monument*, there are a few key elements to keep in mind: 1) The importance of re-contextualising history, through archival research, mapping, and other methods which allow for an investigation and unwrapping of historical layers. 2) How listening articulates histories in public space. 3) The responsibility of the artist's presence in public discourse.

Practice vs. Methodology

We can't control systems or figure them out. But we can dance with them!

Meadow 2001:55

When I speak about participatory and socially-engaged arts in artistic research, I focus on critical reflection through method and practice exploring the limits of language. They are referred to by many different names, and as an artist I worry about the lack of such language for those who are attempting to make sense of such complex creative practices. So, in order to explore the basic principles underlying the methods of working in participatory and socially-engaged arts, one has to consider the rapidly changing world where political, economic, and cultural agendas involve more risk than ever before. Drawing on conversations with artists and representatives of art institutions, as well as my own practice, this text will provide an introduction to some key approaches to methodology and practice in the field of participatory and socially-engaged arts.

Without a doubt, theoretical writing about participatory and socially-engaged arts is still in its early days. Reflection and a language that expresses the material so that one is better equipped to understand the reach of the art making in the social and public realm is still lacking. However, it is rather interesting to see that artists, art institutions, and educational bodies have taken this ethical turn in art criticism as an opportunity to develop the field further. Participatory and socially-engaged arts have become a vital part of contemporary art practice and art making. Community-oriented and educational institutions commission works. During the last decade the field is also represented at museums, biennials, and in art schools, where there are graduate courses that focus specifically on participatory and socially-engaged arts practice. So the criticism and resistance during the early

days of the field have strengthened it and been part of mapping and contextualising the practices. This knowledge has spread and built a foundation in contemporary art practice.

To further explore practice vs. methodology I will elaborate on how I relate to the terms and try to contextualise them in my art making.

PRACTICE

As an artist, process is central to my art making. I would even go so far as to say that I feel process is life itself and contains a multitude of facets of art making and living. This is how I see my practice—as an open-ended form of process, continually evolving, parallel to my life. There are actually many processes within this process, which includes mental processing—thinking as art making and the processes of remembering and forgetting. Through the depth of my own memories, I can process, I can reprocess experiences and their content. To do this, I make maps and lists as a way to retrace and create patterns that I can revisit and explore during my investigations and art making. The mapping of process takes me into the core of my investigation and opens up the continuous presence around us. Presence within practice means that the process is moving. There is no way to separate practice and life, because it is a process in the processes that takes place within practice. Everything one does feeds into everything else and the more conscious one is as part of these processes, the more aware one is in making the art. So it is key to develop an awareness of every single step in one's process, and how it is feeds into other processes happening simultaneously. Thus, my practice has developed as I become more aware of the processes taking place.

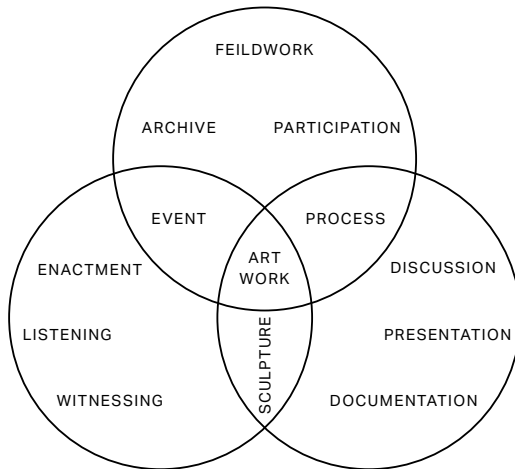
METHOD

Much has been written about method in artistic research, but I have found only a few publications that I can relate to in my art practice. Early in my research I was looking for a basic outline that reflected artistic practice. This is when I read *Artistic Research Methodology: Narrative, Power and the Public* (Hannula, Suoranta, Vadén 2014:15) and found the Table 2.1. Basic Formula of

Artistic Research, which provided me with helpful insights that have become a platform for my investigations.

ARTISTIC PROCESS: ACTS INSIDE THE PRACTICE	ARGUING FOR A POINT OF VIEW (CONTEXT, TRADITION, AND THEIR INTERPRETATION)
Committed with an eye on the conditions of the practice	Social and theoretical imagination
Documenting the acts	Hermeneutics
Moving between insider and outsider positions	Conceptual, linguistic and argumentative innovations
Preparing works of art	Verbalisation

Using this formula, I created one of my own that has been with me throughout my artistic research:



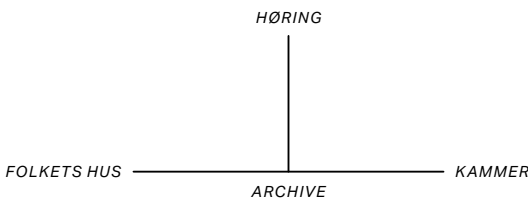
There is a method in every artist's work, and as an artistic researcher I have relearned how to become aware of these processes. As an artist with a process-based practice, method is part of everything I do. My research is built on collaboration and relies on participation and feedback from participants in my art projects, colleagues, scholars, and the public.

I find that qualitative research, in the terminology of research, is closest to my approach since the material for my artworks are gathered and mediated through me. The gathering of material, such as interviews, workshops, observation, and archival research has always been part of my art practice and has also been the core of *The Participatory Monument*.

However, the method can be put this simply: what I do, when I do what I do. This is when I use *tacit* knowledge, knowledge that can be felt through my intuition and learned knowledge. I encourage conscious processes in the art making. With each step done I try to think about what it means to do what I am doing. To me as for most artists, method is individual and is often moved by intuition, which means it would be difficult for someone else to follow this working method because it is personal and consequently is linked to me and all that I do. My method can be seen as a conceptual framework where dialogue and mapping are central to the art making. Therefore, I often refer to my work as practice-led, as it involves me as a participant and observer (self-reflective practitioner).

MAPPING

There is a need for a continuous mapping of participatory and socially-engaged arts so that different practitioners can present their art practices that are not recognized or described by theory. Although they are active in a kind of art practice that depends on collaboration in art making, artists are actually quite isolated in their projects, particularly if they are not collaborating with other artists. The intensity and commitment to the work makes it hard to maintain an overview of what others in the field are doing. Thus, mapping the field to reflect methodology and practice is a step in achieving an understanding of process.



Socially-engaged art is an umbrella term referring to many different forms of artistic practice. Some examples include artistic activism, community art, new genre public art, participatory art, social practice, and social sculpture. This list, however, is not all-inclusive—it is continually expanding. The main reason for this is that art practices often are based on a project's primary intention and methods, and these intentions are not mutually exclusive in art. More than one may apply to a single work. After researching the field of socially-engaged art, I am still not able to offer a working definition. This is because the vocabulary is still evolving and for many art practices a precise definition has yet not been formulated.

However, I have found one common core dominator. It is the agency and desire to affect social change. As such, it requires a practice that goes beyond that used in studio art. There is also the argument that socially-engaged art may not always address political or economic issues—certain expressions of cultural identity are political acts unto themselves. To peel back the layers of socially-engaged art, one should look at the following: intentions, abilities, and ethics. In layman's terms, it needs to address why, how, and for whom.

INTENTION

Aims are underlying directives, notions that answer the “why,” why we are pursuing something; goals are the “what,” the tangible thing or action undertaken and presented as product. But if we suspend goals, leaving them undefined, flexible, and open to discovery, then anything is possible; and if we are clear about our aims and attentive to them, then no matter what path we go down, exploring where it might lead but guided by our essential aims, it is possible to arrive at the appropriate, perhaps unexpected, but responsive, end.

Jacob 2007

First, let us look at intention. Participatory and socially-engaged arts are conceived and executed primarily by the artist. Most artists in the field always work in a broader context and setting. Thus, we are reminded that this method of art making

takes place in a dynamic network of interrelated roles, relations, and intentions.

Think through and consider:

- × Where does the art making takes place? Is it site-specific or not related to a particular site?
- × What is the topic, questions, or core concern raised in the art making? Is there an individual thematic or a universal one?
- × What is the timeframe of the work? Is it temporary or short term?
- × What role does the artist assume in the art making? Are they facilitators or do they assume ownership of the work?
- × How invested is the artist in the project? Is it local or does it come from outside?
- × Who initiated the project, an artist, the community, or an institution?
- × How is the project defined?
- × How does the artist define their collaborations and participants? As participants or audience?
- × Is the project funded? Who are the funders and what is their directive?

Specific characteristics of socially-engaged art can influence a project's value and outcomes. These characteristics may be indicators that identify the intentions behind the art making.

ABILITIES

When I talk about abilities, I mean to talk about how a work was made. There are many ways of defining this with a series of terms that often are used: tools, systems, format.

There have been many attempts to make toolboxes for artists that define the skills that should be learned and developed when working in participation and socially-engaged arts. If developed in a mindful manner, these can be helpful in providing an understanding of the array of skills needed to develop and make participatory and socially-engaged arts projects. My experience is that any project executed with determination and insight will succeed as long as one finds the right collaborators. As an artist it is important to know your own limits and to form a network

of collaborators who can contribute the appropriate skills needed in the artistic process or the execution of the work.

ETHICS

Rethinking ethics on the frontiers of art practice is essential. Contextualising what it means in the framework between the artist, institutions, and funders on the one side, and the society dispossessed of these processes on the other. Ethics are the rules of conduct particular to culture, politics, and public sphere; since we subscribe to different public spheres, they may or may not correspond to the moral stance of our individual lives in that culture.

Here is my list of considerations to keep in mind when working with participation and socially-engaged arts:

Be conscious

... that socially-engaged artists do not act in a vacuum. Period. Even if a project is conceived and executed primarily by an artist, one is always working in a broader context and space.

... that if you wish to work in a community, your artistic practice cannot be neutral.

... of your privilege! What biases and intentions do you carry with you?

... what social position (and power) do you bring to space or process?

... that participation is not always progressive or empowering. Projects may have elements of participation but can easily become limiting, manipulative, and condescending. Know when to step back.

The vocabulary used in the field is often weighed down by sentiment and personal experience. So the language often differs from how art is generally described. This is why participatory arts trigger negative attention. My theory is that the participation itself makes it possible to truly understand a work one has to take part in it. Observation has its limits and documentation will be coloured by the audience's own experiences in the field in any case. The vocabulary is there but outside the work one is afraid

to use it. Participation and socially-engaged arts are personal and demand a personal approach to language.

RESEARCH

Artistic research is a field where participatory and socially-engaged arts are able to provoke other academic fields because it makes its own case for reflecting on what we do, when we do what we do—making art. To understand this, one has to take time to become more familiar with the process within, what it takes, and learn to separate all the subtle little triggers that enable one to better understand the process in the making.

These methods are like fingerprints, or better, like the language of the individual artist. Thus, one can easily separate artists' undertakings by looking at the methods they use. Method is what one builds during a lifetime of art making. Initially, one establishes fixed ways of working, through being taught and teaching others and through practice. By the time one receives an artistic research fellowship, one has accumulated so much experience and knowledge of art making that one can take time to reflect.

In a meeting with Mika Hannula, he reminded me that research is an approach. At the moment when one feels uncertainty in what one is doing, listening opens up a wide register of clarity. Tapping into this clarity is the key to artistic research. I remember him asking me to sit down as he put on a record. We listened to the whole record in silence. Then he asked me, "What do you hear?"

What I heard was something other than a singer or the lyrics of the song. What I heard was myself remembering why I was doing what I was doing, the core of my questions, my search. Finding clarity in research and thinking about methodology is often simple. The clarity comes in many ways—a change of scenery, going for a swim or by listening. However, it does require change of attention.

The process can be contextualized as *open works*, to quote Umberto Eco (1998:55):

The poetics of the "work in movement" (and partly that of the "open" work) sets in motion a new cycle of relations between the artist and his audience, a new mechanics

of aesthetic perception, a different status for the artistic product in contemporary society. It opens a new page in sociology and in pedagogy, as well as a new chapter in the history of art. It poses new practical problems by organizing new communicative situations. In short, it installs a new relationship between the contemplation and the utilization of a work of art.

Mediated through my art works, it is essential for me to state that I draw no conclusions, only an outline of my thinking and my art practice. Methodologies for artists working with participatory and socially-engaged arts should challenge and open up interdisciplinary dialogue and processes in public sphere.

Methodology as well as practice is about trust and freedom, the confidence that something is coming together even when at the beginning it does not have a specific form. That a form of transformation takes place for the artist and the participants is fundamental and takes time.

Mika Hannula has proposed three metaphors to explain the artistic research process (Hannula 2009):

Artistic research is:

- 1) Like Trying to Run in Waist-High New Snow. You sweat a lot, it's rather difficult and not very elegant, but if you keep doing it consistently and coherently, you will get through
- 2) Crossing a River by Feeling Each Stone. The essential character of valid qualitative research is a certain slowness, and in Artistic Research, this means understanding how much time it takes and is needed to get two different views on relating to reality to collide, contrast and cooperate.
- 3) Moving like Smugglers' Boats, moving quietly in the night, with no lights, almost colliding with one another, but never quite making contact. Research practice requires collective interaction and commitment in a long-term, give-and-take situation.

Research is essential to me and to my thinking on methodology and practice as an artist working in the public sphere. Both methodology and practice demand a self-determining process that should continually challenge the artist working in the public

sphere. It is about trying out new ways to make works, to gain knowledge, and to explore risk. In art making—as in life—there is no perfection. We do the best we can with the material we have at our disposal in a particular situation. Given that we change, the materials change, and the making itself changes, there must be a moment when we stop. Then we say, “This is the best I can do for now...” There is dignity in effort, courage in persistence—in building one’s methodology. Research is a process of trying and failing; to begin—again and again. Again.

ON REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Reflection is a form of mental processing—like a form of thinking—that we use to fulfil a purpose or to achieve some anticipated outcome. It is applied to relatively complicated or unstructured ideas for which there is not an obvious solution and is largely based on the further processing of knowledge and understanding and possibly emotions that we already possess.

Moon 1999

Jennifer Moon, a researcher on reflective practice, points out that one of the defining characteristics of surface learning is that it does not involve reflection. She describes the conditions for reflection as time and space. To understand the art making process, we have to reflect with time and space on the material and methods at hand.

Failure in art making is also something all artists experience and reflect on in their practice. It is an open-ended situation as part of an ongoing dialogue in the art making process. I choose to use the term “failure,” as it is the one I use in my practice when the outcome of an artwork does not fulfil my intention. What is failure other than the emotional experience of defeat? Moreover, how should we theorise it? How can we use failure to explore the varied forms of knowledge in practice? Can we incorporate and situate failure in the context of artistic research? Can failure have an impact on the broader methods of art making?

After we have exhausted an idea, the mapping, the research, the material—and we find that none of these satisfy or is permanently

convincing—what remains? What does it mean to be living the questions in one’s research, living the experience, the skill, and knowledge of the journey the research process has taken you on? What does that mean? Sometimes, when the idea is materialised as an artwork, there may still be parts of the process that do not fulfil the intention. The method undertaken during the making of an artwork is something that I have found interesting to look at more closely and to discuss often with others. During the research, I had the opportunity to open a dialogue with other practitioners that expands my knowledge beyond my own expertise. These meetings have been valuable because they opened up new questions, questions about my own definition of failure and when one should either change the direction of one’s investigation or simply give up a path. I see my work as an ongoing struggle and a diverse means by which to create circles of reverence in a time of collective doubt, when we are wary of being moved by anything but our own perspective. The works I make are bound to the nature of my own humanity, to my ability to remain open and curious in a world that instead beckons closure through fear.

This is why *risk* is so valuable in the research of one’s practice. Working consciously instead of simply relying on methods of practice developed over a decade opens up a vulnerability that is not often explored otherwise. Challenging the very core of one’s practice and giving it the chance to be situated in consciousness is to be engaged in a reciprocity where presence, both physical and mental, depends on one’s understanding of one’s own gestures. The intention of a work often becomes clear after the process is over. Then the failure often becomes more apparent.

“What would you say increases with knowledge?” Jordan Elgrably once asked James Baldwin. “You learn how little you know”, Baldwin said.

Elgrably 1984

At this stage in the process, it is primarily internalised and is subject to my own self-evaluation. It is in the doing, the being, and the becoming that presence is made. What becomes significant is the act itself, not what remains. Something incomprehensible is set into motion. Our outcome, like the results of all processes, is determined by chance, by circumstance, and by approval.

Masters are not experts because they take a subject to its conceptual end. They are masters because they realize that there isn't one. On utterly smooth ground, the path from aim to attainment is in the permanent future.

Lewis 2014:33

I often return to my failures to remember something I sometimes forget—that the processes can be risky and painful, but the promise and integrity of a work continuously holds up a mirror to what has been lost. Through our work and ultimately through our practice we get to know ourselves. The relearning is a part of the becoming, the experience involved in the research is part of artistic research. I do not mean to suggest that there are any final answers. And I don't mean to suggest that there is a single position. I often find that academics and authors writing about artistic research are blind to the processes that a human being undergoes in the creative mechanism. Practise based artistic research is not an assignment that can be outlined in a manual. One must always accept that processes continue and are subject to internal and external forces that never repeat themselves.

