



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

Archive of Fear and Love

On the discourse of history, memory and nostalgia
in contemporary art

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Summary

In my master thesis project, I deal with the ongoing discourse in contemporary art on archive, memory, nostalgia and history. I am making different versions of *archival* “total” installations dealing with nuclear power, fear, hope and connections between the *political* and the *private*.

Starting out with the appropriation of found texts, objects, photos and film footage merged with personal memories I rework the material – transforming it, bending it, adding to it and making new connections between the objects. The aim is to both *deconstruct* and *reconstruct* the past in order to offer alternative historical accounts and also putting the search light on the power structures and societal norms that make up the foundations of established historical research. Whose history is being written and what is excluded? I incorporate elements and fragments of life that I as a historian would have found irrelevant, and thereby open up for a more “true” and democratic history where the viewer visiting my installations will become a co-producer of the work.

My installations are made up of mixed media: video, painting, sculpture, found objects and texts. In my artistic process theories of art, culture and society are important sources of inspiration. On the other hand, the strongest driving forces for me to do art are in the physical materiality and the practical search process of the work itself.

Key words: archive, history, memory, nostalgia, contemporary art, installation art, video art, nuclear energy, technological determinism

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Lars Olsson

1. Introduction

My work is inspired by the discourse in contemporary art dealing with archive and the writing of history. As we shall see in this thesis there are many artists dealing with the topic – the “crowded intersection of archivization and art” as one writer puts it.¹ In my art I try to build upon my earlier experience as a historian in order to develop a narrative suggesting alternative ways of forming society and human interaction.

I have been interested in history as far back as I can remember – without the historical context of whatever surrounds me I usually feel helpless and lost. I have always felt a need to know how things became what they are – the places where I have lived, our family history, my country, the world. Maybe I need these stories of the past to guide me in my thinking about the future. I suspect that the heritage from my father is strong here – he had a great interest in history and my childhood is filled with trips to museums, old castles, monasteries, medieval town centres and other places. The histories that attracted most of his attention were those of kings, generals, soldiers and warfare in the past, especially in the 17th and 18th centuries when Sweden was a strong political power in Northern Europe.

The history that eventually would become my major concern was that of industrial society in the Western world in the 19th and 20th centuries. When I as an engineering student at Chalmers University of Technology was about to embark upon my master thesis project in 1991 the chance appeared to do it in the field of history of technology. This in turn led directly for me to be enrolled as a Ph.D. student there, learning to become a professional historian – more about this in chapter 3. Looking back at myself, I now realise that, what attracted me to the field was the visual material I encountered – the images in archives, journals and books – images of people in industrial settings, in offices and elsewhere – people with dreams, with fears and hopes, people now dead since a long time.

After having finished my doctoral dissertation in 2000, I turned the horizon 180 degrees working for some years with strategies and future planning in Swedish government research policy. However, feeling a need for a more subjective, open and critical approach to these and other areas, I choose to become an artist, having been in art schools since 2006 – first two years at Göteborgs Konstskola and for the last two years in the master’s programme C:Art:Media at Valand School of Fine Arts.

This report is organized in the following way: first, in chapter 2, I will discuss the over-all discourse in the art world dealing with archive and history – this is the main objective of my investigation. I will be presenting some artists that have been vital sources of inspiration to me. Then, in chapter 3, I will deal with the theme I address as regards the social issues and the larger context of my art. Finally, in chapter 4, I will out-line the process of my master project – concerns, references and directions. As a concluding remark, in chapter 5 we embark on a journey to a vast foreign continent.

All images in this report are documentations of my master project.

¹Sven Spieker, *The Big Archive: Art from Bureaucracy* (Cambridge, MA, 2008), 195.

2. Discourse: History, archive and memory

In this chapter I will deal with the discourse of archive, history and memory as well as bring forward artists which have had a strong influence upon my work. While I will be citing some of the theoretical literature in the field it should be noted that in the art world the discourses take place not only in theory and art critique but in the practical work of the artists as well.

2.1 An archival impulse

The concept of archive and questions about the writing of history attract considerable interest in the art world.² Hal Foster has pointed to an “archival impulse” in contemporary art, characterized by an ambition among artists to make history, physically and spatially present.³ The starting point is historical material, often lost, marginalized or suppressed, and in the form of found texts, images and objects. This art connects things that appear to lack connections and take past visions of the future – visions that never materialized – as a starting point for presenting alternative ways of organizing our world. Foster emphasises that the art in question “is archival since it not only draws on informal archives but produces them as well” and goes on saying that the art “underscores the nature of all archival materials as found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private”.⁴

A recent local example of an archival approach was when artist-run Gallery 54 in Göteborg in December 2009 created an exhibition of its own archival material collected since the start in the 1950s. In a review Fredrik Svensk argues that the explanation to the interest in archival approaches is that they deal with issues of knowledge and power.⁵ He further says that the material in itself is an artistic medium in the same way as, for example, painting and that an advantage of making a work for the archive is that it generally has a long exhibition period. We can assume that he means centuries rather than weeks, an exiting possibility for an artist.

The perspective of power recurs frequently in art where the writing of history is called into question: whose history is being written and what has been left out? In the catalogue for the exhibition *Lost and Found: Queering the Archive* at Bildmuseet in Umeå during the winter and spring of 2010, the authors conclude that the works of art both *deconstruct* and *reconstruct* the past by questioning the power structures that are embedded in the archives.⁶ The

² I have published an earlier Swedish version of the text in this section in the art journal *Paletten*, see Lars Olsson, “Palettens arkiv – historisk källa och konstnärligt material”, *Paletten* 2010:1, 62 ff. The article is also enclosed in the appendix to this master thesis. On the discourse of archive in the art world there is a rich literature. In addition to those listed below, some important works in this field are: Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (London, 1996); Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London, 1972); Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and simulation* (Ann Arbor, 1994); Ursula Marx et.al. (eds.), *Walter Benjamin’s Archive: Images, texts, signs* (London, 2007). For an overview of the field, see: Charles Merewether (ed.), *The Archive* (Documents of Contemporary Art; Cambridge, MA, 2006).

³ Hal Foster, “An Archival Impulse”, *October* 110 (2004), 3-22. Compare with: Foster et.al, *Art since 1900: Modernism, antimodernism, postmodernism* (London, 2004), 668-669. Comments to Foster’s arguments and discussions about archival strategies in art can be found in Jonas J Magnusson & Cecilia Grönberg, *Omkopplingar: avskrifter, listor, dokument, arkiv* (Göteborg, 2006), 49-52.

⁴ Foster, “An Archival Impulse”, 5.

⁵ Fredrik Svensk, “Arkivet: Galleri 54”, *Göteborgs-Posten* December 12, 2009.

⁶ Mathias Danbolt, Jane Rowley & Louise Wolthers (eds.), *Lost and Found: Queering the Archive* (Bildmuseet, Umeå university, 2010).

strategy applied is to create alternative archives that include the hidden, forgotten and repressed. In *Lost and Found* it is noted that public and private archives often have left out or put aside materials related to queer lives or homosexuality. Instead of financial data, population statistics or criminal records the queer-archival art strive to record and preserve feelings and intimacy.

With the concept of archive follows several aspects that are of interest and have impact upon the choice of artistic strategy. One of these concerns the relationship between archive and memory. In his book *The Big Archive: Art from bureaucracy* Sven Spieker points out that the archive is not a memory bank and that information retrieved from there often contradicts one's memory. He argues that what an archive records "rarely coincides with what our consciousness is able to register" and concludes: "Archives do not record experience so much as its absence".⁷ Spieker exemplifies with Andy Warhol's *Time Capsules* – boxes filled with souvenirs, notes, correspondence, photos and receipts that the artist sent away for storage. These boxes became an extension of what was accumulated on Warhol's desk and the documents were filed "not because they were important, valuable or otherwise memorable, but because they were 'there', on the desk".⁸

While public archives that store material from organizations or businesses usually are not built up as haphazardly as Warhol's time capsules, still there is a fundamental similarity – the documents often have been saved just because they were "there" and at some time did have a function. Then they have been sorted and preserved, not as memory, experience and narrative, but as lists and documents that functionally keep together and reflect the activities of the organization.

The building up of an archive is crucial and has implications for its status as a source of knowledge. According to art historian Mathias Danbolt *exclusion* is a fundamental characteristic of the archive – if all documents were to be saved, this would soon lead to overfull archives, where eventually nothing would be accessible. Archives are therefore always "positioned between memory and forgetting, between order and chaos".⁹ The exclusion of material re-connect to the aspect of power – what is saved and what is not, as well as how the material is classified will affect what knowledge can be extracted at a later stage. With the spotlight on the persons that do these choices it is also relevant to consider the underlying driving forces to create archives – are they produced as a result of legal necessity, by chance or from a personal desire to leave traces behind.

The different aspects of archival art out-lined above have been valuable to me in developing my artistic process, both in the way of guiding my work in new directions and in offering an understanding of what I had already done in my art without reflecting upon it. Yet another aspect of archival art that not really is being addressed by the above cited literature is that of nostalgia, a subject which I find crucial to such an approach.

⁷ Spieker, *The Big Archive*, 3.

⁸ Ibid. For a discussion about the content in Warhol's time capsules, see Matt Wrbcian, "Tidskapsel 61 går på bio", in Eva Meyer-Hermann (ed.), *Andy Warhol: En guide till 706 föremål på 2 timmar och 56 minuter* (Moderna museet, Stockholm, 2007).

⁹ Mathias Danbolt, "Touching history: Archival relations in queer art and theory", in Danbolt et.al., *Lost and Found*, 30.

2.2 Nostalgia

“..... but be aware of the nostalgia trap!”. From the very first to the last studio talk with teachers at Valand I have been told about the dangers of nostalgia. I always get suspicious when everyone seems to agree on something and at some point I started to reflect upon the concept itself. I googled the term and found it was the same discussions abroad too – for instance, in a blog for MFA students at the Art Department of Portland State University I read: “there seems to be a general understanding among art teachers and students alike that nostalgic imagery and themes are off-limits (or maybe just too bourgeois) and should be avoided as a general rule of course”.¹⁰

Obviously, the problem associated with nostalgia in contemporary art is that “it is sure working” but “it is too easy”, “too cheap points to be gained”. Arguing in favour of nostalgia, I objected to one teacher – “but it is so strong” and she responded: “Yes, indeed it is! It is as strong as love and sex!”

For me, one way of avoiding the trap and at the same time deal with something really interesting is to make nostalgia part of the investigation. This is especially fruitful in dealing with archival art – as I see it considerations of nostalgia are more or less always present in this kind of art.

Nostalgia comes from greek with *nostos* meaning “return home” and *algos* “suffering”.¹¹ In our time we usually associate nostalgia with a feeling of loss and the longing for an idealized past that in some way appears to have been better, brighter or more secure. However, as the historian of ideas Karin Johannisson has shown, the meaning of the concept has changed throughout history – for instance in the 17th and 18th centuries nostalgia was considered a serious and sometimes even lethal disease.¹² Looking up the term in the encyclopaedia *Svensk uppslagsbok* from 1960 there was still the meaning associated with something harmful – nostalgia was described as a nervous state of mind characterized by uneasiness and disharmony among people that against their own will had been forced to move away from their home environment.¹³

Nowadays I find the term is mainly associated with something positive. Our culture is flooded by works taking a point of departure in nostalgia – for instance nostalgic books showing images of toys, urban environments and vehicles typically from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. In fashion and design nostalgia is closely connected to the term retro while in film as well as in art there is a long tradition of reuse of images associated with nostalgic strategies.¹⁴

The concept of nostalgia needs to be analysed. It addresses questions of loss and memory and contains several emotions, some of them conflicting, such as melancholia, pain and disappointment as well as joy, playfulness and passion.¹⁵ In the field of photo theory the literary critic Roland Barthes has argued “that every photograph has some degree of melancholy

¹⁰ “The ‘N Word.’ Maybe Nostalgia isn’t just for grandmas and ordinary people”, April 30, 2008, <http://contemptart.blogspot.com/2008/04/n-word-maybe-nostalgia-isnt-just-for.html>

¹¹ *Svensk uppslagsbok*, vol. 21 (Malmö, 1960), 502.

¹² For an interview with Karin Johannisson, see Awiwa Keller, “Nutida dröm om en svunnen tid”, *Dagens Nyheter*, June 14, 2005. Cf. Karin Johannisson, *Nostalggi: En känslornas historia* (Stockholm, 2001).

