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EX CENTRIC

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INTRODUCTION

ambitions and references

The goal of this project has been to study, discuss and develop my artistic method, defining its central tools. The production of five individual, context specific art works has served both as research method and case studies: “Saga night” (asphalt covering of a road at Maihaugen cultural heritage museum, Lillehammer), “Promesse de Bonheur” (refurbishing of the foyer of the former Academy in Oslo), “Waldgänger” (a log cabin inside the Hammerfest tax office), “Three months’ work” (a speech based on a period spent as a volunteer at the Red Cross), and “Mirage” (ten identical wells, one in Norway and nine in Malawi, still in production).

These five individual projects are also art works in their own right and can be seen independently from the research project as a whole. In this text I have chosen to refer to them as *interventions* to avoid confusion around the words *work* and *project*, as they both have several other meanings here.

Central notions have been “gift”, “participation” and “activation of blind zones”. Each intervention has consisted of a working period connected to a selected institution or production situation, followed by a concrete, functional intervention in what I perceive as a symbolically, politically and poetically charged space. Experiences gained from the interventions exemplify ways in which I can use the role of the artist as an artistic strategy in itself, and the consequences thereof when it comes to the production, reception and function of my work.

Ex-Centric continues a practice I have developed over the last 15 years, ever since I left the Academy. A central topic in my production has been investigations of the gaps between different value systems, particularly those between cultural capital and artistic value on the one side and financial capital and market economy on the other. My insights into economy are far from complete, but on researching it in its various forms over these years, I have felt a growing concern observing how the logic of financial capitalism increasingly permeates, shapes and dominates practically every aspect of our lives. The ongoing financial collapse and its consequences for society and the art field have made this feeling even more acute. I believe I share this feeling with very many as the growing market dominance of society is obviously one of the truly big challenges of our times. It is impossible not to feel overwhelmed when confronted with the opacity and shapeless ubiquity of financial capitalism. Against this backdrop the possibilities of gift economy

seemed relevant as an alternative to the dominating system. My ambition is that my interventions should contrast the feeling of powerlessness produced by financial capitalism and its implementations, present today far beyond its own institutions. But first of all I personally feel encouraged and comforted by the simple fact that it is possible to realise them. I see them as exceptions to the rule, almost like Brechtian interruptions. What I look for are shortcomings in the system, hidden possibilities, blind zones. Then I try to activate these overlooked potentialities through the introduction of new concrete, physical, often architectural elements. These elements both present a rupture with the original context, and a possible, realistic continuation of a slightly different interpretation of what is already there.

The underlying question of my role as an artist runs through the whole project. What kind of position should an artist occupy in society today, and how can art today be efficient, relevant and meaningful? I perceive this as an urgent question, maybe especially within the field of public art. Applied to my own practice, this question has been the real motivation for my research project, and it is one for which I have no clear answer. I feel ambivalent towards the discussions concerning art's autonomy, and this ambivalence is reflected in my work. To some extent it even becomes both its motive and its driving force. The very title of this project, *Ex-Centric*, plays on this ambivalence.

Participation is a central aspect of my work, and also one of my most important tools, but I still feel only partially at home within the so-called relational aesthetic. The use of the term 'participation' can maybe produce some confusion as within the art discourse it has somehow come to mean that the audience or other groups take part in the conception or production of the art work, in other words that they participate in what is traditionally conceived of as the artist's privilege. In my work the relation is the other way around, with me taking part in ordinary everyday production activities outside of the art field over a certain period of time. It has not been my ambition to produce new communities through the interventions in this project, but each intervention is born out of my taking part in already existing environments, almost like an anthropologist. Pierre Bourdieu's ideas of habitus and of representation of cultural, social and symbolic capital have been an inspiration to me in interpreting and organising my impressions from these environments. But as the selected environments are institutions and not individual homes, I have seen these representations not so much as an expression of the actual capital of the staff, but rather as a form of regulation or boundaries imposed by external authorities. To point out gaps, discrepancies or contradictions in these representations has therefore been important,

and I have thought of these as possible areas of renewed awareness, self definition and emancipation. Over time, participation in the daily activities of an institution enables the discovery of blind zones; forgotten or overlooked aspects of institutional practices, which have constituted the starting point for the concrete interventions. I have entered these contexts as what might be called a parallel worker; on one side I shared the duties and obligations of my colleagues, on the other side my reason for being there was always openly declared as different from theirs. Here I have also been inspired by the notion of the organic intellectual as described by Antonio Gramsci. The organic intellectual differs from the traditional intellectual in expressing the feelings, longings and ideas of a specific class or group. The organic intellectuals don't consider themselves separate from society as traditional intellectuals would do, but are produced 'organically' on all class levels from within these classes themselves. I feel related to this in the conviction that the traditionally elitist productions of intellectuals or, in my case, artists, are not necessarily originated and understood only within this elite, but can equally originate and function outside of their predefined arenas. But I differ from Gramsci's organic intellectual as my interest is more aesthetic and social than directed towards political class struggle. Although informed by the meetings with specific contexts and taking part in them over time, so partly identifying with them, I feel very strongly that I don't and can't represent interests of entire groups, only my own visions, ideas and experiences. My work expresses my visions and experiences, and is not intended to be directly representative of the experience of others. There is a friction between the context and me, and this friction is crucial as it serves as the starting point for each intervention. The process of identification is an important part of my work, and I try to render it as transparent as possible. But it is never complete as both I and everybody else in the situations I enter each identify with numerous interests and roles. In this respect I think there is a distance between my work and central relational artists such as for instance Rirkrit Tiravanija, with whom I share a common interest in generosity as an artistic tool. Tiravanija's shared meals in art contexts let relationships between the artist and the audience develop, turning art spaces into social spaces. The critique against his practice has been that it is based on a seamless identification between the artist and his audience, and that it downplays any actual conflict or tension in favour of networking and communication among insiders of the art world. It does not challenge the thresholds surrounding the art sphere, and the mixing of 'art' and 'life' is maybe only apparent.¹

¹ See Claire Bishop, *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*, October, 2004.

I have often presented the final result of my projects as gifts towards the receiving institution. A gift is never neutral. In this way, the power relation between me and the receiver is altered. This strategy is inspired by anthropological theories on gift economy, especially the writings of Georges Bataille and Marcel Mauss and his followers such as Chris Hann, Keith Hart and Alain Caillé among others. Ritual giving and receiving of gifts form a complex web of power relations, and can hold entire communities together establishing and performing their hierarchies. Gift economy is often (wrongly) considered more primitive than market economy, but despite the prevalence of the latter in our society, elements of gift economy are still practised in our culture. This makes it possible to use it as a strategy and a codex in my work, as people respond to it according to somewhat predictable patterns. The moment of donation is central, and I often perform a speech to mark the event. This has several functions: it lifts the moment of donation together with the gift out of the everyday context surrounding it, it tells the story about the project and the process behind it, and it contextualises the intervention both within the art field and as a functional room in the concrete situation where it is placed. The speech is also an important moment because it merges the different roles I have had during the production period into one figure.

During the participation phase of my work I collect sensorial impressions, many of them vague, personal, fleeting and nameless, but all of them based on a physical presence in the given environment. Francesco Berardi's argument that the increased subjectivation of our times makes necessary the recognition and a development of «a body, a social and a physical body, a socioeconomic body»² seems in line with this, and has been useful to me in reflecting on what I do. Chantal Mouffe's analysis on the challenges facing democratic politics today, and the need to develop a more complex, agonistic political sphere where conflicts and interests can be defined and represented in a more nuanced way has been an important guide in thinking through and defining the way I work and why. As with Gramsci, her interest is maybe more specifically political than mine, but the search for more complex and nuanced models of interests is still at the basis of my work. My looking for «blind spots» and overlooked narratives is an attempt to contrast an idea of society as built from repeated (and repeatable), simplified models as opposed to individual, always changing, situations and environments. The «blind zones» I look for and which constitute the starting point of my works are, simply put, what is lost in this simplification.

² <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/183>

Questioning, building down and highlighting hierarchical structures is an important issue in my work. This is in line with relational aesthetic's efforts towards democracy or 'change'. Some of these efforts have produced somewhat slippery positions where it would seem any relation is positive and any communication or network is democratic, just as any change is considered good. The general notion of change (as seen in Obama's electoral campaigns for instance) is but a blank canvas onto which any agenda can be projected. Therefore it is important to me that my works are not presented or envisioned as platforms for possible, potential change, but as specific changes actually and concretely taking place. The interventions are therefore not 'open works', they result in physical installations fitted to the environment in which they are placed, and as concrete as their surroundings. There is a final point to my process. When it comes to the form of this final result and how it works over time, I feel related to artists such as Robert Smithson, Gordon Matta-Clark and Lara Almarcegui. Smithson's concept of entropy is similar to how I think of my interventions as changing through everyday use over time until eventually they will be absorbed by their surroundings. In basing my work so much on what is already present in a given context, I also feel my interventions are related to his Passaic Monuments and Earthworks (maybe especially *Glue Pour* and *Asphalt Rundown*, both from 1969). This line of work somehow continues in Lara Almarcegui's big but subtle *Wasteland* interventions. Of course our topics differ, she mostly discusses issues related to urban development and concepts of nature whereas my concern is more sociological and linked to institutional and interpersonal structures, but I share with her an interest for highlighting and materialising the potential exception through the very use of the definition of something as art.

I feel related, even indebted, to Michael Asher, Hans Haacke and Andrea Fraser. The similarities are conceptual, formal and strategic, and justify the description of my work as part of the current of institutional critique. But whereas these artists all work almost exclusively within the art system, for me it has felt natural to move out of and beyond the boundaries of art's privileged spaces and structures. This is a consequence of my interest for questioning and discussing art's and the artists' position and meaning in society at large. My work has often been equally the result of an art practice as that of an ordinary working experience parallel to those of my non-artist colleagues. An obvious reference is Joseph Beuys' Social sculpture, and I also see my work as closely related to the feminist performance art of the 60s and 70s. Mierle Laderman Ukeles with her maintenance art, Adrian Piper's Funk Lessons, and Guerrilla Girls, just to mention some, have informed my practice ever since I started to work as an artist and are still relevant references. I have

always found their elaboration of identity, socio-cultural hierarchies and possibilities of emancipation inspiring.

Attempts to modify or expand the art scene take place in a marginal field but represent a long tradition. Rather than placing my work within limited categories such as relational art or institutional critique, I like to think of it first of all as part of this tradition.

ON THE GIFT AS ARTISTIC STRATEGY

A gift is not a simple gesture of exchange. It is rather the accumulation of honour through loss of material wealth. One of the main characteristics of gift economy is that of circulation of wealth, making it a dynamic and performative structure able to hold entire societies together. A gift is the opening of a relationship, and the definition of the roles and the power structure within it, with the giver positioning herself symbolically higher in the hierarchy than the receiver. One could even say that a gift is a challenge. Since the interest for hierarchies and how they are practiced is central to my work, giving gifts has been a natural strategy for me. Offering my work as a gift opens up existing hierarchies, enabling me to question them and propose a different, equally possible way of understanding the situation. It dissolves some of the conventions through which a situation is understood and described, so that a different order can be established. I use gifts as a form of Trojan horse; they enable me to penetrate structures I would otherwise probably be excluded from, and to be openly critical but still constructive enough not to be simply rejected. My gifts are sugared pills, and my ambition is for them to keep functioning long after I hand them over. A gift is a magic object, it is restless and symbolically attached to the giver, binding giver and receiver together until it is returned or passed on. To keep a gift instead of passing it on is to arrest its dynamic nature, it quits working and loses its characteristics as a carrier of dynamic relations when removed from circulation.

Despite the prevalence of market economy in our culture, elements of gift economy are still practised, both in structured situations such as Christmas, birthdays, weddings and more subtly during informal situations. Whether organised or not, the gift always opens and defines a dynamic relationship towards which both parties are committed. The fact that gift economy is a normal practice in our culture makes it possible to use it as an artistic tool. It also ensures a somewhat predictable reaction and response.

Hyde and Bataille both point out the relations between gift economy and art production. Whereas for Bataille art production is a result of the need, both of individuals and of society in general, of spending the surplus in the form of luxury or, more tragically, in the form of wars, for Hyde it is more a question of a positive circulation. The inspiration is 'given' to the artist, who then passes it on in the form of an artwork. For both it is clear that art production is part of a general economy embracing all human experience and activity, and that this system is much more complex than that of market economy and the model of mere exchange. It also seems interesting to me how being defined as a gift, just as

being defined as art, adds a special quality or vibration to an object, making it stand out from its surroundings. A gift is born out of a surplus, and by being expendable it leaves its giver glorious. The parallels to the role of the artist here seem very clear.

By offering my work as gifts, I am able to initiate a relation to the selected institution or situation. I don't have to wait for an invitation, but can set my own agenda. Artistically I find this freeing and empowering. Of course the institution can turn down my offer, in which case the project will not happen (I have never experienced this), but if the gift is accepted this also implies an acceptance of the power relation that is installed. Since the strategy of the gift is a question about power and positioning, I need to be careful about the way it hits. This is one of the reasons why the participation element is important in my work. To the workers in the office at Hammerfest or the staff at the Academy in Oslo, hopefully my interventions simply represent an improvement and an affirmation of their interests. To their leaders, the ones who define their functions and their rights, the interventions can be more of a stone in the shoe. It is important that the gift is offered to them, that they are the ones to accept it. In this way they are also the ones committed by it. The fact that I have functioned as one of the workers, the ones who will be using the structure in their everyday life, also means that the gift symbolically stems from them, and that the established hierarchies in the working situation are questioned or undermined. I don't make my gifts to create trouble or embarrassment, but to point out a possibility. The interventions become concretisations of a logic that is already present in the context. The fact that it is offered as a gift commits the receiver towards it and makes sure the statement is heard. As long as the gift is not returned, the intervention will work as an open, unanswered question. It creates a sort of symbolic void around the physical intervention resulting from the process.