The artwork will always be much more precious than one's ability to understand it. In this awareness resides a humbling and disquieting reminder of our limitations. Construction and destruction are constant and similar. Therefore, the very idea of failure to me is a striving for meaning, a self and self-containing presence within our consciousness. We merely pursue our vision of the idea through whatever we do and leave others to decide whether it succeeds or fails. To me, succeeding and failing depends on what we choose to focus on. A secret of all meaningful labour might be that it does not have to make sense. Failure is an inevitable consequence of doing something new. Without it, we would have no originality, no manifestation of learning and exploration. I find risk to be the company of failure. Rather than worrying about avoiding failure one should expect it as an integral part of the art making process.

Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try Again. Fail again.
Fail better.

Beckett 1983:7

It is sometimes hard to stay in your process when you are at a breaking point in your own understanding in the art making process. Losing one's focus and train of thought in the art making process can take you far away from your idea. Therefore, patience about failure is a state of consciousness that experienced artists have learned to live with. So, I encourage acquiring a practice that treasures mistakes. One should actively seek out opportunities to make ambitious mistakes, then practice the patience to recover from them. Start over and over again—every single day. A better understanding of causes and consequences might be the most intriguing part of failure. And this can open up processes that challenge and sharpen the art making process. Dare to risk failure—as it can be an inspiring experience, because sometimes the faults in an artwork open up new insights and help you recognize different frames of reference and reflection.

If you live by perception, as all artists must, then you sometimes have to wait a long time for your mind to tell you the next step to take...

Martin 1976

Remembrance vs. Forgetting

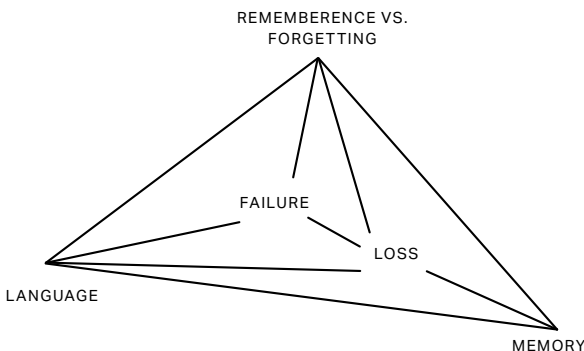
Speaking about memory necessarily means speaking about forgetfulness, because one cannot remember everything.

Ricoeur 1994:21

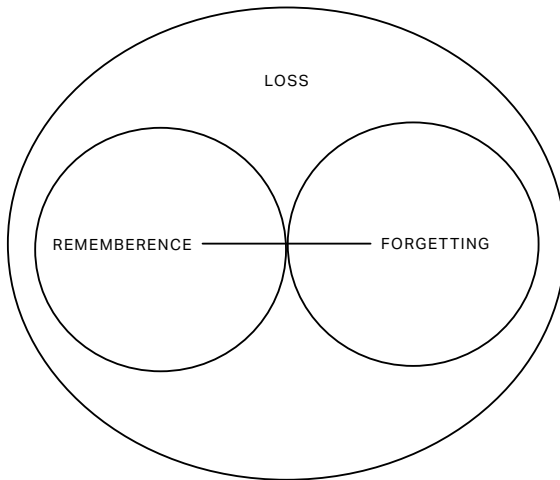
We live with the consensus that we need to remember and that we must fight forgetting. ... But what should be positive about remembering? Remembering and forgetting are human capacities that are neither positive nor negative per se, but are both needed for coping with life.

Reemtsma 2010:25–26

In order to clarify my approach in terms of remembrance and forgetting, I will now reflect on the duality that remembrance and forgetting represent and how they are inseparable. Memory—forgetting: this is Paul Ricoeur’s ethical trajectory. Remembrance and forgetting are often set side by side, as if they were opposites. However, I believe they are parts of a whole that embodies both. For example, our ability to remember is the loss of the ability to forget. The value of each depends greatly on the society which constructs them. However, we seem to place more value on remembrance than on forgetting. Clearly, I challenge this notion.



Looking at loss, it becomes very obvious that remembrance and forgetting are one.



Culture considers loss a process of lost rituals and collective participation with no rational direction. On the one hand, cultures operate on a set of unspoken rules about how we ought to feel and behave when experiencing loss in the public sphere. On the other, we have but few rituals for observing and externalising loss that are not directly connected to religion and politics. In the aftermath of traumatic events, from the loss of fellow citizens in all-too frequent terrorist attacks to the death of someone close to us, we experience first-hand the need for new, often spontaneous forms of remembrance, forms that I believe reflect our identity and our loss more closely than religion or politics ever can today.

The philosopher Judith Butler and the artist Doris Salcedo remind us that when we lose someone, we are not prepared for how we may react.

Something takes hold of you: where does it come from?
What sense does it make? What claims us in such
moments, such that we are not masters of ourselves? To
what are we tied?

Butler 2004:55

When a person disappears, everything becomes impregnated with that person's presence. Every single object, as well as every space, becomes a reminder of absence as if absence were more important than presence.

Salcedo 2001:73

"Everyone has one death he or she remembers—for me it was you" was the headline to a *Guardian* article I read (2017: 26.1). It talked about a doctor's experience of loss on a daily basis and how he dealt with it without losing empathy. It involved his remembering one specific, personal encounter with loss. Nothing feeds our understanding of loss more profoundly than our own personal history, which is drenched in memories of versions of ourselves. There is nothing we fill with loss more intimately than the stories of our lives. Like life itself, these archives of lived memories are entwined in both remembrance and forgetting. They form the space between our past and present selves and our relation to others.

The dilemma of the representation of loss and human suffering is discussed in Susan Sontag's essay *Regarding The Pain Of Others*, in which she poses the question "What to do with the feelings that have been aroused, the knowledge that has been communicated" (Sontag 2003:110). Here Sontag addresses whether representation merely serves suppressed desires for the spectacular, or does it only generate cynicism and apathy? This concurs with my position regarding the urgency of understanding the ethical standards around the protection of personal rights, as well as the degree of anonymity that is applied according to the background and social condition of the public taking part in participatory and socially-engaged arts projects. Memory itself is an imperfect memorial. It is but a representation of our struggle to articulate remembrance and the need not to forget in the public sphere. The struggle of representation calls for more attention to be paid to the critical factors that determine who expresses loss in the public sphere.

In May 2015 I participated in a seminar at ICI Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry in Berlin in which Ilit Ferber presented a paper entitled "Language Failing: The Reach of Lament." Ferber explained how language loses its grip and fails in relation to lament. The seminar touched on the performative aspects of language and its failures. It also addressed Walter Benjamin's thoughts on this

subject, particularly the inherent failure of language which undermines any lingering notions that it can be policed and purified by a history, which is as derivative as language itself is.

Thus, the question really is not what language to use, but rather how to use two languages simultaneously, spoken and written, how to write a life lived between these languages. We fail not only in our use of language, we are also taken advantage of by our language. Not everyone uses language in the same way, so we must ask whose voice this is and how is language being used? How do we hear it and translate it? Sometimes language words are not enough. One has to go deeper into a consideration of positioning our understanding in ethics, identities, and politics.

This was a critical turn in my understanding of remembrance and forgetting. Failure is an inevitable consequence of doing something new. Without it, we would have no originality, no manifestation of learning and exploration. I find language fails when discussing remembrance and forgetting with other people. Yet we have to accept the failure of language even if we return to it often to remember what we have forgotten. This is a risky process but the result carries the potential to extend our language and our vocabulary and to enable a greater understanding of remembrance and forgetting in the public sphere.

How can artistic strategies that deal with loss in the public sphere create a shared experience? Susan Sontag wrote “a conscious act of the mind, which illustrates a certain code, certain rules of interpretation, a task affiliated to translation.” (Sontag 1964:5) She touches upon aspects of the human experience, such as courage and resistance that may constitute critical factors in our collective representation of loss in the public sphere.

As an example, I would like to recall the public discussions about the memorial after the massacre July 22, 2012 that took place in Norway. The international competition in 2014 was won by the artist Jonas Dahlberg, whose proposal *Memory Wound* was to dig a canal across the Sørbråten peninsula, near the island of Utøya. The three-and-a-half-metre-wide “symbolic wound” would leave a gap to be faced with stone on either side. A tunnel would lead visitors to an aperture in one wall to see the victims’ names engraved on the other.

The proposal was controversial. There was protests claiming that the memorial was an offence to “innocent” nature, and the

local residents won their claim that they had been traumatised enough by the killer's passage among them not to have a daily reminder of it facing them. But this artistic concept failed to articulate the public conception of what a memorial could be because its directness did not meet the public's need to both remember and forget the event. As a result, it escalated debate to the point that it was ultimately rejected.

This is an example how fragile we are when it comes to dealing with artworks that confront loss in the public sphere. Yet Dahlberg's proposal was such a strong idea that it has become part of the collective memory and is present in the discourse of memorialisation in public sphere. I agree with Dahlberg's statement: "A work of art can contribute to keeping the conversation about traumatic events alive in a very specific way, visual art plays a special role in relation to these type of events, that can seem difficult to grasp and put into words (personal communication, Arts and Crafts department, Agenda, 2014)." For me art is most powerful when it makes us reflect on the past and brings that past into our present and activates our collective consciousness in public sphere. Thus, I believe that the most affecting monuments do not impose themselves on us but rather enable us to discover them on our own terms. That is an extremely difficult and challenging task since one can never foresee the public's reaction to a work and it is always impacted by the times and the political climate.

To conclude, I would like to quote the motto of the fictional state in George Orwell's novel *1984*: "Who controls the past, controls the future: who controls the present, controls the past." Forgetting is not necessarily final, since anything can be retrieved and reinterpreted. What we recover and use, however, always depends on needs and cultural values in society. As artists working with participatory and socially-engaged arts, we need to explore forms of artistic practice that reflect and challenge the representation of remembrance and forgetting in the public sphere. As artist-researchers we need to relearn how we relate to these questions, not only in our research but also in questioning what they mean in our art making and the contexts we research. The commemorative artwork will always be much more precious than one's ability to measure its reach. In this awareness resides a humbling and disquieting reminder of our limitations when we work with remembrance and forgetting in the public sphere.

Public space vs. Public sphere

There is always one question that comes up at the start or the end of any participatory and socially-engaged arts project: “Are you working in public *space* or public *sphere*?” It is crucial to make a distinction between the two. What is the difference between the two ideas, and why is it important to take this difference into account?

First of all, this is a political discussion. Spaces and places are always implicated by theoretical and philosophical concepts of public space and the public sphere. *Public space* means physical space—like streets, squares and parks—which are accessible and usable by the public at any time. Private spaces may also be included if their owner makes them accessible. *Public sphere* on the other hand is discursive and cannot be explained as easily. It is a more complex subject. Public sphere theory and its study have a solid foundation and pertinent implications for public life. It is often used in connection to various academic perspectives in urban planning, architecture, philosophy, and public art.

One must take into account that the reflections and awareness that surround the terms public space and public sphere date back to around 1960. We, therefore, must consider what was going on both politically and culturally at that time to better understand the circumstances surrounding the emergence of these terms at that time. During the last few decades additional theories have arisen, but I have chosen to reflect on the models of two authors, Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas, who for me present interesting positions on these ideas.

Hannah Arendt (1906–1975) was a political theorist and visionary best known for her writings on power, authority, totalitarianism, and democracy. She reflected on what she called the private and public realms. For her, the private realm is the domain of the household, while the public realm is the site of action. Activity in the private realm is preoccupied with bodily

necessities, whereas the public realm is free of these necessities, necessities which would prevent individuals from distinguishing themselves through great works and deeds. Arendt emphasises the multidimensional and multiperspectival views of the public as the essential character of the public realm. She did not focus on the question of how political institutions can offer space for speech and action in a meaningful way—meaningful in the sense that the state also provides society with an orderly organization and gives “the public” a voice in governing themselves. Rather, Arendt stays strictly at the level at which action speaks for itself because the public contains a plurality of all human beings. Her insistence on the importance of direct participation in politics is thus based on the idea that politics is something that needs a worldly location. Consequently, participation can only happen in a public space. If one is not present in such a space one simply cannot engage in politics.

For Arendt the public sphere comprises two distinct but interrelated dimensions. The first is the *space of appearance*, a space of political freedom and equality, which comes into being whenever citizens act in concert through the medium of speech and persuasion. The second is the *common world*, a shared and public world of human artefacts, institutions, and settings that separate us from nature. The common world provides a relatively permanent and durable context for our activities. Both dimensions are essential to the practice of citizenship. The former provides the spaces where it can flourish, the latter provides the stable background from which public spaces of action and deliberation can arise. For Arendt the reactivation of citizenship in the modern world depends upon the recovery of a common, shared world as well as the creation of numerous spaces of appearance in which individuals can disclose their identities and establish relations of reciprocity and solidarity. Arendt defended fundamental liberal rights, including freedom of speech. Despite their differences, Arendt was a source of inspiration for the Frankfurt School’s leading representative from the late 60s onward, Jürgen Habermas.

Jürgen Habermas (1929–) is a sociologist and philosopher. For Habermas, the bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people coming together as a public. They soon claim the public sphere, regulated from above, from the public authorities, in order to engage them in a debate over

the general rules governing relations in the basically privatised but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labour.

In the book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas (1989) explains the public sphere and how it is formed by its possibilities. Through a normative ideal of political action and as an historical phenomenon, he defined public space as an intermediary space between private life and the state. The public sphere is particular and specific to a time and a place and also to certain social transformations. The historical context of Habermas's public sphere was the emergence of the concept of society, and the distinction between society and state where society represents the private individuals, and state the governing bodies. For Habermas, *Öffentlichkeit* designates a sphere of open (public) space and communication where a public discourse on matters of common concern can take place and lead to the formation of an opinion on the part of citizens that in turn may influence political decision making (Gripsrud 2010).

The use of the terms “public” and “public sphere” betrays a multiplicity of concurrent meanings. Their origins go back to various historical periods and, when applied synchronically to the conditions of a bourgeois society that is industrially advanced and constituted as a social welfare state, they fuse into a clouded amalgam. Yet the very conditions that make the inherited language seem inappropriate appear to require these words, however confused their employment.

Habermas 1997

To close my thoughts on the noncoercive character of the public sphere, I will only say that no final conclusions about it can ever be reached because the terms develop continuously and, hence, challenge scholars and artists alike. The public sphere is the sum of all the places in which one can discuss and argue about public issues, whereas public space is physical space to which we can all relate. While Habermas imagines the public sphere as a space of consensus, Arendt sees the public realm as a space for plurality.

In the public sphere, dialogue is supposed to provide the basis for political action. It is a sum of all the places where one discusses and argues about public issues. Public spaces are where

community, exchange, and democracy begin. Today the substance of art making is changing to such a degree that artists engage in a public debate about the contents of their art. In doing so they are not so much redefining art as redefining our understanding of public space and the public sphere. In art making, the debate itself becomes the public space. In my work I find that my art practice is placed within a more extensive discussion in the public sphere. But artworks that are participatory monuments only exist for a short time in public space. Moreover, they reappear in the public sphere as a collective memory after they have ended.

There is always an urgency to re-evaluate public spaces and their uses so that they reflect the needs of our society. Consequently, the essential questions of what constitutes public space or the public sphere will continue to remain of crucial importance to our increasingly interconnected, collective lives. However, as I have pointed out these two terms seem to complement each other even as they challenge our identity, our memories, and our ability to participate in a larger discourse around the potential of the public sphere as space for critical dialogue and democratic exchange.

Performance vs. Participation

The term Participatory Arts encompasses a range of arts practices informed by social, political, geographic, economic, and cultural imperatives, such as socially-engaged arts, new genre public art, activist art, and relational aesthetics. The only thing clear about working with participation is that you cannot control everything. The sooner you make peace with this, the sooner you will enjoy the process. Based on my experience, I firmly believe that control and participatory practice are not compatible. Instead, I have found that presence and dialogue are central tools in participatory practices.

One striking example of participatory practice is the *Monument Against Fascism* by Esther Shalev-Gerz and Jochen Gerz (1986). They called it a counter monument since the intention was to oppose the dominant authoritarian monument tradition by recognising audience reaction and participation as part of the monument itself. It consisted of a twelve meter high and one meter wide hollow aluminium pillar, with an external layer of dark lead covering its surface. Near its base is an inscription in German, French, English, Russian, Hebrew, Arabic, and Turkish: “We invite the citizens of Hamburg and visitors to the town to add their names here to ours. In doing so, we commit ourselves to remain vigilant. As more and more names cover this twelve meter tall lead column, it will gradually be lowered into the ground. One day it will have disappeared completely, and the site of the Hamburg monument against fascism will be empty. In the end, it is only we ourselves who can rise up against injustice.” A steel pencil was attached at each corner of the pillar by a cable so that people could sign their names onto the lead. Every time one meter and a half of the pillar was covered with inscriptions, the monument was lowered. Unveiled in 1986, the memorial was lowered six times before sinking completely in 1993, with over 70,000 signatures inscribed onto its surface.