¹³ *Svensk uppslagsbok*, 502.

¹⁴ Vera Dika, *Recycled Culture in Contemporary Art and Film: The Uses of Nostalgia* (Cambridge, UK, 2003).

¹⁵ “The ‘N Word’”; Annika Triberg & Eva Kallhed, *Nostalgiboken: Minnen, beskrivningar, lekar och recept från 1950-, 1960- och 1970-talen* (Stockholm, 2000), 5.

affect in that the instant the image is captured it has already died; the moment is now the past, yet there is an attempt to hold on at the same time”.¹⁶

In my art I often take a point of departure in found images, objects and texts from the past, be that 8 mm amateur films, film footage from news media, photos from books or texts from journals and archives. The questions raised in connection to nostalgia are close at hand. When discussing my master project in chapter 4, I will outline the strategy I have followed for working with nostalgia in my own installations.

2.3 Artist that inspire my work

There are many artists that inspire me and the list also changes over time, if someone asks me within a year I will probably present a partly different group than now. In the following I will mainly deal with the two that have had the greatest impact upon my master project – Ilya Kabakov and Johan Grimonprez.

However, there are also many others, that for different reasons, have influenced the direction of my process, among them: Björn Lövin¹⁷, *In Memoriam*, 1972 and 2008; Jake and Dinos Chapman, *Hell*, 2000; Carl Hammoud, various paintings; Thomas Hirschhorn, *Concretion Re*, 2007 and other installations; William Kentridge, various works; Joachim Koester, *Message from André*, 2005; Sigmar Polke, various paintings; Gerhard Richter, various paintings; Rachel Whiteread, *House*, 1993, and other works.

Kabakov – “total” installations

At the very moment I first saw an image of Ilya Kabakov’s installation *The Man Who Flew into Space from his Apartment* I know in what direction I wanted to go as an artist – it was love at first sight, I guess. Every inch of the room in that piece contributes to tell a story and if there is anything that could be described as the opposite of a minimalist sculpture it must be this work, overloaded with images, drawings, text, furniture, a model landscape and other things.

Kabakov has outlined his artistic approach in the book *Total installations*. Central to his thinking is the emphasis on the viewer:

The main actor of the total installation, the main center toward which everything is addressed, for which everything is intended, is the viewer [...] the whole installation is oriented only toward his perception, and any point of the installation, any of its structures is

¹⁶ The quote is not from Barthes but from the blog “The ‘N Word”. Cf. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (New York, 1981). See also [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camera_Lucida_\(book\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camera_Lucida_(book))

¹⁷ From the early 1970s onwards, Björn Lövin built “environments” or installations dealing with the relationship between the personal and the political, often touching upon the concept of the museum and the relation between his own memories and historical information. I am inspired by several of his works but in particular the piece *In Memoriam*, first exhibited in 1972 and reconstructed at the exhibition *History Acts* in Göteborg in 2008. The piece is built as an interior of an office including a narrative in the form of a fictional documentary on a flat screen, see: Magnus af Petersens (ed.), *Björn Lövin: Ett kryss för tanken / X Marks the Thought* (Stockholm, 2009).

*oriented only toward the impression it should make on the viewer, only his reaction is anticipated.*¹⁸

Kabakov compares the total installation with the theatre “where everything – the decorations, actions, plot – exists not in and of itself, but rather is calculated for the viewer’s reaction”. On the other hand, there are also important differences, especially regarding the behaviour of the viewer – in the theatre he or she sit still but in the installation “moves freely around inside of it, finds newer and newer points of examination, viewing either details, or the whole thing, being governed, so it seems, only by his own whim and choice”. For this reason the artist must carefully think through every detail of the installation and anticipate every direction of viewing. If not, it might jeopardize the piece: “If *all* possible points of review are not definitively considered in the execution of the artistic concept, then these ‘blanks’ will lead to the failure of the entire concept.”¹⁹

In line with this reasoning, in his writing he thoroughly discusses the different parts of a total installation that one must consider: the walls, the ceiling, the floor, entrances to and exits from the installation, lighting, colour, sound i.e. music and voice, the flow through the installation if it is made up of several rooms, the time that the viewer can be expected to spend in the installation and many other aspects. All these things have to contribute and find a “common language”.

The art critic Clair Bishop describes Kabakov’s installations as immersive scenes which the viewers enter into and argue that they hereby get a special kind of viewing experience, which above all can be associated with dreaming. She says: “Kabakov often describes the effect of the ‘total installation’ as one of ‘engulfment’: we are not just surrounded by a physical scenario but are ‘submerged’ by the work; we ‘dive’ into it, and are ‘engrossed’ ”.²⁰ To some extent this resembles the experience one can have when watching a film, reading a book or dreaming. Of course, all these are quite different modes but what they share with the total installation is the characteristic of psychological absorption.

Bishop goes on saying that we “imaginatively project ourselves into an immersive ‘scene’ that requires creative free-association in order to articulate its meaning”. In Kabakov’s own words it is a matter of “cranking up of the wheel of associations, cultural or everyday analogies, personal memories” and he maintain that familiar “circumstances and the contrived illusion carry the one who is wandering inside the installation away into his personal corridor of memory”. However, as Bishop points out, the associations are not only personal but also culturally specific with many of Kabakov’s installations taking a point of departure in institutional spaces, such as communal apartments or schools, during the Soviet era. Well known to people in Russia, these spaces also are recognised by Westerners as familiar places which according to Kabakov “already exist in principle in the past experience of each person” and leading the viewer to “his own personal, highly familiar past”.²¹

A work by Kabakov which is of particular relevance to our discussion is his *The Big Archive*. The piece tries to activate the viewer and make them part of the installation. As described by Sven Spieker, upon entering “the installation and reading the handwritten messages and forms that are posted all over its drab dividing walls, the visitor soon realizes that he or she is in fact

¹⁸ Ilya Kabakov, *On the Total Installation* (Bonn, 1995), 275.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Clair Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (London, 2005), 14.

²¹ All quotes in this paragraph are from Ibid, 16 f.

part of the archive's inventory" and on the forms "on the archive's desks invite spectators to confirm through their signatures that they are ready to accept the position the archive has reserved for them".²² The viewers are sorted into groups such as "sick people", "dissatisfied with their living conditions" and so on.

As I will discuss in section 4.3 there are several aspects of Kabakov's thinking about total installations that have inspired me in my work, such as considerations about engulfment of the viewer and how every detail contribute to a common language leading associations both to specific places and periods in history and to one's personal story.

Grimonprez – the tension between documentary and fiction

What I find interesting in Johan Grimonprez's work is the way that he develops a certain kind of narrative in his videos combining elements of *documentary* and *fiction*. The two pieces that I will refer to are *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* (1997, 68 minutes), available on DVD, and *Double Take* (2009, 80 minutes) – I watched the latter one at Magasin 3 in Stockholm in June 2009.

In *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* he uses documentary news media film images about aircraft hijackings from the post-World War period up until the 1990s and combines this material with other elements such as a narrative voice reading poetry, film clips from feature films and commercials – material not really connected to the documentary parts but still working very well together in forming a narrative which differs both from historical documentaries and from the narrative of Hollywood productions.

Upon watching I made the following remarks on its content:

- ☐ shifting musical themes, from fearful to silly, contemporary to those days
- ☐ story-teller, sometimes poetry
- ☐ disturbances in the TV images
- ☐ text and arrows
- ☐ sometimes colour, sometimes black and white
- ☐ documentary narrative voice
- ☐ Japanese kamikaze pilot, World War II
- ☐ dealing with one geographic area at a time, connected to certain hijackings there
- ☐ images of journalists
- ☐ quotations from novels by Don DeLillo; *White Noise* and *Mao II*
- ☐ newly (i.e. when he made the film) produced film footage from airports
- ☐ film clips from feature films, catastrophe films
- ☐ interviews with victims
- ☐ old newsreels
- ☐ death and conspiracy are general features throughout
- ☐ hijacking at Cuba and documentary clips of Castro
- ☐ weapons
- ☐ trains and cars
- ☐ Malcolm X
- ☐ sometimes film images in slow motion
- ☐ the Soviet Union, launch of rockets, nuclear explosions, Stalin, sportsmen, Russian music

²² Spieker, *The Big Archive*, 196.

- ☐ dying mice
- ☐ the stroke of the clock, date
- ☐ Hungarian hijackers in the West
- ☐ Castro visiting Soviet leaders, going hunting
- ☐ the UN and Castro
- ☐ Korea, China, Mao
- ☐ Arabs, Kuwait
- ☐ psychologist being interviewed on the behaviour of hijackers
- ☐ TV set in the home
- ☐ president Nixon
- ☐ homemade bombs
- ☐ cartoons
- ☐ colour TV: exaggerated contrasts in the image
- ☐ Arabic music and landscapes
- ☐ sound from a communication radio
- ☐ film clips from space travel, underwater wedding
- ☐ stories about death, the death of Mao
- ☐ Reagan on TV, attempted murder
- ☐ Iran, Khomeini
- ☐ Soviet shooting down Korean civil aircraft by mistake
- ☐ media call-up around hijackings
- ☐ commercial for cleaning equipment
- ☐ Lockerbie
- ☐ Russia and Jeltsin

The media theorist Vräath Öhner has commented upon *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* asking: “Is it really possible to call history? What sort of apparatus will make the connection? Will history answer? And most importantly: Who would make such a call and why?” In the video he sees a virtual history which expands the viewer’s field of observation while comprehending television images “as reflections of social progress which we are as yet unable to describe, it does not reflect them as fictional reality but as the reality of fiction”.²³

The way that Grimonprez reflects upon television as a medium and how it affects our view of reality is even more developed in *Double Take* than in *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*. The video is made up of four major elements:

- a. the Cold War
- b. the television show *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour* (1955-65)
- c. coffee commercials
- d. television as a medium

For most part, in *Double Take* Grimonprez offers images that we are familiar with and can recognise – to me nostalgia is ever present but at the same time obstructed by the Cold War images and sounds – the constant threat – and side by side with clips from *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour* fear is present all the time. When a commercial for coffee is shown, I as a viewer read death into that too – “how do you want to die?” What he does in his game of fact and fiction is to create a visual archive that let us into a history we did not know we were

²³ Vräath Öhner, “On seeing, flying and dreaming”, in *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y: a film by JOHAN GRIMONPREZ* (Ostfildern-Ruit, 2003), book and DVD.

looking for – a living and mortal reflection of the fragile in life in the tension between the big and the small story. In section 4.3 I will return to Grimonprez as a source of inspiration in my own work.

3. Theme: Society, technology and nuclear power

In an article in *Paletten* in 1970, entitled “Aesthetics as politics”, art historian Per Göran Rådberg maintained that “our society is being transformed into a technocratic dictatorship. The real upper class today is not the old capitalism but the technical experts, the intellectual bureaucracy. They have forced society to adjust to a one-sided rationalistic pattern and have then made themselves indispensable because only they can fully master the system”.²⁴ His main target was that of urban planning but his reasoning extended to other areas of technology as well.

It certainly is a critique of technological society typical of the period – many fields became objects of heated debates such as urban development, nuclear power, the building of hydro-electric power plants in rivers in Northern Sweden, the military-industrial complex etc. However, some decades later – now in 2010 – the really heated debates about large scale technological systems seems to have less impact, most political parties agree that technology and economic growth is something basically good, be that if we can handle questions of climate etc. Of course there are always critics – activist groups and others – but mostly their influence upon the development of our society is marginal in this respect.

A theme that I address in my art is the democratic aspects of science and technology, which are strong transformational forces but also major *belief systems* in contemporary western society. Both my theoretical understanding of industrial development and my experience from working with government research policy, function as a kind of empirical material feeding into my artistic process. Not the least, I am influenced by the discourse in the history of technology on the evolution of large technological systems and of determinism. I will deal with it in section 3.1 and then move on to tell a story of one such system, that of nuclear energy.

3.1 Systems and technological determinism

The academic discipline of history of technology deals with questions about the interplay between the developments of science, technology and industry and of other fields of human activity – how society is influencing the choice of new technologies as well as how it is being formed by technological change. The field is deeply influenced by sociology and has close connections to the history of ideas, history of science and economic history.