In our culture we are still sensitive towards the latent humiliation always present in a gift, and critical voices have pointed out that there is something aggressive about my strategy. This may be true to the extent that I do occupy a space, and I do create a situation where my statement is heard and noticed. The receiver stays symbolically committed to me, and carries a symbolic debt after accepting the gift. There is also a responsibility with the fact that people, often not including me, will have to deal with my statement or intervention in their daily life after I finish my work.

I accept and carry this responsibility as a necessary part of the power I obtain through the practice of the gift. There is no power without responsibility, and I want my work to be seen and my voice to be heard. So rather than the term 'aggressive', I prefer the

term 'active'. The strategy allows me to act without waiting for an invitation and a definition from the outside. This is an effect of the structure implicit in gift economy: the giver is the one starting the process, and she receives power and honour by the loss of material wealth. Of course the receiver always has the possibility to not accept the gift I offer. If they do accept it, the relation between us will symbolically be open by mutual agreement.

Some have questioned whether my work may be considered anti social or neo liberalist in implying a sort of 'just do it-attitude' where the individual positions herself over that of the collective group. While I do understand the reason for this question, I still see it as a misunderstanding. To define personal initiative and the assumption of an active position as neo liberalist seems to me a very sad and weak position. I believe personal initiative to be a human faculty, something to be found within all societies and cultures, and not so much a question of political ideology. It has also been pointed out to me that my own political agenda may be hard to pinpoint in my work. This is a more complex question, and one I have given quite a lot of consideration. The gift is a powerful and effective tool, but in order for it to work it has to be subtle enough for the receiver to accept it. It cannot be too frontal or aggressive, otherwise it will not work even if it is accepted. So I always have to carefully balance the criticism against the attractiveness of the gift, and the nuances have to be finely tuned. Just like in a conversation a certain openness has to be there in order for the relation between me and the receiver, established by the gift, to be possible. This means my statements cannot be slogan-like accusations or frontal statements, but rather oblique suggestions of doubts concerning given orders. When my interventions work, they do so not because they are frontal aggressions to the receiver or illustrations of a specific political position, but because they are open enough for the receiver to identify with. It has to be possible for them to accept my position, and from there reach their own conclusions, which might even differ from my own. I find this logical as what I mostly oppose is the imposition of models and rules by external authorities; my gifts should represent a different approach as they are ultimately about emancipation.

Gift economy also in itself contrasts enormously and powerfully with the main order ruling the world and our lives today; that of financial capitalism. Practising gift economy as a central aspect to my work therefore seems to me a political statement in its own right. By existing, and by functioning in such a predictable way, they show how there are other alternatives to the political and financial order we live under today, and how this system fails to completely describe or control the world. Whereas financial capitalism, just

like capitalism in general, is an impersonal economy, gift economy is personal, based on circulation rather than accumulation.

The element of pride and honour is important in the gift. Directing my (actually quite modest) gifts upwards in the system feels a bit like David taking on Goliath. And since my economy, just like that of most artists, is rather limited, of course there is a certain grandeur to the gesture of the gift. This is admittedly only apparent as producing art in other ways is of course equally expensive and for most artists there is no guarantee of any response from the market, but still the fact that my work is presented as gifts makes them appear luxurious or extraordinary. This is the same effect as that produced by the traditional potlatches, where during gatherings the hosts compete in demonstrating their power through giving away goods, sometimes spiralling into uncontrolled destruction of wealth. The status of any family or individual is not determined by who possesses the most resources, but by who distributes the most resources. The institutions receiving my gifts of course all have infinitely more resources than I do, yet by offering them my work as gifts I position myself over them and can question their practices expecting to be heard.

But do the theories of gift economy apply to institutions? Can they feel and understand honour? An answer to this may be that an institution is made of people and the relations between them. It is the sum of these people and does not exist without them. In negotiating my work with the various institutions, I of course talk to persons, not abstract elements. The complexity of an institution makes it slower and heavier than a single individual, but in my experience it still reacts to and understands the logic of a gift. It may not be able to answer directly as internal responsibility can be a question of complicated relations leading to decisional slowness and lack of a clear voice, but the reactions of the individuals inside of it will make sure it is affected. Another aspect is the fact that public opinion reacts to the stories about the gifts, creating an additional pressure upon the receiver.

This question touches upon the artists' possibilities of negotiating a position for themselves opposite the institutions we work with. Within the Norwegian art scene (as is the case with the international art scene) this has become an urgent question as most institutional counterparts prove increasingly instrumentalised by political interests far from the art productions' own. My project «Promesse de bonheur», installed in the foyer of the former Academy in Oslo, discusses this specifically. Despite not obtaining any concrete results in terms of changing the destiny of the Academy to be moved against the staff's

own wish, the project served as a symbol and an image for the situation, and created a story that is still in circulation.

PARTICIPATION

I have chose to use the term ‘participation’ to describe one of the central aspects of the way I work, despite the fact that it might create some confusion. Within the art discourse participation has somehow come to mean that the audience or other groups take part in the conception or production of the art work, in other words that they participate in what is traditionally conceived of as the artist’s privilege. *They participate in the artist’s work*. In my work the relation between the chosen context and me is the other way around, with me taking part in ordinary everyday production activities outside of the art field over a certain period of time. *The artist participates in their work*. In both cases there is a blurring of roles, and both strategies aim at questioning ownership, representation and how art and artists can be relevant to a wider audience. But whereas the first way of understanding the term indicates the ambition of *creating* some kind of community or communal experience, each of my interventions is born out of my taking part in and highlighting what is there in already existing environments.

The participation aspect of my work is entwined with my personality, education, class background, temperament and personal history, and my own understanding of how it works is partial as it mirrors my insight in myself. It is difficult to talk in general about this part of my method, as the whole point is to adapt to the specific environment I am in, which always exceeds any generic model by its complexity and richness in detail. This method, however, enables me to base my interventions on my own experience. It provides me with first hand information and insights, and it roots my work in the environment in a way I otherwise would not have been able to. There are strong resemblances between my participation and the field work of an anthropologist, especially methods such as «participant observation» and «creative participation». My findings during the participation are qualitative rather than quantitative. The relation between this phase of my work and the final, physical intervention it leads to is complex. The participation has performative aspects, and I consider it an integrated part of my artistic expression.³ At the same time the findings from this phase are the basis for the physical intervention, so in some cases it can be seen simply as a particularly thorough and demanding research method leading up to the production of an art object.

³ This is especially clear in the project «Waldgänger»

During the participation phase of my work I collect sensorial impressions, many of them vague, personal, fleeting and nameless, but all of them based on a physical presence in the given environment. Concretely, the method consists in taking part over time in a particular work- or production situation. The situation, institution or environment is selected because of a symbolic quality it represents, and it is important that both my colleagues and I during this work period accept that we don't know the outcome of the experience. I enter the environment as I would any new job. I am inexperienced with the task I am given, unfamiliar with my colleagues, their routines, codes and positions, and with the rooms and architecture. I try to be as open minded as possible, and to stay alert to what happens around me. It is quite like any new employee in a new job would behave, only my efforts are on two levels at once as I both try to master the work tasks I am presented with, and come up with a functional artistic idea for that specific environment. Through being presented to and performing the concrete tasks and responsibilities of my job, and trying to blend in when it comes to routines and behaviour, I acquire the personal, physical experience of being part of it. My work is a bit like that of an anthropologist. I observe aspects of the environment such as architecture, furniture, lighting, temperature, air quality, tone of voice and other sounds, movement patterns, routines, decision making and so on. How do we look at each other? How do we talk to each other? About what and where? How do we see people on the outside? What makes us stick together and what splits us? Do we meet outside of work? But I focus on my *feeling of* the environment rather than the environment itself. I find it very much an exercise in concentration and imagination. I am not out to create a scientific or neutral analysis of the environment, I am looking for the starting point of an artwork. As one of my supervisors said borrowing an image from Deleuze and Guattari, it is like describing the ocean by becoming one with the forces that move the waves rather than by observing it from the shore.

Over time, participation in the daily activities of an environment enables the discovery of blind zones; forgotten or overlooked aspects of institutional practices, which have constituted the starting point for the concrete interventions. I have entered these contexts as what might be called a parallel worker; on one side I shared the duties and obligations of my colleagues, on the other side my reason for being there was always openly declared as different from theirs. My role was double, I was both a colleague and an artist, and I was not 'under cover'. Emphasis was put on the exchange of experience. From my side this meant both professional presentations of my art production, and more informal conversations during work hours or in social situations. In order to perform my duties to

satisfaction and make the experience of the context my own, I was also thoroughly introduced to their routines and expertise. This created a sense of reciprocity and familiarity removing layers of prejudice on both sides.

The performative aspects of the participation phase of my work are a natural consequence of the fact that environments are defined and maintained by actions performed according to established patterns. Based on the experience of carrying out concrete tasks and movements, and also through the interaction with my colleagues, I create a role for myself that will function as my persona during the first phase of the work. I move in and out of this role, as in order to come up with the idea for the final intervention I also have to observe myself and my experience from the outside. I remain an artist during the whole period, and this duplicity is openly communicated to my colleagues. The moving back and forth between the two roles is precisely what permits a different perspective; it is what eventually lets me discover other, latent possibilities in the environment. While it could possibly be understood just as research, I perceive the participation part of my work as also a part of the final aesthetic result.

After some time, I generally become aware of something slightly out of sync with the general, official or manifest logic of the environment. At first it is just a slight, unfocused sensation, which can easily be overlooked. Slowly an alternative understanding starts to unfold, mostly as a line of associations starting out from the observed detail. If it works, it will eventually lead to a consequence in the form of a concrete, often architectural, form representing and manifesting an alternative to the existing order.

Every situation and every environment has hidden angles and blind zones. It would be impossible to include the whole absolute complexity of the world in every moment we live, so certain aspects are always left out from the main narrative of a situation. All situations also present a myriad of different possibilities, so I have to stay very alert and open in order to pick the right detail. It is not my main objective to be critical, but to highlight a latent potential or possibility. I have been asked whether I consider my interventions as models, but my projects are sure to entail as many problems and blind spots as any other model, if they were to be systematically applied as a general system on a larger scale. I think they function better as individual examples; systems have a tendency to fail to take into account complexities and nuances. And it is exactly these ignored nuances that are the starting point for my work.

I have been asked if there could be a risk of my work becoming simply a production of design-like solutions to problematic situations. This would probably be a more market

friendly direction for my work, but it is also one I consider quite unlikely. The point of being part of the staff over time (not part of the direction) is that of achieving the perspective of the actual users of the environments, not to make them more obedient to orders or patterns imposed on them. And the goal of my work is not that of improving the immediate conditions or of rendering production more efficient, but rather to make existing contradictions manifest. I am interested in opening up conflicts between competing interests and giving them a concrete shape or a name. I think of my interventions as interruptions in an existing logic generally imposed from the outside of the environment but acted out on its inside. They are figures of friction and of other possibilities. They can hardly be said to be beautiful or tasteful in any traditional sense, mostly they are not even very practical, depending on the commitment and care of their immediate audience to survive the continuous claims of efficiency. So far they seem to have been successful in producing friction and discussion rather than consensus.

For me this way of working seems a possible answer to the problem of representing the interests and experiences of others in art. This problem became urgent with the wave of relational aesthetics in the nineties, and caused some of the harshest critics against this tendency as it became obvious some artworks, because of their inherent production structure, repeated the power relations they started out to criticise. It is not possible to talk for others. I think the method I have developed allows me to produce art that represents my own experience but that is still rooted in the context where it is placed, and toward which it is possible for an immediate audience to feel ownership. I believe that by actively aligning my personal experience with theirs, the final outcome of the process is close to being a concretisation of an experience my temporary colleagues can recognise.

A recurrent question has been whether this method cancels the threshold between my work and 'everything else'. Does everything become fiction, or everything become reality? This question comes up because of a series of aspects in my work, one being my function as an ordinary worker in the environments I enter, another being the pragmatic quality of the concrete outcome. After actively challenging my work on this point, I have come to think that yes, there is a difference between my work and everything else, even when it is not immediately visible. There are aesthetic qualities and potentials everywhere; aesthetics is no privilege of the art world. My tasks in these various environments at one level were the same as those of my colleagues, but I always had a double role. I think of my permanence as both a co-worker and an artist in these places as a way to activate latent aesthetic potentials. My colleagues could have done what I did, but they don't consider

themselves artists so they don't look at the environment from the same angle as I do. I know from conversations that this understanding of the meaning and function of my work coincides with that of my colleagues. After the intervention is completed they have maintained a different view on their environment and also on their own functions. So I think the answer is yes, it is art even though it is possible to relate to the architectonic aspects of it without recognising it as such. I come from an art education; I feel I understand its codes and traditions and that my work is based upon them. I bring this with me when I enter the selected environments, and the slight 'differentness' of art compared to the main currents in society is what opens them up and makes it possible to individuate other possibilities. It is a matter of viewpoint and perspective. The art tradition is absolutely basic to how I work, without this understanding it would give no meaning and it would not function. I also believe the art discourse is the only one able to contain all aspects of my work. It belongs there.

FUNCTIONALITY, PRESENTATION AND DISTRIBUTION

A significant level in my work is the functional. This is important to me because the possibility of actual use of my interventions allows them to break out of being purely symbolic or representational in favour of appearing as actual, concrete alternatives to existing conventions. Rather than representation of ideas I would like my works to be a realisation of those same ideas. We do not know the limits of what is possible. The pragmatic quality of my approach and of the result of my work also means that if it is possible for me, it is equally possible for others. Change is possible and the categories with which we understand and classify the world can potentially be redefined if we wish so.