This participatory artwork demonstrates the negation of the monument as a mere object by reconsidering it as a social practice. *Monument Against Fascism* was a pioneering artwork that incorporated performance and action through audience participation. The participatory aim to engage the public through the gesture of signing their names is also a performative gesture. The artwork demonstrates the transformative power of a participatory monument by inviting the formerly passive audience to become active participants in the art making, thus making the monument part of social practice. Elastic is a term I find helpful in exploring the notion of how practice in socially-engaged arts can be simultaneously performative and participatory.

While there are many different ways to approach a definition of performance, I see it in a wider public culture, since performance is public art per definition. Various performance practices are active agents in the social production of space. As such, they include the disciplines of spatial design, architecture, theatre, dance, and art, to mention just a few. Performance presented to an audience in an art context is often interdisciplinary and can be implied without being directed or scripted. Mostly, it is performed by performers and usually performance indicates that there already is a planned framework laid out for the performers to play out over the duration of the artwork. Thus, performance can be live or presented through media; the performer can be present or absent. I have found four elements that define performance practice: time, space, the performer's body (or presence through the medium), and the relationship between performer and audience.

Performance may challenge us and our critical spatial thinking, our relationships to the audience, or the perceptions of the performer's role in society. In my research, artists' works that have been of particular importance in contextualising performance are: Zentrum für Politische Schönheit (ZPS), Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001), Thomas Hirschhorn's *Gramsci Monument* (2013), and Hannah Herzig's *The Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-Knowledge* and *The Milieu of the Dead. Part 2: Absences, The Afterlife of Slavery and the Gaps in the Archive* (2017).

Thus, I situate my art projects in a lineage beginning in the 1970s as I share my fellow artists' search to change memorialisation

practices and participatory monuments. Like them, I consider the interaction with the audience as interacting subjects essential.

To sum up, I regard both participation and performance as means of creating dialogue through collaboration. Both practices include public engagement, and both practices challenge the hierarchy of authorship through different approaches to the positioning of roles. Audience, participant, or performer each have defined characteristics in their relation to each other. Socially-engaged art challenges this notion in performance as well as in participation because the lines are blurred throughout the art making. During the last sixty years, participation and performance have become elastic terms that have been established and have matured as a platform of potentiality for art making. They bring people together and activate them, often merging the roles of participants and audience into one group. They open up stages of discovery and levels of presence that move the making of a work forward. I argue that participation and performance are to an equal degree potentially regenerative practices, and both are generous gestures of infinite possibilities. Nothing can be made without the presence of others. Collaboration, the exploration of space, time, and mind always take place when working with participation and performance in the public sphere.

Temporary vs. Permanent

If time is a place, then several places are possible.

Smithson 1966

I have chosen to write about what I consider the differences between temporary and permanent artworks since misunderstandings often occur. Firstly, all artworks exist in both time and space. Even if works of art are intended for eternity, they are easily forgotten—they can even be physically destroyed by time if they are not exhibited in public museums or if they are situated in public spaces not related to events or rituals. These differences also have to do with different ideologies when it comes to the visual arts' temporal dimension. As Robert Smithson, among others, has shown, the term *site-specific* is not so much about the site per se as it is about the artist's circulation of the site in other media chosen by the artist, such as photos, video, film, and archives, which offer diverse audiences access to the location or artwork in question. Temporality is regarded as an integral part of the artwork in my approach. In addition I delegate the performance to the audience by including the visitors as participants.

An artwork can also become part of the identity of a place. But the sad truth is that artworks are more often forgotten. This is a critical factor when thinking of public art and spatial policies. Permanent and temporary artworks have one thing in common: they both reveal something about the specific location, the environment in which they are placed, as well as about the time period and reason they were originally placed there.

Permanent artworks, like monuments and statues, share hundreds of years of history, from the time when artworks in public space had the function of commemorating a specific event or person. They become implanted in our collective memory, so that when we walk past a monument we know it is there where we are asked to draw out our memory. However, there are also

temporary monuments, like the works by the artist duo Christo (1935–) and Jeanne-Claude (1935–2009). Although I never experienced their work *Wrapped Reichstag* (1995) in Berlin in person, the images of it are etched into my mind. Temporary artworks are both *in* and *out of* time since they often are part of a larger narrative that continues long after they cease to exist in physical form.

This became clear to me through my own early experience with land art. The narrative becomes a vital element and through it the temporary artwork becomes part of collective memory. In fact, I would argue that the narrative of temporary artworks can carry even more weight than the documentation. This is an important realisation in my own experience of art making that I continue to explore. As a primary focus and methodology, time is a vital element in my pursuit of temporary projects in public space. When it comes to production, a temporary work is just as complex and challenging as a permanent artwork in terms of cost, planning, politics, and permissions. Public art projects of a temporary nature often use video, sound, projection, or live performance, while permanent artworks need to be constructed of long-lasting materials. Therefore, temporary art projects are often less risky for authorities than permanent projects. For this reason, in their short lifetime, temporary projects are, in a way, less likely to create controversy for authorities and custodians of public space. Nevertheless temporary artworks frequently provoke public debate because they often address current issues and events.

Claire Doherty addressed this point over a decade ago:

We need to tackle the perception that a public artwork should be permanent; why should the legacy of a temporary public artwork not be as keenly felt culturally as a permanently sited commemorative statue, why should public art not have time limits? Places are not static sites onto which public art is grafted; rather regeneration is a continuous process to which artists are contributing... At its most challenging, public art is the beginning of a conversation that changes the way in which we interact with the world around us; at its most conventional, it is a full stop.

Doherty 2010

For the past forty years, there has been an ongoing debate about art in public and public art. In Norway, no municipal, commercial, or cultural site is complete without a public artwork commissioned by Public Art Norway (KORO). Through its various art programs, Public Art Norway ensures that as many people as possible are able to experience contemporary art in public and semi-public spaces. This accomplishment has not gone unnoticed and not always in a good way. Public rules, regulations, and policies are changing and increasingly challenge the production of public art, the timeframes for production, and the duration of presentation.

Does an artwork have to last one year, six years, or a hundred years to be permanent? Government planning bodies that have the power to define such policies often argue that it is better for an artwork to remain in situ for as long as possible to be accessible to as many people as possible. Yet this runs counter to contemporary art practices that seek to be participatory and more short-lived and which cannot fulfil the criteria for conservation policies for traditional public art acquisitions. The idea of reversing position on the need for permanent artworks has been stated perfectly: “There is nothing in this world as invisible as a monument” (Musil 1987:61).

Moreover, public art can be used as a form of cultural manifestation of gentrification. And here temporary public art is at times commissioned as a tool to help increase the value of cities and to cover up aggressive gentrification that produces social inequalities in space rather than addressing the issue directly. It is partly about the symbolism, to appear to signal a change in atmosphere that will eventually mean impoverished residents will no longer belong there. Aggressive gentrification speaks to fundamental questions of home, identity, and community, how those places define us, and how we define them. So artists have to be aware and justify their position in a particular place and consider its implications for their practice.

While we may think gentrification is one of the defining issues of our age, evidence of this centuries-old trend can be found in city archives, animated by the personal sentiments of those whose stories of displacement and suffering generally go unheard or are ignored. They resound with subjects of private profit taking over civic life, although the right to the city ought to be a fundamental

human right. Oslo East is such an example: an area that became attractive to wealthy investors—even though the area, dominated by public housing, had previously been undesirable—so the history of the place is rewritten.

I have shown in my artistic research and the related projects how temporary artworks can encourage gentle but piercing experiences by making the past present for those involved. This presence comes about as they address relevant questions about commemoration in the public sphere.

On Collective Memory

—we will survive in the memory of others.

Flusser 1988

This chapter situates collective memory between public and private life, agency and power, considering it as a vast resource for participation and social practice. In order to understand the conceptual framework of collective memory, we have to understand its significance and implications, taking into account the following terms: memory, remembering, history, and erasure.

If our collective memory is taken from us—is rewritten—
we lose the ability to sustain our true selves.

Murakami 2011:275

While many scholars have explored the term collective memory, the discourse began with the work of sociologist Emile Durkheim. Although he never used the term “collective memory,” he noted that societies require continuity and connection with the past to preserve social unity and cohesion. For Durkheim, although everyone in society has an individual consciousness, they also share solidarity with one another. We work together in many ways, and our collective consciousness is one of the factors that allow this to happen. He described collective consciousness as a constellation of ideas, beliefs, and values shared by a people. However, it is the philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, a student of Durkheim, who is known for developing the idea of collective memory *per se*. Halbwachs’s argued that collective memory is a phenomenon that occurs in the context of human interactions, suggesting that memory is reconstructed according to the situation in which memories are recalled. Thus, collective memory plays an important role in framing our imaginaries, remembrance, and memorialisation.

COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

“Collective consciousness” occurs when we are united in thought. This term was coined by Durkheim. For Durkheim, individuals in society, although all have their own individual consciousness, also share solidarity with one another. We work together in many ways and our consciousness is what allows this to happen. He described collective consciousness as a constellation of ideas, beliefs, and values that people share. This is where the formation of conscious memorialisation starts—in the mind. Collective consciousness is an interesting term to explore when thinking about social art making and social practice because the participants in art making form collective thoughts through the shared experience.

It is in society that people normally acquire their memories.
It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize
their memories.

Halbwachs 1925:38

The historian Pierre Nora expanded upon Halbwachs, writing that collective memory is used by communities and individuals to interpret a past. Yet these memories become detached from the past. Nora claimed that groups select certain events and people to commemorate and deliberately eliminate others from representation (collective amnesia), even inventing traditions to support the collective memory. From this perspective, rather than being a static body of knowledge possessed by people, collective remembering is viewed as an active process that often involves contention and contestation. Collective remembering is complex because it represents individual histories as objective representations of the past. The fact that history is written by individuals or small groups of people indicates how collective memory and collective remembering can be conflictual at best. Both Halbwachs and Nora suggest that collective memory is a manipulated construction of those who maintain the power and status to define those memories. This is an important claim to keep in mind: collective memory can be misused to construct histories that position certain political and ideological agendas. The public sphere opposes this as it draws on the diversity of social perspectives through research on public narratives and forges a more democratic and

inclusive imaginary of our collective pasts. The complexities of publicness and the public sphere are the shifting boundaries between history, storytelling, and fiction.

NOSTALGIA

Nostalgia is central to the discussion of collective memory. It is essential to addressing the way societies and individuals view both history and their own past. In my artworks *Folkets Hus* and *Kammer*, it is important to be aware that they were not made with a nostalgic aim. People view history through the lens of the present, their memories are rarely accurate. Nostalgia serves to further dilute them with the addition of general forgetfulness, a deliberate erasure of painful memories, and a highly romanticized vision of the realities of the past. As David Lowenthal writes, “It is no longer the presence of the past that speaks to us, but its pastness.” (Lowenthal 1985) I think that nostalgia is employed by the public and cultures to distance themselves from the painful and disturbing actualities of history, particularly those that conflict with contemporary social values and practices. Nostalgia shields the present from the reality of its origins in order to discount its meaning and its implications for the future. Nostalgia discourages people from living fully in the present. The past, as it is idealized or imagined, is believed to shine a more positive light than the reality of every day life does. Nostalgia represents a past that never existed and insinuates itself into cultural expressions of history most evocatively in public memory.

During the last few decades there has been a growing public interest in exploring the term collective memory. We are experiencing a sort of “memory boom.” Scholars have sought to explain the rise of interest in the past, memory, commemoration, nostalgia, and history in terms of contexts ranging from traumatic events, popular culture, and public space. The memory boom has been tied to the idea of a crisis in which the abundance of memory can be attributed to a very real fear of social amnesia or forgetfulness. Historian Pierre Nora claimed “We speak so much of memory, because there is so little of it left.” (Nora 1989: 7) Nora sees the discursive inflation of memory not as the real thing, but as a reaction to a perceived acceleration of historical change, which could only be found in the *milieux de mémoire* (Realms

of memory 1998). Where Nora explains “If we were still inhabiting our memory, there would be no need of concrete places for it. There would be no places, because no memories would have been swept away by history.” (Nora 1998:24). I think with the term “*lieux de mémoire*” (modern society) Nora is saying that memory is cut off from modern society. And that the memory often gets called upon after the memory has already been lost, as in the case of history. Thus, I believe memory cannot be lost in advance, because is still being shaped.

Collective memories are socially constructed, based on emotion, values, present circumstances, and experiences in which communities or individuals find themselves. They are connected to politics and events as well as to the rise of reparations and apologies. They are also meant to address domestic and international politics and questions about ethics, including present-day debates about the nation-state as a carrier of identity as well as on religion, multiculturalism, and postmodernity. Memories created by communities serve an important role in creating a sense of identity in the group. They may also provide the members of the community with a particular method of interpreting their common experiences that can enable individuals to cope when memories are particularly traumatic or are related to a common loss. By contrast, individual memory is a personal interpretation of an event from our own lives, the study of which has its own history in psychology, memory studies, and sociology.

Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past.

Nora 2013:14

Consequently, the difficulty with history is that it rarely draws on living memory. It is knowledge acquired by investigation and the residue of the past as stored, for instance, in archives. This is when it becomes complicated, challenging, and, at times, somewhat confusing. And here lies the hidden ground of what I find useful in interrogating collective memory, which reveals that life and written history do not come together. It is as if they existed in different spheres. When taking history into account, we must ask: Who chooses to preserve the material that historians base

their studies on? Who writes the history and for whom is it being written? And we should remember that no collective reflection on history has been built on comprehensive collective accounts of the past.

Collective memory is collective experience shared in the present. There is also a history of collective memory but that has yet to be written. Even though the term collective memory is used more frequently, it is a term that requires further exploration in order to better understand its potential. Art seldom makes its way into history, even if it (also as collective memory and experience) has always existed side by side with history. Stories of works of art touch us and open us to the transformative power of collective memory, opening up the experience of individuals as well as the perspective of a community to broader interpretation.

Although memory is often defined in terms of a personal interpretation of the experiences in our lives, the community with which we identify unquestionably influences our opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards our individuality. We weave our past personal experiences into collective memories. Coming together through reminiscences is what I call collective remembering. It is something that happens over time as remembering and forgetting, as socially constituted experiences with individual and social bases, come together to form our collective memory. Thus, even though we may not have experienced a situation first hand, we can still have a collective memory of the event, even if these experiences are filtered through age, cultural background, and ideology.

A personal example is my collection of stones, some of which I was given as gifts, others I have collected over my lifetime. Every time I touch or see one of them laying around my house, it triggers my memory. I recall images from my life, the smells and the sounds of landscapes where I have taken walks with my family and people close to me. These strong memories of shared moments are examples of collective memories that I share with people in my life. Over time, I learned that I am not the only person with such a collection of stones. My mother has collected stones all her life and now they are all placed around her garden. Each stone represents a moment in her life. Through her, I learned that this way of retaining memory is a collective one, shared by people and communities all around the world. There is

comfort in the stones, the feeling that they are symbols of something eternal, that they are more complete during our short time on earth. So imagine that stones are like the traces of collective memory we find around us, representing histories from our shared lives.

Everything faded into mist. The past was erased, the erasure was forgotten, the lie became truth.

Orwell 1961

One aspect of artistic research dealing with collective memory is the active concealing or camouflaging of historical events, often referred to as erasure, and how ideologies have the tendency to dismiss inconvenient facts. Erasure is increasingly used to describe how history renders certain people and communities invisible—their stories, history, and achievements are simply blotted out. The importance of places, spaces, and sites of remembrance are often used as examples in studies of erasure. Our collective imaginaries are symbolic spheres in which spaces and places are contested. In our lifetimes we have experienced how our collective memory is gradually erased through forced removal, traumatic displacement, and natural disasters, as well as through the bureaucratic processes of planning, eviction, demolition, and rebuilding. The removal of statues following regime change, whether after the end of World War II or following the fall of Communism in eastern and central Europe, can of course be a matter of common consent. This can be a way for a society to demonstrate its commitment to a new set of values and a new way of living together, freed from the legacy of the past.

The controversial “Rhodes Must Fall” protests in South Africa in 2015 and 2016, led to the removal of the offending statue of the British colonialist. By attacking the statue, the young students involved in the protests were pointing to unresolved legacies of colonialism in the everyday lives of their communities and called on the political establishment to recognise how much still needed to be done to overcome those legacies. The protest triggered similar events taking place in Europe and United States. I find their memory activism a salient form of the protest in our time, raising questions that not only make people see the wrongs of the past but also likely produce strong counterreaction.