Among the many research issues in the field there has been a strong focus on the *social construction of technology* and the development of *large technological systems* during the last 100 years – the heydays of Industrial Capitalism and Communist Plan Economy – both systems favouring large scale industrial systems. A much debated issue in this context have been that of *technological determinism*, basically meaning that technology develops according to its own internal logic and is not really under the control of society any more – i.e. more shaping society and culture, and to a lesser extent being shaped by it.²⁵ On the contrary, with a social constructivist perspective, technology is simply a result of the interaction between rele-

²⁴ Per Göran Rådberg, “Estetik som politik”, *Paletten* 1970:1, 43.

²⁵ For an overview of the discourse on technological determinism, see Merritt Roe Smith & Leo Marx (eds.), *Does Technology Drive History? The Dilemma of Technological Determinism* (Cambridge, MA, 1994).

vant social groups and therefore open for negotiation at any time.²⁶ Even though no historian of technology would want to be accused of being a technological determinist many agree that when large scale systems have been established they seem to have a “life of their own” often far away from democratic control. By virtue of their expert knowledge engineers, scientists and economists most often set the agenda.

The historian Thomas P. Hughes has developed a model to describe the evolution of large technological systems. In his *Networks of Power* he has investigated the growth of the electric light and power systems in Chicago, London and Berlin between 1880 and 1930.²⁷ The components of an electric power system are both physical artefacts such as turbo generators, transformers and transmission lines and non-technical things like organizations – e.g. manufacturing firms, utility companies, investment banks – regulatory laws, engineering education and research programs. A component interacts with other components to fulfil a system goal. If the characteristics of one component are changed, then other components have to change too in order for the system to function harmoniously.

Hughes refuses to accept that there is a distinction between technical, social, political and economic factors as explanations of historical events. He has introduced the notion of a seamless web to describe how these factors interact in a technological system. Those inventors who were also successful system builders – i.e. the managers and entrepreneurs of the systems – were those who invented not only technical but also non-technical artefacts, and who took a holistic view of their activity – “system builders were no respecters of knowledge categories or professional boundaries. In his notebook, Thomas Edison so thoroughly mixed matters commonly labelled ‘economic’, ‘technical’ and ‘scientific’ that his thoughts composed a seamless web”.²⁸

One characteristic feature of technological systems is their ability and ambition to expand. The system has an environment “consisting of intractable factors not under the control of the system managers”.²⁹ System builders strive to increase the size of the system and incorporate environmental factors in the system. If they are successful they gain control and the factors become interacting components of the system.

The evolution of a large technological system has several different phases: invention, development, innovation, technology transfer, growth, competition and consolidation. The phases do not always have to come in that order. Hughes mentions two kinds of inventions, conservative and radical ones. The former contribute to the growth of an existing technological sys-

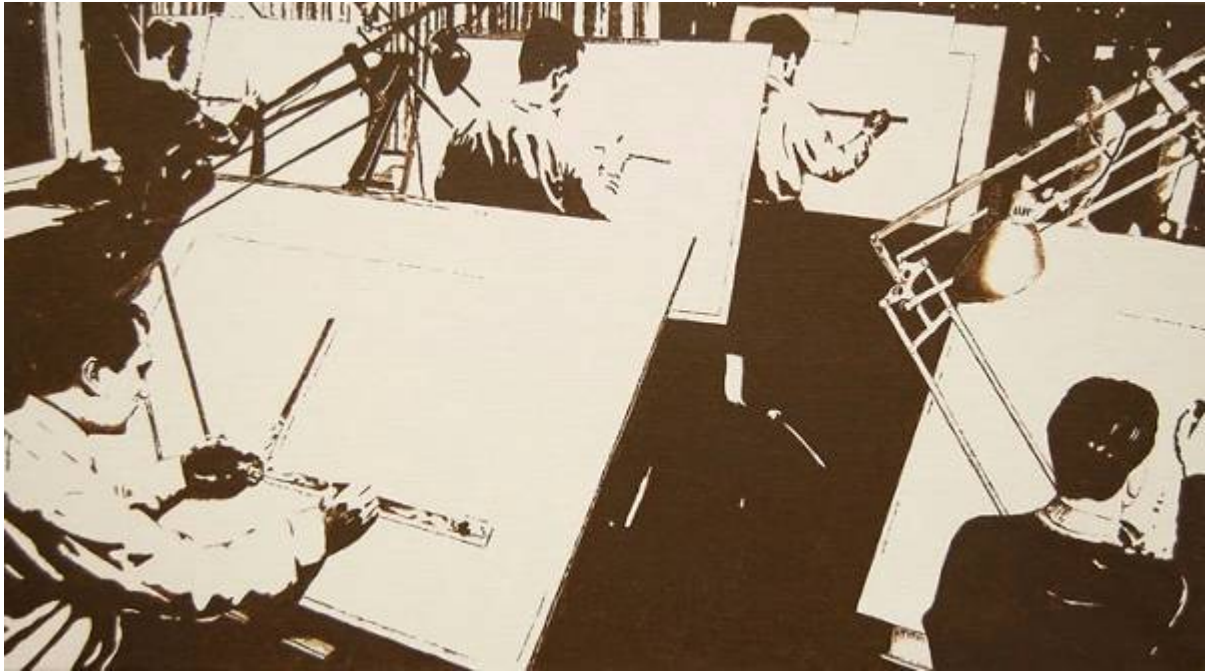
²⁶ For an introduction to the social shaping or social construction of technology approach, see for instance Wiebe E. Bijker; Thomas P. Hughes & Trevor Pinch (eds.), *The Social Construction of Technological Systems: New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology* (Cambridge, MA, 1987); Wiebe E. Bijker & Trevor Pinch (eds.), *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change* (Cambridge, MA, 1992); Donald MacKenzie & Judy Wajcman (eds.), *The Social Shaping of Technology: How the refrigerator got its hum* (Philadelphia, 1985). Cf. Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to follow scientists and engineers through society* (Cambridge, MA, 1987).

²⁷ Thomas P. Hughes, *Networks of Power: Electrification in Western Society, 1880-1930* (Baltimore, 1983). He has further developed his ideas of systems in other books, see idem., *American Genesis: A Century of Invention and Technological Enthusiasm 1870-1970* (New York, 1989); idem., *Rescuing Prometheus* (New York, 1998).

²⁸ Idem, “The Seamless Web: Technology, Science, Etcetera, Etcetera”, *Social Studies of Science*, 16 (1986), 285 f.

²⁹ Idem, “The Evolution of Large Technological Systems”, in Wiebe E Bijker; Thomas P. Hughes & Trevor Pinch (eds.), *The Social Construction of Technological Systems: New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology* (Cambridge, MA, 1987), 52.

tem, whereas the latter do not and will, if successfully developed, form the foundation of a new system. Radical inventions occur during the invention phase while the inventions of the growth and competition phase are conservative. During the development phase the invention grows from an idea in the mind of the inventor into a product at the experimental stage.



Hughes rejects technological determinism and offers an alternative in the concept of *technological momentum* – still a kind of determinism his critiques argue. According to Hughes, as the system grows and becomes older and more mature, it acquires momentum. The concept is analogous to the engineers’ notion of inertia of motion. Technological systems are both socially constructed and society-shaping. A young system is more open to sociocultural influences. When it becomes older and has acquired a lot of momentum it is much more rigid – “more shaping of society and less shaped by it”.³⁰ Still, the system has not become *autonomous*, he argues. The concept is time-dependent and might be placed between social construction of technology and technological determinism. The way a system acquires momentum is through the vested interest, fixed assets and sunk costs associated with its growth:

*The large mass of a technological system arises especially from the organizations and people committed by various interests to the system. Manufacturing corporations, public and private utilities, industrial and government research laboratories, investment and banking houses, sections of technical and scientific societies, departments in educational institutions, and regulatory bodies add greatly to the momentum of modern electric light and power systems. Inventors, engineers, scientists, managers, owners, investors, financiers, civil servants, and politicians often have vested interest in the growth and durability of a system.*³¹

³⁰ Idem, “Technological Momentum”, in Merritt Roe Smith & Leo Marx, eds., *Does Technology Drive History? The Dilemma of Technological Determinism* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994), 101-113.

³¹ Idem, “The Evolution of Large Technological Systems”, 76 f.

In my doctoral dissertation and elsewhere I have analysed the Swedish shipbuilding industry as a large technological system.³² In an article on the crises in the 1970s and 1980s that eventually wiped out that entire industry, I have shown how the momentum rendered impossible the attempts to redirect to alternative products when the shipyard's traditional market of oil tankers failed.³³ The momentum was both a result of the investments in industrial plants and of the building up of knowledge among engineers, economists and workers.

Ever since I wrote my dissertation I have been observant upon the many large technological systems that shape today's world and how they develop. Often it puts me in a state of unsettlement – in the best case it is a matter of responsibility of the technical and financial expertise, in the worst case I am afraid that the systems actually are becoming autonomous or at least far out of democratic control, be that in bio-medicine, electronics, nanotechnology or any other field of technology and science.

An interesting case of a system is that of nuclear energy – from being born out of politics and war during World War II and the following Cold War it became a field of civil industry aiming at electric power production. In this respect, during the 1950s and 1960s it became mainly a technical matter left over to engineers to deal with.³⁴ Then, in the 1970s, it became a highly debated matter, not the least in parliamentary politics and in activism. The awareness among the public was partly fuelled by accidents in nuclear reactors and the problems not solved for how to store the nuclear waste. In Sweden there was a referendum in 1980 which resulted in the decision that no new reactors were to be planned and that all existing ones should be phased out by 2010. Since then the timetable has been deliberately delayed but the decision to close down has remained.

What triggered me to deal with nuclear power and momentum of systems in my art was when I in February 2009 read that a parliamentary majority finally had decided to repeal the decision from 1980 and start to invest in the renewal of nuclear power in Sweden. Of course, the world is not the same as 1980, how long do we have to follow decisions taken by another generation – with climate issues as one of the greatest threats to humanity nuclear energy can be our saviour ... but still, safety and waste problems have not been solved ... It makes me wonder if the technological and industrial systems really are out of human control. And it awakens all the fears of the atom from my childhood.

Before moving on to my master project, I will give a short account of an article I wrote in connection to my dissertation and which dealt with plans for nuclear powered merchant ships. As a historian I *constructed* that story and in my first-year work at Valand I did an attempt to *deconstruct* it, as we will see in section 4.1. I found the subject interesting since it was an example of failed visions – as I will describe below there was a lot of hope and enthusiasm about this but it turned out to be a dead end – no such ships were ever built in Sweden and very few abroad. On the other hand the Swedish shipyards eventually became suppliers of heavy equipment for the nuclear energy industry building land based power plants and thereby contributing to the momentum of that system.

³² Lars Olsson, *Technology Carriers: The Role of Engineers in the Expanding Swedish Shipbuilding System* (Göteborg, 2000).

³³ Idem, "Offshore som livboj: Varvskrisen och försöken till omorientering, 1974-1985", in Pär Blomkvist & Arne Kaijser (eds.), *Den konstruerade världen: Tekniska system i historiskt perspektiv* (Stockholm, 1998), 205-229.

³⁴ Several essays dealing with the history of nuclear energy in Sweden can be found in: Jan Garnert (ed.), *Kärnkraft retro: Daedalus, Tekniska museets årsbok* (Stockholm, 2008).

3.2 Detour: Short history of nuclear fear and hope

To me, the story starts with the Manhattan project during World War II resulting in the atomic bombs dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Not long after the end of the war the former allies became enemies and entered upon the Cold War. By 1949 the Soviet Union had nuclear weapons of their own and a future global war would probably mean that the human race was wiped out.

In this dark new world there was, however, also hope – in contrast to the promise of death offered by nuclear weapons much optimism was attributed to the peaceful use of the atom. Not least in government quarters in the United States there was a strong desire to create a positive antithesis to the sense of doom. Therefore, major efforts were made to find civilian applications of atomic energy. A concrete manifestation of this effort was President Dwight D. Eisenhower's *Atoms for Peace* program, which he launched in a speech to the United Nations General Assembly in December 1953. The programme accelerated with the Geneva conference in August 1955 – a scientific conference on the peaceful use of atomic energy. Here the great powers published extensive information previously kept secret. In the wake of the conference followed worldwide an increasing interest in nuclear power creating a kind of “atomic fever”.