My physical interventions can be sensibly experienced just like the rest of the things surrounding them. The functional aspect in my work cannot be separated from the conceptual or poetic aspect. If it cannot be utilised in real life, it loses its main point, namely that situations and structures that are experienced as set and defined, and that are understood according to a given, conventional interpretation, can actually mean something completely different when observed from another point of view. I am interested in the openness and liberating potential in this. Often, it does not take very much to alter conventions, but it only succeeds if the 'alternative' is perceived as something as actual, possible and credible as the conventional, existing order. The technical and design details needs to be of high quality for the works to be able to sustain the everyday wear and tear, and also to be conceptually credible. High quality here means they have to be robust enough to safely and efficiently sustain the use they are meant for, they have to look aesthetically attractive and interesting, and they have to relate both aesthetically and conceptually to the specific environment they are placed in while at the same time giving body to my artistic idea. In addition to this they also have to function within the art discourse both formally and conceptually. I have collaborated with technicians and professionals within various fields (designers, architects, craftsmen, other artists, engineers etc.) to insure this quality, and my aesthetic expression (with its lack of apparent continuity) is to a great extent a result of these collaborations. Some of the artistically most significant moments for me during the project have been the concrete production of the interventions together with glass blowers, asphalt technicians and the log cabin builders. To me these moments carry in them the strength of the work, it is where the exception takes place and becomes concrete.

I have been asked if I consider my interventions as models, but I think of them rather as individual examples. They would of course be sure to entail as many problems and blind spots as any other model, if they were to be systematically applied as a general system on a larger scale. Systems have a tendency to fail to take into account complexities and nuances. And it is exactly these ignored nuances that work as starting point for most of my projects.

When an intervention is finished, it stands there as part of some people's daily lives. This obviously implies a certain responsibility. But, at the same time, my works do not demand to stand unchanged forever. The fact that they are functional objects means that they are subject to both wear and tear and change over time. Just like every other physical object or situation in the real, physical world. They are exposed to a process that adapts them to what they will be used for. Once the gift is handed over and the intervention becomes an object of everyday use, it is out of my hands. To a certain extent I can influence the future life of the work when holding the speech or preparing the ground for it within the environment where it will be placed, but I will not be able to influence decisions made on it or ways in which it will be used, interpreted or understood after I have opened it and handed it over. Honour is a strong currency, but it is still just symbolic and does not hinder the users of the intervention from using it as they wish.

This is an important point because it is one of the possibilities the receiver has to neutralise the gift. It is possible to disrespect the intervention, to not take care of it and to demonstrate a lack of understanding of its symbolic aspect. It is possible to not recognise it as a gift, and to not recognise the link to me as the giver. An example of this is the destiny of my project *Construction site* from 2006 at the National Gallery⁴ in Oslo. After having worked for a year as a museum warden, I offered the Museum an architect-drawn refurbishment of the lunch room for my colleagues. This was a comment to the fact that the rest of the staff was offered sponsored, organic lunches in a designer furnished canteen at the top floor of the administration building with terraces overlooking the fiord, while the museum wardens still had to eat their lunch in unregulated basement rooms. This may sound like a bitter observation, but the self-image generally promoted by institution was generally that of a non-hierarchic structure valuing artistic competence and considering aesthetic experience part of everyday life. The fact that the wardens were mostly recruited

⁴ The National Gallery is part of the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design.

from the art scene made the lunch-room arrangement an obvious and a bit embarrassing blind spot.

I invited two of the hottest and most expensive Norwegian architects to design a new lunch room in the same space as the old one, and they based their work on a survey I carried out among my colleagues asking them how they wanted the room to look and function. I paid for the architects and the building of the room, and since the Museum would have had to refurbish the room anyway to bring it up to legal standards, the institution paid for the materials. The work of the architects and constructors was offered as a gift from me to the Museum, still technically my employer, and was accepted by its director of security. Once finished, the room contrasted strikingly with its surroundings; worn down technical offices, wardrobes, corridors and storage rooms of technical equipment, none of which had been influenced by the Museum's policy of design, architecture and aesthetic quality as part of everyday life.

Despite continuous information, full insight into all parts of the work, openness when it came to the project's artistic character and possibility of vetoing the video documentation of the process, the critical aspect of the work did not occur to the Museum's direction before the press started writing about it, describing the new lunch room as 'a poisoned gift'⁵. After some time a sign with the museum's logo appeared in the new lunch room stating that the museum wardens would receive fresh fruit as a compensation for not having access to the staff's canteen.

The new room was treasured among the museum wardens, who told me they felt represented and valued by it. There was a general sense of pride, people bought flowers in the same colour palette as the furniture, they added art catalogues to the shelves for everybody to read during breaks, and they started hanging their pictures on the walls. It was their room, and they personalised it with great respect and care.

About a year after the room was opened, changes within the organisation of the museum brought about a reorganising of the staff. The positions formerly filled by the museum wardens were taken over by trained security guards. Today the room is gradually losing its character as different from its surroundings. Broken light bulbs in the starry ceiling are not changed and the furniture has been replaced by more ordinary solutions. There are no personal decoration items on the shelves, and it looks generally messy and a

⁵ «En gave som svir», Marit Paasche, Aftenposten Nov. 18th 2005, «Kritisk oppussing», Aksel Kjær Vidnes, Aftenposten Nov. 16th 2005

bit worn. I believe this is because the users of the room no longer identify with it. There is still a sign on the wall defining it as an artwork, but it is no longer functioning as an exception to the general state of things in the area. It has been neutralised.

The interventions in my research project have had happier endings so far, despite one of them being taken down because of the institution moving out of the building. In order to accommodate an expanding staff, the interior of the log cabin in Hammerfest, «Waldgänger», has been reorganised to make space for everybody. Members of the staff have added cushions, furs and pictures on the walls. I still regularly receive news from my former colleagues, both about them and about the cabin. The asphalt sculpture of «Saga Night» is part of the permanent collection of the museum at Maihaugen, and is by contract treated with the same attention as all other items in the collection. «Promesse de bonheur», the refurbishment in the entrance hall of the former Academy in Oslo, is no longer in function since the institution has left the building to become part of larger art college Oslo National Academy of the Arts. However the image of the work has achieved a more symbolic function for the Academy, which fears for its autonomy and visibility within the larger conglomerate of different schools. The speech I held in «Three Months' Work» is still used as a text in symposiums and seminars at the Red Cross. These cases, both the ones with happy endings and the apparently sadder one, show that the continuation of the life of the intervention after the opening depends on whether the users feel represented by it, whether there is the possibility for them to feel ownership and pride towards the result.

Everyday use will eventually wear down all the interventions, so the works cannot be considered as eternal as were they for instance conserved in a museum (a possible exception to this may be «Saga Night» because of the contract with Maihaugen which obliges the museum to consider it within the same logic as all other items in the collection). Likewise, it is not my goal that they should stay unaltered. Through time they will be naturalised as part of their surroundings. In this way what initially appeared as a contrasting alternative, will become a part of a canonised reality. The artwork's change through time is also in line with my interest for gift economy, where dynamic circulation, rather than accumulation, is the central principle.

A challenge in all the interventions in this project is their extreme environment specificity. This ensures their functioning on the site, but it makes exhibitions and distribution a bit problematic. The (imperfect) solution to this has been to exhibit documentation photos and videos of the interventions. I have put great care into the production of the documentation, and this solution has worked quite well with some of the

images, especially the one of *Saga night* becoming very well known through vast national media coverage. But the problem remains: the interventions cannot be moved, and they are the actual artwork whereas the documentation is just documentation however well executed it may be. Lately, and partly as a result of these interventions, I have been invited to exhibit at some important art venues, and my solution has been to produce new interventions specifically for these art institutions, using more or less the same approach as in the interventions presented here. Especially *Three Months' Work* opens up a possible way to present my work within the designated art institutions, and so far this seems successful. It has also been pointed out to me that my production so far seems extremely linked up to Norway, Norwegian society and Norwegian history. This is true, and I have sometimes questioned whether this is a problem or not. Working in Norway is in many ways easier than in most other countries, as our social democratic structure so far has limited the development of huge hierarchical differences in society. Decision making is relatively transparent, meaning the distance between the individual and those in power is relatively short and the institutions generally open to inputs from the outside. Another advantage is the enormous wealth in the country and how parts of this wealth is directed into art production making it possible for artists to work without consideration for the market. I have also found that the apparent harmony and lack of real conflict in Norway an interesting backdrop to my work: the interruptions, doubts or disturbances created by my interventions are easily visible against the general evenness and uniformity of Norwegian society. But the most important reason for my insistence on placing my interventions within Norwegian institutions is my being Norwegian, and my deep and personal familiarity with the social structures on which they are based. Working in Norway I always have access to first hand experience. I don't think Norway is any more interesting or peculiar than other nations, I simply know how it works and how to access the situations I am interested in. Producing similar work with similar outcome in other contexts is not impossible, it would just require my presence over time in order to acquire the necessary naturalised familiarity with the environment. The last intervention in this project, *Mirage*, at the moment still in production, points at a future development towards other contexts than the Norwegian one.

However this still means my work generally stays site- and context specific, and one piece cannot easily be exhibited to the same result in different art venues. My process therefore is bound to be a bit slower than that of an artist with a less context specific production. But since I consider the demand for efficiency and continuous expansion one of

the big problems of our time, this slowness somehow seems a logical consequence of my concept, almost a strength rather than a weakness.

THE SPEECH

Given the nature of my work, the moment of handing over or opening the work to its users is crucial to its later function and destiny. I have marked these occasions by giving a speech. The speech has several functions. It creates a solemn atmosphere around the handing over of the final intervention, making the moment stand out from everyday experience. It is like a frame, surrounding and separating the object from what lies around it, and it structures the work process in a sort of rhythm. People will stand still and concentrate during the approximately eight minutes it takes to perform one of my speeches, which is performed in direct relation to the physical intervention. In this way the understanding of the object they are looking at is informed through what I am saying. This first introduction of the work creates an aura around an otherwise quite pragmatic object. They have actually really *looked* at the object from more than one angle both physically and conceptually, and they have followed a line of thoughts leading up to it. The aura created during this first intervention in my experience will stick with the object and how it is seen, not unlike the first impression given during a meeting. The speech also contains the story behind the physical intervention, thus bringing my participation in the environment to the surface and connecting the two parts of the work to create an aesthetical whole. Not seldom, since my interventions are so environment specific, these stories are what is known of my work to a larger audience (the stories tend to wander), so the speech needs to be linear and easy to grasp in its narrative in order to be retold without losing its most important points. In telling these stories, the speeches also point to a way of understanding and contextualising my work both inside and outside of the art discourse. Here I have a possibility to point specifically to the blind zones on which I have based my work, to name them and give them a visibility. The speech points to what is in between the notions and categories normally used to understand the environment. Finally, the speech is the moment when all my roles in the work are merged into one, and the work as a whole becomes one artistic expression.

I have doubted whether the speech was necessary to the work, or whether it was maybe more a sign of lack of trust in the images I was producing. Was the speech a way to explain images I did not fully believe could tell their own stories and speak for themselves? Did the speech stand in the way of the images or the possibility of the audience to create their own interpretations? Were they simply too bossy and controlling? Or were the speeches actually the centre of the work, maybe even the work itself while all the rest of my process should be considered research and preparations?

Text has always played an important role in my work, and in the four first interventions in this project the speech is a constant element. Differently from a written text, the speech is performed. I embody the text when reading it, and I pay great attention to visual detail when performing it. Where in the room and at what height I stand, colours, volumes and textures of what I am wearing, the rhythm and structure of the event (which sometimes, as in «Promesse de bonheur» also include other elements than just my speech) and where the audience is placed are some of the details that together add up to the construction of an image in its own right. This does not mean that I put on a show detached from or competing with the intervention. The speech is not an attempt to gloss it up or simply make it more entertaining, easy or fun. The details in the speech are there to sustain the general aesthetic; they are part of the same artistic expression and project and need to be finely tuned.

I think an important function for the speech is that it is the moment where I can most efficiently or directly claim my space as an artist. It is central in the creation and development of an area in which to operate. As is often pointed out to me, my interventions are not visually spectacular and may easily be ignored or confused with their surroundings. It is not simply a handing over of the intervention and its story to its actual users, it also introduces my whole operation as an artwork to the art scene and makes sure it has a place there despite being placed physically outside of the traditionally assigned spaces for art. I find this maybe the most important and interesting aspect of the speech; it contributes to the questioning of the boundaries surrounding art by bringing art and life together. It merges the various functions of the physical intervention: the everyday functionality, the symbolic meaning and the aesthetical choices form one conceptual unity. Likewise, during the speech, I am both co-worker and artist merged in one body. The roles are slightly different, but the person performing them is the same. They are deeply connected in the same experience: me.



Saga Night, Maihaugen, 2008

SAGA NIGHT

Saga Night is the first of the five interventions in the research project, and consists of what I have called an asphalt sculpture, or, as other people would probably say, a piece of asphalted road. It was produced at Maihaugen museum of cultural heritage in Lillehammer, Norway, produced in the period from 2006 to 2008 in collaboration with curator and producer Per Gunnar Eeg-Tverbakk⁶. *Saga Night* connects different sectors or fields such as (oil) economy, the welfare state, the construction of national identity, and public art grants. The overall motivation for the intervention was an ambition to show how these are connected, and thereby discuss and challenge the construction of contemporary Norway's national identity from the perspective of my own artistic practice.

The intervention was preceded by a two year long process producing also a solo exhibition at R-O-M for Art and Architecture. The exhibition showed the funding behind the intervention and introduced the question of a slightly overlooked relation between Norwegian contemporary art and Norwegian oil economy. The production of the actual intervention was documented through a video produced with director Hanne Myren from *Medieoperatørene*.