So imagine we've removed the monuments, and perhaps plaques, house names, street names, do we start going through the written record erasing their names there as well? How far back do we go? Should we follow the example of the ancient Egyptian? When power changed hands, they defaced ornaments and statues by carving off faces and chiselling away the names they found unfit to represent their past. With the act of erasure, we lose reminders that can be warnings in the future to not repeat the past. What is done cannot be undone but if we apply critical inquiry to construct a contemporary narrative and comment on history, revising it over time with each new generation, we can begin to undo wrongs as they come to light. After all, our own history will also be rethought in the future. History is constantly being remixed, reconstructed, and replayed. So even if amnesia is an erasure of memory, the presence and absence of the past in our lives will find ways of becoming visible in the present, leaving room for a plurality of points of view.

Since erasure, unlike forgetting, keeps certain people at the centre of history and insulates them from guilt, there is a need for laws and public policy to ensure that erasure is not misused in the public sphere. As an artist I feel the need to take a stand against erasure by acknowledging the awareness of the people's histories that have been displaced. Collective memory then serves as an exercise in visibility about others and as a means of survival and empowerment for those whose lives are in danger of being erased.

Collective memory is omnipresent. It shapes our everyday lives. It plays a role in how archives come into existence and why they are preserved. History needs to address the various forms by which collective memory is enacted. Rather than debating distinctions between forms of collective memory, historians need to reflect critically on the complicities embedded in these narratives.

Collective memory is not merely inscribed in our imaginary, it is part of our living memory and extends through generations and is inscribed in long-term life patterns. Communities and individuals use collective memories to contextualize narratives and identities. Following these concepts, I interpret collective memory as a narrative actively located in the public sphere with the potential to shape people's experience and understanding of the culture of the place. By sharing collective memories in art

making, we contextualize our memories and express them to others, unleashing their transformative power. Reconceptualising the past through artistic interventions opens up the possibility of dialogue. Herein lies a unique potential to establish understanding and dialogue.

On Consciousness

We are only too given to making an entity out of the abstract noun “consciousness.” We forget that it comes from the adjective “conscious.” To be conscious is to be aware of what we are about; conscious signifies the deliberate, observant, planning traits of activity. Consciousness is nothing which we have which gazes idly on the scene around one or which has impressions made upon it by physical things; it is a name for the purposeful quality of an activity, for the fact that it is directed by an aim. Put the other way about, to have an aim is to act with meaning, not like an automatic machine; it is to mean to do something and to perceive the meaning of things in the light of that intent.

Dewey 1916:44

John Dewey identified consciousness with attentiveness or mindfulness, something our mind needs in order to gather more information about the world in order to act upon it. Thus, I embody my sensory capacities, which enables me to become a part of what I experience. For instance, when I listen, I become part of the listening process. So consciousness and memory are dependent on each other. In fact, memories may possibly be the very core of consciousness. There is a possibility that memories are a part of the very structure of consciousness and that there may be no consciousness without memory. Understanding memory requires an understanding of a consciousness.

Susan Sontag wrote “a conscious act of the mind which illustrates a certain code, certain ‘rules’ of interpretation” (Sontag, 1964), this is a task affiliated to translation. Here she touches upon aspects of the human experience like courage and resistance that are some of the key factors in our conscious representation of loss in the public sphere. Psychologist Julian Jaynes explored

the controversial idea that tragedy forces people to acquire consciousness. As an artist in proximity to consciousness, everything in the making of a work of art starts as consciousness. It is hard to define consciousness clearly because I believe one cannot go looking for it. The idea has been expressed that in order to study something, you need to have very clear questions before you start. However, I don't think that's true, because consciousness cannot be defined with any degree of specificity.

IMAGINARY

Throughout my reflection, I often use the term "imaginary." Psychoanalyst and psychiatrist Jacques Marie Émile Lacan described the imaginary: "As is known, it is in the realm of experience inaugurated by psychoanalysis that we may grasp along what imaginary lines the human organism, in the most intimate recesses of its being, manifests its capture in a symbolic dimension." (Lacan 1972) To me it is an expression that refers to a state of consciousness, sometimes fictitious, at other times very real. It is a realm of images and imagination anchored in reflection. Consequently, the imaginary is a mirror of our inner life and the world outside, and is always present in art making. As artists, we have to mobilize the imaginary in order to fulfil our conscious intentions. I would even assert that consciousness needs the imaginary to manifest itself in the world. My experience is that practice-based artistic research is part of developing and mapping a better understanding of the imaginary as a conscious presence in art making.

Yet whatever one calls it, we share a rough idea of what's meant: a lasting sense of one's self moving in a sea of selves, dependent yet alone; a sense, or perhaps a deep and common wish, that I somehow belong to "we," and that this we belongs to something even larger and less comprehensible; and the recurring thought, so easy to brush aside, the daily effort to cross the street safely and get through one's to-do list, much less to confront the world's true crises, that my time, our time, matters precisely because it ends.

Burdick 2007:XV

Consciousness is state of being aware of your self and the world around you. Anything that we are aware of at a given moment forms part of our consciousness. The conscious mind extends to everything in our awareness, including perceptions, sensations, feelings, thoughts, memories, and the imaginary. This is an awareness in which the physical world no longer obstructs understanding. Knowing that, one knows one's self is central to art making. As we begin to see the purpose behind perception and thought, our consciousness helps us to connect with our purpose as artists. The continuous questioning in art making brings one closer to consciousness, enabling us to continually discover, pursue, and question our knowledge.

Time is the substance I am made of. Time is a river which sweeps me along, but I am the river; it is a tiger which destroys me, but I am the tiger; it is a fire which consumes me, but I am the fire.

Borges 1964:233

On Listening

We cannot bring back to life those whom we find cast ashore in the archives. But this is not a reason to make them suffer a second death. There is only a narrow space in which to develop a story that will neither cancel out nor dissolve these lives, but leave them available so that another day, and elsewhere, another narrative can be built from their enigmatic presence.

Farge 2013:121

Can listening be an act of remembrance? If so, how can I share this experience with others? In a time when listening may be one of the least encouraged of our senses, I find it the one that unites us with all beings. Sadly, in many of our environments, we are bombarded by an array of sounds. The ear, unlike the eye, does not have lids. Therefore we have learned a form of unconscious, selective listening that enables us to ignore much of the sound around us, including media. We spend a lot of time avoiding the sound of others, and our ears shut down by default. It is, therefore, important to distinguish listening from hearing as two different modes of perception. Hearing is a term often defined as auditory perception; it is used to describe our ability to distinguish sound frequencies which we perceive not only with our ears but also with our body. If one is not hearing-impaired, hearing simply happens by itself, and because we are often not actively paying attention to or waiting for a sound, most hearing is subject to chance. Listening, on the other hand, is something one consciously chooses to do. It requires attentiveness of your mind in order to process meaning from sounds and language. In my work, listening has always been important in one way or another. This again points to the central core of my research, which is about being conscious in the process of art making. Listening is a way of being in the world, which concerns being present,

conscious, and aware. In order to listen properly, you have to set aside lifelong training in self-absorption and self-protection. Listening to someone demands presence.

There are theories that suggest that sound memories are stored for slightly longer periods of time than visual memories, and this is backed up by electroencephalograms (EEGs) of people's brain waves made as they were dying. In addition, it is commonly said that our hearing is the last sense we lose before we die (Sen 2016). I like to think that our inner sound archives are the soundtracks of our lives and that they create a narrative for our experiences.

As an exercise, I want to ask you to think of the sound that makes you feel safe right now. What does that sound open up in your memory? Does it open one or several moments? Is it a shared moment? Are you in company of others? Is it a voice, or an environment made of natural or man-made sounds? I am certain that most answers will be very individual. We do not share most of our sound archive, but some sounds in it have been learned through experience. Universal sounds like thunder, rain, or crying. Still, how we respond to the sounds emotionally is highly individual. Just a half a century ago listening was vital. There was collective listening to the radio since, after reading, it was the primary source of information. Listening is its own language. As you live, you archive sounds that help you orient yourself in your everyday life. There has been a great deal written on memory and sound, and how they affect us as part of our everyday life and movements. It affects, for example, how we move and why we move. It also causes changes in our behaviour. So thinking about listening has been an ongoing and continuous focus throughout my practice-based artistic research. I use the city and my travelling as a form of fieldwork, not necessarily by means of recording sounds on a machine but by being an active listener myself. Listening to the city is a way of mapping and understanding the city as an archive. It is a landscape of acoustic memory.

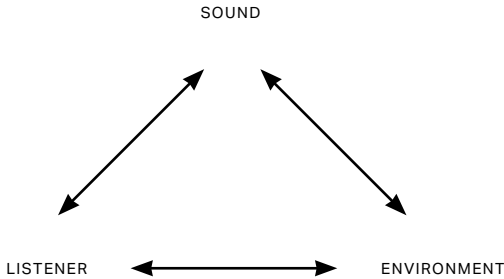
To recall Italo Calvino words:

As this wave from memories flows in, the city soaks it up like a sponge and expands. A description of [the city] as it is today should contain all [the city's] past. The city, however, does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the

gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls.

Calvino 1974:9

I was interested in how sound memories are created, stored in the mind, and felt in the body—the physical aspect of listening. One text that is of interest on this matter is “Acoustic Communication” by Barry Truax, which explains how sound works positively to create a relationship with an environment. The chapter on listening in his text confirmed many of my own thoughts about listening—sound can be an agent that integrates an artwork with its surroundings as if it had always been there. Barry Truax calls these “earwitness accounts”.



The mediating relationship of listener to environment through sound. (Truax 1984:11)

As an artist who works with listening, it became important to relearn how to listen to others. Through listening I was capable of opening up. Listening engages you with mutual respect, dialogue and understanding. I am very grateful that I discovered an approach to listening. Thus, my understanding of what it actually means to listen is still expanding. Listening encompasses much more than words. It is its own mode in language beyond any rational comprehension. Consequently, learning to listen anew was an extreme test because opening up for this intense awareness

demanded that I shut down everything else. Not having been trained in aural awareness, I sought help talking to people for whom this is a part of their profession. I wanted to learn how they form a response. Then I translated their methods into my own practise. Before and after a work, I take time to sit and listen to the environment. For example, when the Folkets hus in Lillestøm was demolished, I listened to the house, just as I did when I first spent time in the house. I listened to everything. Listening is also how I chose the site for *Kammer* (fig. 1–2). The site turned out to be near a path crossing between two roads that was also a point where different streams of sound crossed. All these different sounds formed the sound environment in which the work unfolded by day and by night. It was important that this sound environment heightened the experience and at the same time demanded that the listener take time to listen instead of just hearing.

There are a handful of works by other artists that have stayed with me and shaped my understanding of listening, sound, and sculpture. Sound has a materiality that can be felt and shaped. Janet Cardiff and Georg Burrell Miller's sound installation *FOREST (for a thousand years...)* (2012) at *Dokumenta* was such an intense experience.

As I entered the *FOREST (for a thousand years...)*, I become one with the sound installation. The sound space made me sit down to be able to take in the audio composition emitted from more than thirty speakers. The experience was profound. I felt a sense of marvel as it led me to explore the potential of what sound can do in a work of art. Listening as a transformative experience is expressive and at times overwhelming. An important part of this experience was listening with others because it was collective and an intimate act. It effortlessly unified a group of strangers who were sharing the same experience while at the same time it connected everyone with their environment by the mere act of active listening.

Opening the process of art making to others previously held at a distance is demanding. It involves inserting them into the process and being accountable to them, while they—having become thoughtfully and constructively engaged—become accountable to us and to the art. It is not a passive giving and receiving, and responsibilities

exist for each party involved. But the dialogue that is engendered —whether art or part of the process of making—is evidence that in the experience of art, we all have something to gain. The more openly and generously we listen to each other, and encourage other perceptions, the more we will hear, and the greater the work of art will resound.

Jacob 2005:9



Fig. 1. Listeners in *Kammer* outside the Munch Museum.



Fig. 2. A directional speaker used in *Kammer* outside the Munch Museum.

On sculpture

Every day you have to abandon your past or accept it
and then, if you cannot accept it, you become a sculptor.

Bourgeois 1998

Sculpture, in the form of monuments or memorials, has always been at the centre of public commemoration. A sculpture defines itself by the methods and techniques used in making it. It is a narrative and a language that can be felt, touched, and heard. The external and internal presence of sculpture constructs something continuous. The materiality also changes constantly. Sculpture is a language, a part of me, an extension of my body and my mind. Forms and shapes materialise, translate my surroundings, and become part of a whole. This is more than just a sensation—it is a bodily as well as a mental experience for me. It is personal. As an artist, this knowledge has been with me my whole life, expressed through art making. The more I try to move away from sculpture, the more my art making draws me back into it and manifests itself in the situations or the places in which I find myself.

Since 1977, with the establishment of the art production of Public Art Norway, from childhood on, one has been exposed to sculpture in public spaces in Norway. This is extremely important and generous because you encounter artwork in public spaces. It gives you an opportunity to have art experiences no matter what your cultural and economic background. Art encounters you at school, in the hospital, or swimming pool, to mention just a few places where I experienced public art as a child.

My first attempts at sculpture took place in the forest next to the house I grew up in. I made forms out of stones and figures out of tree cones. Before I experienced sculpture, I started to develop sensitivity for form. As a child there were many encounters with sculpture where one interacted with a material, shaping various forms of clay or homemade modelling clay (*trolldelig*). This material was

coarse. I remember the feeling of its brittle structure and how it would always break. I quickly turned to nature and materials that I found outside. I brought them home with me to build little cairns around my home. I believe I share these experiences with many others. We all form a relationship to sculpture at an early age. Exploring the relation between what you see and what you touch is crucial as is finding a way to examine material with your hands. Stone, wood, and snow are the materials that influence my imagination the most. They are more flexible and allow you to build structures that are like shelters or hideouts. Over the years, exploring material has been my way of shaping my surroundings, transforming my environment, and creating my own realm. This new world then becomes my truth. It is the core of all I do and it follows me through life. I believe that one always searches for the way back to this state of origin where the imagination has not been filled by outside sources. We search for this mode of being, for this core, in order to reveal the very presence of our work and ourselves. Accordingly, being an artist for me is about seeking. I recognise myself in the words of Louise Bourgeois, in which she connects what she does to a past, different consciousness.

In my sculpture, it's not an image I am seeking, it's not an idea. My goal is to relive a past emotion. My art is an exorcism, and beauty is something I never talk about.

Bourgeois 1923–1997:357

“Encountering sculpture,” as I call it, is to be turned, whether for a moment or a lifetime. It is always, in part, not knowing, being a little or very lost. When we encounter sculpture, it asks us to surrender something of ourselves, willingly or otherwise, to take part in an unpredictable experience. Encountering sculpture happens in many ways. My artist’s knowledge takes form in my work. Encounters occur many times in an art project and each is different. Meeting your own thoughts in the moment, art making becomes both a familiar and unfamiliar. One faces a lifetime of making, because the sum of your art making is your foundation, which all your further knowledge and experience builds on. This is where your achievements and failures come together. You have to evaluate them from inside yourself and not from an outside framework, choosing what to take in and investigate more

deeply, never knowing where the encounter will lead, if anywhere, or what you will experience along the way. Still, it is a very seductive and private experience, a point of no return. And it is what makes you continue. One will never know one's work the same way ever again. Insights change and so do relevancies.

Encountering sculpture shows how the practice of social sculpture is an extension of art beyond the museum and the art world with the transformative power to shape social reality. It is an art practice in which everyone can participate more consciously to develop a shared social reality. Beuys demonstrated that it's possible for us to use these processes through social sculpture to activate human potential in places, spaces, and cultures. To me, social sculpture has the collective creative power to change the ways we think, see each other, and live.

There are three aspects to social sculpture as a process of collective art making. First, we have to establish the conditions for the art making, a setting or context in which we can do the art project that provides an issue or question to be addressed through an open-ended inquiry. In my experience, this can be anywhere, even on the street or, for example, in a building set for demolition like *Folkets Hus*. Second, we need to research, understand, and trust the social as a medium, enlisting and gaining expertise to develop and facilitate the social processes that take place through dialogue. Thus, I believe that only through the experience of participatory and socially-engaged art will the audience be more conscious when it comes to new and emergent forms of art and art making.

In these types of projects, artists guide participants from different parts of society to come together, experience, and challenge their perspectives. The participatory monument, as an extension of social sculpture, uncovers and identifies mind-sets deep within our social fabric—core beliefs and identities that, in turn, shape behaviour and beliefs. Like Beuys, who claimed that the actions of the people in a city were social sculptures and that cities are the responsibility of their inhabitants, I have come to the conclusion that participatory and socially-engaged art is a vital and meaningful form of art making in the urban context. As we encounter social sculpture, and as it makes itself accessible and understandable to any who care to engage with it, participatory monuments have the ability to transform the way the public experiences collective consciousness.

Folkets Hus

Folkets hus (“People’s house”) was found in the city of Lillestrøm, Norway. In 2015, 100 years after it opened, it was demolished to make room for new city development. This work, *Folkets Hus*, was a commission curated by director Rikke Kommisar and Monica Holmen of Akershus Kunstsenter in Lillestrøm. It began on an autumn day in 2014. I was given a commission with the freedom to respond to the city and its citizens.