The American press, in particular, described enthusiastically how this apparently inexhaustible source of free energy would completely replace traditional sources.³⁵ The days of producing electricity in large hydroelectric power stations were past – instead there would be small, compact atomic power units for use both at work and at home. The fact that the technology could be created on a small scale would also enable it to be used as a source of power for vehicles, ships and aircraft. The predictions included atomic cars, which would never need to stop for petrol because a small tablet of atomic fuel would last for years. Large nuclear-powered aircraft could accommodate thousands of passengers and – like Atlantic ocean liners – offer spacious cabins. With nuclear-powered spacecraft, man would conquer space.

The new energy source could also be used to improve weather conditions on Earth – to melt icebergs, to make Northern ports ice-free all year around and to create entire air-conditioned cities in the tropics. The destructive capacity of the technology, as demonstrated so clearly in the final stages of World War II, could be useful in large construction projects, including the blowing away of entire mountains. There were ambitious plans in the United States to use nuclear explosions in the construction of a new larger Panama Canal. This project was not realized, among other things due to the resistance of the people living in that part of the world.

The persons who painted these grand visions were usually laymen in the field – journalists but sometimes also high government officials and politicians. Scientists were generally much more sceptical saying that the visions to provide cars, locomotives and houses with small nuclear power units for power production were completely unrealistic, not least because of radiation dangers. One physicist argued that nobody would have a need for a car that could run a full year on a small tablet of uranium-235 because it would be enough to stay in the car for five minutes to obtain a lethal dose of radiation.

³⁵ Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (New York, 1985; reissue 1994), 109-121; Stephen L. Del Sesto, "Wasn't the Future of Nuclear Energy Wonderful?", in *Imagining Tomorrow: History, Technology, and the American Future*, ed. Joseph J. Corn (Cambridge, MA, 1986), 58-76.

Of all the plans to use atomic energy as the source of power for vehicles or other uses, it was only the application at sea that to some extent came to fruition. In 1946 the U.S. Navy had begun development work on nuclear powered ships. By 1954 the first nuclear-powered submarine was launched. As time went by also nuclear-powered cruisers and aircraft carriers came into being. The new energy source provided a key advantage for military operations because the vessels' radius of operation increased significantly. That the technology was very expensive was in this context of less importance.

In the commercial world, however, costs were crucial. In order to facilitate the civil applications of the technology the U.S. government funded the first nuclear-powered cargo ship – the NS *Savannah* which was launched in 1959 and delivered in 1962. The ship was primarily intended to be an experimental ship, showing that the concept was technically and economically feasible.

The Swedish shipbuilding industry, which was among the major players at the global market, followed the course of international developments in the late 1950s with great interest.³⁶ Half a century earlier the diesel engine had successfully competed with, and replaced, the steam engine in ships. The Swedish yards had been pioneers in this process and build their expansion during the inter-war period upon it. Perhaps they now saw the first stages of the next revolutionary technological transformation in ship motive power. In that case it was important not to be left behind.

Both in joint efforts and individually the shipyards came to carry out analysis work and research on atomic ships. Several leading engineers were very confident that the new technology would be the future. Trapped in a spirit of the age with overwhelming enthusiasm for the atom, they saw before them how they soon would overcome the technical problems and then take advantage of this almost inexhaustible energy resource. As always, there were also those who were more sceptical and believed that the new technology would not be able to compete economically with conventional technology, at least not in the foreseeable future.

The Swedish engineers closely followed the developments in other countries, especially the building of the NS *Savannah*, in which case the shipyards had personnel stationed at the building site in the United States. An event that attracted attention was when, some years later, that ship went on its first trip to Europe and came to visit the Swedish ports of Helsingborg and Malmö. The ship was not welcome to Göteborg – the director of the harbour did not want such a dangerous thing in the middle of the city – what if something goes wrong, he asked.

However, by the mid-1960s the interest in nuclear-powered ships cooled down among the Swedish shipyards. This was also the case elsewhere in the world. What strikes me is that it was mainly for economic reasons – not for safety reasons. Still, the problems of safety had not been solved. The conditions at sea differ in many respects from those prevailing for land-based nuclear power plants. A ship is exposed to the forces of the sea and the machinery must work perfectly even in a storm. In addition to weather condition there is always also the risks of going aground, colliding with other ships and to sink. So, in the end what came out of this was that the shipyards kept on building ships with conventional diesel engines but, as mentioned, also became suppliers of equipment to the land-based nuclear power industry.

³⁶ For a more extensive account of Swedish research on nuclear-powered ships, see: Lars Olsson, “‘Skall vi bygga atomfartyg?’: Svensk varvsindustri och frågan om atomdrift till sjöss, 1955–65”, *Varv: Varvshistoriska Föreningen i Göteborg Årsskrift* 1997, 4–28.



When I grew up, I occasionally saw a plastic model of the NS *Savannah* which my older brother had built in the late 1960s and which by the 1970s had been put in a storage space in our house. Inherent in the model I find the optimism of the age for the peaceful usage of the atom. I don't remember having thought about the model when I wrote the article but it came to my mind when I started to do art on this theme – and then I was really surprised when I collected film footage for the *Archive 3.0* video – there, on 8 mm film, it was – he was building the model. It is strange, these connections appear all the time in my work with history – or maybe it is not strange at all – it is within my own archive I am searching.

4. My work

In this chapter I will discuss my master thesis project, mainly the piece *Archive 3.0*, exhibited at Röda Sten, but also two earlier pieces which have been part of the same process and are closely connected to it. I will out-line the efforts leading to the three works, different considerations and choices, principles that have guided me, as well as the immediate references to other artists and the discourse I am addressing. In addition to *Archive 3.0* the main focus here will be on the *Planning Department*, exhibited in April 2010, but I will also mention *Archive 1.0* from Valand's spring exhibition of 2009 which was the springboard for the other two.

4.1 Deconstructing nuclear history: *Archive 1.0*

When I, in January 2009 was about to choose a subject for my term project, I started to think about taking a point of departure in my earlier experience of historical research. As a case, I wanted to use the above mentioned article on failed visions for nuclear powered merchant ships in the 1950s and 1960s.

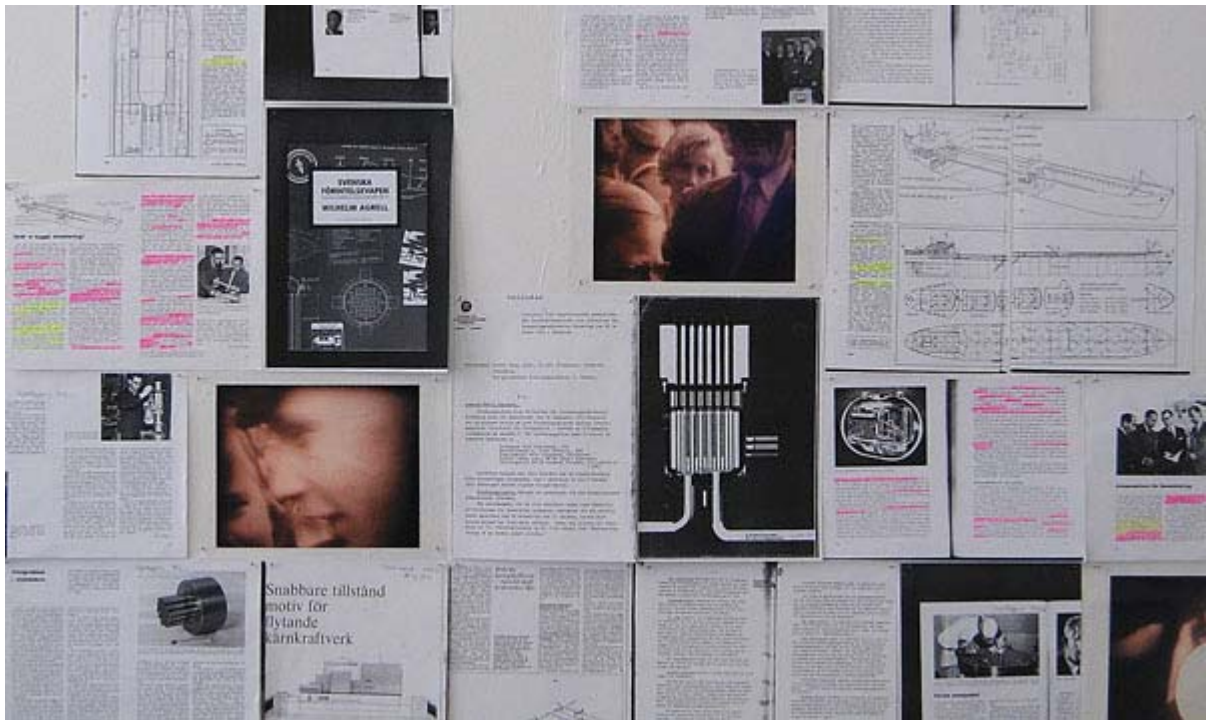


Influenced by some recent art exhibitions, among them *History Acts* at Göteborgs Konsthall in the autumn of 2008, I began to look into my own archive from the years as a doctoral student.³⁷ I had saved books, articles, copies of archival material, notes, images, tape-recorded interviews and other material, which I had used while writing the article. However, in contrast

³⁷ The catalogue includes both descriptions of the exhibited works and essays dealing with the issue of writing history as addressed by contemporary art, see: Mikael Nanfeldt et.al., *History Acts: 25 oktober 2008 – 11 januari 2009* (Göteborg, 2008).

to the mid-1990s when I used the material to *construct* a historical narrative, I now wanted to do the opposite – to *deconstruct* the history by presenting my earlier working material, showing what I as a historian had included and what I had excluded – my choices of what was relevant and what was not. The material was exhibited as an installation with documents attached to the walls. For the viewer to be able to connect the working material with the finally constructed historical account, I had added a print-out of my article.

To this I also added other elements, among them two videos – one on a flat screen and one being projected on a wall – in order to add material that did not really have anything to do with the history of nuclear energy but still, to me now trying to disintegrate my own story, was highly relevant. The videos, constructed of 8 mm films produced by my father – more about this material in the following sections – showed people in the same time period, both in the private and the public sphere. The intention was that the viewer entering into the installation would start identifying new connections in the archival material and relate to their own memories and family stories. Further the work would rise questions about what is fact and what is fiction – was even the story about nuclear ships, unfamiliar to most viewers, a fiction created by the artist?



There was really a lot of text in the installation. The ambition was not to make the viewer see or read everything, but to make subjective choices. In this context I find some observations by Kabakov interesting. He argues in favour of adding really a lot of material – in a way too much. A man visiting his installations might be spending some 25 minutes within it – “the optimal time for viewing a large exhibit” – without seeing it all: “he still had the feeling that he hadn’t seen everything (both in terms of ideas and quantity)”. Kabakov concludes that this is a “surplus” which is a “very important quality inherent in the ‘total’ installation”.³⁸ I agree with his line of argument finding something interesting in presenting “too much” material – of course, a lot of stuff doesn’t change the fact that we still deal with a matter of inclusion and exclusion. However, it has the effect of putting the search light on that very process.

³⁸ Kabakov, *On the Total Installation*, 270.

Looking back at the *Archive 1.0* after a year having passed, I see the piece as my first attempt to build an archival installation. There were several problems with the piece ranging from making it difficult to get into for non-Swedish speaking viewers since most of the text material was in Swedish only, but maybe more importantly that I was not really deconstructing history at all but rather constructing or re-constructing since most or perhaps all material was unknown to the viewer – they still had to trust my interpretations and follow what I had included.

4.2 A cut-out: The Planning Department

In the autumn of 2009 I became part of a Valand workshop entitled *Trust and Mistake*. Under the supervision of Esther Shalev-Grez, we were some ten students from various programmes at the school that began to work together with the Göteborg City Museum. The aim of the workshop was to deal with questions about how trust and mistakes are inscribed in the museum as a producer of images of the city in the broadest sense. This meant that we in our art projects could investigate the museum in its roles of displaying and telling the history of Göteborg, storing archival material, contributing to the writing of history or building its collections of artefacts.

For me this was a chance to make a cut-out from my general theme of technological systems and their interaction with society while addressing the discourse of archive and history.³⁹ I wanted to try out something rather different compared to my planned master project at Röda Sten. My first idea was to look for inspiration – film footage, texts, images or objects – in the collections of the former Industry Museum which for many years was a separate museum but in the 1990s was merged with the City Museum.