A watershed in Norwegian economy: from rags to riches

Norway today is often considered as a modern welfare state and a beacon for democracy. In 2005, for the fifth year in a row, the UN declared it as the best country to live in. Both among the general population, in the media and cultural institutions representing Norwegian cultural history, there seems to be a tendency to forget that our status as one of the world's richest countries came largely as a result of a stroke of luck that occurred some 40 years ago. The first significant oil discoveries on the Norwegian shelf in 1969 turned the nation from pauper to prince. This dramatic development occurred within only a few decades. Norway was completely unprepared for the tremendous and rapid growth and what it meant for the community. The established Norwegian self-understanding is, forty years after this economic watershed, still in contrast to the country's status as *nouveau riche*. It is paradoxical that all the welfare benefits and the overall wealth Norwegians currently enjoy seem so obvious and natural to us. The fact that Norway was still a poor country only four decades ago seems surprisingly forgotten and repressed. When our national identity is presented in response to

⁶ *Saga Night* has also been discussed as part of Per Gunnar Eeg-Tverbakk's own research project, entitled 'Room for Interference', conducted at KHiO and concluded in 2011.

questions like: what is typically Norwegian?, a nostalgic version of history is often preferred. In this tale, the Norway earned its position as the world's richest country through hard work, strong traditions, frugality and developing unique expertise over many centuries. The main focus here is on issues such as union, Resistance, landscape and folklore. The newly rich and partly hedonistic Norway has, in spite of its real existence, little if any place in a national self-understanding founded on different values and ideals. An inherited frugal and Protestant temperament does not allow for undeserved happiness.

Maihaugen and Lyngveien

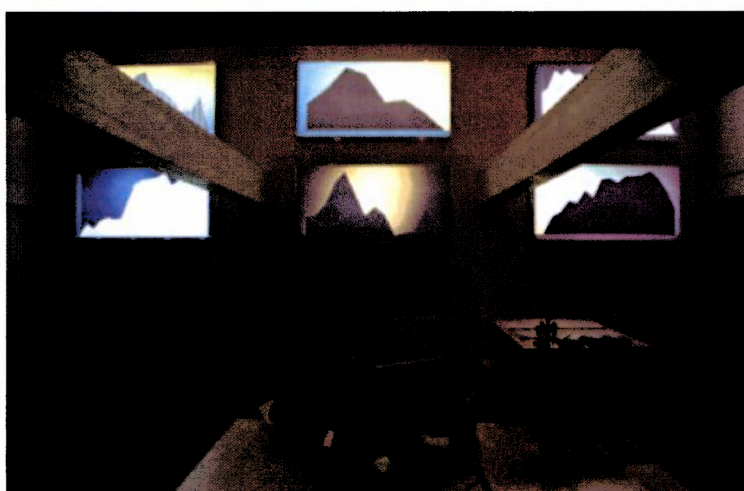
Maihaugen is an outdoor museum featuring typical buildings primarily from Gudbrandsdalen, a geographic area that is considered as a kind of core area of 'Norwegianness'. The houses are idyllically situated in an extensive outdoor stage design reconstructing the landscape more or less as it must have been at its best. The exhibition runs back to the 15th century, with the bulk of the collection consisting of quite small wooden buildings in log technique. The museum guides wear contemporary costumes based on the costume traditions of the area. Waffles, porridge and salted meats are served from an outdoor cafeteria. Dance and various performances are part of the programme. The museum is a great success among foreign tourists who arrive in bus loads from long distances to get to know Norwegian traditions.



The collection also includes a modern part, which is located in the so called Lyngveien. Along the approximately 100 meter long road you will find a phone box from the 30's, a functionalistic house, a so-called 'Swedish house' from the post-war period, and three prefabricated houses from prefab housing producers Block Wathne and Moelven. At the end of the road there is the so-called 'Future house': a 90-century vision of digital home solutions, flexible wall modules, flat panel displays, solar panels, felted wool carpets and

natural materials. Lyngveien is organised chronologically and shows a modern society expanding rapidly, from the 30's to the present day, where the middle class lives in safe, comfortable and almost luxurious conditions. It refers to a reality that is very different from the rest of the collection, which depicts a community of tired, malnourished, poor farmers in the narrow, dark, bare, unsanitary and overcrowded housing. Still Lyngveien is a less popular tourist attraction than the rest of the collection, and it is much less visited. No role plays, demonstrations or entertainment activities happen there.

The idea of the intervention came after a visit to Maihaugen where I had walked through the beautiful exhibition feeling irritated without really understanding why. The feeling grew when I entered Lyngveien. As a child I lived in an area very similar to this, and despite a strong feeling of déjà vu, Lyngveien also seemed strangely off to me. Eventually I realised it was the light gravel road connecting the whole exhibition that irritated me: Where I grew up of course the road was not covered with gravel, but with asphalt. And what caused the huge uplift in the standard of living that Lyngveien exposes? This was not explanation anywhere. Based on the exhibition the new Norwegian prosperity could only be understood as an obvious and seamless continuation of life of the former centuries' poor and frugal farmer. The road, as it was, seemed to implicate a sort of continuous romantic nostalgia that was absolutely not what I remembered from that period. And I also realised what was missing was the most important single event in Norwegian economy in the last century: the petroleum findings on the Norwegian shelf in 1969⁷.

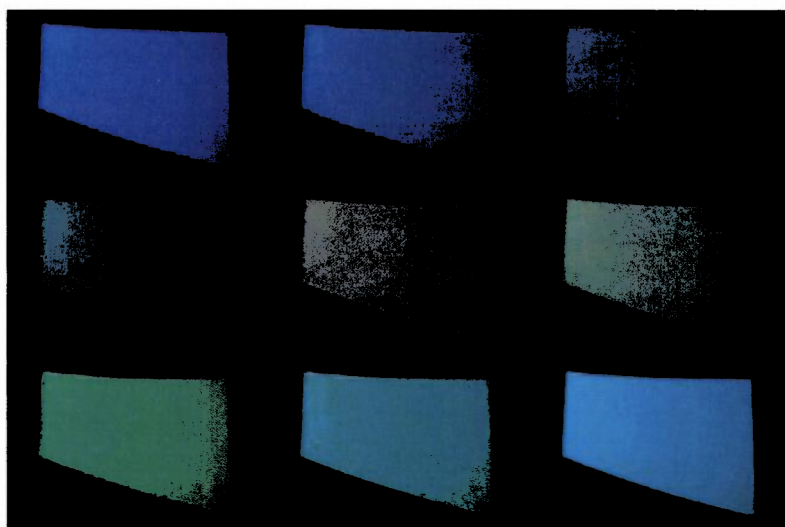


Landscape, light boxes, 2007. Ph M. Wang

⁷ I describe this sensation in the opening speech held on occasion of the opening of the asphalt road in May 2008.

The Oil Adventure

In the seventies the Norwegian shelf was a giant technological laboratory, run with people and the environment as inputs. Norway initially had neither the expertise nor the equipment to carry out oil recovery on the bottom of the North Sea. Mortality in the Norwegian sector was eight times higher than in the oil industry in general. From its inception in 1966 through 1978 eighty two fatal accidents were recorded on the Norwegian shelf, three times as many as in the UK. It is worth noting that during the first half of the 1970s, the North Sea divers were exempt from the Working Environment Act. The Norwegian government's willingness to take risks in connection exploring the North Sea in order to release its economic potential can be seen as a parallel to other major nationality-building investments, such as the development of road and rail networks in other countries. Working conditions in the North Sea fitted badly with the image of a responsible welfare state, as we like to think of Norway today.



Pioneer, video installation, 2007. Ph M. Wang

163 500, - Norwegian kroner from public art grant to the Norwegian Petroleum Fund

Like many other Norwegian artists, I am lucky enough to receive public grants from time to time. In the period 2005 - 2006, I received government grant for young and newly established artists.

The grant amounted to 163,500 Norwegian kroner per year, equivalent to the lowest level on the national salary scheme. This scholarship is funded directly from the Norwegian state budget, and (slightly simplified), one can say that the money in this budget, like most of the public funds in Norway, comes from the North Sea. The Norwegian artists' activist campaign for better conditions in the 70's, known as the Kunstneraksjon '74 (Artists' Action

'74), can in many ways be seen as a consequence of the economic optimism that followed the oil discoveries in the North Sea: everyone would be rich, and the artists also wanted their share. The grant I received is intended to function as wages so that artists can release time from other employment and prioritize their artistic development.

Instead of using the time that was released through the grant to work in a studio, in 2006 I took the following paid jobs: temporary teacher at Oslo Music and Culture School, guest lecturer and guest teacher at the Art Academy in Oslo, substitute at Asker Culture School, guest teacher at Nordland Art and Film School, lecturer at the Department of Color, guest lecturer at the Art Academy in Bergen and at the Norwegian Theatre Academy in Fredrikstad. In addition, I published texts in visual art magazines, worked as a photographer for children's theatre productions, and sold photos to various publications.

Common to all these jobs was an educational, communicative character, where I saw my own artistic competence reproduced. None of them were based on direct interaction or negotiation with a 'natural market': all my employers were funded through government subsidies. Through this activity in 2006 I earned the equivalent of my public work grant of 163 500 Norwegian kroner. I invested the money in Norwegian petroleum shares, thus symbolically returning it to where it came from: the North Sea. The acquisition of the shares indicates the starting point for a series of works, culminating in the intervention at Maihaugen.



Investment, 2007. Ph M. Wang

The asphalt road

The project culminated in a donation to Maihaugen. I sold my petroleum shares in April 2008, and used the money to pave Lyngveien from a point that in its chronology would indicate 1969. It interrupts and ends the continuous light gravel road running through the entirety of the collection. It runs past the last four decades until it ends in the small forest that would seem to represent an unknown future still to be defined, thus introducing the watershed shift in Norwegian economy caused by the petroleum findings as a central premise for what Norway is today. The intervention corrects and adds to the history communicated by an otherwise correctly constructed environment. Asphalt is a petroleum-based material that could almost be seen as a symbol of modernisation in its own right. It is determining for modern road standards, and is an integral to national and regional transport policy. It somehow signals efficiency.

Saga Night today is part of Maihaugen collection, just like every other object and artefact in the exhibition. The museum pays the same attention to its maintenance as they do to any other object they have. It is almost invisible in the museum, and probably to most people it will seem a completely ordinary asphalted piece of road, which it also is. A sign placed where the asphalt starts tells the story of the intervention, its reasons and its funding.



Collaboration with Maihaugen

When together with Per Gunnar Eeg-Tverbakk I proposed *Saga Night* as a gift to Maihaugen, we did so without trying to hide the intervention's implicit critique of Norwegian contemporary history as the museum had constructed it. The intervention was openly proposed as both a gift and a correction, and we went into details in discussing the missing element in the collection and how we expected *Saga Night* to be understood by the audience and by the press. We were almost certain that Maihaugen would reject the gift, but

to our surprise they accepted it with great enthusiasm. This meant we could expand the discussion to not simply questioning the exhibition at Maihaugen, but to the general idea of contemporary Norwegian history, how it is constructed and what it means.

I consider this collaboration a success, but I have been asked if this accepting attitude from the institutions might represent a problem for my projects' critical function? Is confrontational opposition necessary, or even possible for my kind of work with museums increasingly looking for vitalisation of static collections by introduction of critical art projects? After considering these questions, I feel the experience with *Saga Night* seems to me an interesting example of how artists and institutions can collaborate in a slightly different way than the models of either works commissioned by the institutions, or frontal critique from the artist outside of the institution. Instead of producing friction between me and the museum, with the collaboration of Maihaugen *Saga Night* actually managed to examine some beliefs and values that continuously constitutes the idea of Norway as a nation in a much larger audience than the one interested specifically in the exhibitions at Maihaugen.

SAGA NIGHT

Presentation Speech

The very first time I strolled up the Lyngveien road, I had a virtually dizzying feeling of déjà vu. Walking along this tiny stretch of road was a bit like reentering my childhood. The house I grew up in was a typical 70s-style prefabricated home the same color as this building by Moelven right in front of us. Childhood memories came flooding as I walked by the low garden fences, the garage gates and the well-kept, freshly stained wooden walls. Yet, I had a gnawing feeling that something was slightly off, without being able to put my finger on it.

This recreated setting, known as “the Residential Development”, is located at Maihaugen in Lillehammer, an open-air museum of cultural heritage. Visitors reach this section by walking across picturesque farmyards surrounded by tiny wood cabins and past the beautiful lily ponds by the stave church in the lower parts of the outdoor museum. On their way, they can admire the beauty of the scenery and the lovely, hand-woven rugs displayed in interiors decorated with rose painting. The road lined with wildflowers that stitches the museum together meanders among the birch trees in more or less chronological fashion through settings from the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries that seem true to the way things may have appeared in Mid-Norway back then. Visitor then arrive at the Residential Development and the Lyngveien road, which leads them through the 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s and past the already slightly outdated House of the Future, all the way to the uncertain future, poetically represented by the edge of the forest where the road and the museum ends.

Why was it that, despite my feeling of knowing it so well, the Lyngveien road seemed so annoyingly out of touch with reality? It was because of the ROAD itself. The street I lived on during my childhood in the 70s was obviously not a gravel road, but rather freshly coated with durable asphalt true to modern, effective standards. I don't think it even had a single pothole. Come on now, this was the 70s, so there was certainly no lack of money for such things in Norway!

The contrast between the Lyngveien road and the rest of the museum is striking. Obviously, something radical has occurred that completely changed the appearance of our country. But the way things looked when I first came there, visitors were left guessing what might have caused this tremendous change. The light-colored gravel road stitching the museum together

seemed to indicate that the rich Norwegian society of today was a seamless continuation of the story of the smalltime farmer we know from all the other museum exhibits. The area seemed to be saying that: the wealth is ours. Gained by the labor of generations of thrifty, persevering Norwegians in hardscrabble conditions and in the dead of winter; these riches are the fruits of much effort, and we deserve them.

Saga Night, the sculpture right in front of us, signifies a departure: a radical change that occurred in plain view, and yet seems to represent a blind spot in Norwegian culture and self-perception. In the Norwegian national anthem, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson evoked the saga night that sends “dreams to our earth”. This is a reference to the Viking Age and the Norway of Old Norse times. However, another saga night sent dreams to our country in the late 60s: The first substantial oil discovery on the Norwegian shelf in the North Sea in 1968 was an event that virtually overnight sent Norway off into a dream-like future that the country was entirely unprepared for, allowing for visions that we did not even know we had. That was the start of the Norwegian Oil Adventure. This story about modern Norway is not primarily about patience, traditions, thriftiness and hard work, but rather about a stroke of luck. The Norwegian wealth is not family silver passed down through the ages, but something that just fell into our laps. Simply put, we were unbelievably LUCKY.