Throughout its lifetime, the house had been the centre of a number of key events in people’s lives. It was a place where human actions, dialogue, and solidarity shaped society and its culture and created a political identity for the local workers. The idea of the Folkets hus was established in an era when workers were banned from gathering and discussing politics in public space. Folkets hus served as a safe space for political discussion and social organisation and did so for a century (fig. 3–8).

Folkets Hus (1915–2015) was a participatory monument in which local people of varied political and religious affiliations met to exchange memories and share a common history. This site-specific temporary art project served as a central platform for reactivating the idea of Folkets hus, examining its social and political significance in Lillestrøm. Throughout the final months of the building’s existence, from November 2014 to March 2015, a number of events were staged in the house before it was demolished. They included the local residents who had a history with it.

The events which activated alternative modes of memorialisation and collective memory were the enactment of a centennial dinner before the actual date of the anniversary, a union strike meeting, the floodlighting of the facade of the building, and a seminar in the building. Subsequently, tours and talks took place in the house during which the participants shared their stories and experiences. Thus, researching the idea of the performative monument through the *Folkets Hus* project, I explored

and reflected on the idea that even small collaborative actions and gestures can reignite the forgotten past.

Every thing has a beginning and beginnings are always connected to our past. I think I grew up in a particular participatory time. When I was little there were block parties and bonfires in the neighbourhood on midsummer. This is how you knew you belonged—by being part of a community. Neighbours would work together to build playgrounds, clean up communal areas, or just help their neighbours in need—the neighbourhood was extended family. It was a time when one felt everything was about community and being together. My family was always involved in these activities and taking part together with them gave me a sense of belonging.

When I returned to Norway after studying and working abroad for nearly two decades none of this remained. Where did it all go? Can traditions and rituals change in less than a quarter of a century? Yet this story is not exclusive to northern Norway. It applies to many places all over the world. It is much more a story about places growing out of themselves and failing to keep their cultural traditions alive as economics and politics change our culture and us with them.

I first came across the seemingly abandoned *Folkets hus* on a cold day in October 2014, when I was walking around the city. Generally speaking, it was a ghost house on the side of the main road. I was intrigued by its appearance and wondered what kind of place it had been. Where I grew up, there were many community houses supported by the local groups and run as charities, but this one looked like something else. The architecture was a mish-mash of styles due to its use of materials and hybrid shapes. It looked like it had been rebuilt several times.

After I started enquiring about the building I learned that it was regarded an eyesore by the local residents. In fact, this building had become a painful reminder of Lillestrøm's humble beginnings and the hardships of many. The building's narrative did not fit the idea of a modern urban development. So, witnessing the disappearance of *Folkets hus* from everyday life in Lillestrøm was in many ways a reflection of the city's wish to renew itself and become a modern city. In other words demolishing (fig. 9).

Folkets Hus was part of a gentrification process and by the time I discovered it. It had already been sold to a developer. Its fate

was sealed. Nevertheless (or precisely because of that) I became excited by the idea of tracing its past and reactivating it in the remaining, limited timeframe. This added urgency to undertaking a process of researching what it meant for those who had a history there. I wanted to tell the story of the extraordinary history of the building which was about to disappear.

The events I instigated were announced under the title *Framtidsmonument* (“future monument”). They were inspired by the following major work in contemporary art history: Joseph Beuys’s *7000 Oak Trees*, which embodied his definition of social sculpture, grounded in humanism, social philosophy, and anthroposophy. Initiated in 1982 for Documenta 7, he proposed a plan to plant 7000 oaks throughout the city of Kassel with the help of local participants. The project, seen locally as a gesture towards green urban renewal, took five years to complete. As a collective action, it inspired the direction I adopted.

In 2104 I interviewed Thomas Hirschhorn in his Paris studio about the *Gramsci Monument*. He told me: “The *Gramsci Monument*, like all monuments, is made for eternity. Because with each work of art, with each monument, the artist interrogates the existing works of art, the existing history of art, the existing history and the existing monuments.” He also told how the *Gramsci Monument* was a participatory artwork for people who don’t usually enter art galleries or museums. I found similarities to my own methods, especially in what Hirschhorn calls *Presence* and *Production*, by which he means that the artist is on site throughout the work’s construction, programming and performance. For me, this is an essential element when working in temporary participatory and socially-engaged art because the artist’s presence creates a bond between the participatory public and the work. And here Hirschhorn’s position on authorship of members of the public as well as the artist is also instructive. In the case of *Folkets Hus*, I am the author with responsibility for what takes place there but I am not the author of every aspect. The participants who take part are—equally—co-authors in the art project.

In the months before the first event, I observed the groups still using the building: a dog-training group, a chess club with three members, and a cheerleading troop. I was given the keys to the building and started to invite local residents to meet me there to tell me their stories. They gave me insight into a bygone

time when the house was central to Lillestrøm's social life. They brought photos and other mementos. During our conversations, we discussed how to reactivate the house. How could we make it visible and alive again?

Because the house was nearly abandoned, I needed to reset the interior. I referred to old photographs to determine how to rearrange the furniture and hung many pictures that had I found stored away. Physically, this was quite a challenging task but it got done.

The first public event was floodlighting the facade for a week. This decision to illuminate the building arose from conversations about how important buildings are often lit to make them visible to the greater public. On a snowy day in January, the local mayor turned on the lights. A handful of local residents were present and the building was opened so that everyone could come in and have a look around. The building was restored to its former glory as far as it was possible. There was candlelight on the tables and coffee, and hot chocolate was available for the people who attended. Local newspapers covered the event and led more people to contact me with their stories, more than I could ever have hoped for. Clearly many people felt the need to remember and share their stories of this building, for which I realised I served as instigator and witness (fig. 10).

The second event was the seminar where I proposed that Folkets hus in Lillestrøm was not merely a building. It was also an important monument and focal point for community ideals, values, and dedication at a time when the future was uncertain. Political and economic changes in society had led Folkets hus to lose its original function and, therefore, become obsolete and forgotten.

The seminar was open to the public, and many came who do not normally attend art projects. I invited three guest speakers to elaborate on my proposed ideas from their perspective. Historian Frank Meyer spoke on archives as the preservation of collective memory; art historian Olga Schmedling spoke about the monument of the future from a social historical perspective; and historian Harald Berntsen contributed a talk about the people's house history seen from a national and international perspective. He has also written a book on the hundred-year history of the Folkets hus in Norway.

The seminar was something out of the ordinary. The participants engaged with each other remarkably well during the

event, sharing their own experiences and thoughts. At one point, encouraged by Berntsen, they all stood up and sang songs from memory, songs that used to be part of what took place in the building. For me as an outsider it was incredibly powerful and special to see how the idea of this place sparked so many collective memories, thoughts, and even this collective singing (fig. 11).

The centennial dinner was mentioned during many of the conversations. There had been a tradition to celebrate the building every ten years and the next celebration was due in the spring of 2015. It was actually going to be even more special because it would be the hundred year anniversary. Demolition, however, was scheduled for March, which meant that the centennial dinner was not going to happen. Everyone involved in the project agreed that it would be a tragedy if the dinner was cancelled. So we decided to reschedule the dinner, before its actual date, so it could take place. This is how the centennial dinner came to be a reality. Local residents that had experienced previous dinners helped me by offering advice regarding the program, etiquette, decoration, menus, and drinks. Thus, the centennial dinner became a re-enactment of celebrations of the past.

One hundred golden hand-printed invitations went out to the local residents that had shared their history of the house with me. The invitation had the same design as those for the 50 year jubilee of the building had had, and we also chose to have the same dinner menu. On the night of the celebration, close to a hundred formally dressed people arrived. The main hall was decorated and staged as in former photographs—streamers hung from the ceiling, tables were decorated with candles and red roses. As in the old tradition, each place setting included a set of songs sung at earlier jubilees. During the dinner there was collective singing and a performance by the Lillestrøm woman's choir, who sang songs that had been performed in the building almost one hundred years ago. There were also many speeches, including one by the mayor of Lillestrøm. But the climactic moment during meal was when former culture minister Åse Kleveland stepped onto the stage—a gasp was audible throughout the hall. This was a grand experience because Kleveland is a former politician and one of Norway's most renowned singers. It was such an honour to see her perform in such an intimate setting. Even more special, she had performed her first public concert as a young girl on the

same stage in the building. Some of the audience members had been there to witness it, and that was how I learned of Kleveland's connection with the building. She performed a couple of songs and went on to hold a speech about her relation to the house. I had arranged this in secret so it could be my surprise, a gesture of gratitude for everyone involved.

Afterwards the microphone was open so that anyone could share stories. The stories they told were tales from all sides of life: weddings, parties, and funerals. The building had been central to so many occasions in so many people's lives—it had been a witness to hundred years of social life in a community that went from being a town to becoming a city. If it was not clear before they came, it became clear by then how unique this occasion was. Many of the participants had not known each other before, but through their stories they found others to reminisce with, people that understood their need to remember. It was a night that surely will not be forgotten by anyone who was present—it created a common history and bonds between strangers. So for one night the house had its community back and this place sounded like a true people's palace, full of laughter and voices locked in intense conversation. There was so much to share in so little time. As the dessert coffee was served and the last speech was held, we all said a communal farewell to the building and all it had stood for.

Yet it was not the last good bye. The dinner was the occasion of another very special event. Some of the participants of the dinner were still active members of the metal union. They asked me if they could hold one last meeting in the house—no ordinary meeting but a strike meeting. For this last community event the chairs were filled with union workers discussing their rights. It was a fitting end to see the building return to its original function (fig. 12).

A few weeks later I started to take apart the interiors to try to find parts of the original building. Little did I know that while I was looking for something else that I would find a photograph of one of the first striker's meeting. It showed the same union but from a long time before, taken in the hall of the building at exactly the same place where the final meeting had occurred just a few weeks prior. The image seemed like an echo of this last event (fig. 13–14).

I also found a hidden room that contained an archive spanning the timeframe from before the building was opened until World

War II. It contained photographs, blueprints, hand-drawn drawings of the original interior, meeting logs, accounting books, and the original deeds to the land. I turned all this over to the Norwegian Labour Movement Archives and Library, as it was important material for anyone who might want to study the building in the future. The material fascinated me utterly. Its quality and the multitude of information were an incredible find and such a gift in itself after having tried so hard to find material about the building in several archives during the process of undertaking the project.

The last days I spent crawling around the corners of the house, the cellar, the loft, and the crawl spaces above the attic. I found additional objects that I took with me and now use when I present the narrative of the building. The objects were nine strike picket signs that must have been used in the 1960s and that still had parts of their posters attached. There were also house rules from 1915 and a wooden sculpture of a golden fire that may have been an ornament in the building.

I also found an original Rosa Luxemburg poster. I consider these findings treasures that might open up doors to new artworks. The building had given what it could to everyone, including me. It spent a century shaping a community and was now going to be lost forever. I made sure that in spite of losing we did what we could to activate the idea of what it was and bring it back to life again for the future.

But for now it was dying. When it was the last building still standing on the block, I was inside the house making sound recordings while other houses were being demolished in the street. The outside was filled with the noise of building parts being ripped apart and demolished but from the inside through my headphones it sounded like the house was taking its last breath. The last days spent in the house were a rather a strange experience.

Folkets Hus is my contribution to future monuments. Throughout the project I tested out several new ways of documentation, such as 3D scanning with help from Trond Kasper Mikkelsen, printing 3D models of the building to preserve it for the future. I also recorded the sound from the building and the different events that took place there. All this documentation and material is now part of my *Archive*.

How we remember, depends on how we share our experiences with others.

I learned that the project event challenged people from different communities to choose what to remember and that one can create collective memories in a group of strangers by sharing a common relation. In this work it was the building. However, the narrative continues after the building was torn down. The project has been presented in many new contexts showing how one can activate the past and the politics of remembrance to build relationships for the construction of collective memory. We may still live in participatory time after all—because now *we* are the monuments. We all have memories that we can activate in the future. Being in the world is what unites us—it is what brings us together.

Folkets Hus, Lillestrømmen

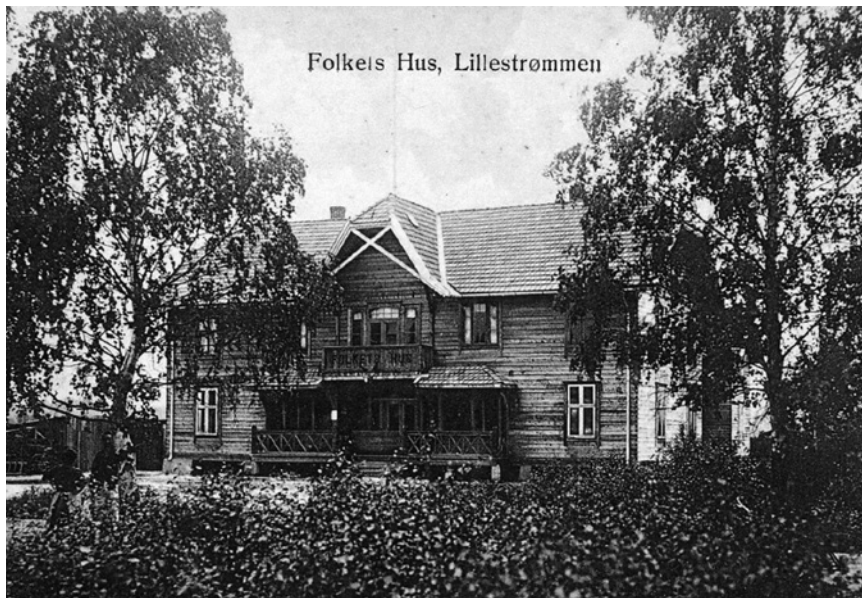


Fig. 3. Folkets hus, Lillestrøm, 1915.



Fig. 4. The great hall in Folkets hus,
Lillestrøm, 1920.



Fig. 5. Folkets hus, Lillestrøm, 2015.



Fig. 6. The great hall in Folkets hus, Lillestrøm, 2015.



Fig. 7. Interior in Folkets hus,
Lillestrøm, 2015.



Fig. 8. Interior in Folkets hus,
Lillestrøm, 2015.



Fig. 9. Demolition of Folkets hus, Lillestrøm, 2015.



Fig. 10. Flooflight of the facade of Folkets hus, Lillestrøm 2015.



Fig. 11. Seminar at Folkets hus, Lillestrøm, 2015.



Fig. 12. Enacted centennial dinner at Folkets hus in 2015.

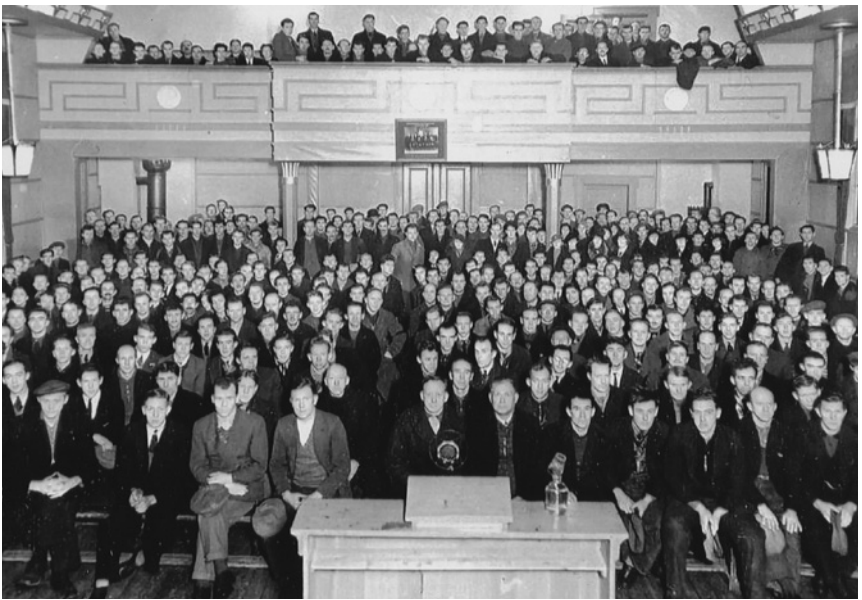


Fig. 13. Strike meeting at Folkets hus,
Lillestrøm, ca. 1920.



Fig. 14. Last enacted strike meeting
at Folkes hus, Lillestrøm, 2015.

Kammer

Kammer (Chamber) was a site-specific sound sculpture and a temporary monument to the hidden life stories of women who are never memorialised in public space. Curated by Natalie Hope O'Donnell as part of a series of commissions called “Munchmuseet on the Move” for the Munch Museum in Oslo, Norway, it was situated outside of the Munch Museum in Oslo East, open to the public day and night for three months from June 17 to September 17, 2017. It consisted of four directional speakers, two looped soundtracks, and a listening platform.

The platform was circular in shape, ten meters in diameter, and made of polished black concrete with inlaid glow stones. An entry path and ramp were cast into the sculpture along with three steps all around, each ten centimetres high, by which the listening platform was reached. The four directional speakers, mounted on poles, were set up equidistant from each other and were of a slim horizontal, rectangular shape. The speaker poles were built into the platform and painted black. The speakers played a looped soundtrack fifteen minutes in length. Each was comprised of ten personal life stories of women in the area. Divided into four parts in a bilingual sound space, two speakers played the stories in Norwegian, while on the other two speakers the stories were in English. Each section could accommodate four to six listeners. Together this soundscape created an imaginary chamber activated by listeners and observers (fig. 15).