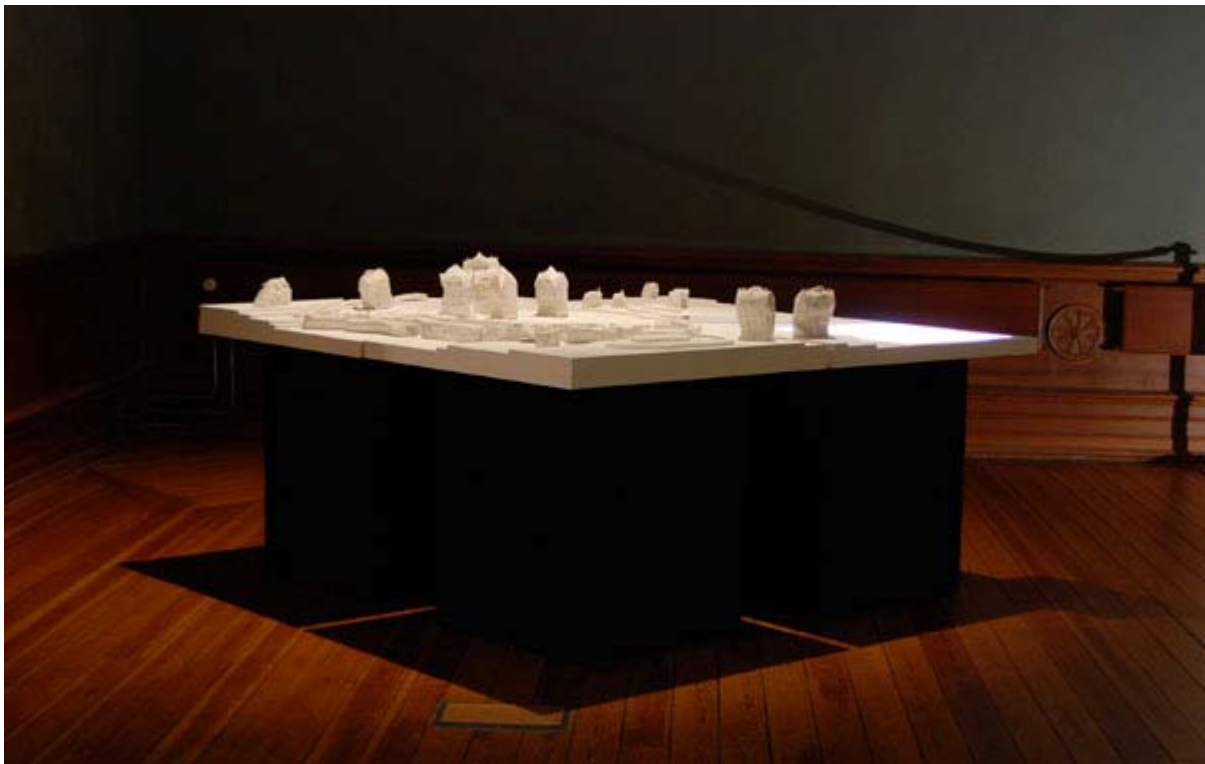
However, as it turned out, I came to follow another track. Instead of visiting the storage of the museum physically, I decided to take a point of departure in a personal memory of an earlier visit – I remember following my father to the Industry Museum in the late 1970s. The museum was at that time located behind Göteborgs Konsthall, in a building erected for the Finnish Pavilion at the city's 300 year anniversary exhibition in 1923 and between 1925 and 1950 housing Valand.

My father, City Secretary at the Göteborg City Council, was going there to have a meeting with the museum director. When we arrived at the museum we went through the exhibition and down to the basement where the collection of artefacts not on display were stored. It was a very special feeling for me as a boy to walk around and look at the different objects, not in the way that you usually see them at a museum but put on shelves, in boxes, and other ways. What especially attracted my attention was numerous open boxes with equipment for an old model railway – tracks, cars, engines, light signals and much more. Of course that interested me since model railways was my major hobby as a child but it was not just that – rather it was about the alternative way of displaying the trains, not as a more or less realistic landscape but as something that had been excluded from the museum exhibition, put aside, just laying there bearing witness of a past usage but now in a way being a lost and retired material. This combined with the intoxicating feeling of being allowed to go beyond what you as an ordinary visitor of the museum would be permitted to see and do.

³⁹ Many artists deal with an over-reaching theme as an ongoing investigation, making cut-outs as separate pieces for exhibitions, for instance Annika Lundgren: <http://www.annikalundgren.net/>

Several years later, when I was a doctoral student at Chalmers, I again visited the Industry Museum, this time at a conference. The museum had moved to a larger building in Gårda and was in the coming year to close down and be incorporated in the City Museum as mentioned. I did not see the model trains and left with a feeling of void and loss. I went back to Chalmers and spent the following years to learn the methods and norms of the established historical profession – including to my writing what was relevant in connections to my research questions and excluding what was not – writing a history hopefully meeting the requirements of producing good interpretations of events in the past. A history that you could trust, a historical writing without intending to add elements of mistake. As it came out, when I had finished my dissertation and worked for some years with research policy I still had the same feeling of void – then art came in my way as an alternative and that’s where I am today.

Models – not only trains – have always fascinated me. I know I am not alone in this, maybe most people feel that way. Something happens in relation to scale – we are very sensitive to it and to the smallest inaccuracies of proportions in scale models. According to Karen Moon in her *Modeling Messages: The Architect and the Model* our sensibility to “scale is instilled throughout the years of childhood”.⁴⁰ In dollhouses or model railways we encounter worlds that can be “grasped, comprehended, possessed, controlled – at last (apparently) understood”.⁴¹



In architecture and urban planning the scale model has for centuries been used as a tool both for developing ideas and for communicating the maker’s intentions. In the latter role the seductive power of the scale model sometimes have become a vehicle for domination – to manipulate the public to accept a suggested way of forming the physical environment, presenting promising visions of the future that might no be fulfilled. My choice to work with something

⁴⁰ Karen Moon, *Modeling Messages: The Architect and the Model* (New York, 2005), 70.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

giving associations to the architectural model was in this respect a cut-out of my over reaching theme of dealing with the technical expertise in industry and society – as we shall see in section 4.3, in my Röda Sten installation I built an entire office of the expert with references to other tools as well, but also including a model.

The text I wrote describing the *Planning Department* reads as follows:

From childhood play to impact upon the world by the grown-up – a continuous journey between hope and fear, power and weakness, passion and anxiety. By the seductive power of the scale model, as a tool for domination, the expertise make their ideology invisible while presenting promising visions of the future. But on the way from the private to the public it becomes no one's world.

The relation between the child playing with his or her toys and the adult playing with the world interests me – the grown-up gaining influence upon the direction of living conditions, transport, industry, peace and war. In my process I went back to some of the many plastic train models left from my childhood and learnt that I could reproduce them in new ways – for some time I had been working with twisted objects, cast in latex moulds and made of plaster or concrete. As I will discuss in section 4.3 I began doing these objects by mistake. Now I started transforming them and experimented with the balance between the repetition of almost identical objects and the unique characters created by the twisting of the shapes of houses, trains, bridges and railway tracks.

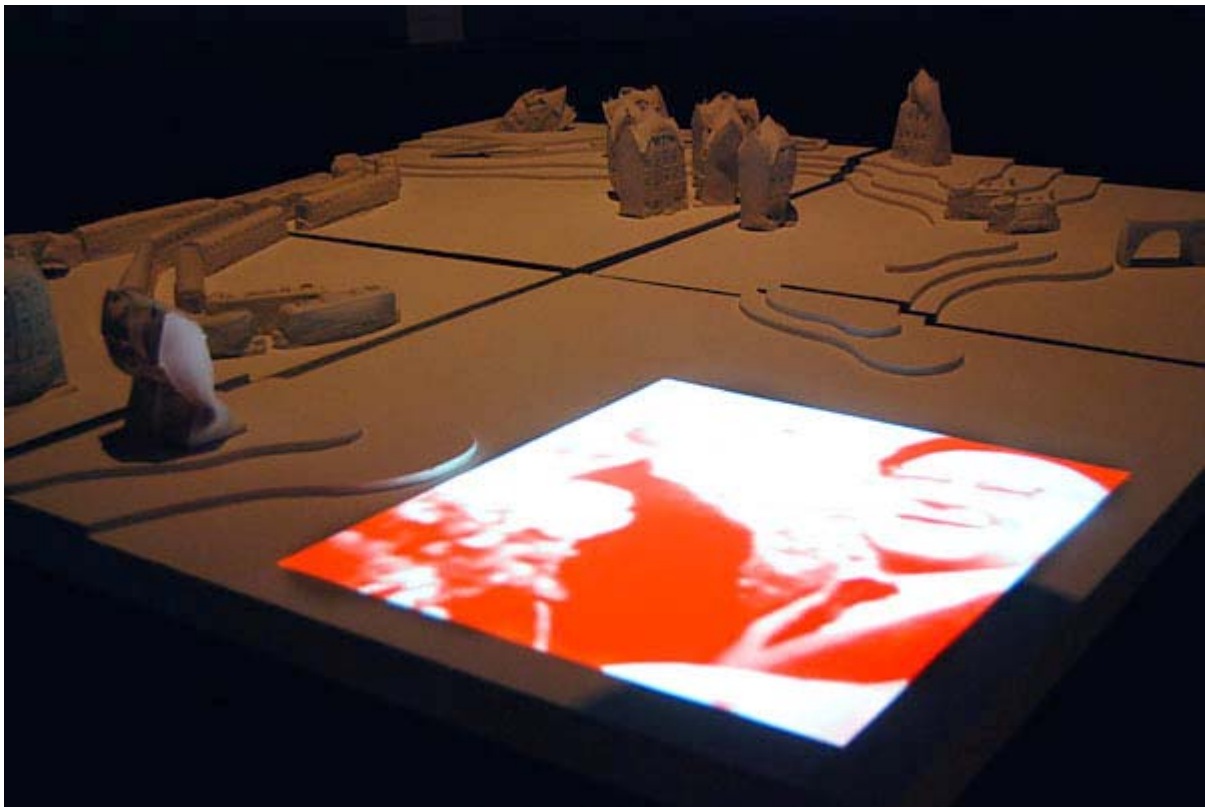


My original idea was to sculpture a rather realistically looking miniature landscape with the twisted objects attached to it. As I did small scale tests I realized it was not the preferred way to do it. Of course, one important reason was that architectural models often have a simplified landscape with cut out height curves but the major determining factor was that I did not want

the landscape in itself to dominate – instead it should be rather neutral and call attention to the shapes of the twisted objects. Like architectural models I made it out of wood and foam and painted it white like the plaster objects to keep the unity of the model. Further I decided to split the landscape into four square shaped parts, each measuring 90 x 90 cm, leaving a slit of approximately one inch in between.

The placing of the houses and trains on the landscape offered hard considerations. It became a process of first adding very much, as it turned out too much, material and then reducing. The guiding principle for me became to balance between the imagined playfulness of the child building its model railway and the pain I find inherent in the twisted characters of the plaster objects, leading associations to some kind of social interaction – haven't we all been twisted in one way or another by our lives?

In addition to the model landscape I wanted to integrate a video projection using images from some of my father's old 8 mm films with elements of both the private sphere and the working life of the political administration and industrial life in Göteborg. The use of the film clips aims at connecting childhood play with working life of the adult men. There are clips from when my brother got his first model railway at Christmas Eve in 1964, something that eventually would have an impact upon my own childhood interest in railways – from the time I was born in 1966 and until our family moved in 1970, I shared room with that landscape and obviously it made a strong impression upon me. There are also clips from my father's work, him being involved in urban planning, as well as clips of people's everyday life in the city.



The image of the vertical video projection upon the horizontal landscape was shaped as a square in accordance with the four squares of the model, however only covering part of it. I wanted to experiment with moving images of raster dots which to me has a parallel in my raster dot paintings of the Röda Sten installation and other projects. For me this is a way of

dealing with archival photos and film footage as something fragile and constantly dissolving while giving reference to printed images in newspapers.⁴²

I choose to make the video monochrome in red, partly just because I like that colour, partly since red symbolizes love, passion and energy but also male power, anger and blood. Further, red combined with white – in my case the white model landscape – has associations to death. To me this again rises questions about if it is a good society that the model tries to sell to us. Maybe no viewer will discover my intentions but I wanted to do it like this anyway.

The placing within the room, with a 45 degrees angle to the walls, made the work accessible and reinforced the idea that, as an installation, the viewers should be encouraged to move around it – the way architectural models are viewed – and see it from different directions rather than just offering one preferred direction of viewing. Also the height of the landscape from the floor, some 80 cm, was important in making it feel like an architectural model.