The only Norway people my age or younger have ever known is the Norway that starts right here on the Lyngveien road. It is virtually unfathomable to us that it has only been a few decades since Norwegian schools taught that “Norway is a poor country”. The buildings from this point onwards to the edge of the woods clearly demonstrate an explosive rise in living standards. The signs of the new wealth are evident in the sizes of the prefabricated houses, the two-car garages, and the large, thoroughly insulated windows. The houses are surrounded by decorative gardens, as opposed to hopeful attempts at deriving sustenance from the soil. But while this radical change is obvious to anyone with eyes to see, it is conspicuously absent in the typical narrative of the history of our nation. This was also the case for the museum exhibits here at the Maihaugen Museum, which are otherwise so thorough and complete.

History never is an actual, complete presentation of the past. It is a construction, a product of our own times, an attempt to explain to ourselves what, who and where we are today, and how we got here. One might say that it is rather an image of the times in which it is being

told than of the era it is meant to recall. In other words, does this oversight or omission mean that contemporary Norwegians feel uncomfortable about our oil history? Do we not welcome the thought that we have been lucky?

Nostalgia, romanticism: the distance from which we observe the farmyards in the lower parts of this outdoor museum echoes our knowledge that chances are we will never again have to live in such conditions in this country. We are far too wealthy for that. The hard work and thriftiness evident in the other museum exhibits will never again be a part of our daily life. We see the beauty in the scenery and the buildings, in the closeness to nature, in the traditions of craftsmanship. But we do not see the child mortality, the hunger during the years when the harvest failed, the bitter winter cold, the terrible toothaches and louse-ridden hair, entire families sharing a single bed, the illiteracy. We do not see that the country we admire is a Norway that was completely and fundamentally different from the country we know today. We are safely standing in a completely different landscape than the one these old buildings were part of, and we do not share the experiences of Norwegians of past generations.

Saga Night, whose title is borrowed from Bjørnstjerne Bjørnsson's lyrics for the Norwegian national anthem, is a gift from me to the Maihaugen Museum. The work will become part of its collection on a par with the buildings and objects on display in the rest of the open air museum. In the museum's chronological presentation, this curve in the road corresponds to the year of 1968, a watershed in the Norwegian economy. My piece starts at this very point to call attention to and serve as a permanent reminder of the radical shift that was occasioned by the start of oil drilling on the Norwegian shelf. This event has affected the lives of all Norwegians ever since. The sculpture is financed by my odd jobs in Norwegian art institutions, all run on public funds, during a period for which I had been awarded a government artist grant. This money is generated, as are the majority of Norwegian public funds, more or less directly from drilling in the North Sea. Without these funds, I would not have been able to create my art, and the Maihaugen Museum would not have been able to present the Norwegian cultural heritage the way it does. My sculpture therefore links both Maihaugen and myself to the new Norwegian landscape of which we are all part: the Oil Nation of Norway.

Dear Ågot Gammersvik, Director of the Maihaugen Museum, it is all yours!



Waldgänger, Hammerfest Tax Office, 2008

WALDGÄNGER

Hammerfest Tax Office

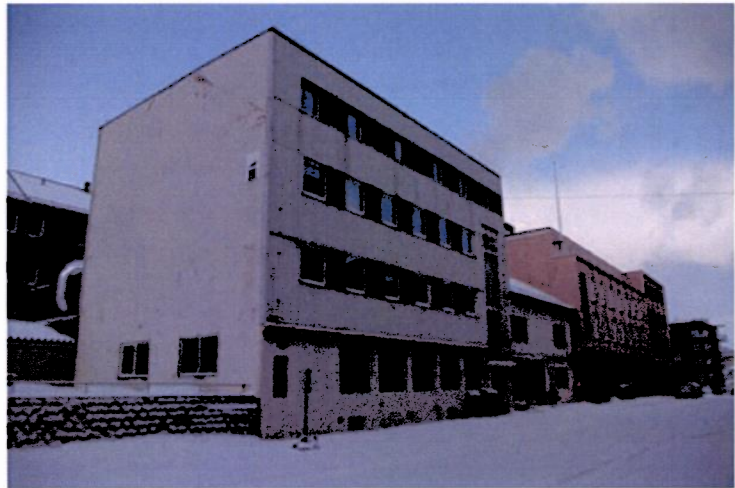
In 2007 KORO (Public Art Norway) invited me to make a site-specific project for the Tax Office in Hammerfest. The intervention *Waldgänger* is the answer to this invitation. It consists of a traditional Norwegian log cabin located in the Tax Office's open office landscape, and is based on the experience of a two months' period as part of the office staff.

I arrived at Hammerfest on a Sunday in March 2008, and started work at 8 am the next day. In my notes after the first day, I describe the Tax Office as follows:

The Tax Office seems an unusually well-functioning workplace. It is located in the recently renovated premises of a former hotel, later reception centre for immigrants in the centre of Hammerfest. The building's exterior is poorly kept, while the office interior is well kept, clean, efficient and simple. The office is roughly divided into three main areas: the reception, the open office landscape, and the second floor (kitchen, meeting room and two smaller offices). The atmosphere among the staff seems good (they laugh a lot).

The office had moved to these new premises partly as a result of a recent centralisation reform in the entire Norwegian tax agency. This same reform had led to more monotonous and repetitive routines for the staff. This, together with the aesthetic uniformity of work stations (personal effects such as photos, plants or other items were not allowed in the work stations), was the only reasons for complaints I ever heard among the employees. The hierarchy of the office was practically invisible at first sight (it took me four days to realise who was the office's director), and absences were apparently unusually rare. This particular tax office is one of the very few in the country where they are up to date with the workload. The management put great emphasis on the quality of the working environment. Frequent activities such as skiing, picnics, waffle baking, wine lottery etc., as well as two daily, possibly not quite authorised, coffee breaks at regular times were decisive factors.

It was important to me to function as a real colleague for the staff members while I was there. I considered this participation in the office's everyday work as a kind of performative part of the artwork rather than research. Despite the kindness and courtesy, I experienced the first meeting with my new colleagues as characterized by mutual



Tax Office building

projections. They had a lot of ideas about how artists were, and on my part I had quite a few prejudices against bureaucrats and office workers. To participate as a member of the staff offered the opportunity to bridge this gap. I had to learn their tasks and routines. The tax Office's routines are naturally very strict and systematic, and I had to follow them to the same degree as my colleagues. Through this participation, I gradually started to see things from their perspective. For instance, the power exercised from Oslo appears quite different seen from their viewpoint than from my usual perspective of an Oslo-based artist. I held an introductory presentation of my work for them the first week of my stay. Afterwards I had ongoing informal and very interesting conversations about art throughout my stay. The last week I presented my proposal for a physical intervention in the office.

Hammerfest with its strong history is an important backdrop for *Waldgänger*. Like most other towns and villages in the counties of Finnmark and North Troms the whole city was burned down by the Nazis when they withdrew from the area in 1944. The population was forcibly evacuated, but started to return already during the first summer after the war. The repatriation of Finnmark is the largest civil disobedience act during peacetime in Norwegian history. The reconstruction of the town, planned and organized by the government in Oslo, has put a strong mark on the it both aesthetically and socially. The rows of identical houses were designed by architects appointed by the government and the building was thoroughly checked to make sure they conformed to the plans. No individual variations were previewed, aesthetic details should contribute to a unified and harmonious cityscape rather than to express the residents' individuality. The striking architectural standardization has produced a complicated relationship between the residents and the central national authorities, and also with the town itself. This is compensated for by an active life outside of the town, in contact with the surrounding nature. Life and activities in



Hammerfest

the cabins in the areas outside Hammerfest was one of the biggest common interests among the employees at the tax office while I was there. While the town is characterized by architectural and aesthetic uniformity, the cabins are ongoing creative building projects in continuous aesthetic development and with great stylistic variations. According to my colleagues at the tax office this is "where they live." The town is often virtually empty on weekends after people have left for the cabins.

For me it was almost shocking to realise how little I knew about the reconstruction of Finnmark. These dramatic events are not covered by the Norwegian school curriculum. Despite having affected the population in large parts of northern Norway, this story has risked falling out of the canonical history of Norway. It's hard not to see a link between the omission of these big events and the geographical distance between Finnmark and the political power centres located in the south of the country.

The invitation from KORO gave no specific indication for what they expected me to produce or how they wanted the art in the Tax Office to function. Before I went to Hammerfest, I had assumed there would be plenty of blind spots and dysfunctionalities to discover at the office, and that these would serve as artistic material and inspiration for my intervention. But both the office's public profile, the general working environment and the aesthetic design of the workplaces seemed to be functioning well, and I found no negative blind spots during my stay.

However the two daily unauthorised coffee breaks stroke me as interesting. Nobody remembered exactly when these breaks first had been introduced, but they were all certain it had been an informal initiative by some members of the staff. The breaks had continued despite the fact that they were not completely in line with the very strict instructions for office routines. The coffee breaks were in many ways a haven in an otherwise thoroughly

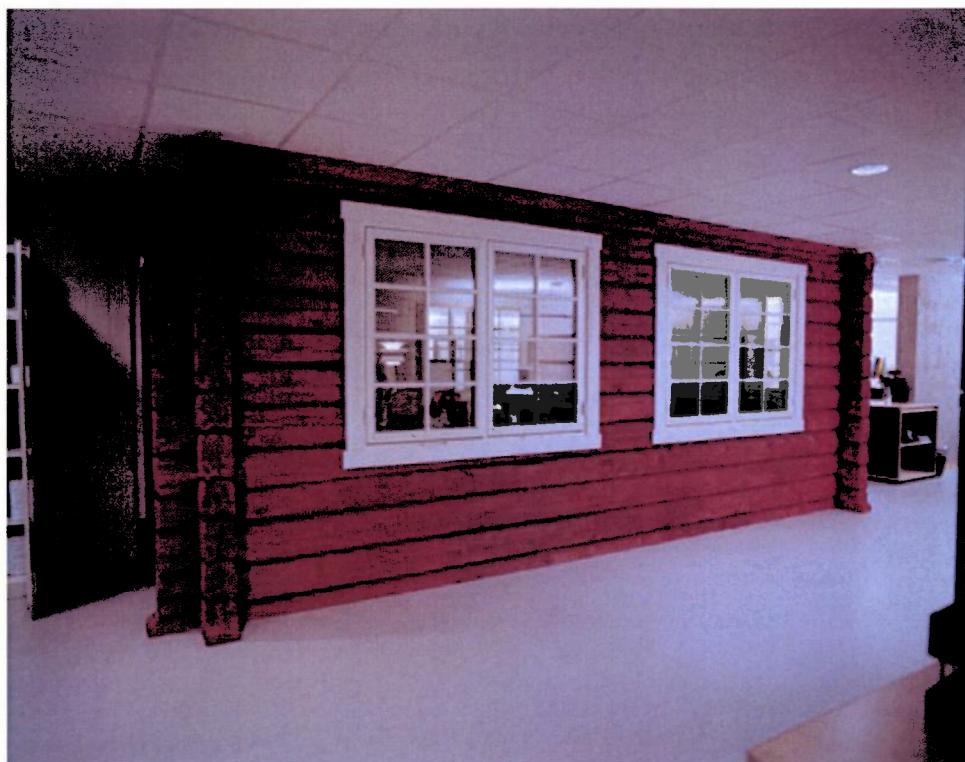


The glass cage

regulated life, almost like occupied territory. While the rest of the working hours and the office itself were characterized by efficiency, concentration and rational solutions, the coffee breaks and the room in which they took place were characterized by high volume and free flowing conversation. The first break was at 8 o'clock in the morning, which meant that all the employees arrived before 8 every day despite having the possibility of flexible work hours. The coffee breaks were a completely casual and informal meeting place for the 22 employees. I had the feeling that these unauthorised breaks were one of the main reasons that the office was such a well-functioning workplace.

The breaks took place in a rather odd glass cage built in modular walls and placed in the middle of the open office landscape. It had no other use than these two breaks, and it was also the only exception to the offices otherwise uniformed and efficiency-oriented aesthetic profile. The parallels between this room's function in the office landscape and the function of the cabins for Hammerfest and its population seemed striking.

Waldgänger borrows its title from Ernst Jünger's 1951 essay, where the figure of the 'Forest Fleeer' is an answer to the question of survival of individual freedom in a totalitarian world. The intervention consists of a replacement and a reinforcement of the existing 'glass cage'. The traditional log cabin standing there now is so heavy that it is almost impossible to move, and the aesthetic contrast between the office and the surrounding office landscape is also impossible to ignore. What is basically a pragmatic space is defined as art,



Waldgänger completed

creates a solid and protective frame around a practice which contrasts the tax agency's otherwise completely fixed routines. The cabin's design and interior were defined in collaboration with the office staff, and the color of the walls has been selected by vote. The walls were painted by us all (my colleagues and me) during a typical Norwegian 'dugnad' the night before the opening. This participation has contributed to a familiarisation with the idea of contemporary art, and it also provided a sense of ownership. Through their everyday use of the intervention, the employees at the office will continue to develop and change it, hopefully keeping it alive long after the completion of my part of the process.

Waldgänger was received as a success and has become a sort of light relief for both KORO and the Tax Office. Asked by local television whether any tax office should have such a cabin, Director Marianne Christensen said: "I'm not sure a log cabin is the correct expression for all tax offices in Norway, but I certainly think that all tax offices should get themselves an artist", thus perfectly summing up my idea that the specific intervention should not be thought of as a general model to be implemented repeatedly. Still, I was a little uncertain about how *Waldgänger* was really understood. There was great emphasis on the end result, which was seen as an unusual and funnily pragmatic sculpture, while the participation phase leading up to it seemed reduced to an anecdote with no real aesthetic value. I also was a bit unsure of where the intervention's artistic core was actually to be found. And I was perplexed by the total absence of friction it produced. Should perhaps the

participation process that led to the physical intervention have been isolated and somehow presented as an artwork in itself? Did it really, as I had hoped, have an aesthetic value on its own? Or was it simply a very thorough form of research, in many ways not so far away from anthropological field studies? I decided to go further into these issues in my next intervention.