The making of *Kammer* started at the Oslo City Archives where I located traces of narratives from the area around the Munch Museum. The archives preserve historically important documents of the City of Oslo with a mandate to make them available for future generations. Amongst these archives, hidden behind locked doors, I found a collection of protocols from the *Arkivet for utsatte* (Archive for the vulnerable), which triggered my imagination. This collection contains testimony from

interrogations undertaken from 1881 to 1910. I spent considerable time reading these (according to the usual procedure, one is able to check out just one at a time), sitting and reading the intricate and desperate stories of the people from Oslo East. Their words revealed the cruel reality of the time. Oslo East was already one of the poorest areas of the city and its citizens were confronted with incredible indignities by the authorities. This was especially true for women, who suffered tragic inequalities that often rendered a normal life impossible compared to men, who at times actually received support from the local government in Oslo East (fig. 16).

The fact that the protocols were handwritten in ink made the undertaking a very tactile and personal encounter. The interrogators' handwriting revealed so much of their contempt, distrust, and disrespect for their subjects—especially when they were women, because their questioning was carried out in greater detail and was intimate in nature inquiring about their sexual histories and relations. There were also codes written in colour pencil in the margins. As I deciphered them, I understood that they indicated the outcome of the different cases. To break the code, I simply searched for a woman with the same code in the citizen registry. Thus, I could continue to follow the journey of the woman. They all had the same unfortunate destiny: they were sent to mental institutions. The protocols were heartbreaking to read, and it is all too easy to draw parallels to many stories of the worst social services cases circulating in the media today (fig. 17).

Since the archive only contained written histories recorded by the authorities, which, thus, give only one side of the story, one version of history, these stories made me aware of the need to preserve oral history. I felt *Kammer* could share the stories and memories related by living individuals that are not found in archives and make the listeners reflect on stories of their own lives and stories told to them by others. By passing on memory and experience by word of mouth, oral history serves as primary evidence of our existence. It can guide us to a better understanding of who we were and who we are because memories fade and are lost if they are not shared with others. But oral history is becoming a lost art. So I thought that only through telling our stories, the stories of our time, could *Kammer* activate oral history as a contemporary mode of remembrance and forgetting in the public sphere.

INTERVIEWS

From earlier art projects in my art practice I had had the experience of undertaking interviews about people's life stories that evoke their personal narratives. I ask interviewees to tell their life stories in their own words and to recount events in the order they preferred. I do so without asking them too many direct and predetermined questions in order to avoid the risk of destroying the narrative and inadvertently directing the course of the interview. Thus, the question I have found most suitable to achieve this objective is simply *What is your story?* (fig. 18).

This became my method again for collecting the stories for *Kammer*. I wanted to represent a diverse range of stories. So after my initial findings in the archives, I first met with representatives from the different history groups in Oslo East. However, I soon realised that these groups did not have the approach to oral history that I had hoped for. Rather they focused on the use of buildings and the industry in the area rather than the stories of the people living and working there. I needed to meet more people though and the history groups were very helpful in introducing me to older members and friends. Over the following months I conducted about forty interviews with individuals who shared their stories and those of loved ones—stories from the areas they felt should be shared. Each meeting led me to the next, and in this way I was sure that I was meeting dedicated individuals who had stories they wanted to share.

This was a time of listening and being a witness. We are all storytellers and story keepers. We have to share our stories to keep oral history alive and sometimes the best way is to tell it to a stranger. Many of my meetings were extremely touching and emotional because many of the people shared life stories they had never told anyone before. This is a privileged situation, and I became a custodian of their stories. To honour this role, it became clear to me that their stories had to be retold, anonymously. The storytellers' own voices would be too revealing and easy to recognise. Thinking about how the stories could be retold, I reflected on my own experience as listener and started to think of how I could create a similar experience of attentive listening in public space. This is how *Kammer* became a sound sculpture.

Choosing which stories to use came quite naturally as I started putting them together. Here my collage practice helped build

a larger narrative. How much has to be told to tell a story? How much do we have to know to become part of a story? I experimented with different edits, interested in what could be opened up to enable listeners to use their own imagination, especially in regard to time and space. Eventually a whole life was edited down to between one and three minutes, yet this was enough to draw the listener into the narrator's world. In the end, the whole soundtrack of ten stories was about 15 minutes in length, in both Norwegian and English (fig. 19).

The stories were then re-recorded at Oslo National Academy of the Arts sound studios where I worked with professional actresses to compose the actual oral soundtrack for *Kammer*. This was undertaken on advice from Professor Kai Johansen from the Academy of Theatre at the National Academy of the Arts gave me in one of our conversations. With his guidance, I was able to reach out and secure the services of some of Norway's most prominent actors as well as a few master students from the Academy of Theatre. After listening to their voice reels, I decided which actor would be the narrator of each story. While we were working together to record the stories I had already witnessed once before, it was interesting to see how their personalities played into their roles as narrators.

Working in a sound studio made it possible to explore individual narrative voices without distraction and enabled me to really get into the sound of their voices. Each actress recorded one story in both Norwegian and English. I chose to work with actresses with a distinctive Norwegian accent in the narrator's voices to anchor them to a specific locality. Sound designer Olaf Stangeland recorded the sessions at the highest level of sound quality. Yet we only had a few sessions available so there was pressure to deliver the recordings within the given time frame. Moreover, it was extremely nerve-racking for me that everything happening in the studio was under the control of others.

Once the recordings were completed in the spring 2017, I chose to take them back to the storytellers to let them hear their narrators' voices. Listening to their stories retold was a powerful experience both for the original narrators, and me. And in the end the decision, from both sides, the interviewees and me, to keep the storytellers anonymous proved to be the right one.

Then we discover our own sounds and those of others directly and without environmental interference. This sense of “removal” from the environment may even seem a positive experience, similar to meditation.

Truax 1984:20

One of the challenges I set for myself in my research project was to explore new technology, not new in the world but new to my art practice with memorialisation. Having made the decision to make a sound sculpture, it was crucial to use the right equipment and assemble it so that it created the sound spaces I was imagining. This was a time of sketching and drawing out the different elements of the work and talking to specialists in the field of sound art to map out what equipment would be right to use for *Kammer*. This included speakers that would create a defined and intimate sound space and, thus, give the sense of an imaginary chamber. The speakers would have to be durable, waterproof, and able to portray the human voice untainted and in all its different emotions.

The directional speakers I chose led me to research a field called psychoacoustics, which is essentially the study of the perception of sound. The study of psychoacoustics dissects the listening experience and pertains to the perception of sound and the production of speech.

I had first experienced directional speakers at the Oslo airport when it opened in 1998. The artist Anna Karin Rynander's *Human in Motion* (1998) sited there consists of eleven sound showers in the departure and arrival halls. They each have their own soundscape that one experiences by entering a circular marking on the floor, which is part of the integrated floor's design. Mounted above is a dome-shaped speaker that focuses its sound field on the person in that space. Each sound shower is controlled by a computer program which includes a digital sound library—from sea waves and bird songs to positive words derived from and whispered by a Sami shaman, a polar explorer, and an IT guru. Hearing sound space emitted in real time creates a unique experience for each participant.

The effect is very powerful in an environment like an airport, and this artwork's non-intrusive sculptural form in a hectic environment intrigued me. Still, as I started to research potential speakers for *Kammer*, I knew that I wanted a more advanced system than

the ones used in the sound showers. The investigation led me to make a more in-depth inquiry about what speakers and equipment that would deal with the weather conditions and the sound environment on the chosen site. The speakers I decided to use for *Kammer* are specially made for small groups of listeners standing from one half meter to one meter away. The sound produced by the speakers in the listening area is always five times louder than it is only one meter away from the listening area. This effect on listeners is very apparent in an environment in which background noise is present, like at the museum site, and less apparent in a quieter environment. People perceive sound volume very differently. The background noise provides the listener with a reference point for other sounds heard. When a directional speaker is used, the listener adjusts their perception of a sound to its loudness relative to the reference sound. In a quieter environment, the listener's perception of loudness is actually "turned up" for softer sounds and "turned down" for louder sounds. This works this way because the listener remains stationary while listening. The sound environment stays constant while the listener is exposed the sounds both inside and outside of the loudspeakers' environment. To create the best sound-confining effect for *Kammer* in its environment, we had to adjust the volume of the directional speaker to a comfortable level, just above the level of ambient sound.

The sound designer Stangeland programmed the recordings onsite to complete the sound environment for *Kammer*. Finding the right sound level was a challenge as the noise level at the site changed depending on whether it was day or night. During the exhibition, weather conditions also turned out to have a big impact on the listening experience. It was something that could not be controlled and the sound levels had to be altered many times throughout the duration of the piece.

What made directional speakers the right choice for *Kammer*, a work placed in public space, was their non-intrusive nature. I am interested in continuing to work with directional speaker technology in future projects that work with sound.

FIELD RECORDINGS

Documenting a sound sculpture presents challenges. One has to consider alternative methods of documenting and archiving

temporary artworks. The head of the Artistic Research and Fellowship Programme Trond Lossius advised me to contact NOTAM in Oslo to help me record the work *in situ*. NOTAM is a centre for the development and innovative use of technology in music and the arts. It is a resource for artists who work with sound as an artistic tool and their focus is on sharing their knowledge and expertise.

Notam's sound engineer and producer Cato Langnes recorded a series of ambisonic field recordings of the work. He met me at the site and showed me how he made the ambisonic field recordings. Ambisonics is a full-sphere, surround sound format. It is a method of recording and reproducing audio in a full 360-degree area. This was the recording format used in documenting the sound of *Kammer*. This recording is more suited as documentation of the work because the studio recordings alone do not contain all of the work. The narrative soundtracks together with the site-specific sound environment fully reflect *Kammer's* sound experience. The recordings also have a great potential to provide material for a further exploration that will take place at a later date.

Kammer was situated outside the Munch Museum on the end corner of the museum grounds at the corner of a road crossing. One road is a drive that leads to the museum entrance and the other is a public road. This was an accessible and secure site, and since it is on the museum property, it was under guard day and night.

The ground on the site was sloping and rather steep, so when the exact placement was set, it had to be levelled by the landscape company hired to build the sound sculpture. The exact placement of the work was a long process. I had to take time to listen to the site to know how the different locations changed the sound environment (fig. 20–21).

IMAGINARY CHAMBER

As the project progressed, the sculptural material structure of *Kammer* took a few forms before it took on its final form outside the Munch Museum. In the very beginning, when I wrote my proposal for the work, I imagined it would take a form of a pavilion—a structure that the audience could enter.

At an early stage of my research in the Oslo City Archive and the digital archives, I came across series of photographs of women whose faces were blurred. There was a technical explanation for this—cameras at the time required a person to sit perfectly still, but these women had moved. I found that these photographs had a ghostly presence. At first, I wanted to use them in the work, like a kind of slideshow of photos of faceless women reflecting the ever-challenging gender inequalities in public sphere (fig. 22).

Consequently, I started researching forms of visual display and came across stereography. Stereoscopic display was an invention of physicist August Fuhrmann and met the demands of 19th century audiences. This took me next to The Märkisches Museum in Berlin where I experienced a *Kaiserpanorama*, a stereoscopic display that was a forerunner to cinema. The *Kaiserpanorama* (fig. 23) has several viewing stations that provide constantly rotating glimpses of photographs, whose vivid, 3D depth and lifelike detail still astonish. This was a rare viewing experience since very few have survived intact. I also found that these kinds of machines were on permanent display at Tivoli's in Oslo as late as the 1930s. Ultimately, however, I decided not to pursue a photographic approach with *Kammer* as it felt too distracting. Nevertheless, I would like to develop this idea further because I am very intrigued by the idea of building a contemporary *Kaiserpanorama* in public space.

THE GLOW STONES

How to engage with the participating public at night time was one of the questions I encountered during the making of *Kammer*. Although the sound sculpture was located close to streetlights, 30 kilos of glow stones were the answer to my need to light the piece. Glow stones are powered by any light source and create a glow that lasts for hours depending on the intensity of daylight that charged the stones. I had first encountered them used in powdered form on the surface of *OTRO*, a work by the artist Koo Jeong, commissioned in 2012 by the Liverpool Biennial. This permanent sculpture is a fully functional wheel park, open day and night to skaters and BMX bikers.

In *Kammer* I embedded these blue glow stones across the surface of the polished concrete platform. They made it glimmer

and come alive at night. It was extremely satisfying that after the long process of being placed by hand on the final layer of concrete and being relentlessly polished, the stones actually did glow quite visibly in the dark. The effect reminded the curator of a natural phenomena, “*mareel morild*,” that takes place in summertime at the seashore not far from the *Kammer* site. It is a phenomenon that has been neither rigorously documented nor thoroughly explained (fig. 24–25).

THE BUILDING PROCESS

The construction of *Kammer* took several weeks. Its foundation is made out of a 10 meter wide platform of three layers that formed three circular steps to the listening platform. The inner core of the platform is made from styrofoam covered with a reinforcing bar to carry the weight of the outer layers of concrete. The concrete was made onsite with black pigment mixed in to give it the patina intended. The shape was achieved by means of a process very similar to any concrete sculpture. A mould was constructed out of wood and filled with concrete. Each layer required a few days to dry before the next mould could be constructed and filled.

After the whole sculpture had dried and the mould was removed, the time-intensive process of polishing the platform began. It took several weeks to finish. Finally, only a few days before the opening, grass was laid to settle around the sound sculpture. Then the pathway up to the ramp was laid. The stones for the path were Norwegian granite and fit the entranceway perfectly.

Hanging the speakers was done in collaboration with the Munch Museum’s own technicians. Unfortunately, the speaker brackets did not work at the angle required, so I had to design and make new brackets in just a few hours’ time. Luckily, the design worked perfectly and held the speakers in place for the entire exhibition period. Installing the sound system then proceeded smoothly as the technicians laid the power and sound cables along the twenty meter stretch from the museum’s control room to the sound sculpture and into the speaker poles.

The final task was painting the speaker poles black so that they would blend in with the platform and speakers, and create the silhouette of the sound sculpture that I knew so well in my mind from my drawings and models.

It was when the work was complete, all the fences and building material removed, and the site that I could really see *Kammer* in operation, rested in its surroundings as a sound sculpture as intended. Visible and invisible at the same time, unintrusive and at the same time very present. All the parts came together: the site, the soundtrack, and the structure. It came alive when a listener was present within the work.

THE EXHIBITION

Kammer was activated the moment I could watch someone else walk up and listen for the first time. When I saw the first handful of people standing there listening to the piece, forgetting their surroundings, totally immersed in the stories, I saw them becoming the monument. It was then that I knew I had fulfilled my own expectations of the work.

The exhibition period for *Kammer* was set for three months, summer and part of autumn 2017. Listeners from all walks of life entered the work and were exposed to the voices and to themselves. Because the work was accessible day and night, I would often find people listening at all hours when I visited the work. Some even became regulars and they told me that the work felt different every time. Others brought friends and colleagues to experience it.

I had the opportunity to do tours of the work in which I explained my method and research. It was very rewarding and gave me the opportunity to learn about other people's experience of my work. I found it rather intriguing in this respect, that people who have little experience with art were able to relate to the work without any explanation. It also confirmed my thoughts that sound can be a very powerful tool for reaching a wide audience when working with memorialisation and participation in public space.

I spent a lot of time with the work *in situ*. Observing listeners, it also became clear that the work had new sides to it that I had not anticipated. It created a series of experiences, for the listener but also for the passing public who observed the listener.

Mechtild Widrich's dissertation *Performative Monuments: The Rematerialisation of Public Art* (2014) was, in many ways, my entry into to my *The Participatory Monument*. It made me question the potential of the performative in regards to advancing the potential of contemporary monuments in public spaces. This

is how I realized that *Kammer* was a participatory monument rather than a performative one. This was an important discovery in my research that gave me a clearer insight to my art making process and made me rewrite my abstract as it had completely changed my contextualisation of my research (fig. 26).

THE SEMINAR

The week before the work was taken down the curator Natalie Hope O' Donnell invited the public to a seminar to present the publication on the work. The seminar, entitled "*Memorialization, Collaboration, and Creative Chaos*," was part of a series called "Munchmuseet on the Move" and it opened up a dialogue that reflected on the human dimensions of art that connect us with stories forgotten or previously hidden. O'Donnell moderated the event, while Mary Jane Jacob and I discussed *Kammer*, using examples from our practices. The audience took part in the conversation discussing the potential of participatory engagement in art practice in public space. For me this was a rewarding situation because I was able to discuss some of the aspects that *Kammer* had revealed to me during the process of making it with a broad range of people. These questions mainly revolved around ethical processes of artists and their collaborators when working on participatory art projects.