To summarize the comments I got on the piece I think most viewers who commented upon it thought that the landscape worked while the projected video some of them found problematic. Among the opinions expressed was that the video image was too bright in contrast to the landscape and its lightning, that the video was too “nice looking” and, in contrast to the model, got to the viewer too fast or that the projected area did not feel to be in scale with the plaster buildings – instead it should have been smaller than the houses or projected elsewhere, not on the landscape. Others were more fond of the projection saying that it gave unexpected entrances to the work, not making it predictable. One comment concerned the splitting up of the model into four parts with a slit in between – the work thereby came to incorporate “moving without moving, which is very hard to accomplish” and created an uncertainty of whether the piece was “disintegrating or integrating”.

I think all comments are important even though I stand by most of my decisions. Something I want to try in subsequent versions of this piece is to experiment with different and much smaller projections.

When it comes to the implications of *Trust and Mistake* for the museum, I think that the discourse in contemporary art about archive and the writing of history is of great relevance in developing new ways for museums to work. As mentioned, many artists deal with questions about whose history is being written and what have been preserved in or rather left out of the archives and museum collections. The museums should consider how they display the aspects of our history that I think matters to most – the history of relations, intimacy, anxiety, love.

Traditionally different kinds of models have been used by museums for pedagogical purposes. For the City Museum, in its role of displaying and telling the history of Göteborg, models are important, due to the physical size of houses, streets and other elements that make up the city. Models thereby constitute a valuable complement to other ways of displaying such as showing individual artefacts or built up interiors.

What have driven me in *Planning Department* is to suggest one way for the museum to present *history as art*. By incorporating elements and fragments of life that I as a trained historian would have found irrelevant I try to open up for alternative stories – to me a more “true” and

⁴² Compare with the works of Sigmar Polke, for instance see: Fiona Elliott (ed.), *Sigmar Polke: The Three Lies of Painting* (Ostfildern-Ruit, 1997), 51 ff.

democratic history. My intention is that viewers visiting the installation will be activated in the sense that they will read their own personal and family history into the events in the past or trigger their thinking about what constitutes a good city.

So what if ...

...the City Museum, in addition to the established cultural, social and economic history of Göteborg, in new ways was to display the history of fears, hopes, passions and anxieties. To use the model as a medium but going beyond the traditional use of it might open up new possibilities and new interpretations.

4.3 Towards a total installation: Archive 3.0

We enter into a room – some kind of office – probably in an engineering department in industry. The office was probably furnished in the 1960s but as visitors we are not moved back to that time, there are traces leading at least to the 1990s. The person inhabiting the room is not there for the moment, but he is probably not far away, the lightning and the TV have been left on. Why do I presume it is a man and not a woman? Well, it just feels that way but I could be wrong. However, I believe I saw him at the opening, wearing the same dark suit as on one of the photos put on the wall, a photo I was told had been taken at a study trip to East Asia in 1991.



This “probably-an-engineer-kind-of-person” is engaged in some kind of work – we see drawings of machine parts, old technical journals, calculating machines, a model outlining some kind of industrial plant and its surroundings and other work material. As mentioned, the TV is on, the volume is not very loud but we hear voices and music from the past and see familiar images from the Cold War Era as well as more private episodes that we do not recog-

nise – but still they feel familiar to us in some way, wasn't that my dad's old uncle in his younger years? Is it a repeat of a historical documentary being broadcast in the middle of the day?



On the walls in the room we see framed paintings with images of engineers at work near their drawing-tables, all turning their backs at us. The only exception is a painting of a woman with her typewriter but wasn't she also on TV just a moment ago....? And then we have a wall that differs from the others – there are photos, handwritten notes, copies of articles and other stuff attached to it – fragile memories in physical form, someone's personal archive?

.....

In the piece *Archive 3.0* at Röda Sten I was given the opportunity to try out some of my ideas about archival art and total installations. While building an immersive environment I wanted to add fragments of history and memory – personal and collective – and open up for new connections between the private and the political while offering ways for alternative histories to be written or told.

To me, and hopefully also to the viewer of the installation, there are invisible threads connecting the different fragments of the work – between the video and the paintings and photos, between wall charts and the concrete model, between texts and images and so on. The point is not that the viewers discover all my threads but produce their own between the various elements of the installation and then in relation to their own memories and experiences. Here, to find some of mine could be a way of accelerating their process. The democratic mission in this is that the telling or writing of history shouldn't be done by me as a historian, judging what is relevant or irrelevant – to be included or excluded – but should be left to the viewer to

imagine – the viewer’s own fears of nuclear weapons, their childhood, their trip with one of the passenger ships bound for New York or their first kiss.

In these considerations about the viewer’s own personal histories and associations I have been influenced by Kabakov. The whole idea of building a total installation is for the viewer to be engulfed or submerged in the piece. As with Kabakov’s institutional places I wanted to create a working life environment familiar to most of us but still unknown – both because most people seldom have the opportunity to enter into the *black box* of technology, science and industry and because this particular office have other strange characteristics. To my thinking it was important to consider every detail in order to construct this kind of space. In a way it was helpful to be guided by Kabakov – his book works as a check-list for total installation builders – what to think about when designing the walls, ceiling, lightning, sound etc.

Of course, I did not follow it slavishly but did my own choices. To me it was a challenge to make use of the site-specific qualities offered by the building at Röda Sten. Constructing an office leading associations to engineering industry benefited from using the authentic industrial characteristics of the house. Still, it would not have worked to put my piece just anywhere in the building. The location I was given had the right qualifications. After constructing two new walls, I had a square shaped room measuring 4,5 x 4,5 meters and some 3,5 meters in height. In the ceiling there were ventilation shafts that felt natural to an office and I also experimented with different set-ups of fluorescent-lamps which gave an office-like light which was not too bright.



It was also possible to use a window where the pane of glass had been painted black giving a feeling of never-ending night outside. When it comes to colours I first planned to paint the walls in some kind of light green-grey colour but for practical reasons I had to keep it white. What I think more than anything else gave the space a feeling of an office was the grey wall-

to-wall carpet covering the floor. As regards furniture and other details I used office equipments from the 1960s or 1970s.

To stimulate the viewer to construct or deconstruct their own history, in addition to the equipped office itself, I put in texts, images and sound to offer different narratives. As discussed in section 4.1 I used texts to a large extent in *Archive 1.0* – texts are crucial to my archival approach not the least because they are the prime material for historians writing history. However, while the historian will build their interpretation and narrative upon what can be found in the archive, I as an artist can take a point of departure in what is missing – what has been left out.⁴³



I find it interesting to compare with Kabakov's experience of using texts. He argues that in general "the role of the text in the installation is enormous, in particular, the total installation easily accepts texts into it, large masses of text" and says that the "viewer in the installation actually does read [...] The viewer stands and reads prefaces, explanations near objects, reads texts which have simply been hung up, no matter how many they are".⁴⁴

Closely connected to the meaning attached to the room itself is the question of whom it belongs to. The story about the inhabitant of the office is one of the many possible narratives of the piece. As with Kabakov's *The Man Who Flew into Space* and other works we are invited "to fantasise about the complex psychological interiority of the [...] inhabitants".⁴⁵ Who is the person inhabiting the *Archive 3.0*? What goes on inside his or her head, is it a person loyal to

⁴³ I have developed this reasoning more in detail in an article in *Paletten*, see: Olsson "Palettens arkiv", 63 f. It is also included in the appendix of this report.

⁴⁴ Kabakov, *On the Total Installation*, 247.

⁴⁵ Bishop, *Installation Art*, 17.

the capitalistic large scale industrial system and who applauds the plans to extend nuclear power generation? Or is it a person who thinks differently?

In line with issues of power and the layers of meaning connecting to both technological society and the use of history, I wrote the following text to give entrances into the piece. Of course, there is a striking kinship to the corresponding text in section 4.2:

Making the ideology invisible large scale technological systems give promises of bright new futures but leave us with fear and hope, weakness and power, anxiety and passion. The deconstruction of history, memory and archive in the radiation of the political and the private make possible alternative readings of the past – nothing is more gay than the atom.

As I discussed in the previous section, *nostalgia* is often close at hand in archival art and therefore interesting to investigate. To me a guiding principle in this has been to balance between a nostalgic looking back for a better time now lost, and memories of fear, weakness and anxiety, hereby questioning our thinking about the notion that things were safer or more hopeful in the past. I have tried to create an ocean of nostalgia for the viewer to be attracted into the installation – to swim in it, to be drawn down into the deep. Then, with the viewer in a state of sweet dreams comes elements of fear – one after another – leading associations in different directions. It becomes a story of yesterday’s tomorrows – bright new futures in consumer society or suffering, death and the extermination of the human race. And maybe it is not at all about the past, the present time is the only one we will ever live in, from where we construct our memories, histories and identities.



Central elements in this process are the exhibited fragments of my personal memories of nuclear energy: the visit to Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1991 when I experienced the memories of people suffering from the bombs; my military service in Härnösand in 1986 at the time when that part of Sweden got the greatest radioactive fall-out from the Chernobyl nuclear disaster; my father in the 1970s building a shelter near our house as protection in case of a nuclear war and him telling about his memories of fear during the Cuban Missile Crisis. To this come other memories – the memories of hope, of love, of me in the mid-1990s writing the above mentioned article of optimism in the post-War period on the peaceful uses of the atom.

The elements of both hope and fear also make up the basis for the narrative of my video. As indicated in chapter 2, I have been inspired by the works of Johan Grimonprez. In a somewhat similar way I have mixed various film images and sounds to create new connections and a tension between fiction and documentary. However, I have put greater emphasis on links between the private and the political – between the small and the great stories. Furthermore, I have not included so much diverse material in order to focus on a few parallel narrative tracks building up my story. In consequence my video is a loop of 15 minutes and as a viewer you do not have to see it all. The elements of fear are there in the use of atomic weapons and nuclear power plant disasters, as well as of hope in the form of happy childhood memories, young people graduating from college or of Salvador Dali enthusiastically arguing that there is nothing more gay than the atom.



A major difference between *Archive 3.0* and Grimonprez's videos is that he shows them in a cinema setting – you sit there and watch in a dark room for more than an hour, like any feature film. In contrast, I have chosen to include video as part of a total installation which gives a radically different experience. First I planned to have a projection somewhere in the room – compare with my *Archive 1.0* – possibly on an old film screen of the kind used for watching 8 mm films. This might have worked due to the associations to amateur film in the content of

my video but still I felt I would create other problems in relation to the immersive sense. A better solution was to use an old television set from the 1980s and put it on the kind of movable shelf often used in schools or at work places. By showing the video in this way it becomes more reliable to the whole concept of an office – what we see is a TV showing some kind of historical documentary or whatever it is. The very medium of television is closely associated to the period and the news media images are an integral part of it. The fact that these images are well-known to the viewer facilitates the reading of the work. When it comes to the other material I have used, i.e. the private 8 mm films and the shipping company commercial, I am surprised how well it fits into the TV medium despite the fact that it was earlier conceived for projection on a wall or screen. A reason might be that this kind of material often has been used in historical documentaries.

When it comes to the question of *appropriation* of images and film footage, i.e. using material that I don't own the copyright to, I felt a need to think through what I was doing.⁴⁶ The question is central when dealing with archival material in different forms – seldom do we have the rights to old material, I use material that was produced when I was not even born. Of course, really old material can often be used.

In my case these considerations mainly have bearing upon the material I have used for the video. One category of material is my father's 8 mm films – he is dead and my mother, sister and brother all agreed that I can use that material. As regards the people who can be identified I have asked some of them if they accepted to be visible and they answered yes, others which I don't know who they are could be a problem but hopefully not – it was a long time ago and they were young and beautiful – I hope they will forgive me.

A second element of my video, which makes up both a large proportion of the visual material and almost all of the sound in the piece, is a commercial entitled “Vacation on the Atlantic” by the then active shipping company The Swedish American Line. The company was dissolved in the mid-1970s and the rights are now owned by the Göteborg Maritime Museum, which have given me a written permission to use the film.