WALDGÄNGER

Opening speech

This work is the result of two months of employment here at the Tax Office. I must admit that I arrived here with a few preconceptions as to what I would encounter. I assumed I would find a somewhat boring working environment with frustrated, over-worked employees organised in a strict hierarchy. I expected to stumble across unresolved conflicts and discontent, and I had planned to take hold of precisely this as my artistic point of departure. This plan failed. For here, they had pretty much done my work for me already.

From an outsider's perspective, the tax department does not exactly exude flexibility and creative thought. It may seem like a difficult starting point for a site-specific work of art. And the impression of a thoroughly regulated working reality – where all aspects from the technical and bureaucratic to the human are caught up systems and rules – is fairly accurate. Routines and rules permeate almost everything. They are thorough and well-implemented, and are, naturally, intended to work constructively so that the department functions as well as possible for as many as possible, both users and employees. It must be correct, and the same for everybody. But, we cannot escape the fact that such thorough regulation has something of the machine about it, and that a web of such strict rules can seem a little frustrating for those who have to operate within it. When there are rules for absolutely everything we do, there is not much space left for individual expression, or expressions of any kind for that matter.

During my time here, it struck me that Hammerfest Tax Office resembles Hammerfest town. Permeating regulation has a visible, physical presence here, both inside the office and outside. The identical work stations without a personal touch can be seen as a sort of parallel to the identical post-war housing developments, and both are manifestations of decisions taking place in the centres of power far away from here. You can move between any one of the work desks here and continue with the exact same task; tasks that are described, decided and nationally coordinated by the head tax authority in Oslo. The open-plan office which makes private conversations difficult, the neutral colour scheme and furniture developed for movements in front of a computer screen make the office resemble a sort of machine hall of bureaucratic procedures. But we are not machines. Irregular, individual personalities do not fit painlessly into prefabricated forms. The people of Hammerfest resist the architectural monotony of the city by the creative use of colour on the walls of the houses, windowsills

and fences, as well as actively building cabins in the holiday spots outside the city. In a similar way, people here in the office showed resistance to the permeating regulation of the workplace. In the middle of the tidy, effective and monotone office landscape – in the middle of the stiff routines – sat the great exception.

A slightly strange glass cage, consisting of light walls, had been set up in the middle of the open-plan office. It had no clearly defined function; well-equipped lunch-and meeting rooms already existed, as well as quiet, private rooms. This room, however, stood there, undefined and open, not circumscribed by any of the rule-bound functions of the office. I quickly got the sense that the heart of the office could be found precisely in this slightly strange room. It gave the office environment a pulse and vitality, and the use of the room added rhythm to the working day. Twice a day, at specific times, all the employees gathered in there for coffee breaks, and the surrounding office outside stood as empty as Hammerfest town on a Friday afternoon after office hours. The workers crowded into the little room and the level of sound was high as people chatted about everything and nothing, with no clear direction or professional aim. Discussions and disagreements had their places in here, and the same went for heart-to-hearts, humour and generosity. In here there was room for irregularities, exceptions, tensions, in short the complexity that characterises the real world. The room and its use functioned as sort of security vent for the working environment. I felt as if it had the same effect on the office employees as the holiday cabins outside the town had for most Hammerfest inhabitants. As one of the workers here commented when I queried why the town was so empty at the weekend: 'But, we live at our holiday cabins.'

The coffee breaks were shrouded in some secrecy; they were not quite above board. After a while, I realised that they fell outside the stipulated working routines, and that even if the management let them pass, they were not fully accepted. I know that the breaks have been an issue here as they involve a sort of sneaking off or bending of the rules. You have no right to them. But, as the Tax Office is actually on schedule with their work, and the employees, despite having the option of flexitime, all show up every morning at 8 am for the first coffee break, they turned a blind eye to this breach of regulations.

The room as it now stands, after my intervention, is a reinforcement of what had already arisen spontaneously. The title of the work, «Waldgänger», is borrowed from Ernst Jünger. Having survived two world wars, the author describes how to avoid totalitarian regimes by

'going into the forest'. The forest becomes a representation of everything the authorities had not predicted and thus could not control. Jünger saw the individual's ability to withdraw as the most effective and realistic way to exercise resistance. As he put it: "A 'no' need not be expressed where the authorities expect it." Similar tactics are described by Michel De Certeau who, politically speaking, appears to belong to the opposite wing to Jünger. For him, it is not about individual withdrawal, but rather a social and collective practice. In his book, *L'invention du quotidien*, De Certeau describes how one can utilise existing structures, but in a different way to what was predicted. It is about being creative enough to see forgotten spaces in the system, and about using them in new ways. He writes about how you can utilise places and structures you do not own or control, a bit like playing in the opposition's half.

The systems we live with – and the Tax Office here represents one of them – are important to keep society together effectively. However, the price of effectiveness is simplification: reality is always far more complex than the systems that attempt to describe it, capture it or control it. A system lies like a web around the reality we live in. The web can consist of smaller or larger meshes. There are holes and forgotten spaces, gaps and openings. These spaces offer a glimpse of something else, of an alternative reality that could look completely different. Not necessarily better or worse, but different. This in itself is a great asset: it shows that there are other opportunities, and the freedom to change things exists. It shows that it is possible to imagine other, new possibilities, and even that it is possible to realise them. There is room for creativity and vision precisely because of these holes in the system. The system's counterpart can be found in the system itself.

I hope the conjoined walls can function as a concrete manifestation of the resistance that already exists here, and a defence of the great, defiant and necessary EXCEPTION. This exception does not prove the rule. It sows doubt about the absolute validity of the rule, and reintroduces a complexity that the rule cannot encompass. It is this exception that makes this office reflect the world outside, and the reason why the environment here functions so well.



Promesse de bonheur, foyer former Academy of Fine Arts, 2008

PROMESSE DE BONHEUR

Intervention at the entrance at the former Academy of Fine Art in Oslo.

The intervention consists of a general refurbishment, custom designed furniture, and five mouth-blown glass lamps. The red lamp in the middle of the room was lit by the Dean during an opening ceremony for students and staff on October 15th 2008. After the opening the red light stayed lit 24 hours a day regardless of the institution's opening hours until the Academy moved out of the building in May 2010.

The shape of the glass lamps was inspired by classic Roman amphorae. They were produced in collaboration with glass artist Kjersti Johannessen and Magnor Glassworks. The furniture was designed and manufactured with Various Architects.

First meeting with the Academy of Fine Art

Promesse de bonheur is based on my meeting with the Academy of Fine Art in Oslo (Academy), where I have been employed as a research fellow. I had studied art in Italy, so when I got the fellowship at the Academy in 2007, it was my first encounter with the everyday life of this institution.

The Academy was in the midst of a serious crisis. In 1996 it had been incorporated into what is now the Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KhiO), the result of a parliamentary approved merger- and co-location project. In addition, the Bologna process had led to a restructuring of the educational programme, increasing the administrative burden. This development was frequently questioned. Was it not in fact reducing the institution to simply a service provider and the students to customers? The program for artistic research I have been a part of was also by some seen as a result of the Bologna process, governed by the same interdisciplinary principles as the co-location project and building on the new five-year education structure.

KhiO would, apart from the Academy, consist of the Faculty of Visual Art (based on an Arts & Crafts/ Bauhaus tradition), the Academy of Dance, the Academy of Opera and the Faculty of Design. Staff and students at the Academy had been opposed to this plan from the start. Their intense, fierce and hopeless struggle for independence was already more than ten years old when I started in my position. This fight and the following defeat had drained the institution, leaving a general feeling of disillusion. The staff had no confidence in the central, politically appointed leadership at KhiO, students felt they were

not heard, conflict and a feeling of powerlessness dominated. The situation no doubt heavily influenced the institution's artistic activities.

Looking from the outside, I had not quite understood how all consuming and serious this conflict appeared from inside of the institution, and I was not really prepared for what met me. It took several months before I had a proper overview of my work situation. The flow of information was generally poor and random. Monday meetings, which were supposed to gather staff and students for general info on the week's planned activities, were characterized by abandonment. Both these and staff meetings regularly ended in discussions of organizational and political problems related to the merger rather than art related issues. I had the feeling that no one really cared about the Academy of Fine Art anymore. Artistic independence and freedom had been replaced by a void.

A key aspect of the merger was the collocation of the different schools in a common campus area organised especially to facilitate interdisciplinary art projects. Production facilities, workshops and expertise would be available across the various faculties, all organised under one administration to ensure efficiency. Parts of KhiO would move into newly renovated premises in a former textile industry complex, while the Academy should be partly placed in a new building, with the rest spread around the existing, older buildings. The staff had continuously opposed to these solutions without being heard. The objections were, just to mention a few examples, that the production of art being not only object oriented, technical workshops could not replace individual studio spaces for students, to safeguard and facilitate contact between students the student body should not be spread over several buildings, one had to be able to open the windows to let out toxic fumes after painting even if it meant increased fuel costs, adequate viewing capabilities and equipment had to be provided, the doors had to be large enough to let larger paintings and objects pass, and both staff and students needed spaces for ordinary social activities and meetings to ensure the general function of the institution. This type of input met little or no understanding, and the final building plans showed very little interest in the Academy's clearly expressed needs.

The lack of receptivity was striking. I had recently worked at another of the schools in the merger project and had the impression that their institution's requirements and wishes were met with understanding and interest from management and technicians. Why was it so much harder for the Academy?

Historical Background: Art Academy and Queen Maud

The “fine” arts have a relatively short history in Norway. The Academy of Fine Art was not founded until 1909, with Christian Krohg, Halfdan Strøm and Gunnar Utsond as its first professors. Norway already had a school of drawing, but wanted an institution that could represent the young Norwegian nation within the great European art tradition. Even if the Academy was relatively small, it represented a great and visionary ambition. In this way, the Academy was a central part of the creation of Norway as an independent nation on par with other European countries, along with several other social institutions founded around the same time. One can draw parallels between the foundation of a specialised institution of fine art and the introduction of the most symbolically heavy of these new, representative institutions: the Norwegian royal family. King Haakon and Queen Maud had their coronation in Nidarosdomen in June 1906, just three years before the foundation of the Academy. Both can be seen as manifestations of the desire to give primacy to the exceptional in society. In this respect, they could be seen as exemplary, capturing something for people to aspire to.

Maud was an English princess who married her Danish cousin Prince Carl (later Haakon VII). She represented a potentially strong bond between Norway and the UK, which was probably seen as more important than greater ties to Denmark, which her husband represented.

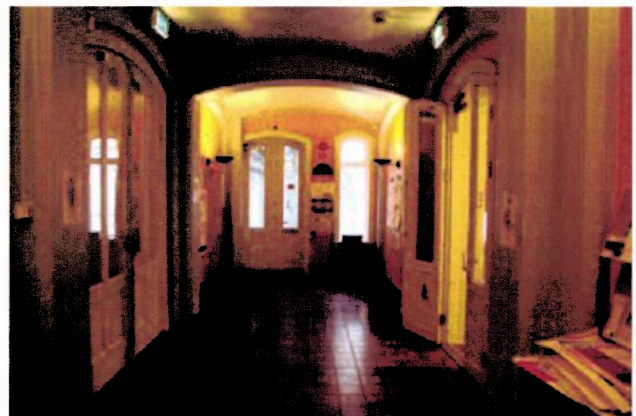
Maud was a style-conscious woman, who brought European fashion to Norway, both symbolically and practically. She was renowned for her good taste and was seen as unusually elegant, both in Norway and abroad. This sense of style was reflected in her wardrobe, but she also made other aesthetic alterations to her surroundings. One of her projects was to change the lighting in the Royal Palace in Oslo. She ordered specially designed, hand-blown red light bulbs for the representative rooms at the Palace. The light from these bulbs was particularly flattering, making the face glow so that people looked younger and more radiant. The light became a subtle frame that created a specific ambience for her meetings, transcending the glumness of the everyday.

The building and room

The Academy's history and following isolation was reflected in the building that housed it. Designed by architect Wilhelm von Hanno and built by the Norwegian government in 1879, it was originally built for the Norwegian Mapping Authority. When the Academy moved in in 1982, the building was already listed as protected.

Despite its charismatic character, the building had no clear main entrance. Over the front door large gold letters still announced Norwegian Mapping Authorities as inhabitant. Only on closer inspection a small, transparent plastic sign on the side of the door announced KhiO's presence. The Academy only appeared in hand writing on a piece of paper next to a bell. The door was always locked. Students and staff used a back door leading to a narrow spiral staircase as main entrance, while the original and statelier 'main entrance' was mainly used for storage. For visitors the first meeting with the institution was strangely dismissive, haphazard and confusing. Instead of a lobby or reception area, one entered a narrow corridor apparently leading nowhere. I believe that this description, unfortunately, captures how outsiders often feel when they encounter art and its institutions.

The Academy's communication problems struck me as significant on several levels. I felt they were the result of a friction, perhaps even incompatibility, between the inside and outside of the institution, and that the real problem was a lack of trust between Norwegian social democracy and European art tradition. I wanted to open the Academy up by giving it a functional entrance. My ambition with this intervention was to give the Academy's status a more clear visual representation, and at the same time to make the institution more available. The room already existed, but rather than projecting the Academy's self image as a representative of a great tradition, it visualised the feeling of powerlessness that prevailed at the institution. I wanted to activate both the practical and the symbolic significance of the room.