CONCLUSION

Kammer brought out hidden stories of marginalized voices that had never before been memorialized in public space. It was made with the intent of retrieving and making restitution to women previously "lost" to history. The making of *Kammer* confronted me with a set of very specific questions: What materializes when personal and collective memories collide? Who are the guardians of the city as an archive? Which of our memories are the ones worth keeping? If we could erase the most painful ones, should we? Before I was able to find answers, I had to find a key question to help the public find a way to enter the work. It turned out to be a very intimate question with no short answer: What is your story? *Kammer* was and still is an imaginary chamber, activated by storytellers and listeners–witnesses in time.

Through the act of listening, I was able with *Kammer* to realize my desire to create an inseparable bond between remembrance and forgetting. I think artworks can encourage us to share and reflect upon our memories and past experiences. Sharing how we perceive moments in time can be inspiring and deepen our conversations, which, in return, build relations, empathy, and a greater understanding of our personal and collective identities. We all remember and memorialize differently and our interpretations of our memories add to the richness of our culture and transcend our differences. Making art is a powerful way to contextualize memories and express them to others. Through listening to another person's stories, those stories become part of our consciousness. The work was seen as an empowering work of art because it made listeners reflect on their own stories and connected them with specific memories in their own lives.

Working with memory is difficult. It is hard and it makes you very vulnerable at the same time because it is emotional. Working with memory-bearing art in public space is a demanding process. Recounting stories that reflect all of us is a shared responsibility, to create awareness of representation and, at times, its absence in public space. So *Kammer* was not built alone—every person I met during its making contributed to it. It was an incredibly powerful and privileged experience to have others confide in me as I carry these fragments of their stories forward so that everyone can hear them. In our lifetime, we experience countless monuments, keepsakes—all of which are work in honour of memory.

For me, *Kammer* is a reminder that memorialisation is a shared responsibility, and that it is crucial that we explore new ways of memorialisation. We are all storytellers, narrators, and witnesses in time. Together we can create a common room, a *chamber*.



Fig. 15. *Kammer* outside the Munch Museum, 2017.

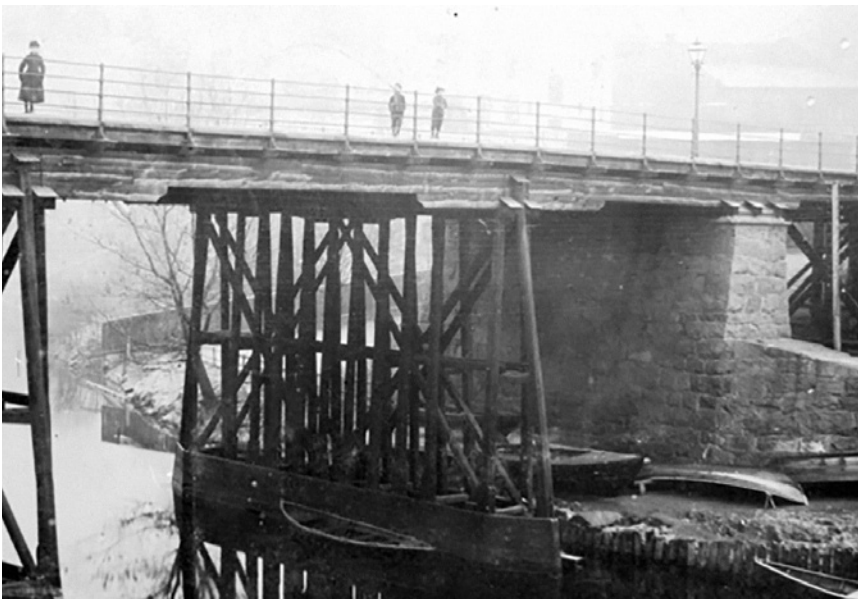


Fig. 16. Woman on a bridge
over Akerselva.

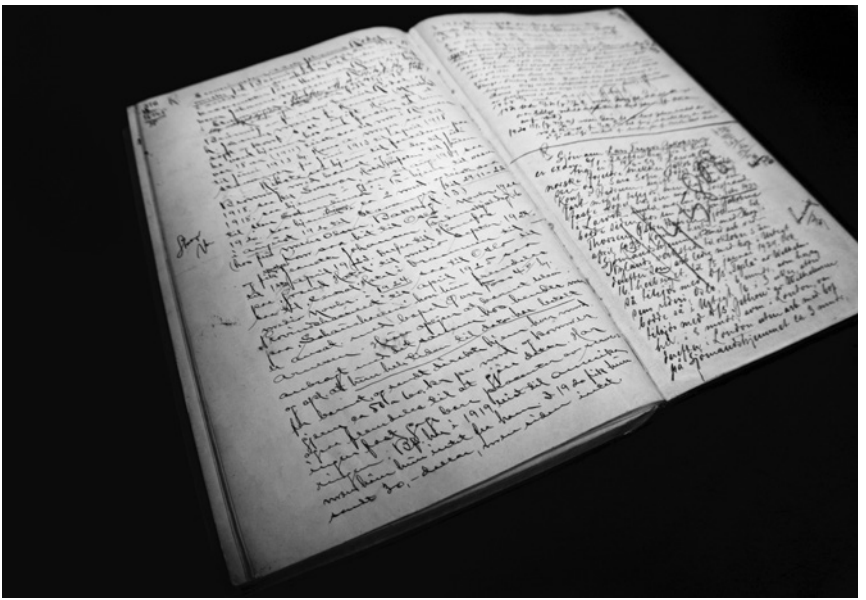


Fig. 17. Protocol from Arkivet for utsatte (Archive for the vulnerable) at Oslo City Archives.



Fig. 18. Merete Røstad with her Archive bike used to collect stories in Oslo East.



Fig. 19. Recording of soundtrack for *Kammer*. Here with actor Trine Wiggen.



Fig. 20. Site of *Kammer* outside the Munch Museum, summer 2017.



Fig. 21. Site outside the Munch Museum, winter 2016.



Fig. 22. Woman with child, with her face blurred out.

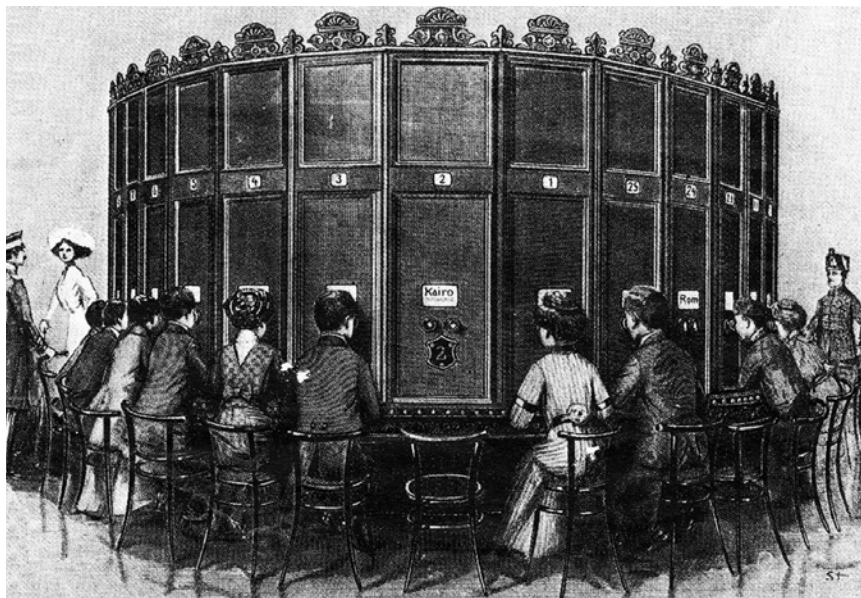


Fig. 23. Kaiserpanorama.

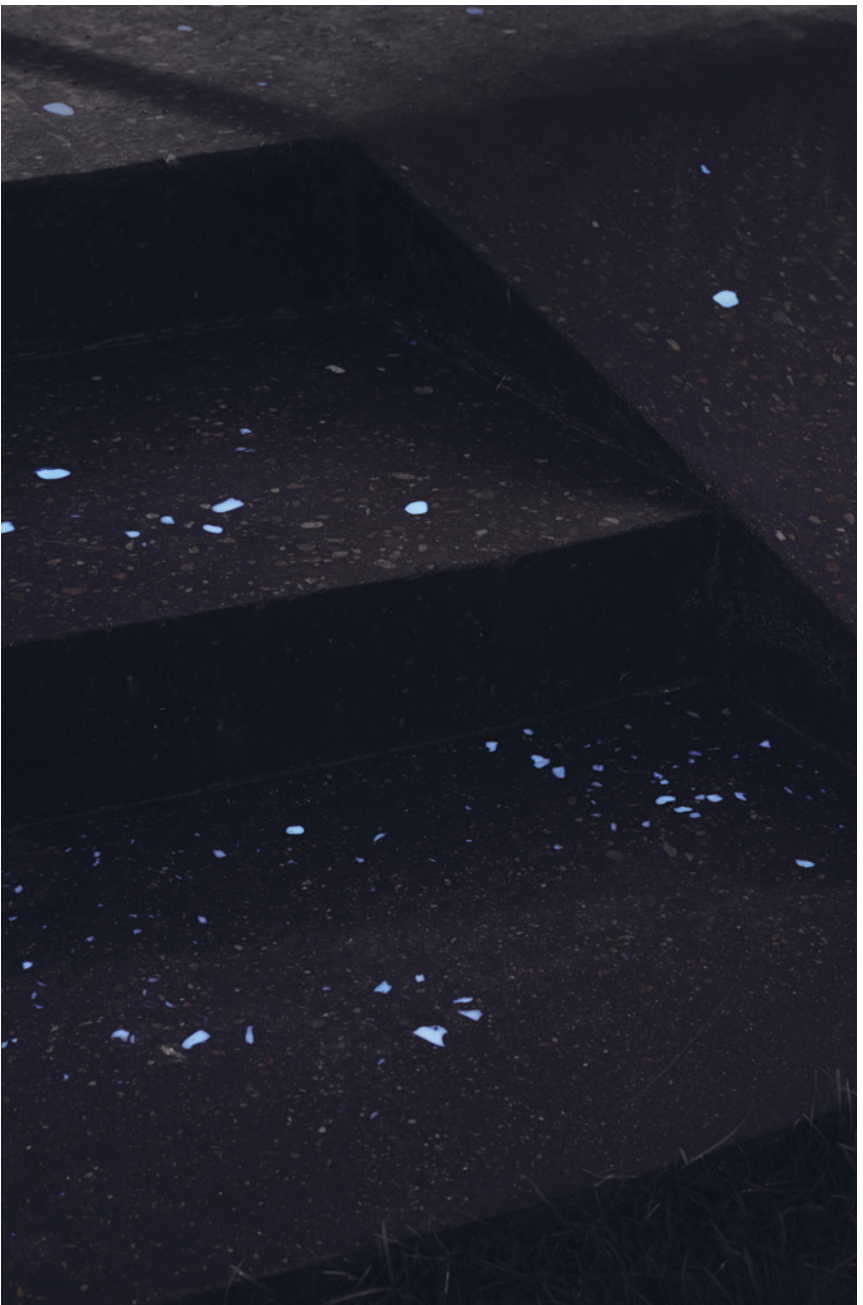


Fig. 24. *Kammer* at night with the glowing stones.



Fig. 25. *Kammer* at night.



Fig. 26. Listener at *Kammer* outside the Munch Museum.



Fig. 27. Listeners at *Kammer* outside the Munch Museum.

Høring

Høring (hearing) is a one-day public hearing on the participatory monument. The event will present insights into my temporary artworks *Folkets Hus* (2015) and *Kammer* (2017). Because these works have already taken place, I felt that any re-representation of them or presentation of their documentation would fail to recreate the experience of having actually participated in the artworks. Instead, *Høring*, enacted by witnesses who have had direct experience of these art projects as participants, is an attempt to contend with the projects' meaning.

How should we deal with absent artworks and simultaneously leave them open for future interpretation and narratives? Can *Høring* serve as evidence of participatory monuments and how they enable collective memory to come to light?

The aim of this event is also to reveal the complex ethical and philosophical issues that surround participatory public art works projects and to encourage the public to form an opinion, that is, to determine their own position on these subjects. The basis for the argumentation will be the case of my two art projects—*Folkets Hus* and *Kammer*. They will serve as evidence that participatory monuments exist and of how such monuments enable collective memory to come to light.

Høring is part of a larger contemporary conversation on public art and commemorative art making, which explores new modes of remembering and forgetting in the public sphere. It will take place at Domus Academica, Karl Johans gate 47, Oslo, Norway, on September 7th at 9–12 pm. I will be its host.

It is inspired by art projects like the “performative installation” series *The Milieu of the Dead* (2010- ongoing) by *Mobile Academy Berlin*.

“What you cannot see, you can talk about. What you cannot know, you should definitely talk about. Narrating,

fabulating and hallucinating in all appropriate ambiguity: that's the way to maintain relationships with things and beings that are not present.”

The Milieu of the Dead 2010

Since I am writing my reflection in advance of the public hearing, these texts will outline only my intentions, choices, and beliefs in the project and all the participants who will be involved. In my practice and my approach, in many ways, *Høring* is a method of presenting research to the wider public. I have to say that observation and site are vital. My work often starts with an observation, a story, or a question. From there, I start mapping the matter at hand, trying to find what is important to focus on: the art projects, the participating public, and the sites where the works took place.

Mary Jane Jacob suggests following these steps when preparing an exhibition (2013:36):

- 1) Locate the reason why you are doing an exhibition, the aim
- 2) Let art lead to you
- 3) Have partners in the exploration
- 4) Imagine opportunities
- 5) Openly venture ideas
- 6) Listen to artists
- 7) Listen to audiences
- 8) Care about the process
- 9) Trust the process
- 10) Trust that art will make things happen

When I was just beginning the work on my artistic research fellowship, I was on a study trip together with the Master's programme *Art and Public Space* to Paris. My supervisor Olga Schmedling arranged an afternoon with Daniel Buren during which he talked about his knowledge and experience. Questioning his own process in response to exhibitions and projects in public space, Buren explained how he always examines a site's structure, architecture, and the layout of rooms, exits, hallways, staircases, and windows. He also said he considers the more abstract aspects of a given space: the network of social, economic, and political forces at play in a given context. Because his

work considers this constellation of variables, each work is specific to the site it inhabits. From their very conception, his works are closely related to settings that represent the scenarios of everyday life. They are meant for and exist through direct interaction, eliciting the viewer's sensibility, intelligence, and reflections. Little did I know then that I would initiate, plan, and orchestrate my presentation of the research in collaboration with others. Buren's recorded words were an encouragement when I started preparing for my presentation of my artistic results.

The concept behind *Høring* started to develop during the last year of my artistic research fellowship. Conversations with the artist Simon Pope on his public defence of his thesis *Who Else Takes Part?* (2015) made it clear to me that a white cube exhibition would not be the right format in which to present my artistic results. It became obvious to me that the presentation should be an *in situ* experience. *In situ* is the term Buren uses to describe the relationship between his work and the sites where they take place.

The participants should come close to being part of my artwork through reflection. Since my artworks for the doctorate are temporary in format and no longer exist as sites, it became interesting to find a site that could incorporate the core of my thesis work—participatory monument, public sphere, and collective memory. Therefore, I made a decision to make an “exhibition” of reflection through listening. Listening to the participants in *Folkets Hus* and *Kammer* and witnessing their experience.

John Dewey wrote, “We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience.” (1933:78). *Høring* started to take shape as I looked at different formats that public hearings have—their setting and their formal or informal approaches to the topic at hand. I decided early on that the participants should have different positions from both inside and outside contemporary art. This was necessary to clarify and emphasize my own position in my work, namely that all participants are equal in the experience of art making. *Høring* proposes the concept of the gesture as a way of theorizing practice, situating it between theory and practice, as both individual and collective memory.

Many artists have used public hearings as a format over the past decade in contemporary art, often with an agenda, such as uncovering a political, historical, or ethical truth, To mention just a few: Lene Bergs *Gompen og andre beretninger om overvåking*

i Norge 1948–1989 (2014), who created a re-enactment of a hearing that dealt with surveillance in Norwegian society during the Cold War; and Hanna Hurzig's *Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-Knowledge*, a temporary production and showroom in which various narrative formats of knowledge mediation are tried and presented in different formats and on different sites. I should also mention the conference *Participation on Trial in Amsterdam* in 2014 that questioned participatory art and took the form of an re-enacted court case. All these examples of contemporary practice have one thing in common—exploring by taking risk. All three works have a live element that provides an opening for something unknown—a risk. This unknown in the form of risk is something I also want to explore in *Høring*. Risk creates an opening for urgency in practice and provides an opportunity to address current modes of discourse *in situ*. This is my intent although I am aware that there is no certainty that it will work out on the day of the hearing.

ARTIST—CURATOR

The subject of an exhibition tends more and more to be not so much the exhibition of works of art, as the exhibition of the exhibition as a work of art.