The third category of film material is trickier. I have used news media film footage that most of us are familiar with – images from the Cold War, Kennedy and Khrushchev, nuclear explosions etc. The material has been collected from TV-documentaries and from YouTube – I have not broken any copy protections on DVDs. To me it is important to use my piece to make a statement upon the issue of copyright – building upon my experience as a historian I argue in favour of the freedom of quoting material. Of course, if you write history you are free to quote a text as long as you tell who wrote it and where, while on the other hand you often have to have permission to use other person's photos in your article or book. I think there is a lack of symmetry in this. Further, when I as an artist “write” history it is mainly done visually and I would be cut off from using most of the images that make up our common historical archive. Therefore I have taken the liberty to use these well known news media images without asking, just because they are familiar to us – as I see it they are the heritage and archive of all people. I am aware that companies that think they own the rights might knock on my door some day and ask me to stop using the images and I think that could lead to interesting discussions.

⁴⁶ On the topic of appropriation art, for instance see: Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction – Culture as screenplay: How art reprograms the world* (New York, 2002); “Appropriation (art)”, *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia* [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appropriation_\(art\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appropriation_(art))

To quote something, of course, means that you somewhere have a list of references. In art you usually don't have that, references are up to the viewer and critic to discover. However, I thought that in line with my reasoning above, the sources I used must be included in the piece – I choose to do that in the video, as credit titles at the end.

One object within *Archive 3.0* connecting to *Planning Department* discussed in section 4.2 is the model of steel and concrete. As mentioned I have been working with casting twisted miniature trains, houses and other objects. Ever since I was a boy I have had a close relation to concrete. My father often worked with the material both for smaller objects and larger constructions including the above mentioned shelter. As a teenager I built a large swimming pool of concrete near my parent's house – the pool is still there but has been taken over by nature.

The idea to experiment with concrete in my art came up when I considered how to work after having completed *Archive 1.0* a year ago. In relation to my work on fear and hope, concrete has a symbolic meaning as a medium in the building of industrial society. Similar to other technological systems such as nuclear power there was a technical expertise enthusiastically arguing in favour of it and using it, not the least in urban development, in the 1950s and 1960s but a growing public opinion against it in the 1970s and 1980s. From being the material of the future concrete came to be seen as low, ugly and representing a society hostile to humans.



As I started to experiment I made a clay mould of a small locomotive but when I poured wet concrete into the mould it collapsed. I decided to just leave it and wait a week for the concrete to harden. When I finally opened the mould I found a model train, twisted but with all tiny details visible. More striking, when I first saw it my thoughts went directly to a glass bottle I saw at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in 1991 and which have been in my mind ever

since – a bottle that had been twisted by the heat of the exploding atomic bomb. To me, the train I had cast was actually that bottle.



Then I learnt to make latex moulds and did various objects, more or less twisted – in both plaster and concrete. Those made of the latter material are much heavier and quite different. As mentioned in section 4.2, to me pain and suffering are inherent in the twisted shapes. When sculpturing the model in *Archive 3.0* I had images of the ruins of the Chernobyl reactor in mind but didn't want it to be too obvious. Instead, I wanted a clean structure leading associations to some kind of industrial plant and its surroundings. The logic of having a model in the office at all, of course, alludes to the role of the model as a tool in design and planning work. As with the piece *Planning Department*, this kind of work usually is expected to create a good environment and a bright future society for humans to live in. The faintly outlined power plant in the model of *Archive 3.0* does not reveal any signs of a disaster but still, the houses and trains in the close proximity tells a history of suffering – in sharp contrast to the image at the opposite wall arguing that “concrete builds a better society”.

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Based on the comments I have got on the final piece, I think it mainly works in the intended way making up an immersive scene. A comment from one viewer that I found interesting was that he saw a resemblance to the film *Good Bye Lenin* (2003) which, as soon as he mentioned it, was really striking to me both concerning the re-constructed interior and the programmes on television within the room – those of you who have seen the film will know why.

One problem, connected to the time period treated and to my personal memories, is that they probably evoke very different associations to a younger generation that has not experienced the Cold War Era than compared to my own generation – some of the feelings of fear might

be lost here. Another problem, for which I will try out other solutions to in the future, concerns the opinion of some viewers finding the wall of memories and the other wall as loosely fitted. I can agree that they visually are, however not conceptually.

As regards the reading of the political aspects I think that works too. In a review in *Göteborgs-Posten*, Mikael Olofsson comments that the work – which he finds interesting and deviating – as an archive of the past reminds us of a future that never came into being. He goes on saying that the piece touches upon the concept of the museum in an “attempt to establish a cross-section of history and ideology”.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Mikael Olofsson, “Bild på idéjakt eller tvärtom”, *Göteborgs-Posten*, May 22, 2010, 90 f.

5. Epilogue

Text from the video in *Archive 3.0*:

Mr. and Mrs. Axberg have plans to travel to America, a business trip and family reunion. A dream for several years that finally is about to come true. Here comes the exciting ... been booked. So now it's best to look at the map of America and start planning the details. Two months later the Axberg couple begins their long journey ... the family's two girls staying home during dad's and mom's America trip.

Göteborg is the gateway of Sweden to the world. Ships from all around the world come here. At the America pier it is particularly lively because the Kungsholm is leaving today. Taxis are running back and forth and here are Axberg's coming who have put their own car in their garage.

The heavy luggage a carrier takes care of. Customs and passport formalities, is now a simple and painless procedure that is passed quickly. With eager anticipation our travelers walk the gangway.

There is a special atmosphere around a ship about to cross the Atlantic – sadness and tears are mixed with cheers and happy anticipation. Flags are slamming in the wind and trumpet fanfare is sounded from a farewell Blowing Horn Band.

On the bridge is full of activity – the departure time has come. Order is given to the engine room and the 18 000 horse powers are put in motion.

Now we pass Långedrag and Älvsborg's fortress. The sea opens up and we can move at full speed. Passengers are beginning to make themselves at home on board. Axberg's are travelling tourist class and they note with satisfaction that the comfort and interior of their cabin is exquisite. A flashy dresser with mirror's diversity appeals to Mrs. Alice. Yes, closet space is of good size. Running hot and cold water, that is excellent. And here as in all other cabins on the Kungsholm, there is automatically controlled air conditioning. Private showers are also available in each cabin. In the meantime, we sailed off south along the Halland coast. The first part goes to Copenhagen. Thousands inhabitants of Copenhagen, has this beautiful summer evening made their way down to the harbour to get a glimpse of the white flagship of the Swedish merchant fleet sail into the city. Here, additional passengers get on board. With a fully loaded ship of passengers we set course for New York while the sun goes down in an almost calm Sound. With up to date weather reports the captain puts out the most appropriate route on the chart. The chief officer inspects the nautical equipment.

The passenger cabins are all quiet and peaceful. How nice it is to after departure stretch out in pleasant slumber in Kungsholm's lovely beds. But while Axberg's have just fallen asleep, it is time for others to get up. Here, the baker wakes up to obtaining fresh buns on the breakfast table. We follow him and his assistant down to the bakery. Here one combines the crossing of the Atlantic and the crushing of eggs. 45 000 eggs are spend on a return trip to New York. Mechanical equipment is here as everywhere on the Kungsholm

of most modern type. When combined with the skill of experienced craftsmen, the result is the best.

In the early morning hours there is a meeting in the restaurant manager's cabin. Here are menus for the day finally fixed. Chef goes directly down to the store manager to make the orders. We take a look into the well-stocked pantry of the Kungsholm. On this trip, no one needs to starve or thirst.

Although there is a great peace in the passenger's cabin Mr. Axberg has woken alert and well rested, and finds that a morning dip in the salty ocean water would just be perfect. No, he will not jump overboard. The swimming pool here has some clear and nice sea water with the absolute right temperature.

Mrs. Alice will also be in the best mood when she gets to sit at the cosy dressing table. The spouses cannot agree who has got the best start on this first morning at sea. Now we will call home to the kids says Mrs. Alice, they must be happy to talk to us here at sea. Mr. Axberg orders the call. The conversation goes first to the radio room – the key for contact with the outside world. This facility can be linked to telephone subscribers in all continents. Ready to Strandhagen. Hey, this is mom, how are you? And then a wireless bridge is connecting the ship on the Atlantic and a summer house in Sweden. A live contact between mother and child.

But let us not forget the Atlantic holiday culinary elements. Butchers with deft fingers cut and fillet. In the huge kitchen it starts to boil in the pots and fries in the pans. All equipment is of the highest quality and the employees are satisfied with their jobs.

Travelling with family can sometimes have their moments, but on board the Kungsholm, there are good and safe playgrounds for children, both on deck and inside. There is also a special nanny who can take care of the kids when mom and dad want some time for themselves. However, even the adults have to play to thrive – here is the clay-pigeon shooting. Yes that's right! But do not take it for granted that you will hit the small fast replicas. Those who want peace and quiet may find that in one of the comfortable and cosy libraries or writing rooms.

In a beautifully raw glass window Vilhelm Moberg and Fredrika Bremer travel west-bound, towards the big adventures. Over 700 works of art are on board. King Gustav III and George Washington lived during the same period and from their time onwards the best relationships have remained between Sweden and America.

They have arrived happily at their destination. The flag moves in the wind as a greeting from the coast they have left. Well may we go ... everything clear. Many goodbyes ... those who would meet. Oh, hallo, there you are! The friends Jim and Ulf have truly driven down from Maine. It must be open arms. Is it your car? Yes, said Jimmy, get in and make yourself at home.

The journey continues into the big city. Surely New York is called a city desert but this desert land is truly majestic and its stones shaped into a magnificent line games. Mixing colours at Times Square, one of the world-famous meeting points. Only a few hours, our friends stay in the city before they travel further on. But a visit to the Empire State Building – the world's tallest building – they still have time to do. The destination is

located a day trip towards the inland. It is best to start! The journey, over the massive George Washington Bridge, continues towards New Jersey. We would very much like to travel along the traffic lanes toward the vast American continent, but that's another story.

(Translation from Swedish by Anna-Lena Lindström Olsson)

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To sum up – I like art ... art is fun, art schools too ... and archives ... and history. If I am to say a last word on the topic, I chose to give that opportunity away to others who have been dead for some time, they should know:

“History is a bag of tricks we play upon the dead.”

Voltaire

“History is a bag of tricks which the dead have played upon historians.”

Medieval historian Lynn White, Jr.

I can only agree ...

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Appendix – Lars Olsson, “Palettens arkiv”

Palettens arkiv – historisk källa och konstnärligt material

Av Lars Olsson

Arkiv och historieskrivning tilldrar sig idag ett betydande intresse i konstvärlden. Hal Foster har pekat på en »arkivisk impuls« i samtidskonsten som kännetecknas av en ambition bland konstnärer att göra historien fysiskt och rumsligt närvarande.¹ Utgångspunkten är ofta ett förlorat, marginaliserat eller undertryckt historiskt material i form av upphittade texter, bilder och föremål. Denna arkiviska konst länkar ihop saker som kan förefalla sakna förbindelser, samt tar gångna tiders framtidsvisioner – visioner som aldrig förverkligades – som utgångspunkt för att visa på alternativa sätt att organisera vår värld.

Ett aktuellt exempel på arkivisk konst gavs när det konstnärsdrivna Galleri 54 i Göteborg i december 2009 skapade en utställning av sitt eget arkivmaterial som samlats sedan starten på 1950-talet. I en recension menar Fredrik Svensk att en förklaring till intresset för arkiviska ansatser är att de berör frågor om kunskap och makt.² Han hävdar vidare att materialet utgör ett medium på samma sätt som till exempel måleri och påpekar att fördelen »med att göra ett verk för arkivet är att det i allmänhet har en lång utställningsperiod« – adress Evigheten får man förmoda att han menar.

Maktperspektivet återkommer ofta i konst med arkiviska förtecken där historieskrivningen ifrågasätts: vems historia är det som skrivs och vad är det som utelämnas? I katalogen till *Lost and Found: Querying the Archive* på Bildmuseet i Umeå vintern-våren 2010 konstateras att de verk som ingår i utställningen både dekonstruerar och rekonstruerar det förgångna genom att ifrågasätta de maktstrukturer som ligger inbäddade i arkiven.³ Strategin som tillämpas är att skapa alternativa arkiv som inkluderar det undangömda, glömda och förträngda. I *Lost and Found* påpekas att offentliga och privata arkiv ofta utelämnat eller gallrat ut material som berör queerliv eller

homosexualitet. I stället för ekonomiska mätetal, journaler och straffregister vill den queer-arkiviska konsten samla och bevara känslor och intimitet.