Before my intervention the hall was painted in a strong, opaque orange with profiles in cold grey. It had random lighting and furniture which functioned poorly both practically and aesthetically. I scratched the painting to identify the original colours of the walls, which

were then brought back to their original colours. Specially designed furniture was installed, and, most importantly, the lighting was changed to add status and character to the room. A lighting inspired by the story of Queen Maud's red light bulbs replaced the existing wall lamps. A big red mouth-blown glass lamp was hung from the ceiling in the middle of the room, surrounded by four white lamps blown in the same shape.

When the Art Academy moved out of the old premises, the glass lamps were left in the old building. It is unclear why this happened, it has been said that they were fixed to the ceiling, which is not the case. The red light is therefore currently out, which could maybe be seen as an illustration to the currently still quite difficult situation at the Academy. Instead of the real lamps, KHiO has wished for, and received, my two large, framed photographs of the intervention as a gift from the private owner of the buildings on the new campus. The pictures now hang outside the entrance to the new, interdisciplinary library. *Promesse de bonheur* argues the need for an autonomous Academy, and its need for suitable premises. The intervention is a concrete image, or reminder of the great international art tradition the Academy is part of. But first and foremost it is an illustration of art's ability to survive, and its continuity throughout history. Art is both symbolic and very concrete. It provides 'the alternative' with a face and a place in society. In this way, it meets a general need – not just the artist's – but also for society as a whole. It shows that there is room for exceptions and surprises. There is freedom and beauty. The trick is, as Adorno put it, a promise of happiness, *Promesse de bonheur*.



Magnor glass factory



I was done, I needed to abandon
art and enter the real world.

Three Months' Work, speech, 2010

THREE MONTHS' WORK

Work period and speech at Stenersenmuseet

The result of three months' work as part of the staff at the Oslo department of the Red Cross.

Background

Three Months' Work represents a crisis in my artistic project. It was born out of an uncertainty about where the artistic core was to be found in my interventions (was there even really such a thing as a 'core'?), about the relation between the participation phase and the finished result, and about who I was addressing. But *Three Months' Work* also expresses the irritation about how the political engagement expressed in art so often seems to fall flat to the ground without being seen or heard by anyone except those already sharing the artist's position. My ambition was somehow to test out limits or possibilities in my way of working. Despite a truly heartfelt and intense motivation, in retrospect I do not see this intervention as particularly artistically successful. What is interesting, therefore, is to look at where the problems lay and why.

Israel's attack on Gaza during Christmas 2008 led to a number of calls for boycotts and similar reactions from committed artists. I participated in several discussions about possible reactions. Of course nobody expected a boycott by Norwegian artists to be the solution to a serious crisis in the Middle East, but on a more general level the fact that an artistic boycott would have no real effect on a concrete situation was still perceived by many as very frustrating. It seemed a bit pointless if it were to be seen only as a symbolic gesture. I shared this frustration, and I also suspected that this feeling of impotence led to a strange and actually false political uniformity among my fellow artists. I knew for a fact that there were significant differences in our personal views and positions, but these seemed to disappear into compromises about positions we tacitly accepted that nobody would really listen to. I sometimes had a feeling that we did not even take our own claims seriously, and that they were mostly a confirmation of solidarity towards our own group, a safe expression of belonging. It seemed to me that there was too little at stake, the framework we worked in was too protective. I felt disillusioned and disappointed.

Three Months' Work was an attempt to find an artistic method by which the aesthetic principle would also produce real consequences. I would try to break what I perceived as a

membrane separating artistic gestures from 'real life', represented here by the walls around the empty exhibition room. In line with this and with the experience from *Waldgänger*, I decided to isolate the participation phase of my work to see if it could work as an aesthetic experience and object in itself. The question was whether my way of participating was in itself an artistic act, or if it was just a rather complicated research method leading up to the artistic result in the form of a physical element in the room. And was there any point to defining my work as art at all if there were other ways to be more efficient?

The choice of the Red Cross

The search for practical and efficient alternatives led to an interest for humanitarian organisations. Having considered several NGOs, I ended up offering the Red Cross three months of my work for free. The reason I chose the Red Cross was the organization's size and global presence, their fundamental principles, which include neutrality and volunteerism, and their role in conceiving the Geneva Conventions and controlling their application internationally. I was also interested in volunteerism as a practice of gift economy. I estimated three months to be the time I would otherwise have invested in producing a more traditional artwork for a museum exhibition. The story about this work period and the reasons behind it were to be told in the form of a speech in an empty room at the Stenersen museum in Oslo. Apart from the speech and what was expected of me as an ordinary part of the staff, I did not produce anything else while working at the Red Cross. I worked full time and was responsible among other things for archiving historical materials, the register of volunteers and members, coordination of volunteer activities, and writing articles for their magazine. My colleagues were aware that I was an artist and that I was there as part of my artistic practice.

Criticism

Three Months' Work met mixed reactions. Some were positive, others were harshly negative. Here I will focus on the negative because I think they make clear which aspects are fundamental to my work and which are less important. The main criticism was about the very spirit of the intervention, perceived by some as negative and disillusioned. Weaknesses in the speech were also problematic. It was too naïf, inarticulate and uncritical towards what I had chosen to use as a counterweight or alternative to the political art and the problems connected to our claims for autonomy. The Red Cross was portrayed as a 'clean alternative', which of course it is not. Among others, several examples of international corruption have

been documented within the organisation, and criticism of the principle of political neutrality giving way to apathy was the very reason for the creation of Médecins Sans Frontières. Intending to highlight and criticise the art field and its claim for autonomy as a political limitation, I had not been interested in criticizing the Red Cross. But the use of the Red Cross as a symbol in a text that insisted on the concrete was an obvious contradiction, and the lack of criticism towards the organization was a blind spot that made my argument less convincing.

More in line with what I was prepared for was the criticism that this work did not offer anything to the audience, and for leaving the room empty. However, many had found that the aesthetic choices of the actual performance of the speech to be successful (the red dress against the grey floor and the white walls seemed to echo both personal drama and the symbol of the Red Cross, the position in the room, the lighting, etc.). In other words, the formal aspects of the intervention, as it was presented in the exhibition, were a success and could be put to better use with a stronger concept. The performance of the speech had worked as an image, but it was not enough to compensate for the weaknesses in the text.

The audience for this intervention consisted of two groups in two different contexts, and they have also seen two very different representations of the concept. *Three Months' Work* had functioned well with the staff at the Red Cross, which has expressed joy and satisfaction both with my presence there and with the results of it in terms of work and self-knowledge in the workplace. They also appreciated the speech, and still use it internally during seminars and courses. The participation in other words had worked well, similarly to the period spent at the tax office in Hammerfest for *Waldgänger*. But the story did not communicate equally well with the audience in the exhibition space. This may partly be attributed to a weaker concept than in other interventions, and partly I think it was problematic that the intervention as a whole failed to produce an attractive or convincing alternative to what I was criticising. In other projects I had strongly advocated the centrality of art in society, a position that doesn't require a particularly strong argument to gain acceptance within the art world, while here doubts about this formed the very centre and motivation for my intervention. The speech was maybe perceived as unpleasantly confrontational in the art room, but I do not think this would have been a problem had it also presented a clearer articulation of the relationship with the Red Cross. Further, the weaknesses in the text were also highlighted by the empty room; the representation of the experience completely depended on speech. The visuality of the performance was not enough to compensate for the gaps in the speech. As one of my critics said, there was no joy

in this intervention, it was just sad. I think the problems in *Three Months' Work* point to the actual importance of a physical and clearly aesthetical end result in my work. It is crucial to the story about the whole concept, and these stories are ultimately, in my opinion, the most important result of my work. But they require physical, sensory expression to come to life.

Despite the less than successful result of this intervention, it was based on a genuine interest for the topics I tried to discuss. A developed and hopefully refined version of some of the key concepts in *Three Months' Work* are central to my next intervention, *Mirage*, still in production at the moment of writing.

THREE MONTHS' WORK

Speech

This was going to be my farewell to art.

It started with Israel's attack on the Gaza Strip at Christmas in 2008. Only the very cold-hearted could remain unmoved by the images of the dead among the rubble of what had been homes, schools and shops. It became impossible to read the papers. Every day they showed how civilians' basic rights were mercilessly trampled on. It was shockingly ugly. A terrible sense of powerlessness crept in along with the awareness that I had no right to feel this pain, which strictly speaking was not mine. The pictures from the Gaza Strip had no concrete consequences for my life. It would be inappropriate to make this problem my own, yet, at the same, it was impossible to ignore the images. The only right thing to do was to act.

I received a number of requests from committed colleagues who called for a cultural boycott of Israel. We discussed it for some time. Our conversations repeatedly circled around without finding a way out. Our compassion and solidarity meant nothing. Our toolbox contained no useful devices for this situation.

Events on the Gaza Strip made clear my limitations as an artist. In principle, there was nothing wrong with making art based on the feeling I shared with so many others that Christmas. Nevertheless, in relation to how the term ART can be understood and dealt with there are insurmountable ethical problems with works of art that are based on such issues. Regardless of how good the intentions are and how real the commitment of the artist is, it becomes impossible, for example, not to aestheticize the pain of others. Works of art seem forever removed from the reality they spring from and cannot generate a reciprocal dialogue with the world outside.

My works have always been attempts to create windows onto a different, albeit as real, a world to create a sense of alternative possibilities. There is nothing wrong in doing this through pictures, but if one senses that the work of art is contained by the surface of the

image, it remains “just” a picture. It does not operate in the world of the viewer and has no impact. In the intersection between the art institution, the press, the market and the public domain it is often in this way art is understood and mediated. The works of art are no longer windows onto a potential reality, but a fantasy world one does not need to take seriously. It is as if they have been subdued.

It felt utterly meaningless to hold onto the importance of artistic production in light of what else happened in the world that Christmas. I thought this was definitively the end. I was done, I needed to abandon art and enter the real world.

For some people do act. And what they do does not mean anything more than just that, it does not refer to anything else. They are in direct contact with reality. Their actions lead to real, concrete changes. This was exactly what I missed as an artist.

The Red Cross upholds the Geneva Conventions, which all nations have signed up to. The Conventions state that there are rules even in war and that civilians have inalienable rights. The attack on the Gaza Strip was a blatant breach of the Conventions. What Israel did that Christmas WAS wrong, and could not be excused or interpreted in any other way. Regardless of historical precedents and other factors: this was in principle WRONG. The Geneva Conventions were a stable, guiding light against a murky backdrop.

So I offered the Red Cross the time I would otherwise have spent on filling this exhibition space. This autumn – for three months – I have been a full-time volunteer at the Oslo Red Cross.

The activities of the Red Cross are based on seven guiding principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality. The organisation maintains rigorous self-control to ensure that it does not lose sight of these principles. As the working days passed by, I became increasingly overwhelmed by the power inherent in this approach. These principles place the Red Cross outside other mechanism that regulate society, which can seem to reign supreme. One cannot control the Red Cross from outside, it will not allow itself to become instrumentalised. In many ways it represents what I mean by this “other world”, showing not only that it is possible, but also that it really EXISTS. It is the same world that we inhabit, just seen from a slightly different angle.

The people who work for the Red Cross persistently strive for a clear ideal. They repeatedly express it, and place it in reality as a concrete fact for all to see.

Our systems ARE NOT reality, they are merely instruments for understanding and inhabiting reality. The Red Cross is an example of how there are traces of radically different models of understanding within our system. They can be found where our system fails, in the gaps between the different concepts we operate with. The activities of the Red Cross are as real as the attacks on the Gaza Strip. They express real aspects of humankind, and give these aspects concrete, living form in the world.

So I continued to use the time I would otherwise have spent on art production on the same thing: on the possibility of creating a slightly different world. In this case, my work was set in a worldwide system, and it was, of course, not about my free, individual expression. However, after a while it seemed less important to maintain the boundary between my artistic practice and what I was now doing. In reality, they felt the same. And if what I did for the Red Cross was part of my artistic practice, one could say, given that my colleagues had exactly the same tasks and carried them out in exactly the same way, that their endeavours could also be seen as an aesthetic gesture. Was there any real difference between my work and theirs?

It is easy to assume that the systems, categories and concepts we are surrounded by are naturally given or absolute; that we have to accept them and adapt to the boundaries between one concept and another, one category and another. But if we rest our gaze on a face, for example, it is as if the contours gradually disintegrate. The face is still there, but more as a concentration of presence rather than something that is distinct from everything else. In the same way, I feel that, if we look closely at this room, the walls that set it apart from the outside world may lose their significance.

MIRAGE

In collaboration with UNICEF, commissioned by the National Tourist Routes in Norway
Still in production, scheduled to be finished in 2014

Mirage is the last of the five interventions in *Ex Centric*, and is still under production. The intervention will consist of ten wells drilled in the ground, all topped by identical Afridev hand pumps. One well will be positioned in the spectacular landscape by the Gaular mountain not far from the Sognefjord, the world's longest fjord, while the other nine wells will be placed in the Bantyre area in Malawi. They are to be considered together as forming one artwork while also being simply ten unctinal wells pumping up the local groundwater.

Since this intervention is yet to be finished, I will focus on the production process and the challenges I have met working on it so far.

National Tourist Routes

Mirage continues my interest in humanitarian organizations, this time I am working with UNICEF to explore the issue of third world aid both as a conventional, regulated economy and as an expression of gift economy. The intervention is produced by invitation from the National Tourist Routes (NT), a huge national investment promoting Norway as a destination for car tourists. Throughout Norway NT has selected eighteen stretches of road because of their spectacular landscape qualities. The roads will be improved and necessary structures such as parking spots, picnic areas and viewpoints will be added. In addition, one site specific artwork will be produced for each route. NT's promotion of Norway insists on the spectacular and romantic. Mountains, fjords and breathtaking views are elements that are typically emphasized. The selected routes are unarguably remarkably beautiful, but the selection deliberately omits traces of modernity such as for instance industry, housing developments, mining and energy production. In this way NT, similarly to Maihaugen before *Saga Night*, shows a version of Norway that has little in common with the country's contemporary economic reality. The extremely luxurious and lavish productions' only purpose is to confirm and emphasize the spectacular qualities of the selected landscapes. Where the project's funding comes from, or what lies beyond the selected views, is not mentioned The Norwegian oil industry and its environmental and socioeconomic impact is not part of the story conveyed here. The romantic and nostalgic version of Norway promoted



Gaular watercourses

here seems vaguely in contradiction to the car tourism the project is supposed to encourage, but this is never addressed. At a closer look several of the areas surrounding the selected routes are visibly struggling with depopulation. Old fashioned fishing and farming is no longer profitable, and people move to larger centres for education and jobs. The investment in tourism is also an attempt to replace livelihoods lost in the modernisation process of the country.