Buren 2013:19

This gets into the discourse on the artist as curator. My practice has always been multifaceted. Its roles are fluid, moving between the roles of artist, curator, and educator. The artist-curator explores the various notions that the exhibition as a subject carries just as much weight as the work of art as a subject. This hypothesis is certainly true in the case of the artist as curator. I believe that the artist-curator makes a different *conscious* contribution to the practice of traditional curators and exhibition-makers because their work uses artistic strategies, which are opposed to a purely academic or curatorial methodology. As an artist-curator, I see curatorial practice as an extension of art practice. The implication is that artist-curators encourage a break with the conventions or rules of the institution that has invited them to create an exhibition. Thus, the artist can choose to disregard academic

quality as defined by traditional curatorial practice. For me, curating and art production are not separate activities. Rather, my artistic production includes both my artwork and the projects I have curated. In the case of *Høring*, it became crucial for me to establish a network of collaborators so that the logic of the presentation of my artistic results would involve not only me and the institutions involved but would open up a larger conversation through the participation of individuals that have been taking part throughout the process. Each decision made was carried out in steps to encourage a transparent process. It demanded collaboration on every level.

THE STORY

Stories have always fixed what is broken in us, restored our empathy, hope and presence. Behind the lies of history there are tales that tell a deeper truth. We may not change—we are just human after all. But I need to believe that we can change, evolve through conscious choices. That's where one finds transformation. The story looks back and identifies even more than we do, who we are and what we are. To be exact, it begins in the presence of conciseness. By consciousness, I mean a particular state of awareness—piercing, adjusted, and persistent, yet also porous and exposed. This quality of presence, although it may not be easy to put into words, is instantly recognizable. The experience of consciousness may be physical—a simple, unexpected sensation between yourself and everything else. It may come in form of an action. Beuys said, “At the moment, art is taught as a special field which demands the production of documents in the form of artworks. Whereas I advocate an aesthetic involvement from science, from economics, from politics, from religion—every sphere of human activity. Even the act of peeling a potato can be a work of art if it is a conscious act” (Beuys 1990:87).

Within every action is felt an awakening, a state of mind as time slows down and extends, and a person's every movement and decision seem to play a part in presence. Consciousness can also be positioned into objects—it moves from a work of art to sounds, words, and ideas. In the intensity of concentration, the sphere and the self begin to cohere. With that state comes a manifestation of what may be known, what may be felt, what may be

done. Consciousness arises out of processes deep within the body that are projected, by means of creative acts, onto the external world where they can then be internalized into awareness.

PARTICIPANTS

Høring is a public event. Anyone can attend. Because this event is intended to present my findings to a wider audience, I have chosen to give names to the different participants, i.e. witness, expert, and jury. Participants will be able to ask and answer questions. The witnesses are individuals who experienced or observed my art projects *Folkets Hus* or *Kammer*. The experts have a double role because they have both experienced the work but are also able to provide a contextual framework for the work through their professional expertise. The audience is what I call the jury, because when they will leave *Høring* they will be able to form an opinion on the potential of the participatory monument.

SITE

The choice of location of *Høring* was the result of a complex process of deciding on a site that included the elements of my method and research. It had to meet a set of criteria in order to be relevant to the event. It had to be a site that would stage the participatory monument in the public sphere and be a site that was rooted in collective memory discourse. The site should be at a central location in Oslo, close to public transport, and set inside a triangle in political and social history. My first choice was the National Library's main reading room. I can remember my heart started beating when I was introduced to *Gamle fest-sal* in *Urbyggingen* at Domus Academica in the city of Oslo by Lossius. When I first had my location viewing together with the University of Oslo's curator Ulla Uberg, my intuition told me that I had found my site. It fulfilled all my requirements for *Høring*.

The *Storting* is the Norwegian Parliament. It is the arena for political debate and decision-making in Norway. Between 1854 and 1866, the *Storting* met in the *Gamle festal* until its parliamentary building was ready to use. The building has been used for many different purposes in its lifetime. As I delved deeper into the history of the building, I found many stories about the

site that showed it to be fundamental to the cultural history and nation-building in Norway. On a darker note, the *Gamle festsal* was used also by Vidkun Quisling (1887–1945), a military officer and politician who was the nominal head of government of Norway during the German occupation in the World War II. I found many accounts in the archives that described how he held his *førerting* (leader council) there. But there were also stories documenting the Norwegian women's union and their first Nordic meeting in 1902, where none other than Fredrikke Marie Qvam was chairperson. Qvam is known as a humanitarian leader, feminist, and liberal politician. She served as President of the Norwegian Association for Women's Rights from 1899 to 1903 and is widely regarded as one of the most influential and successful political lobbyists of her time. The journal *Samtiden* described her as the 'Queen of the corridors' in 1915 (fig. 28). Other stories also triggered my imagination, like the clock that faces the Karl Johan Gate which is the clock that Henrik Ibsen, Norwegian playwright, poet and one of the founders of Modernism in the theatre, used to set his watch to every day for many years. The *Gamle festsal* itself was designed by Henrik Ibsen's set designer. Due to financial restrictions during the building, they used faux materials for the interior decorations in the *Gamle festsal*. As it stands today, the room still has the same scenic elements that would have been used in the National Theatre for the construction of sets. The National Theatre is across the street from the *Urbygningen*. Throughout its lifetime it has been *seen* as a national building. And within its halls thousands of *hearings* and *viva voce* arguments have taken place. The site has been a witness to the complexities of remembrance and forgetting over its entire lifetime. Therefore, for me, it is a fitting place to recall the works made during my artistic research.

The purpose of *Høring* comprises trains of thought, as I like to call them, that always originate in concrete life experiences in our present time. In *Høring*, I am asking the audience to listen and not just hear what can not be revealed to them. This not only makes it possible to open up new adaptations of the presentation of documentation but also serves as my example of how we are witnesses in public sphere, of how experience is a way of being present, and how we become part of the transformative power of collective memory through the retelling of our experience.

Even though I have laid out the framework by inviting witnesses, they will tell their own stories of the experience of *Folkets Hus* and *Kammer*. The outcome is not certain, and I will not go into detail about the work that took place in the planning because it is just as detailed as my other projects. The difference is that here the only institutional backing is financial. So I have had to involve more people to realize the event. It involves great risk, but with great risk as a single event to speak for three years of intense labour-intensive artistic research. Hopefully, the listeners at the *Høring* is challenged by my research and the ideas presented. And that *Høring* is adding to the field of participatory and socially-engaged arts as it continue to develop in the future. As I submit this reflection the planning and process of *Høring* and *Archive* is still ongoing. The archive is an addition to *Høring* where the public is invited to explore the documentation of the research undertaken. *Archive* (fig. 43–44) will be presented at The National Academy of the Arts after the *Høring* (fig. 29–42).



Fig. 28. Fredrikke Marie Quam speaking
in gamle festsal, Domus academica, 1902.



Fig. 29. Høring preparation.



Fig. 30. Technical run of Høring in the morning before the event.



Fig. 31. Program of Høring.



Fig. 32. Rikke Kommisar and Monica Holmen, witnesses of Folkets Hus.



Fig. 33. Registration of Høring participants and audience, by artist assistant Marie Skeie and Archive archivist Amina Sahan.



Fig. 34. The audience welcomed by event coordinator Ingebjørg Torgersen. Simultan translator Elisabeth Styren Undall seen on the right in the translator box.



Fig. 35. The row of witnesses from Kammer and Folkets Hus.



Fig. 36. Nora Ceciliedatter Nerdrum, witness of Kammer.



Fig. 37. Listening audience.



Fig. 38. Introduction by artist
Merete Røstad



Fig. 39. Marius Grønning, witness of Kammer.



Fig. 40. Frank Meyer, witness of Fokets Hus.



Fig. 41. Ellen Ulvin, witness of Folkets Hus.

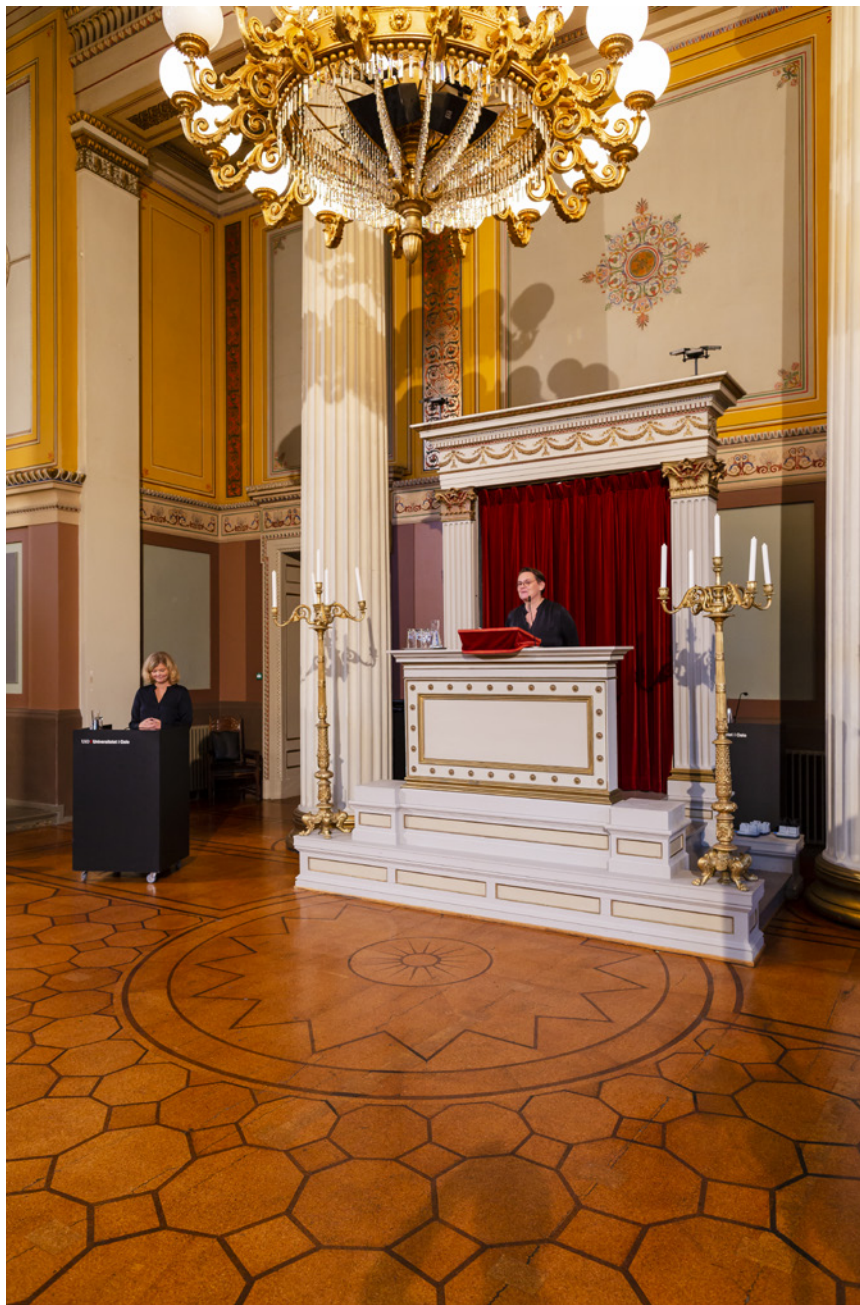


Fig. 42. From left: mediator Hege Stensrud Høsøien and Hilde Ghosh Maisey, witness of Folkets Hus.



Fig. 43. Archive with furniture and objects and materials from Folkets hus and Kammer.



Fig. 44. Archive detail. Golden fire, Rosa Luxemburg poster and 3D printed model of Folkets hus.

Concluding Thoughts—The Participatory Monument

My research into remembrance and forgetting in public sphere has challenged my own understanding of art and memory as well as that of my participants and collaborators. I have found that art making and thinking about art making is itself an approach to research. It is the lens through which thinking occurs. Put another way, my art making outlines the way in which practice based artistic research can be undertaken. Consequently, my investigation into remembrance and forgetting in the public sphere has been based on making two new art projects—*Folkets Hus* and *Kammer*—which explored the potential of the performative monument and led me to discover and define the term “participatory monument.” I have set out the following points to clarify this idea. The participatory monument:

- × Brings the public into the work, engaging them as participants through interaction with remembrance and forgetting.
- × Can include anyone interested and willing as a participant.
- × Activates memory and contributes to forming collective memory through participation.
- × Is not based on a scripted dialogue and does not direct participants’ behavior or movement.
- × Includes participants as witnesses, observers, and contributors.
- × Has a framework that is temporary and time-limited in nature focused on critical material and a social situation in the present time.
- × Is not defined by or limited to particular media, materials, or technology.
- × Gives the artist a role in creating a situation, place, or event that open up an exchange between the narrative material in the work and the participants.
- × Requires the artist to be present in the making of the work and to be available at every stage of the process.

I consider both *Folkets Hus* and *Kammer* to be participatory monuments and have used them as exemplars throughout this reflection. Furthermore, my own insight into and, therefore, use of the term of participatory monument marked a *breakthrough* for me, because it revealed several key elements that I find integral to my practice as an artist. These may also serve others working in the field of participatory and socially-engaged art in the future.

First, the participatory monument only becomes activated through public participation. This is my experience with my participatory monuments, both *Folkets Hus* and *Kammer*, as well as Høring and *ARCHIVE*, and in this last instance this is true whether taking viewing *ARCHIVE* or visiting on the website. In each work, they exist only in participation. Moreover, a participatory monument can be present in both public space and sphere, depending on the form of engagement because the artwork only becomes activated through public participation. Participants are the carriers of collective memory and activate the public space or public sphere through the sharing of their art experience with others. In my opinion, this demonstrates how the participatory monument empowers its participants. The participants' presence makes the experience of the artworks actual, thus activating them and demonstrating how art can be part of the discourse on remembrance and forgetting in public sphere.

Secondly, because participatory and socially-engaged art bring the public into the art making by expanding art making to include trans-disciplinary inquiry and collaboration, what I term a participatory monument must also incorporate ethical processes into the methodology and framework of art making. Participants must each be treated with due ethical consideration, and transparency is a crucial corollary for working with remembrance and forgetting. This is how I engage with them personally, developing a shared understanding as to how the information they provide will be used, and confidentiality is a key consideration when working with the public. Participant consent must be obtained before their contribution is presented. They have the right to terminate their participation at any time. Thus, it is essential to make clear the conditions and to get agreements at each level about the material gathered through the collaboration and to discuss how their participation will be presented. It is a contract the artist must honour when working with collective memory and oral history.

And importantly, in turn, the direction I take with my work is informed by what I learn from exchanges with participants.

To enact this contract requires active listening. So, thirdly, I have found that such acts of listening require patience and tolerance. It must be an open exchange between the artist and participant that allows for difference to be embraced and consciousness to grow. Listening is a form of embodied translation of language.

Finally, I have realized that memory can be imagined as a light reflected through a prism, reflecting parts of history, but never the whole of it. As participatory monuments, *Kammer* and *Folkets Hus* are an attempt to use the “prism” as an attempt to understand remembrance and forgetting through art making. If we cannot remember the past, it is often said, we are condemned to repeat it. I believe that remembrance without gleaning greater understanding can also be destructive and condemn us. We still understand too little about the ways in which identity, gender, and class differences inform our collective consciousness. There remains a critical need for on-going inquiry into our cultural and post-colonial past through modes of remembrance and forgetting. We have yet to fully open up history beyond convention as told from more privileged positions and that, too, is to the detriment of others. By inviting participants into my artistic research I have learned that different ways of practising memorialisation open up like a prism to reflect light into the darkest corners of the archives and narratives of our shared histories.

While many artists in recent decades have addressed commemoration in public spaces, we must remain active, even vigilant, in rethinking the past, bringing more enlightened perspectives into not only academic discourse, but also daily life and our collective consciousness. I encourage further investigations into the field because I find there is an urgent need to redefine the artist’s role and position in this public discourse. As artists, our inner worlds and reflections are translated into artworks and meet the public through the experience of art. The participatory monument is my contribution to artists working in participatory and socially-engaged art, as well as to future participants in the public sphere.

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Merete Røstad, August 2018

Biography

Merete Røstad is a visual artist, lecturer, and curator whose projects are rooted in the examination of public life, collective memory, remembrance, and archives. Frequently engaging with communities and the public sphere, her process-based practice explores our everyday interactions with the histories inscribed in our surroundings and how we come to read the traces to be found there. During the course of her PhD study, Røstad initiated the projects *Folkets Hus* (2015), *Kammer* (2017) and *Høring* (2018). Each examines the social and political significance of a site as a starting point for thinking about collective memory of place and to activate alternative modes of memorialization in public sphere.

Røstad is currently undertaking a PhD in Artistic Research and is an Associate Professor in Art and Public Space (MFA) at the Department of Arts and Crafts in the Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHiO). Røstad holds an MFA in Public Art and New Artistic Strategies from Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, Germany and a BA from the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA), United Kingdom.

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as Art Practice in Public Sphere

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