Med arkivbegreppet följer frågeställningar som har betydelse för hur arkiviska strategier utformas. En av dessa rör relationen mellan arkiv och minne. Sven Spieker påpekar i sin bok *The Big Archive: Art from Bureaucracy* att arkivet inte är en minnesbank och att information som hämtas därifrån ibland motsäger minnet. Han menar att det som arkivet registrerar sällan sammanfaller »med det som vårt medvetande förmår registrera« och konstaterar: »Arkiv inregistrerar inte erfarenhet, utan snarare dess frånvaro.«⁴ Spieker exemplifierar med Andy Warhols *Time Capsules* – lådor fyllda med souvenirer, anteckningar, korrespondens, foton och kvitton som konstnären sände iväg för magasinerings. Dessa lådor blev en förlängning av allt som samlades på Warhols skrivbord och dokumenten kom att arkiveras »inte för att de var viktiga, värdefulla eller på annat sätt minnesvärda, utan eftersom de fanns »där«, på skrivbordet.«⁵

Även om offentliga arkiv som lagrar material från organisationer och företag inte tillkommit tillsynes lika slumpmässigt som Warhols tidsskapslar finns en principiell likhet – det handlar om dokument som i många fall sparats just för att de fanns »där« och för att de vid någon tidpunkt fyllde en funktion. Därefter har de ordnats, inte som minne, erfarenhet och berättelse, utan som listor och handlingar som funktionellt hör ihop och återspeglar organisationens verksamhet.

Själva ordnandet är centralt och får följderna för arkivets status som källa till kunskap. Enligt konstvetaren Mathias Danbolt är uteslutandet en grundläggande egenskap hos arkivet – om alla handlingar sparades skulle detta snart leda till överfulla arkiv där till slut inget blir åtkomligt. Arkiv befinner

»De hittills sjuttio publicerade årgångarna av *Paletten* utgör en självklar källa för den som vill studera tidskriften och dess plats på den svenska konstscenen. Här kan man i bild och text – artiklar, ledarspalter, polemiska inlägg, recensioner, referat och notiser – följa konstlivets skiften.«

sig således hela tiden någonstans »mellan minne och glömska, mellan ordning och kaos«.⁶ Exkluderandet återkopplar till maktperspektivet – vad som sparas respektive gallras ut och hur materialet klassificeras får betydelse för vilken kunskap som kan utvinnas i ett senare skede. Med sökarljuset riktat mot de personer som påverkat kommer också frågan om drivkrafterna att skapa arkiv – juridisk nödvändighet, gammal vana eller människors önskan att lämna spår efter sig.

Med avstamp i dessa tankar ska vi övergå till de årningar av handlingar som det redaktionella och administrativa arbetet på *Paletten* har lämnat efter sig sedan starten 1940. Materialet är en naturlig utgångspunkt för en historiker som vill skriva om tidskriften. Det bör dock framhållas att dokumenten i lika hög grad utgör ett intressant material för en konstnär som arbetar utifrån arkiviska ansatser. Denna konst kan erbjuda en alternativ förståelse av det förgångna jämfört med den som historikern skapar.

Paletten har alltid varit lokaliserad till Göteborg och det växande arkivmaterialet har följt med då redaktionen under åren haft olika adresser – exempelvis nämner Håkan Wettre i en minnesbild från det tidiga 1970-talet att arkivet under några år fanns i hemmet »under redaktörens säng«.⁷ Huvuddelen av dokumenten har under senare år funnits på kontoret i Lagerhuset men förs nu i omgångar över till Region- och stadsarkivet i Göteborg med Folkrorelsernas arkiv som sedan tidigare förvarar delar av tidskriftens äldre material. Arkivet blir genom flytten mer lättillgängligt för forskare och andra intresserade.⁸

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att spåra de nätverk som varit knutna till eller kommit till tals i tidskriften. Med ett jämförande perspektiv kan *Palettens* inriktning under olika perioder sättas i relation till andra svenska konstitidskrifter som *Konstrevy* och *Konstperspektiv*, eller till dagspressens konstbevakning. Christian Chambert, själv flitig medarbetare under en rad av år, har talat om *Paletten* som »den andra rösten«. Han menar att »utgiven i Göteborg har tidskriften inte speglat det officiella svenska konstlivets agenda utan har haft ett eget perspektiv på saker och ting, har stått för alternativ och debatt«.⁹

Det i många avseenden tillrättalagda och färdigredigerade material som utgör *Palettens* olika nummer har givetvis sina begränsningar. Många av de mänskliga relationer, arbetsinsatser och stridigheter som föregått utgivningen syns inte i det publicerade materialet. Då måste vi i stället gräva djupare i arkivet – i mötesprotokoll, årsbokslut, ekonomisk redovisning, pressklipp och brevväxling mellan redaktion och styrelse, skribenter, korrespondenter, läsare och finansierare.¹⁰ Konstvetare och andra som vill studera till exempel fördelningen mellan manliga och kvinnliga medarbetare i *Paletten*, eller i vilken grad medarbetarnas kön påverkat innehållet, kan här hitta material som förmedlar glimtar av de redaktionella diskussionerna. Samma sak gäller fördelningen mellan regionalt, nationellt och internationellt material.

Det finns också andra källor till tidskriftens historia. En är Göteborgs konstnärsklubbs arkiv då klubben var huvudman för *Paletten* till 1992 års slut. Detta material finns också på Region- och stadsarkivet. Vidare kan personer tidigare knutna till tidskriften ge minnesbilder och information framför allt från perioden 1960-talet och fram till nutiden.

När *Paletten* firade sitt 60-årsjubileum publicerades i nummer 2:2000 en samling texter där tidigare redaktörer reflekterade



»Om den information som finns i arkivet utgör underlag för historikernas tolkningar så kan omvänt det som utelämnats och saknas i arkivet utgöra viktig inspiration för att konstnärligt arbeta med tidskriftens historia.«

över tidskriftens historia. Under senare år har två konstvetenskapliga uppsatser lagts fram om *Palettens* tidiga historia, med fokus på åren fram till och med 1949. Den ena av dessa, skriven av Henrik Hannfors 2009, bildar underlag för en artikel i detta nummer (se sidorna 4-7). I övrigt förekommer *Paletten* sporadiskt och oftast kortfattat i historieskrivningen om Göteborgs konstnärsklubb och konsten i Göteborg och Västsverige.¹¹

Vilka historier döljs i *Palettens* arkiv? Naturligtvis avgörs detta av vilka intressen och metoder som styr forskaren. Ett tillvägagångssätt är att anlägga ett nätverksperspektiv och följa de personer som varit knutna till *Paletten* i redaktion och styrelse. Protokoll från möten och korrespondens till och från tidskriften ger en levande bild av strider, samförstånd och lagarbete, något som tas tillvara i Hannfors uppsats. En historieskrivning som fokuserar på *Palettens* sociala nätverk har möjligheter att inte bara säga något om tidskriftens skiftande öden utan också om den göteborgska och svenska konstscenen i stort.

Återkommande, i alla fall från 1980-talet och framåt, är ekonomiska kriser och nedlägningshot. Otoliga styrelser har arbetat med dynamiska räddningsplaner för att öka antalet prenumeranter. Även om visionerna om dramatiska öknningar av antalet betalande läsare inte infriats har tidskriften överlevt gång efter gång. Så länge Göteborgs konstnärsklubb var huvudman hade den det ekonomiska ansvaret, men även sedan utgivningen togs över av en självständig stiftelse har tidskriften visat en osannolik överlevnadsförmåga. Detta kastar ljus inte bara över *Palettens* egna strävanden utan berättar också om offentliga och privata finansärer och kulturpolitiken i Sverige under de senaste decennierna.

Ytterligare ett tema är *Paletten* och dess annonsörer, kanske med fokus på estetik eller ekonomisk historia. Annonserna har hela tiden varit en del av det praktiska arbetet med att ge ut tidskriften. Här, i beskrivningar av en kulturtidskrifts vardag, har arkivet sin verkliga styrka med allt sitt material som berör såväl administration och redaktionellt arbete som styrelsearbete och andra ideella insatser. Även korrespondensen mellan läsarna och *Palettens* redaktion är intressant att utforska. Men för att skapa en helhetsbild av läsarnas historia bör detta material kompletteras med andra källor.¹²

Om den information som finns i *Palettens* arkiv utgör underlag för historikernas tolkningar så kan omvänt det som utelämnats och saknas i arkivet utgöra viktig inspiration för att konstnärligt arbeta med tidskriftens historia. Ett sådant sätt att närma sig arkivet skulle ligga nära några av de strategier för arkivisk konst som diskuterats ovan.

Liksom historikern kan konstnären behöva bedriva forskning om vad som finns i arkivet men samtidigt gå bortom detta

material – att läsa mellan raderna, att kritiskt ifrågasätta, att visuellt gestalta det som aldrig blivit och att koppla samman element på ett nytt sätt för att kunna berätta alternativa historier. En konstnärlig undersökning av materialet kan exempelvis fokusera på maktaspekter eller bortglömda medarbetare och konstnärer. Den kan också utgå från fantasieggande påståenden tagna ur sitt sammanhang – som att läsningen av *Paletten* blivit en »alltmer spöklik sysselsättning«.¹³ Om konstverket dessutom självt inlemmas i arkivet blir som påpekats den tid som det står utställt mycket lång – inte veckor utan århundraden.

Noter

- Hal Foster, »An Archival Impulse«, *October* 110 (2004), s. 3-22. Se också Foster et. al, *Art since 1900: Modernism, antimodernism, postmodernism* (London, 2004), s. 668-669. Kommentarer till Fosters resonemang samt diskussioner om arkiviska strategier inom konsten återfinns i Jonas (J) Magnusson & Cecilia Grönberg, *Omkopplingar: avskrifter, listor, dokument, arkiv* (Göteborg, 2006), s. 49-52. Se också Charles Merewether (red.), *The Archive* (Documents of Contemporary Art; Cambridge, MA, 2006).
- Fredrik Svensk, »Arkivet: Galleri 54«, *Göteborgs-Posten* 12 december 2009.
- Mathias Danbolt, Jane Rowley & Louise Wolthers (red.), *Lost and Found: Querying the Archive* (Bildmuseet, Umeå university, 2010).
- Sven Spieker, *The Big Archive: Art from Bureaucracy* (Cambridge, MA, 2008). Bokens inledning finns översatt till svenska av Cecilia Grönberg och Jonas (J) Magnusson i *OEI #42* (2009) s. 3-12 (Sven Spieker, »Det stora arkivet: Byråkraterns konst«) varifrån citat hämtats.
- Ibid., s. 3. För exempel på innehåll i Warhols tidskriftnummer, se Matt Wrblan, »Tidskapsel 61 går på bio«, i Eva Meyer-Hermann (red.), *Andy Warhol: En guide till 706 föremål på 2 timmar och 56 minuter* (Moderna museet, Stockholm, 2007).
- Mathias Danbolt, »Touching history: Archival relations in queer art and theory«, i Danbolt et.al., *Lost and Found*, s. 30.
- Håkan Wettre, »Palettens 70-tal«, *Paletten* 2:2000, s. 53.
- För kontaktuppgifter, se <http://www.arkivnamnden.org/goteborg/folk/folk.htm>.
- Christian Chambert, »Den andra rösten«, *Paletten* 2:2000, s. 49.
- Utöver nämnt material finns i arkivet också en komplett svit av tidskriften, böcker utgivna på *Palettens* förlag, bildmaterial som publicerats i tidskriften, ämnesordnade handlingar (t.ex. om *Palettens* galleri) och mycket annat.
- Paletten* 2:2000, s. 49-55; Jan Åke Sandberg, »Paletten – de tio första åren (1940-1949): ett framgångsrikt Göteborgsprojekt«, kandidatuppsats, Institutionen för konst- och bildvetenskap, Göteborgs universitet, 2002; Henrik Hannfors, »Om att mötas kring Paletten: Göteborgs Konstnärsklubb som skriftställare 1933-1949«, magisteruppsats, Institutionen för konst- och bildvetenskap, Göteborgs universitet, 2009. I den senare uppsatsen listas litteratur som kortfattat berör *Paletten*.
- En läsekretsundersökning genomfördes 1972, se Kerstin Andersson, »Paletten: Spridning, läsekrets och läsarnas attityder«, uppsats för Kulturgeografiska seminariet vid Göteborgs universitet (*Palettens* arkiv).
- Tord Bäckström, »Paletten: Konstforskare och forskarkonst«, *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning* 5 september 1980 (*Palettens* klipparkiv).

GALLERIGUIDEN VÅREN 2010

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