I was a bit disturbed by what I perceived as an underlying rhetoric problem in the whole project, and in developing *Mirage* the tension between migration and tourism has been an important starting point. In the face of this enormously expensive investment in tourism, it is impossible not to think of the problems connected to immigration in Norway, with its strict policy often described as inhuman. Why do people travel? From a global perspective tourism is reserved for a very small, highly privileged economic elite, while most travels are made in search of better life conditions, even survival. The question of economic centre versus economic periphery, and the responsibility that rests on our privileged part of the world was a key question.

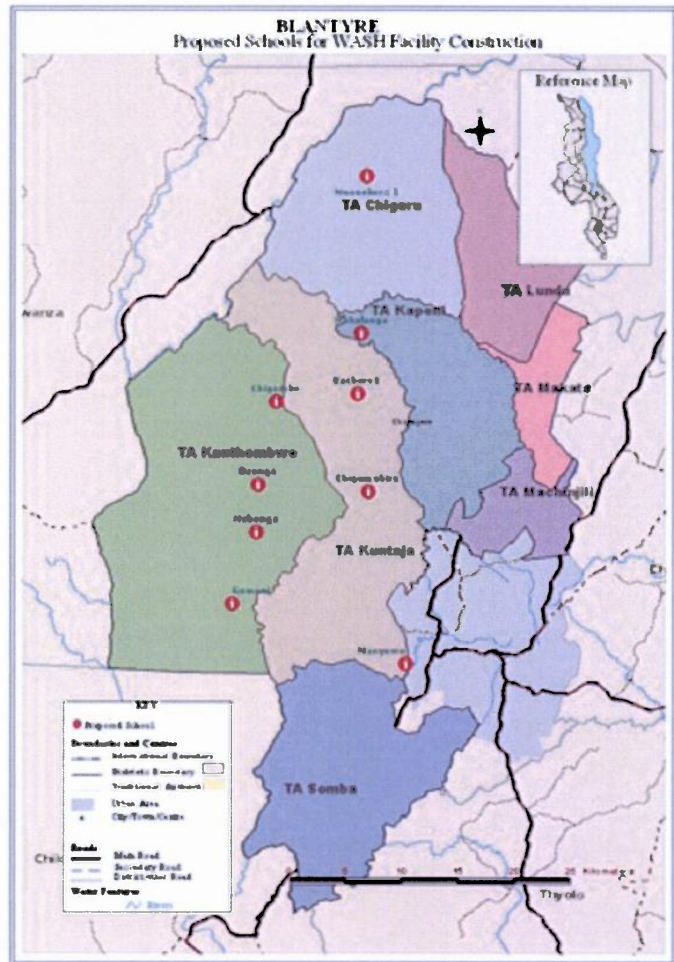
Initially *Mirage* was conceived in response to Atlanterhavsvegen, a stretch of road running over a series of tiny islands connected with spectacular bridges. The road runs along one of the most dramatic coastlines in Norway, its waters infamous for hidden rocks and its bottom full of shipwrecks. A monument for those who never came back from the sea on one of the tiny islands serves as a reminder of the harsh life people in this area once lived. From the road the view goes on uninterrupted towards the horizon, and the title of this intervention alludes precisely to the relationship between near and far. 'Mirage' is the term for an optical phenomenon in which light rays are refracted and create an image of distant objects. It is like

a mirror reflecting images from elsewhere. Mountains, cities, ships or other objects which in reality are far beyond the horizon, can appear very close. This phenomenon has always lured travelers and sailors to believe they are in a different place than they actually are. I wanted *Mirage* to be about what is common to people, and about how the world is distributed. I wanted it to be about empathy.

Because of technical challenges connected to the ground water and its quality, the intervention has now been moved to Gaularfjellet. Just like Atlanterhavsvegen, this area is characterised by its abundance of water. Rivers and waterfalls run through the whole area in a continuous system until it reaches the Sognefjord, the longest and deepest fjord in the world, and then the ocean. Drought has been a key trigger for mass migration and humanitarian crises in the world. The abundance of water in this landscape stroke me as a good analogy to Norway's extremely privileged economic situation, and also of the lavishness of the very project I was in. *Mirage* has the biggest production budget I have ever had, 1,8 million Nok (c. 250 000,- Euro) in addition to my fee. This is public money and is therefore not mine to give, but my intervention can be seen as the upset of a framework where this abundance can flow according to a pattern in contrast with the one determining global distribution today. The collaboration with UNICEF on their programme to provide clean drinking water in drought affected areas in Africa combines the two flows, one enabling the other; the flow of water masses, and the flow of money. Water runs through all living beings and forms a continuous mass throughout the globe similarly to how the practice of gift economy connects the members of societies and holds them together. By placing identical wells in different locations at such a great a distance, mental image of a unitary world will be created. The different sites are conceptually brought together, and life's different conditions are set up against each other.

Malawi

After discussing various options with UNICEF, we decided to concentrate on Malawi for many reasons. A rather small country in the inland of South-East Africa, Malawi is one of the world's least developed countries. The main industry is agriculture, and the ca 13.9 million inhabitants live mostly in rural areas. After a long period of dictatorship, the country is now in a process of democratization. It has a high infant mortality and major problems with HIV / AIDS. There are big challenges related to water, sanitation and education. The political situation is currently quiet and transparent and not signed by conflict, making it relatively easy to implement a project like this. An investment here is convenient, it is safe to

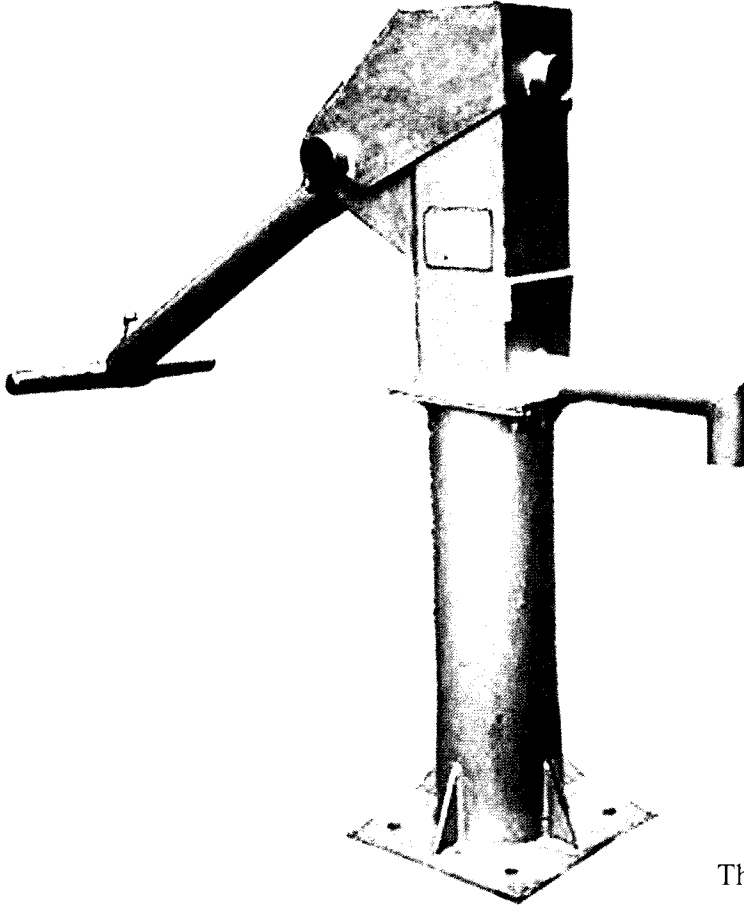


Positioning of the wells in Malawi

assume the money will arrive where it should, and that the wells will be maintained. The physical distances in Malawi are limited, so transport and logistics will not be too challenging.

The wells

The wells will be drilled and the pumps installed according to UNICEF's manual, which will serve as an important conceptual fulcrum of the whole intervention. All ten wells will be fully functional. The Afri Dev pump model installed on top of each well is designed and produced in Africa by African engineers to meet African needs, and can be considered an example of African emancipation from the problems created by colonialism and historically also partly upheld by traditional third world aid. But even if every well will be drilled and built according to the same manual, there will be formal variations due to individual local characteristics. The small pool in front of each pump will be made of cement mixed with local sand, interfering with the colour of the concrete. The shape of the pool will be decided



The Afri Dev pump

in each case taking into consideration the terrain onto which it is placed, thus some will be high, some will be low, inclination, size and form will vary. In Malawi there will be a local committee responsible for the maintenance and operation of each well, while in Norway NT will be responsible..

Problems along the way

My proposal for *Mirage* won a closed competition, and explained all aspects of the concept in detail. National Tourist Routes must therefore be said to have had full knowledge of the project and its implications. Yet we have encountered several major problems during the production, by now accumulating a delay of more than two years. Some are practical problems connected to things such as water quality, soil conditions, legal ownership of the drilling sites, etc., while others are more conceptual. The largest and most complex obstacle so far has been associated with the very concept of the gift, which has led to a lot of confusion and problems of both practical and conceptual character. Negotiations around this problem has been the biggest and most time consuming challenge in the production so far,

revealing a series of interesting aspects of economic management. It is very much like trying to fit a circle into a square. Both as a consequence of *Mirage* being produced for public money and in line with modern third world aid concepts neither UNICEF, NT nor I will appear as 'giver', but emphasis will be on the local population's own investment and ownership towards the wells. NT is part of the Norwegian Public Roads Administration, and as a State agency any gift from them will count as corruption. All expenses must correspond to acquisitions of goods or services. For the same reasons UNICEF Malawi has also had to repeatedly document their financial transparency as a supplier to the Norwegian government. I was clearly told that my work could not be a gift, it had to be art. The two concepts were mutually exclusive. To define the gift as an integral part of the general aesthetic of the intervention proved impossible within the administrative framework of NT. It was necessary to get something back, and the transaction had to be direct, meaning the money leaving NT had to be registered and understood as a payment for some kind of goods or service. It was not enough that NT, in turn, would receive something from UNICEF Malawi in the form of concept, competence and pumps. Therefore, in order to proceed with the intervention, I had to translate 'gift' into 'art production abroad'. This apparently solved most problems while leaving the actual function and concept intact. But the problem lingered, and reappeared in other forms. An initial demand for signs with NT logos positioned by each of the Malawi wells and a claim that the wells *must* be understood as art works were dropped after some discussion and an absolute rejection from UNICEF. But the question of how the wells' dual nature as both art and pragmatic everyday objects should be communicated in Malawi, and how this communication could be combined with UNICEF's requirements about local ownership was still a problem. Was it colonialist of me to communicate the wells simply as everyday objects? Or was it, on the contrary, colonialist of me to communicate them as art? Both these simplified versions of the story would be only partial and based on assumptions about the locals' needs and interests. These questions have never been raised during the production of equivalent projects realised in Norway (see for example *Waldgänger* and *Construction site*). I have argued for an attitude similar to that of my various participation experiences: I'm going to be present at the start of each drilling, and I will not try to hide my role as an artist. The wells will all be placed near primary schools to help the literacy process in the area and the story of *Mirage* will be conveyed through the school's educational program. But there will not be any signs by the wells, and the drilling and construction of the wells will be clearly communicated as a local investment as this work is done partly by volunteers in the various communities. The wells are primarily the merit of the locals, who

also have made great efforts to get their village on the list of eligible locations for a UNICEF intervention. Contrasting a division between an 'us' and a 'them' has proven necessary and challenging from the start. The idea that value would be flowing in two opposite directions, the money from Norway, and engineering expertise, ideas and material flowing from Africa, and that these two opposite flows should neutralise each other within the structure of *Mirage*, has still not quite convinced the Norwegian administration. Finding the pump ugly, they have suggested a series of alternatives and modifications to it in order for the well to fit more seamlessly and gracefully into the spectacular Norwegian landscape. Money not being a problem here, it seems hard to understand why we could not simply buy a prettier pump. More or less clearly expressed expectations of gratitude also keep showing up, for instance in the form of what would seem like a rather pointless lack of clarity towards UNICEF when it comes to actual economic commitment.

The argument that they will get a work of art, just like they do for all their other routes, seems vaguely unconvincing, probably because most of the intervention will take place somewhere else. The immaterial aspect of the *Mirage* that is primarily due to the large distances is challenging to convey in a reassuring way. But most of all gift economy has proved to be generally and fundamentally incompatible with the production structure within which *Mirage* is to be realised. Partly this is due to strict and narrow regulations of expenditure of public money, but partly I believe it is due to the institutional structure of NT. Gift economy is more personal than market economy, and therefore often struggles in the meeting with institutions where responsibilities and initiatives are delegated and fragmented. The giving of a gift means the giver accumulates honour, but it is debatable whether an institution as such reacts to this concept. As I mentioned in the paragraph called *On the gift as artistic strategy*, the solution to this is to look at the institution as the sum of the people working within it and the relations between them. In my experience it works, but it takes longer than if the relationship is direct between two people. In this case it remains to be seen. At the moment, however, there are signals that despite all this, the NT finds the Malawi part of the intervention artistically interesting enough to be willing to stick to it despite insufficient water quality at the first drilling in Norway. It appears therefore that the intervention will be completed as planned during 2014. If completed, *Mirage* will provide drinking water to an estimate 25 000 people.



Drilling for water by Atlanterhavsvegen, February 2012

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